

Cabaret Biarritz

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UK panel's choice Year 2015

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Georges Miet writes made-to-order mass-market stories for the French publishing house La Fortune, until one day his editor asks him for a 'serious' novel about the tragic events that shook the vibrant city of Biarritz fifteen years before, in 1925, during the summer season. The body of a local young woman was found tied to a mooring ring in the docks. Georges Miet goes to Biarritz and interviews some thirty people of different social classes who were more or less directly involved with the young woman. Through their stories, Miet discovers that the police and the judge wanted to cover up the case and that the events came to light thanks to the investigation the journalist Paul Villequeau and the photographer Galet carried out at the time, with the collaboration of the beautiful Beatrix Ross, Villequeau's teenage love.

UK panellists opinion:

In the summer of 1925 a series of tragic events shook the otherwise glamorous seaside town of Biarritz, in the south of France. It began with the death of an English woman, a tourist who seemingly drowned, and of the two men who tried to save her. Only a few days later, after a violent storm, the body of a young girl called Aitzane Palefroi was found washed up in the harbour. The death was assumed to be a suicide. Shortly thereafter, nineteen year old Alexandre Saint-Berthelemy stormed into an elegant engagement reception at the Hotel du Palais and shot himself, after shouting accusations at one of the tables. The three events are referred to as 'that summer' or 'the tragic events of Biarritz'.

Cabaret Biarritz is a collection of fictional interviews carried out by George Miet, a writer who in 1938 was commissioned by the editor of a popular publishing house to write a novel based on the tragedies (...)

The voice of each character when interviewed is fully inhabited and explored in entertaining ways, with idiosyncrasies, singular personalities and vocabulary, whilst the form of the interview –and the interviewer as an author with an agenda – is never completely forgotten. At times Miet's descriptions seem deliberately like caricatures of figures of the time, (...) This creates a fascinating reading experience (...)

The invisible figure of Miet – the forgotten and tragic collector of these stories – remains literally silent. His questions and comments are entirely absent from the interviews, bringing an enjoyable and subtle mystery to the text. With only the interviewed characters' reactions to go by, the reader is invited to fill in the blanks.

(...) it is repeatedly funny and - not to underestimate it – engagingly cynical.

From the reader's report by [Jessica Johannesson Gaitán](#) [3]

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