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LITERARY FICTION

Danilov, Dmitri

Fedyarov, Aleksei

Nikitin, Aleksei

Remizov, Viktor

Starobinets, Anna

NARRATIVE NON-FICTION

Fedyarov, Aleksei

Yuzefovich, Leonid

NON-FICTION

Danilkin, Lev

Rudenko, Serhii

HORROR

Bobyleva, Darya

Parfenov and others

Rubanov, Andrei

Starobinets, Anna

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2022

live pitch

short clips per genre

news & updates

youtube channel
news
awards
topseller

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authors

LITERARY
FICTION

Hello Sasha

Novel. AST. Moscow 2022. 180 pages

Awards: Book of the Year 2022, Yasnaya Polyana Award 2022 (sponsored by Samsung)

Sergei, mid-30s, impeccable personal and professional criminal records, had consensual, prearranged sex with a 20-year-old woman. Lately, however, you are not an adult until you are 21. She swears in court that she believes he is innocent. However, the death penalty was recently introduced as part of a project to humanize the penal system for crimes where society has no real sense of wrongdoing. Consensual sex with minors is included. Rapists and murderers do not need to fear such punishment since they have already died a moral death.

However, the execution of the death penalty was humanized to the maximum. The prison is now called Combinat, you live like in a luxury hotel. So that no one becomes a murderer, executions are no longer carried out by executioners. Instead, a warden has recently taken you out for a walk every day through the same hallway, where one fine day you will be torn to pieces by a salvo of an automatic machine gun. This can happen in three days or in thirty years. As luck would have it. Even the guard has no idea. All humane, because you actually don't notice anything and can go on living your life as before. Sergei can also continue to practice his job as a university lecturer – online. Attempts to escape are not punished, because the law recognizes the desire for freedom as the highest human good, but Sergei's attempts to escape all end up back in the Combinat, where he soon longs to return – by remote control.

The absurdity of a life dependent on random algorithms is literally reflected in the absurdity of the dialogues with judges, law enforcement officials, ministers of various denominations or with Sergei's wife. To her he is a living corpse. He ruined her life, which is why she doesn't want to have anything to do with him anymore, as she makes him understand with increasing absurdity in his repeated calls from the Combinat. The absurdity of Sergei's own mental state is shown by the fact that after a short while he gives the machine gun a name and greets it every day on his walks with „Hello Sasha“. The absurdity of this little novel culminates in a surreal happy ending when Sergei disappears into the distance with his favorite prison officer on a last walk to the applause of all the protagonists mentioned in the book standing in a row, like during credits in the cinema. While Sasha, the machine gun, blasts the floor tiles to pieces in the deserted Combinat hallway.

The main character of the book, Sergei, is reminiscent of all the key figures of the most famous anti-utopias at once, from D-503 to Josef K., but the conditions in which he is placed have never been told in such a way. With the exception of the small fantastic basic premise, this dystopia moves right on the edge of the real. With his own style of writing, his laconic language working with repetitive structures, Danilov has already exposed our everyday routines in several novels in an ironic, philosophical and frighteningly beguiling way. But his style combined with this shocking plot made this new novel become a masterpiece.

Danilov was born in Moscow in 1969. Writer, playwright, poet. Author of eight books of prose, five books of poetry and six plays. „The Man from Podolsk“ was shown in more than 50 theatres worldwide. Danilov lives in Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

translations
6 languages

awards
Yasnaya Polyana Award 2022
Book of the Year 2022
Moscow Art Prize 2021
Golden Mask Award 2018
Premio Letterare Internazionale
Citta di Cattolica 2016
Novy Mir Award 2012

samples available
english

other work
Description of a City
Horizontal Position
The Man from Podolsk

Dmitri Danilov

literary fiction

"Dmitry Danilov's book seems to be about the future, but the world of ultimate comfort and utter bondage in which the novel's hero finds himself looks suspiciously familiar. This is a forecast for tomorrow that is already coming true today."

YURI SAPRYKIN

"You're alive, but you're dead. People are indifferent and selfish, but kind and unselfish. Nobody cares about you, but you are not alone. Each time we choose one of the two. And only Dmitry Danilov chooses both at once."

MARIA GALINA

"Excellent read by Dmitry Danilov. I heard it in early April 2022 while walking the streets of Moscow and when it came time to say goodbye to my beloved city."

LITRES (Anna about the audiobook)

"Everybody's forgiven Sergei but the state."

LIZA HAYDEN

Dmitri Danilov

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.

"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. From this perspective of irresponsibility, the possibility of external administration seems anything but fantastic." ARKADI DUBNOV

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



THE AUTHOR

other works

Agami – the sequel to Sfumato

Man in jail – narrative non fiction

sample translation

english

Aleksei Fedyarov

Ukrainian literary fiction

The Orderly from Institutska Street

Novel. Lyuta Sprava. Ukraine 2016. 150 pages**Awards:** longlist Big Book 2016**Publishers:** Italy - Mondadori (excerpt)

The Orderly from Institutska Street is the story of two friends from Kyiv, the poet Yurka Nezgoda and the artist Nikolai Umanets. They belong to the generation formed in the first years of Independent Ukraine. In the 1990's Nezgoda and Umanets were prominent members of the bohemian Kyiv art scene. Later, Umanets became a commercially successful artist and Nezgoda – the editor-in-chief of a glossy magazine. Their lives rarely touch politics; each in his own way tries to cope with the problems of contemporary life that always plague Ukrainians. Nezgoda's brilliance, his depression, his morbid obsession with a mythical historical progenitor, is chronicled through the point of view of his detached and ironic friend Umanets. But in the end the heroes meet again on Kyiv's Maidan Square. Umanets is with the protesters, while Nezgoda tries to stay neutral. But it is Nezgoda who gets pulled into the swirl of events in the novel. He dies as an orderly, trying to move the wounded to safety under fire. Umanets watches his friend die on live television.

The author considers the Ukrainian events of the beginning of the 21st century as another link in the historical chain of episodes of Ukraine's struggle for independence, which has been going on, now fading, now escalating, for several centuries.

Nikitin about the novel:

«Ukraine has always been situated in the center of a cruelly-mounted historical framework and it is continually looking to the past. But its past history is not exactly a story of triumphs. This is a cyclical focus on bad history, on bad experiences that need to be overcome. The success of Ukraine's protest movement was due to its refusal to cling to the past, its ability to find something new, to reject the burden of its negative experience.»

In 2019, five years after Maidan, the novel was the only Russian-language novel to be included in the list of "best texts about Maidan."

