

Ludmila FILIPOVA



Biography

Ludmila Filipova is one of Bulgaria's most popular and best selling contemporary authors. Her works have also been translated into Russian, Greek, Turkish, Serbian and German. She is the author of the novels: *Anatomy of Illusions* (2006), *Scarlet Gold* (2007), *Glass Butterflies* (2008), *The Parchment Maze* (2009) and *Dante's Antichthon* (2010), five of which have become nationwide bestsellers and have been translated in several languages. Four of her novels are currently being developed into feature films. The author was born on Easter 1977. She graduated from the *Economy University Sofia*, with high honors, and from the *City University*, MBA Degree in General Management. Ludmila also specialized Creative writing fiction in Oxford University in 2009.

The author was already nominated for the European literary contest *Prix du Livre Europeen 2008*. And it is the only foreign novel nominated for the American literary award *Hidden River 2009*. Her novels were also selected to be presented at *Berlinale 2009* from the *Frankfurt book fair* among thousands applicants.

Creative Work

Filipova has already five published novels and she is a columnist in the most popular Bulgarian newspaper *24 Hours* and *Business week Bulgaria*. The books of Ludmila are based on, or inspired by real stories and facts. She travels worldwide in order to gather the necessary information, make interviews and hard papers analysis researches.

ANATOMY OF ILLIUSIONS (2006) is the debut novel of the young writer Ludmila Filipova. The book is one of the most successful stories about the Bulgarian transition period and bestseller at the Bulgarian book market, reprinted 7 times. It is based on a real story of a boy and girl in the Bulgarian transition from communism to democracy. It was reprinted 6 times. Currently, the book is translated in German language. In several months it will be published in Turkey too and filmed in big TV international serial production. Its working name is "The walls between us", Sinegraf Film Productions Ltd, Istanbul.

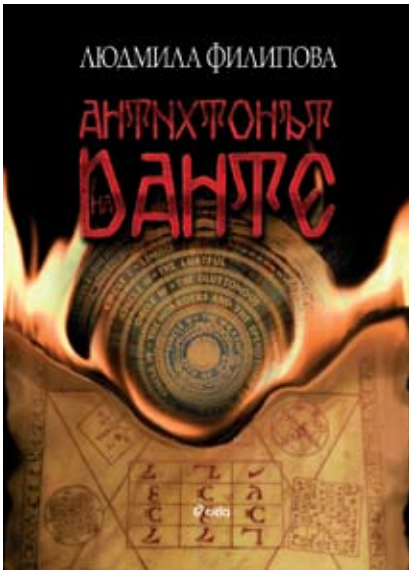


SCARLET GOLD (2007) is the second novel of Filipova. The book is a bestseller in Bulgaria and Russia. The author sold the rights for a movie, which will be multinational co-production. It is an international political thriller that deals with an issue of urgent significance - the trafficking of human blood which victims are already 3 000 000. The book is already published in Russia in 300 000 copies.

GLASS BUTTERFLIES (February 2008) is the third novel of Ludmila Filipova. It was already nominated for the second selection on the European literary contest "Prix du Livre European 2008". And it is the only foreign novel nominated for the American literary award "Hidden River 2009". Moreover, the novel was nominated for the second selection on the Bulgarian literary contest "Novel of the year 2009". One of the most powerful features of the novel is that it attempts to reveal for the first time in the literature the world scale and risks of uncontrolled trading with genetic material, millions human embryos and advanced reproductive technologies. In a drama-thriller the novel unravels the details around the practice of trading with live embryos. Currently there are 6 million frozen embryos for sales worldwide. The book is due to be published in Turkey, Greece and Serbia, already published in Russia in 300 000 copies from the biggest Russian publishing house AST (Olymp branch company) and a movie production is in process based on the novel.



THE PARCHMENT MAZE (2009) is a historical novel in which each scene is based on actual historical event and an extant artifact. The place and time of the events in the novel are actual. About the novel it is created the first Virtual Museum of traces in the Maze www.mastileniat-labirint.com. The novel The Parchment Maze was nominated in Bulgaria as the best-seller of the year with thousands sold copies, more than Dan Brown in the country. Soon it will be published also in Russia and Greece. Currently, the American production company Prosperitas Entertainment Inc works on a movie based on the novel.



DANTE'S ANTICHTHON (Ciela 2010) is Ludmila Filipova's fifth novel. The book is a cipher of sorts for decoding ancient secrets and laws that modern man has forgotten. As with her previous novel, the author has created an online Gallery of Traces where readers can find photographs of most of the places, puzzles and artifacts described in the novel at the address: www.mastileniat-labirint.com . The book can be read either as a continuation of the bestselling *The Parchment Maze* or as a completely new adventure.

Ludmila Filipova also has sort actresses career in DIMITAR PETROV'S children's classic "A dog in a drawer". In 1985 she participates in the adventurous saga under BOGOMIL RAINOV "Good blood doesn't tell" directed by NEDELCHO CHERNEV and then in "A Husband is Looked for Mom", with director MARIANA BIOLCHEVA.

Deyan ENEV



Deyan Enev (Bulgarian: Деян Енев) (August 11, 1960) is one of the most reputed contemporary Bulgarian writers. He is one of the big names in the Bulgarian literature since 1989, and one of the most well-known artists of his generation in the country.

Biography

Deyan Enev was born in 1960 in Sofia. He graduated from First English School, and after that did Bulgarian Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Married with two children.

He has done various jobs: painter at Boyana Movie Center, night hospital attendant, teacher, copywriter in an advertisement agency, and journalist. He has published 11 books, mainly collections of short stories: "*Chetivo za noshten vlak*" ("*Readings for the Night Train*", Bulgarian: "*Четиво за нощен влак*") (1987); "*Konsko evangeliie*" (Bulgarian: "*Конско евангелие*") (1992); "*Lovet na hora*" ("*Man Hunter*", Bulgarian: "*Ловец на хора*") (1994), winner of the *Annual Award for Fiction* of "*Hristo Botev*" Publishing House, translated in Norway (1997); "*Klaneto na petela*" ("*The Slaughtering of the Rooster*", Bulgarian: "*Клането на петела*") (1997); "*Ezi-tura*" ("*Heads or Tails*", Bulgarian: "*Ези-тура*") (2000), *National Award for Bulgarian Fiction* "*Hristo G. Danov*" and the *Annual Award for Literature of the Bulgarian Writers Union*; "*Gospodi, pomiluy*" ("*Kyrie Eleison*" (*Have Mercy on Us, Oh Lord*"), Bulgarian: "*Господи, помилуй*") (2004), the *Big Award for New Bulgarian prose* "*Helikon*"; and "*Vsichki na nosa na gemiyata*" ("*Everyone on the bow of the boat*", Bulgarian: "*Всички на носа на гемията*") (2005, 2007, 2009) In 2009 he published also a collection of new stories – "*A town named Mendosino*" ("*Градче на име Мендосино*") and a collection of portraits of writers – "*Men of feather*" ("*Хора на перото*"). His English translation of short stories "*Circus Bulgaria*" ("*Portobello books*") is nominated for *Frank O'Connor Short Story Award*.



