

Russian literary fiction

Genii

Novel. Ripol. Moscow 2016. 434 pages

The new border between Ukraine and the area controlled by the separatists does not merely go through Grezhin, the village where Arkadi lives, but directly through the middle of his house. Arkadi lives in one half, in the other, because of Arkadi's alleged infidelity, his wife Nina, jealous and sulking, has barricaded herself in. There is enough stress bringing up their son in this situation, but on top of that the divided village is threatened by a visit from Russia, from the MAN HIMSELF.

However, the next visitor from Russia is Arkadi's half-brother (Ev-)Genii, a strange fellow who is constantly speaking into an audio recorder about himself in a third person narrative. But Genii seems to have a wonderful ability of observation and be able to look inside people and appeal to their real and hidden longings. When an unidentified rocket, set off by a boys prank, hits a lorry, killing the son of the village oligarch, the village falls into more than just a mental state of war. For now both the Ukrainian and the Russian forces advance on Grezhin, as always set on taking action against the guilty "third party", against a village that just did not want to be drawn into the conflict.

Slapovski has an unerring sense of the ridiculous inherent in every great tragedy. Although he knows the healing power of humour, he does not invent a whimsical Utopia, and allows the novel to collide hard with reality. In the end, it is not only many Ukrainian and Russian combatants who die, but also the two boys. And Genii is killed by a stray bullet, without having fired a shot himself.

This is the first novel that deals directly with the Ukraine conflict by a well-known Russian author, who lives in Russia and who does not belong to the patriots camp. With GENII Slapovski has produced a study of common sense and humanity that, in this time of crisis, is heartily recommended to several of the political actors both in the East and in the West.



THE AUTHOR

translations
8 languages

awards
Big Book shortlist 2017
Penne Award (Italy) 2009

other work
The Unknown

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

Aleksei Slapovski