"The culminating events of the novel – the protests and violence on Maidan Square in 2014 – makes the novel a vivid evocation of modern Ukraine." CATHERINE O'NEIL

"Nezgoda, just a collective image of the Ukrainian nineties with their grandiose scandals, literary scholarships, the first collections that have become rarities, treatment in fools and constant longing for either imperfect or not perfect. I don't even remember if, after Andrukhovych's "Recreations", one created such a voluminous image..." NOVY NARNIA

"Maidan, as a lived experience, when the feeling of history being created, is perceived deeply and directly. This made The Orderly a deeper and wiser text than a mere projection of a series of lost generation." LITCENTR

Nikitin was born in Kiev in 1967. After completing his course of physics at the university of Kiev and his period of conscription he established his own company in 1992 and worked on different projects for the Ukrainian oil, chemical and atomic industries. In 2000 he published his first volume of poetry, which was awarded the Korolenko prize by the Ukrainian writers association for the best poetry of the year. In 2002 Nikitin closed his business operations and worked for several years as an IT journalist. Afterwards he dedicated himself completely to his literary activities and has since published several novels. Nikitin lives in Kiev.



THE AUTHOR

translations
4 languages

awards
National Bestseller 2014
Russkaya Premia shortlist 2013

sample translation available
english

other works
Bat Ami
Victory Park

Aleksei Nikitin

Ukrainian literary fiction

Bat-Ami

From the Face of Fire

Novel. Ukraine 2020. Approx. 400 pages**Publishers:** Italy - Voland, Ukraine - Phoenix, US - Harvard University Press

Ukrainian Jewish boxing champion Ilya Goldinov has just come second place in the Soviet All-Union championships when World War II breaks out. After the German invasion of Ukraine, he joins the partisan fighters in the forests behind the front line. Only by lucky coincidence does he survive and he joins the regular army as a soldier before being sent by the Ukrainian secret service on a life-threatening mission to occupied Kyiv. There a former sports comrade recognizes him by chance on the street and denounces him to the Germans as a Jew. Meanwhile Ilya's wife Felixa is leaving with the evacuation. On the way she falls ill and is abandoned by her Jewish mother-in-law, together with her daughter Bat-Ami. The hope of seeing Ilya alive again keeps mother and daughter alive. They make it back to Kyiv. There Felixa's friend Ira is the last to see Ilya alive. But Ira is in a concentration camp. It's only in the summer of 1945, after miraculously surviving the concentration camp that Ira can deliver the bitter truth.

This family saga, full of unforeseeable twists and turns, is told in such a thrilling, detailed and touching way that it casts its spell after only a few pages. Unique is the perspective – the attack of the Germans seen through the eyes of a boxer and assimilated Jew. Even the Ukrainian farmers, Nazis, secret service agents, partisans, and sports comrades rarely conform to the usual schemata of good and evil, friend and foe. They are interwoven in fine shades into the main plot of Ilya's family during the chaos of war. An emotional and a stylistic highlight of the novel is Ilya's march to Kyiv carrying the small Kyiv rabbi in his rucksack: for the elderly rabbi a rescuing march into life, for the young Ilya a walk to certain death.

BAT-AMI is not a documentary novel, but its story – inspired in part by the author's family history – is based on files relating to 1941-42 secret service operations from the archives of the Ukrainian Secret Service, not released until 2011, as well as from other Ukrainian archives, the museum of the Dynamo Kyiv sports club and Yad Vashem. Most were not published until very recently. These sources enabled the author to tell the true story of the famous boxer Goldinov. Because the widespread theories about what happened to him – the rumours that were still circulating in Kyiv after the war – have largely proven to be false, as has old Yad Vashem version of events. The descriptions of Ukraine's complex conflicts involving an overpowering Russian brother state, the Soviet secret service, German occupation, partisans and patriotic nationalist freedom fighters cast their shadows even onto the Ukraine of today.

All the NKVD officers who were involved in this operation and are mentioned in the novel are real people whose background in the pre- and post-war period has been researched and made known thanks to the work of the Russian Memorial Society and Ukrainian historians.

Nikitin was born in Kyiv in 1967. After completing his course of physics at the university of Kyiv and his period of conscription he established his own company in 1992 and worked on different projects for the Ukrainian oil, chemical and atomic industries. In 2000 he published his first volume of poetry, which was awarded the Korolenko prize by the Ukrainian writers association for the best poetry of the year. In 2002 Nikitin closed his business operations and worked for several years as an IT journalist. Afterwards he dedicated himself completely to his literary activities and has since published several novels. Nikitin lives in Kyiv.

Aleksei Nikitin



THE AUTHOR

translations
4 languages

awards
National Bestseller 2014
Russkaya Premia shortlist 2013

sample translation available
english

other works
Victory Park
Mayong
Istemi - Your Turn

REVIEWS

"An epic novel recounting the events and atmosphere of life in Kyiv before, during and in the early years after the war; in particular, Jewish Kyiv, which was completely destroyed by the Germans; life of rural Ukraine during the war years, along with a chronicle of hostilities in which the hero of the novel takes part in one way or another. This is a novel with a large number of characters, but also a plot for each of them. The work of the NKVD before and during the war, the socio-psychological types of the all-powerful special officers at the time, forms a separate thematic line. In other words, Nikitin creates his own picture of war-time reality and does so through traditional realistic writing, so to speak - with a thorough study of the patterns of events and the psychology of the people of a time long past for us. Of course, this image is solely that of the author, created by someone with no wartime experience, but Nikitin still manages to create a sense of historical authenticity. Reading his novel, one involuntarily recalls the prose of Konstantin Vorobyov or Vasil Bykov. Nikitin's novel is a continuation of this tradition in Russian literature, but with one difference: this is absolutely modern prose - hard-written, expressive, fearless in dealing with its material and with those of life revealed by war."

NOVY MIR

"No, there are no execution scenes at Babii Yar in the novel. But nonetheless Bat-Ami is about the executions at Babii Yar. Even more than that: it is about the Kyiv that ended with those murders, and the Kyiv that began after them. And, no, Nikitin isn't giving us a moral lesson - at least not only. He gives us a masterful work of literature."

THE VILLAGE

"If Grossman's novel «Life and Fate» is the «War and Peace» of the 20th century, than Nikitin's «From the Face of Fire» has the potential to become the «War and Peace» of the 21st century... Everything in this novel is contemporary: both the perspective on historical events and the manner of narration. At the same time, the theme and philosophical message of the book is as old as time itself."

SOFIA BOGATYREVA

Aleksei Nikitin

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

Publishers: Germany - Hoffmann&Campe

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

"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

Look at him

Documentary novel. Moscow 2017. 288 pages

Publishers: Latvia/ Janis Rose, Spain/ Impedimenta, US/ Three String Press

In this groundbreaking memoir, Starobinets chronicles the devastating loss of her unborn son to a fatal birth defect. After her son's death, Starobinets suffers from nightmares and panic attacks; the memoir describes her struggle to find sympathy, community, and psychological support for herself and her family. A finalist for the 2018 National Bestseller Prize, *Look at Him* ignited a firestorm in Russia, prompting both high praise and severe condemnation for the author's willingness to discuss long-taboo issues of women's agency over their own bodies, the aftereffects of abortion and miscarriage on marriage and family life, and the callousness and ignorance displayed by many in Russia in situations like hers. Beautiful, darkly humorous, and deeply moving, *Look at Him* explores moral, ethical—and quintessentially human—issues that resonate for families in the world beyond Russia, as well. This is in some way a survival guide for those who find themselves in the face of a grief that seems unbearable.



