

**Banke, Goumen & Smirnova**  
Literary Agency

**TRANSLATION RIGHTS CATALOGUE**

**RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE LITERARY FICTION**

**QUALITY COMMERCIAL FICTION & NON-FICTION**

**2024**

List of Authors

---

**NARINE ABGARYAN**  
**SONA ABGARYAN**  
**DANIEL BERGER**  
**VERA BOGDANOVA**  
**KSENIA BUKSHA & ARTHUR BONDAR**  
**DENIS BUSHLATOV**  
**SVETA DOROSHEVA**  
**LENA ELTANG**  
**KATERINA GORDEEVA**  
**SERGEY KUZNETSOV**  
**EKATERINA MANOYLO**  
**NATALIYA MESHCHANINOVA**  
**IVAN PHILIPPOV**  
**MIKHAIL SHISHKIN**  
**MARINA STEPNOVA**  
**YANA VAGNER**  
**EDUARD VERKIN**  
**TATSIANA ZAMIROVSKAYA**  
**KONSTANTIN ZARUBIN**

## 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.

**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 Knauer (pre-empt)  
Dutch Murrow/Overamstel Uitgevers (pre-empt)  
Czech Maraton (auction)  
Italian 21Lettere  
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:

**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 Bertò 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:

**EKATERINA MANOYLO** born in 1988 in Orsk, the city in Russia close to Kazakhstan, in an interethnic family, with a Kazakh father and a Russian mother. Manoylo graduated from the Literary Institute in Moscow in 2022. Her debut novel, *Dad Faces the West*, won the Alexander Pushkin's Litsei Award for young writers in both the best prose and the critics' choice nominations in 2022, before its publication as a book. The novel sold in impressive 40,000 copies in less than a year since its release. On publication, the novel was shortlisted for the Yasnaya Polyana Prize and longlisted for the Big Books Award in 2023.

As Ekaterina herself tells in the interviews, the idea of the debut novel came to her after she, just like the protagonist of the book, had to return to her native town to sort out inheritance issues after the funeral of her estranged father.

Manoylo's second novel, *The Wind Carries Away the Dead Leaves*, a road thriller about two sisters escaping from an abusive father, was published by Alpina Non-Fiction Publishers in early 2024.

Ekaterina is married, with three daughters, a dog and a cat.



## *Selected Bibliography*

2024 — *The Wind Carries Away the Dead Leaves*, *novel*

2023 — *Dad Faces the West*, *novel*

**The Alexander Pushkin's Litsei Prize 2022**

**The Critics Choice Litsei 2022**

Shortlisted for the **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2023**

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2023**

The Alexander Pushkin's Litsei Prize 2022

The Critics Choice Litsei 2022

Shortlisted for the Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2023

Longlisted for the Big Book Award 2023



**Alpina Non-Fiction**

Novel, 2024

272 pp

Film rights optioned

## Dad Faces the West

Katerina Manoylo's debut novel has become a sensation that fell into focus of literary professionals before its publication, winning the prominent literary award for young writers in 2022, having sold in impressive 40,000 copies in a few months since its release. Manoylo has written an uncompromisingly honest novel about family violence, a search for national and cultural identity, about a child's imminent revolt against their parents that is a true token of love, about life that overcomes death, and, ultimately, about an unyielding craving for freedom.

Katya is a daughter of a Russian mother and a Kazakh father, living in a Kazakh village on the border between the two countries. Katya has always felt herself an unwanted burden while the family waited for a proper — that is, male — offspring. Katya turns seven when her brother is born. Emotionally struggling with her maternity, Katya's mother finds relief in the Christian Orthodox religion. The father takes longer shifts as a long-haul truck driver and is hardly at home. When Marat, Katya's brother turns two, he still does not speak, yet he sings in an angelic voice, like of Robertino Loretti. While their parents grow more estranged, Katya is the one to watch after the kid. Until her brother dies in an accident, caused by the father, in front of the girl's eyes. After the funeral the mother runs away with the family's meagre savings, donating the money to the monastery, the father finds solace in booze, and Katya — miraculously — is taken by her grandmother to Moscow, freed from the burden of her past and a grim future.

Since the little boy's funeral, the villagers start to hear Maratik's singing — sometimes, he is there to reveal their hidden (and often shameful) secrets, sometimes he warns against an imminent accident, illness or death. It is Maratik that Katya's father sees before his stroke.

Katya, 25 y.o., now lives in Moscow after her grandmother's death. Oddly attuned to sounds of the world, she works as a sound designer, rents a tiny flat from an abusive host and struggles to find her place in the big city. When she receives a call from her

aunt demanding retribution for the father's funeral, Katya hopes to invest the money she receives from the sale of the family's flat into a place of her own in Moscow. Yet her relatives have different plans for the family's property.

