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LITERARY FICTION

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- *Martinovich, Viktor
Remizov, Viktor
Slapovski, Aleksei
- *Slavnikova, Olga
- *Zakharov, Dmitri

TRUE STORY

- *Gromova, Olga

NARRATIVE NON-FICTION

- *Fedyarov, Aleksei

NON-FICTION

- Eidman, Igor

THRILLER

- *Bochkov, Valery

selection of Russian / Belorussian anti-regime books

live pitch

short clips*

news & updates

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news
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authors

WIEDLING
LITERARY AGENCY

literary
fiction

literary fiction

Sfumato: Dead Birds are Flying

Political dystopia. Zakharov Publishers. Moscow 2019. 189 pages

Welcome to Russia 2032. There is peace in the world. Russia, Europe, the United States and China signed a convention ten years ago that completely ruled out a nuclear war of aggression. Tired of the Kremlin's aggression, the world community reached an agreement with Russia: in exchange for its own security, the West no longer cares how the Russian government treats its citizens under its isolated power and only occasionally checks whether foreign policy agreements are respected. Human rights or repression within Russia are considered to be their internal affair. Russia is fenced and the borders are closed. America is no longer the enemy, the rhetoric has changed completely. The taiga is almost entirely cut down, the Chinese – Russia's 'fraternal allies' - have founded productive farms on the permafrost. The whole country is divided into 'clusters': the more critical you are of the regime, the further away from Moscow you are banished. Moscow is the zero cluster and has already been cleaned of all harmful elements.

This frightening dystopia is shrewdly realistic and timely, with the author drawing on his own knowledge and experience from today's prison and law enforcement system in Russia, instead of simply staging a darkly conceived scifi reality. The hyper-real political landscape of the novel is explicitly not post-apocalyptic, but rather develops consistently from today's political realities. The fact that the political dimension of this dystopia extends beyond Russia makes it an Orwellian warning call. A radically austere style that takes your breath away. A shocking unemotional look at a not too distant possible future, in which there is nothing that could not already be found in today's Russia.



THE AUTHOR

other works

Agami - the sequel to Sfumato
Man in jail - narrative non fiction

sample translation

english

"An evil and sad dystopia – and the saddest part is that it's probably true. The purity and power of its first part is in no way inferior to Orwell's despair." VIKTOR SHENDEROVICH

"Conscious of human nature, Alexei Fedyarov demonstrates his insight to the highest degree ... It is hard not to believe his warning of the future, a future that lies ahead of the young and inexperienced as much as the old and wise. The brazen won't escape, nor will the fearless; neither the destitute nor the wealthy; neither the stupid, nor the clever – the planners of our future have a solution ready for everyone." ANNA BERSENEVA

"A successful dystopia is always a warning. It needs a very careful look at the present with a complete understanding of all psychological, historical and social mechanisms and trends, and then you have to pick up on these trends and persuade them convincingly. This is exactly what Fedyarov did ... This novel has frightened many readers and critics. And rightly so. Because it was written by a man who knows this world very well, and not just by hearsay." CARINA COCKRELL

"Fedyarov describes with astonishing exactitude the inability of our current elite to maintain the country in its current size and configuration." ARKADI DUBNOV

"I was shaken, left reeling just like after reading Kafka." VASILI GENERALOV

Aleksei Fedyarov was born in Chuvashia in 1976. After studying law, he worked as an investigator for the public prosecutor's office for ten years. In 2007, he started his own business. In 2013, he was suddenly arrested and convicted of 'particularly serious fraud' – a fate shared with many Russian entrepreneurs. He served a three-year sentence in a camp in the Urals. While still in custody, Fedyarov began filing appeals on behalf of other prisoners. Today he is not only a human rights activist, he is now head of the legal department of the Rus Sidyashchi Charity Fund, the only fund that helps Russian prisoners and their families. At the same time, he is the managing partner of a law firm. Fedyarov lives in Moscow.

Aleksei Fedyarov

literary fiction

Sfumato: Dead Birds are Flying

SUMMARY

The widower Anatoli is a postal clerk in the northernmost cluster FJL (Franz Joseph Land), to which those condemned for 'terrorism' or 'sodomy' are banished. However, they don't live in prisoner barracks, but in their own houses, sleeping on bed linen instead of bare beds. And they can send letters to other clusters with the exception of the zero cluster Moscow, which has already been cleansed of all harmful elements.

When Anatoli delivers the post to the neighboring island for censorship, as he does every week, he is arrested on account of a denunciation because, when drunk, he had spoken out in favor of using nuclear weapons against the 'brother states'. Under torture, Anatoli denounces his drinking buddy, both of whom are executed. Their neighbor Victoria is now taking care of Anatoli's son Stanislav. What she does not know: it was her own brother David, collaborator with high-up connections, who had denounced Anatoli.

Anatoli's son Stanislav also grows up unaware. At 16, he and his girlfriend Masha find themselves in a network of betrayal and envy that also affects their friends and families. Fortunately, the old secret service agent Sergei holds his protective hand over Stanislav and Masha. Along with other old intelligence officers, Sergei had become an enemy of the new convention. The old KGBers had only persevered because they alone were competent enough to organize the large-scale resettlement campaign. Done with the intellectuals, the oligarchs would have been the next and last ones. Most of the depopulated old cities have already been flattened and dug up by the Chinese, leaving no home to go back to. The maligne elements in the clusters die out so that less and less clusters are needed and the old intelligence officers finally get the situation back under their own control.

But Sergei can read the signs of the times: the old oppression system no longer works. Either Sergei himself becomes a victim and rots in a cluster or he joins in with the new slogan of 'integration', which promises a faster revival of Russia as an economic power.

Sergei sees himself not as a traitor to his old comrades in the secret service, but as far-sighted, since he is now pursuing the plan to take Stanislav and his girlfriend Masha to a special school on the site of the former Kremlin in Moscow. There the future generation will be vaccinated with the great historical significance of the Great Renovation. In fact, Stanislav tells his foster mother Victoria that he and his girlfriend will go to this school because they don't want to be victims; they hope to be influential in the future.

Horrified, Victoria doesn't understand whether Stanislav made this decision out of conviction or out of immaturity. But then she herself, as the last representative of the old Moscow Intelligentsia, gets an offer from Sergei to manage the Integration media project, to gather as many survivors from that time as possible and re-educate people to the new system. Only after promising her a long life through medical intervention, Victoria agrees. And from now on, as a teacher, she always can stay connected, via a hologram bracelet, to her foster son Stanislav in the distant zero cluster Moscow.