Deyan Enev on "A Town Named Mendocino":

"As the years go by it gets harder for me to write true short stories. This is not the case with newspaper and other texts, though. The true stories open doors to other huge worlds and it seems it becomes more difficult for me to write such texts. I keep trying, however. The 18 short stories in "A Town Named Mendocino" represent my attempts to write such "true" stories during the last couple of years. I hope at least some of them are successful."



Alek POPOV



Alek Popov

Alek Popov was born in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1966. He graduated from St. Constantine Cyril Philosopher College for Ancient Languages and Cultures in Sofia and later received his Masters of Arts degree in Bulgarian Language and Literature from the University of Sofia.

Alek published his first collection of short stories *The Other Death* in 1992. Through the years he has contributed to numerous publications and has produced six collections of short stories. His first novel *Mission: London*, based on colourful impressions from being the Cultural Attaché at the Bulgarian Embassy in the United Kingdom, was published in 2001. It has been widely acclaimed as “the funniest contemporary Bulgarian book” for its sarcastic projection of the Bulgarian diplomatic elite.

He has won several literary awards including the National Radio’s *Pavel Veshinov Award* for the best criminal short story; the *Graviton Award* for best science fiction; the *Radko Sugarev Award* for best short story; the prize *Helicon* for best prose book of the year, 2002; the annual prize of *Clouds* magazine for the English translation of *Mission London*, 2004; and most recently the *National Prize for Drama Ivan Radoev*.

Alek’s short stories have been translated into German, Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, Czech, French, Danish, English and Turkish. His novel *Mission London* was published in Serbian from Geopoetica publishing house and in Hungarian from Kijarat Kiado. It is currently prepared for print in France.

Today Alek is one of the most popular young writers in Bulgaria with a broad range of creative interests. He continues to focus on prose, but also authors screenplays and facilitates various creative workshops.

THE BLACK BOX

Novel

Alek Popov tells the story of two Bulgarian brothers who lost their father in America at the brink of change in Eastern Europe. It is a story of personal growth and quest for meaning beyond the delusions and clichés, introduced by the post-communist reality.

The novel opens with a tragic scene; the family receives an unusual dispatch from the US – a plastic black box containing the ashes of the late father. He was a well known scientist, professor of math, one of the few who were allowed to teach



in the US during the 80s. Like many endowed people he had a turbulent character and an alcohol problem. The unexpected end of professor Banoff has left his two sons with a sense of trauma and insecurity. Since neither of them has seen the body, deeply inside they foster doubts: is he really dead? Was it staged? Why?

15 years later the answers begin to emerge...

MISSION LONDON

Novel

"I came, I saw, I described...", this periphrasis of the famous Caesarean *veni, vidi, vici* could be a well-turned motto to Alek Popov's first novel. The title "Mission London" implies that it is a book with documentary zest due to the fact that the author has been a Bulgarian diplomat in the British capital. But although based in a perfectly real context, the novel remains entirely a product of imagination.

The novel represents a cross-section of the life in an Eastern-European embassy with all the absurdities of the so called Transition. The leading story tracks out the titanic efforts of the ambassador Varadin Dimitroff to get on informal terms with the Royal Family. Determined to satisfy the whims of the new political class at all costs, he puts himself at the mercy of a shady PR-agency that promises him direct access to the highest social circles. In his haste he fails to get information about some essential activities of that agency and when the truth shows up, it is unfortunately too late. A gigantic scandal is looming on the horizon...

Meanwhile, on the low levels of the embassy hierarchy life goes on as if nothing has changed. The officials' basic concerns are not to be recalled to their fatherland and to gain some additional pounds. Their actions are in abrupt contradiction with their ambassador's efforts to create a new western-like image of the mission. The mix-up they have managed to muddle gradually takes threatening dimensions. The theme of emigration is introduced by means of the story of a Bulgarian girl student who leads a double life. Behind the modest appearances of a hard working girl hides an attractive lap-dancer. Her striking resemblance with the late Princess Diana pushes her destiny in unpredictable direction...

At the end of the novel the author masterly brings together all plot lines in order to achieve a surprising denouement – a sumptuous carnival of frenzy and futile vanity where the illusion and delusions of the postcommunist society are reflected. The author's ironic comment is devoid of any didactic and brings readers to a postmodern insight into life.

FULL CURSE FOR ADVANCED

Selected Stories

The stories in this book fall into two sections: Advanced level and Coming over Tower Bridge. The first comprises mostly



stories with unexpected ends and fresh ideas reflecting the dynamic of post-communist period. The second part is built up of stories with an intellectual edge and sense of irony set in UK. According to the author they represent a kind of existential comment of his novel *Mission London*.

Advanced Level won the Helikon Award for best prose book of the year 2002.

"Would you destroy the world if it depended on you?" the Russian asked, sticking up a small pickled cucumber on his fork.

"Yes, I would, and right away at that", I answered without thinking much. "I'll render it to ashes in a pig's whistle."

The restaurant car of the train was empty. There was a bottle of vodka, a saucer of pickled cucumbers and some sausage on the table. I had dropped in to drink a beer, then this Russian man sat at the table opposite me and gradually we reached the present stage of our conversation. I was traveling to RouseNø; he intended to go on to his native country.

"I am really asking you a question," he said his pale eyes peering into mine. "Would you do it if you had the a chance?"

"O, gladly, gladly!" I nodded my head. "Just wait and see!"

"Why would you, man? Aren't you satisfied?"

"Because it's rotten, that's why. And it will get more rotten", I went on fervently. "I mean the human civilization. Nothing decent will come out of it."

"That's the honest truth", the Russian agreed lowering his eyes.

"You see, communism failed like hell."

"Capitalism will fail like hell too," I added stuffing the last piece of sausage into my mouth. "Just wait and you'll see."

"Oh, the world is stinking place," he sighed. "If we could fix it somehow..."

"We couldn't for sure" I interrupted him belligerently. "It's not worth one's while, because it will become rotten again. We'd better abolish it, if you ask me! But who gives a damn about me and you, man? All the buttons are in the hands of some jerks who are interested to continue this agony of ours for ever."

"You are not right!" he suddenly said raising his head. "We ordinary people, still have some possibilities..."

From Nineveh

MYTHOLOGY OF TRANSITION

Selected stories

Collection of selected short stories from previous books introducing the theme of Transition from different points of views. An art version of the history which interprets the popular myths set up in the common consciousness after the fall of communism.