On arrival, Katya discovers that nightmarish village of her childhood has not changed. Here, a newborn girl is not a cause to celebrate, kidnapping a bride is just a common practice, family violence and abuse make a daily routine. These are not only national cultural and social traditions and norms, but this is also the routine that her family embraces. Katya finds moral strength to challenge these norms and to fight with the demons of her childhood, but will she find courage to look into the face of her dead father, when her cousin decides to get rid of an unwanted heir by locking her in the father's tomb? What song will Maratik sing to the sister, when she hears her deceased baby brother's voice?

The fabric of this debut novel is woven with contrasts: the harsh, candid, uncompromising customs of the Kazakh hinterlands and the tenderness, fragility of the young girls and children living there. The oppressive, stuffy routine of human life and the grandeur of a free, vast steppe. The cruel, exceedingly real actions of the heroes and at the same time the delicate, angelic voice of Katia's deceased brother, echoing throughout the village, spreading the secrets of its inhabitants.

### Selected quotes

[Dad Faces the West comprises] vivid descriptions of human cruelty, selfishness, and foolishness, qualities inherent to people regardless of age. The shattered relationship between Katia and her parents illustrates not a generational conflict, but rather the incapacity for empathy and dialogue. It is this incapacity that defines the central theme of the novel.

*Prochtenie*

This writer definitely knows how death smells.

*Afisha*

The debut novel by the winner of the Litsei Prize, Ekaterina Manoylo, about a girl named Katia — the daughter of a Kazakh man, Serikbay, and his Russian wife, Naina — reads like fiction from days long gone, when brides were abducted in villages and mothers-in-law ruled over their daughters-in-law. But 34-year-old Ekaterina Manoylo, herself the daughter of a Kazakh and a Russian, invents nothing.

*Forbes.ru*



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 900,000 copies  
sold worldwide

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.

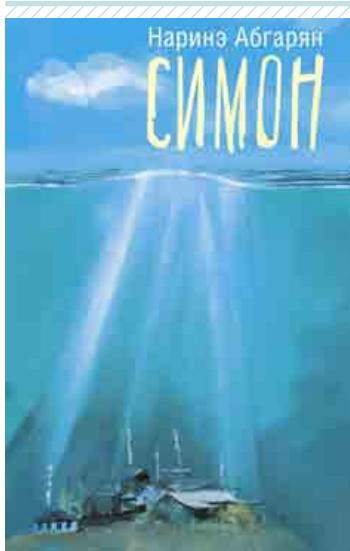
### AST

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

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

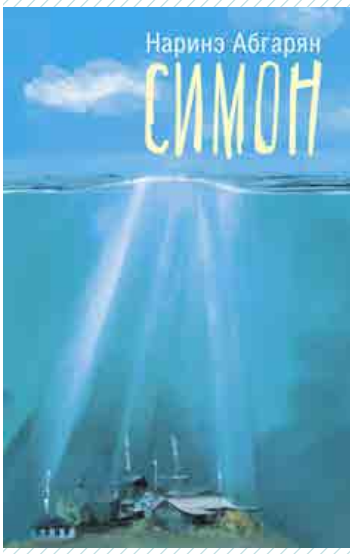
Armenian Antares  
Estonian Tänapäev  
Italian Brioschi  
Bulgarian Labyrinth  
Slovakian Artforum  
Simplified Chinese Rentian Ulus Cultural Media  
Romanian Humanitas  
Lithuanian Balto  
Catalan Comanegra  
Czech Prostor  
Malayalam Green Books  
Hungarian Typotex Kiadó  
Polish Glowbook

### 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 .

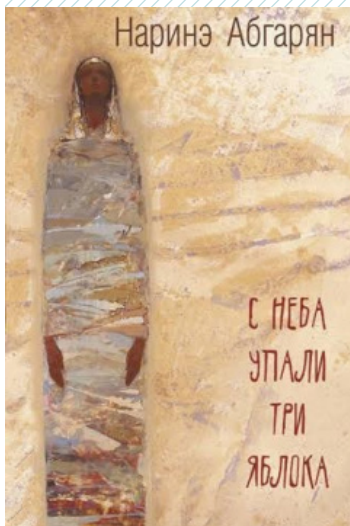
*sntat.ru*

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

*soyuz.ru*





Winner of the **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2016**Longlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2016**Over  
**150,000 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 fairytales: “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.

