



About the author:

EUGENE VODOLAZKIN was born in Kiev in 1964. A scholarly expert in the old Russian literature, since 1990 Vodolazkin has worked in the department of the Old Russian Literature at the Pushkin House. Prof. Dmitry Likhachev's pupil, Eugene Vodolazkin has numerous academic published titles and articles to his name and has been awarded fellowships for research and lectureship in Germany from Toepfer Foundation and Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Vodolazkin's debut novel, *Solovyov and Larionov*, became an immediate success, shortlisted to Andrei Bely Prize (2009) and The Big Book Award (2010). *Laurus*, Eugene Vodolazkin's second novel, became an international bestseller, translated into 35 languages, and awarded with The Big Book Award and Yasnaya Polyana Prize in 2013. Eugene Vodolazkin lives with his family in St Petersburg, Russia.

Selected Bibliography

- 2022 — **Chagin**, *novel*
 2020 — **A History of the Island**, *novel*
 2020 — **Sister of Four**, *plays*
 2019 — **Brisbane**, *novel*
 2016 — **The Aviator**, *novel*
 2012 — **Laurus**, *novel*
 2009 — **Soloviev & Larionov**, *novel*

Longlisted for the **International Dublin Award 2022**

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2019, 2021**

The Alexander Slozhenitsyn Prize 2019

The Big Book Award 2016

Shortlisted for the **New Literature Award 2016**

The Gorky Prize, Sorrento 2016

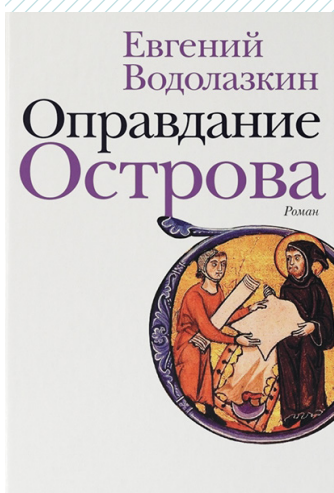
The Big Book Award and Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2013

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2013**

The Booker Prize 2013

The Big Book Award 2010

Andrei Bely Prize 2009

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021**
Over 80,000 copies
sold in Russia
since publication
**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**

Novel, 2020

416 pp

Translation rights sold

World English Plough
Romanian Humanitas
Arabic Al Mada
Latvian Janis Roze
Macedonian Antolog
Hungarian Helikon
Serbian Sluzbeny Glasnik
Bulgarian Book Trend/List
French Syrtes
Armenian Vogt Nairi
Turkish Alfa Kitap
Estonian Postimehe Kirjastus
Albanian Fan Noli
Spanish Armaenia

A History of the Island

Gulliver's Travels meet History of the World in 10½ Chapters in this witty and breathtaking parable about history and time from the prize-winning author of Laurus and a scholar of medieval literature, Eugene Vodolazkin.

This novel, named by many critics a coda to the internationally acclaimed Laurus, develops Vodolazkin's approach to history and time. In his new novel the author chronicles the history of a fictional island, from the medieval to modern time.

Unlike in Laurus, Vodolazkin does not experiment with language but rather with an intonation — the novel is written as a medieval Christian chronicle.

The author in the novel does not concentrate on the Russian history nor does he exclude the Russian history from the European history: the island here is a fictional island, a small piece of land becoming a platform for events reminiscent of the Western European history through centuries. Chroniclers dutifully narrate about events they witness, that — like at all times in the history of the world — include national conflicts, quests for power involving betrayals, cunning schemes and complex riddles of blood relations; pandemics, bad harvests and an eventual months of starvation, invasions, revolutions, times of flourish, stagnation and decay. Objective and unbiased at most, medieval monks at times give way to their personal response to the events, in alternative chroni-

cles, to be discovered centuries later in secret hideouts. The complete array of these chronicles receives a commentary today, from a family couple and the island's former rulers. Their Highnesses Prince Parthenay and Princess Ksenia have been invited to provide an expert opinion on a script of a feature historical drama, produced by a celebrated French film director. This elderly couple is truly extraordinary: born in the Medieval Times, having spent their long lives on the island, they turn 347 today — a life-span typical for Biblical heroes but not for common people. Living eyewitnesses of the island's turbulent history, they offer clever, sharp-eyed but non-judging observations of the changing flow of time and of people, persistent in their delusions.

What has been keeping the royal couple alive for centuries? Is there a chance that an old prophecy comes true, and two righteous persons shall save the island at the face of an imminent catastrophe?

Vodolazkin is at his best speaking about world's history, turbulent and often hard, even gleam, times in a light-hearted, humorous way, resembling Julian Barnes' attitude.