"At that time I was terribly proud of the fact that I was working with the State Security Committee, even though the duties I had were quite insignificant. In the morning, towards nine, I went through the offices, collected the reports and left them



at the Reception. In the afternoon, towards five o'clock, I went once again through the rooms to replace the worn-out typewriter ribbons and to replenish them with white writing paper. I used to move along the corridor in a small silvery electric truck; I enjoyed putting on speed and dashing on the smooth marbled flooring, the small round-bellied tyres swishing at the turns. That was all.

From Report Given



THE RADICAL THINKER'S COMPANION

Collection of essays

More than 40 essays published in the press during the last seven years. The content is rather broad and covers different issues and topics such as the roles of the writer, the new myths and the junctions between societies, art and science. Ironical and clever the Popov's essays are picturing the state of minds in this particularly dynamic period of history.

NASTY DREAMS

short stories

1994, Reporter, Sofia

Book based on the Black Collection published originally in the first Bulgarian private newspaper after the Change "Reporter7". The subtitle is Absurd and Horror Short Stories.



Stepan POLYAKOV



Stepan Polyakov is a Bulgarian novelist, screenwriter, journalist and film producer.

He was born in the southern town of Pazardzhik in 1969. His father is a theater director, his mother is an actress. Stepan`s grandfather is a White guard immigrant in Bulgaria. The latest Stepan Polyakov`s works include the documentary novels "Ethiopia: Disappearance of the last God" („Етиопия: Краят на последния бог“) 2010, "Bulgaria: "Tender Revolution Ltd." („България: Нежна революция Ltd.) 2006, "Cuba: Viva la Revolucion! 50 years of Sugar-cane, Cigars, Death" (Куба: Viva la Revolucion! 50 години тръстика, пури, смърт“) 2004 part of the Ciela`s World Revolutions book series.

Polyakov is now best-known for his last documentary "Sofia – the History of Europe", seen on the Internet by more than 200 000 viewers all over the world.

In 1979, his family moved to the capital city of Sofia, where Stepan graduated the "Vladislav Gramatik" Russian College. Then he successfully gained a place to study Bulgarian Philology and Literature at the Sofia University. At the same time, the Tender East European revolution began. Polyakov headed the press-centre of the occupied Sofia University. Then he was permanently involved with journalism. After the turmoil, he managed to write and publish (under the University Publishing House "Saints Cyril and Methodius) the nonfiction novel (or faction) "The Century is Elapsing at the 90th minute" / "Бекъм узмича в 90-ама минуца" / about the two already implemented University occupation strikes. At that time, the author was just 22 years old. The following year, he won a grant from the Ministry of Culture for his collection of short stories "The Tzar of the Short Story" ("Царят на късия разказ"). Before his Ph D, Polyakov was already a professional journalist and worked for the most influential opposition daily newspaper Democracy („Демокрация“). During his 4-year period as a daily newspaper reporter, he traveled all over the world, writing various reports and interviewing different world-famous persons, such as the blues legend John Mayall, the playwright Harold Pinter and a number of famous world politicians. In 1997 (until present), he became a freelance writer, journalist and filmmaker. By 2000, he had already the thriller novels "Say No" ("Кажу не“) published by the Foundation for Bulgarian Literature, "The Death Flies Around" („Смъртта лети“), "Just one girl succeeds" („Само едно момиче успя“). In 1997, his play "Mendelssohn doesn't want to put off fires" was brought on Svoboden Theater`s stage. During this period, he

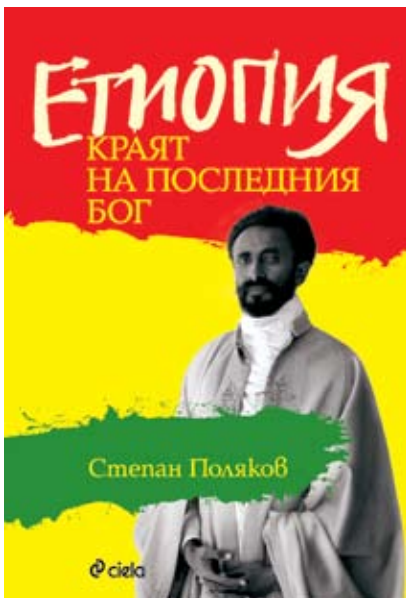
wrote many articles for some of the largest Bulgarian magazines and newspapers.

During 2003-2008, he continued his traveling around the world. He also created more than 50 screenplays for films about countries as Ghana, Gambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Egypt, Tunisia and almost all of Europe.

In 2006, Ciela Publishing House published his collected "Tales from the Gulf of Guinea" („Пруказки от Гвинејскиот залув“).

In 2010, he participated as a co-publisher of the first "Bulgarian-Thai phrase-book" by George Koinakov.

Recently, Stepan Polyakov has been living in Sofia with his wife Nadia and daughter Natalia. He is working on a screenplay for a documentary film about the life of the Roman emperor Galerius.



DISAPPEARANCE OF THE LAST GOD *novel*

Disappearance of the Last God is the story of an empire from the Old Testament. The action takes place in Ethiopia and everything is authentic - even most of the dialogue between the characters. Most of the characters are popular personalities such as John Kennedy, Winston Churchill, Bob Marley, Mussolini, etc. This historical documentary novel is even called "The Unregistered World History" or "The Bible of Rastafarianism".

Radoslav PARUSHEV



He is born on the 29th January, 1975 in Sofia and grew up in Musagenitza residential area, where he attended the local school. Later Parushev graduates from Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski", faculty of Law (2000) and 2 years later he becomes member of the Sofia Bar Association and ever since he works as a lawyer in the sphere of intellectual property, telecommunications and new technology – first at the law and reference system APIS, later on for "Penev & Partners". In 2008 he establishes a lawyer's office of his own – "Ovcharov & Parushev". Parushev is also a member of "Copyright and Neighbouring Rights" Directorate at the Ministry of Culture. Parushev is also a member of the informal literary club "Byrza literatura" (quick literature) Together with Toma Markov, Bogdan Rusev and other young writers since it was established in 2004. Since then Parushev and the informal group of writers take part in many public readings and literary performances in Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Blagoevgrad, Ruse, Sozopol (within the framework of Apollonia Festival of Arts 2005), as well as in many artistic activities in Sofia.

In 2000 at the Constituent Assembly of the Writers in Bulgaria Radoslav Parushev has been elected as a first Chairperson of the Board of Managers of the Association. The Association itself is conceived as a counterbalance to of the Union of Bulgarian Writers and as an alternative thereof. The Association aims to guarantee the rights and interests of contemporary young Bulgarian writers.

Works

Fiction

Parushev admits that he has been influenced as a writer by Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, Jorge Luis Borges and Umberto Eco. His absolute favorite writer however is Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Parushev gains popularity among the people who are interested in contemporary Bulgarian fiction after 15 of his short stories are published in the special edition of Capital newspaper – "Capital light".