### AST

Novel, 2016  
315 pp

### Translation Rights sold

World English Oneworld Publications  
French Macha Publishing  
Italian Brioschi  
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  
German Ullstein List  
Swedish Tranan

### 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*

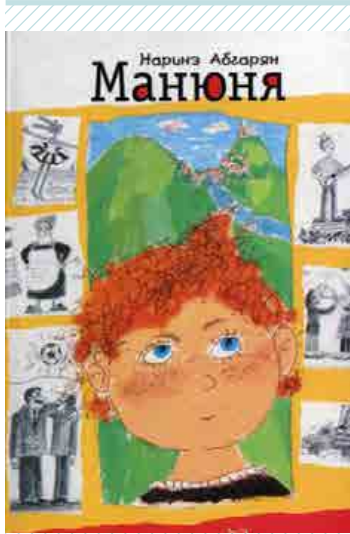


The Alexander Green Award 2015

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 Andreyan 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



## 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.

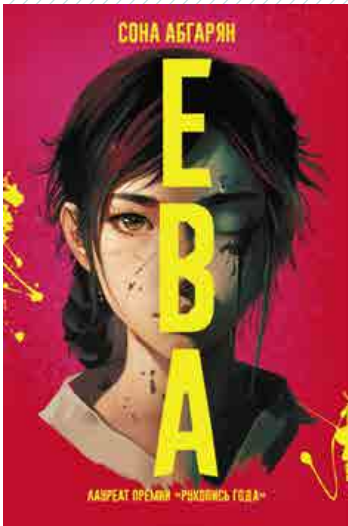
## *Selected Bibliography*

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...

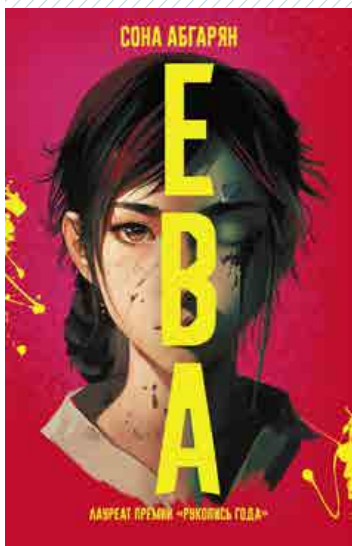
Gripping and action-driven, the novel reads as a script of an original anime film, and the author's drawings, opening each chapter, help the readers to immerse into the novel's ingenious world. Fictional and fantastical as the story is, it alludes to the real facts and recent events in Armenia, easily 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,**

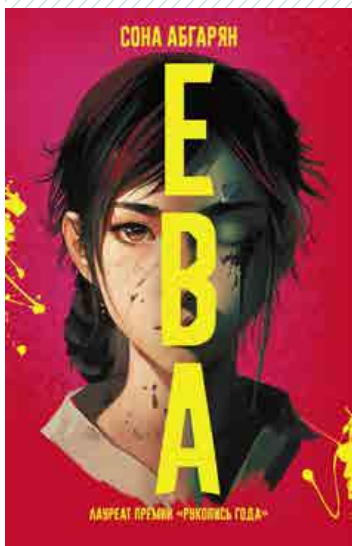
the internationally bestselling author of  
*Three Apples Fell from the Sky*





## The Old Woman and Her Goats (Eva)





## The Old Woman and Her Goats (Eva)





## About the author:

**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.



## 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*

- 2023 — **New Science Fiction From L.**, *novel*
- 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.

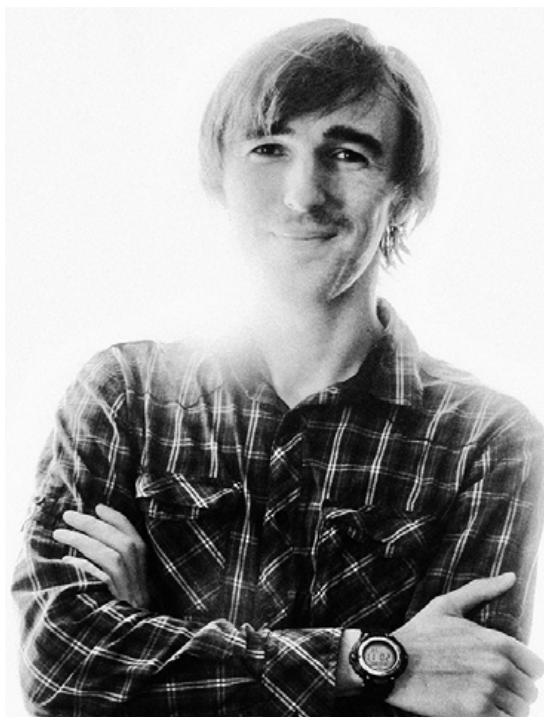
*New Science Fiction from L.* is a gripping literary quest set on the eve of a new European war and in the twilight years of the Soviet empire. It speaks in many voices and takes the reader many places: from Kyiv and Tbilisi in the 1980s to the Riga, Bologna and St. Petersburg of the 2010s. Both a compassionate 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.

