

**Banke, Goumen & Smirnova**  
Literary Agency

**TRANSLATION RIGHTS CATALOGUE**

**LITERARY FICTION**

**QUALITY COMMERCIAL FICTION & NON-FICTION**

**2025**

## List of Authors

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**NARINE ABGARYAN**  
**SONA ABGARYAN**  
**LIUBOV BARINOVA**  
**DANIEL BERGER**  
**ZHENYA BERKOVICH**  
**LEONID BERSHIDSKY**  
**KSENIA BUKSHA & ARTHUR BONDAR**  
**DENIS BUSHLATOV**  
**SVETA DOROSHEVA**  
**LENA ELTANG**  
**ALLA GORBUNOVA**  
**KATERINA GORDEEVA**  
**SERGEY KUZNETSOV**  
**YANA LETT**  
**VLADIMIR MEDVEDEV**  
**NATALIYA MESHCHANINOVA**  
**YANA MOSKALENKO**  
**VALENTINA NAZAROVA**  
**LUDMILLA PETRUSHEVSKAYA**  
**IVAN PHILIPPOV**  
**EDWARD REZNIK**  
**DINA RUBINA**  
**KIRILL RYABOV**  
**MIKHAIL SHISHKIN**  
**MARINA STEPNOVA**  
**YANA VAGNER**  
**TATSIANA ZAMIROVSKAYA**  
**KONSTANTIN ZARUBIN**



About the agency:

**BANKE, GOUMEN & SMIRNOVA AGENCY** is a leading rights agency based in Sweden and Cyprus. We specialize in handling book and film rights, with a primary emphasis on fiction encompassing a wide spectrum, from highly literary works to commercial titles with mass-market appeal. Our list includes writers from countries like Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, and other nations.

As literary agents, we have the privilege of representing some of the most prominent award-winning contemporary authors, such as Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, Mikhail Shishkin, Eugene Vodolazkin, Marina Stepnova, and Narine Abgaryan, translated into over thirty languages. Our guiding philosophy revolves around providing a personalized approach for each author, connecting them with the perfect publishers or film production companies worldwide, and crafting unique marketing and promotional strategies for every title.

Our journey in the publishing and film industries has transformed us into a full-service agency, representing authors in publishing, film, television, and theatre.



About the author:

**NARINE ABGARYAN** was born in 1971 in Berd, Armenia, in the family of a doctor and a school teacher. She graduated from the State University of Linguistic Studies in Yerevan, with a diploma of a teacher of Russian language and literature. Abgaryan is the internationally bestselling author of a dozen of books, including her nationally bestselling and prize-winning (The Manuscript of the Year 2010 and The Russian Literature Prize 2011) trilogy about Manunia, a busy and troublesome 11-year-old in a small Armenian town Berd. Manunia has been made into a TV series, an Okko platform show, with a premier at Kinotavr Film Festival in 2021. Abgaryan's other book for children, Semyon Andreich, received Baby-NOS from The New Literature Award in 2013, as "the best book for children of the last decade." The author's powerful and moving parable Three Apples Fell From the Sky was translated into 23 languages and became a long seller throughout Europe. In 2016, it won the prestigious Yasnaya Polyana Prize. Since 2022 Narine Abgaryan has moved to her native Armenia, sharing her time between Armenia and Germany.

### *Selected Bibliography*

- 2020 — **Simon**, *novel*
- 2017 — **Go on Living**, *short stories*
- 2016 — **Zulali**, *novel*
- 2015 — **Three Apples Fell from the Sky**, *novel*
- 2014 — **People Who Are Always with Me**, *novel*
- 2012 — **Semyon Andreich. A Story in Scribbles**, *novel*
- 2012 — **Manunia, Gran's Birthday Anniversary and Other Turmoils**, *novel*
- 2011 — **The Migrant**, *novel*
- 2010 — **Manunia Writes a Fantastic Novel**, *novel*
- 2010 — **Manunia**, *novel*

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021**

**Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2016**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2016**

**The Alexander Green Award 2015**

**The New Literature Award 2013** (The Best Book for Children)

**The Russian Literature Prize 2011**

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2011**

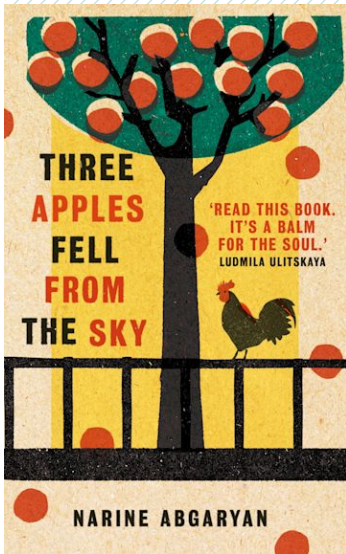
**Manuscript of the Year 2010**

Over 1 500 000 copies sold  
worldwide

Winner of the **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2016**

Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2016**

Over  
**280 000 copies**  
sold



## Three Apples Fell from the Sky

Marquez' all times classic epic *One Hundred Years of Solitude* meets Sergei Parajanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in this memorable fable about a small decaying Armenian village lost on the Manish Kar mountain top.

The title of the novel — *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* — refers to a typical ending of Armenian fairy-tales: “three apples fell from the sky: an apple for the one who watched, another for the one who told the story, and the third one for the one who listened.” The novel, too, resembles a fable. Its heroes are several families living in a decaying mountain village. The village's only connections with the lowland are an old wire telegraph and a hardly visible road that even cows thread with difficulty. Part weirdoes, part naggers, the village's few remaining inhabitants — a dozen of elderly people — share one thing in common: they believe in magic.

Love and pain, vengeance and forgiveness, friendship and feud tensely knot the lives of the villagers together through generations. There's Anatolia, the last from the village's oldest family, having survived after a great famine. A rare beauty and a book lover, Anatolia would suffer from the ravage attacks of her husband, who fled the village after he nearly beat his wife to death. There's a blacksmith Vasily, a widower, who had lost his three sons and the younger brother in the WWII. The same younger brother, who had saved the village from the imminent destruction in the landslide, thanks to a unique foreseeing girl. There's a healer Yasaman, Anatolia's friend and neighbor, who treats all villagers

with self-prepared herb mixtures. There's even a white peacock whose miraculous appearance in the village in the time of the big famine will only be explained at the novel's end.

Readers follow the mundane routine of the old people's lives — them making baklava, baking cakes, gathering crops, doing house chores — and get familiar with their life stories weaving into a slow-paced yet fascinating fable of a village that faces an imminent ending. When one true miracle changes everything — a 58-year-old Anatolia knows that she bears a child...

Narine Abgaryan brilliantly captures the local life's oddness, its striking beauty and an underlying melancholy. With a sumptuous visual imagery, a close eye for the petty local details, Abgaryan pictures the world where a reader wishes to linger long after the story ends.

ASL, 2016  
315 pp

*Translation Rights sold*

World English Oneworld Publications  
French Macha Publishing  
French pocket Univers Poche  
German Ullstein List  
Italian Einaudi  
Estonian Tänapäev  
Bulgarian Labirint  
Arabic AS Publishers  
Armenian Newmag Publishing  
Hungarian Typotex  
Latvian Janis Roze  
Malayalam (India) Green Books  
Czech Prostor  
Lithuanian Balto  
Romanian Humanitas  
Slovakian Artforum  
Serbian Vulkan  
Catalan Comanegra  
Macedonian Muza  
Simplified Chinese Rentian Ulus Cultural Media  
Korean Eulyoo Publishing  
Spanish Editorial Navona  
Polish Krzysztof Glowinkowski  
Croatian Hena  
Turkish Hippo / Aras Ya  
Portuguese Presenca  
Sinhala (China) Subhavi  
Thai Library House  
Swedish Tranan  
Amharic Ethiopia Hohe Publishing

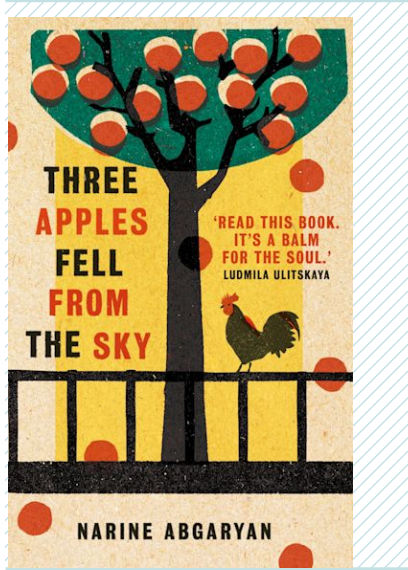
*Theater rights sold*

Vedogon Theater, Moscow

Complete  
**English & French**  
translations  
available

Over **30,000 copies**  
sold in UK





# Three Apples Fell from the Sky

## Selected quotes

A magical realist story of friendship and feuds.

*The Guardian*

Abgaryan impresses with finely phrased descriptions of daily activities and homes with “chimneys that clung to the hem of the sky,” and indelible details of complex, humble characters. This magical tale transcends familiar mystical tropes with its fresh reimagining of Armenian folklore.

*Publishers Weekly*

A charming novel... [It] teems with minor characters whose quirks are at times amusing and at times heartbreaking... A warm-hearted story about family, friendship, and community.

*Foreword Reviews*

Abgaryan’s folktale [is] so improbably of the moment... [her] leisurely, painstaking prose — in Hayden’s lyrical translation — is an added gift for readers at the moment, because it prompts us to adjust to the “measured pace of existence” that is now also our own.

*Asymptote Journal*

Suffused with kindness, humour, subtlety and understated finesse.

*Eugene Vodolazkin*  
author of *Laurus*

Read this book. It’s balm for the soul.

*Ludmila Ulitskaya*  
author of *The Big Green Tent*

A superb novel... I urge you to read it.

*Ma Lecturothèque (France)*

Abgaryan’s work conveys a deep belief in the resilience of humanity without glossing over the horrors of human conflict.

*meduza.io*

A poignant, bittersweet, fable-like story... The strongest message that shines through this finely translated novel is that resignation need not lead to cynicism.

*Asian Review of Books*

I loved this! A tender and quirky tale of stoicism, resilience and love... The ultimate feel-good story of an unlikely romance and the warmth of a community, drawn with humour, empathy and an earthy, magical charm.

*Mary Chamberlain*  
author of *The Hidden*

At the charming heart of *Three Apples Fell from the Sky*, pulses the certain knowledge that “it takes a village” — a village to bleed, to weep, and, finally, to laugh and celebrate as one.

*Faith Sullivan*

author of *The Cape Ann and Goodnight, Mr. Wodehouse*

Abgaryan’s descriptions are beautifully written... I couldn’t put this book down.

*Un Univers de Livres blog (France)*

The novel’s plot consists of multiple stories of very ordinary but bold and beautiful people, with so much love and humour that cannot fail to go away feeling positive and uplifted.

*Russia Beyond*

A quiet song of a novel. A novel that opens and lingers... that sweeps over you like a wave on a beach.

*The Book Trail*

A perfect book for anyone who wants to learn more about Armenia: its customs, its beliefs, traditions and history... A heartfelt, delicate novel.

*La Couleur des Mots blog (France)*

A novel about ordinary life, written with extraordinary sensitivity and tenderness.

*Prestaplume (France)*

A magical novel. It manages to be life-affirming without descending into cheap sentimentality... Abgaryan achieves this challenging balance in part through the beauty of the novel’s prose, which mimics the oral storytelling of myths and legends.

*End of the Word blogspot*

To render the richness of Maran’s culture, translator Lisa C. Hayden confidently navigates the linguistic complexities of this book... Her translation is visual and sensory... Dramatic and humorous.

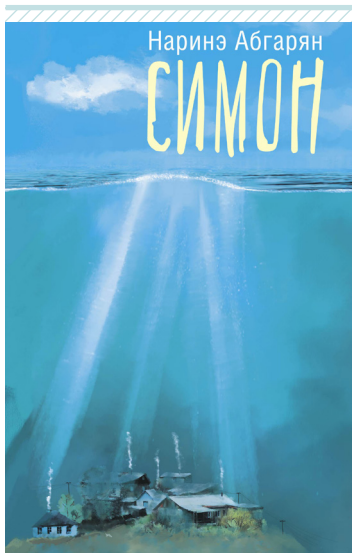
*The Common*

Abgaryan’s affectionate portrayal of rural rhythms and unlikely romance is an absolute joy.

*New European*

*30 Great European Books for the Beach*



Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021**

## Simon

Nearly  
80,000 copies  
sold

Disguised as the story of a philanderer who “saves” women, Narine Abgaryan’s *Simon* is a powerful tale of four remarkable women finding themselves, written by an artist working at the height of her power. Just like with her nationally awarded bestseller, *Three Apples Fell from the Sky*, Abgaryan invites readers to the Armenian mountain village of Berd, as she depicts — with unflinching honesty, heartfelt warmth and gentle humor — her female characters’ transformation against the twentieth-century social and psychic traumas of Armenia.

Narine Abgaryan’s *Simon* is named for a man, but it tells the stories of four remarkable women. Set in the Armenian mountain village of Berd, *Simon* depicts a generation of women coming of age in the late Soviet period. With unflinching honesty and gentle humor, Abgaryan sets her novel against the twentieth-century traumas of the Armenian genocide, civil war, two world wars, and Soviet power, all of which leave their mark on her characters. Many of the women have lost fathers in the Second World War; their mothers exhibit the scars of war, hunger, and backbreaking labor. Bridal abduction, rape stigma, and other social and legal customs that disenfranchise women further complicate their already-difficult lives. But their community has not lost its humanity: a sympathetic doctor protects a psychiatric patient from her vengeful husband, a neighbor slips desperately needed money into a woman’s pocket, a mother-in-law sides with a daughter-in-law whose husband is having an affair. The townspeople of Berd — from the softhearted and straitlaced policeman Ilya to the ancient Katinka to the village idiot Vardanush, keeper of everyone’s secrets — dispense wisdom and good cheer on matters ranging from swaddling babies to how best to disguise a corpse’s blue ears. The novel begins as guests come to pay their final respects to 79-year-old Simon, known as a hearty drinker and womanizer. Among the mourners are four women with whom Simon has had extramarital affairs. A weak, sensual, but generally kind-hearted man, Simon has crossed paths with all the women at key moments in their lives, offering many of them their first-ever taste of sexual pleasure and desperately needed emotional sustenance. Simon is no saint: his story, which we glimpse in snippets from the tales told by the women, is one of coming to terms with one’s own failings. Despite showing early promise as a draftsman, Simon drops out of architectural school and marries the long-suffering Melania, whom he then torments

with his carousing and affairs. At critical moments of his life, he chooses to sulk rather than act decisively, condemning himself and the women who love him to further misery.

After the other guests leave, the four women join Melania in drinking wine and telling their stories, each of which constitutes a chapter in the novel. Suffering from painful, undiagnosed vaginismus, Silvia endures marriage to a well-connected man who assaults and then institutionalizes her, cutting her off from all contact with their infant daughter. Eliza, unwanted by her own mother, marries a man who is besotted by another woman; he despises Eliza, going so far as to tell her that she even smells disgusting. Sofia, a spoiled girl who willfully marries a man against her family’s wishes, suffers numerous miscarriages and despairs of ever conceiving a longed-for daughter. Susanna, whose impoverished, dysfunctional family stands out even among the general poverty and dysfunction of the time, is abducted and raped on the eve of her high school graduation, ruining her chances for love and a better life.

Abgaryan’s novel is remarkably forthright on subjects traditionally considered taboo in Russophone literature: female sensuality and sexuality, reproductive function (and dysfunction), female body image, and the psychic wounds of war, poverty, and cultural and institutional misogyny.

Despite the brutal nature of some of its subject matter, *Simon* radiates warmth and good nature. Abgaryan is interested not just in women’s individual lives, but in the ways those lives swell together to perpetuate life’s eternal cycle: birth from water, a mother’s voice remembered as the sound of the sea, death as return to the depths of the sea. Disguised as the story of a philanderer who “saves” women, Abgaryan’s *Simon* is a powerful tale of women finding themselves, written by an artist working at the height of her power.

### AST

Novel, 2020  
352 pp

### Translation Rights sold

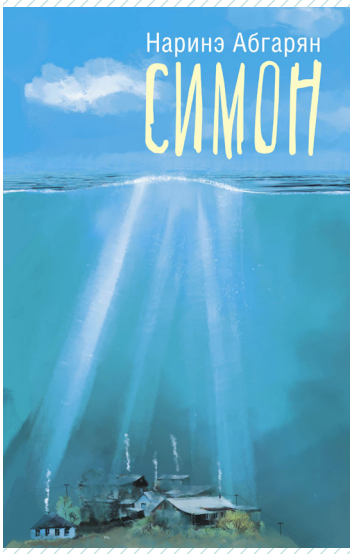
Armenian Antares  
Estonian Tänapäev  
Italian Brioschi  
Bulgarian Labyrinth  
Slovakian Artforum  
Simplified Chinese Rentian Ulus Cultural Media  
Romanian Humanitas  
Lithuanian Balto  
Catalan Comanegra  
Czech Prostor  
Malayalam Green Books  
Hungarian Typotex Kiadó  
Polish Glowbook

### Film rights sold

### Theater rights sold

Mayakovsky Theater  
Sovremennik Theater





## Simon

### Selected quotes

The narration pulls us into a dense whirlpool of human fates leaving readers no space for a judgement. You cannot even condemn Simon whom the author transforms from a lighthearted womanizer into a person helping his beloved ones in their own transformations, even “resurrections” if you like. In the best traditions of Narine Abgaryan’s prose the tragic and the grim interweaves in the text with the funny and light-hearted moments.

*Rossiyskaya gazeta*

In the rich and complex ornament of the text there’s place for an Armenian cultural and national identity, hidden family secrets, a late-night chapel singing, and a scent of honey from the lover’s body. Yet there’s no space for any allegations, a condemnation or a judgement of sorts. Thanks to this generous acceptance, Abgaryan’s novel is wise in a sense that is almost biblical, as it is concocted from stories of people whose hearts beating spins our world.

*Anna Delianidi*  
 a literary critic

An outstanding, heartfelt story about love for a human being .

*Psychologies*

Set in a small old Armenian village, this book is filled with folk lore, intelligence and humor .

*sntat.ru*

Narine Abgaryan is unsurpassed in her transition from humor to earnestness, from tragedy to a meticulous lyricism .

*soyuz.ru*





Nearly 70,000  
copies  
sold



## Go on Living

Narine Abgaryan's collection of short stories *Go on Living* poses the simplest yet hardest question about how, in the aftermath of terrible tragedy, people learn to live, love and hope anew, while cherishing the memories of the loved ones lost.

Set in the picturesque village of Berd, the collection traces the interconnected lives of its inhabitants, seemingly unremarkable villagers who go on about their lives, tending to their daily tasks, engaging in their quotidian squabbles, and celebrating small joys amid a luscious, beautiful local landscape. Yet their seemingly unremarkable existence in a setting imbued with a deliberate sense of being suspended in time and space belies an unspeakable tragedy: every character in Abgaryan's stories must contend with the unbearable burden of loss that they have suffered during the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. The war itself rages largely off the book's pages and appears only in small and fragmented flashbacks, and Abgaryan's stories focus instead on the war's aftermath, portraying the different ways in which the survivors work, as individuals and as a community, to find a way forward. For some, the toll is a psychological one, as the opening vignette introduces the reader to Zanazan, a beautiful young woman who has lost her unborn child, her husband, and her ability to speak to enemy shelling, and who now lives in the care of her elderly mother-in-law. The middle-aged Metaksia visits her stepson's grave and chats with him as if they were sitting across from each other at a dinner table. Agnesa, whose ill-fated desire to keep her daughter warm in a bomb shelter has cost her not only her own limbs but also the life of her child finds love and a chance at redemption with a new family. Lusine, who barely recalls her mother, abducted and brutally murdered

by the enemy, receives, as an engagement present, the last surviving rug woven by her mother. Anichka, whose entire family has been brutally murdered, forges a platonic relationship with a widower whose son has been left incapacitated by yet another act of senseless violence.

The characters in Abgaryan's book have lived through unimaginable loss, but their sadness is described as cathartic, engendering hope where all hope must be lost. The book, set up as 31 interconnected short stories, has no single protagonist; instead, the book is centered around the resilience of the human spirit and its ability to soar above. Written in Abgaryan's signature prose style that weaves elements of Armenian folkloric tradition into its prose, the book simultaneously mourns and celebrates human life.

### AST

Novellas, short stories, 2014  
280 pp

### Translation rights sold

World English Plough  
Bulgarian Labirint  
Armenian Newmag Publishing  
Hungarian Typotex Kiadó  
Romanian Humanitas  
Czech Prostor

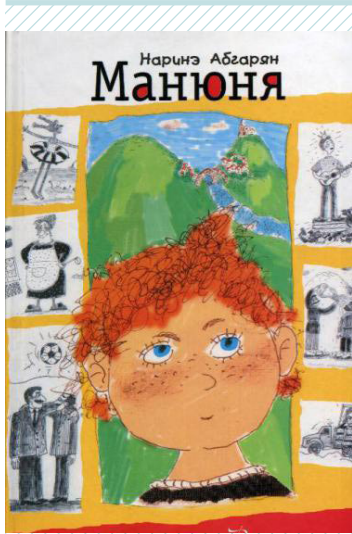
Complete English  
translation  
available

The Alexander Green Award 2015

Longlisted for the Big Book Award 2011

Winner of the Manuscript of the Year 2010

Winner of the Russian Literature Prize 2010



## Manunia

Over 400,000  
copies  
sold

Manunia was the first major work by Narine Abgaryan, named as 'one of Europe's most exciting authors' by The Guardian. Manunia is the first of a prize-winning trilogy, which has enjoyed considerable commercial success — selling over 400 000 copies, topping the bestsellers lists, and — most excitingly — was adapted into a television series, a feature film and is being adapted into an animated series.

Set in the 1980s, Manunia tells the story of two little girls growing up in Soviet Armenia, and the often absurd situations they found themselves in. Manunia is an autobiographical mix of light-hearted anecdotes and heart-breaking lessons retold with compassion, whilst at the same time hinting at the very adult world just on the fringes of the girls' awareness. Manunia is distinctive for its humour, often derived from arguably controversial themes, such as death and religion, yet handled with artistry and sensitivity by the author. Abgaryan's writing is revealing: she doesn't shy away from the grittier aspects of growing up. She writes candidly and irreverently about "that time Manunia and I got head-lice," and "that time Manunia had a crush on the next-door neighbour", not to mention, "that time we nearly shot our PE teacher with a shot-gun."

Most of the narrative unfolds over the course of one long, sumptuous summer, just as the girls are on the cusp of adolescence. The narrator introduces us to the town of Berd, its history and the particularities of its people. We soon meet Ba, the story's unlikely protagonist: a veritable force of nature, the character of Manunia's grandmother is a slow burner. Cantankerous at the best of times, with a unique world view and sense of humour, she has a nature one warms to over the course of the narrative. Each chapter sees the girls embroiled in mishap after mishap: whether its setting Grandma's bloomers on fire, or playing with the rag-and-bone man's kids, who are strictly out of bounds. A bout of head-lice means the girls have their heads

shaved by Ba, who accidentally dyes their scalps blue with her homemade hair-mask — though she'd have you believe it was entirely part of the plan. The girls learn a valuable lesson about life and death when they find a baby bird, fallen from its nest. And again when they play at being snipers — complete with a real shot-gun. While the focus is on the girls' antics and shenanigans, Abgaryan deftly uses the negative spaces to show glimpses of life in the Soviet Union.

The plot is set against a backdrop of characters from various cultures: Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Russians, Georgians, Gypsies, and Jews. All from different walks of life. All inextricably intertwined, as was the norm in the Soviet Union. All thrown together by circumstance, rubbing along with surprising harmony. Set in an unfamiliar for a non-Russian reader cultural landscape, Manunia would appeal to a readership seeking a more nuanced insight into growing up in the Soviet Union.

The story is set in Armenia, which adds a unique cultural element to the narrative, distinguishing it from the majority of books translated from Russian. Manunia was marketed as "a children's book for adults" — an easy read for adult readers, this novel would also be suitable for the young adult market. It is hard to compare Manunia to other books as it feels very contextual. To a certain extent, the colourful characters and distinctive humour are reminiscent of Gerald Durrell's My Family and Other Animals.

### AST

Novel, 2010  
315 pp

### Translation rights sold

Armenian Antares  
Bulgarian Labirint  
Estonian Tänapäev  
Romanian Editura Frontiera  
Arabic Thaqafa  
Polish Glowbook

### Film rights sold

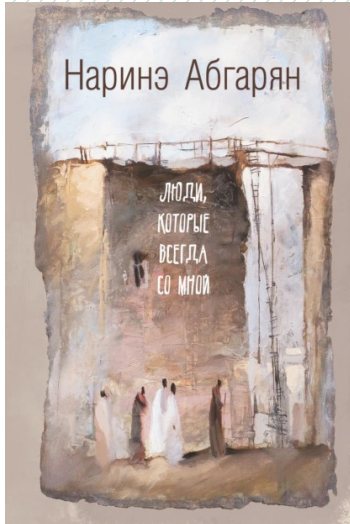
film series Manunia, two seasons  
(directed by Arman Marutyan,  
produced by Andreyasyan brothers, 2021-2022)  
a feature film Manunia in the Movies  
(directed by Arman Marutyan, 2022)

### Theater rights sold

RAMT, Moscow  
Theater For Young Viewers, Ufa

English sample  
available

Nearly 150,000  
copies  
sold



## People Who Are Always with Me

People Who Are Always with Me is a story of several generations of one family told through thirteen novellas through the eyes of a child. This is the story of people who have gone through hardships but managed to preserve kindness, humanity and love in their hearts.

It is not so often that you come across books that give you goosebumps, lulling with a leisurely narration of the simplest things that surround us every day. The novel People Who Are Always with Me is just that, giving a positive charge and faith in the best.

In fact, Narine Abgaryan wrote an autobiography — a story about a little Girl, next to whom there is a large family, close-knit, ready to support and hide from adversity, to point the right way.

The novel People Who Are Always with Me is a world, through the eyes of a child, unclouded by problems and hardships, colorful and bright. This child already knows what life and death are, but perceives it as regularities, knows how cruel human rumor can be, which can easily lead to hatred. But the Girl is in no hurry, because the whole world belongs to her and offers her thousands of roads.

Narine Abgaryan draws touching pictures from childhood: a trip to the mountains, a wedding, admonitions from adults. All these incidents are viewed through the prism of the child's worldview, conclusions are drawn, remembered in order to one day be in demand in a future life.

The narrative sometimes jumps from place to place, returns to continue what was started, but this does not prevent the reader from absorbing the beautiful and warm story of the Girl's life. It is good to read such a novel on a rainy autumn evening, wrapped in a blanket, but to feel a different warmth — the warmth of Narine Abgaryan's soul, the warmth of a long-gone childhood.

This book is infinitely comfortable, able to heal mental wounds, relax and pacify. Such works must be read in order to remember what spiritual beauty is, what the beauty of the world around us is, which we begin to forget about in our endless haste and pursuit of ghosts.

Stop for a moment and plunge into the world of childhood with the novel People Who Are Always with Me. It is addressed to a wide audience of readers, regardless of age and literary preferences.

### AST

Novel/Novellas, 2014  
280 pp

### Translation rights sold

French Macha Publication  
Bulgarian Labirint  
Armenian Oracle  
Lithuanian Balto  
Macedonian Muza

Complete French translation  
& English sample  
available

### Selected quotes

Abgaryan's warmth in portraying everyday twentieth-century reality, such as it is, in Berd, Armenia, feels like a unique form of writerly magic.

*Lizok's Bookshelf*



## About the author:

**SONA ABGARYAN** was born in 1979, in the city Bird, Armenia. 1995-2000 she studied at the Terlemezyan Art College, Armenia, in 2007 – Academy of fine Arts Paris, France. Her specialty is video art, digital and analogue paintings. Her illustrations appeared in the books written by her sister, Narine Abgaryan. Today, Sona Abgaryan participates in different projects and international collaborations, and also works at the Tumo-Center for Creative Technologies.

Selected Exhibitions: Blind Dates, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, NY (2011), Oberhausen film festival, Germany (2009), Adieu Parajanov, Kunsthalle MOMA, Vienna, Austria (2003), Cool Generation – solo exhibition, ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia (2003), XLIX International Art Biennale of Venice (2001).

The Old Woman and Her Goats is Sona Abgaryan's debut in prose. Originally written in Armenian, it was translated into Russian by Lilit S. Meliksetyan and won The Manuscript of the Year prize in 2022, followed by publication in 2023.

Today Sona Abgaryan lives in Yerevan and works on the novel's sequel.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2023 — **The Old Woman and Her Goats (Eva)**, *novel with illustrations*

Winner of the **Manuscript of the Year 2022**

Winner of the Manuscript of the Year 2022

## The Old Woman and Her Goats (Eva)



Averik Books

Armenian language

Novel with illustrations, 2023

382 pp

Translation rights sold

Russian AST

If Kill Bill featured Jeanne d'Arc in a fictional war-torn Armenia of the alternative present. The Old Woman and Her Goats is an extraordinary prose debut from a gifted artist — an action, dark fantasy manga-inspired novel, rooted in the Armenian folk lore as well as the country's dark present.

The novel tells the story of a struggle between the young female warrior Eva with ruthless tyrants, the Gerbers, terrorizing Yerevan with the help of the mutated cannibal hyenas and the police. Thanks to genetic experiments every man in the Gerbers family has a hideous head of a monster in his stomach, literally gobbling up their enemies and opposition. Even three Gerber's daughters suffer from their father's concupiscence and malice — living in luxury, they are still victims of continuous sexual and physical abuse from their father and his henchmen.

The story opens with Eva, 17 years old, waking up in her Granny's house, heavily mutilated and with a severe memory loss. Granny heals her with magic invisible herbs. While on her sick bed, Eva gets a visit from The Umbrella Man, a demon, feeding on sufferings and tears of his victims. The Umbrella Man is drawn to Eva, so rather than killing her he leaves his mark on her neck, as she's beginning to remember. Her memories are truly devastating: a leader of the opposition, she lost to the Gerbers. Both her fellows and rivals believe she died in that battle. The most eerie memory is of Arthur, a homeless boy she once met in the underground and made friends with — Eva thinks Arthur died in that battle, the last she remembers before she passed out is his blood-covered face. Eva is set to find Arthur's whereabouts, and revenge for his death.

Eva seeks a new battle, yet Granny insists that Eva should first regain her powers and sends her to the Lieutenant Colonel, one of the greatest masters of Armenia. Through exhausting exercise and training Eva excels in battle skills (her armory is her hair, she uses braids as sables), and what's more — revives her persistent battling spirit. The Lieutenant Colonel gets Eva to the master Arutyun — a legendary master who once taught all greatest masters, himself and The Umbrella Man included. The shepherd Arutyun is half man, half woman, and can gift his pupil with a unique magical skill. He should just look you straight in the eye, but this almost never happens, as he fights with his eyes closed. Master Arutyun does not believe Eva can win over the Gerbers, yet in their final training battle she succeeds in surprising the master, and he gives Eva a look. Now Eva is gifted with a unique power — she can control the time flow.

Eva returns to Yerevan and gathers her fellow warriors together. There is Mary, an introvert warrior, fighting with a blue sword, charging her life spirit in battles; Marie, keen on fashion and looks, mastering at a bright pink and deadly electric chain saw; Marat, a young man torn between his feelings for Eva and war ambitions; Ssati's female warriors, from the quarter of prostitutes; Ssati's son, Dev — a strikingly handsome demon turning into a dragon at battles. The detachments of Yezidis and the Molokans will join their forces on Eva's side.

Yet Eva is afraid they won't stand a chance against the Gerber's hyenas and police, by far superior in numbers. Moreover, Eva is torn by doubts about leading people to imminent death, for the sake of gaining freedom. Is any idea worth a human life?

Eva seeks support at her Godmother, a sorceress, and Granny. They give her magic powders: the star dust that can revive any human being but takes the life of another, of its own choice, and the black dust that eases pain at death.

The Gerber daughters leave Eva without a choice — they murder their father in self-defense, in an act of mutiny leading to an even crueler tyrant seizing power. They are thrown to prison to be soon executed, while Doza, Gerber's right hand and advocate, proclaims himself a new ruler. He demonstrates his true nature at the coronation, cynically ordering his hyenas to devour the representatives of the poor quarter attending the ceremony with gifts. Eva has to protect citizens from violence and tyranny, while her fellows show willingness to fight for freedom until their last breath.

The battles between stoic heroes and monstrous villains rage in the streets, death toll escalating on both sides, when hyenas suddenly switch sides, choosing Eva over their evil handlers. Finally, Eva's army stands a proper chance.

Doza challenges Eva to single combat that should define the outcome of the war. Doza surpasses Eva in powers, and the word has it that he has a unique power of transformation, though nobody ever saw his other identities. Eva is nearly defeated when she gathers her spirit and uses her magic skill, turning time flow against him, repeatedly reviving, and beating the rival. In response Doza applies his superpower of transformation. Eva has to meet Doza's other identity — it is Arthur, her friend, whom she sought after. Arthur is alive, and he is Doza's childhood. Eva kills Doza but appeals to the star dust to revive Arthur. Now the star dust will take the other life in return, but Eva is not afraid: she has her Granny's black powder, so she can stand the pain of death. But the fate decides otherwise...

Gripping and action-driven, the novel reads as a script of an original anime film, and the author's drawings, opening each chapter, help the readers to immerse into the novel's ingenious world. Fictional and fantastical as the story is, it alludes to the real facts and recent events in Armenia, easily recognizable by anyone familiar with the country's often tragic present. Despite its exotic setting, The Old Woman and Her Goats prompts its readers to contemplate over universal and acute questions. Is any idea worth a human life? And what does it take to break the eternal circle of war and violence?

My sister Sona wrote a book. She wrote it after we had lost in war. While everyone would go mad in their own way, my sister came up with a story about the city which fell but did not surrender. She wrote of people who are stronger than despair. She wrote of life winning over death. Eva is topical for all of us today as it speaks about what we feel right here and right now.