Selected quotes

If I had to define in short what the novel is about, I would say it is about time. The readjustment of two speeds, two different scales, two different distances concocts an amazing optical effect of the novel. We see the world that Vodolazkin created as at once fluid and static, whole and fractional, changing and repetitive, and as you switch between the angles or rather employ both at the same time the reading becomes a totally breathtaking experience. This is an exceptional writer's accomplishment, equal to that of Laurus.

Galina Yuzefovich
for *meduza.io*

Compelling reading: brilliantly vivid and inventive, it combines magical-realist mischief with a compassionate, radically Christian perspective on the self-destructing idiocies of human history and political posturing. A masterpiece by one of Europe's finest contemporary novelists.

Rowan Williams
former Archbishop of Canterbury

Vodolazkin is a contemporary writer only as by accident of time. ... He is more of a medieval than a modern, and many of the paradoxes that perplex us today are, in his hands, playthings. He juggles his symbols dexterously, weaving an airborne pattern that we thrill to follow, and then just when we begin to feel rather clever for seeing what he is doing, he slips in a line gently mocking us.

The European Conservative

What we lack in writings on history today is the angle that was typical for medieval chronicles, i.e. seeing history as a battle between evil and good.

says **Vodolazkin**
in his interview to *Forbes*

Vodolazkin ironizes on the way this history is constantly being rewritten, according to each current political era.

Irish Sun

A New Statesman Book of the Year 2016 (USA)

The Gorky Prize, Sorrento 2016

Double winner of the **Big Book Award 2013** (1st place)
and the **Readers' Choice Award** (3rd place)

Winner of Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2013

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2013**

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 2013**



Laurus

Nearly
250,000 copies
sold in Russia

Andrei Rublev meets The Name of Rose in this profound tale, a spectacular literary achievement. An expert in medieval history and lore, Eugene Vodolazkin writes on the eternal themes of love, loss, self-sacrifice, and faith with the resonating force and gripping energy of a masterly storyteller.

“If you write a fictional story, it must be a story that can make readers shed tears”, says Eugene Vodolazkin.

Laurus is a fable in the form of a biography. It tells of a late 15th century village healer who is powerless to help his beloved, watching her die in childbirth, die in sin — unwed and without having received communion. The protagonist, a desperate man, sets out on an exhausting journey in search of redemption. On this journey of privation and hardship in the service of the people, a journey that spans ages and countries, the hero undergoes a painful personal transformation.

The protagonist sheds his names at every step of this metamorphosis: in the beginning of the story he is Arseny, a gifted young healer in a small village. After the loss of his beloved, he takes her name and becomes Ustin, wandering through the land as a holy fool (called “yurodivy” in the tradition of the Orthodox Church), and displaying miraculous healing powers during the great plague. Laurus is the protagonist's name when he, by now an old man and revered by the church and the people, returns to his home village to lead the life of a monastic hermit and face his most difficult trial yet. The narrative mode recalls medieval fables and tales. Rich in detail, the story enumerates the countless wonders and healing miracles displayed by Ustin along his journey. The chronicler carefully fixes all the minutiae of the habits and deeds of the medieval doctor and the holy fool, assembling a gallery of profound portraits. Readers observe Ustin's patients, his fellow travellers.

Orthodox monks and local governors, and learn about legendary creatures from the strangest medieval bestiaries. The most colourful characters shaping Ustin's personality on his ascent through the hierarchy of Christian martyrdom follow him on an epic journey to Jerusalem. These include a Franciscan monk, a comic character recalling Chaucer's heroes, and a young scholar with a visionary gift, a clear homage to Umberto Eco's Baudolino.

This tale, sprawling across time and place, unites carefully researched historical fact with the fantasy of a postmodern space. Vodolazkin baffles his readers with sudden shifts in the manner and pace of the discourse. The reader gets accustomed to the narrative mode of a medieval tale replete with archaic words and anachronisms, when characters exchange modern day vulgarities or switch to bureaucratic jargon. The protagonist kicks aside plastic bottles and litter as he walks through empty streets in villages devastated by the plague. Laurus's friend and companion, a young scholar from Italy, watches human dramas from the 1960s or 80s in his colorful dreams. Nevertheless, however meticulously depicted the panorama of the Middle Ages in Vodolazkin's novel, the author's message stands in clear contrast to that of a historical chronicle. For him, time is irrelevant, while the notion of man's devotion and self-sacrifice for the sake of love is universal.

Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2012
352 pp

Translation rights sold

World English One World Publications

German Doerlemann

French Fayard

Italian Elliot/Lit Edizioni

Swedish Ersatz

Serbian Draslar Partner

Latvian Janis Roze

Estonian Kunst

Lithuanian Gimtasis Zodis

Macedonian Antolog

Romanian Humanitas

Polish Zysk i s-ka

Albanian Fan Noli

Finnish Into Kustannus

Slovenian Cankarjeva založba

Arabic Al Mada

Bulgarian Prozorets

Czech Dobrovsky

Malayalam Green Books

Japanese Sakuhinsha

Georgian Palitra

Turkish Alfa Kitap

Spanish/Latin America Poklonka

Croatian Naklada Ljevak

Hindi Prakashan Sansthan

Dutch Glagoslav

Slovakian Petrus

Simplified Chinese Orient Publishing

Bulgarian Panorama

Spanish Armaenia

Greek Potamos

Korean EunHaeng NaMu Publishing

Portuguese Pilgrim

Hungarian Helikon

Simplified Chinese CITIC Press





Laurus

Selected quotes

A quirky, ambitious book ... Eugene Vodolazkin succeeds gloriously.

Janet Fitch

*the author of *The White Oleander*, for LARB*

In *Laurus*, Vodolazkin aims directly at the heart of the Russian religious experience and perhaps even at that maddeningly elusive concept that is cherished to the point of cliché: the Russian soul.

Ken Kalfus

*in *The New Yorker**

Laurus is written with ease and flair. <...> This is a highly appealing story, filled with gentle humor, tranquility, and quiet love.

Vyacheslav Kuritsyn

a writer

[The novel] *Laurus* insists that time can be otherwise, can get scrambled or disappear altogether, and is in fact of no importance; what is essential, however, is the space that generates certain human types. <...> *Laurus* is a novel that can uncork the soul's most hermetic vessels.

Lev Danilkin

*for *Afisha**

A timeless epic... pointed, touching, and at times humorous, unpredictably straying from the path and leading readers along a wild chase through time, language, and medieval Europe.

Asymptote Journal

Laurus is without a doubt one of the most moving and mysterious books you will read in this or any other year.

The American Conservative

In a sense, *Laurus* develops the literary trend [set by Mikhail Shishkin's *Letter Book*]. This is a profound

and passionate love tale, where love itself is taken beyond the limits of the narrative. <...> There's a unique mixture of postmodern play and classical tradition; of dry, academic expertise and warm, intelligent irony — this makes *Laurus* a book you enjoy discussing and pondering, a book you want to carry around with you, opening it and re-reading it in chance places, a you want to present as a gift and recommend to your friends.

Itogi Magazine

For Russian literature, the glorification — indeed sanctification — of the irrational is anything but new, but here it is delivered with great aplomb and narrative charm. Indeed, the most infectious element of Eugene Vodolazkin's book may be its faith in language as a kind of charm... Many readers are likely to find the book enchanting, if not palliative.

The Times Literary Supplement

Brilliant storytelling... a uniquely lavish, multilayered work.

Booklist

Vodolazkin succeeds in walking a thin line, achieving a fine balance between the ancient and archaic, and the ultra-modern; between the ironic and the tragic.

TimeOut

Love, faith, and a quest for atonement are the driving themes of an epic, prizewinning Russian novel that, while set in the medieval era, takes a contemporary look at the meaning of time... With flavors of Umberto Eco and *The Canterbury Tales*, this affecting, idiosyncratic novel... is an impressive achievement.

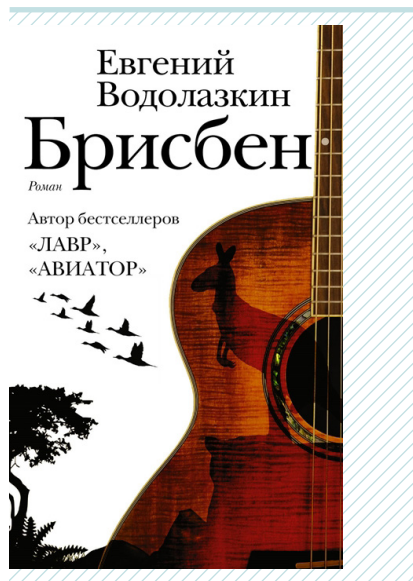
Kirkus



Longlisted for the **International Dublin Literary Award 2022**

The National Book of the Year 2019

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2019**



Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2019

410 pp

Translation rights sold

World English Plough

French Syrtis (before publication)

Hungarian Helikon

Romanian Humanitas

Spanish Editorial Rubinos

Italian Brioschi Editore

Serbian Sluzbeni glasnik

Armenian Vogt Nairi

Simplified Chinese Beijing Publishing

Macedonian Antolog

Arabic Al Mada

Albanian Fan Noli

Brisbane

Brisbane, an intense psychological drama from the award-winning author of *Laurus*, is a captivating narrative about the life of a musical prodigy who is also a troubled man in search of inner peace when he faces an incurable disease. In Vodolazkin's universe, this moving personal story resonates with galvanic force, as music and word merge, grasping for eternity.