## 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:

**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:

**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:

**VERA BOGDANOVA** (1986) was born in Moscow. She graduated from Moscow Region State University as a professional translator from the English language and attended language school in New York. In 2019 she completed a two-year creative writing course run by Olga Slavnikova. Bogdanova's short stories were published in anthologies, literary journals and platforms. She is also the author of sci-fi novels published under the literary pen-name Vera Ogneva, which received nominations for literary awards (New Horizons and Interpresscon in 2017). Her first novel, published under her real name, *Pavel Zhang and Other River Beasts*, was a finalist of the Litsei Literature Award for Young Writers, entered a short list for the National Bestseller Prize, and was in the run for the Big Book Award, Yasnaya Polyana Award and New Literature Prize (NOS). Bogdanova runs a blog on translated fiction from the States and the United Kingdom, @wordsnletters. Her novel *The Season of Poisoned Fruits* received a warm welcome from critics and struck a chord with readers, coming out in the second printing within two months since publication.

### *Selected Bibliography*

2022 — **The Season of Poisoned Fruits**, *novel*

2021 — **Pavel Zhang and Other River Beasts**, *novel*

Nominated for the **Big Book Award 2022**

Nominated for the **New Literature Award 2022**

Nominated for **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2022**

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2021**

Nominated for the **Big Book Award 2021**

Finalist of the **Litsei Literature Award for Young Writers 2020**

Nominated for **New Horizons 2017**

Nominated for the **Big Book Award 2022**

Nominated for the **New Literature Award 2022**

Nominated for **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2022**



**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**

Novel, 2022

348 pp

*Translation rights sold*

French Actes Sud

*Film rights*

Under option

## The Season of Poisoned Fruits

With this melancholic and sad love story Vera Bogdanova throws limelight to the hidden psychological traumas torturing people in their forties in modern Russia, and smartly investigates the social (and political) turmoil that forms the core of the generation, growing up in the 1990s.

The message is bitter: we are poisoned fruits, the fruits of delusions, obsessions and uncertainty of our time.

Since early childhood, Zhenya was told that she should be a good girl: get higher education, build a career, get married and have children, all this before she's thirty. And yet there she is — hitting thirty, no longer able to have children or known to set healthy boundaries, secretly struggling with alcohol addiction, hiding away literally at the end of the world, and still pining for the only person she ever loved, a man she has known since childhood — her cousin Ilya. They have been irresistibly drawn to each other since sixteen, and Zhenya sees this forbidden and devastating love affair as her only comfort, and her curse. Not only has it brought doom on her own head, but on anyone she's ever known, or so she feels.

Ilya, in the meantime, is just as desperate to be “a real man”: to earn more, provide for his family, never have to beg, show weakness, or witness the abuse his mother suffered from the violent thug of a stepfather. Ilya, too, hides a dark secret, bearing the guilt for his stepfather's apparently accidental death. But none of his efforts to conform to the “social norm” pays off or brings relief — his life is stuck in a rut and he himself in an unhappy marriage, unable to break the vicious work-sleep-mortgage circle.

His half-sister Dasha, on the other hand, unable to embrace her own sexuality (and her unrequited teenage attraction to Zhenya), still sees her abusive father as a role model, and time after time falls for the same wife-basher type. One of them becomes her husband, and this union threatens Dasha's life.

Each of them faces their own demons, failing to see how their choices end up ruining the lives of others — and their own.

Set against the dramatic backdrop of early to mid 2000s, with its terrorist attacks, Beslan school siege, London bombings and general chaos, their stories echo with the historical turmoil in a desperate search of a new identity.

The Season of Poisoned Fruits is the story of a generation that grew up in the 90s, children of parents who survived in the chaos having plunged the country. Today these children have grown up and they seek security and stability they were deprived of, also desperately searching for their own selves. Yet would they find a “new beautiful world” or the poison from the fruits of the past won't let them see the way?

### Selected quotes

With her novel Bogdanova makes a diagnosis of the whole generation with clarity, bitterness and compassion, like no other modern Russian writer.

*meduza.io*

This is like Nabokov's Ada — the pain and gloom of the 90ies and the early aughts: a granny's country house, a family saga, strange backyards, the family blood. Today this all is neither wildly exotic nor noirish — we have survived, have grown up and so we can speak about what it is like to be a strange girl in a strange time. Vera Bogdanova unwinds traumas and fates of her characters carefully and gently, like blood-soaked bandage. Bogdanova is not trying to make her characters suffer to amuse some hypothetical reader.

On the contrary, she seeks ways to save them all.

She succeeds, eventually, even with those who cannot be saved.

*Tatsiana Zamirovskaya*  
the author of *The Deadnet*

The first thing you want to do when you finish the novel is name it the book of the generation. The 90s, the aughts, economic downfall and con-

sumerism, Soviet and post-Soviet patriarchal norms, domestic violence, terroristic attacks on the news, upsurging nationalistic movements at the backdrop, a suppressed sexuality and liberation from inhibitions and social restrains — all these contexts intertwine in a smartly contrived plot.

