

Russian fiction

Brodsky, Basmanova, the Third

Documentary fiction. Manuscript 2025. 300 pages

Marina Basmanova and Joseph Brodsky had more than just a relationship. Basmanova was his great and, as the poet himself admitted, his only love. Literary scholars agree that his relationship with Basmanova was crucial to Brodsky's life. The vast majority of his love poems are dedicated to her (M.B.).

Brodsky and Basmanova meet on January 2, 1962, at a private New Year's Eve party hosted by the young composer Boris Tishchenko. Basmanova and Tishchenko are in a relationship at the time, and Brodsky is one of the guests. Despite his friendship with the composer, Joseph practically steals his girlfriend from him. The poet's relationship with Basmanova flourishes, but his relationship with the Soviet authorities reaches a crisis. He subsequently faces accusations of parasitism and the threat of exile. Fleeing arrest, Brodsky travels to Moscow. At this point, Basmanova makes a strange move—she asks Brodsky's best friend, Bobyshev, to celebrate New Year's Eve with her. It's New Year's Eve again (1964), and once again a friend steals his best friend's girlfriend. But this time Brodsky is the victim. Desperate with grief, the poet immediately returns to Leningrad, tries to slit his wrists, and, as many believe, gives up the fight for his destiny. He is arrested and exiled.

Since then, Basmanova and Bobyshev have been publicly viewed as those who stabbed the poet in the back at the most difficult moment of his life. Basmanova is swept away by a wave of widespread contempt and becomes an outsider in Leningrad's cultural circles. Although she briefly reunites with Brodsky and even gives birth to his son, the stigma of betrayal clings to her for life.

After their final separation (Brodsky was notoriously promiscuous) and the poet's departure to the West, Marina withdraws completely. She never attempts to justify herself. She never writes a memoir about the poet and consistently refuses interviews with journalists. There are virtually no photographs of her. She has lived a secluded life for over 50 years now.

In this novel, based on true events, the generally known events remain unchanged. Even the historically documented dialogues (from memoirs) remain close to the original in meaning, although they take on a completely different effect in the new context. However, research and conversations with contemporary witnesses gave the opportunity to look at the twists and turns of their relationship from a significantly different perspective. This novel is about a woman who continues on her path while the whole world is against her. Yet she finds the strength to persevere and assert her view of things, pursuing with dignity the path she consciously chose. She sacrificed her love and her reputation, and silence was essential to achieving her goal and ensuring that her sacrifice was not in vain. She could not even reveal herself to her closest confidants. In essence, the novel creates a kind of emotional diary in which the unspoken takes on full meaning and we finally learn what really happened.

Ramil Khalikov was born in 1969 in Kyrgyzstan. He is a Tatar by nationality. He graduated from the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow in 1995, where he studied with Maria Stepanova and Roman Senchin, among others. He has published a novel, and other prose works in journals and literary anthologies. He is a recipient of the Platonov Prize. Khalikov lives near Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

awards

Platonov Prize

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