



Nadie logrará conocerse - Cuarteto de la guerra II

Author:

Xavier Güell

Reader's name:

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**Nadie logrará conocerse** is a novel by Xavier Güell which is the second in a Quartet of novels dealing with the experiences of renowned composers, Bela Bartok, Richard Strauss, Dimitri Shostakovich, and Arnold Schoenberg, who remained in Nazi Germany. This novel deals with Richard Strauss, a composer who is well known to classical music and opera lovers around the world. Even those who are not familiar with his name will recognize his iconic **Thus spake Zarathustra**, as the opening music of the film **2001**.

The novel is not long, a short 204 pages. Its title, in English, “No one will get to know one another”, is a hint as to what we will learn from this intriguing work. Aside from a few technical terms related to musical notes and composition, the language of the novel is straight forward and engaging to the reader. It will easily translate into English and this reader believes it will find a ready market in the U.S.

My professor, Julián Marías told us, in class, and in his book, **La imagen de la vida humana**, that we can have a higher experience of reality by way of imagination. This is so true in Güell’s novel. This novel is unique in that it is more theatrical, starting with a prologue and three acts, Act one has three scenes, Act two, four, and Act three, five scenes. The novel spans the years from 1906 to 1945. In each scene including the prologue, our narrator sets the scene and gives our characters their leave to perform. It is through these scenes and the prologue that we get to know Strauss from various perspectives. We may know Strauss from his music, or check him out on Google, or Wikipedia, but nowhere will we get to know him as we do in this fascinating novel.

In the prologue we see Strauss in his bath, musing about his relationship with Gustav Mahler, then deceased, and the latter’s opinion of Strauss’s work.

In ACT I, Scene 2 we view Strauss and his work through the eyes of two young men traveling to see the opening of Strauss’s opera Salomé. One of them, a fan of Strauss, turns out to be a young Adolph Hitler. Without going scene by scene here, in the course of this novel we see Strauss socializing with other composers, such as Mahler prior to the opening of Salomé, getting to know him as the artist, then at home with his wife, Pauline, getting to know him as a husband and family man, then with Hitler and Goebbels where he is man, artist and perhaps politician dealing with the moral dilemma of becoming part of the Nazi bureaucracy.

In ACT 2, we even see a side of Hitler in an almost family atmosphere, in a scene with the family of the composer Richard Wagner, his favorite, where Verena, Wagner’s granddaughter affectionately plays with Hitler, referring to him as Uncle Wolf. Here Hitler appears more human than the monster we know from all the depictions in print, news reels, films and general histories. Hitler recruits

Strauss to head the Reichsmusikkammer, and to replace Toscanini as principal conductor of the Bayreuth Festival. Richard Strauss as a very complex human being, who aside from being a celebrated composer, is also a protector of his family. His daughter-in-law is a Jew, some of whose family members have already disappeared into the death camps. He goes head to head with Goebbels to protect Alice and his grandchildren from the fate of other Jews. Another source of his difficulties with Goebbels is his relationship with the Jewish writer and librettist Stefan Zweig. He also views himself as the defender of artistic rights, protecting the copyrights of the artist and the compensation for their works through royalties.

As the Third Reich ends Strauss is faced with the possibility of being considered a collaborator with the regime. The Americans arrive and they want to commandeer the Strauss home, Hitler's suicide saves the day. Strauss's interaction with the American officer and an enlisted Oboe player shows the dignity of this great composer.

I believe that this imaginative, biographical novel is ideal for the American market. Like all good literature it's theme is universal and thus just as likely to be a bestseller on the American market as **La sombra del viento** or **Dime quién soy**.

My only regret is that I was not able to read the other novels of the Quartet. I can imagine a boxed set being promoted on Amazon. I don't think it will be long until **Nadie logrará conocerse** will appear on stages in Spain, Germany and the U.S.

I did not give this work a 10 because frankly I don't know what perfection is, but a 9 is awfully close.