Aleksei Fedyarov

Belarusian literary fiction

Paranoia

Novel. AST. Russia 2009. 382 pages

Publishers: Finland - Like, Germany - Voland&Quist, UK/US - Northwestern University Press, Russia - AST

A totalitarian regime in Eastern Europe. The young author Anatoli leads a relatively unnoticed life – until he meets the mysterious Yelisaveta and begins a passionate affair with her. Slowly though, Anatoli has increasingly the feeling that Yelisaveta is leading a double life: apparently she also has a relationship with the head of the intelligence service. The ménage à trois explodes when Yelisaveta becomes pregnant. All of a sudden she disappears without a trace, and Anatoli is summoned to a meeting with the all-powerful intelligence service. After several interrogations, the boundary between apparent reality and intelligence-service-speak becomes blurred. And Anatoli has to accept that every breath is monitored and recorded, that every smile is registered, that the one and only function of the walls around him is for eavesdropping, and that in the streets there is no such thing as a chance meeting. Paranoia takes over.

An electrifying political thriller and a tragic story of love and betrayal, which if nothing else shines a spot-light on the methods of Big Brother in the 21st century. As Martinovich himself says: "One does not need to write a new '1984' anymore, one just needs to look around."

"No political novel could be more up-to-date or oppressive."
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

"PARANOIA is an excellent novel that has to be read: on the one hand, because it exposes the mechanisms of a paranoid state-apparatus in a most thrilling way. And on the other hand, because it is a love-story with an intensity that is rarely to be found in modern-day literature. And a damned tragic love-story at that ... His use of language, his feeling for rhythm and his inventiveness are overwhelming. You don't just read this chronicle of paranoia foretold, you get steamrolled by it."
Deutschlandradio Kultur

"PARANOIA has an energy and a nerve of its own – a refreshing sign that cultural life in Belarus has not been defeated."
The New York Times



THE AUTHOR

translations
4 languages

awards
Bogdanovich Literay Award
2012
Best European Fiction anthology
2011 (Dalkey Archive)

sample translation available
english

other works
Lake of Joy
Mova
Revolution
Night

Martinovich was born in Oshmiany, Belarus in 1977. He is a political scientist, doctor of art history, and professor at the Vilnius University. He is a regular contributor to the German weekly DIE ZEIT. His literary works are published parallel in the Belarusian and Russian languages. Paranoia, published in Russia at the end of 2009, was immediately banned from sale in Belarus (unofficially prohibited). In 2017 he was Writer in Residence at the Literaturhaus Zürich and PWG foundation. Martinovich lives with his family in Minsk.

Viktor Martinovich

Belarusian literary fiction

Revolution

Novel. Manuscript 2017. 268 pages

Publishers: Germany - Volland&Quist

He, a professor at a private Moscow university; she, a waitress in a bar; for both it is a case of love at first sight. But one day he leaves their apartment near the Moscow television tower never to be seen again. And now Martinovich's nameless hero begins to explain to his beloved Olya in a long letter why he has not been in touch all this time. He wants to tear down the wall of lies he has erected piece by piece between himself and Olya.

An unknown organization, which knows everything about him, including his financial debts, blackmails him into carrying out small favours. Why is anyone interested in him at all? As a professor at the university he turns free-thinking minds to a perfect fit for industry and government use. Knowledge is power. And his will to power is the only rational means by which the chaos in the nation might be controlled. That is the situation as presented to him by the godfather of the organization. He feels intellectually flattered, and carries on. The favours become more demanding. His doubts are eased by frequent, unexpected privileges, which confirm the influence of the secret organization.

As he is offered promotion within the organization, but only on the condition that he leaves Olya for ever, he decides to quit. But it seems to be too late. His attempt to flee abroad across the border fails, as his friends, who he now sees as his enemies, are always one step ahead. Slowly he realizes that he has to overcome a different sort of boundary. Freedom lies in a flight forward. There has to be a revolution from within. He plans his own revolution down to the finest detail. Anticipating his opponent's every move and ruthlessly applying terror and violence, he manages to overthrow the organization. But on the day of his coming to power, he finally understands that he has now reached the position where the former godfather always wanted him to be.

While Martinovich's debut novel PARANOIA explores subjugation to an autocratic state-service, his recent novel REVOLUTION shows the other side of the coin: subservience to the corruption of power.



THE AUTHOR

translations
4 languages

awards
Bogdanovich Literay Award
2012
Best European Fiction anthology
2011 (Dalkey Archive)

sample translation
english

other works
Lake of Joy
Mova
Paranoia
Night

Martinovich was born in Oshmiany, Belarus in 1977. He is a political scientist, doctor of art history, and professor at the Vilnius University. He is a regular contributor to the German weekly DIE ZEIT. His literary works are published parallel in the Belarusian and Russian languages. Paranoia, published in Russia at the end of 2009, was immediately banned from sale in Belarus (unofficially prohibited). In 2017 he was Writer in Residence at the Literaturhaus Zürich and PWG foundation. Martinovich lives with his family in Minsk.

Viktor Martinovich

literary fiction

Eternal Frost

Novel. Rubezh. Vladivostok 2020. 820 pages

Awards: 2021 Book of the Year WINNER
2021 Big Book shortlist
2021 National Bestseller longlist

The novel is set against the background of the construction of the "Great Stalin Railway" on the Arctic Circle in Siberia, on which up to 80,000 prisoners of the GULAG were simultaneously working between 1947 and 1953. It is one of the most tragic projects of the Stalinist machinery of repression.

Like the Enisei, this novel is a mighty, broad, calm river. No sudden unexpected turns, no rapids. But once you have stepped aboard Captain Belov's tugboat, you can no longer escape the power of its currents and undercurrents. Belov is one of the main character in this large-scale Siberian epic, which actually describes only about 5 years between 1949-53, but focussing on these few years describing at the same time the whole human tragedy and the murderous madness of the Soviet century. We see people and nature little by little caught in the spider web of the GULAG labor camps and subjected to an insane project - the construction of the "Great Stalin Railway" personally ordered by Stalin.

In the novel the river Enisei, which is only navigable for a few months of the year for the replenishment of people and material and otherwise frozen under ice, not only symbolically represents the relentless living conditions of a country in eternal frost. Up to the branches of the tributaries, we experience the diverse beauty and richness of a barren landscape into which humans invade in order to subjugate them, enslaving and destroying not only nature but also those of their own kind. A research down to the smallest detail gives this novel almost documentary authenticity. We get to know all the shades of human dignity and greatness and low motives, even in the minor characters. The progressively tragic interweaving of the individual main characters unfolds an underlying tension and emotionally lasting impact thanks to the stylistically withdrawn narrative style.

It is Remizov's trademark not to exaggerate or disguise reality in literary terms, but to present it as bare as possible. In his novels, the evil is no more diabolical than it is, the good is not canonized. He shows us every single act as an emotional decision by people who at least try to stay true to themselves or to some extent upright in the flow of life. Or just not to go under. Because their flow of life is the maelstrom of Stalinist repressions. With Stalin's death, the project of the railway is crushed and many prisoners are released in a general amnesty. What remains is a grimly disfigured landscape of building ruins and half-disbanded penal camps. And the fates of humans cruelly and senselessly destroyed.



