



The Accompanist

Nina Berberova

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A spellbinding short novel set in post-revolutionary Russia about a young girl's jealousy. The fifth book of Nina Berberova to be published by New Directions, *The Accompanist*, written in 1936, proved to be a literary phenomenon in Europe where it was first published. A spellbinding, short novel set in post-revolutionary Russia *The Accompanist* portrays with extraordinary sensitivity the entangled relationships of three intriguing characters. Sonechka is a talented but shy young pianist hired by a beautiful soprano (Maria Nikolaevna) and her devoted, bourgeois husband. Maria is everything Sonechka is not: glamorous and flamboyant. Her voice brings with it "something immortal and indisputable, something which gives reality to the human being's dream of having wings." Doomed to live in her mentor's shadow, the young girl secretly schemes to expose the singer's infidelities. But as she awaits her chance, the diva's husband takes matters into his own hands, bringing events to a surprising resolution. This intense and beautiful little novel was published in America almost fifty years after it was written; sadly out of print for a number of years, it is a wonderfully compelling and crucial addition to Nina Berberova's growing number of published fictional works.

The Accompanist Details

Date : Published June 17th 2003 by New Directions (first published 1985)

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Author : Nina Berberova

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From Reader Review The Accompanist for online ebook

Carla says

As pessoas são egoístas.

Methodtomadness says

The Accompanist is a slim little novella that seems far, far more modern than its 1936 publication date. It's not a cheerful novel, and it's not a happy novel, but it's a well-crafted and subtle novel. It's hard for a non-Russian speaker to know how much of the modernity is in the original prose, and how much has been conveyed through the translation, but it's a crisp, largely direct style that grabs you and hangs on with the same sort of neurotic intensity the narrator herself displays. *The Accompanist* is largely concerned with ambition, and what happens when ambition collides not just with reality, but with the undermining forces of one's own mind. You could easily get annoyed with the narrator's self-pity, but it's her insecurities that make her character both realistic and ultimately somewhat sympathetic. Read it in an hour or so, and be impressed by Berberova's compact, brooding little story.

Jennifer says

Short one-sitting read that's engaging and a little depressing.

Mohsen Rajabi says

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Sandra en Alaska says

"Ante mí fulguraba la vida y pasaba de largo, trituraba y molía a las personas, pero a mí no me rozaba, por mucho que se lo rogara."

.

Gracias a Marta Rebón por la traducción. Gracias a ella he descubierto a Ulítskaya, Chukovskaia, o Berbérova, y gracias a ellas estoy pensando en pedir la nacionalidad rusa, aprender ruso, irme a Rusia y

¡empezar a vivir! a la rusa, con pasión y tozudez y rabia y nostalgia.

.

María Trávina, vive y Sóniechka, envidia. ¡Todos creemos ser del grupo de los vivos! Soberbios y arrogantes mediocres. ¡Todo lo vivieron los rusos y todo lo escribieron los rusos!

.

Qué pena que sea una novela corta si dura unas páginas más seguramente descubro el secreto de la infelicidad.

Kobe Bryant says

Sad little story

Floris Meertens says

De machtsverhouding tussen de twee personages (begeleidster en zangeres) is confronterend en oneerlijk. Het is er een die ik niet vaak ben tegengekomen in de literatuur, terwijl het juist herkenbaar en levensecht is. De eerbied en de haat van de ongelukkige, ongetalenteerde begeleidster voor de schitterende zangeres, voor wie het geluk eenvoudig lijkt. En als lezer wil je eigenlijk ook niet dat haar geluk eenvoudig is, omdat jij aan de kant staat van de Begeleidster (misschien alleen omdat je haar memoires leest, misschien omdat dat eenvoudige geluk meer iets lijkt voor anderen).

Twee mooie citaten over deze moeizame wisselwerking:

"En God? Waar was Hij? Waarom had Hij ons niet allemaal gemaakt zoals Hij haar had gemaakt?"

"Een gelukkig mens leeft als het ware boven de anderen (en verdrukt hen natuurlijk enigszins). En er valt niets te vergeven, het is net zoiets als gezondheid, schoonheid."

Als dat laatste citaat klopt, echter, is het misschien beter de zoektocht naar geluk op te geven.

Tara says

Berberova's little novel seems simple enough at the start, but there is a prickling emotional intensity that grows as the story progresses. I enjoyed the unexpected twists near the end and overall found this piece quite enjoyable. I'll be on the lookout for Berberova's other works.

Mila says

If you are looking for fiction about music, this novella is the wrong pick. It barely refers to the musical universe or practice. It reads like some French psychological movie about an unremarkable woman in the shadow of a successful one- restrained and forgettable.

Incidentally, it has been adapted into a French psychological drama.