**Narine Abgaryan,**

the internationally bestselling author of  
Three Apples Fell from the Sky





## The Old Woman and Her Goats (Eva)





## The Old Woman and Her Goats (Eva)





## About the author:

**LIUBOV BARINOVA** was born in a village in Rostov Velikii region in 1972. Barinova graduated from the Moscow State University of Printing Arts of Ivan Fedorov and has worked as a journalist and sales manager in publishing. Her short stories were published in various journals and anthologies. Barinova attended two creative writing courses in Moscow. Her mentor Marina Stepnova, the acclaimed author of *Women of Lazarus*, highly praised Barinova's debut novel and recommended the manuscript to her literary agents who placed it with Russia's leading literary publisher Elena Shubina. Film rights to the debut novel *Eve* were sold prior to the publication, the film show is in production. Barinova lives in Moscow with her family.

## *Selected Bibliography*

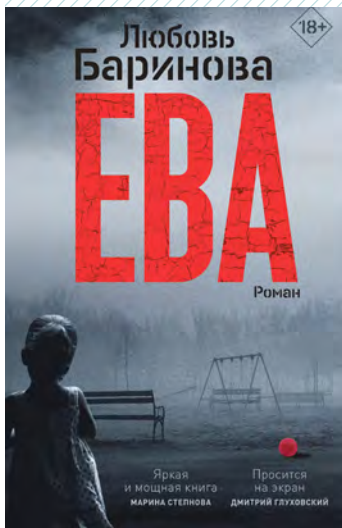
2022 — **Victima**, *novel*

2019 — **Eve**, *novel*

Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2020**



Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2020**



Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)  
Novel, 2019  
318 pp

Translation rights sold  
Arabic AS Publishers  
Hungarian Tericum

Film rights sold before publication

## Eve

Liubov Barinova's riveting debut novel — *Eve*, a psychological drama — struck a chord with the Russian literary community. The manuscript was championed by Barinova's mentor, Marina Stepnova, as well as Dmitry Glukhovsky, the internationally bestselling author of the *Metro* series of novels. *Eve* is a taut novel with the trigger of a thriller: it forces the reader to ponder difficult questions of how far a sibling's love can go and if evil can be recouped with another crime.

Herman Morozov is a kidnapper. This is his story. The novel's opening catches Herman Morozov as he is about to pull the trigger. Herman's plan is to shoot the Lomakins, who murdered his sister, Eve. Herman changes his original scheme, though, when he sees the Lomakins' three-year-old daughter: he will kidnap the girl to make the Lomakins suffer just as they made him suffer. It should be simple — he will send them pieces of the girl's clothes and belongings regularly, no explanations, no ransom demands, no hope of seeing their daughter again. An eye for an eye.

Told in alternating perspectives before and after the kidnapping, *Eve* asks unsettling questions about whether one evil deed can be retaliated with another crime.

Following the story of Herman's past, we watch painful bonding between the siblings: their relationship explains, even excuses, the crime Herman commits. Raised by a stern single father, the siblings develop a strong connection, where a silent boy depends totally on his effervescent sister. Two childhood incidents — a tragic winter walk in the woods that leaves Herman handicapped for years and a heart-wrenching bullying incident at school — make Herman's dependence on his sister physiologically obsessive. The boy literally loses his breath in Eve's absence.

Over the years, Herman learns to control the physical side effects of their bond, though Eve remains the core of his life, the mechanism running his universe. Eve, too, relies on her brother as she walks along a thin path on the darker side. With a life credo of challenging extremes, Eve even writes a suicide note to prevent suspicions being cast on her family in the event of her death. Yet Herman is always there to support his sister whether she's recovering from a new love affair or another job adventure. When Eve marries the headstrong, ambitious Oleg Lomakin, she seems to eventually gain a long-sought peace along with a bright career. Then

one day Eve again calls Herman, who discovers a heart-broken husband upon arrival — Eve has drowned. Supposedly, she has committed suicide. Soon Herman gets evidence that his sister's death was neither a suicide nor an accident.

In the novel's present, Herman struggles with his hatred towards his sister's murderers, holding their daughter a hostage to his rage. Lost in a crowd of journalists and onlookers, Herman follows as the Lomakins' dream of a family is crushed and the desperate parents plead for their kidnapped baby's return. When the couple pays out a huge ransom to a fake kidnapper, they receive a package with a piece of the girl's clothes from Herman, oblivious to the preceding drama. In despair, Arina's mother poisons her husband and commits suicide. Herman is left with no choice — he must raise Arina as his own daughter.

Over the years, Arina's questions about her mother grow more urgent but remain unanswered. Together with her boyfriend, the girl searches in her father's past. When Arina's investigation brings them to Eve's grave, the girl cannot foresee how the discovered truth about Eve will upend everything she knows about her father and herself.

With exceptional elegance, Barinova makes a surgically detailed psychological examination of her characters and carefully reconstructs their human drama over the length of the novel. The author's eloquent style makes the reading exceptionally enjoyable, immersing readers into Barinova's colorful and vivid universe and into the heart of her ambivalent hero. Barinova demonstrates masterly control over the novel's vivid and totally believable characters, picturesque depictions, and every nuance of the plot's development. The author's razor-sharp descriptions, precise word choice and juicy metaphors ratchet up the novel's tension, making this debut psychological drama truly stand out in the modern literary landscape.

### Selected quotes

[Barinova has written] a suspenseful drama with a close eye to psychological details and plot turns. This book explains that life cannot be defined by either a string of incidents or an inherent disposition, but depends instead on what we do and what we choose.

*Esquire*

A beautiful and overwhelming novel that's impossible to put down.

*Marina Stepnova*

*the prize-awarded author of Women of Lazarus*

The This novel is totally gripping. It shouts, please, shoot me!

*Dmitry Glukhovsky*

*the author of the bestselling Metro series of books*

This novel is brilliantly conceived and written. Much looking forward to watch the TV show when it is coming.

*Vladislav Tolstov*

*a critic*



## About the author:

**DANIEL BERGER** (born 1983) is a film director and producer from Kyrgyzstan. He is the Development Director of the International Documentary Film Festival Artdocfest/Riga and the Executive director of the Artdocfest/Asia Festival. As a film director and producer Berger released a number of short films with a sharp social focus, including *May I Not Die?* (2023), *On a Game* (2022), *Virtual Reality* (2021), *You Are Not Alone* (2021). Now, with the support of Current Time and Radio Liberty, Daniel is working on a documentary about the consequences of Russia's brutal colonial policy in the countries of Central Asia. The film tells about the natives of Kyrgyzstan who died in the war in Ukraine.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2023 — **Soviet Demons and Other Beasts**, *novellas and short stories*

Nominated for the **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2023**  
Nominated for the **Big Book Award 2023**

Nominated for the **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2023**  
Nominated for the **Big Book Award 2023**

## Soviet Demons and Other Beasts



Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novellas and short stories, 2023

315 pp

Daniel Berger's ingenious debut book of prose offers readers a funny and dark kaleidoscopic journey into myth, covering pivotal moments of the twentieth century throughout the former Soviet Republics.

Daniel Berger inventively and seamlessly weaves together local myths from various regions of the collapsed Soviet empire — from Siberia through the country's South and North, to his native Kyrgyzstan — as he tells stories of pivotal moments in the twentieth century from the perspective of mythical creatures. Along with familiar ghouls, mermaids, forest sprites, and house elves, the stories' inventive bestiary includes creatures endemic to specific regions. We read of Bashkir shulikuns (small demons who plague humans, often with evil tricks), Kyrgyz Albartsy (an evil mountain creature resembling Big Foot), and even an invented ethnic group, the Erylas and their warlocks, who marry trees in order to give birth to their common offspring.

These mythological creatures are all part of Soviet and post-Soviet reality and are firmly integrated into the daily routines of humans. Some creatures choose not to interact with people, serving as silent witnesses to the flow of time. Others prefer to adapt in society, as they find professional occupations in tune with their natural gifts.

The elderly evil spirit Albartsy works in a regional natural science museum. By day, he's a museum exhibit, pretending to be a Pithecanthropus, but by night, he works as a janitor and a guard, dreaming of a well-deserved pension. When refused by the museum's director, Albartsy hires a pair of elderly cemetery ghouls to threaten the director into granting him a leave and a proper severance package. Meanwhile, the starved ghouls have their own plans for the chubby director (Albartsy).

The story Ene and Soho is set in the Volga region, where Berger places two invented ethnic groups — Erylas and Shulges. In fine and colorful details, the author depicts their history, cosmogony, traditions, and rituals. What's more, the author coins a language for the Erylas, based on Hungarian and Chuvash languages. Severpi, a young woman from town and a hereditary Eryla witch, comes to her native village for her grandfather's funeral. As a girl who's become accustomed to city life in the late 1990s, Severpi knows little of her people's beliefs. But when the funeral ceremony goes wrong, she appeals to the village's female elders for help. They remind her of Ene and Soho, the ancient patrons of their kin, and guide the young woman to the adjacent wood, which seems to be rooted into village life in ways Severpi would never have imagined. What begins as a duty

turns into a scary but rewarding journey in search of her true self and a true love (Ene and Soho).

Mimosa, a once-immortal Siren, runs a school canteen in a Caucasus village and grieves for her youth, when she reigned together with her sister, enchanting kings, and the bravest warriors, invading new lands and demolishing empires... Until the day her sister bears a son, and their divine powers begin to dissipate (Good Night, Mimosa).

The devilishly attractive demon Strekopytov, a brilliant farm manager and procurer thanks to his irresistible magnetism, suffers from his unrequited love for a young farmer girl (Strekopytov).

A devoted house elf is forced to leave his home together with his "host" family, after being deported to the far north in the early 1930s as part of dekulakization. Thanks to him, the family survives an ice-cold winter at a labor camp. They become the first residents of Soviet settlements in the Sakha region (Khonzia).

Senia, a young shulikun (a small but mighty devil from Bashkir lore), is drafted into the Red Army, and fights along with his kin in Moscow and Siberia, but dreams only of returning home to his native Bashkiria and marrying his beloved. To approach an angel is severely painful for shulikuns, yet Senia pleads to a passing angel to send his love to his girl while he is away. The angel fulfills the request though he knows that Senia will not return home from this war (Shulikuns).

An old forest sprite decides to go against his own rules of not engaging with humans. Fighting the instinct to go into hibernation, the old sprite takes children from their Belarus village, which Nazi troops demolished in their persecutions of partisans, and brings them to a new family. He loses his magic powers when leaving his home forest, but he is prepared to face all hardships of war along with the children, in what will become his last journey (The Forest Children).

Darkly humorous, moving, and often eerie, Berger's book is more than simply a patchwork mythological bestiary from different regions of the former Soviet Union. The intricate blend of myth and reality gives a unique perspective to the historical narrative. In Berger's universe, these mythological creatures change neither history nor human nature. Their magical interactions, though, display the best and the worst in people, ultimately forcing them to look deep into their hearts, often make illuminating discoveries.

### Selected quotes

This text is both serious and funny, and sad at the same time, while the representatives of the "evil" or supernatural beings, supposedly dangerous to humans, are in their own way quite endearing and totally humane.

*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*

These stories of rather hapless transcendent beings are simultaneously funny, somewhat eerie, and yet, in their own way, very touching.

*Afisha*

[In describing the supernatural,] the author has found their own unique approach and style. Moreover, from one story to another, it evolves: the allegory gives way to a funny anecdote, and in "The Treasury of Goznak," the narrative style

resembles an Eastern fairy tale, which fits the plot just perfectly...

*Psychologies*

If we believe Berger's stories, the devil is not as frightening as the people surrounding him. Next to aggressive power-seekers, representatives of the supernatural seem to be innocent kids, albeit with a mischievous streak. People perceive the evil spirits as a matter of course. Some help them settle into everyday life, while others exploit them for selfish purposes. There is some consolation in this: despite their superhuman abilities, even magical creatures succumb to this country's drastic history.

*Prochtenie*

In Gaiman's American Gods the supernatural creatures are petty, weak, cruel and flawed – in short, they are not different from humans. Daniel Berger, on the contrary, is more optimistic (or less so if you like). The mythological creatures in his universe are alluringly sympathetic and, in a way, more human. This difference gets emphasized when depicted against the backdrop of real historical events.

**Yana Vagner**

the author of the internationally bestselling novel *To the Lake*



#### About the author:

**EVGENIYA (ZHENYA) BERKOVICH** is a prize-winning theater director and a poet. She is a member of Kirill Serebrennikov's Seventh Studio and the founder of the independent theater company, SOSO Daughters.

A Russian military court has sentenced her and a playwright Svetlana Petriyuchuk to six years in prison on charges of "justifying terrorism" in the 2020 play *Finist The Brave Falcon* about women marrying jihadists in Syria. The play had been awarded two prestigious Golden Mask national theatre awards in 2021.

In years following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Berkovich wrote a number of powerful anti-war poems that were published in social media and recited by theater actors and social activists, some of whom are so-called "foreign agents", a state opposition. There are speculations linking Berkovich's arrest and trial with the poems, seeing the play as a pretext for a case and an eventual grave sentence.

Women in Berkovich family have been human rights activists in several generations: her grandmother, Nina Katerli, passed away in 2023, while Berkovich was kept in prison during the case investigation, denied of parole; and so is her mother, Elena Efros.

Through years, Berkovich was active in charity, founding and running a theater festival, *You Are Not Alone*, for children in the orphanages. In 2019, she with her husband adopted two girls, aged 13 and 15, whom she got to know through this charity work.

Zhenya Berkovich wrote her prison tale, *Pets*, for her daughters, but it will definitely travel to a vast adult readership who is open to bold genre and text experiments and wants to support people of art who are in prison and under prosecution. Berkovich wrote *Pets* by hand, sending us notebook sheets, while her friends made copies, deciphered the text, forwarded the printed version back to us and the editor for her notes and questions.

According to Zhenya, writing the story of a cat struggling with odds to re-unite and, ultimately, to free her imprisoned owner, has helped her to survive through these tormenting times. We hope that the fairy tale spirit of the book will unite people in support of Berkovich.

#### *Selected Bibliography*

2024 — **Pets**, *novel*

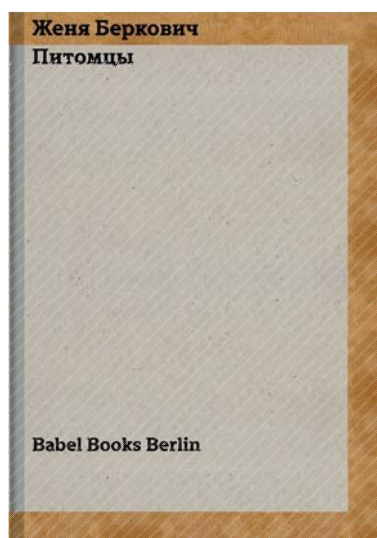
#### *Awards*

**Anna Politkovskaya Prize 2023**

**Music Heart of the Theater National Award 2021**

**Snob Award**, nomination Theater 2021

**Award-winning theater director and  
a poet sentenced to prison**

**Babel Books Berlin**

Novel, 2024  
188 pp

*Translation rights sold*  
All rights available

*Theatre rights*  
Carinthian Summer Festival, Austria

English sample  
available soon

## PETS

Zhenya Berkovich, a celebrated theater director, who is now doing a six-year prison term after a fabricated, politically charged, case, has written a book that upends the tradition of prison writing in Russia. *Pets* is a sharply humorous and – quite surprisingly – hopeful tale for adults that describes prison life from the perspective of its animal inhabitants – cats, mostly, but not without a whimsical involvement of a (white) crow.

There's Cat, a free stray cat, a leader of the cats' gang – residents of prison, known as Purrrison. As a true leader of a gang with its strict hierarchy, Cat is cunning, strong and resilient – all the qualities that are vital to be able to survive in the harsh prison environment. Quite ironically, Cat, a prison cat, treasures his freedom mostly, and his pragmatic approach helps him to head the gang, providing for himself and the kittens, keeping a peace treaty and a balanced co-existence with other inhabitants of the prison quarters, including rats and the old lonely dog. This carefully maintained balance worked smoothly until a sudden intrusion of a crow named Irky, whose naivety, impulsiveness and impracticality immediately disrupt the prison's established order.

Irky, a young and clueless crow, lands in the prison's courtyard, covered in fresh white paint from an unfortunate encounter with a newly painted birch tree. But it is not only the white paint that makes the crow a proper embodiment of a "white crow". Raised by humans in a deli/café, Irky has no experience of survival, but has learned to read and even speak human language. After the café's owner passed away Irky sets out on a journey as an independent bird, until her flight gets disrupted by a tree's bulk. Accustomed to the pet/owner dynamics, she sees Cat as "her" cat, of which, luckily to her, he remains unaware.

Paradoxically her abrupt arrival intervenes with a riot-plot within the cat gang, when younger and stronger cats seek to undermine Cat's status as the Cat in Charge.

Irky persuades Cat to run a "rescue" operation of a human inmate – for the sake of Shiny, a British domestic cat, another character in the heart of the story. Shiny has been brought to prison in a desperate quest to reunite with her recently arrested and confined owner. With her once pristine fur, delicate demeanor and absent – surgically removed – claws Shiny would be a justified target for constantly underfed inhabitants of the Purrrison, rats and cats alike. Yet Cat and Irky decide otherwise.

With their own lives and the existence of all animal inhabitants of the prison in mortal danger, the newly bonded friends concoct an intricate plan of making the owner and the domestic cat reunite and succeed – against numerous odds and disruptions – in an impossible mission: to release the human inmate from the prison.

Through vivid descriptions, hilarious dialogues, quite eccentric inclusions of poetic texts, and a mix of dark humor and poignant moments, Berkovich paints a complex portrait of life in confinement, where the boundaries between humans and animals blur, and survival depends on friendship and loyalty, but also on luck and wit, and – ultimately – on an enduring hope for freedom.

### Selected quotes

*Pets* is a thriller with humor. A phantasmagoria from the lives of animals in prison: cats, crows, rats, and even cockroaches – with witty dialogues, funny verses, and a perfect happy ending. <...> Berkovich masterfully, with a fine sense of rhythm, sprinkles real characters and true details of prison life into this bright, life-affirming reality at the necessary moments. <...> She enriches her daily experiences in prison with hope. But this is not a self-

delusion in the sense of "everything will be fine," but the daring declaration "I will not despair." A witty, free world full of joie de vivre, like something out of dreams and favorite cartoons, she transfers into her prison world – a true testimony of disobedience.

*Anna Narinskaya, for Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

## About the author:

**LEONID BERSHIDSKY** was born in Moscow in 1971. A journalist since the age of 17, his first job was with the Moscow bureau of the Philadelphia Inquirer, where he helped cover the breakup of the Soviet Union. In 1999, Bershidsky, by then an experienced reporter and editor, became the founding editor-in-chief of the daily Vedomosti, an ambitious media start-up that brought together Financial Times and The Wall Street Journal.

Bershidsky, a graduate of the INSEAD business school in Fontainebleau, France, was the founding editor or publisher of a number of other publications including the Russian and Ukrainian editions of Forbes, as well as the opinion website Republic.ru, now designated by the Putin regime as a “foreign agent.”

In 2014, Bershidsky loudly protested the Russian annexation of Crimea. Soon, he and his family were forced to emigrate to Berlin, where Bershidsky went to work as a staff columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. As the organization's Europe Columnist, Bershidsky covered politics, policy and business in Russia, Ukraine and throughout Europe until the Covid pandemic broke out in 2020. He spent most of 2016 in the United States chronicling Donald Trump's path to the presidency.

Bershidsky continued writing columns through 2023, restating his strongly anti-Putin and pro-Ukrainian position as Russia re-invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Bershidsky is also an experienced literary translator, having translated notable works, including 1984 by George Orwell and The Trial by Franz Kafka into Russian. Additionally, he has translated a selection of poems by Alexander Pushkin into English, titled A Captive Finch, which will be published by Freedom Letters worldwide in 2024.

Now, as technical lead of Bloomberg's News Innovation Lab, Bershidsky, a proficient coder, experiments with artificial intelligence applications for the Bloomberg newsroom. A German citizen, he lives with his wife and two daughters in Berlin and in Saxony-Anhalt, part of former East Germany.

*Selected Bibliography*

- 2024 — **Animal Tested**, *novel*  
2013 — **The Craft**, *non-fiction*  
2012 — **Faberge's Eight**, *novel*  
2011 — **Devilish Trills**, *novel*  
2010 — **Rembrandt Must Die**, *novel*

*Awards*

- Shortlisted for **PolitProsvet Award** 2014



Novel, 2024  
172 pp, 84 334 words  
Originally written in English

*Translation rights sold*  
All rights available

English original  
available

## Animal Tested

In *Animal Tested*, animals – crows, lab rats and chihuahuas – dramatically disrupt the lives of the novel's human protagonists and, eventually, trigger an avalanche of drastic geopolitical changes. Leonid Bershidsky employs a peculiar lens to explore urgent contemporary dilemmas of power vs control, empathy vs tolerance, and the real cost of scientific progress.

In the novel's alternative near future three seemingly unrelated plotlines intertwine into a tight knot.

In Moscow, a strongman ruler – whom his intimates call Coach and others are instructed not to address directly – faces a growing problem with crows. The priests are the first to be attacked by the aggressive and unusually intelligent birds, but Coach himself appears to be their ultimate target. The ruler's entourage reads his erratic and violent response towards birds as a sign of declining mental health and, more importantly, of weakness. An attempted coup d'état finds Coach sequestered in his fortress residence with his disenchanting mistress and their child. They, too, have been forced to hide indoors from aggressive crows.

The Coach and his family are placed under home arrest, while the guards undermine his authority by continuously provoking both him and his family, trying to make him snap. But to Coach himself, the only way to escape the nightmare is to join and head up the mystical forces aligned against him, to fly with the crows – and to get a message to a loyal general. By the time the coup is defeated, Coach perceives himself simultaneously as man and crow, ready to wage his wars in ways no ordinary man could ever imagine.

In Atlanta, Lex, a young biochemist at a medium-sized pharma company, leads a small team conducting obesity pill research. Lex' unusual emotional intelligence and gentle hands make her the favorite of the lab rats used in the experiments. Eager to make contact with Lex – and no one else – the rats display various near-human behaviors. When the researcher shares her experience with colleagues and her superior, Cheol, she is immediately suspected of burnout and drug use. Not to be deterred by the institutional resistance and the unfamiliar scientific terrain, Lex smuggles in forbidden equipment and embarks on a series of experiments with a brain-computer interface to decipher the message the rats want to communicate. When she finally succeeds, the message is one of unspeakable

suffering. Fired from the firm when Cheol covets her findings, Lex takes her program to academia and her results to the public, finding herself at the head of a powerful movement driven by compassion not only for animals but for victims of all forms of oppression.

In Berlin, Rainer Radtke runs one of several happiness models for EGAL, a think-tank-like organization that has been running Germany since, in the middle of a pandemic, the political establishment peacefully handed over power to the experts. Rainer's job is to track hundreds of real-time data feeds and suggest policy measures to make sure the population's happiness level doesn't drop below 70%. Rainer himself, however, no longer believes in scientific governance since a city planning decision resulted in the demolition of his childhood home and the death of his father. He rebels by running an underground pub in a gloomy village an hour's drive from Berlin and by breeding chihuahuas in defiance of a nationwide dog ban. The chihuahua business unexpectedly brings him into contact with a loose grouping of anti-expert dissidents and retired politicians bent on returning to power – and badly in need of canine companionship. Rainer helps his new friends wreck the models to escalate public discontent.

When the three plotlines finally intersect during a series of surreal conference calls between government buildings in Moscow, D.C. and Berlin, it's clear that the state of the world is precarious as rarely before – and that the story doesn't end here.

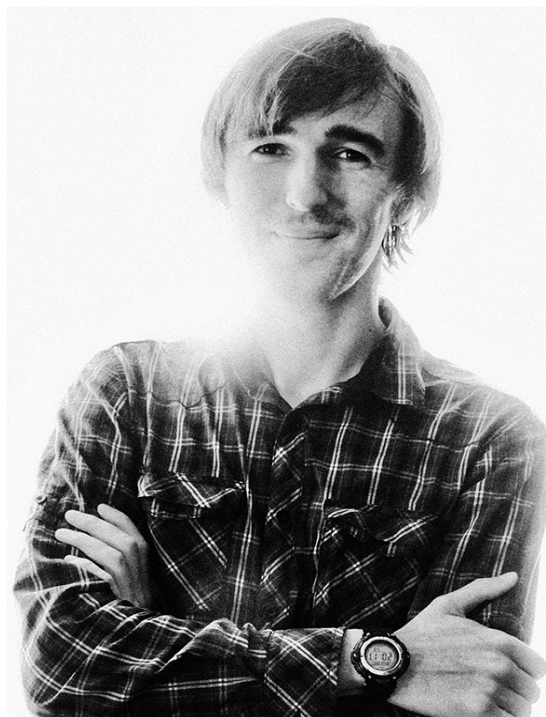
At once a brisk social commentary and a thrilling roller-coaster dystopia, *Animal Tested* showcases a colorful array of vivid characters, surprising the readers at every page turn with smartly concocted plot twists as well as dramatic psychological transformations. Bershidsky elegantly leads the readers as we probe the notions of power, control, intelligence, empathy – and freedom.

## About the authors:

**ARTHUR BONDAR** (1983) is a photographer, publisher and collector. Bondar has been collecting WWII war negatives and prints for many years, and he possesses over 1500 unique war photographs, including the Valery Faminsky archive. Bondar studied documentary photography and human rights at New York University Tisch School of the Arts (New York, USA). Bondar was honored with National Geographic 2011 and Magnum Foundation Human Rights 2012 grants. Bondar was noted with a Photographer of the Year in Ukraine title (2012), and he is also a laureate of the Foundation of Documentary Photography in the USA (2013) and Allard Prize, Canada (2013).

Arthur Bondar has published seven books, including *Signatures of War*, *Valery Faminsky V. 1945*, and *Barricade: The Euromaidan Revolt*.

His projects have been widely exhibited as installations, exhibitions and screenings in museums and art institutions worldwide. Arthur cooperates with many international magazines, newspapers and online media. His works have been published in *The Time*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* (including his photograph of President Zelenskyy on the front page), *Le Monde*, *the Times of London*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *De Volkskrant*, etc. The author's website: <https://arthurbondar.com>



**KSENIA BUKSHA** (1983) was a St. Petersburg-based poet and writer until she left Russia with her four children in March 2022. Buksha is the author of 15 books of poetry and fiction, including the National Bestseller Prize-winning novel *The Freedom Factory*, translated into English by Anne O. Fisher (Deep Vellum/Phoneme Media, 2018). Buksha was the youngest woman ever to win. To date, she is the youngest writer ever to have been shortlisted for Russia's Big Book prize, and one of only two writers – and the only woman – ever to be shortlisted for the Big Book twice before the age of 40.

Buksha is also an artist whose work often appears in the pages and on the covers of her own books. Other literary awards include Citta di Penne-Mosca Prize 2014 (Italy), the Big Book award shortlist (2014 for *The Freedom Factory* and 2020 for *Churov and Churbanov*), and the NOS shortlist in 2019 for *Opens Inward*. Ksenia Buksha's literary fiction, excluding *There's Nobody Up There*, is handled by Elkost Literary Agency.



## About Klaudberri, the publisher:

**KLAUDBERRI**, a small independent press based in St. Petersburg, have gained their distinction with high quality unique editions on art and photography. Their prize-winning and acclaimed books include *HOME* (a selection of short stories by prominent Russian authors, a non-profit project run in partnership with *Nochlezhka* – Night Shelter – to help homeless) and Robert Capa's war memoir *Slightly Out of Focus*. *There's Nobody Up There* was crowdfunded in fall of 2021 and publication was planned for the end of February 2022, but the Russian invasion of Ukraine has made it difficult for Klaudberri to proceed with the publication. It's notable that in April, the book was longlisted for the 2022 Big Book Prize, but the prize announcement refers to the book simply as "a manuscript of an unnamed author."



**Klaudberri**

Ksenia Buksha — text

photographs from Arthur Bondar's private collection  
350 pp (33 short stories)

100 documentary photographs

English sample  
available

## There's Nobody Up There

An internationally acclaimed Ukrainian photographer and collector and a nationally awarded Russian writer unite for the sake of this unique book on World War II, successfully coining a new language for war discourse. *There's Nobody Up There*, a monumental anti-war collection of short stories and photographic images from WWII, reflects the bitter, sore actuality of today.

The idea of this project comes from documentary photographs of World War II, collected by Arthur Bondar. Bondar has been collecting unknown war photographs for years, and today possesses a unique archive of over 15,000 negatives. The selection of over one hundred photographic images of war comprises the visual context of this edition. These images are not illustrations to the text, they are their own visual documentary narrative, working in tandem with the text to create an immersive, eye-witness effect. In these photographs German, American, and Soviet soldiers are caught in action and at rest between battles drinking vodka and schnapps or posing with bombs and automatic guns; horrifying images of ruined Russian and Belarusian villages intersect with images of besieged Leningrad, bombed-out Dresden, collapsed bridges and roads in havoc. And people, of course, looking at readers from these old black and white photos: Jewish families, Russian and Belarusian partisans, soldiers and pilots of all nationalities across the frontlines, villagers and citizens, children and the elderly, wounded and alive.

Ksenia Buksha has written 33 short pieces of historical fiction, based on thorough research in WWII archives. The characters and their stories are fictional, but Buksha was inspired by real facts, newspapers, diaries and correspondence of the Soviet, German, American, British, Polish, and other participants and eyewitnesses of the war. There's a British pilot back at home after the war — and Dresden bombing — with PTSD (A Burning Crossword Puzzle). There's Osya Zilber, a young Jewish man in a village in Belarus taken over by the Germans; he is suspected by Belarus partisans so has to join a special unit of Jewish partisans after he flees from imminent persecution as German troops enter his home village (Avengers). There's a girl serving in the territory defense unit in Leningrad who accidentally flies off with an aerostat

over the besieged city (The Aerostats). A Roma boy teaches his Russian comrade the most important war lesson — to stay human (What War Teaches). There's a German family saving two Soviet war prisoners who escaped from a concentration camp (A Stupid Dog). A Russian German woman sacrificing herself but killing several German soldiers by suicide bomb (I Am German). A Jewish doctor saving a neighbor boy from his father who has turned mad from starvation in Leningrad during the siege (A Neighbor). A Polish girl singing in the streets of Warsaw, secretly mocking German occupants (A Little Eve, Warsaw Riot). We follow Martin and Lt Dieter Knabe, a German soldier and a pilot, through their transformation while the war takes them deeper in Russia (Into the Dark Hole, No Church Ceremony, Christmas, Martin Does Not Sleep). The war brings these people together, their fates intertwined into an uncuttable knot. Their vivid and authentic stories raise a grand choir in a dramatic anti-war hymn.

*There's Nobody Up There* is a powerful, authentic interplay of fiction and visual narrative. It offers a key to speaking about war in a direct and frank manner, the only manner that's possible today, when the battlefields in Ukraine burn from real bomb shelling.

*There's Nobody Up There* was crowdfunded in fall of 2021 and publication was planned for the end of February 2022, but the Russian invasion of Ukraine has put the publication of this anti-war book in Russia in question. It's notable that in April, the book was long-listed for the 2022 Big Book Prize, but the prize announcement refers to the book simply as "a manuscript of an unnamed author."





## There's Nobody Up There



sudden, he wasn't afraid. Because what he was doing right now had meaning.

"Look there! He's coming back! And he dragged his buddy back with him!" said the men in the trenches, amazed. "It's a miracle. Come on, boys, cover them!"

Mitya crawled the remaining few dozen meters under covering fire. And then into the trench. They were saved!

Oh, right—that's another thing war taught Mitya: to stay human. Even when it's almost impossible.





## About the author:

**DENIS BUSHLATOV** is a Ukrainian horror writer. His published work includes four novels and two collections of short stories. Several short stories were published in the English translation by Bewildering Stories and Kzine in the UK. In 2021 Bushlatov's short story *The Disintegrator* was included into the *Hex-Periments: A Dark Biotech Athology*, edited by Keith Anthony Baird. Film rights to *One Who Does Not Sleep* have been sold.

Denis also works as an interviewer and a journalist, with focus on horror.

Denis Bushlatov lives in Odessa, Ukraine. His work in progress in 2023 is the book on the war of Russia against Ukraine, based on his eye-witness experience and numerous interviews he has conducted since the invasion in February 2022.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2021 — **Beside Tranquil Waters**, *novel*

2021 — **The Disintegrator**, *a short story*

2020 — **One Who Does Not Sleep**, *novel*

2020 — **The Captain**, *biography, non-fiction*

2017 — **Dead Dragon's Children**, *novel*

2016 — **Keeper of the Abyss**, *novel*

2013 — **A Gift**, *short stories collection*

2009 — **Devolution**, *short stories collection*

**Palmira**

Novel, 2020  
403 pp

*Audio rights sold*  
Storytel Originals

*Film rights optioned*

## One Who Does Not Sleep

Treading in the steps of William Peter Blatty's *Legion*, *One Who Does Not Sleep* is a mesmerizing and terrifying tale of serial killings linked to an ancient evil cult of a demon of graveyards and decay in a seaside town.

A small seaside town is shattered with a series of inexplicable gruesome murders. Children are found dead, having disappeared from their parents' hold in full sight often in public. All dead bodies bear the same wound — a tiny hole in the ear, inflicted by a sharp object.

Olga Serbinova, a local psychotherapist specializing in obsessive syndromes, gets approached by her school friend (and a once teenage flame) Andrei, a police officer in charge of the investigation. Andrei asks Olga to compile a psychological profile of the serial killer and to search for possible matches among her patients — the town is small, and Olga is one of the very few practicing specialists. The more Olga learns about the sinister case, the more clues point to a particular patient of hers, a smart but spoiled student brat from a well-to-do family, Vadim Nishenko. Vadim is obsessed with violence, he runs a Youtube channel video-documenting eerie tortures of stray animals, and he seems oddly informed about confidential detail pertaining to the murders. Considering the severity of the case and her strong suspicions, Olga reports her client to the police. During the arrest Vadim gets shot by the police, officers later giving a perplexing and hallucinogenic account of the events.