THE AUTHOR

translations
7 languages

awards
National Bestseller longlist 2021
Big Book Award shortlist 2014
Russian Booker Prize shortlist 2014
NOS Award shortlist 2014

sample translation
english

other works
Free and Wild
Temptation

Remizov was born in Saratov in 1958, where he studied geological prospecting at college. After serving in the army Remizov studied languages at Moscow State University. He worked as a surveyor in the taiga, a school teacher of Russian literature and – for the longest time of his professional career – as a journalist. Viktor Remizov lives with his family near Moscow.

Viktor Remizov

literary fiction

"Thanks for the truth. It is the truth without a doubt. We have to remember that. That's how it was."
LITRES

"This is by far the most interesting sample text I have translated in recent times."
ANDREW BROMFIELD

"Remizov's novel contains many valuable details that cannot be invented. He collected them all, listened, spied, saw, remembered. Many historical details that cannot be found in Solzhenitsyn, Shalamov and others."
NATSBEST VERONIKA KUNGURTSEVA

"«Eternal Frost» is a Siberian, northern, historical, industrial novel ... The death in it is always connected with life that arises and continues even under these most inhuman conditions. A seemingly gloomy story into which a light shines that always comes after darkness and that cannot exist without darkness."
NATSBEST VASIL AVCHENKO

"Remizov's novel is neither ideological nor precocious: the author succeeds in immersing the reader in a past that is so meticulously and thoroughly described that one feels carried away by the plot – on a densely populated construction site, in a breathtaking natural setting, in taiga and tundra, in the prison camp, in the torture cellar of the NKVD, in the village restaurant on New Year's Eve, at school, in Aul in Kazakhstan, in the shelters where exiled settlers have surrendered to the grace of the elements. The book contains a lot of Soviet pathos from those years, slogans, red-brown posters, party conferences, but not an ounce of pathos from the author. Like his young captain, he leads the reader confidently through the wild nature of the taiga river, on which his three hundred hp steam tug «Polyarny» drives and supplies material for the construction site, coal and lawless people in the sealed, stinking holds of the barges.

You think you've already read a lot, but thanks to the amazing abundance of material everything looks new: details, terms, boats, breaks (barges with flat bottoms), steamers and people, their clothes, gait, experiences, fear and courage are described meticulously and lovingly so that you believe the text and turn the pages of this epic novel without being able to tear yourself away. Everything serves the one plan: to immerse the reader in the past, to allow him to listen to the endless conversations of the characters, to discuss, praise, condemn the time in which they happen to live or some also die... In this eternal frost there is also a place for love, desperate but reliable; honesty, sometimes naive; ideals, strong and unchangeable."
NOVAYA GAZETA PETR ALESHKOVSKI

"A great book. Excellent prose and wonderful language. An epic about our recent Soviet past and the last of the great Stalinist construction projects. The novel does not contain the horrors of Shalamov's prose. On the contrary, it is a leisurely, almost everyday description of the hero's life, whether in Moscow, in Siberian cities or behind the barbed wire, that takes the reader into that world. The book is amazingly cinematographic. The text is projected onto the screen, so to speak, and one involuntarily begins to see and experience the events with the heroes. Many events in the novel take place against the backdrop of the endless Siberian taiga and the Yenisei. These two forces of nature, infinitely free and stubborn, are also heroes of the novel. I repeat that the novel does not contain a description of the horrors of the camp, but the acquaintance with everyday camp life caused a real emotional shock in me.

The book is very sincere, you won't find anything invented or any of the cinematic or literary stereotypes about that time. On the contrary, the actions and feelings of the heroes, the everyday details of their lives and the unwritten laws of the GULAG are perceived as if the author had experienced it first hand."
NIKOLAI OBRAZTSOV

"I haven't read anything like that in Russian in the 21st century! A really great novel that is not inferior to the most important works of the 20th century. It is absolutely impossible to put it down. But above all the power of the effect. Let me give you an example. At home, it's usually 22 degrees and my clothes at home, like many others, are a T-shirt and shorts. And so I sit at the computer and read an episode of how a barely alive horse pulls a drinking water sledge through Ermakovo during the terrible frosts. And how terribly the harness creaks. The frost is creaking, the insulation on the tap ... And suddenly I realized that I was not sitting there in a T-shirt, but in a winter down jacket that I had taken out of the closet without even realizing it."
RUMATA ESTORSKI

Viktor Remizov

literary fiction

The Unknown

Novel. AST. Moscow 2017. 500 pages

Big Book shortlist 2017

Publishers: Slovak Republic - Slovart

The subtitle of Slapovski's most recent book is: "Novel of a Century 1917 to 2017". And indeed, the story begins with Nikolai Smirnov's entry into his diary on the 17th December 1917 and ends with a letter from Gleb Smirnov to his father Victor in 2017. Thus the novel is also a family saga spanning five generations, but not in the usual way as there is neither a clear picture of the family Smirnov nor of 20th century Russia. The family-tree is shown in the appendix and only a few of the members of family are given a chance to speak. Two separate branches of the family are presented, whose narratives either overlap or leave gaps in time.

What may appear to be a design error in the novel, is intentionally so composed with style and content consistently applied. Noteworthy are the gaps in the family mosaic which automatically bring the fissures of the previous Russian century to the fore. Slapovski holds the family together over a century merely by story-telling, which in hindsight, does not yield any final truths. Every character is influenced by their own epoch and narrates in their own particular style - diaries, letters, interviews, short stories, emails – thereby mirroring the time in which they live. It is only in a judicial report that we learn of Anton Smirnov's career as an unwitting crook, for which he was sentenced to death in 1962. The only common thread in all these different lives is the presence and influence of the Russian secret service.

In THE UNKNOWN Slapovski's well-known ability of remaining authentic over the whole stylistic bandwidth as well as his much-vaunted empathy with each of his insignificant and bungling protagonists, which were recently reviled as "too soft" by patriotically disposed critics, come together creating a magnificent multi-faceted novel. There is no single style that smooths the image of the century. No hubristic judgment of the individual fate. Many members of the family recognize that they are on their way into the unknown. Significantly, the succession stops for those who react with a closed life-plan because they fear the unknown future too much. THE UNKNOWN is thus a courageous response to new and old political reflexives in Russia: the rising self-emancipating and self-opening society being harassed from above and isolated from the world.



THE AUTHOR

translations
8 languages

awards
Big Book shortlist 2017
Penne Award (Italy) 2009

other work
Genii

Slapovski was born in 1957 in Saratov. He holds a degree in philology from the university of Saratov. He worked as a school teacher, truck driver and journalist. His writing debut was a theater piece in 1985. He won several awards (Eugin O'Neill Drama Festival/USA, European Theater Festival/D-Kassel, Moscow Theater Competition). He has successfully written several novels and TV-series and has been nominated four times for the Russian Booker and two times for Big Book Award. His works are translated into many languages. Slapovski lives in Moscow.