In December 2004 Janet45 Publishing House published his first book – the collection of short stories Never be unhappy (Никоганебъднешасмен), followed by the novel Chase (Преследване) in May, 2005, both being part of "quickliterature" ("Бърза литература") series of the aforementioned publishing house. The two books arouse the interest of the readers, provoked topics for discussion and were critically acclaimed in specialized media and in the Internet. Parushev's next three books have been published by Ciela



Publishing House, Sofia and are no longer considered a part of the “quickliterature” series.

Journalism

Parushev has published some articles in Literary Newspaper (Литературен вестник), Newspaper Now (Сега), in the magazines Egoist, One (Едно), Playboy, Intro, One Week in Sofia (Една седмица в София), Husler, the M-tel Magazine and The Man (Мъжът).

Poetry

The poetic attempts of Radoslav Parushev are limited to two pieces, which have been published in the collection Anthology of the living poets (Sofia, 2008) The sole live presentation of his poetry was at the Sofia Poetics Festival in 2010, where he read one of his poems.

Awards

In 2000 he wins the short story contest of Egoist magazine called Be a writer in which have taken part more than 600 participants.

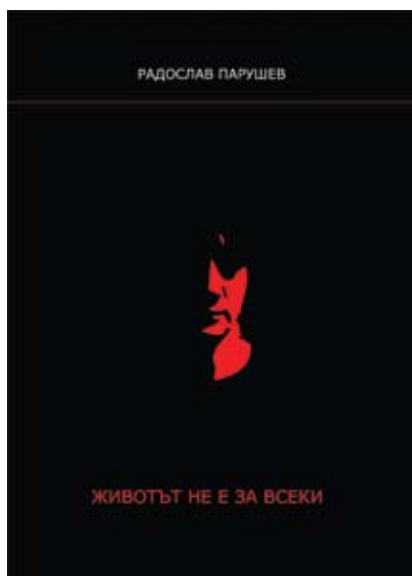
In 2003 he wins the national short story contest Rashko Sugarev.

Following a literary contest, Parushev receives a participation award for the Bulgarian-British literary festival, conducted by the British Council in Sofia in 2003. As soon as he becomes closely acquainted with the “demagogy and the retrograde approaches” (as Parushev put it) of the organizers \sponsors\ of the festival, he refuses to take part in it and also rejects the award.

In 2009 he is nominated for the Helicon prize for his novel Project Dostpyevsky.

Bibliography

- Never be unhappy (Никоганебъднешастен), Plovdiv 2004, Janet45 Publishing House
- Chase (Преследване), Plovdiv 2005, Janet45 Publishing House
- Project GigaMono, Sofia 2007, Ciela Publishing House
- Project Dostoevsky, Sofia 2009, Ciela Publishing House
- Life is not for Everyone (Животът не е за всеки), Sofia 2011, CIELA PUBLISHING HOUSE



Vassil GEORGIEV



Vassil Georgiev is born in 1975 in Sofia and graduates from Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, faculty of Law (2001). In 2008 he defends a Ph.D. in European Union law. Vassil Georgiev works as a lawyer and lecturer at the Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski.

Works

Vassil Georgiev writes short “city” stories covering diverse topics and suggesting extreme moods (from dark underground atmosphere to social themes). The stories are written in different styles (romantic realism to brutal postmodern experiment), often having absurd storylines with surprising plot twists.



The first collection of short stories by Vassil Georgiev is called Buddhist beach (Будгистки плаж) published in 2008 is highly critically acclaimed. Vassil Georgiev is sad to be one of the most intriguing short story writers in the last 20 years as well as “a wise man among the Bulgarian writers” and Buddhist beach is claimed as an important step in the development of the Bulgarian short story in general. The book is nominated for the Helicon award in 2009, however Zachary Karabashliev’s collection of short stories A Brief History of the Airplane\$ wins it by just one vote.

The first collection of short stories by Vassil Georgiev Mudlark: Stories of the Sofia Streets (Уличник. Истории на софийските улици) is nominated for the annual national Hristo G. Danov award for a Book of the Year (2010). In this book are collected the best texts of the author, published in One Week in Sofia magazine, where he portrays the Sofia streets since 2006.

In 2011 is published Degrad (Деград) – the third collection of short stories by Vassil Georgiev.

Bibliography

- 2008 – Buddhist beach (Будгистки плаж), Janet45 Publishing House
- 2010 - Mudlark: Stories of the Sofia Streets (Уличник. Истории на софийските улици), Ciela Publishing House
- 2011 – Degrad (Деград) – short stories – Ciela Publishing House



Alexander SEKULOV



Alexander Sekulov is born on the 6th of January 1964 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. He graduated professional school for stage arts as an assistant producer and Bulgarian philology as a master in Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski.

He is author of four poetry books: *Seventh Sky* (1988), *High above the Distance* (1997), *Enchanting and Light* (2003), *Maps and Geographies* (2010).

He has published also books with essays: *The Master and the Stones* (1996), a book with fragments *The High Stone Hills* (2006), as well as the journalistic book *The History of the Minimum Resistance. Chronological novel in one column* (2008).

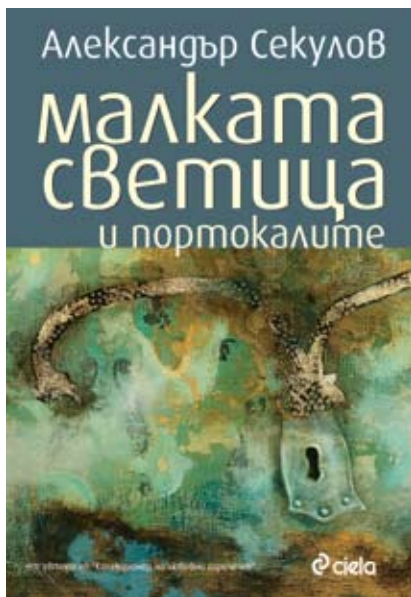
In partnership with the artist Atanas Hranov, he has published the art collections *Nasco H. Stories with Rum, Ginger, Raisons and Honey* (2005) u *The Little Saint and the Black Pepper Men* (2007). Sekulov and Hranov are also the authors of the travelling exhibition organized by the Cultural Institute of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry *The Floating Town and the Black Pepper Men* which premiere was on the Arts Festival *Apolonia* (Sozopol, 2008). Alexander Sekulov has written also the play *Light Hotel Rooms* (2005) and the novel *The Collector of Love Sentences* (2007). The book was nominated together with five others for the VIK Foundation prize. The novel has a second edition in 2008. It is translated in Serbian. In May 2009, the author publishes his second novel *The Little Saint and the Oranges*. His poetry and prose are translated in English, German, French and Hungarian.

