

About the author:

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

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

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



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

#### Awards:

Anna Politkovskaya Prize 2023

Music Heart of the Theater National Award 2021

Snob Award, nomination Theater 2021



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## The Auction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Selected quotes

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

*Yana Vanger, writer*

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

*Marina Stepnova, writer*

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

*Maya Kucherskaya, writer*

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

*Galina Yuzefovich, literary critic*