Aleksei Slapovski

literary fiction

The Lighthouse

Novel. AST. Moscow 2010. 231 pages

Publishers: China - People's Literature, Egypt - Al Arabi, France - Mirobole, Italy - Fandango, Macedonia - Tri, Poland - Draga, Romania - Alfa

Maxim Ermakov weighs four kilogram's less than a normal person. Even as a child, his head felt as light and empty as a balloon. With his good grades and a good deal of application he manages to become the PR manager for a chocolate factory. Ermakov is an almost normal representative of the new Moscow middle class, what he earns is not bad, he loves the free market, his Toyota and his apartment (apart from the landlady). He enjoys the little personal luxuries he has worked for. Ermakov is still single. Then he receives a visit from two gentlemen from the state Institute of Social Prognosis. They maintain that tests reveal that he radiates a damaging alpha field triggering world catastrophes. Ermakov is responsible for climate damage, terror attacks, car accidents, fires and, illness. He needs to end his life voluntarily for the good of mankind. The alpha field will be eradicated only if he commits suicide. The state will make him a posthumous hero, complete with proper compensation as well. Ermakov does not want to, however. He has had too much of a taste of individual freedom and determining his own way of life to be able to sacrifice himself for the reasons of a state with he no longer identifies at all. He feels himself to be more a citizen of the world than a state citizen. Anyone who does not listen to Russian authorities must be made to feel. Ermakov is put under pressure and under obvious surveillance, the door to his apartment smeared with slogans, his landlady gives him notice, his company demotes him and the mob demonstrates on the street against the man refusing to grant salvation from evil. Only one person sticks by him, little Lyusia from his company. Having lost his job, money, apartment and reputation he finds a safe little haven of love and marriage with her. And then the Institute of Social Prognosis announces that they had made a mistake. The pressure is off him. And Lyusia falls pregnant. Anyone believing in a happy ending for Russia is very much mistaken, however. With sound, witty punch lines and razor sharp analysis, Slavnikova's quasi-literary experiment puts archetypal Russian qualities under the conditions of globalisation to the test: individualism versus communism, self versus society, the willingness to make sacrifices versus egoism. What is the Russian soul still worth today? A scandalously entertaining book as the logical sequel to the author's analysis of Putinocracy in her successful novel "2017", just in another genre. One could define LIGHT HEAD as a political farce if it were not for the very bitter ending, as bitter as that in the Orwell adaptation of Monty Python's BRAZIL.

"The irrational absurdity does not disturb the reading, on the contrary, it reinforces the tragic impression." *Ex Libris*

"A high-tension, entertaining, but absolutely frightening novel devoid of hope." *Vedomosti*

Slavnikova was born in 1957 near Ekaterinburg. She writes reviews and essays for *Novy mir*, *Znamya*, *Oktyabr*. She was a member of the Russian booker prize jury in 1999. In 2000 she was part of the board for the *Novy mir* Prize for short stories and now organizes the Debut Prize of the *Pokolenie* fund. Her novel "Strekoza, uvelichennaya do razmerov sobaki" was shortlisted for the booker prize in 1997. "Odin v zerkale" won the Bazgov Prize and was nominated for the Booker Prize in 2000. Slavnikova lives in Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

translations
20 languages

awards

Big Book Award shortlist 2018
Yasnaya Polyana Award 2018
Book of the Year 2018
National Bestseller shortlist 2018
Gorky Award Italy 2012
Gjenima Prize (US) 2006-2007
Russian Booker Prize 2006

sample translation available

full english, french

other works

The Jump
The Immortal
2017
Love in the 7th Train

Olga Slavnikova

literary fiction

Moscow Banksy

(Middle Edda)

Political thriller. AST Publishers. Moscow 2019. 347 pages

Suddenly, new graffiti appears in Moscow week after week with a clock-face in the corner, the painted hand creeping towards 12. The grotesque works of an anonymous graffiti artist each represent a different member of the new bureaucratic nomenklatura - each of whom dies shortly afterwards. While the graffiti artist quickly becomes a new icon for the liberal protest movement, spin doctors close to the Kremlin are frantically trying to reveal his identity.

But the power elites are divided. Some arrest well-known opposition street artists and hire teams of 'censors' who immediately paint over any new graffiti to prevent the image being distributed via social networks. When images of the cleaned-up graffiti are posted all over Moscow, other power clans interpret this as an attack from their competitors and start a violent search for the ringleader among the city administration, oil companies and oligarchs.

Meanwhile, some representatives of the corrupt power hierarchy are ready to pay huge sums for the next graffiti to depict one of their opponents. A large opposition rally in the center of Moscow turns out to be staged by people with a great deal at stake in the struggle for future power. When the demo turns into a bloody battle it serves as a welcome distraction from their political intrigue: the dismissal of the government, the flight of the speaker of parliament abroad and the long-prepared installation of a puppet candidate as deputy spokesman and formally number two in the state hierarchy. And number one, if anything happens to the president.

Everyone in Moscow is convinced that the twelfth graffiti will show the president. The city is paralysed when the presidential limousine's escort stops unscheduled in the center of Moscow. Despite the utmost security precautions, it is clear to everyone - it's the president next.

"It is not us that are like that, it's life and the novel too. The book of a generation, the death knell of a decade, and quite simply a novel of its time- bitter, angry and at the same time full of hope."

SHAMIL IDIATULLIN

"Exactly the novel about here and now that we have been missing for so long. Chamber play and global epos at the same time; an emotional story about living people, an exciting thriller, a razor-sharp, socially critical drama."

GALINA YUZEFOVICH

"A political crime thriller, an anti-utopia, a Russian Dogville, a saga about the battle of the Norse gods ... But above all a searching and relentless diagnosis of the generation of the Russian 2000s, painful and timely."

ALEKSANDR GAVRILOV

Dmitri Zakharov was born in 1979 in a 'closed' city in Siberia near Krasnoyarsk. After training as a journalist, he worked as a correspondent and editor for Kommersant newspaper and headed various marketing departments in the government and the private sectors. Dmitri Zakharov lives in St. Petersburg



THE AUTHOR

sample translation

english

Dmitri Zakharov

literary fiction

Moscow Banksy

(Middle Edda)

ADDITIONAL REVIEWS

"The book is definitely fantastical, but underneath all the layers of the author's imagination lies the unfailingly recognizable daily life of Russia. The bloody battle on Tverskaya and the predetermined 'public hearings' are portrayed with both detachment and a high degree of drama, like battle scenes in the movies. The contemporary slang scattered across the pages and the mentions of real people bring about a terrible realisation – that here – slightly blurred – is our reality."

THE VILLAGE

"The author was said to have described the Moscow protests from last summer particularly well – and yet the novel was finished six months before these events. Bizarrely, the book even reflects the story of the shaman walking to Moscow, although nothing was known about the shaman when the author was working on the text ... Middle Edda calls to mind the best early novels by Victor Pelevin - Generation P, Chapaev, and Void – this is a book in which we recognize a cynical image of ourselves."