As Olga continues her investigation, she consults with her skeptical boyfriend who refers her to another odd character, apparently the town's criminal authority who links the series of murders with an ancient cult of the local evil demon Sabnach, the demon of graveyards and decay. He reassures Olga that no serial killer could operate in town, while local historical archives

would furnish Olga with proves of similar recurrent cases over years. Andrei is forced to close the case by the town's shadowy moguls — he gets a reward for solving the case and eliminating the serial killer, a psychic teenager Vadim. However Andrei feels dissatisfied. Just like Olga, he suspects there is more to the case than a sick teenager's rage. However, Andrei's attempts to continue his investigation prompt his suspension.

Olga begins to experience weird hallucinations and horror dreams, and is forced to return to the case. A terrifying realization dawns on her — there is in fact someone else linked to all these cases, who knew the families of victims and could be at the crime scene at the time of murders: that is, her own self.

Eerie and gripping, this horror whodunit will linger with you long after you finish the book. It introduces a true master of the genre and an original voice to all fans of Stephen King and William Peter Blatty.



#### About the author:

**SVETA DOROSHEVA** was born and raised in Ukraine and is currently based in Israel. She is working in the areas of narrative art and illustration. A deep fascination for myth and fairytales, among other things, finds its way into her detailed works. She evolved as an artist by self-training and has primarily worked on book illustrations and art for magazines and brands. Her first author-illustrator book, *The Nenuphar Book*, was published in Russia in 2015, and was nominated for the National Bestseller Prize. It was translated into many languages, including Romanian, Japanese, Simplified and Complex Chinese, Arabic, Czech and English and is on its way to other markets since 2019. Her second book, *How to Handle a Child*, was published in 2016 in Russia and is following the same path. All of her books are personal art projects.

Sveta has three shortlist awards for the World Best Illustrations (AOI), her works are published in the world's leading compendiums of modern illustration, and in summer 2018 she enjoyed being selected for the prestigious three-month artist residency in Art Peace Swatch Hotel, Shanghai. The result was another book, published in Russia in 2022 – *Shanghai Chronicles: an Artist's Journey*.

Sveta creates hand drawn art on paper. She merges a lot of mythical and traditional motifs from various cultures with her own contemporary ideas. In a lot of her work past is often juxtaposed with the present. She takes inspiration in history of arts, local mix of cultures and the contradictions of human nature.

#### *Selected Bibliography*

- 2022 — **Shanghai Chronicles: an Artist's Journey**, *illustrated fiction*
- 2016 — **How to Handle a Child**, *a collection of stories with illustrations*
- 2015 — **The Nenuphar Book (The Land of Stone Flowers)**, *graphic novel*
- 2006 — **Mummy Hurries Home**, *graphic novel*

Nominated for the **Big Book Award 2023**

Honorary Mention Award at **Global Illustration Award 2017**

Shortlisted for **AOI World Illustration Awards 2017, 2018**

**Hiii Illustration Award 2016**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2015**

**Azbooka**

Graphic novel, 2015  
216 pp

*Translation rights sold*

World English Chronicle Books  
Romanian Baroque Books  
Japanese Maar-sha Publishing  
Simplified Chinese Hunan Literature and Art  
Arabic Egyptian Office For Publishing & Dit.  
Albanian Fan Noli  
Serbian Dereta  
Complex Chinese (Taiwan) Azoth Books  
Czech Omega

Complete  
English translation  
available

## The Nenuphar Book (The Land of Stone Flowers)

The Nenuphar Book is a book about people written by fairies, dwarfs, elves and other fairy-tale creatures. It was found in a water lily under mysterious circumstances (hence the name). The whole book is a collection of evidence by fairy creatures proving that people exist. Bursting with intricate and evocative illustrations, The Nenuphar Book creates a world of fantasy and fable that slyly reveals many hidden truths about human existence.

It's a book about people and human world, as seen through the eyes of fairy-tale creatures. They don't generally believe in people, but some have traveled to our world in various mysterious ways. Such travelers collected evidence and observations about people in this book. It's an assortment of drawings, letters, stories, diaries and other stuff about people, written and drawn by fairies, elves, dwarfs and other fairy personalities. These observations may be perplexing, funny and sometimes absurd, but they all present a surprised look at the things that we, people, take for granted.

Each chapter is written by a different creature — elf, fairy, dwarf, ogre, giant, witch, etc. It comprises such topics as human anatomy, types and origin of people, magic human things and dwellings, language, beliefs, rituals, work, music, dance, and many more. Some ob-

servations are odd, some awfully inaccurate, some — plain funny, but they all weave together into a tongue-in-the-cheek playful picture of a world so incredibly odd to an outsider, that it's no wonder fairy creatures can't believe in it!

"This is a series of book illustrations that presents an attempt of fairy-tale creatures (who don't believe in people) to understand what is a man, based on testimonials of people themselves (quotes by famous people on the nature of man). The resulting impression is rather perplexing."

With her imaginative illustrations, Sveta is overlapping philosophy and literature, creating her own fictional narrative in the form of fairy tale, whilst actually defining many truths about human nature.

### Selected quotes

After reading Nenuphar Book, you'll come away with a new appreciation for the magical world, for your own world, and for your place in it. And you'll learn to laugh a bit more at yourself and those around you. You may even start believing in magic. Magic that is invented in our minds and made real by our words and our pens. Magic that adds life to the human experience. Magic that touches even people like me who are strongly rooted in logic and objective truth... In the end, all I can say is, "Wow! This book is a masterpiece."

**GeekDad/GeekMom**

Ukraine-born artist Sveta Dorosheva has been dedicated to creating some of the most beautiful book illustrations I have ever laid eyes on... <...> The Nenuphar Book, one of Dorosheva's many graphic jewels, is a book about a world in reverse, where humans are Todorov's so-called paper beings, while fairytale creatures shiver under their blankets in fear of our mysterious ways. Starting as a completely different project, that is a catalogue of fairies, it came to be an entire chronicle on humans as seen by fairy-tale creatures. The book looks inquisitively at the abstract mechanisms of love and hate and money, our daily habits and their rationale, if any, and our origins. The lacunae are of course filled

with fantasy — since seen from afar, humans seem powerful beyond measure and their lives unknowable.

**Andreea Saïoc**  
*The Global Panorama*

Sveta Dorosheva's fantastical art could be compared to a brilliant dream collaboration among noted artists, for whom the goal is a visionary book of enchanted tales. Imagine an artistic hybrid comprised of the intricately-lined illustrations of Harry Clarke or Aubrey Beardsley, the luxurious art deco magnificence of Romain de Tiroff (Erté) fashion plates, and the beautiful-on-the-verge-of-grotesque visages drawn by the enigmatic Alastair. But! In this imaginary scenario, the artists realize there is something... some je ne sais quois... missing from their efforts. They entice illustrator Sveta Dorosheva to join their endeavors: she flits in, and with a mischievous smile and a gleam of amusement in her eye, announces "yes, yes, this is all very beautiful... but let's make it FUN!"

**Coilhouse**

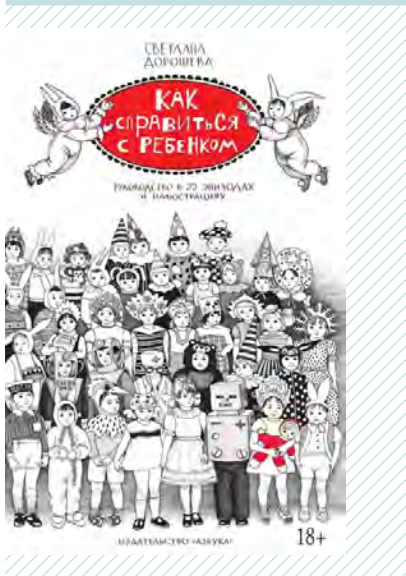
Her illustrations take me back to childhood being in love with fairytales and knowing there was infinite possibility for imagination in the world ahead.

**Cupcake Punk**



## The Nenuphar Book (The Land of Stone Flowers)



**Azbooka**

A collection of stories with illustrations, 2016  
48 pp

*Translation rights sold*

Romanian Baroque Books  
Mongolian Nepko

English sample  
available

## How to Handle a Child

How to Handle a Child is mock “how to” book on parenthood (think Edward Gorey’s *The Recently Deflowered Girl: The Right Thing to Say on Every Dubious Occasion*). The book embraces the most arguable questions of parenthood, never really yielding a single sober advice.

The underpinning is — people shouldn’t be taught how to handle their kids. They should be soothed that parenthood is a most perplexing task in the universe, and so, whatever they are doing, they are doing a great job. Mistakes and failures are inevitable, joys and rewards sporadic, but with a little bit of humor and philosophy, the whole parenting business is a priceless fuel for observing life itself.

All the episodes in the book are based on true stories and conversations with my kids — Adam (aged three), Liran (aged six), and Alex (aged eleven). Each of the 22 episodes starts out with a maxim uttered by a child, be it the “AAAAAAA” of the newborn or a teenager’s verdict on life. The rest of the story elaborates on this “prophecy,” trying to deduct wisdom, lesson or principle, in the manner of a parable. The resulting stories are full of subtle humor, truth and are instantly recognizable and appealing to anyone who has dared to tread the unpredictable, full of trial, error and humility path of parenthood.

Each episode is illustrated with a scene from the author’s own childhood, loosely related to the topic of the text. The illustrations balance between the “child’s eyesight perception” (magic, unreal, enchanted, yet taken for granted as solid fact of life — just as kids do) and brutal truth (things that did actually take place and were actually the way they are depicted in the illustration. The truth is — the reality is way wilder than any fiction.

The illustrations address adult readers. After all, no matter how dramatically different their childhood was from that of their kids, the core things that make childhood what it is are intact — the freshness of perception, the agony of growing up, the mischief, and the absence of borderline between the real and the unreal.

**Contents:**

- How to have a child
- How to birth a child
- How to use a newborn child
- How to name your child
- Where to put the child you’ve birthed
- How to understand what a child is for
- How to wash a child
- How to understand what your child wants from you
- How to make your child sleep
- How to cure your child of illness
- How to make your child speak properly
- How to make your child be quiet
- How to understand what your child is doing
- How to survive your child’s temper tantrum
- How to deal to your child’s mischief
- How to make your child good
- What to do if your child isn’t as good as you’d hoped
- How and what to teach your child
- How to play with your child
- How to punish your child
- How to lie to your child
- How to fix the upbringing you gave to your child





# How to Handle a Child



Nominated for the **Big Book Award 2023**

**Livebook**  
Illustrated fiction, 2022  
480 pp

English sample  
available

## Shanghai Chronicles: an Artist's Journey

A commercial illustrator in her forties leaves her family and routine for an adventure in Shanghai — three summer months in a glamorous artist residency, chock full of contemporary artists from around the world — in pursuit of her childhood dream to be a Real Artist.

In Shanghai, she grapples with two new realities, not one: that of the flamboyant, unimaginable Shanghai, and the extravagant, impenetrable world of contemporary art. Essentially, she is into two journeys. One — the usual story: mingling with the in-crowd, going places, and trying to make it in the free art world. And the other — an invisible shamanic journey to the underworld, where the actual people she meets are spirits that lead her through the desert one has to cross whenever one sheds one personality to grow a new one. She needs to do that because her dream of becoming a Real Artist gradually dies on her throughout the journey.

In the “visible” story she basically fails. Her whole Real Artist endeavor is a comic disaster. However, what she's really doing, without realizing it, is the “invisible” journey in search of meaning — of art, of an artist's place in the modern world, and of self.

### Selected quotes

A fascinating journey into a crazy world of contemporary art and through the looking glass of China. Once open, this book will not be laid down.

*Tatyana Tolstaya*  
a writer





## Shanghai Chronicles: an Artist's Journey



## About the author:

**LENA ELTANG** was born in 1964 in Leningrad. In 1988 she left the USSR, lived in Paris, London and Copenhagen. She has been living in Lithuania since 1991. A journalist and a translator, she has also become known as a poet after the publication of two collections of poems in 2003 and 2004, and as a short-prose writer, when her works were included in the Five Names anthology. *Blackberry Shoot*, Lena's first novel, created a stir on the Russian literary scene, became a finalist of the National Bestseller Prize and Andrei Bely Prize, hailed by literary critics as "the best Russian novel in years". Lena has completed her latest novel, *Radin*, in August 2021.

*Selected Bibliography*

- 2022 — **Radin**, *novel*  
2014 — **Cartagena**, *novel*  
2011 — **The Other Drums**, *novel*  
2008 — **The Stone Maples**, *novel*  
2006 — **Blackberry Shoot**, *novel*

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2022**

Longlisted for the **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2022**

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2012**

Finalist of the **Russian Literary Prize 2011**

Winner of the **New Literature Award 2009**

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2006**

Finalist of **Andrei Bely Prize 2006**

**Ripol**

Novel, 2014  
544 pp

**Alpina NF Prose**  
Novel, 2023

*Translation rights sold*

Albanian Fan Noli  
Arabic AS Publishers  
Armenian Oracle  
Latvian Agdads Mansards  
Bulgarian Labyrinth  
Slovenian Mladinska Knjiga

**Complete English  
translation  
available**

## Cartagena

### The Gardener Is Gone

From the prize-winning author of *Blackberry Shoot* and *The Stone Maples*, comes a mesmerizing tale of unwanted love, unperformed vengeance and myths coming alive.

The action unfolds on the rocky coast in the northern Italy, set in the beautiful Briatico hotel — a snow-white manor turned a private nursing pansion.

Petra, a law student, arrives to Briatico from Rome as a nurse, set on her own investigation of the ruthless murder of her brother. The local police inspector is inclined to assign the murder to the result of a trivial ruffle among young men from the village, but Petra knows — the killer is one from the hotel staff. Petra is not the only one in the Briatico hotel who hides behind a false identity.

An Englishman playing the piano in the hotel's lounge lies not only about his real occupation, but also about his nationality. A writer, who has lost his ability to write or sustain a proper relationship, he looks for traces of his lost love. His girlfriend mysteriously disappeared years ago in the premises of the manor, leaving a blazing chapel behind... and a heartbroken Marcus, who has never recovered from what he sees as a betrayal of his love.

There is a hotel guest, who claims to be a captain, trading a false beard and boasting numerous stories of his fake sea adventures. A heir, deprived of the manor, he wants a pay-off for what belongs to him by birthright.

Finally, there's a killer who turns part a comedy of errors, part a blood-curdling crime drama, performed against the strikingly beautiful setting of the Briatico hotel, into an antique tragedy.

Torn by passions, haunted by murky secrets of the past, these different people are drawn to Briatico by fate's invisible threads, seeking vengeance and truth they will want to believe. Eltang brilliantly weaves an intricate web of dramatic turns and shocking riddles, tossing ever-elusive evidence and upturning facts, and follows her characters through the labyrinth of the text with an agile curiosity and genuine sympathy.

Told in Eltang's trademark poetic diction, with an immaculate pitch, unexpected plot twists and a unique delicacy in use of literary allusions, *Cartagena* is more than a spectacular literary achievement and a much-awaited literary sensation of the year. *Cartagena* is an engrossing human drama that will make readers shed tears, run from temptations, solve riddles and shake with sympathy, dread and love for its characters.

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Literary Award 2012**Finalist of the **Russian Literary Prize 2011**

**Eksmo**  
Novel, 2011  
640 pp

## The Other Drums

In *The Other Drums*, Lena Eltang's brilliant third novel, the national prize-winning author completes the theme of escape and freedom in a work that has prompted comparisons to such classics as *De Profundis* and *Invitation to a Beheading*.

The novel begins with the arrest of 34-year old Kostas Kairis, a Lithuanian citizen, in his house in Lisbon, Portugal. Kostas is not the original owner of the house; his step-aunt Zoe inherited the ancient mansion after the suicide of her husband, scion of a noble Portuguese family. Zoe included Kostas in her will at the last moment, just a few days before her early demise from cancer at the age of 44, leaving virtually nothing to her own daughter. The aunt's will burdens Kostas with mortgage payments to the bank, and bans him from re-selling the property. An idle intellectual, Kostas pays the bills by selling the Braga family furniture and jewelry, and subletting the house to shadowy business operations. First, his childhood friend Ljutas installs cameras into the mansion to shoot porn movies. The built-in surveillance appliances come in handy for blackmailing Kostas' chance lover, who offers a share of her husband's settlement deal if they catch him with his pants down on a set-up date with a call girl. Kostas watches in awe as the date unravels and a stranger shoots the prostitute with the Braga family gun. The blackmailers turn the evidence of dead body against Kostas, and when the police come to arrest him several weeks later on murder charges, Kostas feels relieved — he will not hesitate to reveal the identities of the real murderers.

His experience in jail is a rude awakening for Kostas: he is held in solitary confinement as a murderer; the interrogations and meetings with a lawyer are only

occasional; and the guards often forget to bring him his meals. Yet he's been allowed to use his laptop — a real treasure for an undereducated historian turned writer. Kostas begins by writing a letter to his Estonian wife, from whom he separated over fifteen years before. What begins as an explanatory letter grows during nine weeks of imprisonment into powerful confessional prose permeated with guilt, melancholy, and fear of loss. As Kostas Kairis speaks of people he once knew, loved and hated, befriended and betrayed, dreamt of and never came to understand, the reader of Kostas' "diary" becomes the spectator of a street puppetshow at which the director, with a wave of his wand or the sound of the other drums, exchanges roles with the cast. The tension and passion grows with every page, until one day Kostas begins thinking the door to the cell is not real either, throws it open — and walks out.

In her immaculate poetic diction, and with profound encyclopedic knowledge, Lena Eltang concocts a unique mosaic of a novel about guilt and memory that makes us all its voluntary prisoners.

English sample  
available

Winner of the **New Literature Award 2009**



## The Stone Maples

A stunning family drama told with the precision of Nabokov and the hypnotic intensity of Joyce.

### AST

Novel, 2008  
414 pp

Alpina NF Prose  
Novel, 2023

*Translation rights sold*  
Latvian Janis Roze  
Lithuanian Vaga

Red-haired Sasha Saunley runs a Bed and Breakfast called The Stone Maples in the tiny, remote village of Wishguard, somewhere on the moors of Wales. Not only is she considered weird, she is also rumored to be a witch. Such a rumor is not absolutely groundless, since she has refused to speak since the next-door teenagers killed her dogs, Hugin and Munin, all the more as The Stone Maples long ago became a substitute for her five-o'clock meetings with the second cousins of her late father. Sasha's younger stepsister Edna disappears under obscure circumstances — while in the courtyard, a hummock appears with an epitaph for the «Younger One».

The possible crime of the Welsh witch becomes the pretext for a bet — and Llewellyn, a Londoner, arrives at The Stone Maples to investigate what is purported to be a murder. Sasha's journal falls into his hands — the passionate, poetic, and witty confession of an enigmatic woman. Her love-hate relationship with her younger stepsister, knotty affairs with the locals, envy and betrayal, fantasies, myth, and legend — all this enchants Llewellyn, and when he is about to admit his loss of the bet, he finds another of Sasha's journals, containing totally different entries. Why does she need two journals; and, more important, which of them is truth and which is fiction?

Told through the journals and letters of Sasha, her stepmother, and her younger stepsister Edna Alexandrina, Llewellyn, and Tabitha, the London girl who is in love with him, this entrancing family drama reveals one shocking mystery after another. The most significant puzzle is broached at the very end.

The Stone Maples is a breathtakingly deep and atmospheric novel inhabited by lovable and vivid characters. Masterly use of cultural layers, the delicacy of literary allusion reminiscent of Joyce and Nabokov, and an eerily prophetic gaze at reality — these are the trademarks of Lena Eltang, one of the most unique authors writing in Russian today.

English sample  
available

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2006**

Finalist of **Andrei Bely Award 2006**



**Amphora**

Novel, 2006  
396 pp

**Alpina NF Prose**

Novel, 2023

## Blackberry Shoot

Umberto Eco meets Dostoyevsky in this spellbinding debut novel, unanimously hailed by critics as “the best Russian novel in recent years”.

British historian Theo Forge finds a letter written by a monk back in the 15th century. The letter tells the story of some artifacts that seemed so threatening to the Vatican that the monk was sent to Malta to hide and guard them. Forge assumes that the artifacts represent six of the alchemic elements and is obsessed with the idea of finding the treasures. The group of six people setting out to Malta is picturesque: Forge himself; his fiancée Nadia, a London lawyer; red-haired archaeologist Fiona; a Macedonian graduate student, Fiona's lover; French antiquarian Eugene Levas; and in Austrian doctor, York. Each has a secret in the past that sparks the decision to embark on this nearly absurd trip. The adventure of the cryptologists turns into a thriller, as members of the quest begin to die, one by one.

The escalating Maltese drama is witnessed not only by the police, but also by a young man of heavenly beauty and encyclopedic erudition, Moras. He suffers from an unnamed mental illness that is sometimes interpreted as permanent genius. Moras, a Lithuanian language student, is kept in an expensive mental hospital in Barcelona. During the remission of his illness, he is discharged and goes to Malta to be a compassionate pimp, a bellboy, and good company for everyone in the group.

The structure of the novel is complex and multi-voiced: it incorporates fragments of the archeologists' diaries, personal letters, and emails. Yet the major part of the novel is Moras' journal, which the reader follows, spellbound; because, in fact, it's all about Moras in the novel. In addition to being a specific account of the puzzling events, his journal is a poetic revelation, a metaphor, and above all — the central cryptogram to decode.





About the author:

**ALLA GORBUNOVA** was born in Leningrad in 1985 and studied philosophy at St. Petersburg State University. She is a poet and the author of several books of prose. The collection of short stories, *It's the End of the World, My Love*, became the most discussed literary publication in 2020 and received The New Literature Prize 2020. Gorbunova received several nominations for the National Bestseller Prize, her prose entered long lists of the Big Book Award in 2020 and 2021. With her poetry, Alla Gorbunova won the Debut Prize 2005 and the Andrei Bely Prize 2019. Her poems and prose have been translated into many languages. Deep Vellum Publishing launches Gorbunova's prose in the English translation in 2023.

### *Selected Bibliography*

2022 — **The Summer**, *autofiction, novel*

2021 — **Another Matter**, *short stories*

2020 — **It's the End of the World, My Love**, *short stories*

2017 — **Ings & Oughts**, *short stories*

### **The New Literature Award 2020**

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021, 2020**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2020, 2017**

### **Andrei Bely Prize 2019**

Shortlisted for the **New Literature Award 2018**

Nominated for **XXIX Premio Letterario Camaiore 2017** (Italy)

Shortlisted for **Andrei Bely Prize 2011**

### **Debut Prize 2005**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2020**

Nominated for the **New Literature Award 2021**



**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**

Short stories, 2021

221 pp

## Another Matter

A collection of brilliant short stories that's equal parts Kafka, Chekhov, and sketch comedy.

Intelligent and emotional, heartfelt and sardonic, imaginative and gritty, Alla Gorbunova's gemlike miniatures are a serious literary accomplishment. In her third book of prose, the award-winning St. Petersburg writer reveals the extraordinary and the meaningful in the everyday. Set in Moscow and Petersburg in the troubled nineties and aughts, these philosophical, frightening, and mordantly funny tales feature hitchhikers and street artists, over-protective grandparents and terrible boyfriends, teenage outcasts and lifelong rebels, philosophers and schoolchildren. And all the members of this misfit cast are transformed by Gorbunova's unique and generous storytelling, redeemed through wit, close observation, and grace.

Throughout this poignant and hilarious collection, Gorbunova draws on her own life as a rebellious teenager, university student, accomplished poet, and, eventually, a mother. For a young girl, an angry lapdog be-

comes the world's most dangerous animal. A promising future as a professor somehow dead-ends into a day job as a nude artist's model. A juvenile prank at a high school reunion becomes a final farewell to a beloved relative. A rusty old alarm-clock is the key to understanding the nature of time, and a parent's quest to retrieve her son's toy car is a testament both to unconditional love and to the futility of human effort.

Gorbunova's stories borrow from philosophical thought experiments, contemporary autofiction, and a long Russian tradition of funny anecdotes. As usual, she handles profound metaphysical questions with a deceptively light touch, and the results are both inimitable and unforgettable.

### Selected quotes

Alla Gorbunova's prose is deeply authentic, and speaks to all sorts of readers — from authoritative literary critics, artists, and philosophers, to college and high school students. This book is no exception. Hilarious, sad, poignant, and occasionally frightening, these wonderfully lively tales are shot through with the light of her soul, the light of “another matter.”

Lyrical sketches that are profound rather than long — with something in them of medieval exempla, the Japanese *zuihitsu*, and the comic anecdote, in which everything is just fine, except when it isn't. Many of these tales are as paradoxical as their heroine, who remains somehow at a distance from everyday life while being in the middle of it all. As she herself admits, over half of her consciousness is an inferno of anxiety and terror, while the rest is in a primeval paradise wherein where evil is impossible.

*Ksenia Buksha*

*the prize-winning author of The Freedom Factory*

With her third book of prose Gorbunova develops the tradition of concocting texts on the borderline between reality and fiction. In part, it is diary notes, in part — adventures of her lyrical hero, or both.

*prochtenie.org*

The anecdotes from the blurred life in this collection under a snowy-white cover is a bubble wrap carefully preserving the anti-matter (that Gorbunova coined). Alla Gorbunova is not at haste with sharing it, as it is too intimate. More intimate, probably, than she herself. She tells about her son, about her current experience, and it feels that she is more afraid of sharing those, than stories from her past, retold and repeated. Gorbunova probes the water with her little finger, offering us a sample of her intimate revelations, as she wants to make sure if the water is too cold for a substance that fine.

*Gorky.media*

The material world is important. The transcendental can permeate things. Things can accumulate memory and time. They can speak and think. Sometimes I get to hear their thoughts. Strictly speaking, these are not thoughts in our habitual understanding, but a certain murmur, noise, movement, tension — something happening inside the matter, though nothing semantically meaningful. Things are restless on the inside.

*says Alla Gorbunova*

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2018**Shortlisted for the **New Literature Award 2018**

**Limbus Press**  
Short stories, 2017

**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**  
Short stories, 2021  
240 pp

*Translation rights sold*  
World English Deep Vellum  
Bulgarian Scalino  
Italian LietoColle

## Ings & Oughts

A testament to the powers of the imagination from one of Russia's best contemporary writers, *The Lives of Monsters and Other Stories* is an uncanny masterpiece with echoes of Dante, Beckett, and Borges.

Grouped according to themes of romance, philosophy, fate, fantasy and fable, Gorbunova's debut collection of stories takes a jaundiced view of the world, turning a magical lens on all-too-familiar problems. There is the woman who is horrified to discover that her husband doesn't have a soul and the university professor who unwittingly wanders through a post-Soviet hell. Violence and romance hound the employees at a sun-bleached country market, and myth meets modernity when Scylla and Charybdis run into dating woes.

Not since Calvino has a writer twisted the art of the fairy tale to create as stunning a catalogue of miracles and horrors. Gorbunova's stories are filled with ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, as well as extraordinary people caught up in daily mundanity. Long turning the heads of Russian audiences with her wild and wonderful award-winning poetry, Gorbunova turns here to playful explorations of philosophi-

cal concerns about life, being, and meaning, combining clever satire and shocking flights of fancy into an imaginative menagerie all her own. *The Lives of Monsters and Other Stories* is sure to put one of Russia's youngest and most brilliant literary stars onto the international stage.

*Ings and Oughts is my first book of prose. I believe it has some drive and compassion. I wanted to name it Tales For Nutties, then came about with To Ashes, and then came the final title, Ings & Oughts. Yet Tales for Nutties is an important part of the text and it defines its audience, too. To Ashes is the name of the story about a man walking in sunglasses in winter because he did not want to see the world to its ashes, by watching and burning it to ashes by the act of viewing. So now I told you about two secret planes of my book, and now you are to decide what is "ings" and "oughts" here.*

**Alla Gorbunova**

## About the author:

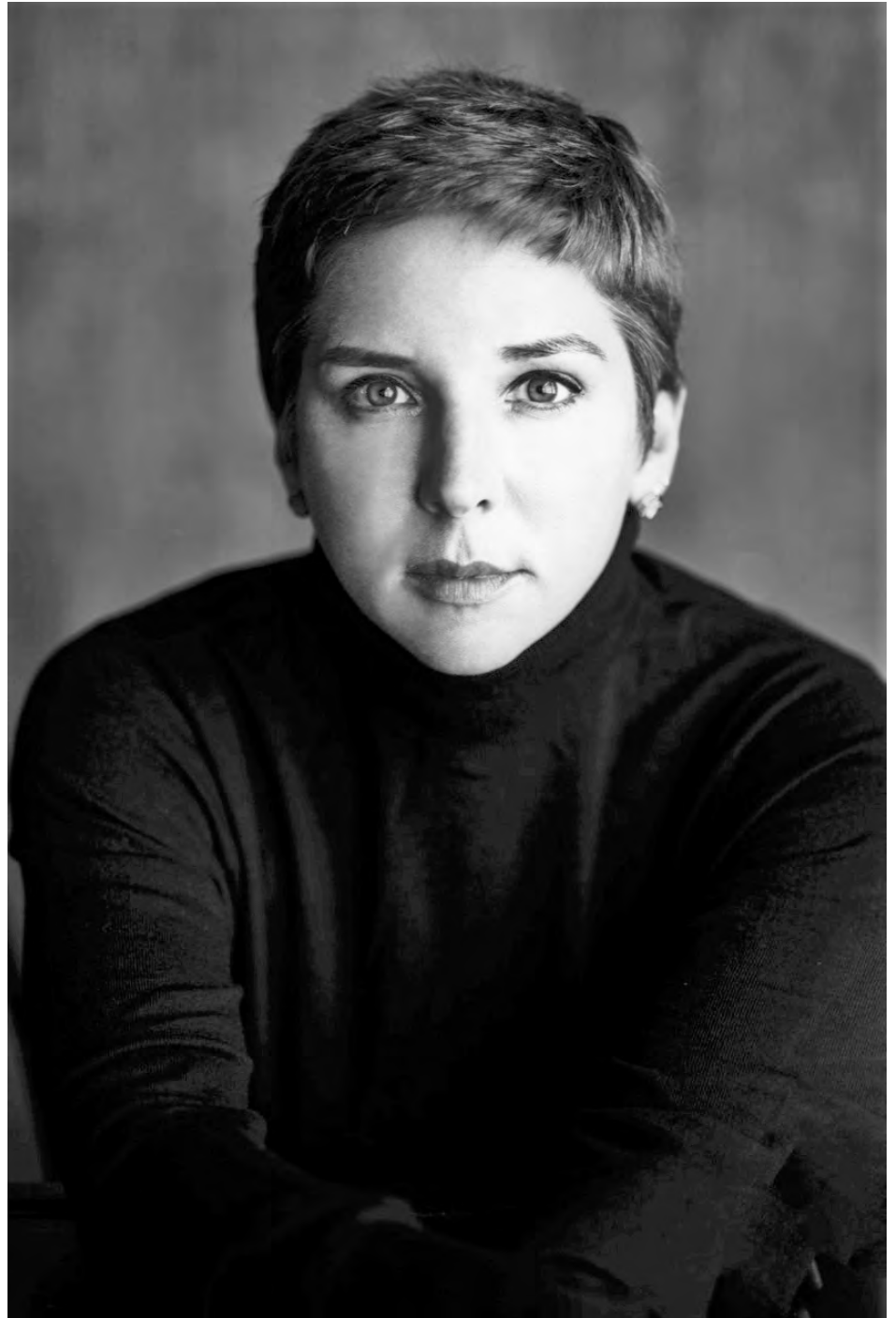
**KATERINA GORDEEVA** (b. 1977) is one of Russia's most famous independent journalists. Until 2012, she worked as a TV reporter for the federal television channel NTV. During her time at NTV, she reported as from the frontlines of Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Iraq as a war correspondent. She later resigned from the channel due to a disagreement with the channel's programming agenda.

Katerina left Moscow out of protest in 2014, after Russia's remorseless annexation of Crimea and seizure of part of Eastern Ukraine. In 2020, she created her own YouTube channel, which today has more than 1.65 million subscribers.

To make her documentary film *Humans At War*, Katerina Gordeeva travelled to dozens of refugee shelters in both Europe and Russia. She collected first-person accounts by interviewing of people with opposing views about their experiences and how the war had drastically changed their lives. This three-hour testimonial film has been viewed by more than 3 million people.

In the summer of 2022, Gordeeva was named as one of the top 10 most influential independent journalists in Russia. She is a five-time winner of the Redcollegia Award, an independent prize that recognizes the work of journalists doing ground-breaking work despite government pressure. Gordeeva was awarded the Anna Politkovskaya International Journalism Prize in August in 2022, an award that truly honors her commitment to independent journalism. In September 2022, the Russian government named Gordeeva a "foreign agent," a title that is often compared to the term "enemy of people," which was used in the Soviet Union during the Stalin era.

Katerina's daily work continues to demonstrate her tremendous devotion to unbiased journalism during these very challenging times.



## The author about the book:

"In the darkest of times, in the midst of it all, a journalist has one single task: to document everything that is happening. Eyewitnesses and their stories will be of value one day soon, so that new history books will not need to lie about what people saw with their eyes," says Katerina Gordeeva, the only journalist in the world who has visited places inaccessible to the public eye, in Europe, Russia, and beyond, speaking with refugees living in temporary camps.

Katerina's book captures 140 hours of interviews, tens of thousands of kilometers spent on the road, and, most importantly, immeasurable grief. In this book you will find twenty-four first-person stories that are both chilling narratives and impartial evidence offered by eyewitnesses.

"This world has enough provocations and fakes. It is time to slow down and simply listen to the voice of a human being." — Gordeeva says.



"Read this book... If you put it off, you'll find yourself defenceless in the face of evil"  
— SYLVIA MESEBACH, WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE

Katerina Gordeeva

#### Take My Grief Away

Non-fiction, reportage, interviews

Meduza, 2024

388 pp

#### Translation rights sold

World English Ebury/Penguin Random House

(pre-empt)

German Droemer Knaur (pre-empt)

Dutch Murrow/Overamstel Uitgevers (pre-empt)

Czech Maraton (auction)

Italian 21 lettere

Hungarian Helikon

Swedish Celander

Estonian Sinisukk

Latvian Zvaigzne

Finnish Minerva

Polish Sonia Draga

Japanese Hakusuisha Publishing

Full German and  
English translations  
available

French sample  
available

## Take My Grief Away

Take My Grief Away contains raw and heartbreaking first-person accounts of harrowing war experiences, collected by Katerina Gordeeva, a prize-winning independent journalist who was named “a foreign agent” by Russian state officials in autumn 2022. Gordeeva interviews people at refugee centers in Russia and Europe after February 24th, when the war in Ukraine began. Common grief unites these people who come from different backgrounds and whose views are often diametrically opposed. These stories, will transform what you know about this ongoing war. These voices need to be heard.