*Rules of Life (former Esquire)*

In *The Season of Poisoned Fruits* the violence is a norm, while happiness is doomed. There're no positive characters in the novel, yet quite a lot of typical ones, easy to recognize: these are words we heard from the family, these are traumas we wished to share... A common love story turns into a smartly contrived, complex psychological drama about feelings and historical memory.

*Afisha Daily*

With her novel, Vera Bogdanova gives a chance to speak up and fight back to those women who have long been used to keep quiet and endure.

*Yunost magazine*

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Award 2021**

Nominated for the **New Literature Award NOS 2021**

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award, Yasnaya Polyana 2021**

Finalist of the **Litsei Literature Award for Young Writers 2020**



Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2021

443 pp

## Pavel Zhang and Other River Beasts

If Jude from *A Little Life* were mixed-race and lived in a near-future, high-tech surveillance state controlled by China, he would be Pavel Zhang, the protagonist of Vera Bogdanova's provoking and profoundly moving dystopian debut novel.

2049, Moscow. After a decade of sanctions and economic crises, Russia becomes part of the Asian Union, headed by Beijing. Everything related to China is considered prestigious, while Russia is just a territory of natural resources and manpower. The Asian Union is a high-tech surveillance state, and every citizen in China is implanted with a chip that controls health, finance and every aspects of daily routines. In opposition to the massive mandatory introduction of chips there acts a radical activist group, CounterNet. Software for the chips is developed by the Russian branch of a Chinese IT corporation, where the protagonist of the novel, Pavel Zhang, is a young specialist with a promising future.

Two things poison Pavel Zhang's life in the spring of 2049. First, his dream job — as a curator for the chip software development project — goes to his competitor. This job was more than just a step up on Pavel's career ladder: it now feels as if Beijing itself is falling out of reach. Moreover, when he's volunteering at an orphanage near Moscow, Pavel runs across Krasnov — a man who raped him in childhood.

Pavel was first raped when he was 13 and lived in an orphanage. The sexual abuse, condoned by the orphanage authorities, was regular, and Pavel happened to be the only child to fight back: he collected evidence and sent it to both the police and bloggers. Pavel discovers that Krasnov escaped punishment thanks to family connections and that he still has access to children.

Knowing that Krasnov won't repent or stop abusing children, Pavel confronts and murders Krasnov by drowning him in a pond.

Against odds, Pavel succeeds in his long-awaited promotion to the Chinese head office. In Beijing, however, the Chinese do not regard Pavel as one of them,

and China doesn't quite match up to his dreams. Disillusioned, Pavel approaches the CounterNet. He hacks the Diyu data to reveal a shocking truth about the authorities' true intentions. The state will not only control life of its citizens but also choose to end it if they wish. Pavel's father, a leader of the CounterNet organization, was the first subject of this experiment: he died after chip implementation, after many years in prison. His death in the file shows up as a death from natural causes, but now Pavel knows better.

He seeks revenge for his ruined childhood, the abuse he suffered in the orphanage, for the family he failed, and his defeated dreams. He will fight for the freedom and the choice of every person — something he did not have — and nothing will stop him in his final act, not even death.

Vera Bogdanova has written a masterly crafted text that challenges its readers with acute social issues (sexual abuse, childhood trauma and its violent consequences, the government's digital control, Internet addiction, and objectification of woman) and at the same time compels the reader to sympathize with the dramas, twists, and challenges in the characters' lives. This rich, frank, and emotional text is at once deft and spacious, filled with air, sounds of lively, brisk, true-to-life dialogues, the novel's transient fine colors, shifting landscapes, vivid realistic details... all set against the backdrop of the flow of an ever-changing river. The result is a spectacular debut that defies genres and expectations and is written in a clear voice that makes Bogdanova a woman to watch in contemporary Russian fiction.





## Pavel Zhang and Other River Beasts

### Selected quotes

Vera Bogdanova is overwhelmed with fears and concerns, and she is both compassionate and resentful to a degree that the reader has no chance to remain distant and reserved about the story she tells. Pavel Zhang truly amazes with its natural emotional force and with the beauty and charm of its carefully crafted structure.

*meduza.io*

This is a debut novel that feels like some sort of minor literary miracle.

*Lizok's Bookshelf*

The story of Pavel Zhang is a story of the long-term impact and consequences of trauma that takes root and flourishes inside, never easing its grip as it continues to attract new problems, new violence, and endless new evils.

*literaturno.com*

For Bogdanova, dystopia is a setting for heated dispute about a traumatic experience, whether we inflict the trauma, or a traumatic experience transforms us, all as mythological monsters inhabit our hearts.

