**BERBEROVA, Nina Nikolaevna (БЕРБЕРОВА, НИНА НИКОЛАЕВНА) (1901-1993)**

Nina Nikolaevna Berberova (1901-1993) was a prominent Russian émigré writer, journal editor, and memoirist. She was born to an Armenian father and Russian mother in St. Petersburg; she died in Philadelphia. Berberova left Russia in 1922 with her then-lover, Vladislav Khodasevich. The couple lived in various European cities during the 1920s as part of Maxim Gorky’s household, before settling in Paris in 1925. Berberova emigrated alone to the USA in 1950. There she held various jobs before joining the Slavic department at Yale in 1958. From 1963 until 1971 she taught at Princeton University, where she was prized as one of the last living links to Russian Silver Age culture. The incisive, understated style of Berberova’s short stories about émigré life in Paris has been compared to that of Turgenev and Chekhov. Many of these stories were published in émigré publications, for which she also wrote reviews and critical articles. In 1947, she helped found the émigré weekly *Russian Thought* [*Russkaia Mysl’*]*.* Berberova is also the author of several biographies, including one of the poet Aleksandr Blok and one about Tchaikovsky — notable for its frank discussion of the composer's homosexuality. She is perhaps best known for her memoirs *The Italics Are Mine* (1969; first published in Russian as *Kursiv moi* in Munich in 1971). A source of controversy in the émigré community due to their candour, and accused of fabrication, the memoirs provide an invaluably vivid record of her generation, its leading figures, and their post-revolutionary fate.

*With Khodasevich in Sorrento, 1925.*

**References and Further Reading:**

Murl Barker. (1990) “Nina Berberova on Surviving.” *Selected Journal of the Pacific Northwest Council on Foreign Languages* 11. pp69-72

Barker was one of Berberova’s graduate students at Yale, lending this piece an invaluable personal perspective.

———— (1989) “The Short Prose of Nina Berberova.” *Russian Literary Triquarterly* 22. pp239-54.

Introduction to the author’s short stories and their main themes.

Ellen Chances. (1994) “Nina Berberova” in *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers.* Marina Ledovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal, Mary Zirin (eds.). Greenwood, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. pp77-79.

Brief but thorough overview of Berberova’s life and work. Includes short discussion of her poetry. Includes a comprehensive bibliography of the author’s own work, as well as critical studies of it.

R. Gul’. (1970) “V nikh tri ingredienta…” *Novyi zhurnal, No. 99*.

Contemporary review of *Kursiv moi.* Exemplary of the outrage caused by Berberova’s memoirs in the émigré community and the negative reviews she received; Gul’ and Berberova had formerly been good friends.

Sergei Kostyrko. (1991) “Vyzhit’, shtoby zhit’.” *Novyi mir 9*. pp216-21.

Russian language review of Berberova’s *The Iron Lady*, *The Italics Are Mine*, and *The Accompanist*.

Nadya L. Peterson. (Autumn, 2001) “The Private “I” in the Works of Nina Berberova”, *Slavic Review,* Vol. 60, No. 3. pp491-512

Analysis of the interaction of the fictional and the autobiographical in Berberova’s narratives, discussed in terms of the author’s gender as well as her experience of emigration.

Gleb Struve. (1956) *Russkaia Literatura v izgnanii.* New York: Izdatel’stvo Chekhova. Pp 292-4.

Brief discussion of Berberova’s position in relation to literature of the emigration.

**Major Works:**

**Collected editions:**

*Oblegchenie uchasti: shest’ povestei.* (Paris, 1949. Reprinted as *Povesti*, Moscow, 1992).

*Biankurskie prazdniki* [Biancourt Festivals]. (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1950).

*Izbrannaia proza.* (New York: Russica, 1982).

*Stikhi, 1921-1983.* (New York: Russica, 1984).

**Novels:**

*Poslednye i pervye* [Last and First] (Paris, 1930)

*Akkompaniatorsha* [The Accompanist] (*Sovremennye zapiski, 58,* 1935)

*Bez zakata* [No Sunset] (Paris: Dom Knigi, 1938)

**Biographical and Autobiographical Works:**

*Chaikovskii: Istoriia odinokoi zhizni* [Chaikovsky: The Story of a Solitary Life] (Paris and Berlin: Petropolis, 1936)

*Alexandre Blok et son temps* [translated as *Aleksandr Blok: A Life,* Robyn Marsack, 1996] (Paris: Editions du Chêne, 1948)

*Borodin* (Paris and Berlin: Petropolis, 1938)

*The Italics Are Mine* (trans. Phillip Radley. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1969) [Published in Russian as *Kursiv Moi: avtobiografiia,* Munich: Fink, 1972]

*Zheleznaia zhenshchina: rasskaz o zhizni M.I. Zakrevskoi-Benkendorf-Budberg, o nei samoi i o nee druz’iakh* [The Iron Lady: A Story about the Life of M.I. Zakrevskaia-Benkendorf-Budberg, about Her and about Her Friends] (New York: Russica, 1982)

**Critical Essays:**

“25 let posle smerti A. Bloka” [“25 years after the death of A. Blok”], *Orion,* 1947

“Vladislav Khodasevich, russkii poet 1886-1939” [“Vladislav Khodasevich, A Russian Poet 1886-1939”], *Grani,* 12, 1951

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