He was journalist and editor of *Maritza* and *Novinar* newspapers (1991 – 1997). Since 1993 he has been author of the daily column *Under the Yoke* in *Maritza* newspaper and was awarded with the Plovdiv Prize for Journalism in 1995 for it. He is author and publisher of the *Fragments* (1990) and *Petnoto* (2004) magazines.

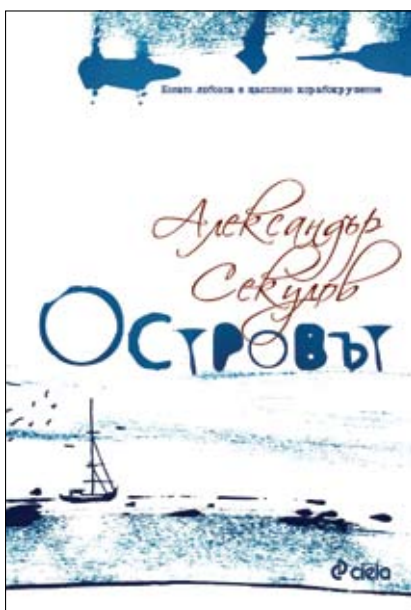
He won the following national literature awards – *Tzvetan Zangov* (1985, 1986, 1987), *Academica* (1988), *Ivan Nikolov* (1998, 2004). For the book *Enchanting and Light*, he won the Plovdiv Prize for Literature.

Alexander Sekulov had been working as a radio presenter in *Radio TNN* (1993 -1995). He was executive director of *European Cultural Month – Plovdiv 1999*. He is a part of the open civil initiative *I Love Plovdiv*, created in the end of 2005. He is creator and owner of two of the most popular music clubs in Plovdiv: *King's Stables* and *Rorschach's Spot*. The clubs implement long term programs in the field of jazz, theatre, literature, classic, pop and rock music, cinema, education in partner-





ship with the British Council, Ciela Publishing House, Czech Cultural Institute, Polish Cultural Institute, private and NGO organizations. Sekulov is creator of the Art festival Summer Time in the old part of Plovdiv (1997 – present) and founder of the Plovdiv Music Stage organization.



Mihail VESHIM



Author's biography

Mikhail Veshim graduated from Sofia University in 1982 with a degree in journalism. Ever since, he has been working for the satirical weekly Bulgarian newspaper *Sturshel* and is now its editor-in-chief. Alongside his work as a journalist, Mikhail Veshim is the author of hundreds of short stories, a few books and autobiographical notes. Even though his works have been translated in many languages, he is mostly known in Eastern countries. Indeed, in the *Anthology of World Humour* published in Vietnam in 2002, his work appears alongside world masters such as Mark Twain and Woody Allen.

The *English Neighbour* is his latest book and a best-seller in Bulgaria. The idea for the book came to him four years ago, while he was vacationing in Kamchiya, Varna region. There, he met an Englishman who ended up being the inspiration for the main character. Initially a series, the story became a longer piece, then a radio play, then a television script ("I'm waiting for it to enter the production stage"), then, finally, a novel.



THE ENGLISH NEIGHBOR *novel*

The village Plodorodno lies somewhere in Bulgaria. Its inhabitants are in great shape but have no will to work. They don't want to make money by toiling the land but by playing the lottery. Thus, the tomatoes they eat are Turkish, the carrots Macedonian and the traditional schnapps Scottish. The Scottish schnapps is served in the local bar named London, where Nottingham Forest is a regular visitor.

One fine day, a true Englishman buys a house and settles in Plodorodno. He also buys a tractor to till the fallow land. While he works the land, his neighbours work on innovative ideas... How comes that, after a while, Her Majesty's subject makes a paper hat out of the pages of *The Guardian*, curses the British Parliament and criticizes the monarchy?

Significant extracts

"[...] I don't like that Englishman... If he were Russian, you could trust him, he would be a bother... but that one... Mayor, isn't he sent here by the MI6 to spy on us?"

– What would he spy on here?

– The English have always had stakes on the Balkans! They are imperialists!

– Shturbanov, in theory you are right! said the Mayor to calm him down. But the reality is quite different. We are now united, both countries are members of NATO, of the European Union... It is a united Europe, Shturbanov!

– We shouldn't give up on our national interest for the sake of the European Union!"

"For fifteen years we have been living in a so called democracy! But is our life better today then before? Then, there were no beggars and junkies, everyone was entitled to free education and healthcare... The State provided work to all and there were no poor and sick people... And now, we have starving people everywhere and no one to give them a piece of bread! [...] We have become the servants of foreign interests!, Shturbanov continued. Foreign agents spy on our country! The Americans are to open a military base! We sold our sovereignty and have become an American state!"

Summary

Plodorodno (meaning fertile, rich) is a small Bulgarian village whose inhabitants try their best to make their lives "Western". One of them is a heavy metal skinhead who listens to Metallica and Iron Maiden and covers his body with tattoos so that he can compete for the Guinness World Record. Another, an earnest football fan, names his cattle after Premier League players, watches and bets on all games and goes as far as renaming himself Nottingham Forest. All the inhabitants gather in the local bar "London" managed by a young woman named Gloria. Her husband moved to London for work and ever since she has led a London life listening to Elton John, serving hamburgers, hot-dogs, bacon and eggs and whiskey and she wants to learn English.

The mayor of Plodorodno is very ambitious and wants to make his village the best representation of a European village in order to attract investors. The inhabitants are very inventive: they produce the fake whiskey which is sold in the local bar; the school director (where there are no pupils) and a former army commander develop a satellite positioning program to monitor the cattle (quite inefficiently, it turns out); they start producing Viagra pills which cause casualties. Unfortunately none, except for the old lady Grandma Mara, wants to till the fertile land of Plodorodno.

John Jones, a 61 year old Englishman, settles in the village. Originally from Manchester, he has travelled to Bulgaria a few times before on holidays and has decided to move there after retirement. He trades his small second floor apartment for an old house and its yard in Plodorodno. That Englishman happens to be more Bulgarian than the Bulgarians themselves. He starts tilling his own land and soon after his neighbour's. He plants his own pesticide-free truck garden, whereas his neighbours buy fruit and vegetables from the local supermarket. On his own, after the hired help abandons him, he undertakes the restoration of his house. With the help of Grandma Mara, he learns how to make yogurt, cheese and ketchup.

John becomes the attraction of the village. He is named citizen of honour of Plodorodno and inherits the former distillery, inoperative since the end of the communist era. Through him,



the mayor tries to establish relations with Manchester in order to attract investors. Still, to most inhabitants, John seems to be a bit unhinged. He was trapped in a divorce when he bought his house and he happens to be in the wrong place at all times. Therefore, he is an easy target for the locals. But John soon gets used to the Bulgarian ways: he starts drinking, stops working and generally lives up to the local stereotypes. But John attracts a new business to Plodorodno: a herbal laboratory replaces the distillery. People start working again and new foreigners settle down. Plodorodno thus becomes a “global village”.