Take My Grief Away is a book of reportage and interviews conducted and written by Katerina Gordeeva. Gordeeva, one of modern Russia's most famous independent journalists, received the Anna Politkovskaya International Journalism Prize in August of 2022 and was named one of the top 10 most influential independent journalists in Russia by Romir Research Holding.

Katerina spent months shuttling between refugee centers in Russia and Europe, and visiting Ukraine. The result of her travels is Humans at War, a 3,5-hour documentary on her YouTube channel. It has been viewed by 2,5 million viewers. Material that Gordeeva gathered while making the film but left out of the final cut was adapted for Take My Grief Away.

Katerina succeeds in collecting and telling the life stories and dramas of people who express diametrically opposed views. The book juxtaposes twenty-four unique stories: each story is a first-person account of lives ruined in the most unthinkable ways.

The list of the stories' heroes includes:

- Julia from Mariupol, a young woman joking that she can stick a magnet on the shrapnel in the back of her head.
- Marina from Mariupol, who told Katerina about cockroaches.
- Svetlana Petrenko, an eighty-four-year-old retiree who lost her mind after shellings and slipped back into her childhood, thinking it was 1942 and fascists had occupied her native Avdiivka.
- Ruslan Miroshnichenko, a physical education teacher from Mariupol who dreamed of a demon shortly before their section in the apartment building collapsed.
- Stefania Cecchini, a farmer from Italy who sheltered three families from Mykolaiv at her home.
- Inna from Mariupol, who went out for a walk with her dog. While she was gone, one of Kadyrov's tanks fired at her apartment, where her husband and other dog were. They died.
- Ilya, a guy missing a leg. He volunteered for the Security Service of Ukraine and was severely injured by a mine.
- Lyuba, a pregnant woman who couldn't crouch down while under fire.
- Tamara Sergeevna, mother of a soldier who returned from captivity with his eyes poked out.
- Lena, a woman whose husband was killed by Russian soldiers, though she was saved by Russian soldiers.
- Kora, a dog who was saved in Bucha.

...Gordeeva has no archaic dilemmas about sticking to professional standards or intervening in a life. The storylines and people collected in this book are staggering. Tragedies, the journey of the Ukrainian people from incomprehension to fury, through rage...  
A wound that is now permanent.

— Dmitry Muratov, chief editor of Novaya Gazeta, Nobel Prize winner



## About the author:

**SERGEY KUZNETSOV** is a contemporary Russian writer, journalist, entrepreneur and educator. Kuznetsov took part in forming post-Soviet independent journalism in Russia, focusing mainly on movies and literature, and in 2011 became the only Russian journalist having received a Knight Fellowship in journalism from Stanford University. Sergey contributes to American periodicals, including The New York Times, The Huffington Post and others.

Kuznetsov is the author of a dozen of books of prose, including *The Butterfly Skin*, a thriller published in 12 languages, including English, German and French, and *Round Dance of Water*, published by Dalkey Archive in the English language in the end of 2022. Kuznetsov received numerous nominations to the prestigious literary prizes and was a finalist for the Big Book Award and New Horizons Award, for the best novel in sci-fi and fantasy.

In 2018 Sergei Kuznetsov, together with his wife Ekaterina Kadieva, launched the international middle school Le Sallay Academy, with branches in France and the States. Since 2013 Kuznetsov resides with his family in France.

## Selected Bibliography

2023 — **Meat Grinder**, *novel*

2019 — **The Teacher Dymov**, *novel*

2019 — **Living and All Grown Up**, *trilogy, novels*

2016 — **Kaleidoscope: Expendable Materials**, *novel*

2010 — **The Round Dance of Water**, *novel*

2005 — **Butterfly Skin**, *novel*

2004 — **PG21** (*in co-authorship with Linor Goralik*) *novel*

2004 — **The Nineties: A Fairy-Tale**, *trilogy, novel*

**The Knight Fellowship** from Stanford University 2001

Finalist of the **Big Book Award 2011**

**Man of the Year 5771** by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia 2011

Longlisted for the **Big Bok Award 2016, 2018**

Shortlisted for the **New Literature Award 2018**

Longlisted for **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2018, 2019**

Shortlisted for the **New Horizons Prize 2017, 2019**

COVER NOT  
AVAILABLE

## Meat Grinder

What if guilt turned into a deadly virus springing up a pandemic of suicides and suicide killings across continents? Razor-sharp and bold as Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, raw and disturbing as Marlon James' *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, *Meat Grinder* takes you on a roller-coaster ride across years, continents and fates. Sergey Kuznetsov brilliantly dissects the ideas of personal vs collective guilt, memory vs history, and considers violence from the perspectives of culture, society, sex and, ultimately, human nature.

**Manuscript**  
 Novel, 2023  
 196,143 words

*All rights available*

*Meat Grinder* was nearly completed by the time the war in Ukraine began in February 2022. Conceived as a reflection on the pandemic, the narrative themes shifted from violence to guilt, and to PTSD. The war made these topics even more relevant, although the book is set in an alternate future where this war never happened.

2030. While studying the statistics of expanded suicides and self-destruction, big data analyst Kevin Mead notices that the spread dynamics of these incidents resemble the progression of a pandemic. However, he never manages to fully understand the nature of the disease that would later be named after him, as he falls victim to the virus, committing a horrendous suicide.

Among the novel's versatile cast there are Thierry and Sonia, a young couple spending their second honeymoon on *Pleasure Island*, a hidden tropical paradise; a gorgeous Michelle, an owner of a marketing agency in Paris, who had a bitter-sweet love affair with Thierry in the past, her teenage son Quentin, as well as her non-binary lover Vic; Sonia's parents, Russian-Jewish immigrants who have made a successful business in the US; Mirabel, a flight attendant suffering from alcoholism and nymphomania; Charlie Kumamoto, a Japanese-American marine stationed on the other side of *Pleasure Island*; participants and victims of the war in Yugoslavia who are futilely trying to forget their past and heal the wounds that have already been passed down to their children. All of them, in one way or another, will encounter Mead's disease as the epidemic swiftly spreads across the world.

Its first stage resembles the flu, the second — a transcendental trip, and in the third, an immense guilt emerges inside the afflicted individual, growing to a point where it becomes unbearable. This guilt could be towards parents, children, spouses and lovers, the underprivileged, the ravaged nature,

the victims of wars and outbreaks of violence. The feeling of unbearable guilt pushes the afflicted person to the edge, where suicide seems like the only way out.

However, not everyone succumbs to the disease. Some possess innate immunity for some, the disease takes a mild form, and others are saved by the arrival of a vaccine. But how safe is the vaccine itself? By safeguarding people from the sense of guilt, wouldn't the vaccine kill conscience itself?

The questions are many, and now, groups of religious extremists storm the medical lab building...

Despite its substantial volume the novel doesn't fit the mold of what is typically referred to as a "big Russian novel." This is a rare case when a Russian novel has little to do with anything Russian. The author is not interested in Russia, its history, or its problems. Among the cast of some thirty characters, only two have Russian roots, having long left their heritage behind. According to the author, Sergey Kuznetsov drew inspiration from books like *A Brief History of Seven Killings* by Marlon James, *Blood Meridian* by Cormac McCarthy, *2666* by Roberto Bolaño, and above all, *Infinite Jest*. The common denominator is the authors' intent to confront the reader with the unbearable: with depression, pain, suffering, and violence. *Meat Grinder* adds guilt and the torment of conscience to the mix.

In *Meat Grinder*, Sergey Kuznetsov stays true to his signature writing approach: the novel is a gaudy yet finely interlaced patchwork of life stories. Each individual voice is surgically pitched and masterly directed into a powerful symphony on modern-time ambiguities and fears. This is a brutal, frightening, and relentless book, but through the darkness a faint glimmer of hope still flickers.

Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2011**

Nominated for the **New Literature Award 2011**

Finalist of the **Big Book Award 2011**



AST  
2010  
Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)  
Novel, 2019  
608 pp

*Translation rights sold*  
World English Dalkey Archive Press  
Arabic AS Publishers

Complete  
English translation  
available

## The Round Dance of Water

From the man Arturo Pérez-Reverte has called “the most talented young Russian author” comes this extraordinary family saga, a journey into the depths of the human soul.

The *Round Dance of Water* is an intricately patterned portrait of three generations of a large family. In the narrative there is no division into primary and secondary characters: each individual fate bears significant weight and streams into the common flow of the turbulent history of the 20th century.

There’s Nikita Melnikov, 37, who runs a small aquarian design business. As he soaks in his young lover’s sweat, Maria, Nikita’s wife, is verging on despair, crushed by her fruitless attempts to conceive a child. She sees her barren body as a vessel for other people’s dramas, living through the grieves and sorrows of strangers and opening herself up to the tragedies of people she could never meet in the real world. They come to her in dreams, these strangers, and Maria, an unwilling witness, never imagines that the history of her own family could in fact be intertwined with these sad stories.

Alexander Brisov, Nikita’s 30-year old step-brother, is a gifted artist whose once anti-bourgeois escapist actions have now turned into frequent drinking bouts. In his bleak, vodka-infused fears, he is being dragged to the bottom by monsters and drowned men. He suspects that he knows who these ghosts are — they are the victims of the purges, arrested and interrogated in the 1930s by his grandfather Grigory Brisov, a member of the Russian nobility who became an NKVD officer to save his own and his family’s lives.

We also follow the life of Nikita’s and Alexander’s cousin. Anya, 33, is a single mother who works as a salesclerk in a shoe shop. A strong and independent young woman, she takes after her grandmother,

who served as a sniper in WWII. Shielding herself from attachments with the motto *Be afraid of no one, rely on no one* — and trouble can’t touch you, Anya is caught unprepared when her new lover offers to build a normal life together with her. Time here is like deep water separating people from different epochs; yet it is also numerous streams that flow from the past into modern days. Actions taken by the characters’ parents in the past echo decisions their children make in the present — strange parallels seen through the looking glass of the refracted surface of time.

As the finely pitched narrative moves between generations, locales, and times, so shifts the tone of the text. Each character’s story is told in part by themselves and as imagined by another member of the family, making for unexpected twists and discoveries. The journey into time and human psychology has also become a field for literary adventure for Sergey Kuznetsov. Written in a clear, elegant style, the novel is filled with literary allusions and is rich with cultural codes. The range of voices is diverse and broad — from Rudyard Kipling through Andrei Platonov and Daniil Kharmis, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the Strugatsky brothers; from canonic film noir to Japanese anime. The masterfully directed chorus is an outstanding accomplishment, a pure artistic delight, and the novel represents a genuine exploration of culture of the 20th century.

### Selected quotes

A whirlpool that drags a swimmer to the bottom, into death and oblivion, it is also a waterspout lifting one above the surface of life. Finally, it’s the eternal cycle we know about from our schooldays. Sergey Kuznetsov’s novel is a battle with the fear of death.

The recipe is simple: love those who are close to you, and remember that you are neither the beginning, nor the end. Yes, this unusual family saga also resembles a whirlpool, engulfing its readers and holding them till the last page.

An unusual chronicle of our time, of the past decades. It’s not only the story of various characters, not only a portrait gallery. This is a history of human passions, a “rounddance” of desire told in 108 chapters (an essential number in Buddhist culture).

*Echo of Moscow Radio*

**Leonid Yuzefovich**  
writer



Longlisted for **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2019**

Shortlisted for the **New Horizons Award 2019**



**Livebook**  
Novel, 2019  
340 pp

Complete  
English translation  
available

## Living and All Grown Up

Stranger Things in a Cold War times setting.

Living and All Grown Up is set in an alternative world where there is a border separating the living from the dead. There has been a war between the two; however, some forms of communication and cooperation exist. The general feeling is that a bad peace is better than a good war. However, the main characters struggle to find their standing and place their loyalties. Their choice is either to go with state propaganda or investigate the shadow areas and history of the conflict, to change the world and find a possibility for coexisting. Nicka, Marina, Leva, and Gosha are 13 years old, they live in a strictly ordered society of the living in the aftermath of the bloody war with the dead which split the known world in two. They are taught that the dead are the enemy, every contact is forbidden and labeled treason. However, technologies, consumer goods, gossip, and movies trickle into the world of the living, and are of great value and interest. What's across the Border? Should the teenagers trust the adults that all the dead are evil? Or is there more to this black and white order of things?

When the friends stumble upon an opportunity to communicate with a teenage dead how can they resist? They become friends with Mike who showers them with knowledge of the world of the dead. New gadgets, languages and jargon, new interpretation of the known historical events and social order — Nicka, Marina, Leva, and Gosha are sponging the information. How come their deadly enemy is just like them? He even falls in love with Marina although this is strictly forbidden — there is no time in the world of the dead and Mike will never age.

This seemingly innocent exchange and blossoming friendships turn out to be a trap. The group of friends incidentally help to breach the border and come under attack of zombies and other evil creatures. Their interaction has been flawed all along — scheming adults have been trying to use it to gain control of both worlds. Will they be able to restore the balance?

The reader can easily see through the allusions of the two depicted world — one is controlled, grim and propaganda-driven, the other seductive in its abundance but seemingly soulless and submerged in consumerism. Meaningless consumption and money as the only true value vs ascetic idealism and propaganda. The conflict is recognizable as of the two conflicting ideologies.

This is an adventure and action-packed novel about growing up and making one's mind, making tricky decisions and taking responsibility. Each of the teenagers becomes a hero in their own way, not just by fighting zombies but also making everyday choices that will define their future selves. With likable characters and recognizable conflicts, the novel can be read as a tense YA horror and espionage thriller or a musing on the everlasting issues of death, loyalty and freedom of will.

### Selected quotes

This is a story of real friendship, about coming of age, about first love, ethical choices and cynicism, of frankness and betrayal. It also tells that when you are an adult many things look different from what they appeared at the first sight. And it also tells that you should never despair and drop hopes to change the world.

*Vasiliy Vladimirovsky*  
*Mir Fantastiki*

Two worlds, introduced by the author, still surround us these days.

*Vladimir Larionov*  
*a critic*



#### About the author:

**YANA LETT** was born in 1992 in Moscow and graduated from the Philology Faculty of Moscow State University. She is a teacher of Russian language, literature, and creative writing. Yana Lett has been writing in different genres – books for children, YA fantasy, techno-fantasy, new weird fiction and magical realism. She is the author of eight books of prose that received nominations and won several national awards since 2018, gaining her wide recognition among the young and adult readership alike. Since 2022 Yana Lett has resided in Mauritius.

#### Selected quotes

Yana Lett is one of the most promising young Russian science fiction writers. With each new book, her talent unfolds in a fresh way: she can write for both teenagers and adults, delve into deep psychological traumas, and craft thrilling adventures, all with equal persuasiveness.

*Vasily Vladimirskiy*  
 a literary critic

Yana Lett finds ways to surprise even the most seasoned reader.

*Mir Fantastiki*

#### Selected Bibliography

- 2023 — **Preparators. The Heart of Frost. Book2**, *novel*
- 2022 — **Preparators. The Hawk's Calling. Book1**, *novel*
- 2020-2022 — **World of Gaps**, *trilogy*
- 2021 — **Absence of Anna**, *novel*
- 2021 — **The Story of Seven Doors**, *children's book*

**The New Science Fiction 2018**

**Interpresscon Prize 2022**

**Finalist of RosCon 2021**

Longlisted for **The New Horizons Prize 2022**

Longlisted for **The New Horizons Prize 2023**

Longlisted for **The New Horizons Prize 2023**

No Sugar Press (AST)  
Novel, 2023  
576 pp

## Preparators. The Hawk's Calling. Book 1

The fans of Leigh Bardugo and George Martin will embrace this new striking universe of thrilling fantasy adventure, fascinating drama and intricate court scheming by Yana Lett, Russia's new bright voice in YA cross-over fiction.

On For many centuries, Kjertania has been bound by eternal ice. In the deadly and alluring Frost that surrounds the cities, only snitirs dwell — extraordinary creatures that exist simultaneously in two layers of reality. It is the snitirs — or, more precisely, parts of their bodies — that sustain life on the continent. Their hearts beat in place of train and car engines, and their eyes pierce the darkness instead of lanterns...

Only preparators — humans with special physical abilities — can hunt them. Their task is to kill the creature's spirit, keeping the body alive — so that its parts can be used for multiple purposes in Kjertania. Annually recruiters take off from the capital all over the country in search of young people who can meet the challenge of Frost as preparators. It is a rare luck when at least one person is found to pass the trial, but this year is different: three young villagers — confident and ambitious Sorta, smart and funny dreamer Ulm, tender and charming Missy — get enlisted on training for this honorable but deadly dangerous service. Each will demonstrate their unique skills during years of practice and all three will have to make decisions that shall define their life paths. What price must be paid for their chosenness, for unexpected and sometimes unwanted abilities?

Sorta demonstrates exceptional hunting skills and is assigned to work in pair with the greatest "hawk", Eric Chrome. He seems arrogant and cold, and Sorta assumes this is because he does not want to feel attachment to a new partner after a recent loss of his previous years-long hunter and friend. Yet this might be not

the only reason — Eric obviously has his own agenda in the court, and the more Sorta knows about Eric the more acute her choice between the loyalty to the service (and the royal court) and to her hawk becomes.

Ulm has always dreamt of exploring the world, and becoming a pilot of Kjertania's grandiose flying vessels would be a career to seek for. Yet his natural inquisitiveness and an eye for minute details is not left unnoticed by the state police, and he is recruited as a detective inspector's hand. When Ulm gets invited to the reception at the court together with other new recruits, he has no idea how his usual charms will work on the royal heiress, and that a small talk with a girl in the palace garden will take him not only into the heart of the princess but also in the center of the court's intricate politics.

Missy, too, falls under charms of a young man from Kjertania's elite. Naïve and open-hearted, she is prepared to sacrifice her career as a hunter to the promise of a family life. Yet does her boyfriend really want this sacrifice?

Yana Lett invites her readers onto a fascinating journey into a new world, filled with dark secrets, terrifying monsters, court intrigues and thrilling adventures. At once a coming-of-age story and a gripping thriller, this story probes on questions that young people often face. Can you fight against the system? What does it take to change your destiny by your own will? How do you choose between love and duty?

### Selected quotes

The world created by Yana Lett is intricate, logical, and detailed. It encompasses social inequality, trains crafted from snitir body parts, religious rituals, intrigues, epidemics, and smuggling. The writer has populated Kjertania with a good dozen prominent characters—complex, multidimensional, not reducible to typical fantasy archetypes.

**Galina Yuzefovich**  
*a literary critic*

A complex weird techno-fantasy with traces of magical realism and horror.

**Mir Fantastiki**

The book ends not even on a half-word but on a half-syllable, and the tension that had been building since the first chapters intensifies exponentially by the finale. After all, whatever can put an end to eternal cold, if it is even possible, is very distant. And the Frost is always very close.

*papmambook.ru*

I have always dreamt of writing a truly epic book — with an original and vivid world, a multitude of characters, and a multi-layered plot. 'Preparators' came to me as if the story had chosen me to be its storyteller. It's a tale of heroism and choice, loyalty and betrayal, death and love. I sincerely hope that I have been able to tell it as it deserves to be told, and that readers will love it as much as I do.

**Yana Lett**  
about Preparators



## About the author:

**VLADIMIR MEDVEDEV** was born in the Zabaikal region of Siberia but was brought up in Tajikistan, where he has spent most of his life. He has worked as a fitter, a newspaper correspondent, a photo reporter, a teacher in a village school, a laborer in a geological research group, and a literary editor. Medvedev is the author of numerous essays, novellas, and short stories published in literary magazines and a collection of short horror stories, *Hunting with Kukuj* (Limbus Press, St Petersburg, 2007). Medvedev's recognition as a prose writer came with his novel *Zahhak* (ArsisBooks, Moscow, 2017) that was shortlisted for The Yasnaya Polyana Award and The Russian Booker Prize 2017. The novel was translated into eight languages, including English, French and German.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2017 — **Zahhak**, *novel*

2007 — **Hunting with Kukuj**, *short stories*

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker 2017**

Finalist of the **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2017**

Finalist of **Prix Pierre-François Caillé de la traduction 2020** (France)

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker 2017**

Finalist of the **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2017**

Finalist of **Prix Pierre-François Caillé de la traduction 2020** (France)



#### ArsisBooks

Novel, 2017  
460 pp

*Translation rights sold*  
World English Old Street Publishing  
Polish Sonia Draga  
German Aufbau  
French Noir sur blanc  
Albanian Ombra  
Macedonian Bata Press  
Romanian Pandora  
Arabic AS Publishers

## Zahhak

Simultaneously an intense period drama, a page-turning thriller, and a brilliant poetic parable on the contagious nature of evil, *Zahhak* has resonated powerfully with a vast readership in Russia and indisputably became the brightest literary event in the year of its publication.

*Zahhak* is set during the most turbulent and violent period in Tajikistan's post-Soviet history — a civil war unleashed in the early 1990s. After the murder of her Tajik husband, a Russian widow and her teenage twins, Andrei and Zarina, need to run for their lives to Talhak, a tiny mountain village on the border with Afghanistan, where her husband's relatives and his former (or second) family live. Each day in the village turns into a struggle for survival thanks to food shortages, an exhausting and unfamiliar job, jealousy and undisguised hostility from the Tajik widow, a different language, and villagers' strange beliefs and traditions. All these mundane hardships, though, seem like small troubles when a local field commander with a gang of criminals calling themselves a military unit settle in the village. Zuhursho likes to appear in public in a military disguise with a huge snake on his shoulders — an homage to *Zahhak*, an evil snake-armed tyrant from Ferdowsi's epic poem, *The Shahnameh*. Just like his mythological role model, Zuhursho rules through methodically exercised terror and violence. He plans to plant opium poppies in the local fields, benefitting from the village's proximity to existing drug trafficking routes. Each villager is literally put face to face with the evil nature of power and forced to make uneasy and often impossible choices that could cost them their lives. The Russian family is drawn into the epicenter of terror when Zuhursho decides to make the Russian girl, Zarina, his wife.

*Zahhak* is told as a polyphonic tale: seven voices with original melodies meld into a dramatic symphony in the novel's climax. Sixteen-year-old Andrei learns to adapt to a swiftly shifting and sinister reality, desperate as he fails to help his mother and twin sister. Zarina, Andrei's twin, unwittingly triggers a chain of

tragic events and inevitably falls as their most miserable victim. The third voice belongs to their uncle Jorub, a local vet, whose views based on the respect of centuries-old traditions and understanding of natural laws collide with the evil chaos brought by Zuhursho and his accomplices. A village boy Karim, nicknamed Pumpkin, who's ridiculed by his fellow villagers and the bandits alike, falls in love with Zarina and cherishes the dream of marrying the girl. Generally a comic figure, Karim will play a tragic role in the novel's outcome, as he kills Zuhursho in revenge for his beloved. The fifth narrator is Oleg, a journalist from Moscow who spent his childhood in Tajikistan and has now returned to the country to interview the country's infamous leader, a "thief in law" named Bobo Sangak. Oleg gets stuck in Talhak and has to witness the atrocities of the local tyrant, with the vain hope of escaping and publishing the evidence. Then there's the enigmatic figure of Davron — an Afghan War veteran suffering from severe post-traumatic psychological issues. Arriving in Talhak as Zuhursho's military hand, Davron openly despises the village's chief, but adheres strictly to the promise he's made and receives orders as well as his own secret system of beliefs and fears. Last but not least is a local Sufi sheikh who was a doctor of philosophy at Moscow State University in the recent past but had to abandon his promising academic career, young wife, and busy lifestyle in the capital in order to inherit the position of village sheikh and Sufi teacher from his father.

With exceptional brilliance, Medvedev forms his characters from flesh and blood, leaving the reader with no choice but to gulp down each new chapter in the desperate hope that the characters will survive the war's meaningless meat grinder.

### Selected quotes

*Zahhak* is definitely one of the most important books of the year, and one of the best novels written in Russian in recent years... It is extremely difficult to live with this novel about the civil war in Tajikistan: each page, if not each line, makes one want to desert. Medvedev doesn't overuse physiological details and blood is shed in strict doses, but the novel's emotional tension and terror literally force readers out of the text. However — and the reader must accept this before beginning the book — the reader is highly unlikely to escape the novel's grip. <...> A poignant, gripping, disturbing, extremely terrifying — and at the same time indispensable — read.

*meduza.io*

*Zahhak* is the rare novel that contains everything in proper proportions: rich story, colorful texture, original characters' voices, good language, a smart mixture of the recent past with fiction, and even an allusion to the Iranian epos which gives the novel its somewhat

mysterious title. The novel tells of a historical period when borders between epochs, cultures, languages, good, and evil were swept away by the same avalanche, and when people were turned into strangers but had to stick together to survive. In short, this novel tells the story of any civil war that could occur in any place and at any time.

*Gorky.media*

*Zahhak's* diverse characters are cruel, naive, funny, dealing with violence and the emergence of de facto loyalties over the ruins of the Soviet state, while the never forgotten old feudal wars come to surface.

*Le Courrier (France)*

It was supposed to be an entertaining book. Yet how, against the background of the beginning of the civil war in Tajikistan the 90s? Vladimir Medvedev succeeded.

*Der Tag (Germany)*



About the author:

**NATALIYA MESHCHANINOVA** was born in 1982, is an acclaimed Russian film director. She has written screenplays for numerous feature films and TV shows, including *Another Year* (2014), *Arrhythmia* (2017), *Anna's War* (2018), and *Storm* (2019). Meshchaninova made her directorial debut in 2014 with *The Hope Factory*, which follows a group of troubled twenty-somethings in the industrial town of Norilsk. Her feature film *Anna's War* received the best film award from all major national film prizes. The autobiographical book *Stories of a Life* is Meshchaninova's first prose work. Originally written as a series of viral Facebook posts, then released as a cult hit in St. Petersburg, Meshchaninova's memoir-novel was nominated for the 2018 Russian National Bestseller Prize and became a finalist for the 2018 New Literature Award, receiving a heated response from the critical community and readers alike. Today it is almost unanimously considered a pillar of the #metoo movement in Russia.

### *Selected Bibliography*

2017 — **Stories of a Life**, *novel*

Finalist of the **Firecracker Award in Fiction 2023**

Winner of the **PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant 2020**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2018**

Shortlisted for the **New Literature Award 2018**

Finalist of the **Firecracker Award in Fiction 2023**

Winner of the **PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant 2020**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2018**

Shortlisted for the **New Literature Award 2018**



#### Seans

Novel, memoir, 2017  
128 pp

#### Translation rights sold

World English Deep Vellum  
Bulgarian Janet 45

#### Audio book rights

Vimbo Publishing

Complete  
English translation  
available

## Stories of a Life

From one of Russia's most celebrated film directors comes a book of raw, honest, punch-in-the-gut autobiographical stories about coming of age in a provincial town in the early 1990s. With unflinching honesty, grit, a close eye for the tiniest detail, and darkly tinted, self-deprecating humour that recall the work of David Sedaris, Meshchaninova produces devastatingly confessional prose about nonchalant teenage cruelty, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. *Stories of a Life*, however, is not just another contribution to a #MeToo choir — Meshchaninova's brisk and authentic tone turns her stories into a powerful tool to fight back against abusive realities.

*Stories of a Life* is shaped by the narrator's conflicting and knot-tight relationships with her mother. Meshchaninova worries about her mother's bad heart so is afraid to upset her; she is afraid of not being like her mother and is tortured by the fear of not being her real biological daughter... Natasha is facing the unnerving and harrowing truth about her mother's awareness of what Natasha's stepfather did to her, stalking the nine-year-old girl, whom he molested and raped at the age of twelve. At the book's end, in a story entitled Mom, Nataliya directly addresses her mother in a heartbreaking ode that accepts and embraces her mother's real self. Extremely frank and private, *Stories of a Life* is also a book of unvarnished portrayals of provincial life in Russia during the early 1990s. Meshchaninova documents a reality where a teenager must navigate a community with diffused borders and a sense of freedom reminiscent of *A Clockwork Orange*, plagued by mundane crime, addiction, and violence. Her text serves as

a coping mechanism that the narrator herself calls "literary exhibitionism". The book grows into the struggle of a girl coming of age in an aggressively non-congenial society. Meshchaninova does not offer commentary on her feelings and emotions, and she doesn't overstate the harsh experiences she had to cope with. In a laconic, raw, and minimalistic manner, she states her story and calls her readers as witnesses. Refusing to be a victim — though her experience as a 12-year-old teenager who was sexually abused by her stepfather is nothing less than being the victim of a crime — or a part of these brutal realities, Nataliya seeks power in the word, molding a different world in her texts, avenging her foes in diaries and notes, and watching her often graphic hatred-infused images come to life. Quite eerily the author states in the text, "whatever you write will come true".

### Selected quotes

(*Stories of a Life*) ... is a thinly veiled family memoir disguised as a fictional bildungsroman. Set in late-'90s, post-Soviet Russia, the novel explores the experience of growing up alongside everyday abuse — almost always gender-based, primarily sexual, just as often psychological as physical.

LARB

Tearing herself free with screams, taunts, and something very much like poetry, Meshchaninova has given us an obscenely private text as frightening as the novels of Stephen King and as sharply formed as the tragedies of Racine... it's not every year that a voice so pure and powerful emerges in Russian literature.

Galina Yuzefovich  
meduza.io

Meshchaninova's scenarios are skin torn to blood, pink glasses discarded as unnecessary, truth uncomfortable for the inhabitants of parallel reality.

Elena Tanakova  
Gallerix

The author, in general, is not trying to shock, she is simply not afraid to say. But this simultaneous openness and ruthlessness strikes with unexpected force and long action. Leads the reader out of their comfort zone. Makes him an involuntary and seemingly guilty observer.

Elena Makeenko  
Gorky Media

It is not often that people are ready to open up, and only the willingness to open up distinguishes real literature.

Aglaya Kurnosenko  
scriptwriter

This story is not about disaster, but about what happens to the survivors... This is the new Russian prose.

Vladimir Pankratov  
a literary critic, founder of Fiction35 Prize

About the author:

**YANA MOSKALENKO**, born 1997, holds two master's degrees in literature: from HSE University (Literary Craft) and Pompeu Fabra (Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Thought).

DEDICATED TO furthering her academic exploration into Russian literature, she began a PhD in Slavonic Studies at UCL (London) in 2024.

YANA CONTINUES to work in journalism, and with various cultural institutions that focus on Russian humanities and culture.



*"Captivating and compelling narrative"  
Maja Kucherskaya, writer*

#### Awards:

Anna Politkovskaya Prize 2023

Music Heart of the Theater National Award 2021

Snob Award, nomination Theater 2021





Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2024

444 pp

Translation rights sold

All rights available

Film rights

under offer

English sample  
available

## The Auction

Brokeback Mountain meet Total Recall in this riveting debut that asserts the emergence a strong new literary voice in Russia's young writers' scene. The Auction introduces a disturbing dystopian world, where souls have become a demanded trade item, with a poignant gay love story in its core.

Due to the legal bans of homosexual propaganda in Russia today, the published edition has been heavily censored by turning the complex gay relationship into a strong male bond. What we present to the international audiences is the original uncensored version.

In a world divided between the prospering City and the destitute Quarters the pursuit of eternal life has evolved into a booming industry.

At the centre of this world lies the City itself – affluent yet restrictive, safe and sterile to the point where swearing is a punishable offence. The City is encircled by a wall, beyond which sprawl the gritty and impoverished Quarters – free, wild and full of violence. Beyond Quarters are the Outskirts, with conditions so dire that people are forced to raise children for slaughter – upon reaching the age of 20, they are required to sell their soul.

These very souls are the City's foremost object of prestige-driven consumption, the primary substance of abuse, and the ultimate status game. A technology invented by the enigmatic scientist N. allows to transplant a soul from donor to recipient, where the recipient rejuvenates – while the donor dies. Yet once you embark on soul transplants, you enter a slippery slope, needing ever more transplants, each soul costing a fortune. And then there are side effects...

At the heart of it all stands the Auction House, selecting, selling, and transplanting souls – a focal point of the novel's intrigue revolving around main characters, each with an agenda and a quest of their own. Varlam, an intellectual prodigy, plucked from the grim alleys of the Quarters and groomed by N. to helm the Soul Bank, is calling the shots. Learning of the identity of the next recipient he sees an opportunity to exact revenge on Adrian, the new King of the Quarters, responsible

for his mother's death. With a cold resolve, he plots to use the person closest to Adrian as a soul donor.

Adrian, born and raised in the inner circle of the King of the Quarters, has only recently seized the power. Outwardly a ruthless thug determined to claim a soul to solidify his rule, he is still just a damaged kid capable of deep feelings, carefully preserving a secret that shapes his every ambition and action, to protect his best friend and the love of his life.

Together with Dante, his advisor and a former City dweller with a personal score to settle with N., they plot to destroy the Auction House, hoping to dismantle N.'s monstrous empire.

Lisa, once a brilliant pianist from a wealthy City family, now lives in the shadow of her shattered dreams. Haunted by the death of her older sister, Lisa's once-promising future was derailed by grief, leaving her with scars both visible and hidden. Fiercely idealistic and unwaveringly determined, she harbours a deep-seated contempt for the soul industry that dominates the City – a loathing that extends to Varlam, whom she blames for her sister's tragic end.

As their intertwined quests for vengeance unfold, Varlam, Adrian, Dante and Lisa must confront the moral cost of their actions. In a world where the line between life and death is blurred, they grapple with whether revenge is worth losing their humanity.

### Selected quotes

In *Never Let Me Go* Ishiguro tells a story about the lives of donors raised for organ transplants. In *The Auction*, it's like we're reading the second part of the story: this time, about those who benefit from such donation. And it seems they aren't having it easy either.

*Yana Vanger, writer*

World and time are essential elements of a successful novel, and Yana Moskalenko masterfully crafts both in her debut. The expansive and dark universe she creates is meticulously detailed; despite the story unfolding in a hypothetical future, you are completely convinced by its nuances. However, the novel's greatest strength lies in its characters. Varying greatly in speech, appearance, social status, and age, they are bound together by two powerful emotions: hatred and love. For each character, the author develops a unique voice and rhythm, allowing us to understand and empathize with them, regardless of how repulsive they may initially appear.