POLIT.RU

"The behind-the-scenes plotting generates fury. But the novel also shows something of value in our times. Love, the pursuit of justice – the very thing that tends to slip away behind the blinkers of political media hype."

PSYCHOLOGIES

"It couldn't be more of the moment! A masterful cocktail of intrigues of power, opposition struggles, mysticism and more than appropriate swearing and slang. A mass of hidden motives, manipulati-on, provocation, and kickbacks."

LIVELIB

"Middle Edda has just one purpose: to portray the present. Whether blindly feeling his way, applying genuine skill or simply getting straight to the point, Zakharov assumes the stark responsibility of leading contemporary Russian literature into the field of political pronouncements – at the very least this is not only a seductive, but also an encouraging endeavor."

PROCHTENIE

"The author manages to tell a lively and consistent story, to convey both subtle psychology and battle scenes. And this has a very unexpected effect: the further you move away from the novel, the more interesting and clear its contours become. In that sense, Middle Edda is an impressionist novel. This effect is also achieved by the fact that the readers have a lot to do for themselves. The author does not lead them by the hand, but presents what initially appear to be unrelated pictures and scenes from life, and then the reader must finish the job, must think and join the dots, in order to complete the text in his head. But the thin line between meaningless clutter and deliberate device is not crossed."

DENIS EPIFANTSEV

Dmitri Zakharov

WIEDLING
LITERARY AGENCY

true story
memoir

true story | memoir

Sugar Child

A story of a girl from the last century as told by Stella Nudolskaya

Memoir. KompasGide. Moscow 2013. 160 pages with photographs
With a preface by Lyudmila Ulitskaya

Publishers: Arabic - Arab Scientific Publishers , Belgium - Clavis, Bulgaria - Tochitsa, France - Editions des quatre vivants, Germany - Aufbau, India - Saikatham, Latvia - Janis Roze, Netherlands - Clavis

Autobiographical memory of Stalin's repressions and experience of surviving exile true story, coming-of-age, survival experience, mother/daughter relationship, historical drama

What is it like to be a „public enemy“ from one day to the next, to be exposed to Stalin's repressions - the Great Terror? Stella Nudolskaja experienced it with her parents in the Soviet Union of the 1930s.

Separated from their father, who was killed by the Soviet regime, mother and daughter Elia were deported from Moscow to Kyrgyzstan in 1937, where they were humiliated, marginalized, hungry and suffering. Their lives resemble an odyssey from one labour camp to the next, from one foreign environment to the next; uncertainty and fear as constant companions. Nevertheless, mother and daughter maintain an independent and dignified attitude to life. And: they take back home with storytelling and singing.

Elia and her mother are released when the construction of the camp is completed. But they are then forced to stay in the region and, above all, to find work and housing on their own. When her mother coughs and gets sick ending up suffering lying on the ground near a barn, they have nothing left. Elia does not lose courage, and knocks on the door of a farm that houses a very large family headed by a good, courageous and taciturn man, Saveli Yuzhakov. He takes Elia and her mother in and treats them well. They call Elia „kant bala“ (Child of sugar in Kyrgyz), because of the whiteness of her skin. 1941, Russia enters the Second World War and her mother is forced to leave her job. She finds a job as a German teacher. 1946, Elia and her mother are allowed (thanks to a falsified document) to return to Moscow and some time later they are rehabilitated. They learned many years later that the father died at Magadan camp in 1940.

This novel of the deportation narrated by a little Russian girl is a great lesson in humanity for all. Protected by a mother whose courage does not leave her, she asks the legitimate and just questions that children ask themselves. Her mother never fails to show her the path of dignity, to look forward, while avoiding the unspeakable. This novel is also a novel of solidarity and kindness, when men are subjected to the torments of history. As she herself says, Elia has forgotten the bad people she met, she only remembers the good ones, despite the wounds inflicted. And throughout her exile in the Kyrgyz lands, solidarity and mutual aid will allow her to escape the most difficult moments when illness and poverty make her foresee death. „Sugar Child“ is full of scary and cruel scenes, but none of them overcome its overall light and inspiring tone.



THE AUTHOR

translations
8 languages

awards

2015 Russian Children's Choices
2015 Leo Tolstoy Prize short-list
2014 V. Krapivin Prize Diploma
2014 Children's of Saint Petersburg
and Region choice
2013 Knigooroo Prize Longlist

sample available
full french

Olga Gromova

true story | memoir

At a time of global antagonisms and differentiation of all kinds, this story shows that man is still man, when life is at stake. And that different peoples, languages, cultures are able to coexist and support each other. A story about love, and yet about dignity and freedom. As in Roberto Benigni's film „Life is Beautiful“, a father manages to get through the horror of Nazi concentration camps with a smile on his son's face, in this book a mother guides her daughter with great dignity and perspective through deportation and misery. A beautiful educational novel, a love story about the strength of the heart and freedom leaving the reader moved to tears and stronger. As Elia's mother says: „Slavery is a state of mind. Free man can't be made a slave.“

In 1988, Olga Gromova, active librarian and editor-in-chief of the specialized journal „Biblioteka v shkole“, met her neighbour, Stella (nicknamed Elia) Doubrova (Noudolskaya - which is her mother's maiden name), who gradually tells her her personal story. Olga Gromova turned it into a strong and tender book for young people, in which the reader accompanies the girl Elia through all her impassable life.

First published in a newspaper in the form of four short stories entitled „Ne pozvoliaï sebe boyatsia“, the text immediately found its young audience. Stella continued her writing work, then left Olga to finish and publish the novel. In the 1980s, Stella Doubrova (Nudolskaya) participated in demonstrations against political repression in Russia and worked as a volunteer for the Memorial Association.

„Sugar Child“ is not a pure memoir, but also a literary novel: despite the story on behalf of little Elia, the author does not give any „children's look“ at the history of the 1930s-1940s, does not play with readers by a pretended „retransformation into a child“: On the contrary, behind the story of the girl the adult is clearly visible. Perhaps this is the reason why the story, which was originally aimed at 12-16 year old readers, is no longer perceived as „young adult“, but has become part of the great Russian literature.

„„Sugar Child“ is the documentary fact of a miracle – the education of a human personality under inhuman conditions. At the same time it is a guide through the vanished camp world, which enables us to see in detail both the anthropology of the state crime and the hidden secret of the emerging resistance.“ *Sergei Lebedev*

„This true story full of light about Stalinist oppression, seen through the eyes of a child sent into exile in Central Asia in the 1930s, makes a significant contribution to the fragile memory of contemporary Russia, where exploration of the period is increasingly marginalized.“ *Le Monde*

„The experience of our long history shows that even under the most tragic circumstances, parents have succeeded in raising morally upright children. To convince us of this, a literature helps that does not report on politicians and commanders, but on the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people in their everyday lives.“ *Evgeni Yamburg*



Olga Gromova

narrative
non-fiction

narrative non-fiction

Man in Jail

Narrative non-fiction. Alpina Publishers. Moscow 2019. 269 pages

Foreign rights: Poland/ Czarne

The heroes of this documentary book are convicted Russian prisoners with varying degrees of ability to survive physically and morally under conditions of total deprivation of liberty, constant humiliation, hunger, slave labor and separation from relatives. All first and last names were changed. Yet these are true stories of people in camp confinement.