NASHINGTON

novel

Where exactly is Nashington?

It is somewhere in the USA where everything is ours, everything is Bulgarian. This is a place where there is Bulgarian rakiya, Bulgarian salad, yoghurt and so on... A place where even the people are of our kind, although they have become Americans. Well, not quite American Americans.

Goshso – one of the novel’s characters – experiences difficulties in trying to get use to California lifestyle. he can’t stand MacDonald’s, coca-cola and the vegetables sold at the store that taste like plastic. He loves everything Bulgarian and has created a small Bulgaria in his backyard, planting tomatoes and traditional Bulgarian spices. He has also installed a small distiller in his garage in order to prepare rakiya (traditional Bulgarian brandy, made out of grapes, plums, pears, apples, etc.). Moreover, Goshso makes his own yoghurt with *Lactobacillus Bulgaricum* and considers it is his mission to keep the Bulgarian spirit alive at his home.

Goshso’s wife Mutca works as a cleaning woman at a rich man’s house, but she dreams of becoming rich herself. She takes interest in the stock exchange, keeps track of the millionaires’ lives and engages in online stock exchange speculations, hoping to earn enough money to buy a house in Mexico, somewhere on the coast of the ocean, with a swimming-pool and servants.

Goshso the emigrant has a name day and, as tradition dictates, he invites his three best friends Sasho, Rasho and Tosho at his home to celebrate. They have been friends since their military service years back in Bulgaria. Sasho supports the theory that he works in Hollywood as an armourer and pyrotechnist in blockbuster action movies. However, the truth is he makes a living by bank card frauds at cash mashines. Tosho, on the other hand, is unemployd and all he does is train for a hot dog eating contest, looking forward to win it. As for the third friend, Rasho, there is another drama goinig on – the doctors have put a cardiac pacemaker inside him, which rings an alarm each time he is about to light a cigarette or to have a drink.

By old Bulgarian custom, there is an oven baked lamb at the

party. However, in this case the lamb is quite unusual – Gosho has not purchased it from the store, but from the pet shop, alive; and has cooked it with the utmost love for his friends. So the four friends are having a party at Gosho's. All of a sudden, in the midst of toasts, two policemen from "Animal police" appear. They want to know whether the host's new pet, the lamb called Agnes is all right, whether it is in good health, has enough space to live and is fed regularly and so on... So the four friends are wondering what to say in order cover up the animal murder. At this moment in the house shows up Meto Ushiote (Meto "the Years" literally) – a famous Bulgarian mafia boss who, having faked his own death in Sofia, now lives in a large Beverly Hills house. The Bulgarian mafia boss suspects that the four friends have been sent by by his enemies to trace him out...

To top it all, Gosho and Mutza's son Peter also appears out of the blue. He studies Law in Boston and his father pins great hopes on him, however it turns out that Peter failed on the exams and has quitted law school. What is even worse, he has married Angela, a waitress. The young family shows up at the most inappropriate time – at the moment when a shot echoes in the house...

The novel "Nashington" is full of humour and comical moments. The humour sprouts out of the Bulgarian attitude of mind and way of life which collides with the American reality. All the emigrant characters are people who have strived for the American dream, but in an attempt to make it a Bulgarian-like dream. This controversy turns them into confused characters – with their legs apart over the ocean – one leg being in the USA, the other still in Bulgaria, wandering which way to chose... "There is only one way – deeper within ourselves..." says the author Mihail Veshim.

Virginia ZAHARIEVA

Biography

Virginia Zaharieva was born in Sofia on September 2, 1959. She is a writer, psychotherapist and the mother of one son, Rouben.

Virginia Zaharieva is the author of three books of poetry:

The Stone That Does Not Listen to the River – 1989

The Hen with the Patched Up Eye – 1992

Quadrille Later in the Afternoon – 1996

As well as the novel *Nine Rabbits* – 2008, QM

The mercy of the small mirrors – 2009, Ciela

Literary critics have labelled her a brilliant representative of *écriture feminine*. Her poetry is as expressive, temperamental and unexpected as the author herself.

Her latest book, *Nine Rabbits*, was nominated for the 2008 Heliikon Prize for the best contemporary Bulgarian fiction and was the best-selling Bulgarian book in bookstores for 2008. *Nine Rabbits* was also nominated for the prestigious literary reward Eduard Vik for the best novel for the 2008.

She graduated with degrees in Bulgarian literature and psychology at Sofia University – St. Kliment Ohridski. She later specialized in analytic psychotherapy in Switzerland under Professor Valdo Bernasconi. Presently, she works in the field of individual and group therapy.

She has more than 30 years of experience in all genres of journalism.

Writing, capturing sounds, researching the psyche, creating performances and installations – these are all part of her activities.

She is the editor-in-chief of *P.S.* – the first gender magazine in Bulgaria.

She created an audio CD entitled *Bulgarian Natural Sounds* and another CD *The House of Medusa – Sounds for Creating*.

The theme of vulnerability as the only portal towards love gave birth to her performance piece entitled *Vulnerability – 5 Motions*, as well as a documentary with the same title.

Between 2003 and 2006 she created several installations: *For People and Mirrors*, *For Texts and Metronomes*, *For Text and 2 Toasters*, and *For Text and Tomato Soup*.

Her hobbies are swimming, tennis, snowboarding and windsurfing.

She adores Baron Munchausen, especially his ability to pull himself out of the water by his hair.

She is the granddaughter of a gardener.

NINE RABBITS

novel

Synopsis

The book *Nine Rabbits* tells the story of a six-year-old girl and a 46-year-old woman. Manda, the little girl, grows up during the height of socialism in the 1960s, raised by her tyrannical grandmother. A raw, funny and magical tale about childhood. Through adventures and horror stories, the reader shares the complicated path of a child determined to explore the world. Manda survives the lopsided battle with her grandmother, who is also waging open and covert wars with life, with the eternally absent grandfather, with their youngest children and with the workmen finishing up the family home along the Black Sea coast.

In the second part, 40 years later that same child has become a woman, now living in democratic times and racked by an identity crisis. Manda has swallowed up her tyrannical grandmother, turning that despotism against herself. In the heroine's difficult process of awakening, every shattering of childhood matrices frees up space for spontaneity, creativity and love. The text bristles with insights that strike the heroine as a result of her concrete experiences, come to her in dreams or are overheard in the ringing of Buddhist bells. *Nine Rabbits* is a book about The Way and the fermentation life subjects each of us to. The geographic leaps – Paris, Osaka, Sofia, remote villages, Dominica, Lisbon, Moscow, St. Petersburg and Vienna – merely serve as a pretext for journeys within the heroine's soul. Just as in the first part, the tragic and the comic, the beautiful and the ugly naturally coexist. They accompany Manda's attempts to cope with modern living, with her taste for luxury, love and spiritual growth. Most of the episodes in the second half show the heroine in various emotional conditions and experiencing archetypal processes such as fear, shame, PMS, divorce, marriage, forgiveness, aging, death and finally love and creative work as salvation for a wounded soul.

