



About the author:

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

Selected Bibliography

2020 — **A New Breed**, *novel*

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

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

2005 — **The Surgeon**, *novel*

Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2021 (readers' choice)

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021**

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

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

Shortlisted for the **Russian Booker Prize 2012**

Shortlisted for the **National Bestseller Prize 2012**

Shortlisted for **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2012**

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Prize 2005**

Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2021 (readers' choice)

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award 2021**

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

Nearly
90,000 copies
sold in Russia



A New Breed (The Garden)

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

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

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

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

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

Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)

Novel, 2020
412 pp

Translation rights sold

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





A New Breed (The Garden)

Selected quotes

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

Forbes.ru

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

Novaya Gazeta

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

meduza.io

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

Uchitelskaya Gazeta

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

literaturno.com



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

Finalist of the **National Bestseller 2012**

Finalist of the **Russian Booker Award 2012**

Shortlisted for **Yasnaya Polyana Literary Award 2012**



Over 200,000 copies
sold in Russia
since publication

The Women of Lazarus

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

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

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

**Elena Shubina Publishing (AST)**

Novel, 2014
383 pp

Translation rights sold

World English World Editions (available since 2021)
Dutch De Geus
German btb
French Les Escales
Hungarian Europa Publishers
Lithuanian Tyto Alba
Macedonian Antolog
Serbian Agora
Estonian Tänapäev
Latvian Janis Rose
Albanian Fan Noli
Slovakian Slovart
Malayalam Green Books (India)
Mongolian Nepko
Bulgarian Prozoretz

Film rights

optioned (available since December 2022)

Complete English
translation available

The Italian Lessons

Over 55,000 copies
sold in Russia
since publication

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

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

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

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

Selected quotes

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

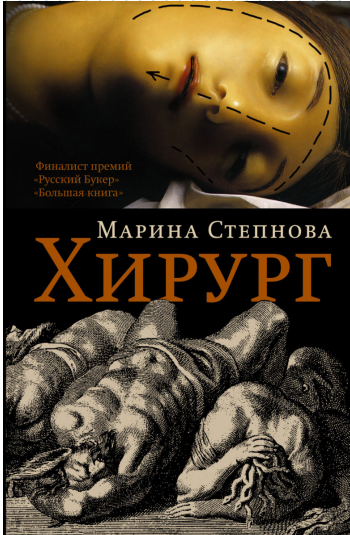
Vedomosti

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

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

prochtenie.ru

Nominated for the **National Bestseller Award 2005**



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

The Surgeon

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

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

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

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

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

Selected quotes

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

Lev Danilkin
Afisha

An ultimately cruel, a mercilessly beautiful prose.

Aitateli

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

weekend.ru

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

snob.ru