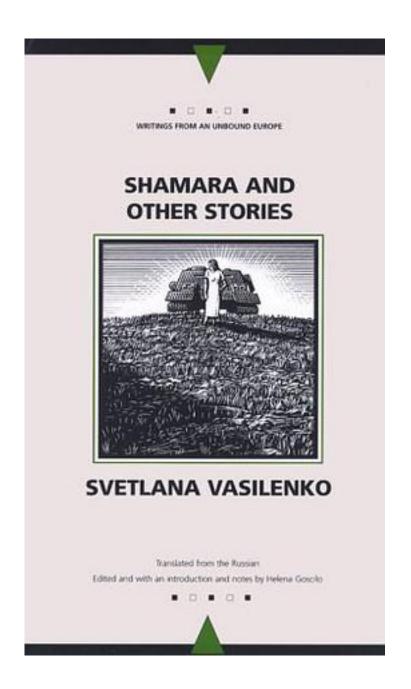
Shamara and Other Writings



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Svetlana Vasilenko awoke to instant fame in 1982 with the publication of her prizewinning debut work, "Going after Goat-Antelopes." Though her subsequent critically acclaimed novellas and short stories have been translated into various languages, Shamara and Other Writings marks Vasilenko's first sustained appearance in English. At the center of the volume is Vasilenko's only novel, Little Fool, nominated for the Booker Prize and recognized by the journal that published it as the best Russian novel of 1998. Rich in folklore, legend, and history, the narrative traces the transformation of Ganna, a child from the Volga shores, into a modern-day Madonna who gives birth to a New World. Leaping from the 1930s of Ganna's girlhood during Stalin's crusade against religion to her ascent into sainthood during Stalin's nuclear war in the 1960s, this allegorical vita weaves a sumptuous web of miniplots and styles. "Shamara, "the novella that lends its title to the collection, chronicles a violent love triangle that unfolds in an atmosphere of rivalry, existential despair, and sexual ambiguity. The volatile characters' abrupt emotional shifts from love to hate, friendship to enmity, and tenderness to animalism are matched by the quicksilver turns of Vasilenko's prose.

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目录:
Shamara and Other Writings_下载链接1_
标签
评论

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