THE AUTHOR

translations
over 20 languages

awards
2018 ESFS award
«Best European Sci-fi author»

2017 Winner Imaginales
book festival in Epinal/ France
2016 Grand Prix of Utopiales

Sci-Fi book festival/ France

Finalist Prix Masterton/ France

Winner «The Portal»
Sci-fi Assembly Ukraine

sample translation available
full english

“[A] most important statement on a topic that no one has ever spoken aloud here [in Russia]—necessary, traumatic, but also healing reading for any woman, and also for any man living with a woman and contemplating having children with her.”

MEDUZA (Galina Yuzefovich)

“[W]hat makes the book so compelling and human is that Starobinets puts her fiction-writing background to good use, pacing her book to develop a story arc and suspense. I could only read a little bit at a time because a personal story about late-term abortion is so intensely emotional. Even so, I had a hard time putting the book down at night.”

LIZA HAYDEN

“As abortion again takes center stage in national and international politics, *Look At Him* underscores the fact that even with birth defects, there are still so many sides to this issue.”

NANCY NAOMI CARLSON

Anna Starobinets was born in Moscow in 1978. She is a Russian and Israeli citizen, writer and scriptwriter who works in various genres: sci-fi, dystopias and horrors for adults, fairy and detective stories for children. She is a widow of Alexander Garros, a renown writer from Latvia. Starobinets was in opposition to Russian government for the last years, and after the beginning of war with Ukraine she escaped from Russia with her two children and a dog.

Anna Starobinets

literary fiction

The Living

Dystopian novel. Moscow 2011. 320 pages

Publishers: Bulgaria/ Zhar, Croatia/ Hangar 7, Czech/ Albatros, Spain/ Nevsky

The world as we know it has ended. After the Great Reduction, the population of the earth remains fixed at three billion people. Nobody dies: At the end of their lives, people are reborn somewhere in the world. An incarnation code contains information about your past lives. There are no more individuals, each human being is nothing more than an element in a larger consciousness, the living. Mankind has become a single, constantly reproducing organism. In this world there are no countries, cities and borders, religions and nations, wars and terror. It's a wonderful, stable world where each individual always has a connection to the community. A central brain decides everything: where people live, what their work will look like, how long they can survive in their current incarnation... Until suddenly a being with no code is born, a baby with no past, which increases the population by one and threaten the entire system. Who is this being? Friend or foe?



THE AUTHOR

translations
over 20 languages

awards
2018 ESFS award
«Best European Sci-fi author»

2017 Winner Imaginales
book festival in Epinal/ France
2016 Grand Prix of Utopiales

Sci-Fi book festival/ France

Finalist Prix Masterton/ France

Winner «The Portal»
Scifi Assembly Ukraine

sample translation available
full english

Anna Starobinets was born in Moscow in 1978. She is a Russian and Israeli citizen, writer and scriptwriter who works in various genres: sci-fi, dystopias and horrors for adults, fairy and detective stories for children. She is a widow of Alexander Garros, a renowned writer from Latvia. Starobinets was in opposition to Russian government for the last years, and after the beginning of war with Ukraine she escaped from Russia with her two children and a dog.

Anna Starobinets

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

narrative non-fiction

Philhellenes

Narrative non-fiction. AST. Moscow 2021. 426 pages

2021 Big Book Award
2021 Yasnaya Polyana finalist

Foreign rights: Greece/ Kastaniotis (request), Romania/ Editura, Serbia/ Russika (request)

The twenties of the 19th century. In Greece there is a war for independence from the Ottoman Empire. The revolutionaries have many sympathisers throughout Europe who are willing to voluntarily defend the old culture and fight to preserve the old greatness. This is what they are called: Philhellenes - lovers of the Greeks. Although the Russian Tsar Alexander I is not eager to interfere in the war of others, there are such Philhellenes in Russia too. One of them is the retired Ural staff captain Grigory Mostsepanov. He is sure that he has found a way to radically change the course of the war in Greece, and must tell everything to the Emperor himself as soon as possible.

This historical novel, told in the form of letters, diary entries and mental conversations of absent heroes, focuses not only on the Philhellenes of the Urals. Numerous people and representatives of different nations and social classes come to word, which paints a multi-faceted picture of a bygone era.

The plot begins in the factories of Nizhny Tagil, continues in Yekaterinburg, Perm, Tsarskoye Selo and Taganrog, leads from Russia to Nafplio and Alexandria and ends in Athens on the Acropolis. The novel's main characters include Alexander I, the mystical baroness Julia Kriedner, the Egyptian general Ibrahim Pasha and other documentary figures.

"Philhellens" is one of those novels in which characters and destinies that are at first unconnected gradually coalesce into a single ornament; watching this pattern emerge is a particular pleasure for the reader. What connects them here is not simply a whim of the author. It is the war by which they are slowly but inexorably drawn and united.... What seems to begin as a beautiful stylisation turns into a reflection on war, its mysticism and mystery." *Meduza*



THE AUTHOR

translations
15 languages

awards
Big Book Award 2021
Yasnaya Polyana finalist 2021
National Bestseller 2016
Big Book Award 2016
Booker Translation Grant 2016
Russian Booker shortlist 2009
Big Book Award 2009

samples available
english
french and others

other works
Philhellenes
Winter Road
Horsemen of the Desert
The Putin Series
Kazaroza

Yuzefovich, born 1947 in Moscow, spent his childhood and youth in the Urals. He has a Doctorate in History and is known to a wide audience of readers through his historical thrillers about Ivan Putin. Yuzefovich is capable of interweaving detailed knowledge of historical fact with masterly literary style into the plot of a thriller. L. Yuzefovich lives in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Leonid Yuzefovich

non-fiction

Ukrainian non-fiction

Battle for Kyiv

Non-fiction. Manuscript finalized by end of October 2022. approx. 160 pages

Foreign rights: Finland/ Tammi, Georgia/ Siesta

This is the new book by Ukrainian journalist Sergii Rudenko, author of a political Zelenskyi Biography sold in 2022 in more than 25 languages.