The author tells from his own experience about the years he spent as a prisoner, first in a remand prison and then in the Tagil penal camp for former law enforcement officers. The reader is immersed in a world of lawlessness in which prisoners want to survive and the guards try to squeeze as much as possible out of them.

The book is not a protest manifesto, but a factual report. Neutral in its basic tone, in the fates described sometimes bitter, sometimes funny, sometimes philosophical, but always honest and touching.

The accompanying text to the book written by Olga Romanova, TV and radio journalist and director of the NGO „Russia in Jail“, who emigrated to Germany after being threatened by the Russian authorities:

„Clever and not very honest and real criminals, rich and poor, prison authorities and servants - none of them can leave the camp. They are all forced to learn the hard and unwritten rules of another life. One can endure it, another cannot. Despite the lack of references to the Bible, these stories can be considered biblical. Instructive without preaching, exciting without a crime plot or melodrama, written in the very precise language of a person who has lived, experienced and understood all this himself.“



THE AUTHOR

other works

Sfumato

Agami - the sequel to Sfumato

Aleksei Fedyarov was born in Chuvashia in 1976. After studying law, he worked as an investigator for the public prosecutor's office for ten years. In 2007, he started his own business. In 2013, he was suddenly arrested and convicted of 'particularly serious fraud' – a fate shared with many Russian entrepreneurs. He served a three-year sentence in a camp in the Urals. While still in custody, Fedyarov began filing appeals on behalf of other prisoners. Today he is not only a human rights activist, he is now head of the legal department of the Rus Sidyashchi Charity Fund, the only fund that helps Russian prisoners and their families. At the same time, he is the managing partner of a law firm. Fedyarov lives in Moscow.

Aleksei Fedyarov

narrative non-fiction

Man in Jail

PRESS REVIEWS 1

"The book ... is less about prison than about Russia and the relationship between government and society."
RADIO LIBERTY

"As you read this book, it becomes very clear that we are in danger. It's very easy to be fooled. And our justice system will not disappoint us... It's an informative report on the inner workings of the prison system. And it seems somewhat well known. Which adds to the effect that our quiet, sated life is approaching an existence behind the barbed wire."
LIVELIB

"One reads in one breath, in one day, although sometimes a lump in the throat rises. Convoy, SIZO, SHIZO - these words rise in your memory, you push them away and tell yourself that it will certainly never happen to you, but then you remember the stories you read and understand that nothing in this life and in this country is certain. And when you get out of jail, that's it, you're a different person. Yes, someone may have been waiting for you, but you are still branded, society looks at you differently. This book is about the broken destinies of various men, supported by the warmth of their mothers and wives. It's not just about the harshness of the prison walls, but also about the management that exists in this system, if you can call it that, an algorithm of bullying and humiliation."
LIVELYB

"The book is not about ordinary convicts, but about former employees of the institutions. Who, like everyone else, are behind bars, without much advantage. Fedyarov writes in such a way that one feels both the fateful and the repulsive. Yes, a perpetrator must go to prison, nobody denies that. And if he is not a criminal? Or if he has committed a less serious crime, but was convicted according to a completely different paragraph? There are more than one such cases in the book."
LIVELIB

"The first book in a long time where I couldn't get away from reading. I cried and laughed. He writes simply and interestingly about what seems absurd, about what is sad and very scary. In some places it reminds me of Ilf and Petrov, in others it reminds me of Victor Frankl, Bulgakov and Stephen King in *The Shawshank Redemption*."
LITRES

"Many people in today's Russia are threatened with imprisonment in camps. Those who are being imprisoned. And those who imprison. And it will always be like this until something changes in our consciousness. Only then will there be justice, elected and responsible authorities, honest police... But for now, these are just wishful thinking."
LITRES

Aleksei Fedyarov

narrative non-fiction

Man in Jail

PRESS REVIEWS 2

"The book is incredibly valuable. In simple language, the author tells of the wonders and horrors of the Gulag in the 21st century. One unknowingly remembers the stories of Shalamov and thinks about how similar Fedyarov's stories are, and one involuntarily feels confusion and sadness: Why has almost nothing changed for so long, for so many dozens of years – neither in the organization of the prisons nor in human nature? Reading this book, I have experienced the whole range of emotions, and despite the incredible and sometimes very terrible events that the author carefully documents, one still has the feeling that justice – will come, that light at the end of the tunnel - will certainly appear, that the human soul – is the most important thing we have, and is so easily in danger of being lost."

BOOKVOED

LONG REVIEW by Mikhail Shevelev

"War, hospital and prison were and are one of the main sources of Russian literature. With regard to modern wars, the late Vladimir Makanin said more than anyone else, in my opinion, with the novel *Asan*. The hospital was described by Maxim Osipov in his notes *In the Homeland*. And the prison now came to us in the form of a book by Alexey Fedyarov: *Man in Jail*.

The author is a former public prosecutor from Cheboksary who left the public service and went into business and was then sentenced under the *Fraud Clause*, after which all our entrepreneurs have been imprisoned and will still be going to jail.

Man in Jail is a story about today's Russian camp, its inhabitants – prisoners and guards alike – and their relations with the free world.

The tradition of camp prose in Russian literature is rich – from Shalamov, Solzhenitsyn and Razgon to the current, youngest authors: Oleg Navalny, the notes of Mikhail Zakharin, who was sentenced to life imprisonment. In this tough competitive environment, Alexei Fedyarov's stories cut a very good figure. In many respects they even maintain the level of the honourable predecessors. In terms of love of life and the ability to find something cheerful about the most tragic circumstances, they are comparable to Dunskey and Frid's *Notes of a camp idiot*, and through the attention to detail and accuracy of language, they are comparable to Dovlatov's *Zone*.

But there is one characteristic of *Man in Jail* that distinguishes it from the others – both historical and contemporary examples. His stories are not only and not so much about prison, which once again threatens each of us at every corner. It is about the ability not to bend, to survive and to win – not against prison, but against something further above – the state. The author is once again in freedom and not only got back on his feet, but also began to help others who found themselves in a similar situation. Meanwhile he is a successful lawyer and head of the legal department of the charity foundation *Russia in Jail*, one of the founders of the children's camp *Terra Nostra*, where children whose parents are innocently imprisoned are admitted free of charge..."