*Esquire*

Pavel Zhang is rightfully a central figure of the novel — he is a hero of our time, torn between feelings and career, abused yet unbroken and uncomplaining. He has pulled himself from the bottom of the river by his own hair and does not want to go back, especially since he still feels the taste of sludge in his mouth.

*dtf.ru*

Vera Bogdanova has touched numerous sore spots that aren't pleasant to discuss but need to be discussed. Violence against the individual, social violence, unfounded hatred, the defeated dreams of a young generation. Despite its dystopian nature and its dark, grim reality, the novel is not devoid of hope. There's hope, yet one has to be persistent in their search, fighting against the river beasts of sorts, and the most vile of all — the human being.

*prochtenie.org*





## 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)

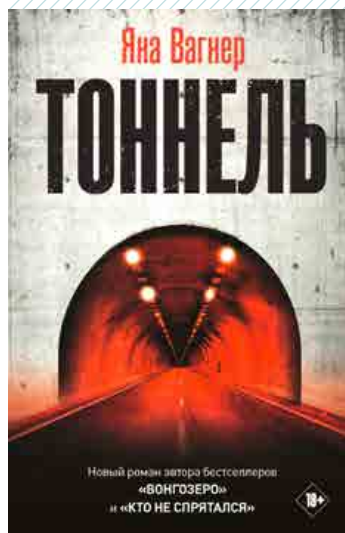
Finalist of the **Grand Prix des lectrices Elle 2015** (France)

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.

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.

**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

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?

Complete  
 English & French  
 translation  
 available



## 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**

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 Gavrilov  
a publisher and critic, for Vimbo audio publishing blog*





## 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**

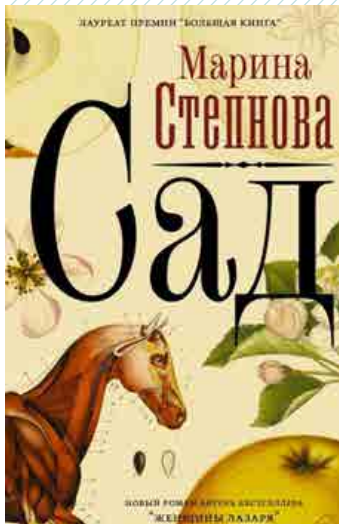
Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2005**

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. Tusya, 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 Tusya as a name), at the scandalously improper age of 45. Tusya 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. Tusya, 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 Tusya's upbringing. Through Tusya, 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 Tusya, 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 Tusya 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 Tusya decides differently.

Fate's whim means the two men shaping Tusya's story are broken and flawed — fugitives in a vain attempt to escape from guilt feelings. Yet Tusya 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.

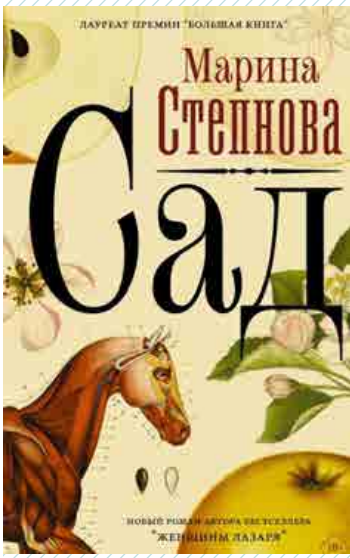
Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

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**



## The Women of Lazarus

Over 200,000 copies  
sold in Russia  
since publication

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.

*Culturopoing*

## 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.



#### 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.

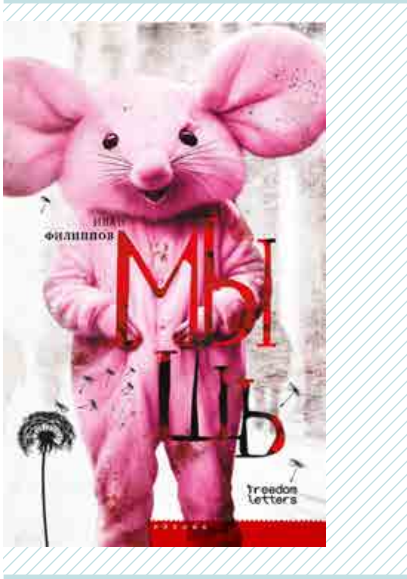
*Afisha Daily*

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:

**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*

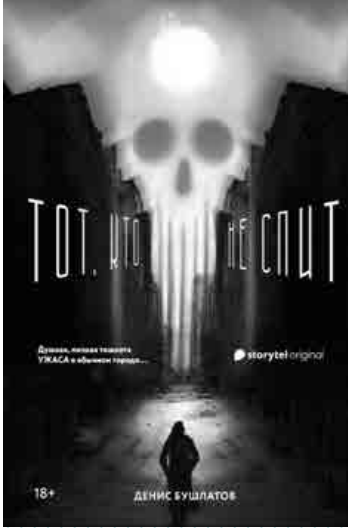
2020 — **The Captain**, *biography, non-fiction*