*Marina Stepnova, writer*

The standout feature of Yana Moskalenko's novel *The Auction* is its scale and originality. Beneath the fantastic plot lies a rich tapestry of philosophical questions – concerning the ethical boundaries of new technologies, the capabilities of artificial intelligence, and its ongoing competition with the human mind. Yet, perhaps even more profoundly, the novel explores the limits of humanity itself, probing where the human experience truly ends and begins. Exploring such complex issues can be daunting, yet Moskalenko skilfully sidesteps any pitfalls. The result is a captivating and compelling narrative that resonates on both aesthetic and substantive levels.

*Maya Kucherskaya, writer*

Within *The Auction* lies a complex and expansive story that, crucially, converges with a graceful precision. Only in hindsight do we recognize the absence of romantic air that surrounds it. This novel brims with an extraordinary vitality, setting it apart from the many others – pristine yet anaemic – that populate the landscape of contemporary Russian literature.

*Galina Yuzefovich, literary critic*



## About the author:

**VALENTINA NAZAROVA**, born 1986, is a Cyprus-based writer, scriptwriter and podcast writer. Nazarova studied creative writing at Northampton University, UK. Her debut book, *The Hidden Track*, written in English, was nominated for the National Bestseller Award, adapted for a web-film in a British-Russian co-production (directed by Bran Lye) and translated into eight languages, including German (Piper). Nazarova's second novel, *The Cookies*, is a thriller focused on crimes in IT and Internet advertising.

*Ritual* is Nazarova's third thriller, originally written for Storytel Original audio series. Valentina co-wrote a TV series script based on the novel. Nazarova's recent novel *Before Dawn* secured her position as a leading voice in thriller genre in Russia. Film adaptation rights have been sold and Nazarova is developing a script based on her work.

Together with her brother Timofey, Valentina runs a popular podcast on true crime – *The Hills Have Podcast*. Her biggest passions are indie rock, music festivals, and true crime. Nazarova lives in Cyprus, with her husband, two dogs and a ginger cat.

*Selected Bibliography*

2022 — **Before Dawn**, *novel*

2019 — **The Ritual**, *trilogy, novels*

2018 — **Cookies**, *novel*

2016 — **The Hidden Track**, *novel*

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2016, 2018, 2020**

Manuscript of the **Year Award 2015**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2016****Winner Manuscript of the Year Award 2015****AST**

Novel, 2016  
384 pp

*Translation rights sold*

German Piper  
Finnish Into Kustannus  
Estonian Tammeraamat  
Hungarian Könyvmolyképző Kiadó  
Latvian Lauku Avize  
Czech Omega  
Polish Sonia Draga  
Arabic AS Publishers

*Film rights sold*

English language web series released in 2019, directed by Brian Lye

Complete  
English translation  
available

## The Hidden Track

Fans of *The Girl on the Train* will devour this absorbing mystery fuelled by guitar riffs and famous Glastonbury mud. With an atmosphere of growing unease, a gloomy setting in stagnant suburban England, and confronting overlapping stories of the unreliable narrators and its delusive plot's twists, *The Hidden Track* enters the brazen world of modern rock-n-roll from backstage, welcoming its bedazzled readers to explore the nature of blood ties, talent, fandom, and betrayal.

Twenty-one-year-old Nika Lukina is a foreign exchange student in London. She's bright and bubbly and has everything all figured out... or at least she's faking it really well. Nika has a secret. When she was thirteen, her beloved older sister Jenya went missing in a small town in the Midlands. The only thing that Nika has left of Jen is her collection of iconic indie rock albums. Those bands shaped Nika's personality and her perception of beauty, love, life, and her own self.

She tries not to think about what happened until one day, just before the Easter break at unil the past catches up with her in a terribly gruesome way, leaving Nika no choice but to find out what really happened to her sister. Nika posts a blurred video from Glastonbury'07 on her Facebook page in hope that someone might recognize her sister's face. After she receives a quick response from a woman who claims to have been Jen's best friend, Nika takes a train to Notown, the town where her sister lived.

With its abandoned factory buildings turned into lofts, dusty for sale signs on display, and a growing sense of desperation in the air, Notown is a disturbing place to be. The only valuable thing that Nika gains from the meeting with her sister's friend is a shoebox full of Jen's stuff, with an old iPod, among other things. Nika is about to leave the town for good when she receives another message from someone who knew her sister. Nika decides to stay for just one night and rents a room above the old live music pub where her sister worked as a bartender.

The more people she meets and the more questions she asks, the clearer the image of her sister becomes. And Jen wasn't the person Nika always thought her to be.

Jen used to hang out with a local indie rock band called The Red Room. In fact, she dated the lead singer, a sweet and tender hooligan named Chris. A local legend, Chris was meant to become the next Jagger, but he fell out with his best friend, the songwriter and lead guitarist Marc, and quit the band on the same night that Jen went missing.

Nika soon realizes that the band's history is deeply entangled with her sister's disappearance and the only way to discover the truth would be to break into the upcoming Glastonbury Festival, which the The Red Room are headlining.

Haunted by the songs on Jen's iPod and the ghosts of the 'good old days' that everyone in Notown seems to be reminiscing about, Nika sets off on a journey that is far more dangerous than she could have ever imagined. Written as a sequence of Facebook messages that the protagonist exchanges with her sister, the investigation propels itself through the stagnant streets of the suburban Midlands to the heart of England's brazen modern rock-n-roll scene. With her hope for a reply vanishing, Nika keeps telling her missing sibling about the course of the investigation, the people she meets, and the songs she listens to along the way.

### Selected quotes

[*The Hidden Track*] is at once a captivating exploration of the call of blood, of an audacious rock-n-roll scene, the unembellished basement world of suburban England, and the modern.

**Pavel Rudnev**

*Chekhov Moscow Art Theater*

The genre of the novel is mixed in just the right way: part mystery investigation with a sibling looking for a missing sister as an amateurish detective; part personal journal; part excursion into the backstage world of show business and indie music... This is also a story about a common British life, interesting for its narrator's perspective — it is told not by a suburban dude, but by a stranger.

**snob.ru**

*The Hidden Track* has everything to grab a teenager's attention: music, lots of music and musicians, reckless hanging out, spontaneous penniless trips, finding new bright acquaintances and experiences, major music festivals, and a personal, carefully hidden, pain.

There's also suspense that grips until the last page.

And, of course, love that's possible only at the age of seventeen — wrong, and depriving you of will and mind, but a million times bigger than yourself. This novel is up-to-date, action-packed, and cool.

**kultur-multur.ru**

The novel reads in a flash and is the ideal recipe for those who spend much time on social networks, want to explore life to the fullest, and know who The Libertines are.

**foodika.ru**

A novel that genuinely surprises and excites. A rocketing, modern, gripping text that competes on a level with international bestsellers. True descriptions, free of clichés, brilliant dialogue, lively characters, language that neither shocks with an overdose of youth jargon nor locks itself into dull literary embellishments. An ingenious writer's freedom is a rare achievement for a debut work.

**Echo Moscow**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2018**


**Eksmo**  
 Novel, 2018  
 380 pp

*Translation rights sold*  
 Czech Omega

## Cookies

A corporate thriller with a painfully topical focus on the Internet personal information insecurity turns into an urban noir mystery into a sweeping crime road story and, eventually, into a blood-curdling psycho thriller — in this mind-exploding literary puzzle from a rocketing star in Russia's genre scene.

Serge is an ordinary guy you meet in a corporate office — a computer geek in his late twenties, who resets an email password or gets you a new keyboard. No one would ever guess that Serge survived through a terrible experience in his past that let him scarred for life. Haunted by the ghost of his lost love, Serge carries a perfectly routine but lonely life. He works in an IT department of a London-based company, dresses smartly, cycles to work, eats takeaways, and plays video games. Sometimes, he stays online for the night in a chat with his only friend — in fact, a randomly matched gamer in an online shooter. They don't know each other's real names, they never talk about personal things and yet, when Tron disappears from the chat, Serge sets off on a journey to find his missing friend.

Shortly before disappearance Tron hinted that he came into possession of some extremely sensitive data that, if the word gets around, presents a potential threat to his life. Serge's initial investigation reveals that his friend seems to have fled London for a tiny village in the Northern France. Serge takes an afternoon off work and flies over — only to find his only friend with a bashed-in skull. Local police call the crime a burglary gone wrong, but Serge senses foul play.

The few pieces of evidence in his possession point that Tron — who turns out to have been a high-profile computer engineer — was connected to top managers of major IT corporations. By the time Serge is certain that people behind his friend's murder plan to get rid of him as an unwanted witness — someone has broken into his London flat. Guided by Tron's note of an appointment with a lady named Lisa at a time of world's largest IT and mobile convention and a polaroid picture where Tron stands along with two girls, Serge takes off for Barcelona to meet the mysterious Lisa who might be the only clue to his investigation.

Lisa shares a story of her late boss, a beautiful and successful woman named Rita, chief marketing officer of a scandalous dating app — and the other girl from the photograph. Her accidental death after a huge convention afterparty in the previous year left the industry in shock. Now both Rita and Serge see the connection between the death of the young woman and the murder of his friend. Lisa remembers that shortly before death her boss blackmailed owners of the controversial dating app with her access to the clients' personal information from the app database. She schemed to use the threat as a tool for a corporate promotion. With the help of a newly found confidant and ally, Serge starts digging to be soon confronted with a strong resistance, which could mean only one thing — they must be on the right track.

As the chase after shadowy secrets of the modern IT industry fastens and the mist in noir tiny streets of Barcelona thickens, Serge loses control over demons from his past. Under pressure and emotional tension, the two women — the one he once lost and the one whom he's about to lose if they don't solve the murderous conspiracy — blend into one. But this time everything will be different, Serge knows he will fight against the whole world but will not let the woman of his dreams abandon him again.

The second novel by Nazarova allows naming the author's trademark narrative manners — the defeated expectancy and completely unpredictable plot twists. What starts as a slowburning corporate thriller gradually transforms into an urban city noir to a sweeping road story and, eventually, the rollercoaster of a psycho thriller. Valentina Nazarova masters at keeping readers aghast at each new turn of the novel's page.

**Clever publishers**

Novel, 2020

382 pp

**Audio book rights sold**

Storytel Original audio series, 8x50min

**Film rights sold****TV series under development**

## The Ritual

Imagine DARK/The OA in the world of the Russian North where civilization and native mythology meet to create a grim, twisted, mind-bending thriller with a coming-of-age/identity crisis drama at its core.

A small town in the primeval forests of Karelia. The mine that provided the whole town with jobs has shut down, and it is only a question of time before the whole settlement will be abandoned. A group of teens come up together to perform a mock ritual on a sacred stone of Saami, the native people of Karelia. During the ritual the friends quarrel, and a girl ironically spells a curse on the others, asking the ancient demons of the woods to take her away from this place no matter how high the price of her wish might be.

However, a bad joke turns out to be a true nightmare. Every teen involved in the ritual dies within a few years, one by one.

Nastya, who made a curse, seems to be unaware — she fled the town soon after the ritual and moved to St. Petersburg to start a new life and never come back. In St. Petersburg, Nastya studies creative writing at the university and works at a coffee shop as many other students do. But deep within her she is terrified that she might repeat the story of her mother, whose schizophrenia landed her in a clinic. Was it really a schizophrenia or a 'polar psychosis', a weird form of mysterious possession inherent to the native peoples of the Russian North?

Misha (17) is a half-blood: his mother is Russian, and the father he hardly remembers is Saami. Since birth, he feels an outcast for Russians and Saami alike, mocked by fellow kids and even by his elder brother, Petya. When the rite happens, Petya makes his little brother go away, so Misha doesn't witness what happened there. But when he finds his brother's body in the woods (official investigation comes to the conclusion that wolves are to blame, but locals know — no

wolves have been noticed in the neighborhood for years) Misha realizes that he and Nastya are the only ones who survived three years after the ritual. Nastya should be the key, so Misha heads to St. Petersburg to bring Nastya back and find ways to stop the curse.

When the ghosts from Nastya's past show up in St Petersburg, the girl has to face questions she has been avoiding for so long. Nastya has to find out if she's 'psychotic' or if her body has actually been taken away from her by a demon. Or maybe she's just a scared girl who fights the consequences of trauma she'd been supplanting so fiercely that she managed to forget it at all. But forgetting does not equal overcoming.

Nastya will return to the Stone and find out what really happened there.



## About the author:

**LUDMILLA PETRUSHEVSKAYA** was born in Moscow in 1938. Petrushevskaya studied journalism at Moscow State University, and began writing prose in the mid '60s. Her first work was published in 1972, only to be followed by almost ten years of officially enforced silence, when the publication of her plays and prose was forbidden. At that time Petrushevskaya earned her living by working as a radio and television journalist and contributing to newspapers and literary magazines. When her somber and disturbing absurdist plays were finally staged, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya became widely recognized as one of Russia's finest playwrights. A collection of short stories and monologues, *Immortal Love*, was published in 1988 and met with stunning success among readers and critics alike. In 1992 Petrushevskaya's novel *The Time Is Night* was short-listed for the Russian Booker Prize; it was translated into more than 30 languages and included in college courses as one of the most important novels of the 20th century. Since then, Petrushevskaya has published over 30 books of prose. Today, award-winning plays by Petrushevskaya are produced around the world, while her prose pieces have been published in more than 30 countries. Ludmila Petrushevskaya is considered to be the only indisputably canonical writer currently at work in Russia today. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's recent publications have established her reputation with a new generation of readers as a master of the mystical thriller and short stories of magical realism. The New York Times bestseller *There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy Tales* (published by Penguin in 2010) won the World Fantasy Award and was one of New York magazine's Ten Best Books of the Year and one of NPR's Five Best Works of Foreign Fiction.

In 1991, Petrushevskaya was awarded the Pushkin Prize by the Alfred Toepfer Foundation in Germany. She has also received prizes from the leading literary journals in Russia. Petrushevskaya's novels *The Time Is Night* and *Number One...* were short-listed for the Russian Booker Prize. In 2002, Petrushevskaya received Russia's most prestigious prize, *The Triumph*, for lifetime achievement. Petrushevskaya's play *Bifem* was awarded the first prize at the New Drama Festival in 2003. In 2003 Ludmilla Petrushevskaya was awarded the State Prize of Russian Federation, in November 2021 Petrushevskaya publicly turned down this prize in protest against an imposed closure of The Memorial human rights organization. The World Fantasy Award was received in 2010 for the short stories collection published by Penguin in USA. In 2018 Petrushevskaya received The Big Book Award for life-time achievement, in 2019 the author was awarded New Literature Award (NOS), in critics' choice nomination. The national drama recognition award *The Golden Mask* has been awarded to Petrushevskaya in 2020 for life-time achievement. In 2022 Petrushevskaya continued to reside in Russia while fearlessly and severely protesting against dictatorship.

## Selected Bibliography

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>2022 — <b>Queen Lear. Magical Tales</b>, <i>short stories</i></p> <p>2020 — <b>The Wedding Night, or May 37th</b>, <i>plays</i></p> <p>2017 — <b>Kidnapped. A Story in Crimes</b>, <i>novel</i></p> <p>2017 — <b>Travels on the Occasion of Death</b>, <i>a novella, short stories</i></p> <p>2013 — <b>There Once Lived a Girl Who Seduced Her Sister's Husband and He Hanged Himself</b>, <i>short stories</i></p> <p>2010 — <b>There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby</b>, <i>short stories</i></p> | <p>2006 — <b>The Little Girl from the Metropol</b>, <i>autobiography</i></p> <p>2004 — <b>Number One or in the Gardens of Other Possibilities</b>, <i>novel</i></p> <p>2002 — <b>A Black Coat</b>, <i>short stories</i></p> <p>2002, 2015 — <b>Piglet Pyotr</b>, <i>children's picture books</i></p> <p>1999 — <b>Real-Life Tales</b>, <i>short stories</i></p> <p>1996 — <b>The Collected Works</b> (<i>5 volumes</i>)</p> <p>1992 — <b>The Time Is Night</b>, <i>novel</i></p> <p>1988 — <b>Immortal Love</b>, <i>short stories</i></p> |
|---|---|



## Complete list of prizes and awards

The Pushkin Prize by the **Alfred Toepfer Foundation 1991** (Germany)

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 1992**

**The Triumph Prize 2002**

**The New Drama Festival** (first prize) **2003**

**The State Prize of the Russian Federation 2003**

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 2004**

**The Gogol Prize 2008**

**The Bunin Prize 2008**

**The World Fantasy Award 2010** (USA)

Finalist of **The National Book Critics Circle Award 2017** (USA)

**The Big Book Award 2018** (for the life-time achievement)

**The New Literature Award 2018** (Critics' Choice)

**The Golden Mask Award 2020** (for the life-time achievement)



## Selected quotes

One of Russia's best living writers.

*The New York Times*

We are likely to hear a lot more of his woman. Some October, perhaps, from the Nobel Prize committee.

*Nation*

Petrushevskaya is a strikingly original author.

*The Guardian*

In her best work Petrushevskaya steers a sure course between neutrally recording the degraded life of the Soviet-era urban underclass and ratcheting up the squalor of that life for the mere pleasure of it. She does so by the steadiness of her moral compass and the gaiety of her prose.

*J. M. Coetzee*

*winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature*

Thrillingly strange... Brilliantly disturbing... proves that the literary tradition that produces Dostoevsky, Gogol, and Babel is alive and well... Petrushevskaya writes instant classics.

*The Daily Beast*

Petrushevskaya is the Tolstoy of the communal kitchen... She is not, like Tolstoy, writing of war, or, like Dostoevsky, writing of criminals on the street, or, like poet Anna Akhmatova or novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, noting the extreme suffering of those sent to the camps. Rather, she is bearing witness to the fight to survive the everyday... [She is] dazzlingly talented and deeply empathetic.

*Slate*

The writing is beautifully controlled and the spirit large... She deserves a wide readership.

*TLS*

...a strong talent.

*Kirkus Review*

The auras of Samuel Beckett and the baleful Albanian magic realist Ismail Kadare blend in Petrushevskaya's work.

*Booklist*

Finalist of **The National Book Critics Circle Award 2017 (USA)****The Gogol Prize 2008**Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2007****Amphora**An autobiographical novel, 2006  
103 pp*Translation rights sold*

English (US) Penguin  
 French Christian Bourgois  
 Lithuanian Vaga  
 Romanian Meteor  
 German Schoeffling  
 Italian Brioschi Editore  
 Arabic Almada Group  
 Portuguese (Brazil) Companhia das Letras  
 Simplified Chinese Shanghai Readers' Culture  
 Czech Pistorious&Olshanska  
 Malayalam (India) Green Books  
 Turkish Fol Kitap

Complete  
 English translation  
 available

## The Little Girl from the Metropol

This is not a typical fiction memoir. Through the prism of the story of her family, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya draws a compelling portrait of the era of communist Russia.

With brilliant precision and telling details, Petrushevskaya draws a gallery of portraits of the Muscovite intelligentsia as they struggle to survive in the new-pov-erty-stricken and ignorant-country. The author recalls her beautiful grandmother, whom the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky was in love with; her great-aunt, lover of head-of-state Mikhail Kalinin; and her grandfather, a celebrated linguist, one of the fathers of the Moscow linguistic circle. These characters are set next to violent and ruthless neighbors who attack Ludmilla's grandmother with an axe when she wants to use the bathroom in their communal flat, and beat Ludmilla if she is found rummaging in their slop-pail for the remains of

food. The 8-year-old girl grows up in the company of fatherless boys, homeless beggars and war invalids that crowded the streets of Saratov (then Kuibyshev), where her family lived as evacuees during the war.

As the story of a small girl in the hungry post-war years unfolds, the fate of the enormous country appears before the reader — a country where the magical is intertwined with the mundane, beautiful and refined neighbor with terrible ones, and despair with hope. A family forest grows out of Petrushevskaya's memoir, one in which each tree is at once "a child, a parent, and a personality."

### Selected quotes

Powerful... Like a stained-glass Chagall window, Petrushevskaya's Soviet-era memoir creates a larger panorama out of tiny, vivid chapters, shattered fragments of different color and shape... [It] brings to mind Auden's famous words about Yeats: 'Mad Ireland hurt him into poetry.' This memoir shows us how Soviet life hurt Ludmilla Petrushevskaya into crystalline prose.

*The New York Times Book Review*

[An] extraordinary memoir... Lively, bold, iconoclastic... [Petrushevskaya] has succeeded Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as the country's greatest writer and authentic moral voice.

*Orlando Figes*

*The New York Review of Books*

A gritty, surprisingly disarming portrait of the grim Stalinist era.

*BBC*

*"Ten Books You Should Read in February"*

Devastating, unjudgmental, and curiously uplifting, the memoir is a profound testament to the power of the creative, loving human spirit to vanquish brutal circumstance... The stories she tells... show a girl of unerodable pride and defiant character, intent on finding joy.

*The Christian Science Monitor*

Petrushevskaya is blessed with good material... [Her] sunny outlook seems all the more remarkable as we learn more details of her childhood, some of which might read as straight out of the Brothers Grimm... A preternaturally nimble and resourceful heroine, she keeps emerging unscathed... Her memoir has the fairy-tale ending its plucky heroine deserves.

*Bookforum*

Biting but beautiful, it's an autobiography that says much about the world both then and now.

*Refinery29*

A well-crafted glimpse into the past of one of Russia's most intriguing writers... Spare, often darkly humorous... Many memories have a touch of the magic Petrushevskaya includes in her fiction... Her perspective is decidedly original.

*BookPage*

A terse, spirited memoir that reads like a picaresque novel... Lively, irreverent... With spunk and defiance, [Petrushevskaya] survived, and transcended, the privations of her youth.

*Kirkus Reviews*

A blend of dark humor and clipped, piercing realism... Petrushevskaya is the definition of incorrigible and indomitable, both on the page and in her life.

*Publishers Weekly*



The New Literature Award 2017 (critics' choice)



**Eksmo**  
Novel, 2017  
320 pp

*Translation rights sold*  
World English Deep Vellum  
Turkish Fol Kitap  
Norwegian Solum  
Macedonian Antolog  
Bulgarian Colibri  
Danish Silkefyret  
Hungarian Typotex

Complete  
English translation  
available

## Kidnapped. A Story in Crimes

Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, Russia's greatest living absurdist and surrealist writer, The New York Times bestselling and The World Fantasy Award winning author of scary fairy-tales, has written a traditional family drama meet a burlesque social satire, enveloped in a Bollywood soap-opera plot.

Set in the 1980s through 1990s, the novel focuses on the life of Alina, 21y.o., a promising language student who has to drop her academic career because of an unplanned pregnancy. Alina decides to give up a baby for adoption after birth and is set to leave the hospital alone. In the hospital she meets another girl, Masha, a graduate from the Moscow Institute of Foreign Affairs, who is happily looking forward to the childbirth and speaks up of her life plans with the husband, Sergei, (he, too, is a future diplomat) in a republic in South Asia. Their family has been chosen for work in the Soviet trade mission there — a fantastic career for young specialists.

Masha dies in childbirth, and Alina who delivers her baby at the same time, on an impulse exchanges bracelets with newborns' names between the babies — she wishes a brighter future for her own son, and believes that the widowed father will still take the baby along abroad, away from the dull Soviet reality. By then Alina feels connected with her baby and feels sorry for Masha's newborn son, and she agrees to breastfeed both babies while in the hospital. Soon Alina is told that her boy died from infection, but she is the only one who knows that her son is alive, since she exchanged the names bracelets. What she does not know, however, is that the baby did not die as reported — the management in the hospital have long worked out a scheme to ease the trade of babies left for adoption — and that the buyer chose her boy (listed as Masha's son) and the management unscrupulously exchanged the bracelets with names again.

Sergei is devastated, Masha's death puts his career plans on threat — only married couples enlist for a foreign service. He approaches Alina with an offer to take

over his dead wife's identity and to travel together with his baby. Alina, who is certain that Sergei's son is her own biological baby, agrees. She cannot even imagine what the future has in stock for her — there will be sexual and physical abuse from the spiteful factitious husband; survival against all odds in unthinkable circumstances in the strange country; a miraculous reunion with her own son in Moscow; struggling for living with two kids and without income or work in the turbulent 1990s. What Alina is certain about when she accepts Sergei's unscrupulous offer is that she will learn to be a good mother.

Petrushevskaya's impeccable style reaches its heights in the writer's chef-d'oeuvre. The author's exceptional command in rendering direct speech of her characters fills archetypical heroes with life and volume, while the high-pitch tension involves readers to otherwise stereotypical, if not trite, conflicts. The flamboyant cast of characters — girls who blackmail their future husbands with pregnancy; a father-in-law who banishes newlyweds in case they might claim rights for a flat in Moscow; a husband who is ready to exchange his dead wife for a stranger for the career's sake; staff of maternity hospital who trade children left for adoption, documenting them as dead; a whimsical elderly lady who falls in love with an old handicapped genius artist; Alina's former college mates with their lovers; Sergei's driver building his private paradise in an offshore country and his wife, nicknamed Kustodiev, with a certainly distinguished figure — they all form a grand choir singing a hymn to the motherhood, a driving force of Petrushevskaya's universe, where everyone is a criminal and a victim, and the author feels compassion for each.

### Selected quotes

The best novel of the year, in every page there's more wit and talent than in the whole contemporary Russian prose, everyone forgive me. Written with much physiology, humor, the novel is at times scaring, always fascinating and precise from a playwright's perspective.

**Dmitry Bykov**  
*the nationally-awarded author of The Living Souls*

The scope is epic — the world of Petrushevskaya has no division between important and secondary events, main characters and the rest; each character is measured in scale of fate, the light from cosmos flowing equally though everyone <...> The new moment in this apotheosis of the "matriparchy" is that the great mother, the main hero in Petrushevskaya's fiction, includes this time both mothers and grandmothers who save other's children not only from death but also from the orphanhood.

Kidnapped is an inventive novel — a hymn to building a family on one's own terms, whatever form that family takes.

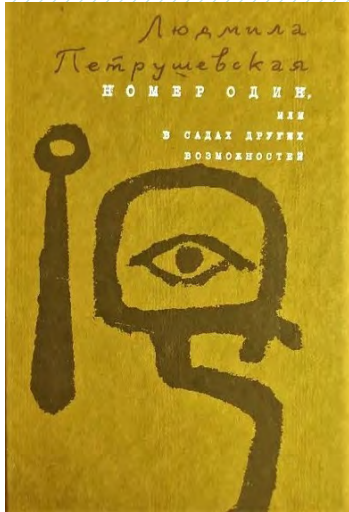
**Foreword Reviews**

...there's plenty of cutting satire of corruption in late- and post-Soviet Russia. This irreverent and absurdist outing will keep readers guessing to the very end.

**Publisher's Weekly**

Kidnapped is a cold war soap opera par excellence, replete with spies, Angolan freedom fighters, and student dormitories filled with the many nationalities of the Soviet Union. <...> Bipolar or multipolar, it is still a man's world. People are still just schemers and strivers, Petrushevskaya tells us, claiming whatever and whomever they want as their own. Such stark, sobering truths are not incompatible with a happy ending.

**NYRB**



**Eksmo**  
 Novel, 2004  
 336 pp

*Translation rights sold*  
 Polish Bertelsmann

## Number One, or in the Gardens of Other Possibilities

This rich and complex Cajun brew of a novel from “one of Russia’s best living writers” (The New York Times) opens up new textual realms — a true feast for Petrushevskaya’s devoted readers and inquisitive minds alike.

The bullet-paced, breathtaking narrative opens with a brilliantly rendered dialogue between a research fellow (Number One) and the director of an ethnographic research institute (Number Two). Ivan (Number One), an underpaid, enthusiastic scientist, father of a handicapped child and clandestine creator of a computer game called *In The Gardens of Other Possibilities*, reports the results of his last expedition to the settlements of the nearly extinct Antti people, whose beliefs and myths merit international scientific attention. Number One plays a recording of the incantations of the powerful shaman of the Antti, who is an adept in the transmigration of souls and knows the way to the evil world of the dead. Ivan has to persuade the director to find 5,000 US dollars in ransom money for his colleague Kukharev, kidnapped during the expedition. Ivan fails to return to the settlement with the money — he is robbed, and the violent pursuit of the thieves ends in the double murder of Ivan and Valery, one of the criminals. Instead of dying, Ivan finds himself in the body of the thief — and in the centre of the grim

reality of the criminal world of Russia’s provinces. As Valery’s body suppresses the consciousness of the intellectual researcher and determines Ivan’s actions, the intricately concocted story escalates into a blood-curdling thriller.

Petrushevskaya’s unsurpassed mastery in rendering the linguistic personalities of the intellectual and the thief, and the dense, concentrated narrative that is the author’s signature technique, open up new textual realms. In the fictional world of Petrushevskaya, the boundaries between the real and the surreal, between everyday existence and the reality of a computer game, are blurred, and her heroes wander along the “forked paths” in the “gardens of other possibilities” that spiral into endless limbos of personal and social hells in modern Russia. The author brilliantly masters the shifts between an absurdist play through mystical thriller to social drama, putting forward the ontological oppositions of body vs. soul, living vs. being, and drawing a compelling portrait of an almost-extinct Russian intelligentsia.

### Selected quotes

The reader’s perception of the text is intentionally frustrated; the brilliant narrative technique confronts and confounds (in a Joycean manner) us. <...> The concentration of the macabre surpasses everything previously published in Russia.

*Russian Journal*

A text of frenzied energy and passion. <...> One of the brightest literary events of the year.

*ej.ru*

This is the unpredictable and harrowing story of a soul that travels between bodies and at the same time tries to solve its numerous problems.

*Private Time Magazine*

Petrushevskaya prepares her plot with a dissector’s precision.

*Afisha*

Petrushevskaya has conveyed the nightmare of identity and the question “Who am I?” hanging in mid-air, unanswered, with consummate skill, in the best traditions of David Lynch.

*Vash Dosug*

In Number One the evil is not the private prerogative of a single person — it becomes a common denominator of life.

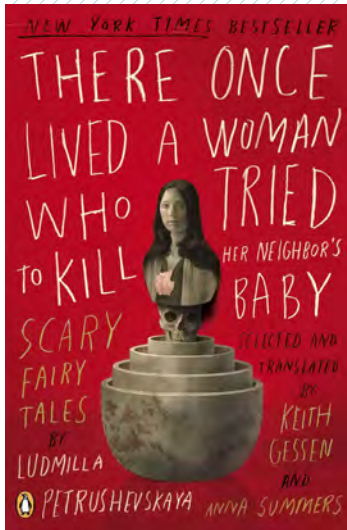
*Itogi Magazine*

The World Fantasy Award 2010

One of The New York magazine's 10 Best Books of the Year 2009

One of NPR's 5 Best Works of Foreign Fiction 2009

The New York Times  
Bestseller  
Amazon.com Bestseller  
in translated fiction



## There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbors' Baby

A master of the short story genre, heir to the spellbinding tradition of Poe and Gogol, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya dazzles the imagination with explorations of death, love, space, time and identity. This is an invitation to travel along a "shadowy borderland between reality and nightmare", one not to resist.

In her mystical scary stories that at once recall Kafka, Borges and Gogol, Petrushevskaya pictures the deprived and desperate — orphans, childless women, lonely elderly people — in search of love and happiness, in their struggle for life. The fantastic (magical transformations, resurrection of the dead, living dolls and magical objects) merges here into reality, authentically captured by the author. Petrushevskaya's signature prose, harrowing and painfully sensitive, seems to strip off your skin, making your naked nerves shudder at the touch of this fictional reality that is much too close for comfort.

Here is a childless woman who grows a girl in a cabbage (The Cabbage-Patch Mother), or a girl attempts suicide and finds herself in a horrid, unlit apartment building chased by monstrous lorry drivers, escaping a split second before it is too late to come back to life (A Black Coat). There are frighteningly prophetic stories on pandemic extreme aftermath (Hygiene, The New Family Robinson).

Set against a bleak background, Petrushevskaya's "fairy-tales for grownups", as the author defines the genre, are amazingly dynamic and ingenious.

### Penguin Books

English language edition  
Short stories, 2009  
224 pp

Russian editions  
AST, 2011; Alpina Prose, 2022

### Translation rights sold

World English Penguin  
German Bloomsbury Berlin  
French Christian Bourgois  
Spanish Atalanta  
Italian Einaudi  
Portuguese (Brazil) Companhia das Letras  
Norwegian Cappelen Damm  
Danish Vandkunsten  
Chinese simplified characters Shanghai 99 Culture Consulting  
Romanian Meteor Press  
Estonian Tänapäev  
Turkish Jaguar  
Japanese Kawade Shobo Shinsha  
Serbian Solaris  
Korean Sigongsa  
Czech Větrné mlýny  
Macedonian Ili Ili  
Hungarian Typotex  
Armenian Vogt Nairi  
Dutch De Geus  
Bulgarian Prozorets  
Albanian Ombra  
Malayalam (India) Saikatham  
Croatian Hangar 7

Full English, French,  
German translations  
available

### Selected quotes

One of Russia's best living writers... Every one of the 19 stories in Petrushevskaya's *There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby* presents an arresting parable of this kind. Timeless and troubling, these "scary fairy tales" grapple with accidents of fate and weaknesses of human nature that exact a heavy penance. Short, highly concentrated, inventive and disturbing, her tales inhabit a borderline between this world and the next, a place where vengeance and grace may be achieved only in dreams.

*The New York Times Book Review*

Simply put, these stories are incredibly weird. But they linger in the mind as unsolvable puzzles: mysterious and undeniably seductive.

*More magazine*

These stories work the boundary states of consciousness — between sleep and waking, hallucination and realization, life and death — like a tongue works an aching tooth. You never know where you are or where you're going, because the ground beneath the narratives is constantly shifting. You know only that the world you are in is as bleak as Beckett, as astringent as witch hazel, as poetic as your finest private passing moments.

*Elle magazine*

Arresting... Incantatory... Timeless and troubling...

This exquisite collection [is] vital, eerie and freighted with the moral messages that attend all cautionary tales... [Petrushevskaya] is hailed as one of Russia's best living writers. This slim volume shows why. Again and again, in surprisingly few words, her witchy magic foment an unsettling brew of conscience and consequences.