Aleksei Fedyarov

non-fiction

non-fiction

The Putin System

Socio-political analysis. Manuscript 2016. 280 pages

Preface by Garri Kasparov and Zhanna Nemtsova

New preface and epilogue

reflecting Russian aggression March 2022

Publishers: Germany - Heyne

This book is an SOS from a Russian expert. He has lived through the end of democracy in his own country and he sees the need to warn readers outside Russia of the comparable risks facing their own countries. Is the whole world about to experience a long period of instability and social and political regression? Is Europe facing the threat of a major war?

From the start Eidman presents the regime in Russia as the pioneer and leader of a new far-right conservative movement. He lists Putin together with politicians such as Trump, Erdogan, Marine le Pen, Urban, Hofer, Frauke Petry, and others. The aggressive regime Putin has created in the east of Europe is contriving to reestablish its power base within the former Soviet sphere of influence. The author describes how Putin tries to influence the public opinion in western countries in order to destabilise the political status quo, how he supports far-right organisations throughout the world and how Moscow has become the command centre for a neo-conservative revolution.

Eidman analyses how Putin came to power and how, using various pretences, he has turned Russia into an autocratic regime. Authoritarian organisations in western countries are now attempting a similar procedure. Eidman's book must be seen, not only as shock-therapy for Russophiles in particular, but also as a warning for all, thereby enabling a necessary and appropriate assessment of the situation and the accompanying danger. The book provides detailed information of the source of the threat, its nature and how it could be countered. It is the author's opinion that tolerating Putin is equivalent to accepting the neo-conservative revolution, by which the liberal West is to be reduced to a model of Putin's design.

The book is easily accessible and reads like an angry political pamphlet intending to shake up a wide base of readers outside Russia. Thanks to his experience in working in elevated Russian political circles Eidman has important insider information, which he shares with the readers of this book.



THE AUTHOR

translations
1 language

samples available
german

Eidman was born in Gorky (today Nizny Novgorod) in 1968 as the son of a famous physicist. After graduating in history he began his career in the 1990s, working as journalist and editor for different media. He later became political consultant for high-ranking politicians, members of the Russian Duma and leaders of the liberal parties. The publication of his conceptual research work on theoretical sociology and social history entitled "Breakthrough to the Future. The Sociology of the Internet Revolution" brought him overnight fame. He took on the post of Communications Director with the Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research (VCIOM). However, after his support as a witness for the New Times for uncovering an in-house corruption scandal, he lost his job and, seeing himself and his family under increased pressure, he emigrated to Germany. Not many years later his cousin, the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, was murdered in Moscow. Eidman's most recent publication is "Das System Putin" (Heyne, Germany, 2016). He writes for wellknown German-language newspapers such as SZ, FAZ, NZZ or magazines such as Focus and had his own column with the Deutsche Welle.

Igor Eidman

WIEDLING
LITERARY AGENCY

thriller
detective

thriller

Charon Coronation of the Beast My Brother Cain

Thriller Trilogy. Eksmo. Moscow 2016-2017. Ca. 320 pages each

Publishers: Poland - Insignis

This trilogy is a masterful mix of classical American high-tension political thriller, alive with realistic characters, cinematographic in detail and scope, and of classic Russian intellectual prose, with philosophical and social tension reminiscent of Dostoyevsky's "Demons". A page turner with the plot precisely organized with dynamic pace and action in each individual novel as well as in the trilogy as a whole.

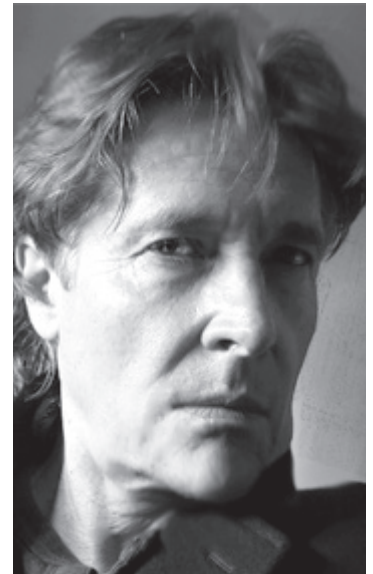
Each novel can be read separately, because in each case the first-person narrator in the centre of the plot is a different hero or heroine. Thanks to this approach three different narrators relate in each novel their perspective of the same event – albeit as perpetrator, intermediary or victim. In addition, the author manages to fictionally connect the remote political participants to the main protagonists in a personal relationship, thereby mirroring the governmental intrigues and power struggles on a personal level. In this way the characters and their motives become easily and emotionally accessible. And the psychologically and intelligently crafted protagonists never become predictable; they are neither only good nor only bad and are easily recognizable to the reader, although to prolong the suspense the author occasionally alters the points of identification.

All three novels deal with the different phases that could occur in a serious upheaval in modern Russia. Within the chronological and atmospherical composition of the trilogy, part 1 (planning and assassination) represents the calm before the storm, part 2 (power vacuum after the murder of the president) presents the unleashing of violence, and part 3 (the new regime) stands for the deceptive peace.

With great insight Bochkov reveals a provocatively straight-forward view of Russia at home in the West – skilfully presents the reader with the external western perspective, but at the same time causes the Westerner to feel directly involved and affected. The great similarity with present-day characters and events is deliberate and strengthens the breath-taking effect of experiencing the historically possibility in a seemingly live transmission.

Whether the future of Russian history is being written in these three books, or whether the reading will write a new future, only time will tell.

Bochkov was born in Latvia and grew up in Moscow. He studied graphic design and was creative director of a PR agency based in Moscow and New York between 1995 and 2000. He then emigrated to the USA. With his own Studio for visual communications he worked out the visual concept for popular shows on Discovery Channel or ABC. For the project Greede TV he was given the ADDY Award. As professional artist he had around a dozen personal exhibitions in Europe and the US and had been invited twice to the Edinburgh Art Festival. His first stories as a literary author were published in 2012. Besides several nominations for Russian shortlists (National best-seller, Big Book, Booker, NOS) he was awarded the Russian Prize 2013, the most prestigious literary award for writers living outside of Russia and writing in Russian. Valery Bochkov speaks Russian, English and German. Bochkov lives and works in Washington, USA.



THE AUTHOR

translations
1 language

awards
Toronto-based Ernest
Hemingway Award 2016
Russian Award 2013

samples available
Vol. 1 in full english

Vitaly Bochkov

thriller

Charon

Thriller. Eksmo. Moscow 2016. 316 pages

Publishers: Poland - Insignis

The hero of the novel, Nick, was born in Russia but grew up in a horrific orphanage. Fortunately, he was adopted and raised in America by a loving American family. Nick thrived and when he was old enough he joined the US military and became a member of the elite Navy Seals. His anonymity is compromised following one of his successful missions – the assassination of a vicious terrorist leader – inciting a group of jihadi extremists to place a million-dollar bounty on his head for anyone who succeeds in killing him.