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:

**EDUARD VERKIN** was born in Vorkuta, Russia's far North, in 1975, in the family of a miner and a pharmacist. He studied history and law at the State University of Syktyvkar (the capital of Komi Republic). After graduating Verkin taught social studies at a middle school. In 2003 Verkin signed up for creative writing courses at the Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow. Since 2004 Eduard Verkin has published several series of sci-fi and fantasy fiction for children, firmly and swiftly gaining recognition as Russia's leading children's writer today. Eduard Verkin's children's books have become bestsellers and won numerous awards. Sakhalin Island is Eduard Verkin's first fiction for adults.

Eduard Verkin is married and has two children.

## *Selected Bibliography*

2022 — **Chaginsk**, *novel*

2021 — **The Autumn Sun**, *novel*

2018 — **The Sakhalin Island**, *novel*

2017 — **The Spacraft with a Broken Wing**, *novel*

2016 — **CHYAP**, *novel*

2012 — **Cloud Regiment**, *novel*

2010 — **My Friend April**, *novel*

## **IBBY Honour List 2022**

Longlisted for the **New Literature Award 2018**

**Kniguru Prize 2019**

Finalist of the **Strugatsky Prize 2019**

**Mir Fantastiki Book of the Year 2018**

**The New Horizons Prize 2017**

Finalist of the **Strugatsky Prize 2017**

**Kniguru Prize 2012**

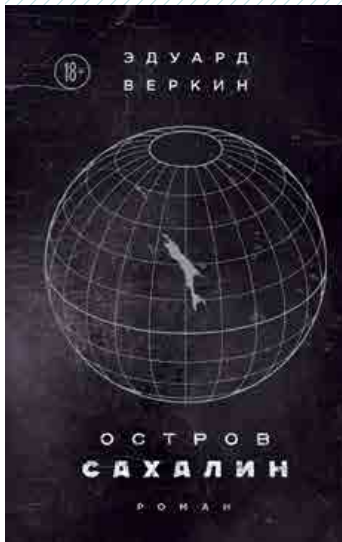
**The White Ravens Book 2012** (Germany)

**Zavetnaya Mechta Prize 2007, 2008, 2009**

Finalist of the **Strugatsky Prize 2019**

**Mir Fantastiki Book of the Year 2018**

Longlisted for the **New Literature Award 2018**



#### **Eksmo**

Novel, 2018  
480 pp

#### *Translation rights sold*

German Heyne  
French Actes Sud (pre-empt)  
Arabic AS Publishers (pre-empt)  
Albanian Fan Noli (pre-empt)  
Bulgarian Labirint  
Serbian Vulkan  
Macedonian Bata Press  
Czech Albatros media  
Mongolian Center for Book Culture  
Finnish Like  
Polish Czarna Owca  
Japanese Kawade Shobo

#### *Film rights optioned*

Complete  
German & French  
translation  
available

## Sakhalin Island

An exquisite poetic homage to Anton Chekhov's Sakhalin Island travel notes, Verkin's novel reminds of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and "monumental, and monumentally mad," as *The Guardian* called *The Strugatsky Brothers'* apocalyptic masterpiece, *Hard To Be a God*. Verkin's novel is a deadly typhoon that sweeps the reader, aghast and mesmerized, into the epicentre of a world of squalor, fear, and death.

The North Korea hit first and the United States didn't leave the strike unanswered, so nuclear war broke out. Civilization was destroyed after a few months of exchanging atomic explosions, the globe burnt down into a devastated wasteland, and those who survived the war were done in by a severe and rapidly spreading disease called MOB (a mobile form of rabies) that turns humans into living zombies within seconds. By some miracle, Japan survived. It is the last haven of civilization, where there are scarce but still sufficient, uncontaminated food and water resources, science, industry, and even art.

The island of Sakhalin serves as a buffer zone between Japan and devastated Eurasia, which is an unthinkable hell because of the MOB-infected population. MOB-infected species can only be stopped by water — this is why Sakhalin and Japan remain uninfected.

Sakhalin is a tiny and terribly overpopulated territory, inhabited by millions of Chinese, and underprivileged Koreans and Americans who continue to pay for the sins of their fathers who unleashed the Big War. Sakhalin is the territory for nightmarish prisons and labor camps, a purgatory where human life is of no value. Corpses are more valuable than living beings — they can serve as firewood or melted for soap. Horrible living standards and unthinkable labor conditions result in severe moral degradation, where "lynching negroes" becomes a widely spread recreation, and slavery, heavy physical and sexual abuse, or the excision of an albino child's bodily parts are routine.