In February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine: the taking of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, a declared main goal of the "special operation". Both the seat of government and the base of President Zelenskyy, Putin's number one enemy, are in Kyiv. Whoever controls Kyiv controls Ukraine. The unexpectedly successful defense of the capital and the expulsion of the Russian occupiers from the surrounding settlements in the greater Kyiv area was a crucial turning point in the course of the war. The mayor of the capital, Vitaly Klitschko, made a significant contribution to this turnaround. Like Zelenskyy, Klitschko could have left the city and taken refuge in order to perform his duties from afar and in safety. Like Zelenskyy, Vitaly Klitschko stayed. His younger brother Wladimir Klitschko has demonstratively supported him and joined the voluntary vigilante group in Kyiv. The two world-famous boxers, who could have made themselves comfortable anywhere in the world after their careers, put themselves at the service of the fight for freedom regardless of the risk to their own lives and thus also personally became symbolic figures for the determination of Ukrainian citizens to defend their country.

Kyiv stands for Ukraine. This incredible spirit of resistance, which neither Putin's generals nor the western world had counted on, made it clear that the war in Ukraine and the struggle for Kyiv is also a struggle for freedom and self-determination in Europe. Only with the liberation of the villages around Kyiv and the gruesome discoveries of Bucha and Irpin would the Western world finally realize that this is also a struggle to defend human dignity.

Chapter by chapter, battle round by round, the author Serhii Rudenko recounts the decisive moments in the defense of Kyiv and the surrounding area. Rudenko himself was in Kyiv when the war broke out, and he witnessed the first rocket hits in the Ukrainian capital. By following the individual fates of 12 people, many of whom he knew personally before the war, he illustrates how brutally this war changes lives. In brief flashbacks, Rudenko shows these people in their earlier life with all their plans and hopes, and then their fate during the struggle for Kyiv. Its hot first phase is described here from a wide variety of perspectives, and tragically for many of these people, the voices that appear in the book have since been silenced by the war. Of course also the Klitschko brothers, whom the author met for the first time thirty years ago, are among these witnesses in the book. And it turns out that the first round of the Klitschkos' personal struggle against Putin took place well before 2022.

Political analyst Viktor Bobyrenko, who predicted already in 2015 that Zelenskyi would become the next president, has now predicted in an interview that the next president will be Vitaly Klitschko. The next elections are in 2024.

Sergii Rudenko was born 1970 in the Sumi region in Ukraine. He is a publicist and television journalist, author of a weekly author column for Deutsche Welle and editor-in-chief of „Espresso.TV“. He worked for the Ukrainian service of Radio Svoboda, was the editor-in-chief of the editions „Now“, „Gazeta 24“, „Glavred“. He is founder of the book portal „Bukvoid“. He became famous by his quite critical political biography about President Zelenskyi translated into more than 25 languages.



THE AUTHOR

translations
25 languages

sample translation
English

Sergii Rudenko

narrative non-fiction

Lenin

Ruler of Sun Dust

Biography. Molodaya Gvardia. Moscow 2017. 480 pages

2017 Big Book Award

2017 Book of the Year

Publishers: France - Macha, Hungary - Gondolat, Serbia - JP Službeni glasnik, Spain - Almuzara

2020 is 150th anniversary of Lenin's birthday

2024 is 100th anniversary of Lenin's death

Of course, you immediately think of everything you knew about Lenin so far. And you can confidently forget it while reading this book, which is quite different and more than just another Lenin biography.

Subject – Observed, analyzed, and accompanied as a historical and human phenomenon: from chess player, cyclist, tourist, sportsman to journalist, economist, speaker, manager, lawyer, conspirator, revolutionary, politician and finally practical philosopher. Without ideological blinkers, Danilkin tries to understand the logic behind each of Lenin's steps possible at any given time, without allowing himself to be distracted neither from the Soviet nor the anti-Soviet discourse.

Composition – The immense documentary material base of this historically accurate biography is organized in an unorthodox and original way – geographically. Instead of an old-fashioned „Portrait on the Background of the Epoch“, the reader is taken on a discovery route to the places of Lenin's active work. Danilkin models them to speaking landscapes and mood carriers for his hero.

Style – To bring Lenin closer to today's readers, Danilkin uses contemporary neologisms from the world of IT and social networks, and comparisons with figures and phenomena from literature, cinema, and pop culture.

Narrator – With the trick of introducing a narrator skeptical at first but capable of learning, Danilkin biography becomes not only extremely entertaining, but makes transparent at a high intellectual level that also the historical questioner is constantly influenced and changed by the object of his investigation.

“This book is not about bringing Lenin back to the Russian Pantheon or making him the idol of youth. The aim is to infect the reader with his own passion ... This book is an injection of sound reason, justice and healthy anger.” *Dmitri Bykov*

“(Danilkin) does neither try to archaize his narrative style artificially, nor to adapt it to the material, he is not devoted to the way his hero speaks. Danilkin speaks exactly as he would talk to his contemporaries about any other person. And that undoubtedly gives this book its relevance and freshness: Not a trace of the dust and patina we're used to when dealing with Lenin.” *Galina Yuzefovich*

Danilkin was born in 1974. He is one of Russia's most advanced literary critics and had his own column in Afisha magazine for fifteen years. Since 2017 he has been an editor in the cultural section of Rossiiskaya Gazeta. He was also a jury member for the Litsei Prize, the Russian-Italian Gorky Prize and the National Bestseller Award. In addition to a collection of short prose, he has published three biographies in the famous edition ZhZL (Life of Famous People). Parallel to his Lenin biography, he published an anthology of selected works by Lenin. Danilkin has also translated Julian Barnes into Russian. Danilkin lives in Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

translations
6 languages

awards

2017 Big Book Award
2017 Book of the Year
2011 Alexander Nevsky Award
2007 Big Book Shortlist

sample translation available
english
full french

other works

Gagarin Biography

Lev Danilkin

horror

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horror

Vyurki

Horror novel. Astrel. St. Petersburg 2018. 416 pages

Awards:

Master of Horror 2021

New Horizons 2019

Master of Horror 2019

Big Book longlist 2018

Yasnaya Polyana longlist 2018

Bad things happen in the Vyurki dacha settlement: cats suddenly jump through the air and scratch their owners until they bleed, nettles overgrow whole gardens and houses in one night. People are disappearing: some went to the forest just to pick mushrooms, some went to the river to swim – nobody comes back. And whoever returns resembles a zombie with animal appetites and blind eyes. Leaving the village is impossible: everyone who tried has disappeared. Telephone, radio, television and clocks no longer work. Time has stood still as eternal summer that, like a black hole, no longer lets anyone in or out.

Of all the local residents, only the strange girl Katya, a silent lonely fisherwoman, seems to roughly understand what is happening in Vyurki and what sins residents are paying for. Romochka, who is considered the village idiot, is the only one besides Katja who apparently also sees the ghosts, but cannot resist their call and voluntarily goes into the water.