The US government offers to place him and his family in the Witness Protection Program but, based on his familiarity with this enemy, he feels that the best way to survive and keep his family safe is to take matters into his own hands. He sends his family to a safe house in California, while he heads to a remote location in Vermont. The jihadists who want him dead are part of a vast network and Nick knows that it's only a matter of time before they find him.

He is eventually found, but not by the jihadi warriors he is expecting. A wealthy Russian woman, Anna, the 3rd richest oligarch in Russia, appears on his doorstep one day with a personal agenda and vast resources to get what she wants. Anna uses her knowledge of the whereabouts of Nick's beloved family to blackmail him to do her bidding. She wants Nick to eliminate a Russian political leader who stands in her way. While Nick has no personal stake in Russian politics, he has no choice but to give in to Anna's demands. He loves his family and he knows Anna is too dangerous of an enemy to refuse.

Eventually, the target of Anna's plan is revealed to be the Russian President. While preparing his operation Nick studies the history and back-story of his target. How did a mediocre civil servant end up with so much power and feared by so many? How does he think and what are his weaknesses? The reader gets an insider's view of the Kremlin and the dangerous games of the powerful and the corrupt. While learning about the President and the inner workings of his criminal government, Nick is also faced with certain revelations and realizations about his own past. All is not as it seems.

As the operation advances, Nick hires a team to help him. Money is no object and Nick puts together an A-Team of thirty professional commandos who are unmatched in their special talents. They use a private Mediterranean island, owned by Anna, as their training ground. Three months of intensive training and the team is ready to act. The action of the operation is the culmination of the novel: Nick's plan is successful, his little army ambushes the President's country villa and the President is kidnapped. Nick and the President fly away in a helicopter to deliver the President to Anna. But Nick is a professional and knows the way this game is played – he is no longer needed and will certainly be killed. He jumps . . .

Vitaly Bochkov

thriller

Coronation of the Beast

Thriller. Eksmo. Moscow 2016. 316 pages

Publishers: Poland - Insignis

The day after the assassination of the President. The protagonist of the novel is Dmitri, a sociology professor and Russian emigrant, who just arrived in Moscow, after learning the previous week that he has an eighteen-year old son who is in danger in Russia.

The assassination is the opening move in a military coup, which leads to chaos in the streets of the capital and a struggle for power in Kremlin. A new charismatic leader emerges – he is strong and fearless and he's in control of the nuclear launch codes. Amazingly, Dimitri recognizes this new leader as his old university friend, Sylvestrov, who is happy to see him in Moscow and wants to use his knowledge and loyalty. Dimitry finds himself in the inner circle of the new ruler of Russia – and searching for his son.

Years of reckless government corruption and imperialistic adventurism have brought Russia to the brink of economical and political collapse. The international policy of the previous President isolated the country and today's Russia is a pariah state. The army and police are little more than mercenaries and refuse to recognize or obey the new leader. Ordinary workers who haven't been paid for months and angry miners are marching on the Kremlin by the hundreds of thousands. To stay in power and stop the popular revolt, Sylvestrov is using his last resort – calling for help from the volatile and unpredictable Chechen leader Kantemirov. His "Steel Division" puts down the uprising of workers and miners, but the Moscow streets are rivers of blood and the Chechen commandos are pillaging and raping across the Russian capitol. Kantemirov expects to be treated as a hero and given real power in the regime, but his friend Sylvestrov has no intention of sharing power with the wild and uncivilized southern tribes. Horrible and shocking violence ensues, literally erasing Chechnya from the map. Sylvestrov has crossed the line – he's on the dark side now with no moral limits containing his ambition for total authority.

In the maelstrom of violence and threats, a group of opposition radicals have kidnapped Sylvestrov's daughter and are demanding free elections for the first time in two generations. Dmitri's son is one of the leaders of the group with the kidnapped girl. Father and son meet secretly in an old monastery outside Moscow where the oppositionists have their headquarters. Dimitri pleads with his son to leave with him, to stop fighting for Russia, which is doomed forever to chaos, totalitarianism, and bloodshed. His son refuses to believe that all hope is lost. But Dmitri was followed and all of the rebels are captured (and the daughter saved). Sylvestrov is not sentimental and plans to eliminate the opposition down to the last man, including Dmitri.

Valery Bochkov

thriller

My Brother Cain

Thriller. Eksmo. Moscow 2017. 320 pages

The third and final novel takes off directly from the shocking end of the "Coronation of the Beast". Moscow is overrun and terrorized by Muslims who banded together in desperate revenge for the nuclear destruction of Chechnya in the previous novel. Now the Russian state, such as it is, is a near feudal empire with most people living in isolation and fear, roving gangs of criminals fighting in the streets, and foreigners trapped in a heavily armed and walled compound of their own making called "White City" within a post-apocalyptic Moscow. The last shred of power is held by Russia's morally bankrupt and fearlessly desperate leader who has set up his "government" in St Petersburg and has his hands on the nuclear codes ready to threaten the world to stay in power and rebuild his empire.

One foreign resident of White City is an award-winning American television journalist, Ekaterina Kashirskaya, who has been the face of credible reporting on the turmoil of Russia for the last four years. More than trying to survive and even more than her professional duty, she is forty years old, returned to Moscow to reclaim her Russian heritage through the powerful spiritual connection she has with her grandfather, a peasant of the Don River Basin recruited to join the Cossack army in World War I. Through her investigation of his life and experiences, she explores and feels the competing narratives of the convolutions of Russian history: the victims and the perpetrators; the gaps, omissions, and rewrites; and the twists of fate which left no family untouched. From the revolution through the civil war, collectivization, the brutal purges of the Communist party and the armed forces, the gulag, the devastation of World War II, and ultimately to the collapse of the ideals of her people and the empire of the Soviet Union.

Ekaterina's vivid travels through Russia's tortured past are derailed when she is abducted by a Muslim gang. Fearful of a ransom that her agency will never pay, she is taken to St Petersburg, to the psychopathic Russian dictator, Sylvestrov. With nothing to lose, Sylvestrov is moving toward a suicidal doomsday threat of nuclear annihilation of the rich nations of the world unless they prop up his regime with food and resources to rebuild – whatever he wants. This is his new world order and Ekaterina is his credible conduit to make his threat real to Western governments. She finds herself in the heart of the plot, in the elaborate underground control center for nuclear launch. Forced to report daily on the demands from Sylvestrov, she uses code and hand motions to secretly convey the location of the site on air. Is it too late when she realizes the essential truth that none of the controls and weapons actually work, that it's all a Potemkin village of blinking lights and flashy controls? But the west has already launched their weapons . . .

The final act in this courageous trilogy is, at its heart, a plea to see and fully appreciate Russia's history in painful honesty, side by side with this one possible future outcome. Where were the tipping points for different outcomes, for less tragic possibilities, and what role has there been and can there be for Russia's people to alter the path of history into the future?

Vitaly Bochkov