In the second half, for Manda the world gradually transforms into a Divine Kitchen, where out of a mixture of characters, places, ingredients and situations she creates delicious dishes. The reader is rewarded for all the pain and suffering with dancing, harmony and abundance. While the first half sticks to the classical narrative of the past, the second part captures the pulse of the present. The work is rich in literary genres and forms, containing elements of scripture, diary, memoir, poetry and journalism, which define *Nine Rabbits* as a hybrid novel. *Nine Rabbits* is a pregnant book – inside it there is another small book containing all 29 recipes found throughout the novel in case readers would like to try them in their own kitchens. In the text itself the recipes are sensory instructions for concrete action – a form of reality that calms and nourishes the furious text as well as the hungry reader.

This is a book about standing up for your own choices.

A handbook for loving yourself. A book about our debt to pleasure. *Nine Rabbits* is a story about life as wakefulness at every moment.

Galín NIKIFOROV

“I was born in 1968. I am educated at The Technical University of Plovdiv and The Economic University of Varna. I have worked as an engineer in the industry since 1993. I am married and I have a daughter.

I have published the following books:

The Last Truth (novels, 1998);

Fairly Gently (novel, Publishing House ‘Razvitie’, 2003);

Good Guy (novel, Publishing House ‘Zhanet-45’, 2006);

The Photographer: Obscura Reperta (novel, ‘Ciela’, 2009);

Loser’s Summer (novel, ‘Ciela’, 2010).

I have got a special award about the novel *Fairly Gently* from the literature competition ‘Razvitie’ (2003) and the award ‘Sveltostrui’ (2008) about the novel *Good Guy*.

I have been nominated twice for the award ‘Helikon’, twice for the VIK Award for Novel of the Year and once in the literature competition ‘Elias Kaneti’.



FROM THE HOUSE OF CLOWNS

by Galin Nikiforov

translated from the Bulgarian by Angela Rodel

I was a strange child, one nobody ever called by name – to the Goddess I was simply “my boy,” while the few other eccentrics life brought my way didn’t feel the need to call me anything or to ask what my name was. I was free, truly free, I lived without rules, without guardians, without responsibilities in the little world of my own family. I’ve never gone to school, hence my rather unusual education and lack of a name. I’ve learned everything I know during endless nights spent in the Mahogany Castle’s enormous library, filled with books in more than thirty languages. There, in the dreamy silence of the midnight darkness that only the candles’ fragile flames nibbled at, I discovered the world’s beauty – its past and its emotions, which had long since smoldered away but which would nevertheless rise up from the ashes every time I touched them, showing me their full charm and intransience.

My thoughts take me back, winding like a spiral in time and catching two bright memories in their invisible silvery nets. The first is my brush with the wonder of the “Chloride Chameleons,” whose colors in the Mahogany Castle’s storehouse at night looked like visions from another universe: cesium chloride, which burned with a light-blue flame; rubidium chloride – a small explosion of raspberry sparks; and sodium chloride – golden-yellow diamonds smashed to pieces. And the second

– that wonderful and inimitable verse by the melancholy Paul Eluard, written in towering gothic letters on the pearly whiteness of one of the walls in the Goddess' spacious studio:

*“Our sad memories – nights clinging to days
And they pull the cord that binds us.
Yet they cannot break it.”*

That was her favorite poem, not only because of its beauty, but also because it had appeared in her life along with me. She had once told me how on the night she gave birth to me, she had heard someone whispering this verse in the darkness: as if an unearthly spirit had bent its head and murmured it to her to remember forever after. I often recall how she would dance past me in the lonely hours of late autumn afternoons – bare-foot, eternally young, out of time's reach. Her eyes closed, she would recite the hopeless French poets who had touched her heart even as a child. On those autumn days when she took the canvas 2

down off her easel – and that meant every late afternoon, as soon as the half-translucent shades in her studio grew blood red from the dying sun – she would sit in front of her triptych mirror, slowly color her lips with pale blue lipstick, put on her golden kimono and sail through the whole house with light dance steps. She knew more about colors than any mere mortal, since she knew that while she danced, thanks to the blue tint, her lips seemed to hang in the air around her like the smile of the Cheshire Cat from Wonderland. Her arms were long and graceful and fluttered along her body with the beautiful smooth motion of falling leaves, while the frozen smile did not leave her face, as if drawn on a diorama. Sometimes, when I was still a child, she would take me in her arms and dance with me, while I, struck dumb, would merely press against her, breathing in her strange dry fragrance of jasmine mixed with the distant, sharp scent of turpentine, which had seeped into her silvery-white breast from her paints. She was a strange, unearthly woman, whom I always touched as if for the last time; there was something doomed about her and she knew it, thus she lived as if enchanted, in a world filled with magic, without wanting anything from anyone, simply delighting in her secluded life and her art. When I grew up and got too heavy for her delicate arms, the birdcage with the yellow-painted magpies from her studio became her “dance partner”: she would embrace it like a Phantom Lover and whirl it endlessly through the hushed rooms of the huge house, while the two surrealistic birds behind the thin bars would almost inaudibly tap their beaks, as if in rhythm with her footsteps. In those lush autumn afternoons and violet evenings I would sit silently by her with a book in my lap or with a half-blank sheet of paper in the typewriter and I would watch her with inexplicable sadness, as if the beauty she filled the house with was not the most important thing, but rather the pain that someday I would lose her forever.

Zachary Karabashliev



Zachary Karabashliev is one of the most well known and reputable contemporary Bulgarian novelists and playwrights. His artistic voice appeals to a significant variety of multicultural audiences around the world. His international critical acclaim is a result of his prolific and unique, yet universally comprehensible style of writing.

His most successful novel, *18% Gray*, (*18% Cubo*, Ciela Publishing, 2008) published in Bulgaria in his native language is a bestselling title with 8 editions. It won the prestigious *Bulgarian Novel of the Year Award* given by Edward Vick Foundation, and was a finalist for the renowned literary biennial *Elias Canetti Award*. It was chosen by anonymous vote to be among the 100 most loved books by Bulgarians in the BBC campaign "The Big Read." It is scheduled for publication in France by Editions Intervalles in May, 2011. It is now being translated in Polish, Serbian, Spanish, German, Hungarian and Croatian. Amongst the reviews, it has been called "*The most successful contemporary Bulgarian ex pat novel*" by the magazine *Capital*, "*Savagely funny!*" by *Novinar*, and "*18% Gray – 100% success!*" by the national newspaper *24Hours*. He sold the film rights, and was recently was commissioned to write the screenplay for the film version of *18% Gray* to be internationally produced by Chouchkov Brothers Co.