At first it seems as if only local river and forest spirits are up to mischief in the dacha village, which could perhaps be appeased with the help of local magic spells and incantations. River elves, goblins, earth monsters made of branches and roots, burning brooms, wandering trees, giant leeches, a walking flame. But little by little the residents of the dacha themselves show strange tendencies. Is it that unbearable howling sound that turns everyone's dark side of character inside out? Suddenly, dear neighbors seem stranger than the guest-worker caretaker who was never really accepted in the settlement: the businessman's family, who have cut themselves off from the entire cooperative in his manor house, now aggressively barricade themselves in; a pensioner hoarding food now burrows like a mole into the storage cellars of the other dachas; the Soviet plaster statues of a collector-loving pensioner suddenly come to life; and the schoolgirl Yuki not only seems to have inherited her Gothic amulet from her grandmother. Or does the reader already only encounter their undead revenants, who chop off fingers, bite off hands and in the end eat entire people?

It turns out to be a good example of an action-horror thriller with an obligatory love spell... then we finally get to know where all these creatures are from, but that doesn't make it any easier - by this point the residents of the village are already so crazy, that they are willing to kill each other. Vyurki reads both as a parable about the current state of mind and morals in a world gone mad by all sorts of civilizational and ecological pressures, as well as a parable about the basic evil woven into every single human being.



THE AUTHOR

other works

Our Yard

sample translation

English

Darya Bobyleva was born in Moscow in 1982. After graduating from the Gorky Literary Institute, she worked as a translator for cinema and television, as well as a voice actress for cinema and computer games. Today she works in an antiquarian bookshop. Bobyleva lives in Moscow.

Darya Bobyleva

horror

„Darya Bobyleva has the talent of a sorceress in literature - she enters the dark memory of the most ordinary apartments, she senses troubles in familiar relationships, she knows the terrible secrets of average big-city families. The novel „Vyurki“ is the culmination of her mystical forays into the wrong side of everyday life.“

VALERIA PUSTOVAYA

„Haze and horror completely unpredictable: the most important virtue of a modern author (tricking the reader by the nose so that no one knows what will happen on the next few pages), she masters brilliantly.“

DMITRI BAVILSKI

„And after ten and after fifty years „Vyurki“ will look as fresh and at the same time monumental as now.“

DARKER MAGAZINE

„The horror here does not lie in the appearance of creepy creatures, nor in the fact that an extreme situation brings out in man all his worst tendencies. The horror is that our zone of control and our scope of action is negligible compared to the territory we do not control.“

DRUZHBA NARODOV

„Daria Bobyleva immediately evokes a feeling of sweet and sleepy childish terror, which at the same time is overshadowed by an increased concrete belief in one's own safety and inaccessibility to the forces of evil.“

MEDUZA (GALINA YUZEFOVICH)

„Slavic mythology is indeed an uncultivated field (and just so vast that it can be tilled for a very long time) on which to create Russian horror, and that's what (this book) does in a great, fitting and flashy way.“

YANA LETT

Darya Bobyleva

horror

Nash Dvor - The Courtyard on the Brink of Midnight

Horror novel. Astrel. St. Petersburg 2021. 352 pages

Publishers: Poland - Nowa Fantastika (excerpt)

An anonymous city courtyard somewhere in Moscow's old town center - a space that is both open and separated from the outside world by a clear natural boundary. A bakery in the courtyard above, a river below, the garages in the middle and next to them a bird cemetery where the children bury pigeons, rats, hamsters and, with a bit of luck, even a cat. On one side of the courtyard is an elegant, cream-colored Stalin building (famous for its deep and horribly flooded cellars), on the other side a pompous block with a rich mosaic (everything would be fine, if the stout collective farmers and muscular miners pictured in this mosaic did not sometimes come to life at night, and woe to those upon whom they cast their dead eyes). But there are also plainly boring nine-story brick buildings and an unhygienic two-story brick shack inhabited by a poltergeist. Behind the houses is a duckweed-covered pond full of tadpoles, behind it a boarding school for mentally handicapped children (in whose catacombs the abbot of the neighboring monastery, who went underground in the civil war and rotted there, still celebrates black masses). The theater's infamous „fourth wall“ that separates the spectator from actor does not exactly collapse in the novel, but rather creeps and ripples, becoming dangerous and disturbingly porous - just like the mirror from which a sinister mummer stares at the novel's heroes. Such neighborhoods are often dangerous, but for a while the sides are in a delicate balance, thanks to an all-female family of fortune tellers living in the corner house. With the help of unusual tarot cards, they understand and explain what is happening in the yard. The fortune tellers are unpopular and considered either witches or charlatans, but as soon as something inexplicable is suspected, everyone rushes to them for help.

“A real “Russian horror book”: joyless, full of despair and tenderness ... The novel is a whole, but it consists of many parts, and each part, each individual element, can be viewed for a long time and reread several times. Images from different times that twist and enchant in a kaleidoscope of events... There are no limits to despair and death... Impossible to tear yourself away from the book.” DARK

“OUR YARD is about not turning a blind eye to some things or it will only make things worse for everyone - both those who turn a blind eye and those who happen to stand by.” FANTLAB.RU

“The stories of Darya Bobyleva immediately bring back memories of that sweet, sleepy childish horror when a first shadow fell on the then rock-solid belief in one's own protection, in being shielded from the power of evil.” MEDUZA (Galina Yuzefovich)

Darya Bobyleva was born in Moscow in 1982. After graduating from the Gorky Literary Institute, she worked as a translator for cinema and television, as well as a voice actress for cinema and computer games. Today she works in an antiquarian bookshop. Bobyleva lives in Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

other works

The Village at the
Edge of Noon

awards

Master of Horror 2021

New Horizons 2019

Master of Horror 2019

Big Book longlist 2018

Yasnaya Polyana longlist 2018

sample translation

English

Darya Bobyleva

Summary

A city courtyard in the center of Moscow is constantly plagued by the supernatural. Local residents live side by side with otherworldly „neighbors“ - characters from Soviet and post-Soviet urban legends as well as creatures far older and stranger than that. This neighborhood is often dangerous, but there is a delicate balance thanks to an all-female family of fortune tellers living in the corner house. They have similar ancient names – Avigeya, Dosithea, Pelageya – and with the help of unusual Tarot cards they can interpret what is happening in the courtyard and beneath it. They are not exactly popular, more feared than liked, and yet they are the guardians of the human world from the “other” one.

At the beginning of the novel, the elderly fortune-teller Avigeya does not have time to save the philosopher Lev Veniaminovich, who has fallen under the spell of his housekeeper Agafya. Agafya prepares unusually delicious Russian folk dishes, sprinkled with black „salt of the earth“. In the end it turns out that this salt is made from burned human bones and the philosopher was fattened to be slaughtered.

The downtrodden boy Lesha, locked in the basement of a „Stalinistic“ house by court thugs, accidentally touches a mysterious subterranean creature and begins to transform into its likeness.

