

literary fiction

Moscow Banksy

(Middle Edda)

Political thriller. AST Publishers. Moscow 2019. 347 pages

Suddenly, new graffiti appears in Moscow week after week with a clock-face in the corner, the painted hand creeping towards 12. The grotesque works of an anonymous graffiti artist each represent a different member of the new bureaucratic nomenklatura – each of whom dies shortly afterwards. While the graffiti artist quickly becomes a new icon for the liberal protest movement, spin doctors close to the Kremlin are frantically trying to reveal his identity. But the power elites are divided. Some arrest well-known opposition street artists and hire teams of ‘censors’ who immediately paint over any new graffiti to prevent the image being distributed via social networks. When images of the cleaned-up graffiti are posted all over Moscow, other power clans interpret this as a launched attack by their competitors and start a violent search for the ringleader among city administration, oil companies and oligarchs. Meanwhile, some representatives of the corrupt vertical power are ready to pay huge sums for the next graffiti to show one of their opponents. A large opposition rally in the center of Moscow turns out to be staged by those really pulling the strings in the struggle for future power. The fact that the demo turns into a bloody battle serves as a welcome distraction from their political intrigue: the dismissal of the government, the flight of the speaker of parliament abroad and the long-prepared installation of a puppet candidate as deputy spokesman, who formally becomes the second man in the state. And the first, if something will happen to the president. Everyone in Moscow is convinced that the twelfth graffiti will show the president. The city is paralysed when the escort with the presidential limousine stops unscheduled in the center of Moscow. Despite the utmost security precautions, it is clear to everyone – it’s the president next.



THE AUTHOR

“It is not us being like that, life is like that – and this novel is. The book of a generation wasting itself to a decade. Simply a very timely novel – evil, bitter and at the same time full of hope.”

SHAMIL IDIATULLIN

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

GALINA YUZEFOVICH

“A political crime thriller, an art anti-utopia, a Russian Dogville, a saga about the battle of the gods ... But above all a vigilant and relentless diagnosis of the generation of the Russian 2000s, painful and on time.”

ALEKSANDR GAVRILOV

Dmitri Zakharov was born in 1979 in a ‘closed’ city in Siberia near Krasnoyarsk. After completing his journalism training, he worked as a correspondent and editor for Kommersant newspaper and headed various marketing departments in the government and the private sector. Dmitri Zakharov lives in St. Petersburg.

Dmitri Zakharov

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ADDITIONAL REVIEWS

"The book is definitely fantastical, but underneath all the layers of the author's imagination lies the undoubtedly recognizable everyday life in Russia. The bloody battle on Tverskaya and the prefabricated 'public hearings' are portrayed as distantly and as expressively as possible, like battle scenes in the cinema. The current slang scattered across the pages and the mention of real people brings to mind a terrible insight – here it is, our fake reality."

THE VILLAGE

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

POLIT.RU

"The intrigue behind the scenes makes you angry. But the novel also shows something in our present that remains. Love, the pursuit of justice – something that is often overlooked due to the blinkers of political information noise."

PSYCHOLOGIES

"How of the moment! A masterful cocktail of intrigues of power, opposition struggles, mysticism and more than appropriate swearing and slang. Different heroes, manipulations, provocations, wrong tracks."

LIVELIB

"Middle Edda serves one purpose: to capture the present. Be it blindly touching, be it truly skillful, be it targeted and direct – Zakharov takes on the heavy responsibility of leading contemporary Russian literature into the field of political messages – this is at least not only a seductive, but also an encouraging endeavor."

PROCHTENIE

"The author manages to tell a lively and consistent story, to convey both subtle psychology and battle scenes. And this is a very unexpected effect. Secondly, the further you move away from the novel, the more interesting and clear the contours. Middle Edda is an impressionist novel in that sense. This effect is also achieved by the fact that the reader has a lot to do himself. The author does not lead by hand, but shows some seemingly unrelated pictures and scenes from life, and then the reader must do the work, think and join the dots, to complete the text in his head. But the thin line between meaningless clutter and conscious reception is not crossed."

DENIS EPIFANTSEV

Dmitri Zakharov