Aurélia says

C'est une relique de PAL que je suis bien contente d'avoir enfin sortie... mais tellement déçue de ne pas avoir accroché, ni au style que j'ai trouvé lourd, ni à la narratrice, qui m'a agacée par son esprit si négatif et ses jérémiades.

J'avais pourtant beaucoup d'attente à son égard...

Elena Farca E says

Me encanto, lo empece y no lo pude soltar hasta terminarlo.

The Reading Bibliophile says

Nouvelle sans grande envergure. Le cheminement psychologique du personnage principal m'a semblé étrange (un peu comme un cheveu dans la soupe).

Mariel says

No matter how many times people tell me that a worm could never aspire to world greatness, I'll never stop waiting and telling myself: you can't die, can't let up, not as long as one person is still walking on this earth. There is still one debt which, maybe, one day, you will recover... If there is a God.

Nina Berberova missed the first crawl. If she would lift up the ends of her ill fitting dress the knees should be blackened with fate. Not a too close call with a brighter star. Sonechka is born under the sign of a secret life lived before you. Her mother, the popular piano teacher, will say "This is my daughter" when her embracing students ask who is this little girl, now nine years old. I wonder what the little face looked like before, hiding behind curtain skirt hems. Born under the planet of her thirty year old mother had her first love in her nineteen year old student. Hiding behind do not disturb white flags. She must have loved him to have finally known this. Sonechka is carried around in a kangaroo's pouch of hide from the wishing stars in bastard's shame. They move to Petersburg when all of the students cannot love their beloved music teacher any longer. I missed the heart beat of every day her mother lives alone. How bright did she burn when she loved. The little and ugly Sonechka is the year of the dog of beg for scraps, the year of hide under the table, the year of tail between your legs. Berberova misses when the girl who professes herself to be loved by her mother with a pathetic gap is not the child of love. The pathetic gap is a more visible dark hole to me than all other locked doors to her. She has nothing to do with them. Her mother's favorite and sole loyal student is a musical genius. Dismissed by Sonechka he still orbits the musical 'verse the young, but nothing else, woman does for nothing else. Berberova missed the crawl of every day when she attends the conservatory and is not special.

This oily genius asks her in the end is she not ashamed to be merely playing music in a theater when apparently everyone had had such high hopes for her. No one ever had high hopes for her! It sounds like a mouth born tasting bitterness. It is Soviet Russia and you wake up to wait in line for food. Your mouth is formed too dry to swallow pride. The girl writes about herself that she is not beautiful, she is not smart. She has nothing to recommend herself. It sounds like someone who gives their last name or serial number. I feel that it would have been sushi guts to swallow every day if it had always been that way. It was always that way. Sonechka isn't the ugly girl only when she gets a job as an accompanist to the glamorous Maria Nikolaevna. The desire to get even with the beautiful woman who appears to her first in pink stockings and it must have been lingerie. The girl is too mesmerized to know what it is she is seeing. She has lovers and a husband and Sonechka insists with screwed eyes fury that her husband couldn't allow himself to be taken over by them. She cries and she feels a gnawing inside. It isn't for the husband that she feels betrayed. She only wants the secure world to crumble. It wouldn't mean that she was nothing if someone else couldn't be born such a something. There are teeth chewing her soul and eating her heart and she doesn't understand why, though she says that she does. I didn't care if the husband found out that his wife had a lover. If Maria was beautiful and everything would work out for her as it would to a person who was born healthy and beautiful and happy that they couldn't even question it. Her job playing piano for the singer didn't matter. That she felt ugly and little and twisted by her side. She has nothing of her own and has no language to ask for what it is that she wants. I felt it was more important that she is born like a baby without eyes than the dazzling everything of the singer. Maria Nikolaevna is boring to me. I didn't really care about Sonechka either. I felt that I should have been able to feel her ugly girls pain inside my own ugly girls pain. I thought it was a mistake to send this glittering singer's life into the sky and darken the rest. Everyone shined without Sonechka. It would be all around her. It would hurt every day to just walk down the street.

It is possible that I'm just an embittered ugly girl, expecting too much of this tiny novel. Maybe she was obsessed with Maria and the hollowness didn't have to speak of how lonely it must be to be born special to no one, truly loved by no one. What do you have to do to be good enough? Sonechka isn't owed. I think that and I'm still going to say that Berberova missed where it really hurt. It was too late before she ever met Maria. Whatever happened to her was never going to matter.

My New Directions copy seemed to me to want to rescue a lost classic. Translated into French and unknown in the English reading world for fifty years.

Nicoleta says

O femeie atras? frumos ?i urât de cea pe care o acompaniaz?.

Sinahy says

i love this book i think it's one of the best in the novel world