The pioneer Lyusya from the finds a page from an old, pre-revolutionary newspaper in the yard, and responds to the advertisement of a certain Umr - “DeAth” -, which she thinks is an interesting riddle to solve. The mysterious being sends parts of itself through the mail until it can finally put itself back together in the form of Lyusya’s father, who has abandoned the family. Umr tries to kidnap Lyusya’s sister, but fortune teller Avigeya dares to fight him – and wins, though she is left with a „bone-crushing disease.”

The director of a boarding school for special needs children conducts experiments to cure the children of mental retardation and make them ideal communist citizens, slowly going mad all the while. The children get smarter at first, but then quickly exceed the limits of the human mind and torture themselves with the fact that they „see through” everything. A boarding school worker who has glimpses of visionary gifts tries to resist the director, but she dies and the children themselves make short work of the director and then disappear from the boarding school.

Rosa, an adopted orphan girl with paranormal abilities, also ends up in this boarding school. Rosa and her half-sister Ada share a deep friendship, and for Ada’s sake, Rosa tries to control her gift of harming people, but she doesn’t always succeed. Rosa protects Ada from her former lover, releases her own gift, and the mosaic on the house’s facade comes to life. The true end of the world begins in the courtyard. The yard is saved by the family of fortune tellers together with old believer sorcerers who came from nowhere. Rosa and Ada, afraid of being separated, decide to flee south together and literally vanish into thin air. The elderly fortune teller Abigail dies from the illness caused by Umr and her place is taken by her daughter Dosithea, who is lazier and more insecure. Everyone compares her to her deceased mother, even she herself thinks that she will not make it. And the affairs of the fortune-tellers’ family are going really badly: the youngest of them, Pelageya, accidentally releases a demon from the mirror during Christmas fortune-telling. The demon takes the form of deceased loved ones and draws people into a mirror, into the realm of the dead. Pelageya can defeat the demon, but to do so she must go through the looking glass, and remain there as a kind of Bloody Mary.

Then the yard appears a TV show because of the story about the poltergeist in the communal barracks. When filming the story, the TV crew devote a lot of time to the ugly living conditions in the tenement, which the tenants perceive as a disgrace. Thanks to the fortune tellers, the TV crew find the source of the poltergeist: the remains of sewage in the basement from a secret toilet that one of the residents of a communal apartment had built in his room. But the yard is soon back in the news for a different reason: children fall into a lethargic sleep when picking up toys that have appeared out of nowhere on the street. Dosithea saves them and doesn’t have to face the usual evil spirits, but aliens she doesn’t even believe in. All of this changes Dosithea’s understanding of the interplay of worlds and her place in them, and she ends up in conflict with those „new Russians” who decide to build a bank on the site of a monastery ruin. Dosithea not only protects the courtyard and life in it from businessmen-bandits, but also from evil spirits. The abbot, who lives underground and whose apartment is being destroyed by the construction workers, comes to her at night with complaints. The „New Russians” have Dosithea murdered. The remaining fortune tellers leave, but the missing sisters Rosa and Ada now return to the courtyard. Rosa leads a „crusade” by alien beings against the newly opened bank. Participating in it are Lesha, who has turned into a cellar creature, the mirror-witch Pelageya, and children from the boarding school.

And finally, in the finale, it turns out that the story was told all along on behalf of the otherworldly beings. It was them who told the events in the courtyard from their point of view, they represent the Moscow of centuries of accreted history that are being forgotten and obliterated. After the bank is defeated, everything calms down and the fragile balance between this world and that reigns once again in the courtyard. And in the apartment where fortune-tellers once lived, a girl named Virineya rents a room - from her name it is clear that she is their descendant, and also of “special blood”.

Darya Bobyleva

horror

Best of «The Most Scary Book»

Horror short stories. AST 2014-2022. 300 pages

M.S. Parfyonov has been dubbed the „godfather“ of Russian horror. He developed the concept of an anthology of scary stories unique in the world, in the compilation of which the readers and fans of the genre themselves take part. Thus was born the very first book, which became a huge success and marked the beginning of the entire «The Most Scary Book» series. The total circulation of the series is over 150,000 copies. Thanks to the series, authors such as Bobyleva, Parfenov, Kabir, Kozhin and Matyukhin became famous. A number of books have won literary awards. Individual works by these and other authors have been filmed, the film rights have been sold by others. Authors and publishers hold their own annual convention. «The Most Scary Book» is the face of Russian horror today.

„The literature of horror and the weird is truly international and enduring. When we look at history, the world we live in now, and speculate about the future, it is easy to ask the question: is any field of fiction more relevant? May black wings carry this anthology of horror fiction, from my peers in Russia, far and wide.“

ADAM NEVILL

„The concept of The Scariest Books is conspicuously ingenious and unique. Often it seems that the horror genre has run out of new ideas. Your anthology definitively proves we need not fear this will occur.“

THOMAS LIGOTTI

„Here, at last, is a collection of new voices, telling stories of horrors unleashed by monsters we have never encountered before. It is a long time since i felt authors inviting me to wallow in their perversities as these writers do. Who could resist? The forbidden beckons to is from terra incognita. Let us meet where the river runs red and the fish have human faces.“

CLIVE BARKER

„My best regards to my writer colleagues in Russia, and I hope everyone reads this book!“

ROBERT MCCAMMON

„The Scariest Book lives up to its name...every story will make you shudder like you have never shuddered before. Whatever you do, don't read this book before you meant to go to sleep...because you won't.“

GRAHAM MASTERON

„The Scariest Book is a wonderful example of continued excellence in horror fiction from my colleagues in Russia, the birthplace of some of the greatest authors of dark literature the world has ever known. This spine-tingler of an anthology is not to be missed!“

GREF F. GIFUNE

„A brilliantly innovative project. This is an exciting way to find wonderful new horror writers.“

SIMON CLARK

M.S. Parfenov et al

horror

„Forever“ - Alexander Matyukhin

Natasha and Stas were once like brimstone. And the video store in the shed next to the school was more beautiful to them than any paradise. And then Stas went away to the big city, leaving Natasha in the outback of the Russian North, along with her loneliness and unhappy family. But many years later, a letter from his youth reaches him, and now he will definitely return. After all, it is not for nothing that one says „forever“ when one loves.

„Tsap-Tsap“ - Evgeny Shikov

Many rumors circulate about this swamp. Some speak of devils, others of witches. A little boy who made it back from there keeps talking about the Tsap. And went insane about it. But as always, there is a daredevil who wants to know more.

„Dribeis“ - Dmitry Kostyukevich

A Russian polar station drifting with an iceberg. Hydrologists studying the subglacial relief. A typical day at the North Pole. Diver Sergei Ivin descends into the ice hole for a dive and, hovering over the abyss of the ocean, begins to check the set steel markers. He is surrounded by a cold majestic landscape, myriads of ice crystals, the omnipresent mud, when suddenly something grabs him from behind.