Lilac, the strikingly beautiful blue-eyed daughter of a Russian mother and a high-ranking Japanese father, is a PhD student of applied futurology science. She receives a field assignment: study current conditions in prisons and labour camps and the general social and economic situation on the island. Her professor believes that Sakhalin in its extreme critical condition may be the territory where the future is being shaped in the present. On her arrival to the island, Lilac gets

a hand from a professional killer from the local privileged sect called "chained to a hook". Artyom will accompany and protect Lilac on her journey. Their tour through the island's hell is dangerous on its own, but one day a massive earthquake strikes. Prisons are ruined, freeing hard-core criminals craving vengeance, and the island's population takes off for the South in a desperate attempt to reach ports and board ships for Japan. The earthquake has another consequence that is far more dangerous than hard-core criminals off the leash or millions of desperate people competing for an unlikely escape: the island is no longer separated by water from the continent, and herds of MOB-infected zombies instantly spread over Sakhalin. Lilac and her companion are on the vertiginous run from the catastrophe, bandits and death itself. And it is not only their own lives that are at stake: they are striving to save a badly damaged albino child they discovered along the way.

Lilac's narrative starts as an elegant and crystal-clear story of a journey, a poetic homage to Anton Chekhov's travel notes. It first transforms into a compassionate observation of man's severe moral and physical degradation, then switches to the most harrowing post-apocalyptic survival stories you've read in years. Readers are forced to keep turning the pages, as if the characters' lives depend on them.

The world that Verkin has brilliantly depicted offers no escape and no hope, and its inhabitants are lost and abandoned, degrading to extreme (almost inhuman) forms. Yet the author writes about them with profound tenderness and compassion. The rotten world of Sakhalin Island has no future, but the narrator's (as well as the author's) willingness to see the future is illuminating. If you are not devoid of compassion, you will inevitably catch yourself crying, if not sobbing, at the end of the novel, but rest assured — these will be purifying tears of redemption.

### Selected quotes

A powerful, harrowing, and gripping story that goes far beyond the traditions of post-apocalyptic genre.

*meduza.io*

Eduard Verkin inflicts both anguish and delight on his readers. Despite depicting murders, human torture, stories of the death of human civilization, and even the picture of a main character collecting corpses for use as fuel, it grabs and wins over the reader. This must be the result of the author's true gift.

*Izvestia*

This is not a sci-fi action thriller, it's a Bible of the New Time.

*krupaspb.ru*



#### 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!"

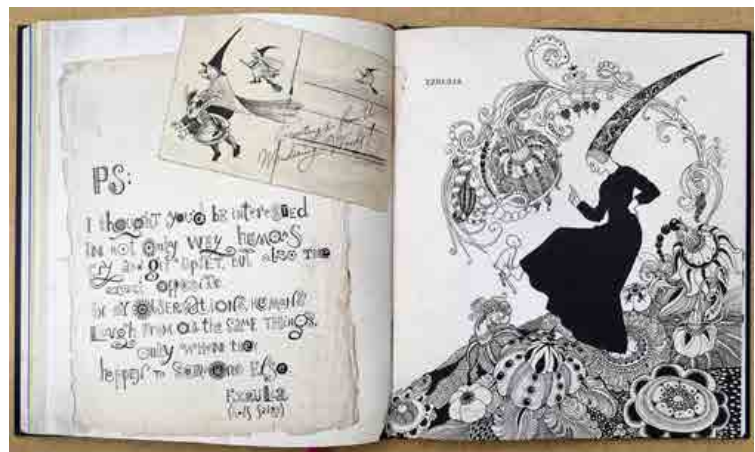
**Coilhouse**

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.

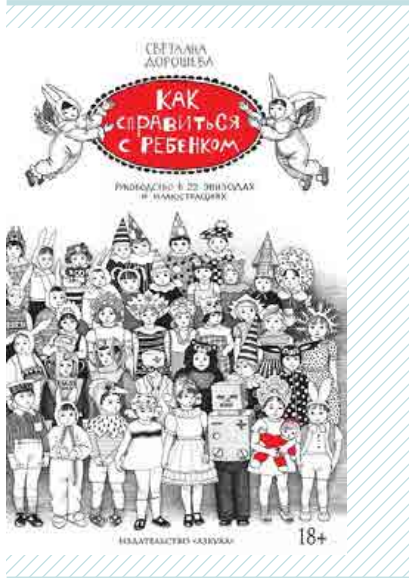
The illustrations address adult readers. After all, no matter how dramatically different their childhood was from that of their kids, the core things that make childhood what it is are intact — the freshness of perception, the agony of growing up, the mischief, and the absence of borderline between the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