*The New York Times Book Review*

The book could catch fire in your hands and you'd still try to be turning pages. It's giving me nightmares, in the nicest way possible.

*Jessica Crispin  
Bookslut*

Thrillingly strange... Brilliantly disturbing... The fact that Ludmilla Petrushevskaya is Russia's premier writer of fiction today proves that the literary tradition that produced Dostoyevsky, Gogol, and Babel is alive and well.

*Taylor Antrim  
The Daily Beast*

What distinguishes the author is her compression of language, her use of detail and her powerful visual sense... Petrushevskaya is certainly a writer of particular gifts.

*Time Out New York*

**Penguin Books**

English edition  
Short stories, 2013  
192 pp

Russian editions:  
AST, 2010; Alpina, 2022

*Translation rights sold*

World English Penguin  
German Bloomsbury Berlin  
Romanian Editura Polirom  
Portuguese (Brazil) Editora Schwarcz  
Danish Sylkefyret  
Spanish Marbot Ediciones  
Catalan Periscopi  
Norwegian Solum  
Hebrew Locus

Complete  
English translation  
available

## There Once Lived a Girl Who Seduced Her Sister's Husband, and He Hanged Himself: Love Stories

By turns sly and sweet, burlesque and heartbreaking, these realist fables of women looking for love are the stories that Ludmilla Petrushevskaya — who has been compared to Chekhov, Tolstoy, Beckett, Poe, Angela Carter, and even Stephen King — is best known for in Russia.

These “love stories, with a twist” follow the New York Times bestselling collection of her mystical short stories *There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby*. The publisher's blurb says, “here are attempts at human connection, both depraved and sublime, by people across the life span: one-night stands in communal apartments, poignantly awkward couplings, office trysts, schoolgirl crushes, elopements, tentative courtships, and rampant infidel-

ity, shot through with lurid violence, romantic illusion, and surprising tenderness.”

With a satirical eye and deep sympathy for her characters, Petrushevskaya blends macabre spectacle with transformative moments of grace and shows just why she is Russia's preeminent contemporary fiction writer.

### Selected quotes

They are deeply unromantic stories told frankly, with an elasticity and economy of language. <...> What is consistent is the dark, fatalistic humor and bone-deep irony Petrushevskaya's characters employ as protection against the biting cold of loneliness and misfortune that seems their birthright. <...> They may not have the heart to throw the bastards out or lock the door against them, but these women hold the keys.

*The New York Times Book Review*

This gem's exquisite conjugation of doom and disconnect is so depressingly convincing that I laughed out loud.

*Elle magazine*

The length of this collection's title is in inverse proportion to the brevity of the stories, a contrast neatly reflecting Petrushevskaya's covert but stinging irony... The scouring realism showcased here in 17 works spanning her long writing life is the narrative mode that made her famous and led to her being banned in her native Russia. These strange, violent, and devastating stories of love warped by poverty, anger, and pain embody the Soviet era's soul-starving shortages of dignity, shelter, and freedom. Petrushevskaya's afflicted characters are trapped in wretchedly crowded communal apartments and suffocating family configurations, bereft of privacy, comfort, and hope. Out of misery coalesce the weirdest and most warped of romances, some disastrous, some grotesque, some

liberating, while mothers' love for their children brightens an absurdly cruel world. Petrushevskaya's phenomenal skill in coaxing radiance from resignation, courage from despair, makes for universal and timeless stories of piercing condemnation, sly humor, profound yearning, and transforming compassion.

*Donna Seaman*  
for Booklist

Dark and mischievous... [Petrushevskaya's] stories never flinch from harshness, yet also offer odd redemptions... comedic brilliance... microscopic precision... several inimitable, laugh-out-loud paragraphs... creepy early-Ian-McEwan style identity disintegrations [and a] formidable way with a character profile... Petrushevskaya... ensures herself a place high in the roster of unsettling Writers of the Weird.

*Locus*

Both supremely gritty and realistically life-affirming... Full of meaningful, finely crafted detail.

*Publishers Weekly*

Think Chekhov writing from a female perspective... Petrushevskaya's short stories transform the mundane into the near surreal, pausing only to wink at the absurdity of it all.

*Kirkus Reviews*



## About the author:

**IVAN PHILIPPOV**, born in 1982 in Moscow, is a Georgia-based writer, journalist, film executive and co-host of a popular podcast. Ivan graduated from a History Faculty of Moscow State University and for seven years worked as a reporter, starting in the news and graduating to writing about entertainment and media industry for «Vedomosti» at the time a joint-venture of Wall Street Journal and Financial Times. Among many stories published by Ivan Philippov at that time were one on one interviews with public figures from Sheldon Adelson and Bob Iger to Jerry Bruckheimer.

After leaving «Vedomosti» Ivan Philippov joined Alexander Rodnyansky's CTC Media as the head of corporate PR. For the past 15 years Ivan worked for Mr. Rodnyansky as a creative executive in his US film company AR Content.

As a journalist Ivan Philippov wrote for many Moscow-based publications, including Forbes, GQ and Esquire. Leaving Russia in the first weeks of war for Tbilisi, now he writes for independent Russian media Holod and his op-eds were published in The Guardian in 2022 and 2023.

On his popular Instagram account and Telegram-channel Ivan Philippov writes about modern television and notable TV-series and he co-host «Previously on» - the most popular podcast in Russian language on the same subject with Elizaveta Surganova.

Ivan Philippov published three books, including a non-fiction about the golden age of modern television and the best TV-shows of the past two decades; his debut novel *The Shadow*, successfully adapted for audio series by Storytel Original and longlisted for the National Bestseller Prize in the year of publication; and the most recent, *Mouse*, a Moscow zombie apocalypse.

He lives with his family in Georgia.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2023 — **Mouse**, *novel*

2022 — **The Shadow**, *novel*

2020 — **In the Next Episodes**, *non-fiction*

Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2022**

Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2022****Inspiria (Eksmo)**

Novel, 2022

352 pp

*Audio rights sold*

Storytel Original

## The Shadow

When death is only the beginning. *The Shadow* is a fantasy thriller, much in the spirit of Neil Gaiman, that blends the superhero genre with authentic stories from a rich and violent Russian history.

On a hot August night, a girl in downtown Moscow is ran over by a car. This is not an ordinary hit-and-run, but a premeditated murder. However, the murder is deemed an accident and an innocent migrant worker is quickly arrested — he was driving a street-sweeping truck on the same street.

Stepan is a Moscow police detective. Far from a hero, he is just an ordinary Russian cop — a little corrupt, indifferent, not outright evil, but getting there. His one redeeming quality is his soft spot for girls who fell victim to violent crimes, due to his own past. Stepan will easily take a bribe from a drug-dealer, but Lord have mercy on a rapist who will cross paths with him. Sonya's death worries Stepan, who sets out to find the truth, ignoring the violent objections and direct order of his superior officer not to dig into it. He quickly realizes that he will lose his job if he doesn't stop, but before he can admit defeat and fall in line, Stepan is gunned down by two of his fellow officers. His body is thrown into a sewage well.

This is how the story begins. Stepan finds himself in The Other Moscow — the so-called subMoscow, where all the unclaimed dead of the city's 900 years of history live. But Stepan is no ordinary deceased, he was chosen by the City as a Champion. Not unlike a huge prehistoric animal, the City can sense danger. It knows not where the danger is coming from, but it chooses a Champion — someone who will find and neutralize the threat. The chosen Champion is known as

The Shadow. As a reward the City gives The Shadow a chance at redemption, a chance to avoid hell. It also gives The Champion a superpower: an ability to inhabit shadows.

Stepan soon realizes that death brought him true freedom. He no longer has desires, he no longer has to play by anyone's rules, he can be himself. With grim satisfaction Stepan agrees that a dead cop is a good cop. And now this good cop will find the people who are responsible for his death. And, while he's at it, save the city.

Each chapter of *The Shadow* begins with a small story about a violent death that took place in Moscow. A 6-years old Polish girl beheaded in 1606 Moscow uprising. An elderly man shot and killed by an APC near a Ostankinskaya television tower in 1993. A wealthy American murdered for disrespecting a black club-owner in 1915. The instigator of a plague riot shot by the soldiers in Red Square. Not just people, every building here is a part of history. And each will play their part in Stepan's quest to save the city from the deadly plans that some maniac in power has schemed for Moscow.

While the tone of the story is always gripping and entertaining, the novel deals with important issues of the modern Moscow, from racism and discrimination to financial and gender inequality, domestic violence, police and state corruption — and evil personified ruling the land.

### Selected quotes

The author's background in history studies finds its way in the world and heroes of the novel.

*Labirinth*

There is Mitya, the oracle, who connects the two worlds; a group of subway constructors having grown into one entity; Saint Basil's Cathedral turned into a Gaudi-style utopian building in Other Moscow... Readers find numerous dreamlike visual discoveries in the spirit of Gaiman and Melville in the text.

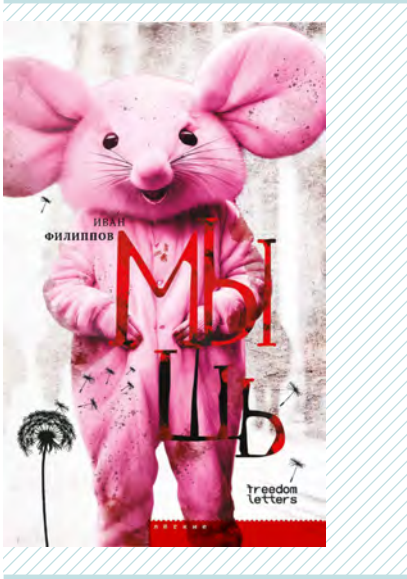
*Afisha Daily*

Ivan Philippov has a masterly command of film production methods, which results in this fascinating story with a range of interweaving storylines from different periods of Moscow's history that tie together in a grand finale.

*Antenna Daily*

This novel is written by a Muscovite who loves his city and knows its history very well. Philippov integrates unfamiliar contexts into a swift, modern and daring narrative, and does this with mastery, ease and wit. To read Philippov's *Shadow* is a pure and not useless pleasure.

*Alexander Rodnyansky*  
a film producer



**Freedom Letters**  
Novel, 2024  
277 pp

## Mouse

Moscow Zombie  
apocalypse

A blood-curdling quest to escape zombie apocalypse in 2020 Moscow, after Putin's immortality experiment goes awry.

In 2020, an infected mouse escapes from the Institute of Functional Immortality, where technology for Putin's immortality is being developed. This results in a devastating zombie apocalypse that sweeps through Moscow, leaving behind a trail of destruction and death. Millions of people die, becoming zombies. The infected have heightened senses of hearing and smell, but their vision and motor skills are severely impaired, which makes an escape possible, if far from easy.

The story follows three different groups of characters: Seva (15) and Kostya (10), two brothers trapped in their apartment, their parents killed, looking for a way to get out of town; Asya, a girl dressed in a full-length costume of a pink mouse, who is also trying to escape the city and return to her hometown, finding romance along the way against all odds; and the 80-year-old doctor of biological sciences, Lavr, and his prison guard, Tonya, stuck in a paddy outside the prison, where Lavr is kept on charges of treason.

The three groups set off from different parts of town heading in the same direction as they try to escape the city. The story unfolds through the three parallel narratives, each group facing various dangers and chal-

lenges. As we follow their journeys through devastated Moscow, they will get to visit the Pushkin museum, escape from a deranged cannibal, walk through the metro tunnels, climb the rooftops and hijack a train. Eventually, they all converge in the final chapter, where their paths cross and their fates are intertwined.

The novel ultimately explores the themes of survival, hope, and human connection in the face of adversity, all while providing a sharp social critique of contemporary politics through its satirical depiction of the brutal deaths of well-known political figures.

### Selected quotes

The book is a captivating and uncompromisingly genre-true read that keeps the reader hooked until the very end, while undoubtedly authentic in its depiction. From the city's toponymy to restaurant interiors, electric train management technology, and the interior design of the Pushkin Museum's rooms, everything is precise, true, and recognizable. This authenticity transforms reading into a pleasure that rivals watching a blockbuster.

A very timely book. I wish millions of fellow citizens would read it. It's an outstanding ingredient in the vaccine against rabies.

**Alexander Rodnyansky**

*a Ukrainian producer with four Oscar nominations  
in the Best Foreign Film category*

This is a right book in these hard times. There's much heroic in the text, as the genre requires. And we need heroism today. Moreover, there are many Dostoevskian descriptions of streets, buildings, and even metro stations in the text. To me, who desperately misses Moscow, it was intriguing to read about the city, even if it is being demolished in the book.

**Dmitry Nizovtsev**

*an independent journalist*



## About the author:

**EDWARD REZNIK** (born in 1960) is a scriptwriter and a playwright with twenty feature films and TV series to his name, including the prizewinning German-Ukrainian-Russian coproduction feature *4 Days in May* (2011). Reznik writes for the theatre, radio and film industry. *Therapy* is his first attempt at fiction writing; the novel draws on his ten years of experience as a practicing counselor. Edward Reznik adapted *Therapy* into a feature script that was noted in the best script category at Berlin, Toronto, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Tel Aviv and Chicago film festivals. Edward Reznik lives with his family in New York.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2022 — **Therapy**, *novel*





Eksmo  
Novel, 2022  
480 pp

## Therapy

The Sopranos meet Persian Lessons in this highly pitched Bildungsroman set against the horror of the Nazi past. A Jewish psychologist in pre-war Berlin saves a young German from suicide and offers free treatment to help the young man discover his new, self-confident self. After gaining the desired confidence, the young man becomes a member of the SS and ends up as a security guard in the same concentration camp where the psychologist and his family are being held. It is now up to the psychologist to test the effectiveness of his skills and will by helping his patient regain his mental health in the face of the hell of Shoah. Reznik calls on his ten years of experience as a practicing psychologist to speak about the challenges of a young person growing up in the apocalyptic times.

Berlin, 1933. Richard, 19 years old, is plodding through a dull lonely life, working shifts as a labourer in a fish factory and an assistant at a hospital morgue. While donating blood to earn some extra money, Richard meets Aida, who has the same rare blood type. The next day Richard visits psychoanalyst Joachim who happens to have recently prevented Richard from committing suicide. Joachim knows that Richard cannot afford to pay for his sessions but he feels a duty to helping suicidal patients and offers to treat Richard for free. Richard blames himself for his mother's suicide and feels an obligation to share his mother's fate. Joachim tries to help Richard release himself from the heavy psychological legacy of his mother and gain self-confidence.

At a therapy session, Richard meets Joachim's daughter by chance — she turns out to be Aida. Unbeknownst to her father, Richard takes Aida to a movie and then arranges a nocturnal excursion to the morgue where he works. However, self-doubt and an internal ban on happiness prevents Richard from developing a relationship with Aida — he breaks up with her.

Ulrich, an influential German official, brings his son Theo to Joachim's office for treatment: Theo displays a romantic interest in men, which is both a cause for criminal persecution and a threat to the father's career. Joachim agrees to help Theo, and he does: after reconfirming his sexual inclinations, Theo leaves for Hamburg and finds a lover. There, members from the youth wing of the SS burst into their hotel room, photograph the couple, and arrest them. The furious Ulrich blames the incident on the psychoanalyst; he will ensure Joachim is deprived of the right to practice in Germany. Prompted by Joachim during therapy, Richard seeks out his father, who turns out to be Ulrich. A high-ranked SS official promotes his illegitimate son in the Nazi hierarchy. Through his father's support, Richard seems to have gained what he needs: inclusion in a large and strong structure, good money, recognition, and a purpose in life. Richard no longer considers psychotherapy necessary so cancels his future appointments with Joachim but resumes his relationship with Aida. Together they move into a new apartment that Richard receives as an SS officer. In public, Aida, unlike her parents, refuses to act as a Jew — she does not wear a six-pointed yellow star, feeling shielded by Rich-

ard's status. At parties, she feels as German as other girls, enjoying the happiness of a young woman in love. Obviously, these relations threaten Richard's career as well as Ulrich's, and Ulrich demands that his son break up with the Jewish girl. Afraid of betraying his father's hopes and love, Richard obeys, and Aida returns to her parents.

Ulrich manages to hush up Theo's homosexual scandal, but now Theo must immediately marry. Ulrich makes sure Theo's boyfriend never gives evidence in court; the young man is found dead in a prison cell. When Theo learns of his lover's murder, he makes a suicide attempt but is saved by his brother. Theo explains his reasons for the attempt not with sorrow over the death of his boyfriend nor an impending marriage but jealousy of Richard, who is Ulrich's more successful son. Unaware that Richard overhears their conversation, Ulrich assures Theo that Richard was taken into the house only to stimulate Theo to act properly. Disillusioned and embittered with the betrayal of his newly gained father, Richard rapes his father's young wife and leaves the house hoping to reconnect with Aida. He finds Joachim's flat empty: Ulrich made sure the Jewish family was deported out of turn.

Ulrich sends Richard away from Berlin to serve as a guard in a concentration camp. In one of the prisoners, Richard recognizes Joachim. He searches for Aida and her mother in the female zone, where he is told that both have died. Richard will never know that Aida was not murdered in a gas chamber with her mother, but that she will survive through hardships, torture, sexual violence, and loss of a newborn child until her eventual liberation.

Severely mourning Aida's death and shaken by the beastly atrocities in the hellish camp, Richard pleads with Joachim to resume therapy. Joachim is desperate at the loss of his family and does not aspire to survive. But he cannot turn Richard down. In their journey to Richard's childhood and the young man's real self, Joachim gains the only reason to live — as a dying prisoner and a desperate old man, he is set to save this person.





## Therapy

### Selected quotes

Therapy is a Freudian novel about Holocaust, written by a practicing psychologist. This is a brilliantly written, stylistically impeccable text, where realism and symbolism blend in a profound, sensual, and fearless narrative.

**Vladimir Mirzoev**  
*a film director and producer*

At first it seems the works lacks brave characters who can dare to challenge fate. People here try to survive, and by conforming they form their time. But then life sets the roles — one will be an executioner, the other will be a victim. And at this moment the choice has to be made, and the heroes begin to react, in accordance or confrontation with the imposed roles.

**Alexander Gelman**  
*a playwright*

This is a story about a young man's personality getting destroyed after he entrusts the meaning of his life to someone or something else — to the state. Richard gets to learn he was made a part of the mechanism of destruction, but this realization will cost thousands of people their lives.

**Alexei Guskov**  
*an actor and producer*





#### About the author:

**DINA RUBINA** is an Israeli Russian-language writer. Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1953, Dina Rubina had her first stories published in 1970s in Yunost (Youth) magazine. She has received numerous awards, and is the bestselling author of over 40 titles, including eight novels. Dina Rubina's novels and novellas have been made into films, adapted for TV, and staged in theaters in Russia and Israel. Dina Rubina is the Big Book Award winner in 2007 and 2020 (reader's choice) for the novels *On the Sunny Side of the Street* and *Napoleon's Train*. In 2009 she won one of the Russian Literature prizes for the novel *The White Dove of Cordoba*. Each new title by Dina Rubina is published in a first edition of 50,000 to 80,000 copies. The total printing of the author's work is over two million copies. Since 1990 Dina Rubina has lived in Ma'ale-Adumim, Israel with her family, artist Boris Karafelov, her daughter and grandchildren.

#### *Selected Bibliography*

- 2021 — **Gurevich, the Maniac**, *novel*
- 2020 — **A Lonely Person Who Writes**, *autobiographical novel*
- 2018-2019 — **Napoleon's Train**, *novels*
- 2017 — **Lady Wind**, *novel*
- 2014-2015 — **The Russian Canary Bird**, *novels*
- 2010 — **The White Dove of Cordoba**, *novel*
- 2010 — **The Petroushka Syndrome**, *novel*
- 2008 — **Leonardo's Handwriting**, *novel*
- 2006 — **On the Sunny Side of the Street**, *novel*
- 2001 — **On Upper Maslovka**, *novel*
- 1996 — **Here Comes the Messiah!**, *novel*

The total printing of  
the author's work is  
over 2 million copies!

Finalist of the **Big Book Award 2020** (2nd prize in Reader's Choice)

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2015**

Finalist of the **Russian Prize 2009**

Winner of the **International Portal Prize 2009** (Ukraine)

Winner of the **Big Book Award 2007** (3rd Prize)

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 2007**

Longlisted for the **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2007**

Finalist of the **Russian Prize 2010**
 The total printing of  
the novel is  
**250 000 copies**


## The White Dove of Córdoba

This gripping art forgery crime drama propels through epochs and countries (Spain in the 17th century, Leningrad under siege and in the end of the 1970ies, the Ukrainian pre-war and post-war Vinnitsa, modern Vatican, Jerusalem, Toledo and Córdoba in Spain) to tell a spelling and dramatic story of a genius artist and to make yet another attempt to find an answer to eternal bitter conflicts of destiny vs man's will, a family's history and a person's solitude, the Jewish devotion to land and fascination with the nation's (and a family's) history vs the spacious lavishness and negligence of the Russian soul.

### Eksmo

Novel, 2009  
544 pp

#### Translation rights sold

German Pereprava  
Lithuanian Nordina  
Ukrainian Bogdan-Ternopol  
Polish Muza  
Estonian Tänapäev  
Latvian Janis Roze  
Albanian Ombra  
Czech Republic Columbus  
Turkish Alfa Kitap  
Bulgarian Labyrinth  
Simplified Chinese Shandong Publishing House of  
Literature and Art  
Hebrew Keter

An unrivalled art forger, touched by a true genius, an engaging intellectual, Zakhar Cordovin is not another hero in the line of greatest perpetrators in the criminal art scene. Impudent and passionate equally about love, life and art, Cordovin has to pay the highest price for his own crimes, but also dramas and mysteries permeating the centuries-long history of the Jewish-Spanish family of the Cordoveras.

Born in the post-war Ukrainian Vinnitsa, Zakhar Cordovin studied art in Leningrad, spent a few years in Stockholm, and now lectures on art in the University of Jerusalem and roams all over Europe chasing obscure art works that he will revive and sell for lavish sums of money, having attributed to the greatest masters of the past. On one of his European trips Cordovin spots an old painting that he immediately identifies as belonging to one of El Greco's pupils. A troubling re-semblance of the artist's name — Zacarias Cordovera — with his own, fascinates Cordovin, but he is also haunted with the image of a saint depicted in the portrait and certain details revealed during the restoration.

A brilliantly concocted forgery scheme culminates with a millions-worth sale of "a previously unknown El Greco painting" to Vatican. Yet Cordovin sets off on his personal investigation of the true story of the painting that eventually brings him to Córdoba and puts face to face with his family's tragic past. This sweeping chase after phantoms and mysteries of his family intertwines with the criminal story from Cordovin's student years in Leningrad. Back then his involvement into a criminal art

scene resulted in a brutal murder of his close friend, challenging him years later with a no-option choice of a murder in revenge. It is in Córdoba that Zakhar Cordovin pulls all links into one deadly knot and finds the only solution to recoup the tragic mistakes and betrayals that he had once committed.

Dina Rubina does an amazing job of composing a breathtaking thrilling story set against the international shadow world of art forgers, art dealers and gross money deals. With a sure hand she draws a vivid panorama of countries, landscapes and art — to an irrevocable effect: readers immediately fall in love with this finely concocted and re-produced world and with the text itself. In the broadest gallery of genuine characters — immigrants, provincials, weirdos and straightforward lunatics, intellectuals, art experts, poets, criminals of various ranks and sorts, art dealers and artists — there is no chance appearance.

Each character has a unique voice that tells his story — be it a whimsical Cordovin's aunt Zhuka in Leningrad; or a grouchy uncle Sema in the Ukrainian Vinnitsa; or Margo, an uproarious partner in their art scam; or the dearest childhood friend Andryusha, an involuntary victim of Cordovin's bashful art crime... Dina Rubina's prose is unsentimental, but is full of genuine sympathy towards her characters, sympathy and love.

Over 400,000  
copies  
sold

## The Petroushka Syndrome

Much like in Lawrence Durrell's enduring classic, *The Alexandria Quartet*, Dina Rubina gives the stage to a diverse cast of voices as she tells the wrenching, enchanted, tragic, somewhat mystical, evocative, and ultimately happy love story of a poignantly flawed puppeteer touched by true genius, and his fragile wife, haunted by the ghosts of her family's dark past. Part impassioned love drama, part evocative family story, part mystical Gothic novel about puppets and puppeteers, and part intellectual examination of history and art, *The Petroushka Syndrome* is a beautifully symbiotic novel about identity and the act of creation, longing, loss and, ultimately, love.

### Eksmo

Novel, 2010  
428 pp

### Translation rights sold

French Macha Publishing  
Bulgarian Labyrinth  
Simplified Chinese Shandong Publishing House of  
Literature and Art  
Lithuanian Nordina  
Czech Omega/Dobrovsky  
Turkish Alfa Kitap  
Hungarian Europa

### Film rights

Feature film directed by Elena Khazanova was released  
in Russia in 2015

When an eight-year-old boy, Petya Uksusov, watches a fiery red-haired lady fall out a window (she falls just like a puppet!), he cannot imagine that this image will trigger the two biggest obsessions of his entire life: puppets and Liza. That same evening, a shut-down, autistic Petya starts playing with fellow kids' puppets, demonstrating unique skills and almost supernatural powers for performance, literally breathing life into dolls. The next day, Petya notices a red-haired baby girl in a buggy at a grocery store, and, smitten by the baby's beauty (she's just like a doll!), decides he absolutely must kidnap the girl. When Liza is returned to her father, Petya discovers she is the daughter of the woman who committed suicide. Petya keeps the girl constant company from then on. When the girl reaches college age, they run away from her father, a lawyer with a repulsive personality and troublingly unhealthy sexual inclinations.

Over the years, Petya becomes an internationally renowned puppeteer who is much in demand; he marries Liza. Together the couple perform a provocative and arresting dance number that wins them vast acclaim. The death of their infant son from a rare and incurable genetic disorder known as the Petroushka Syndrome (male infants in Liza's family have suffered from the syndrome for many generations; the symptoms include a high degree of mental disability, a constant smile on the face, and early death), drives both parents to the verge of despair: Petya, because his wife's life is

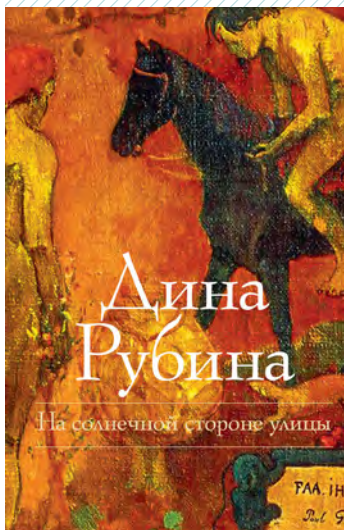
falling out of his control, and Liza, because she's failing in the fight with the sinister ghosts of her family's dark past. Liza suffers from a severe mental breakdown, ending up in an Israeli rehab center, under the care of Petya's childhood friend. Liza's rehabilitation is disrupted when she discovers that Petya is creating a new puppet, an exact copy of his wife, a true masterpiece of his genius as a puppeteer, and Ellis will now replace Liza in their famous dancing gig. As Liza frantically attempts to confront her Doppelgänger, her husband's artful creation, Petya is set to find the truth about their families' past, the only truth that could save their marriage, career, and even their life.

Told through multiple narrators' perspectives (Petya's story intersects with that of Boris, Petya's childhood friend and Liza's doctor), this melodramatic story rises to philosophical and psychological levels to reach the depth and electricity of a true tragedy. Dina Rubina exquisitely renders settings of a Polish-Jewish Lviv, a desperately vast Sakhalin, a snowy Prague, and a torrid Jerusalem with rich detail and texture. This becomes the colorful backstage for the author's compelling version of the Pygmalion myth with echoes of a sinister Golem.

Complete  
French translation  
available

I believe that a person is so multi-dimensional and so complex and excitingly simple, that a so-called author's perspective just isn't enough: the characters should mould images of one other, becoming one other's puppeteers, demiurges, and gods... The reader is free to find their own hero and even their own story within these multiple worlds since the story, too, spins on a revolving stage, revealing new facets with each turn.

**Dina Rubina says**

Winner of the **Big Book Award 2007** (3rd Prize)Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 2007**Longlisted for the **Yasnaya Polyana Award 2007**

Eksmo

Novel, 2006

432 pp

*Translation rights sold*

Italian Ancora

Norwegian Cappelen Damm

Vietnamese Nhanam

Polish Muza

Bulgarian Damyana Yakov

French Macha Publishing

Croatian Hena

Simplified Chinese Beijing Qingcheng Culture

Armenian Vernatun

## On the Sunny Side of the Street

An engrossing love drama, an engaging argument on the nature of art and a grandiose polyphonic ode to Tashkent, *On the Sunny Side of the Street* became a markpoint for Dina Rubina's spectacular literary career, firmly positioning her as one of the most widely read writer in Russia today.

This is a captivating story of two strong female characters. There's Katya, who as a girl escapes from the siege of Leningrad and is evacuated to Tashkent. In the post war city, overcrowded with people from all parts of the country in desperate and greedy need to survive, Katya quickly learns to use her original skill of grasping mere details and a natural talent for mimicry for criminal purpose: a swindler in local markets at first, she grows into a ruthless head of cannabis smuggling net. Her daughter Vera inherits her mother's sharp eye and an ingenious talent, but chooses differently, becoming a true artist with a bright international career. Both mother's and daughter's ways to professional recognition are nothing less but trying, filled with tragic mistakes, unendurable loss(es) and one true love.

The entwining life stories of the novel's two heroines are drawn against a gaudy background of an Oriental city, Tashkent, with its sun-soaked bazaars, crowded yards and a picturesque and engaging cast of characters representing different cultural, ethnical and social backgrounds. This lavishness of the story is masterly

reflected in the novel's complex structure. The drama of a bitter mother and daughter confrontation is intersected with numerous first-person narratives from Tashkent's former residents as they remember the city of their childhood and youth, as well as the author's own colorful childhood memories.

In this novel Rubina succeeds with brilliance in mastering writing skills that make her literary trademarks: the author's juicy Babel-esque language; a gripping narrative's plot; a tender humor, grit and passion in a unanimous accord; a vivid, real-life details and characters.

### Selected quotes

Dina Rubina's *On the Sunny Side of the Street* is the work of a literary magpie: the novel combines a comfortable nest of a story with shiny devices and descriptive passages that attract attention and embellish. Fortunately, the story underlying all the decoration is engrossing, thanks to the situations and city, Tashkent, in which Rubina places her characters.

*Lizok's Bookshelf*

She is perhaps the only modern Russian-language author who manages to combine elements that are often mutually exclusive, such as popular appeal and critical acclaim, thrilling action and rich, expressive language... Rubina is a virtuoso author. She is adept at coming up with gripping storylines, while at the same time filling her books with real-life details, striking metaphors and believable characters.

**RBTH**

Rubina describes Tashkent deliciously, in detail, with its colors, smells, and distinctive speech patterns. Any plot at all could develop amid decorations like these.

*TimeOut*

These are two works (*On Upper Maslovka* and *On the Sunny Side of the Street*) that break out of the format, where good, light fiction rises far above the usual mass level because the literary setting isn't fabricated but 'quilted' with the thread of life, with vitality.

*Voprosy Literaturny*



## About the author:

**KIRILL RYABOV** (1983) was born in Leningrad. He has been noticed by the professional literary community since 2005 when he started publishing his short stories and short novels (novellas) in literary magazines and anthologies. In 2009, his story Spit was selected for an anthology of Russia's new fiction from young writers (edited by Jeff Parker) that was published to good reviews in the United States by Tin House Books. Ryabov's writing has been nominated three times for the National Bestseller Prize; his novel Dog and the book of prose Fascists were shortlisted for the award in 2020 and 2022. Kirill Ryabov's work has been adapted for films, including I Will Be Your Dog (a short film, by Konstantin Selivestrov, 2019) and a feature film by Dmitry Meskhiev, Good Girls Will Go to Heaven. A feature film based on 777 is in production in 2022/23, directed by Alexander Khant. Kirill Ryabov lives in St Petersburg.

*Selected Bibliography*

- 2023 — **Troubles**, *novellas and short stories*  
2022 — **Fascists**, *novellas and short stories*  
2021 — **777**, *novel*  
2021 — **No-One Returns**, *a short novel*  
2020 — **Hangdogs**, *novellas and short stories*  
2019 — **A Dog**, *novel*  
2015 — **Glue**, *novella and short stories*  
2013 — **Burner of Corpses**, *short stories*

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2022, 2020**

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2020**

**The Young Petersburg Literary Prize 2009**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Award 2021****Gorodets**

Novel, 2021  
288 pp

Film rights sold

**777**

Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels meets Gogol's *The Gamblers* in Kirill Ryabov's *777*, a criminal burlesque from Russia's young literary star.

Khlebnikov is a typical little man (in Gogol's sense) — an ordinary resident of a small shabby town in the Russian Far East. There's not much in his life to brag about or remember: the failed dream of becoming a singer, stern wife and unfriendly stepson, dull underpaid job as a cook in a burger joint, and a shadowy petty criminal incident in the past... Khlebnikov once withdrew his meagre salary from an ATM but the cash machine delivered more than two million rubles. This is a fortune for him, an unforeseen chance to change his life. Khlebnikov rents a room in a fleabag motel on the outskirts of town so he can come up with a plan for escaping into a brighter new world. It's no big surprise that his plans won't work and Khlebnikov soon finds himself caught up in events that spin out of his control: a drinking bout, getting set up by an old friend, falling for a hooker, and threats from local gangsters and the bank's security department. Now Khlebnikov isn't pursuing the life of his dreams but simply trying to stay alive.

Ryabov turns a conventional heist crime comedy about the aftermath of a lucky gain into an absurd and even tragic story. A vivid cast of true-to-life characters draws compassionate readers into a rollercoaster of events. Every character shakes off cliché to offer the depth and scope of an almost ancient hero. With his sharp tongue firmly in his cheek, Ryabov tells a crime story about the misadventures of a very ordinary man with a big fortune and transforming it thanks to keen observation of human nature that embraces compassion and greed, lust and lyricism, poetry, fears, and love. There's no false pathos in the novel, filled with life, credibility, real human dramas, and dry humor. Ryabov's sharp eye in depicting the realities of provincial Russia together with bewildering WTF plot twists make *777* a true reading adventure.

**Selected quotes**

This realism, though, leaves plenty of room for surreal and dryly humorous perspectives.