„Beloved“ - Daria Bobyleva

The story about the unenviable fate of the boy Sanya, who at the age of seventeen chose his fateful path. He too had believed that witches did not exist, but life proved him wrong.

„America“ - Anatoly Umansky

Alaska during the war of Russians against native tribes. The inhabitants of a small fort can hardly repel the attacks of the Tlingit. Yet in these harsh latitudes lives something far more terrible than the savage tribes. And this creature intends to use the enmity between the Russians and the natives for its own ends.

„The Glacier“ - Oleg Kozhin

In a secret glacial cave used as a food storage facility, a researcher at a semi-abandoned polar station discovers not only missing reindeer carcasses, but also the body of an aborigine. It all looks like a black market where the recipient and supplier have not come to an agreement on how to share the loot. But then things happen on the station that don't quite fit with this simple version.

Mummer - Dmitry Tikhonov

During a church festival with a masked procession, two village boys encounter an unusual creature. One of the boys survives, but for how much longer?

„My Mother's Hands“ - Mikhail Pavlov

Ilya is a cheerful, sociable guy who comes from a large family. But suddenly a nightmarish witch creature appears, chasing him. Is it real? Where does it come from? Why did it choose him?

„Land of Cockroaches“ - Parfenov M.S.

Kostya has always struggled with complexes due to his provincial origins. Especially now that he is taking an apartment on the outskirts of Moscow. Nevertheless, he dreams of moving to the center one day. But the dream turns into a nightmare when an army of man-eating insects attacks the tenement.

„The Bridge“ - Parfenov M.S.

To find out what happened to his younger sister, who disappeared twenty years ago, Pasha returns to the old bridge not far from where he spent his childhood and where his sister was last seen.

„Snowballs“ - Parfenov M.S.

Alyosha is sad. His friends throw snowballs in the yard. Even fat Edik. Only Alyosha's grandmother strictly forbids him to go out on the street. Maybe steal the key to the locked apartment door and run to the boys? But where did grandma hide them? Also, she should finally turn off that stupid radio on which some liars have been warning non-stop for the last few weeks: „Beware...Potentially dangerous contacts...Dangerous...Dangerous...Wait for help...”

„The Gift of the Tsar“ - Elena Shchetinina

The coronation of Nicholas II is a real holiday. On this occasion, don't miss the distribution of royal gifts. That's what the people think as they flock to the Khodynka field and push their way forward more and more impatiently. But instead of gifts, many find a horrible death in the field.

M.S. Parfenov et al

mystery horror

The Wooden People

Mystery horror novel. AST. Moscow 2021. 507 pages

The facts: After the christianization of Russia, old Russian wooden sculptures derived from Slavic pagan statues were still allowed in churches for a while. Finally, in 1722, the Orthodox Church banned all three-dimensional images of saints. During the Petrine period, almost all wooden figures were removed from the churches and destroyed: chopped up or burned.

The fiction: some statues, hidden by fanatical followers, escaped this „genocide“ and either came to life independently or were breathed into life by others in a secret ritual. These wooden people do not get sick, can see well in the dark, do not grow old and do not die, they can only burn or die of an unhealed crack. Their conspiratorial activity consists mainly in maintaining and increasing their own people.

Antip, the main character, made of wood and brought to life 299 years ago, has been restoring the bodies of statues over the centuries and preparing them for the rite of „awakening“ in addition to his camouflage occupations as ship builder, railroad sleeper producer and now cabinet maker. Most recently, he stole the head of an almost 1,000 year old pagan idol, soaked in sacrificial blood, fear and pain, from the famous historian Voroshilov, who owes his academic career to the wooden people. Without a head there is no awakening. Since the break-in, Antip has been harassed and hunted by the police as well as by an academic mafia that deals in fake figures. Something goes wrong during the awakening: not only does the pagan idol come to life, but also a small figure carved only as a model. Suddenly Antip has a kind of daughter and he is beset by human emotions. And the more Antip feels like a person, the more he is seduced by worldly temptations, the more he deviates from the original path and commits more sins: from more harmless to deadly ones.

Rubanov's novel is one of the few in this genre where a (wooden) „homunculus“ himself tells the story of his life. In a kind of magical realism, we learn from his three hundred years of life, built as flashbacks within the action in the present and now, in which all the evil that weighs on him, as well as the new love that uplifts him, is approaching an inevitable culmination point.

“Antip's memories, which sketch the historical catastrophes of Russia as the misfortunes of an anthropomorphic other, are very original. This novel can be put on a par with Sorokin's „Ice-trilogy“ or Neil Gaiman's „American Gods“ ... Especially I would also like to emphasize the depth with which Rubanov devotes himself to the topic, the breadth of his point of view and the relevance of his presentation.”
NATSBEST

“The new book by Andrei Rubanov ... is a successful novel of ideas that questions the values and spiritual identity of people at the beginning of the 21st century.” GORKY

“The pages of the novel about the wooden girl Dunja, Antip's unwanted daughter, are extremely exciting, and Rubanov should definitely write a continuation of her fate.” NOVY MIR

Andrei Rubanov was born in 1969 in a village near Moscow. He spent his childhood in the village. After graduating from the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow State University, he first worked as a correspondent for a newspaper, then as a construction worker, driver, bodyguard, and also had his own business. In 2005, he published his first novel. Since then, he has made a name for himself not only as an author of mystical or historical novels, but also as a successful screenwriter for cinema. Rubanov lives with his family in Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

awards

National Bestseller Award 2020

Yasnaya Polyana Award 2017

Andrei Rubanov

horror

Vixen Hill

Novel. Moscow. 2022. 716 pages

The action of this horror thriller in the genre of mystic realism takes place in the Far East, on the border of the Soviet Union and Manchuria (China) in 1945, right after the end of World War II and the Japanese occupation of the region. The novel combines the history of the USSR, Chinese mythology, Japanese genetic engineering and Siberian shamanism.

After his adventurous escape from GULAG prisoner Max Kronin ends up in a small village called Vixen Hill in the middle of a no man's land where he believes to find his wife. Vixen Hill is full of bloody miracles and supernatural phenomena. So it seems to be the right place for Max who, before the war, had been trained by KGB officer Aristov to manipulate his own dreams, predict future in trance, and bring lost people back to reality. But as all the others who once found themselves in this cursed place, also Max does not find what he is looking for. And his reality is now manipulated by his former trainer Aristov who, with the help of Max, wants to find the true and only sleeping Terracotta Army. To conquer the world he wants to resurrect this Army with the Waters of Death and Life, a mighty biological weapon developed by Japanese scientists in Vixen Hills. Here also the scientists conduct inhuman experiments in their laboratory for breeding the perfect soldier. Here Soviet warriors fall in love with Chinese werewolffoxes. Here KGB agents face a taoist master who knows the secret of immortality. Here those from fascist Ahnenerbe and those from the Soviet Secret Department represent one and the same ruthless totalitarian monster. Here the war never ends.