At 50, Gleb Yanovski, an internationally celebrated guitar virtuoso, is diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Gleb accepts an offer from a Russian writer, Sergei Nesterov (writing under the penname Nestor), to recount his life for a biographical book. They meet regularly for several years and Gleb recalls his life: childhood spent in Kiev, university studies in St Petersburg, and years in Munich, where Gleb lives with his German wife, Katharina. Munich becomes a platform for Yanovski's rapid career development, first as a tutor of Russian and guitar at a theological collegium, later as a prodigy guitarist touring in major international venues.

Gleb's life appears in these recollections as a continuous string of changing attitudes towards music and death, and the connection between the two grows tighter — clashing and balancing — over the years. And Gleb thus sees the case for his *domra*, the first instrument he learned to play, as a coffin that figuratively “poisoned his life”.

Witnessing a tragic accident with a drowned girl in the Dnepr River causes Gleb to abandon music school — for Gleb, death defies music, just like any other activity. Gleb's life-changing discovery prompts his grandfather to bring him to church. It is then that Gleb learns to see music as a way to overcome time, as a path to eternity. This becomes the birth of Gleb's extraordinary

gift as a performer, something that will support him throughout his life, especially when his grandparents and the father pass away. This is likely why Parkinson's disease shatters Gleb so severely: deprived of music as his guardian against death, the illness makes him especially vulnerable.

And then Gleb meets Vera, an exceptionally gifted thirteen-year-old musician, whom he — together with his wife — willingly embraces as a longed-for daughter. Vera, however, is dying of a rapidly developing kidney cancer, and their determination to fight the girl's imminent death is not enough. In his phone conversation with the girl's mentally ill mother, Gleb explains Vera's absence by saying the girl departed for Brisbane, the dream city of Gleb's mother, where she, too, once went.

Vodolazkin is loyal to his literary universe in his new novel: he dwells on time and eternity. In *Brisbane*, death is overcome not through music, since music gives up on the protagonist through illness, and not through love, since his new-found daughter, Vera, dies during an operation: death is defeated through memories. Ultimately, the only path to *Brisbane*, the world of Gleb's dream, the world where time does not exist — is the word.

Selected quotes

Using two narrative voices — Kyiv-born guitarist Gleb Yanovsky's and his alcohol-sodden biographer Nestor's — this novel counterposes past and present, self and other. It can be defined as an exercise in Dostoyevskian polyphony, and certainly few contemporary writers are as steeped in the Russian greats as Vodolazkin. But it's also a sophisticated and frequently moving study in dissonance, dedicated to pointing out contrasts between art and life, beauty and decay, intention and outcome. And, yes, between Ukraine and Russia.

Booklist

Vodolazkin, a Kyiv-born Russian who attended Ukrainian-language school before moving to St Petersburg as an adult, is steeped in ethnic and linguistic dualism. ... Of Vodolazkin's four novels, this is his most contemporary — and autobiographical... *Brisbane* is a richly polyphonic novel.

TLS

As the [war] has unfolded, Vodolazkin's depiction of these two languages as part of one and the same person, as brothers and foes simultaneously, while not completely new for me, has introduced more nuance

into my thinking. For an English reader less familiar with the relationship between Russia and Ukraine, the novel may well be a revelation.

Marian Schwartz
LiteraryHub

Eugene Vodolazkin has emerged in the eyes of many as the most important living Russian writer. A literary scholar as well as a novelist — or, as he puts it, an ichthyologist as well as a fish — Vodolazkin draws heavily on the Russian classics in novels of ideas addressing what Russians call “the accursed questions,” including the meaning of life and, especially, the significance of death. ... For Vodolazkin, the key to all such mysteries is time. ... We must change our understanding of time, Vodolazkin believes, and that is what his novels try to accomplish.

NYRB

With *Brisbane*, Eugene Vodolazkin, the artistic grandson of Dostoevsky, continues to develop his novelistic philosophy exploring how death contributes to life's baffling meaningfulness.

Englewood Review of Books

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 2016****The Big Book Award 2016** (second prize)Shortlisted for the **New Literature Award 2016**Shortlisted for the **ABS Strugatsky Prize 2016**

The Aviator

From the award-winning and internationally bestselling author of *Laurus* comes this poignant story of memory, guilt, and an all-enduring love that survives time, chaos, and even death.