His short-story collection *Brief History of the Airplane* (*Kpamka istoria na samoleta*, Ciela Publishing) won the 2009 Helikon Award, established by Bulgaria's largest bookstore chain, and his story *Metastases* has been shortlisted by the editors at the American Dalkey Archive Press for inclusion in *Best European Fiction*.

His most recent books *Recoil* (*Omkam*, Ciela Publishing, 2010), a collection of plays and dialogues and *The Doll Maker – A Fairy Tale* (*Prupkazka*, Ciela Publishing) came out in December 2010.

Zachary Karabashliev has four professionally produced plays, two of them running successfully at the moment in Sofia, Bulgaria.

His play *Sunday Evening* won the most prestigious Bulgarian theater award *Askeer 2009*. The play premiered in 2009 with raving reviews on the 400-seat stage in Theater Sofia.

"Karabashliev is not afraid to speak of the problems of the people beyond their thirties and he does it catching you by the throat, not

letting you go until the very final moment. The illusion that he has created something so close to "reality" is simply chilling."(Yana Doneva, Vsekiden)

"...mature and well crafted play... The characters of Karabashliev are natural, convincing, contemporary and detached from themselves..."(Albena Atanassova, Standart News)

His play *Recoil* won the most respected award for unpublished plays *The Best Contemporary Bulgarian Play 2009* in the International Theater Festival Shoumen, Bulgaria. It is being produced right now on the big stage at TBA theater, one of the most distinguished theater venues in Bulgaria (premier date – 20th of January, 2011)

Zachary Karabashliev's last play "Lissabon" was initially commissioned as a one-act play for the international project "Encounters of New Contemporary Dramatists" through "Corps de Textes Europe". It was performed in Lisbon, Portugal in November 2010.

Zachary Karabashliev's short stories, essays and articles appear in literary journals and lifestyle magazines like *Elle*, *Max*, *Vice*, *Capital*, *Kultura*, *Eva*, among others.

He is the freshest and most exciting voice of a generation of Bulgarians who move freely between languages and borders, who embrace the World as their home.

He resides in San Diego, California with his wife and daughter.

18% GRAY

Novel

Stella's been gone nine mornings. Zack, her husband, is a thirty-something failed photographer, Bulgarian ex-pat, now living in California, and holding a 9-to-5 job in a pharmaceutical corporation. Devastated by his wife's leaving, he crosses the border into Mexico. There, he encounters a violent scene, and, trying to save a stranger's life, nearly loses his own. He manages to escape in his assailants' van and makes it back to the US, only to find a huge bag of marijuana in it.

Zack decides instead of clocking-in the next morning to use the unintentionally smuggled marijuana as a means to change his life. The fact of the matter is however, that he has never sold a single joint and has no idea how to turn weed into cash. The only man who can help him is Danny, a college friend, starving artist and small-time drug dealer in New York City. Danny arranges a meeting between Zack and a mysterious man who might be able to buy the marijuana wholesale.

Zack sets off for the East Coast with nothing but a large bag of cannabis and a vintage Nikon he salvages from a pawnshop. Through the lens of the old camera, he starts rediscovering himself by photographing an America we rarely see. His journey unleashes a series of erratic, hilarious, and life-threatening events. As he travels forward across country, the narrative slips backward in time to explore his obsessive romance with emerging artist Stella. The story shifts from present day California

to Eastern Europe in the late eighties, where it runs through the nights of an anti-communist student campus occupation and continues with the young couple's exodus to Ohio. It flows briefly through France and climaxes in a contemporary loft high above Manhattan. There, Zack meets the enigmatic Boss, uncovers the story behind the bag of marijuana, and accepts the excruciating truth about the absence of Stella. Ultimately, he faces his biggest challenge – to find his true purpose in a world seemingly governed by chance.

The novel has a number of well-drawn comic characters who serve as Zack's allies and adversaries. The most notable is Danny, whose day job is bubble wrapping million-dollar works of art auctioned off at Christie's. Another one is Elijah Elli—an overweight redheaded vegan and unsuccessful screenwriter, obsessed with the idea of creating the perfect romantic comedy. The list carries on with characters such as Ken (the good friend from Ohio), Hito (the Japanese fashion photographer), Bernard (the pretentious French artist), and others.

18% Gray is a suspenseful, darkly funny love story with a solid literary flavor. It is written in raw, poetic, and short-breathed *cinéma vérité* style. The ending, twisted but inevitably logical, takes the reader back to the beginning.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AIRPLANE

Collection of short stories

A Brief History of the Airplane (Ciela 2009) is Zachary Karabashliev's second book, following his debut novel *18% Gray* (Ciela 2008.) This collection of short stories simultaneously won the jury's choice and audience's choice awards in Bulgaria's prestigious Helicon Literary Competition. Karabashliev's work has begun gaining attention outside of Bulgaria as well. The Helicon jury argued that the strength of Karabashliev's prose lies in its "terse and realistic recreation of how the universe's warmth and coldness is reflected in the microcosm of the family." Indeed, many of the stories in this compelling collection are about the family and its infinite variations. They are also about displacement – not just physical, but emotional. Zachary Karabashliev introduces vivid and funny characters who often make choices that seem both impossible and inevitable.

In "Departures," the narrator's mother has fallen in love with bougainvillea while visiting him in California and is dead set on taking it back to Bulgaria and planting it there, despite numerous warnings that it would have no chance of surviving the harsh continental winters.

In "House in the Mountains," a not-quite-successful screenwriter, looking for inspiration and refuge in the mountains of Bulgaria, is unnerved by the tales associated with the ruins of an old house.

“Warmth from a Stranger” is a story about a possible but unreal romance between a photographer and the young woman sitting next to him on the bus. It takes no more than the unknown girl’s touch to cause the photographer to abandon – in his searing fantasy, at least – his family.

“The Colt” is a candid snapshot of the spiritual state of a middle-aged man who has lost his tie to nature and ultimately to his primal self.

“Metastases” describes the final (and first) fragile moments of intimacy between an alcoholic father in Bulgaria and his son, who is living in California. In a twist of fate, the incurable tumor brings the father back to the family he himself had destroyed with his ruinous addiction.

“A Brief History of the Airplane” compresses several decades of life in a Bulgarian village where the Party has installed an airplane-café. The villagers dismantle not only a would-be symbol of a proud if decaying communist future, but their very way of looking at the world.

The stories in this dazzling collection resonate with sorrow, humor and compassion. Zachary Karabashliev’s witty and exquisite use of language is often a challenge to translate, since his voice makes use of different registers in the various stories. At the same time, his writing transcends ethnical and cultural differences and evokes eternal human experience