*Publisher's Weekly*

A funny and scary Guy Ritchie story with a smokey touch of Russian chthonic universe.

*Vadim Levental*

*the publisher, the prize-winning author of Masha Regina*

I don't remember when a literary work had such a genuinely heavy impact on me. I believe literature should hammer at the reader, and that's exactly the case here.

*Dmitry Danilov*

*a celebrated poet and playwright*

Kirill Ryabov's simple story has a mesmerizing effect. In the first place, it is due to a unique authorial style that's conversational and laconic, with fine details reminiscent of poetry in prose. The real world in Ryabov's novel seems to be a chaos inhabited by monsters and tricksters. Once you confront it, the only way to survive is to become a hero. Even if you are a ridiculous hero or an outspoken fool, you must struggle for better luck or simply for your mundane life.

*gorky Media*

Russian chthonic or chronic province, many dog-inspired metaphors, a big debt, issues with residency, hero as outsider, frightening debt collectors, unhappy and affectionate hookers, even an old man with a gun and God allusions are in place. Ryabov, much in the spirit of Martin McDonagh, continues to conceal humor behind despair and you don't quite know if you feel amused or desperate, though *777* is at most fun.

*God Literary*

Ryabov balances between elaborate realism (he's very true in describing a hangover, in particular) and fantasy that's indistinguishable from truth; in a way they say that truth is stranger than fiction. The same may be applied to Ryabov, who indeed constantly elaborates on fiction and its edges, while also being the brightest glorifier as well as the annihilator of the spirit of the 1990s.

*Forpost*

Danila Bagrov plays Jesus.

*Prochtenie.org*





## About the author:

**MIKHAIL SHISHKIN** is one of the most celebrated Russian authors today. Born in 1961 in Moscow, he worked as a school teacher and journalist. In 1995 he moved to Switzerland, where he worked as a Russian and German translator within the Immigration Department and specifically with Asylum Seekers. His writing debut in 1993, *Calligraphy Lesson*, a short story translated into French and Finnish, has won him the Prize for the Best Debut of the Year. Since then his works – both fiction and non-fiction – have been translated into 35 languages and have received a large number of prestigious national and international awards, including Haus der Kulturen der Welt International Literature Award (2011), Premio Strega Europeo 2022, the Russian Booker Prize (2000), the National Bestseller Prize (2006), the Big Book Award (2006, 2011) and many others. Today Shishkin is a fearless critic of Putin's regime and Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Mikhail Shishkin's prose fuses the best of the Russian and European literary traditions. The richness and sophistication of the language, the unique rhythm and melody of a phrase, the endless play with words and the nuanced psychological undercurrent are reminiscent of Nabokov and Chekhov. The change of narration styles and narrators within a text yield a fragmented, mosaic structure of composition that focuses on the language itself, recalling James Joyce's genius.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2019 — **Peace or War. Russia and the West**, *essays*

2017 — **Half-Belt Overcoat**, *short stories, essays*

2010 — **Letterbook**, *novel*

2005 — **Maidenhair**, *novel*

2002 — **Tracing Byron and Tolstoy in the Alps**, *novel*

2000 — **Russian Switzerland**, *essay*

2000 — **The Seizure of Izmail**, *novel*

1993 — **Calligraphy Lesson**, *short story*



## Complete list of prizes and awards



### Premio Strega Europeo 2022

Shortlisted for **Leipzig Book Fair Prize 2013**

### Haus der Kulturen der Welt International Literature Award 2011

### The Big Book Award 2011

### Halpérine-Kaminski Prize for the Best Translation 2007

Shortlisted for **Giuseppe Berto Prize 2007**

### Grinzane Cavour Prize 2007

### The Best Foreign Book of the Year of the 21st Century (China)

Shortlisted for **Bunin Literary Award 2006**

### The Big Book Award 2006

Shortlisted for **Andrei Belyi Literary Award 2006**

### The National Bestseller Prize 2005

### The Best Foreign Book of the Year (France) 2005

### Main Literary Prize of Zürich 2002

### The Russian Booker Prize 2000

### Globus Prize 2000

### Literary Prize of Canton Zürich 2000

### The Best Russian Debut of the Year 1994

## Selected quotes

One of the most prominent names in modern Russian literature.

*Publishers Weekly*

[Shishkin] takes Nabokov's remarkable linguistic flexibility but none of his arrogance; like Chekhov, he looks on humanity with humor and compassion. Shishkin's Baroque turns of phrases seem written out of necessity and joy rather than pretention; he respects his readers, he delights in language, and he does not need to show off.

*Madeleine LaRue*  
*The Quarterly Conversation*

If someone in this world has the right to claim the title of "the Sun of Russian Literature" it should be Mikhail Shishkin. <...> As soon as he finishes writing, delightful reviews and awards immediately follow. After

that — a new plunge into creative vortex until the next triumphant emersion.

*Galina Yuzefovich*  
*Expert*

Shishkin proves to be one of the most gifted authors of the Russian literary stage, especially because he manages to disregard fashion and create his own style and literary concept.

*Ulrich Schmidt*  
*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

Shishkin's agile, inventive narration reveals his homeland anew, showing once again why he has become one of Russia's most valued storytellers — and an important new author in the West.

*Literalab*

**Halpérine-Kaminski Prize for the Best Translation 2007 (France)**

Shortlisted for **Giuseppe Berto Prize 2007 (Italy)**

**Grinzane Cavour Prize 2007**

**The Big Book Award 2006**

Shortlisted for **Bunin Literary Award 2006**

Shortlisted for **Andrei Belyi Literary Award 2006**

**The National Bestseller Prize 2005**

**The Best Foreign Book of the Year of the 21st Century (China)**



## Maidenhair

Nearly  
**70,000 copies**  
sold in Russia

“Maidenhair is a kind of book they give Nobel prize for. This novel is majestic ...” — this quote from Bookshelf Magazine is just a small fraction of praise the book has received in Russia, and rightly so. It is a brilliant novel that unquestionably belongs with the greatest works of Russian literature. It’s universal at its core — and not only because the action takes place across countries and historical epochs, virtually destroying boundaries. The whole novel is a metaphor of a resurrection of the soul — through the word. And through love.

Vagrius, 2005

Elena Shubina Publishing (AST), 2011

Novel

479 pp

*Translation rights sold*

English US Open Letter

English UK Quercus Books

Danish Batzer & Co

Swedish Ersatz

Estonian Varrak

Norwegian Forlaget Oktober

Greek Metaichmio

Slovenian DSP

German DVA

French Fayard

Italian Voland Edizione

Serbian Paideia

Bulgarian Fakel

Simplified Chinese People's Literature

Lithuanian Vaga

Polish Noir sur Blanc

Romanian Curtea Veche

Arabic Al Mada

Albanian Dituria

Spanish Impedimenta

The story begins in Switzerland — the narrator works at the local immigration office interpreting interviews with Russian refugees seeking asylum. They all tell stories — some came to Zurich from Chechnya, others from orphanages, some lost their houses in the war, or had parents murdered in front of their eyes, or were raped in prison with a mop handle, tortured, persecuted... They tell these stories for one reason, to stay. One horrid story follows another, in a chain of endless questions and answers. We don't know what's true and what's not any more but at the end it really doesn't matter whether it's really happened to them or not — it's enough to know that the stories are true. Now they have a chance to re-write their lives, to get a new beginning, to find their new true selves. The interpreter becomes the only link between the two worlds, the gatekeeper to the better life. Their lives will lead to their deaths. Unless he redeems them. Once again, with a word.

Between the interviews the interpreter writes letters to his son addressing him as Emperor Navuhodonozaur — letters that will never be sent, describing his life as a servant of the “Swiss Paradise Ministry of Defense.” He remembers his past, reviving and reliving the story of his doomed love, which resonates with other great love stories of world literature — Daphnis and Chloe, Tristan and Isolde.

In the meantime he reads *Anabasis* by Xenophon about the Persian expedition. And since the written word has the power to revivify the past, it is today that the Greek mercenaries retreat to the sea, march through the deserts and towns, cross over rivers — and meet a group of Chechenian refugees who come down from

the mountains, having sworn that they'd rather die than surrender to the Russians. Time becomes irrelevant, their meeting seems only natural, and so the Greeks and the Chechenians continue their journey together. Interviews, letters, memories, love stories, Greeks, Chechenians are linked in a single chain of events and human destinies, interwoven, resonating with one another, outside of time. Another distinctive voice in this chorus of voices is a fictional diary of Bella, or Isabella Yurjeva, a Russian romance singer, notorious beauty and socialite that the main character uses to write her biography — or to bring her back to life as he interprets his task. It's nothing more than a girl's private diary where she describes her childhood, her love affairs, her success, her ups and downs — but somehow it manages to depict a hole era from the pre-Soviet times till this day through the events of her 100-year long life.

In *Maidenhair* Shishkin demonstrates utter proficiency in various styles and manners of speech. The main character's line of work is by no means accidental — his interpreting skills are a metaphor for omniscience — and the real meaning of a Word — thus his almost obsessive desire to find the tomb of Saint Cyril, the creator of the Cyrillic alphabet, while in Rome. This is the alphabet of which his universe is made. The world is magic only because its story can be told. It's unpredictable and erratic, but what once existed will exist for ever. In the word.

*Maidenhair* is in many ways an autobiographical novel. Just like his main character, Mikhail Shishkin worked as an interpreter at an immigration agency.

Complete  
English translation  
available





# Maidenhair

## Selected quotes

A beautiful, powerful and fascinating book which will become a milestone not only in the history of Russian literature but in the development of Russian self-awareness.

**Bakhyt Kenzheyev**  
*Nezavisimaya gazeta*

The first reading of Maidenhair is like tipping the pieces of a 1000-piece jigsaw out of the box and turning them all picture-side up...

**Slightly Booklist**

Shishkin's work has been described as "refined neo-modernism." His dense, lyrical prose suggests the influence of Ulysses, but Shishkin objects that "Joyce doesn't love his heroes"; in Maidenhair love is the crucial answer to most of the hundreds of questions.

**Pheobe Taplin**  
*Russia Beyond The Headlines*

In short, Maidenhair is the best post-Soviet Russian novel I have read. Simply put, it is true literature, a phenomenon we encounter too rarely in any language.

**Daniel Kalder**  
*The Dallas Morning News*

Maidenhair is a great novel about a word and a language that becomes soft and obedient in the hands of a Master. It can create any other reality which will be more stunning and credible than the real world. The gap between a word and a fact, between reality and its translation to the human language is a real hotbed of internal tension in the novel.

**Maya Kucherskaya**  
*polit.ru*

Maidenhair is likely a work of genius... If Shishkin is right about the power of words to resurrect the dead, Maidenhair has all but secured his immortality.

**Christopher Tauchen**  
*Words Without Borders*

Meanwhile, Shishkin's work is not at all a philological novel for a literary coterie or a boring high brow read that reminds one of lapped milk. Although very different from Pavic's works, it could become just as famous.

**Vladimir Berezin**  
*Time Out*

Maidenhair is a kind of book they give the Nobel prize for. The novel is majestic.

**Knizhnaya Vitrina**



**Random House**

Essays, German language  
 2019  
 384 pp

*Translation rights sold*

World English Quercus Books  
 Italian 21 Lettere  
 Swedish Fri Tanke  
 French Noir sur Blanc  
 Spanish Armaenia  
 Polish Noir sur Blanc  
 Lithuanian Vaga  
 Finnish WSOY  
 Norwegian Cappelen Damm  
 Estonian SA Kultuurileht  
 Romanian Curtea Veche  
 Slovakian Slovart  
 Croatian Tim Press  
 Japanese Hakusuisha  
 Dutch Querido  
 Spanish Impedimenta

## Peace or War

### Russia and the West — A Path to Understanding

A unique insight into a foreign mysterious country nearby. Is there a reason to fear Moscow? Could Russia have any reason to distrust the West? How are the tensions between the East and the West fuelled? And could they be solved?

The award-winning writer Mikhail Shishkin shares his understanding of Russia and the West and the contrasts and tensions that have been exacerbated for several years. With his deep knowledge of Russia the writer explores how the epoch of peace and a supposed end of the East-West confrontation could come to the current crisis. Shishkin's love for Russia is uncompromised, yet he sharply criticizes Putin's authoritarian rule and the politics of the Kremlin. Personal insights, sharp political analyses, historical overviews make it a crucially important book in difficult times.

From the author: "This book is a collection of essays about Russia, written specifically for the western reader. Having lived in Europe for so many years helped me recognize the general misconceptions about Russia and Russians that western people often nourish.

This book is for the reader who refuses to accept clichés and platitudes as ultimate truth.

This book answers some of the most important "Russian questions". Why do 21st century westerners travelling the world write about my country as if it were

another planet? What is wrong with my country, and why? What is this whole notion of "Russianness"? Why do revolutions and attempts at democratic reforms only lead to new dictatorships? Why can't the West and Russia reach understanding, after centuries and centuries of war and peace? What does it mean to love Russia? Can one still believe in Russia, as Tyutchev once bequeathed?

The essays are devoted to such eternal topics as "the mystery of the Russian soul" (here is a spoiler: there is no mystery, only the lack of knowledge that adds to a mysterious glare); patriotism and tyranny; "Live not by lie" (but neither by the truth); "Neither the church nor the tavern"; "Russian universality" and hybrid wars; writers and power, and many others.

The future is a glove, and the past is a hand. This is a book about the future of Russia. Therefore, it has a lot of history. I explain to the Western reader its underwater, deep currents, invisible from the outside, but determining its course. Without this, the present of my country cannot be understood. The last two chapters are devoted to what awaits us in the coming years and in the not so distant future."

### Selected quotes

Pleitgen and Shishkin, both sharing a deep knowledge of Russia, duel in a pointed exchange of views of both internal and external sides of things.

*Kölner Stadtanzeiger*

The long-time ARD reporter in Russia and USA and a Russian writer who won every important literary award in Russia, search together for possible ways of handling relations between the West and the East.

*Tagesspiegel*

The mysterious Russia: in his book, Mikhail Shishkin explains the nation that the West fails to understand.

*L'Union Sarda*

From as back as the 19th century the West have considered tsarist Russia as a "prison of people".

In his emotionally charged book, Mikhail Shishkin, revisits this concept and discuss it from the actual modern angle.

*La Repubblica*

Premio Strega Europeo 2022

Shortlisted for the Leipzig Book Fair Prize 2013

The Big Book Award 2011

Haus der Kulturen der Welt International Literature Award 2011



Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2010  
412 pp

Translation rights sold

World English Quercus  
Italian Lettera 21  
German DVA  
French Noir sur blanc  
Spanish Lumen / Random House Mondadori  
Japanese Shinchosha  
Dutch Querido  
Finnish WSOY  
Finnish audioplay YLE  
Norwegian Oktober  
Swedish Ersatz  
Danish Batzer & Co  
Faroe Sprotin  
Icelandic Bjartur  
Serbian Paideia  
Croatian Naklada Ljevak  
Macedonian Antolog  
Czech Vitrné mlýny  
Slovakian Slovart  
Polish Noir sur Blanc  
Lithuanian Vaga  
Latvian Jumava  
Estonian Varrak  
Bulgarian Fakel  
Romanian Curtea Veche  
Hungarian Cartaphilus  
Simplified Chinese Hunan People Publishing House  
Arabic Arab Scientific Publishers  
Albanian Fan Noli  
Turkish Jaguar  
Hebrew Kinneret  
Estonian Varrak

Complete  
English translation  
available

## Letterbook

The internationally prize-awarded writer, Mikhail Shishkin, comes with a beautifully sad and bewitchingly lucid epistolary novel. The stories of two lovers told through their love letters through continents and epochs intertwine in an elaborate text about mysteries of life, acceptance of death, and, ultimately, about grasping the eternity.

This latest novel by Mikhail Shishkin is deceptively simple. A man. A woman. Their love letters. A summer house, the first love. Vladimir — Vovka-carrot-top and Alexandra — Sashka; he goes to war, she stays at home, living an ordinary life. Two people writing each other just about everything — their childhood, families, trifles of life, joys and sorrows — what could be more normal? Until we get to know things are not what they seem. The deeper readers emerge into the writing the more obvious it becomes that the time has been disunited, dissected and tossed together as in a children nonsense rhyme.

The time is indeed out of joint and only these letters bind it together restoring the world's order. She lives in the 60-s, he goes to the Boxers uprising in China at the turn of the twentieth century. He dies in the very first battle of this half-forgotten war of his own choosing ("What war? Doesn't matter. A war

has always been. And will always be. And people get injuries and killed. And death is real.") — but his letters continue to arrive. She gets married, carries and loses a child — and keeps writing to him as if these letters exist in a parallel universe, as if time doesn't matter — and neither does death.

This is a novel about the mysteries of life — and acceptance of death.

Shishkin is loyal to articulating his principle: the written word is the key, and so is love. "To exist you have to live not in your own mind that is so unreliable... but in the mind of another person, and not just any person but the one who cares if you exist."

Shishkin's sophisticated language and intricate style have won him major international literary awards and comparisons to the greatest authors of our time — and Letterbook firmly confirms this well-deserved reputation.

### Selected quotes

Shishkin is arguably Russia's greatest living novelist... his writing is richly textured and innovative and his themes are universal: love and death, pain and happiness, war and peace... Shishkin's writing is both philosophically ambitious and sensually specific, evoking the rain on a dacha roof, the smell of blossoming lime trees, or the stink of human corpses.

**Phoebe Taplin**  
*The Guardian*

Whatever the secret of the time scheme, and however magic-realist or metaphysical it might be, it contributes to the book's powerful treatment of love and the vividness of being alive, underscored by the reality of ever-present morality—Shishkin is a writer with a compelling sense of the skull beneath the skin.

**Phil Baker**  
*The Sunday Times*

There is a lyrical, poetic quality to much of Shishkin's writing... This is certainly the most complicated, protean book I've ever reviewed and one jammed with cultural allusions and ideas.

**Tibor Fischer**  
*Standpoint Magazine*

Shishkin's prodigious erudition, lapidary phrasing and penchant for generic play are conspicuous components of his art... These characteristics do indeed ally him with Nabokov, as he does have faith in the written

word... And yet, unlike Nabokov, Joyce and many of their postmodern acolytes, Shishkin is unabashedly and unironically sentimental.

**Boris Dralyuk**  
*Times Literary Supplement*

Mikhail Shishkin is the Ian McEwan of Russia.

A prize-winning writer who enjoys stunning commercial and critical success, he's also a literary celebrity in a country that still knows how to celebrate its author-heroes. His latest novel, *The Light and the Dark*, in its brilliant translation, is striking proof that great Russian literature didn't die with Dostoevsky. A wonderful book: it is filled with wonder.

**Monocle Magazine**

It really does not matter if the lovers have ever met in person. The only witness who counts is the author — or, more precisely, his prose.

**Anna Aslanyan**  
*The Independent*

Striking... [Vladimir and Alexandra's] tales cohere into a portrait of Russians growing up too soon, enlisted in causes not their own, exemplified by Sashenka's belief in a second, disobedient self who lives out the dreams she can't.

**Publishers Weekly**



## About the author:

**Marina Stepnova** was born in 1971 in the small town of Efremov, in the Tula region. Marina was raised in Moldova and moved to Moscow for a higher education. She graduated from The Gorky Literary Institute and did postgraduate studies at the Institute of World Literature. Stepnova's translation from Romanian of the play *Nameless Star* by Mihail Sebastian has been staged by numerous theaters throughout Russia. Marina Stepnova is the author of several novels, including a Big Book Award winning and nationally bestselling novel, *The Women of Lazarus*. Stepnova works as a scriptwriter with prominent directors – Kantemir Balagov, Avdotya Smirnova, to name a few. Stepnova also teaches creative writing and has discovered and championed new promising literary voices. Marina Stepnova resides with her family in Italy since 2022.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2020 — **A New Breed**, *novel*

2014 — **The Italian Lessons**, *novel*

2011 — **The Women of Lazarus**, *novel*

2005 — **The Surgeon**, *novel*

**Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2021** (readers' choice)

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021**

Shortlisted for the **National Book of the Year 2020**

**The Big Book Award 2012** (third prize by the jury and readers' choice)

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 2012**

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2012**

Shortlisted for **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2012**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2005**

**Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2021** (readers' choice)

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021**

Shortlisted for the **National Book of the Year 2020**

Nearly  
**90,000 copies**  
sold in Russia



## A New Breed (The Garden)

A New Breed, the much-anticipated new novel from Russia's beloved author of *The Women of Lazarus*, is set at the close of the 19th century against the backdrop of the estate of one of the country's oldest noble families. With her signature lavish, rich language palette Stepnova portrays a new type of a woman — an ultimately free person in society's rigid structure that rejects a woman as an independent or notable element. Tusa, the novel's female protagonist, doesn't fight existing norms, she creates her own new world. But what is the price that her family, friends, and partners will pay for her freedom?

Princess Boryatinskaya, the daughter of an old noble family and a friend of the Empress, gives birth to her third child, Natalia (who only accepts Tusa as a name), at the scandalously improper age of 45. Tusa is the result of a single passionate night in the respected marriage of two noble spouses — it takes place in a newly acquired manor house with a fecund old garden. Tusa, who receives the curative effect of the estate's fresh air beginning at birth, is raised to be a new type of a woman, a person of deed, unrestricted will and unbridled freedom. Two people handle her upbringing. The first is her mother, Princess Boryatinskaya, who never leaves the estate after her daughter's birth and never returns to societal duties. The second is Grigory Meizel, a doctor of medicine, who saves the child from death in infancy and devotes his life to Tusa's upbringing. Through Tusa, Meizel hopes to redeem his dishonour: at the violent cholera uprisings in St Petersburg Meizel fled in fear and did not assist his colleague maimed by a frenzied mob. Boryatinskaya and Meizel create a new world for Tusa, where she herself decides when and how to begin to talk, what to study, and what or whom to love. Horses become the girl's true love, and Tusa will stop at nothing to shape the life she desires, with a horse-breeding farm in front of the noble manor house.

The second plane of the novel unfolds in Simbirsk, a new destination for Radovich — an impoverished low-ranked clerk working for the state mail service — and his son. Despite his meagre financial state Radovich, a physically imposing and very handsome person, behaves like a noble man. He creates a myth and raises his only son as a passionate worshiper of the cult of the father, as a vessel of the Serbian royal blood. This legend, which never receives any documentary evidence, creates a shield for Radovich between his mundane, dull, and penniless reality, and the world he and his son happily inhabit. That world is built on total obedience to the trinity of God, the emperor, and the father. A sudden dream-like friendship between Radovich's son and Alexander destroys crashes the very foundation of the Radovich family. Radovich junior inherits his father's attractive appearance, but

not his father's psychotic grandness. Self-aware but inherently flawed, Radovich junior has hardly dreamt of being noticed, not to mention being loved, yet he longs for love and recognition with a youthful anguish. When Alexander Ulianov, the center of Simbirsk academic life and the heart of society, irrevocably chooses Radovich as his friend, Radovich embraces in Ulianov his new self, an ardent follower of his new idol. Alexander Ulianov and Radovich leave together for St Petersburg to pursue a promising (for Alexander, at least) academic career. There Radovich gets to know a court guard captain of Serbian origin — a bon-vivant who opens up a new world for him, made of cocottes, hot chocolate, sparkling wine, gambling — as well as the charm of the guard cavalry and proximity to the emperor himself. Radovich dives passionately into his new life, dismissing Alexander Ulianov just as he had dismissed his father earlier. Embittered with jealousy and pain from the loss of his love, Ulianov ends up plotting against the emperor. Radovich knows about Ulianov's arrest and charges as he travels home out of duty to his gravely ill father. Struck with the mortal fear of imminent persecution as an accomplice to the plot, he is also on the run. Radovich will never come home; he will never see either his father or Ulianov again. He will learn of Ulianov's execution while at Boryatinskaya's estate, where he will be the newly hired manager of the stable and fiancé of the Princess' adopted daughter, Annette. Until Tusa decides differently.

Fate's whim means the two men shaping Tusa's story are broken and flawed — fugitives in a vain attempt to escape from guilt feelings. Yet Tusa will not become either their salvation or their redemption, just as she also cannot be a safe haven: her blinding passion is ruthless and her thirst for a brave new life is inexhaustible. Stepnova writes in the best traditions of nineteenth century Russian literature: her tone is elegant and her rich word choices are a colorful palette. The author draws readers into the world that she has lavishly painted and the reader finds themselves lost for the day in the guilty pleasure of crying along with the dramatic turmoil of the characters' ups and downs.

**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**

Novel, 2020  
412 pp

*Translation rights sold*

Lithuanian Tyto Alba  
Mongolian Nepko  
Arabic Thaqafa  
Estonian Tänapäev  
Hungarian Európa Publishers  
Romanian Curtea Veche  
Macedonian Antolog  
Malayalam (India) Green Books







## A New Breed (The Garden)

### Selected quotes

Marina Stepnova wrote a powerful complex novel that pictures the modern day and its freedom taken for granted by modern children — from the prism of the nineteenth century. In *The Garden*'s universe everything is predetermined, but the socially conditioned passions break out in the most unexpected ways. The novel is beautifully structured, one thing rhyming and echoing with another, weaving elaborately in a pattern reminiscent of the Princess Boryatinskaya's precious shawl.

*Forbes.ru*

An exquisitely literary text. *The Garden* starts an easy-going intercourse with both Russian and world literature. Marina Stepnova has written a novel that explores the past with the modern vision. She revises history, rewriting it anew, covering a range of topics — from conscious parenting to a book escapism to a crisis behaviour. And it is not about one family — this is a reflection of an epoch. *The Garden* is devised with ease and logic, as a revolver, and in this it is enticingly beautiful.

*Novaya Gazeta*

*The Garden* is a sophisticated big novel that alludes to Chekhov, Tolstoy and Turgenev. Stylistically elaborate, exquisite as in needlework, and grand in its scope — this is indeed a literary event, unique and inspiring.

*meduza.io*

Stepnova's *The Garden* is one of the widely discussed book of 2020. This is a pseudo-historical novel that brings up issues that are topical today: feminism, new ways of parenting, Russian liberalism... In this, Stepnova avoids rigid answers, questioning every problem's resolve. Stepnova succeeds in overcoming the novel's post-modern flow — she fills her text that is a parody by its essence (the parody on literary clichés that deconstructs cultural myths) with lyrics, sympathy and tenderness towards her characters.

*Uchitelskaya Gazeta*

Stepnova frees 19th century from the enchantment of Chekhov and Dostoevsky. She draws a new image of the 19th century Russia and writes an acutely topical novel — there's an issue of emancipation, a clash between traditions and molding the image of future, striving for the dream despite all odds. It turns out that in order to write a topical modern novel a writer can still set the text in the 19th century, and does not have to mention Covid or protests in Belarus.

*literaturno.com*



Double winner of the **Big Book Award 2012** (3rd prize from readers and the jury)

Finalist of the **National Bestseller 2012**

Finalist of the **Russian Booker Award 2012**

Shortlisted for **Yasnaya Polyana Literary Award 2012**



Over 200,000 copies  
sold in Russia  
since publication

## The Women of Lazarus

After the success of her debut novel *The Surgeon* (2005), which gained her the nomination for the National Bestseller Prize and enthusiastic critical acclaim, Marina Stepnova returns with a mesmerizing story of love, loss and human genius.

Marusia and Sergei Chaldonov are indeed blessed in their marriage. He — a respectable scientist with a bright academic career ahead, despite the revolutionary turmoil in Russia at dawn of the 20th century; she — a beautiful, kind, and intelligent wife. Their complete happiness is marred by one thing only: the couple is childless. After the first years of disappointment and doubt, Marusia makes a deal with God, the terms of which she never reveals to her husband. And in 1918, when Marusia is 49 years old, a child is bestowed on the couple. This child is Lazarus Lindt: 18-year-old self-educated maverick, true genius and a peer of the troubled century.

Lazar, too, loves Marusia, and with a passion that is different from filial love. The offspring of a poor Jewish family of which nothing is known besides their name, the prodigy Lazarus Lindt becomes Sergei Chaldonov's brightest pupil, his follower, and in no time outdoes his champion. An easy winner in all fields of science, Lazar fails to accomplish what he wants most. Marusia will never know about the true nature of Lazarus's feelings — not when he, already an acclaimed physicist and head of a promising line in nuclear physics, follows the Chaldonovs to Ansk during the evacuation and stays in the provincial town when Marusia decides against returning to Moscow after the war; not when the jour and bon vivant refuses to introduce Marusia to any of his numerous lovers; not even when Lazarus takes his chances and articulates his feelings at Sergei Chaldonov's anniversary. Marusia's open-hearted and easy re-

sponse — “I love you too” — leaves no hope for Lazarus. Lindt gets love-struck for the second time in his life years after Marusia's quiet and peaceful death. Galina — all peaches and cream, an exceptionally beautiful 18-year-old assistant at a Department of Chemistry in the Ansk Engineering Institute of Water Supply — plans her happy and simple family life with a postgraduate student, when her future knocks on the door of the Department in the guise of the Institute's guest lecturer, living classic of the physical sciences and father of the Soviet atomic bomb, Lazarus Lindt. Galina responds to Lazarus' passion with virulent hatred unto death, with the stubbornness of a simple and shallow nature. She will never love anyone else, not even her son, who commits suicide after a fatal accident befalls his wife, leaving their 5-year-old daughter Lida an orphan. The lovely tomboy Lida soon learns to endure pain, living through the spiteful indifference of her grandmother Galina, the physical strains of ballet school, and the despair of unrequited first love. Lida is yet to discover that sometimes you have to go to the farthest ends of the earth and even to die to find your love — and your home.

Marina Stepnova has depicted the country's 20th century on a broad canvas, permeating it with rhyming fates, echoes of feelings, and the tiniest movements of the human soul. The author's unprecedented literary command enables the reader to marvel and wonder at new meanings underlying the most basic notions of family, home, happiness, and love.

### Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2011

444 pp

### Translation rights sold

World English World Editions (available since 2021)

Dutch DeGeus

German btb

French Les Escales

Italian Voland

Swedish 2244

Norwegian Agora

Estonian Tänapäev

Hungarian Euröpa Publishers

Lithuanian Tyto Alba

Polish Czarna Owca

Latvian Janis Roze

Serbian Agora

Bulgarian Prozoretz

Czech Euromedia

Romanian Curtea Veche

Albanian Fan Noli

Macedonian Antolog

Croatian Naklada Ljevak

Armenian Vogt Nairi

Greek Livanist

Slovenian Forum

Arabic AS Publishers

Simplified Chinese Ginkgo Book (Shanghai)

### Film rights

optioned (available since July 2021)

Complete English,  
German & French  
translations  
available

### Selected quotes

This is a beautifully written novel with finely observed characters. A masterpiece.

*Novaya Gazeta*

From the bomb-making scientist in a secret city called Ensk to starving, smoking teenage dancers, filling each other's pointe shoes with ground glass, *The Women of Lazarus* flirts with Russia's enduring clichés even as it constructs a profound and powerful tale about human interaction.

*Russia Beyond the Headlines*

*The Women of Lazarus* has all the makings of being this season's Great Novel. We are talking great tragedy, violently burning love and deep psychological portraits, just like in the classical Russian novels.

*Allehanda*

Marina Stepnova's *Lazar's Women* is one of “those” books: in this case, “those” books are the ones that compel me just a touch more than they repel me. Oddly, for this reader, “those” books have a tendency to be novels where form and content are absolutely inseparable (a big plus) and books that inexplicably leave me with painfully unforgettable scenes and atmospheres (an even bigger plus).

*Lizok's Bookshelf*

Marina Stepnova unfolds an intoxicating tale with sensibility and humour.

*Culturoeping*

**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**

Novel, 2014  
383 pp

*Translation rights sold*

World English World Editions (available since 2021)

Dutch De Geus

German btb

French Les Escales

Hungarian Europa Publishers

Lithuanian Tyto Alba

Macedonian Antolog

Serbian Agora

Estonian Tänapäev

Latvian Janis Rose

Albanian Fan Noli

Slovakian Slovart

Malayalam Green Books (India)

Mongolian Nepko

Bulgarian Prozoretz

*Film rights*

optioned (available since December 2022)

Complete English  
translation available

## The Italian Lessons

Over 55,000 copies  
sold in Russia  
since publication

Marina Stepnova, the national bestselling author of *The Women of Lazarus*, brilliantly weaves together a tragic love story and a Bildungsroman, resulting in a trenchant novel about a mad (and mad-dening) love, personal freedom, and the price one must pay for it.

We follow Ivan Ogaryov's life, from his bleak love-starved childhood, through the army and a tragic deadly accident, to his career as a therapist with a large clientele at a Moscow private clinic. The status quo had always been repellent to Ogaryov, yet at 42 years of age he is living a superficial, formulaic, predictable life. He has his work in the clinic, joyless marriage and sex, Sunday visits to his wife's parents, and Saturday shopping in a supermarket mall. One day is all it takes for this life to collapse into ruins — the day that Ogaryov meets Malya (24), a girl who is truly exceptional. Their mad love affair sweeps Ogaryov out of his dreary existence into a heady “*Master and Margarita*” world, where the only things that matter are verse, food, love and... Italy. Ogaryov gives up his long-standing marriage, leaving his deeply loving wife crushed; he quits his job (a stab in the back of his friend, the clinic's owner). He frequently travels outside “the systematically alien, joyless” country, relishing his new-found happiness. He is determined to protect their life together at any cost — but Malya chooses differently. Told in a brisk manner, through shifting, masterfully paced sentences, the novel is rich in metaphor, and in both hidden and explicit quotes and allusions to Russia's 20th century

poetry and prose — from Vladimir Nabokov through Boris Pasternak to George Adamovich. In her third published novel, Marina Stepnova's by now mature voice rings with exceptional strength and clarity. It has struck a chord with a wide readership; the first printing of 7,000 copies was sold out two weeks after its release. It remained firmly in the top five of the best-seller lists of Moscow's major bookstores for an entire month after publication, and drew a lively response from the national critical establishment.

Marina Stepnova in an interview for *Vedomosti*: “One always pays for freedom, and in Russia (and not only in the Soviet era) the price has always been exceptionally high. On the other hand, freedom is the only thing worth paying this price for. Ogaryov loses everything he has: his country, his job, the woman he loves and who loves him, his social status. But in return he achieves something heretofore unimaginable — at long last he can live the way he had always dreamed about but never dared attempt, because he was always dogged by that very social status, with its family expectations, responsibilities, debts... Ordinary life — alien and importunate.”

