

Anna Akhmatova Spends the Night on Miami Beach

Well, her book, anyway. The Kunitz volume left
lying on a bench, the pages
a bit puffy by morning, flushed with dew, riffled by
sea breeze, scratchy with sand
--the paperback with the 1930's photo
with her in spangled caftan, the back cover
calling her "star of the St. Petersburg circle of
Pasternak, Mandelstam, and Blok,
surviving the Revolution and two World Wars."

So she'd been through worse...
the months outside Lefortovo prison
waiting for a son who was already dead, watching women
stagger and reel with news of executions, one mother
asking, "Can you write about this?" Akhmatova thought,
then answered, "Yes."

If music lured her off the sandy bench to the
clubs where men were kissing that wouldn't
have bothered her much nor the vamps
sashaying in leather.
Decadence amid art deco fit nicely
with her black dress, chopped hair, Chanel cap. What killed
her was the talk, the empty eyes,
which made her long for the one person in ten thousand who could
say her name in Russian,
who could take her home, giving her a place between
Auden and Apollinaire
to whom she could describe her night's excursion amid the
loud hilarities, the trivial hungers
at the end of the American century.