When the protagonist of the novel wakes up in a hospital, he is suffering from complete memory loss — he cannot remember his name or age, identify his occupation, where he is, or what brought him here. The only information that the doctor shares with his patient before urging him to write down every detail or image that comes into his mind is the young man's name: Innokenty Platonov. He begins to register his memories as they appear, along with his current circumstances and experiences, with the diligence and vigor of an awakening consciousness. Platonov's diary is a true page-turner, fascinating readers with chaotic, kaleidoscopic images, faces, phrases, and events, weaving the life story of a young man in Russia in the early 20th century. The story that emerges is at the same time tender and sad, sensual and funny — and, above all, tragic. Childhood recollections surface first: happy summer holidays at a dacha on the outskirts of St Petersburg, playing “aviators” with his cousin Seva, the warm yellow glow of the porch of the country house, a late-summer watermelon brought by his father, greeting his father on the platform each Friday evening during the holiday season as the train arrives from the city — and the day in 1917 when his father does not get off the train, because he was brutally murdered by a mob of drunken sailors at the train station. At the age of 21, Platonov moves with his mother to a communal flat in the city center, where he meets their new neighbors (former owners of the whole apartment), professor Sergei Voronin, and his daughter Anastassia, 15,

who will become Innokenty's love. Another neighbor is Nikolay Zaretsky, a worker in a sausage factory, whose denunciation of professor Voronin leads to Anastassia's father's arrest and quick execution. Zaretsky is soon discovered dead, and Innokenty Platonov is charged with this murder, as well as plotting against the state, and sentenced to a term in the Solovki prison camp. But how can Innokenty remember his life in the early 20th century if the pills he takes in the hospital are dated 1999? Will Platonov succeed in adapting to a new reality and find a home in the strange world of the end of the 20th century? But the overriding question is: what force has brought him to life and tries to kill him again in 1999, after the miraculous resurrection from his death in the Solovki camp? With a meticulous grasp of the details of everyday life and a brilliant ability to convey a whole spectrum of colors, scents and sounds, the narrator draws a vivid, panoramic picture of life in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. The tragedy that besets the nation, and the social turmoil ripping apart the very fabric of the country, take on “flesh and blood” through the depiction of the personal history of a few residents of a single St. Petersburg communal apartment. Vodolazkin demonstrates masterly control of the novel's narrative structure. The brilliant storytelling, elegance of style, and the pervasive tenderness and sadness are reminiscent of Russian literature of the 1920s, recalling in particular Mikhail Bulgakov's *The White Guard*.

Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2016
416 pp

Translation rights sold

World English Plough
French Syrtes
Romanian Humanitas
Arabic Al Mada
Latvian Janis Roze
Macedonian Antolog
Hungarian Helikon
Serbian Sluzbeny Glasnik
Bulgarian Book Trend/List
Armenian Vogt Nairi
Estonian Postimehe Kirjastus
Albanian Fan Noli
Azerbaijani Hadaf
Simplified Chinese Ginko
Turkish Zenon Publishing
Lithuanian Tyto Alba
Vietnamese Nha Nam Publishing

Film rights sold

Selected quotes

Vodolazkin's grip on this narrative is iron-tight... We should expect nothing less from an author whose previous novel, *Laurus*, was a barnstorming thriller about medieval virtue.

Guardian

A fascinating, science fiction-tinged chronicle of a century in Russia.

BBC Culture

An unabashed, panoramic view of the landscape of human consciousness... Draped in thoroughly Russian trappings, *The Aviator* speaks to common experience while soaring into realms that enfold the human drama below.

Foreword Reviews (starred review)

Engaging... Those familiar with twentieth-century Russian history will delight in the swirl of memories that emerge over the course of the narrative.

World Literature Today

Crisply focused, rich in sensory detail... The arc of the narrative is as simple and clever as a philosopher's parable. But this is also a deeply emotional book...

a quietly radical novel, animated by the spirit of Dmitry Likhachev, an academic who knew what it was to suffer the blows of history first-hand.

Words Without Borders

Love, faith, and a quest for atonement are the driving themes of an epic, prizewinning Russian novel that, while set in the medieval era, takes a contemporary look at the meaning of time... With flavors of Umberto Eco and *The Canterbury Tales*, this affecting, idiosyncratic novel... is an impressive achievement.

Kirkus Reviews

Evocative and enigmatic... despite this book's gentle love story or its murder mystery or its sf flourishes, it is, in many ways, a quintessentially Russian novel, as vivid and probing as they come.

Booklist (starred review)