This is a spectacular and frightful trip to the heart of darkness where one not only comes under the power of shamans, Old Believers, the KGB, a hypnotists or a Tao Master. Here everyone finds exactly what he or she has deserved. Some find love, others find death, but everyone finds the only appropriate fate predestined either by God or by the devil.

"Starobinets doesn't let the reader relax for a minute as she manages to keep up the hellish pace over seven hundred and something pages."
MEDUZA (Galina Yuzefovich)



THE AUTHOR

translations
over 20 languages

awards
2018 ESFS award
«Best European Sci-fi author»

2017 Winner Imaginales
book festival in Epinal/ France
2016 Grand Prix of Utopiales

Sci-Fi book festival/ France

Finalist Prix Masterton/ France

Winner «The Portal»
Scifi Assembly Ukraine

sample translation available
english

Anna Starobinets was born in Moscow in 1978. She is a Russian and Israeli citizen, writer and scriptwriter who works in various genres: sci-fi, dystopias and horrors for adults, fairy and detective stories for children. She is a widow of Alexander Garros, a renown writer from Latvia. Starobinets was in opposition to Russian government for the last years, and after the beginning of war with Ukraine she escaped from Russia with her two children and a dog.

Anna Starobinets

Long review as a short summary

(<https://meduza.io/feature/2022/06/11/lisi-brody-roman-anny-starobinets-v-kotorom-tak-mno-go-attraktsionov-chto-zahvatyvaet-duh>)

Anna Starobinets' novel *Lisi Brody – Vixen Hill*, on which she has been working for more than five years, is like an exciting roller coaster ride with many deadly loops, free falls and dizzying curves - or rather, a visit to a huge park with such attractions.

Manchuria, autumn 1945. The mysterious mentalist and part-time KGB colonel Gleb Aristov is here searching for the invincible clay army of Emperor Qin Shihuan - not the soulless fake that archaeologists have unearthed in Xi'an, but the real army, not dead, just sleeping, with which the whole world could be conquered. Maxim Kronin, former circus performer, former front-line intelligence officer, former convict and someone else former (the memory of the pre-war past was erased from his mind by a powerful hand) is looking for his wife in this area - the blonde beauty Elena, only just remembering that he loved her and lost her. A fugitive convict named Flint wants to go to Australia - the magical land where everyone is a convict but there are no guards and where a beaver with a beak like a duck lives. The Ostseebaron Juenger, an Aryan occultist and mystic, is looking for his missing father and at the same time for the elixir of eternal life. The Baron's werewolffox servant, the tiger-man Lama, seeks the teacher who once rejected him - the wise immortal Taoist Zhao. Old Believer Yermil and paratrooper battalion commander Major Boyko search the local swamps for an enchanted ancient pot of gold. Werewolffoxes are looking for a way to get rid of the curse that prevents them from breeding. And the youngest of her clan, half-breed Lisa, is looking for a drug that can save the life of her daughter, seven-year-old Nastya.

All their paths converge and cross in the village of Lisi Brody, which lies on the shore of a cursed lake, surrounded by cursed forests, swamps and hills.

Starobinets combines these tales (and half a dozen others), any of which would make a full novel, with wonderful generosity into a tale that is as masterly constructed as it is delightfully wacky. Starobinets shifts the action from a uranium mine to a Taoist sanctuary, from an opium den to an enchanted dungeon, from an Old Believer hut to a torture chamber on the Lubyanka. And she doesn't let the reader relax for a minute as she manages to keep up the hellish pace over seven hundred and something pages.

Furthermore, the author eliminates any possibility of jumping off this speeding literary racer and shifts it up a notch in the final third by introducing a detective storyline: the heroes know that the almighty Taoist Zhao can take form into anyone, and now they must in their own circle find out the one in which he has incarnated this time.

In short, *Lisi Brody* is a rare example of masterfully crafted adventure prose, comparable among more or less recent books only to Arsen Revazov's "Loneliness-12" or Alexei Ivanov's "Tobol". However, this rarity, this unique feature of Starobinets' novel does not mean that it - excuse the deliberately naive formulation - is in fact simply fun to read. Once the initial fascination with the plot fades and the eye no longer dims, other details appear in *Lisi Brody*, no less rare and valuable, and this distinguishes this book from the texts by Revazov or Ivanov, which are undeniably masterful, but at the same time are one-dimensional and actually quite simply knitted.

Anna Starobinets

Long review as a short summary

The first thing that strikes you is the novel's language, which is plastic and changes depending on which of the characters is in the focus of attention. The mentalist and black magician Aristov always appears throughout the novel's pages in a stuffy halo of metaphorical redundancy that nods to the literary aesthetics of the 1920s. If the seven-year-old daughter of a werewolf is in the focus, the language of the story becomes lovelessly childish, the werewolftiger becomes oriental bizarre, the old believer becomes ritualistic and fairytale-like. Starobinets does not skimp on shading, which her unique voice, recognizable even without intonation marks, gives not only to the main heroes, but also to the secondary characters.

The story told by Starobinets seems completely original at first sight, but on closer inspection it breaks down into numerous cultural references and mythologemes. The Enchanted Pot of Gold, which has the ability to enchant and then destroy human souls, reproduces the archetype of the Gold of the Nibelungs and by extension any enchanted treasure. Baron Juenger comes to Lisi Brody, of course, straight from Viktor Pelevin's novel Chapaev (the half-mad mystic of Starobinets' book has far more family ties to Pelevin's baron than to their common ancestor, the historical Baron Ungern-Sternberg). And the final unveiling of one of the key mysteries — who is the notorious Taoist Zhao, the secret puppeteer of the big-budget drama set in Lisi Brody — relates to all the images of the sage posing before the townsfolk under an unassuming mask hidden, ranging from Haroun al-Rashid and Jesus Christ to the Frog Prince.

In addition to external references, Starobinets' novel is densely interwoven with rhythms and internal references. The image that appears in one chapter reappears in another, but in a different context and in a different tone, giving the novel more coherence and harmony than the actual plot.

In the Russian tradition, the word „belles lettres“ has mostly pejorative connotations - pulp fiction, tomes, dime novels, trash. With her new novel, Starobinets sets a fundamentally new standard for Russian-language belles lettres: Lisi Brody shows that if you are really talented in this genre, you can work away from formulaic stiltedness without losing any of its fascination.

Ten years ago, when Starobinets was just getting into literature, critics called her the “Russian Stephen King”, alluding not only to her outstanding (and since then, by the way, not faded) ability to frighten the reader, but also to her ability to invent and implement high-profile stories into literature. And if at the time it looked as if this coat had been given to the author to grow into, today, according to Lisi Brody, we can confidently state: it fits like a glove.

Anna Starobinets