### Selected quotes

Marina Stepnova writes not simply well, but brilliantly: with ease, beauty, intellect, and authority. [She writes] generously, without constraint. Hers is an ample, weighted word, or rather a deposit of words, solid, juicy as apples, aromatic and definitive. Such a trove of words is a boon for any writer. Yet *Italian Lessons* offers more — this is a “novel with a key,” and with a key idea — and the idea is a sad one. The novel is so bitterly topical that it burns right through to the diaphragm.

*Vedomosti*

Stepnova's prose rightfully assumes special place in modern fiction. Her novels are lyrical experiences

told in prose. Sad stories witnessing to simple yet very important things, such as that every person deserves to love and be loved in return. *The Italian Lessons* is the author's new novel, and in it she remains true to herself and her chosen idiom. Aficionados of *The Women of Lazarus* will be happy to dive into the unconscious of her new characters, interpret their dreams, feel their pain. And, once again, to ascertain that Marina Stepnova's work is an elaboration of the traditions of Russian classical writers down the centuries.

[prochtenie.ru](http://prochtenie.ru)

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Award 2005**



Astrel  
Novel, 2005  
Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)  
Novel, 2013  
316 pp  
*Translation rights sold*  
Mongolian Nepko

## The Surgeon

In her first novel, *The Surgeon*, the national prize-winning author of *The Women of Lazarus*, Marina Stepnova, links together the stories of a ruthless medieval religious fanatic and a modern exceptionally gifted plastic surgeon to paint a grim picture of the world of the total absence of love.

Born in a small provincial town in a working class family, from an alcoholic father and a seductive yet simple-minded mother, Arkady Khripunov has a bleak future ahead: a beaten track of dull school training, followed by dreary work at the town's only local factory during the day and joyless hours of drinking and meaningless fighting with fellow workers in the evening. This inevitable routine gets broken when Arkady, a teenage boy of 12 years old, ...dies. After he recovers from the severe and deadly meningitis attack, Arkady knows two facts: this world is ugly and he is the one to correct this. At the age of 35 Khripunov becomes an exceptionally gifted plastic surgeon, obsessed with one mission, to create the absolute beauty. An endless flow of flesh and bones before him, bearers of which dream only of becoming a material for Khripunov's practice, brings the genius surgeon to the verge of despair, when he meets his Galatea. Unaware of Arkady's true motives, the girl eagerly agrees to become a subject of the surgeon's experiment.

Hassan ibn-al Sabbāh is an all-powerful missionary in the late 11th century Persia. The founder of his own Islam-based religious doctrine, Hassan-I Sabbah devotes all of his life to the mission of converting people into his faith. After the successful seizure of an invincible fortress Alamut in the mountains of the northern Iran, Hassan is considered as nothing less than God's

true chosen one. The ruler of Alamut directs a ruthless campaign against local lords of other doctrines and foreign political leaders. The fortress on the mountain serves for years an ideal hideout and training base for warrior pupils of Hassan's doctrine, whom he carefully chooses to perform his life's mission. Trained through harsh discipline, terror and ardent religious studies, Hassan's soldiers are turned into an invincible mechanism that stops at nothing to spread the branches of their leader's doctrine into the world. These come to be called assassins or the fedayins, meaning "the martyrs" or "the men who accept death". Hassan, too, is unafraid of death — nothing in this world can terrorize him, until one day he sees a young woman, his own daughter whom he ordered to kill right after her birth.

The two alternately life chronicles mold into an original gospel. An immaculate stylist, Stepnova is ruthless to the world she pictures, executing mercy to neither protagonists nor readers. One gets irrevocably mesmerized with the text, with the irresistible beauty of Stepnova's prose, the author's absolute command of the narrative's pitch, its penetrating atmosphere and the author's razor-sharp word choice. *The Surgeon* — a profound narration about obsession, death, madness and beauty — is an exceptional debut work, a true manifest of an arrival of a great literary master.

### Selected quotes

Stepnova has fingers of a surgeon that know how to make an ideally pitched phrase. Stepnova has a masterly command of stylistic means and lexicon that equates the genius of her character's practice of surgical instruments. <...> Stepnova demonstrates a misanthropic vision of this world, yet has a most happy marriage with the language.

*Lev Danilkin*  
*Afisha*

A beautiful, bright, remarkable novel about how tense and uncomfortable can it become in this loveless world for one who thinks of oneself as an *Urbemensch*.

*weekend.ru*

This novel is a rare work of fiction that you can read without understanding and yet without an urge to understand at all cost.

*snob.ru*

An ultimately cruel, a mercilessly beautiful prose.

*Aitateli*



About the author:

**YANA VAGNER** was born in Moscow in 1973 into a bilingual family. Her Czech mother came to Moscow in the 60s to study Russian language and literature. Yana graduated from Moscow State University with a major in management and has worked as an interpreter, an anchorperson on radio, and a logistics manager, which allowed her to travel extensively throughout Africa, Europe and Latin America.

She started writing *To the Lake* as a weekly blog while a flu epidemic swept through Moscow. It has since become a bestselling novel, translated into multiple languages and adapted into a Netflix series.

Yana Vagner lives with her husband, teenage son, and two dogs in their country house on the outskirts of Moscow.

*Selected Bibliography*

2024 — **The Tunnel**, *novel*

2020 — **2068**, *novel*

2017 — **Accomplices**, *novel*

2012 — **Vongozero: Truly Human**, *novel*

2011 — **Vongozero**, *novel*

Longlisted for the **New Literature Prize 2012**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2012, 2018**

Shortlisted for **Prix Russophonie 2015**

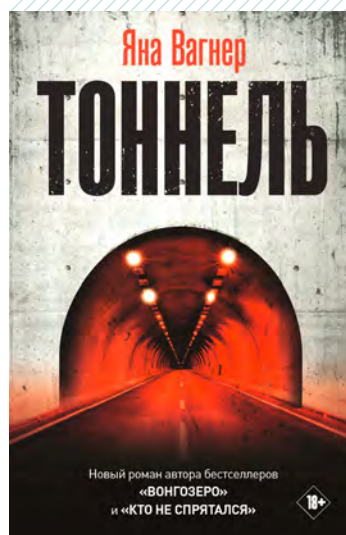
Shortlisted for **Prix Bob Morane 2015** (France)

Finalist of the **Grand Prix des lectrices Elle 2015** (France)

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2017**

**Financial Times Book of the Year 2021** (UK)

**Herald Book of the Year 2021** (UK)



## The Tunnel

A much-anticipated new novel from the internationally bestselling author of *To the Lake*, adapted into a compelling Netflix series and endorsed by none other than Stephen King himself. Yana Vagner is unsurpassed in navigating through the intricate shifts in human behavior under extreme circumstances.

### Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2024  
569 pp

### Translation rights sold

French Robert Laffont  
Bulgarian Labirint

### Audio rights sold

Vimbo

### Film rights sold

A lengthy road tunnel, connecting Moscow with its suburban areas, stretches beneath a river's depths. It's the end of a July weekend, and traffic is congested: elderly dacha owners with cars packed to the brim with freshly harvested fruits and vegetables, families with infants securely nestled in child seats alongside bored teenagers slumping in the backseats, a smattering of pick-up trucks, vans, and refrigerated lorries, a vigilant police car, an opulent executive-class vehicle with tinted windows, and a tattered taxi blaring raucous music — a typical cross-section of urban diversity.

Midway through the tunnel, where radio signals have long vanished, and mobile phones remain deprived of reception, the steady flow of cars abruptly halts. Initially, people are patient assuming it's an accident up ahead or another road closure for an official motorcade. Yet, the gridlock persists, and after a while, people begin to wonder, leaving their vehicles and striking up conversations. Impatience eventually gets the better of some, and a small group ventures toward the tunnel's exit, embarking on a several-kilometer trek. Their hasty return is accompanied by a panicking crowd and troubling news — there's no way out of the tunnel anymore. An explanation eludes them, rumors spread like wildfire, and panic takes root. The crowd retreats toward the tunnel's entrance, but it's barricaded with imposing railings and concrete gates — the same gates that had sealed the exit, tragically thwarting the escape attempt of a reckless car.

Initially, civility prevails as people await rescue. They exchange jokes, share water, and console each other's children. However, as hours pass without any sign of rescue, mobile signals gone, and isolation sets in — both from the external world and from different segments of the lengthy tunnel — reason gradually dissipates, replaced by mounting paranoia.

A sequence of unforeseeable events transforms law-abiding citizens into a frenzied mob. First, a criminal seizes the opportunity to escape from the police car, killing one officer in the process and acquiring a gun. Next, a group of contract construction workers resort to drastic measures, severing an electricity cable in a futile bid to breach the tunnel's walls. At the same time, an elderly, snake-like official finds access to a covert emergency bunker with a capacity limited to sixty occupants, prompting his assistant to execute a specific protocol to select those who might survive.

Following the massive electrical failure, the trapped individuals, confined beneath ground with limited and rapidly depleting air, begin to act as though they're living through Judgment Day. As tensions escalate, they uncover the existence of a bunker stocked with air, weapons, and essential provisions, but discover that the available space proves insufficient for all.

In less than thirty hours since the lockdown, the gates slowly swing open, welcoming rescuers and ambulances. The true cause of the catastrophe is revealed to be an unprecedented cyber attack targeting the city's infrastructure and key transportation hubs. Emerging from the tunnel, exhausted and shaken, survivors feel as though they've spent an eternity underground, miraculously escaping what can only be described as hell. However, for some, salvation never arrived.

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Award 2018**

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2017**

Nearly 70,000 copies sold



**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**

Novel, 2017

542 pp

*Translation rights sold*

French Mirobole Editions

French Poche

Czech Omega/Dobrovsky/ now available

Lithuanian Alma Littera

*Film rights sold*

## Accomplices

Following the success of her bestselling snowy road thriller, *Vongozero*, Yana Vagner sets her new stand-alone detective mystery drama in ice and snow, but ignites it with passion, love and hatred to a blazing extreme.

A film crew arrives to a mountain skiing resort for a film shoot. The film producer rents a secluded hotel on the mountain top a week before the shoot for a friendly getaway. On the first night of the weekly vacation the lead actress is brutally murdered: someone pierces her twice with a ski pole and pushes her over the parapet, down to the rocks, leaving to die under a commencing ice rain.

In the morning the group discovers that the cableway (the only connection with the outside world) is covered with ice and de-energized, the transmitter is crushed, no mobile signal available in the area, — and there is a dead body, frozen to a rocky mountain slope, a few meters away from a skiing path.

They are nine-eight lifetime friends and a morose, somewhat sinister, hotel manager — and one of them is obviously a murderer. Being cut off from the world, they run their own investigation. No one has an alibi, each has a confession to make, and each might want Sonya, the film's star, dead. For years Sonya, an ingenious manipulator, a prodigious actress, ruthlessly and cynically exploited and manipulated her friends, feeding on their love and despairs.

The friends will have to discover unpleasant truths about each other, face the dark secrets of their own past, and break off the ice shell of their lifetime illusions.

The first suspicion falls on Tatiana, the script writer. Tatiana, an author of one novel heralded by critics as a “bright promising debut”, could not produce a close match to her first breakthrough novel and had to switch to writing scripts. Her bitter, austere and even aggressive personality clashes against her husband's conforming and benign nature. The secret glue of the marriage is Tatiana's infertility — a sad side-effect of an abortion she made in the early years of their young marriage, an operation prompted by the husband. Tatiana silently blames her husband for her failure as a mother, while Petya's feeling of guilt keeps him loyal to their otherwise failed marriage. Petya has been hopelessly in love with Sonya, the victim, for years.

Masha, a smart journalist, has known Sonya since school, having introduced Sonya to the rest of the group. Herself a victim of a family abuse as a child, Masha today is a charity activist, providing help for sick children from all over Russia. Masha has no family, and their friendship is an ersatz of relations she subconsciously avoids.

There is Vadik, once a gifted and promising film director, now an alcoholic, wasting his talent in production of countless cheap soap-operas. For years he has been desperately trying to finance his own feature film, but without luck. For this failure he blames Sonya, a celebrity who could help through her connections, but would prefer to seek investment for less risky TV projects.

There is Ivan, an affluent businessman and the film's producer. With his often indecent generosity Ivan continuously attempts to overcome the social gap between him and the rest of the group: for the rest he will always remain an unsophisticated provincial in an elitarian group of Moscovites. For Laura, Ivan's young wife, this social difference is of no importance. With her looks of a fashion model and the same provincial childhood, Laura seems no more than a shallow hunter for Ivan's fortune. However, the girl is truly in love with her husband and is painfully dependent on him, desperately — and in vain — searching for his affection. But Laura, too, has a secret, and Sonya was the only one who knew what the young wife would hide from the adored husband.

Last but not least there is Egor, a successful lawyer, who cheats on his wife Liza. A house-wife incarnate, Lisa replaced a love for her husband with a dedication to their home — a dream-house that she so beautifully and passionately manages. Lisa knows of her husband's infidelity, this is a silent part of their marriage treaty, but what if one of the affairs, their affair with Sonya, has crossed the invisible line?

During an improvised seclusion in an ice cell next to the mutilated dead body of a friend, the group will be in turn investigators, testifiers, and even judges, but essentially will all remain accomplices. The heroes discover that their friendship — based on lies, illusions and masks they eagerly put on — is a wobbly construction that shall not endure, and Sonya's murder has become the conviction to them all.

In this flawlessly written drama, Vagner masterly melds mystery suspense, a close character study, flaming emotions and social background. Vagner's recognizable “avalanche prose” style works with brilliance in this complex drama, making for an intense and a true page-turning read.



**Eksmo**  
2011

**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**  
Novel, 2020  
448 pp

*Translation rights sold*

English UK Skyscraper /original publisher  
English UK Swift Press / new publisher  
English US — Deep Vellum  
French Mirobole Editions  
French paperback Poche  
Swedish Ersatz  
Slovakian Ikar / now available  
Slovenian Mladinska knjiga  
Czech Euromedia / now available  
Polish Zysk  
Lithuanian Alma Littera  
Latvian Zvaigzne  
Estonian Varrak  
Mongolian Nepko  
Arabic AS Publishers / now available  
Serbian Publik Praktikum  
Greek Livanis Publishing  
Ukrainian Book Club «Family Leisure»  
Hungarian Helikon  
Bulgarian Labirint

*Film rights sold*

Art Pictures, Russia  
TV show acquired by Netflix Originals in September 2020  
TV series premiered April 2019  
Fresh TV Fiction selection of 2020 MIPCOM

Complete  
English & French  
translation  
available

Longlisted for the **New Literature Prize 2012**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2012**

Shortlisted for **Prix Russophonie 2015**

Shortlisted for **Prix Bob Morane 2015**

Finalist of the **Grand Prix des lectrices Elle 2015**

**Financial Times Book of the Year 2021**

**Herald Book of the Year 2021**

## Vongozero

In her debut post-apocalyptic thriller Yana Vagner refers simultaneously to Stephen King's *The Stand*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and the popular TV show *Man vs. the Wild* — and yet the author concocts a strikingly visionary survival story in its own right. Written at the time of the H1N1 flu epidemic and coming out as weekly entries in Vagner's blog, *Vongozero* — a haunting and arresting tale of a young woman who attempts to survive with her family during the throes of a pandemic — had already won thousands of readers before its publication as a book, setting off a heated auction among major Russian publishers. It has since become a bestselling novel, translated into multiple languages and adapted into a Netflix series.

What begins as a flu epidemic rapidly transmutes into a national catastrophe; but in the first days there's little panic. Anya, the story's narrator, 36-years old, was married three years before the events and now resides with her husband Sergei and her teenage son Misha in their country house outside of Moscow. They remain oblivious to the scope of the danger until the authorities send out troops to close down the major cities for entry, dooming their inhabitants to a swift yet painful death. Panic triggers violence, looting and devastation.

Anya and Sergei have both left family members behind in Moscow, and while Sergei succeeds in rescuing his ex-wife with their 3-year old son, Anya's mother gets infected and dies in the city under siege. Anya's father arrives just prior to the appearance of the first looters in the settlement, a direct warning to the family. They choose to flee to a shabby getaway house at the Vongozero lake near the Finnish border, where Sergei had stayed a few times on hunting trips. Born out of necessity, the expedition grows into eight adults and three children in four crossovers, loaded with belongings and fuel. Mortal danger draws together this weird and ill-assorted group of fellow travelers, speeding to the north of the rapidly deteriorating country.

Scheduled as a 48-hour journey, the road trip turns into twelve days of nightmare, dreary anticipation of grief,

worry, and struggle. As this highway trip escalates into a test of ultimate survival, the fellow travelers have to find the strength and resources not only to fight against the looming external dangers, but to face the deepest corners of themselves. There are no guarantees, no rules, and no truths outside those that help them to survive. The road challenges the limits of human nature, measuring compassion against the thirst for living, the strength of family ties against jealousy and exasperation — and forces each traveler to pay the utmost cost for survival.

The sweeping avalanche of a road story stops short at the destination point: a tiny shelter on the shore of the ice-covered Vongozero lake in the freezing taiga forest. The protagonists now have time to weep for those who failed to reach the final point and to attempt to build out of the ruins and rubble a new routine, a new code, a new life, and possibly new selves.

As horrifying as one's worst nightmares, the novel reads as a very plausible scenario. Yana Vagner demonstrates outstanding writing skills and deep psychological insight as she sets out the simplest and at the same time the most complicated question before her characters and readers: what does it take to remain human in the face of mortal danger?





## About the author:

**TATSIANA ZAMIROVSKAYA** is a writer, music critic and journalist from Minsk, Belarus who currently resides in Brooklyn, New York. She graduated with a degree in Journalism from Belarusian State University (2002) and received an MFA in Creative Writing from Bard College. Her journalistic works have been published in a variety of Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian media outlets. In Belarus, she worked as a magazine editor (Jazz-Quad Magazine, Belarus, Doberman magazine), and as the arts and culture observer at Belagazeta, the most prominent Belarusian independent weekly newspaper. She also had a successful career as a music critic.

In 2015, Tatsiana moved to New York to earn her MFA at Bard College, where her thesis was an English-language novel-in-progress, *Silence Fiction*. In this project, she moved away from her native language, exploring the concepts of alienation and studying the effects of language insufficiency on memory, narration and representation.

Tatsiana presented excerpts from this work-in-progress were during readings at New York institutions such as Microscope Gallery (Brooklyn), How! happening gallery, Printed Matter bookstore, and Leslie Lohman's Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art. In 2018, Tatsiana won a fellowship from Macdowell Colony and, in 2019, was accepted to VCCA artist colony.

Tatsiana is the author of three Russian-language short stories collections: *Life Without Noise and Pain* (2010), *Sparrow River* (2010), and *The Land of Random Numbers* (2019), published by AST Publishing House in Moscow. Tatsiana's short stories have been published in Russian-language magazines worldwide. In September 2018 her short story *Honeyfast* was awarded the Gorchev Award, a prestigious Russian prize for short fiction. *The Deadnet*, her debut novel, received nominations for New Literature Award and The National Bestseller Prize in 2021.

*Selected Bibliography*

2021 — **The Deadnet**, *novel*

2019 — **The Land of Random Numbers**, *short stories*

2015 — **Sparrow River**, *short stories*

2010 — **Life Without Noise and Pain**, *short stories*

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2021**

Nominated for the **New Literature Award 2021**

**Gorchev Award 2018**

Gorchev Award 2018



Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Short stories, 2019, 2022

390 pp

Film rights optioned

## The Land of Random Numbers

Stephen King meets Ursula K. Le Guin and Philip K. Dick in this fascinating feast of the imagination.

Reminiscent of Black Mirror with a dark metaphysical twist, *The Land of Random Numbers* is a collection of 23 stories dwelling on the “what if?” question. What if people reincarnated back in time in whole clusters? How about a game of Mafia, but with real murders? What if you could pass the trials of the Last Judgment during your lifetime? What if David Bowie didn’t really die, and Joseph Beuys was not rescued and cared for by Crimean Tatars, but by teenage girls in a suburban summer home? What if you lost the ability to speak after a brain injury, but there was still a conscious and verbal part of your brain that claimed a different personality? What if a new virus emerges, intertwining humans and nature into a global mystical “biotext”? And what do you do if you start hearing voices, where one of them is Stalin, and the other is an incoherent half-mute desperate to communicate?

Zamirovskaya stories unravel in realities similar to ours, albeit with a touch of the fantastic. They evolve from themes of the mundane, bureaucracy, power and family. In this transformed universe, time travel is possible, the world can change in a blink of an eye, familiar

historical figures play completely different roles, and an ordinary game can become something much more threatening and sinister than ever imagined.

Tatsiana imbues her personal memories with the dark surrealism of totalitarian-era writing, ghost stories, and children’s folklore, creating spine-chilling, absurd narratives about distorted normativities, in which the surreal takes over and becomes the norm.

Much inspired by metaphysical realism, Tatsiana skillfully intertwines the ideas of quantum theory, neuroscience and biology to explore the nature of things in an attempt to look beyond reality as we know it, to achieve a multi-dimensional perception of the world.

With its poetic language, replete with exquisite metaphors and mesmerizing rhythms, this captivating book lures the reader into the glimmering net of universal existential questions. *The Land of Random Numbers* is a strikingly humane book about coming of age, violence, language deprivation and broken memory, withholding answers but offering vast spaces for contemplation.

### Selected quotes

The author of this book is a stalker. She has a unique optics that allows her to cross the borderline between the real and the other worlds as if no such border has ever existed. From the inside of the text there seems to be no such borderline for you either, and you get to understand how the universe works, and you always knew it, of course, but somehow forgot. And now you remember again.

**Yana Vagner**

*the internationally bestselling author of To the Lake*

Razor-sharp, whimsical yet lucid prose of Zamirovskaya takes the reader by hand and leads through the looking glass to reveal one’s real self. It is too late to close your eyes from fear and pretend you have not been there.

**Natalia Lomykina**

*Forbes.ru*

There’s something wrong here, but what? While life is similar to art — its coincidents and inconsistencies, hopeful occurrences and recurrent turns of fortune — the real art is never similar to life. Or maybe, it is, though, with its misleading optics, a curved beam of light. Here it is, this curve, a frighteningly recognizable unrecognition. Here is my briefcase returned, but

maybe this one is not mine, after all, and belongs to someone else — or maybe, I am that someone. Zamirovskaya peeks into the other world which is intervening with our world, just like Kharms’ messengers, causing sudden goosebumps all over the skin.

**Matvei Yankelevich**

*a poet and translator (New York)*

With every story, every episode, and word Zamirovskaya probes the world for its resistance, as a child first pokes with a stick what he is afraid to touch with his hands. Is it what it looks? And if different, is it good or evil, a truth or a lie? The answers often betray expectations, however, the author’s optimism makes her continue with the research. Indeed, we only live as long as we continue to ask questions.

**Anna Kozlova**

*the prize-winning author of F20*

Each story is a puzzle in the labyrinths of mirrors, but the text has nothing to do with a calculated narrative. Love and memory spring here through the basement of the universe, a living organism fuelled with heart beats of readers and the writer alike.

**Alexander Gavrilov**

*a publisher and critic*

English sample  
available

Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2021**

Nominated for the **New Literature Award 2021**



Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2021

576 pp

Film rights optioned

## The Deadnet

An uprising literary star from Belarus comes with a startling anti-utopia about the digital world of dead consciousnesses — the Deadnet. This collective space concocted from individual memories is home to digital backup copies, each activated after a person's death. This anti-Matrix reality is striking, colorful, replete with memories, love and dreams-come-true. It's an ineffably beautiful world that's well worth... dying for.

The not-so-distant future. The vast majority of illnesses eradicated, human death is now caused mostly by virus outbreaks or terrorist attacks. As a coping mechanism, humanity develops a technology that creates digital copies of human consciousness. Individuals are allowed to create digital backups of themselves. Once they die, their digital copy is activated and can communicate with the world of living — but only with a limited number of family and friends. They are isolated from others, banned from interfering with the world of the living. To compensate for the copies' inevitable loneliness, the government decides to merge all of these dead people's personal contexts and memories, thus creating an internet of the dead, the Deadnet. There, digital copies can interact and even form relationships.

The protagonist, a woman in her mid-forties, wakes up “resurrected” — a copy — only to learn that she has been killed in a terrorist attack. She connects with her family and friends, but her loving husband, to her utter amazement, refuses to communicate with her. Her family is clearly avoiding the subject and, after a series of failed attempts, she is forced to give up. She meets A., one of the first “inhabitants” of Deadnet, and they start a relationship.

Deadnet inhabitants continue their struggle against “bioprivilege,” fighting for their rights to have a say in the real world. A revolution ensues. The dead invade the Internet of Things, taking over digital devices and appliances and wreaking havoc. This attempt is short lived. The government simply unplugs the Deadnet, cutting it off from the real world entirely. Their daring effort, however, is not entirely in vain: the dead are able to steal millions of backup copies of the living.

Among these stolen copies is an earlier copy of the protagonist's husband. Because this copy was created before his wife's death, the husband is totally shocked to find himself on the Deadnet and, what's more, to find his wife involved with another man.

To investigate the protagonist's death, the married couple hacks into the real world. There they discover the awful truth — the protagonist did not die in a terrorist attack. She was brutally murdered by her own husband, who is now in prison.

The murder investigation brings the protagonist to the headquarters of the Committee for the Insurrection

of the Dead. They can help her hack into the otherwise cut-off real world. She manages to reach the world in the shape of an airport departure board, a robotic dog and, even a clone of the dictator of a certain Eastern European country... She does this for the sake of the Deadnet — but also, secretly, for her own personal quest

While the protagonist's own investigation proves fruitless, she obtains a crucial piece of information: the government plans to turn off the Deadnet server. To shut it down completely. The Committee assigns the protagonist with a mission to enable the portal for Deadnet self-download.

In a final effort to solve her murder mystery, she decides to forge a portal not only into the real world, but also through time. She will travel to the time of her murder and witness the act — in the body of her own husband. Through her husband's eyes, she observes her “real” self fighting with her husband at a restaurant. As she rummages through his mind, however, she realizes that he has no — never had any — intention of killing her. But she also knows that if she leaves now, her real self won't die, and none of this would have happened. There would be no resurrected digital copy of herself, no A. and their love, no new friends. She never would have become the person she is now. Moreover, the Deadnet would simply cease to exist. Her death proves to be a key to the new world, and she has a choice to make.

This quantum detective thriller and metaphysical anti-utopia is a true delight for inquisitive minds. Tatsiana Zamirovskaya takes readers on a challenging journey into the philosophical cosmos of Nikolay Fyodorov and Boris Groys, filling her work with concepts from speculative realism, in the vein of Ray Brassier and Timothy Morton. In this witty page-turner, Zamirovskaya poses audacious existential questions. Is memory a gateway to eternity? How might the resurrection of the dead inform our understanding of free will? Is a digitalized consciousness living a “real” life? Zamirovskaya also invites the reader to dwell on social issues that have gained their bitter topicality these days: life in isolation, dictatorships, institutionalized ghettos, and — most of all — the ways in which we revolt.

English sample  
available





## The Deadnet

### Selected quotes

The Deadnet, it seems, is an important cultural evidence or a symptom of modern reflections on the concept of “one” behind the speech.

*Colta.ru*

The debut novel by a young writer from Belarus, Tatsiana Zamirovskaya, reads as a techno thriller of a Black Mirror type in the beginning, continues as a ghost mystery, but is ultimately none of the above. The protagonist carries out a rather painful investigation of her own death, and this research makes the novel the rarest attempt in today’s literature to search for a new approach to talk about life, death and the nature of things, in general.

*Galina Yuzefovich  
meduza.io*

In *The Deadnet*, a fantasy mystery thriller turns into a sequel to the popular essay *What Is It Like To Be a Bat* by Thomas Nagel, an American philosopher. Zamirovskaya develops his thesis — in her fiction world, it is not only living (or dead) people who have a form of individual consciousness, but also things, like a cactus or a stone. The novel’s universe becomes Borges’ *Mirror of Enigmas*, a system where each object carries a piece of information, and the signifier

merges with the signified. This all could make the text too high brow, but Zamirovskaya succeeds in coining a very lively world of the dead (the pun intended) and describes it with much humor.

*Prochtenie*

Everyone interested in the world’s current philosophical trends can find various up-to-date concepts to feed the inquisitive mind in Zamirovskaya’s novel. And it is not solely about philosophy, Zamirovskaya smartly introduces concepts and objects that will form the reality in the not-so-distant future. <...> Essentially, *The Deadnet* is not a space, where a story develops and characters interact — though the author draws both the plot and characters beautifully. The novel, in the end, becomes a platform for an intellectual exchange, a channel for the mind, heart and pure art.

*Anna Berseneva  
New Izvestia*

With her novel Zamirovskaya strongly claims a title of the Russian China Miéville. *The Deadnet* is to me the best novel of the year.

*Alexander Gavrilo  
a publisher and critic, for Vimbo audio publishing blog*





## About the author:

**KONSTANTIN ZARUBIN** is a professor of English language and linguistic studies at Dalarna University in Sweden. He writes fiction and essays, the latter with a focus on gender (female) studies and social issues. He is also a singer and songwriter. He moved to Sweden in 2008, where he now lives with his wife. The author's website – <https://kostia.me>.

## *Selected Bibliography*

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- 2021 — **The Red List of Peace Street**, *novella and short stories*
- 2021 — **Chestnut Freyja**, *novellas*
- 2021 — **Misha, It's Elephants All Around**, *novel*
- 2019 — **A Mayfly Walked Along the Shore**, *novel*
- 2019 — **The Russian Heart Beats for All**, *novel*

Shortlisted for the **New Horizons Award 2023**



**Meduza**

Novel, 2024  
190 pp

*Audio rights sold*  
Litbuk

## The Russian Heart Beats for All

This alarmingly prophetic anti-utopia and a bitter social satire from Konstantin Zarubin, a professor at Dalarna University in Sweden, reads unlike any other literary warning. Surgically acute, bold, and smart, the novel accentuates the most painful aspects in the social and political catastrophe, from which Russia and Europe suffer today.

In the alternative 2023 Russia is torn in parts by a civilian war. European countries try to cope with millions of refugees from the collapsed Russian state.

The protagonist of the first part of the novel is Andrey Menyaev, once a bestselling writer with two film adaptations and a leader of the state propaganda factory in Moscow. Today Menyaev is a refugee, seeking a residency permit in Scandinavia. Ironically, a leading figure of Moscow media beau monde, cynical and smart, today Menyaev fully depends on those he has always despised and mocked — good-hearted idealists. He is being introduced to an Icelandic lady, an activist of feministic movement and a liberal intellectual, and a member of a covert organization helping refugees with the immigration procedures. Will Harpa, his “beautiful Icelander”, as Menyaev calls her, succeed in defending their marriage in the eyes of the experienced migration officials?

The main character of the second part is Danya Svechin. A talented digital artist, he created deepfakes under Menyaev’s supervision in Moscow. To his luck, Svechin has got an Estonian citizenship, and after the revolt in Moscow he settles down in a low-key area in Estonia, far from the Russian refugees ghetto. It is there where alerting news reach Svechin: former fellow workers from the Moscow propaganda factory are reported dead, brutally murdered by a single terrorist or a terrorist group. Svechin receives protection from

authorities in a new hide-away under a fake name. The only connection with his past is Nika, a childhood friend, a single mother who writes to him about their life in the refugees ghetto. Once Nika tells the artist about a group of illegal migrants fighting back a local gang that kept nagging the family with a handicapped kid, though they knew that might compromise their status in Estonia. The police detained the gangsters yet deported the Russians back to their home country. Nika’s story inspires Svechin to draw a comic book that becomes an international sensation. Svechin decides to finally meet Nika in person and falls victim to the mysterious terrorist avenger.

Mira Iskalieva from the last part of the novel is one of this group of deported refugees, a heroine from Svechin’s comic book. We follow her story after the deportation to Moscow, where she becomes a sex slave for local gunmen. Mira manages to escape. With a group of teenagers, she makes another desperate attempt to cross the border of Russia.

Darkly humorous and frighteningly true to life, Zarubin’s novel is more than a social satire or a warning. Zarubin smartly manipulates his readers in translating the novel’s events to the up-to-date news in politics and social life. Zarubin shocks with his prophetic insights and his bright and broad picture of Russian-European relations.

Shortlisted for the **New Horizons Award 2023**



**Elena Shubina publishing (AST)**

Novel, 2023

512 pp

*Audio rights sold*

Litbuk

## New Science Fiction From L.

A captivating literary odyssey, *New Science Fiction from L.* unveils nothing short of a universe: a world where magic happens, a world we live in, a world that might have a future.

Helsinki, July 2020. A scientist who left Russia fleeing trumped-up treason charges is found dead outside his apartment. The task of sorting through the books from his home library falls to Darja, a local student helping out at a second-hand bookshop. In a huge atlas of Arctica, she finds notes of a mysterious investigation that the deceased carried out. The scientist searched for people to interview them from the former Soviet Union, today scattered all over the world, from Kazakhstan and Georgia, Finland and Italy, to Canada. In the recorded interviews, the subjects are asked to recall an anthology of sci-fi short stories. These stories seem to be written by authors of various origin — Latvia, Lviv (Ukraine), Leningrad etc — translated into Russian or published in original languages. Despite the key differences as of original language, publishers, titles of the stories and names of the writers, the plots and subjects of the stories in the collection were nearly identical. What's more, every reader accounts of their reading experience as nothing less but miraculous and life changing.

Now Darja is set to continue the dead scientist's investigation, and she starts with identifying NSFL readers' club, whose members, it turns, hired him in the first place. This decision sets off a breathtaking chain of events that will turn upside down Darja's dreamy pandemic summer and might change the future of our civilization.

*New Science Fiction from L.* is a gripping literary quest set on the eve of a new European war and in the twilight years of the Soviet empire. It speaks in many voices and takes the reader many places: from Kyiv and Tbilisi in the 1980s to the Riga, Bologna and St. Petersburg of the 2010s. Both a compassionate tale of self-discovery and an unflinching reckoning with toxic nostalgia, *New Science Fiction from L.* is a glimpse of what Russophone literature can be when it stops navel-gazing and engages with the world beyond Russian imperial myths.