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Writer

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PROJECT

The First Fear (a novel)

How do fears change over a century...? How do fears shape our century...?

What I've started is a novel of exploration, but also a personal book on the great fears, historical and deeply intimate, and their evolution during the 20th century and in the new millennium. Fear keeps alive the child in each of us. So the question of fear is also a question of childhood. How do our basic fears change against the backdrop of history? That is what I will try to find out through the characters and the plot lines of this book.

Childhood has a special power to observe, a capacity to see the world in detail, perhaps because in the beginning the child's point of view is as tall as a tulip. We know that childhood is a relatively recent phenomenon. In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, children were perceived as smaller adults. But in turbulent historical moments, including in the 20th and 21st century, childhood disappears again. The (hi)story of the century could be written based on the child on the run, the abandoned child, the refugee child of today and their fears.

A few years ago, I was invited for a semester at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. I proposed a course "Childhood and Ideology in Traumatic Moments of the 20th Century", a theme that has always haunted me and my writing.

One day, I assigned my students the task of describing their first childhood fear - half a page, maybe more, as much as the fear would allow them. The next assignment was to gather their mothers' and fathers' childhood fears. The third stage was to question their living grandparents. Thus, we reached fears from another age. Many of the students had heard their parents' and grandparents' fears for the first time. We gathered a small corpus of three generations' memories of fear: the current dreads, the Cold War anxieties of the parents, the war and post-war traumas of the grandparents. A small drawer of fear. A fear file.

I imagine this real situation fictionally developed in the future novel, accumulating various personal voices and stories.

Recommended Reading

Gospodinov, Georgi. 8 Minuten und 19 Sekunden (short stories). Graz: Droschl, 2016. First published as: I vsicko stana luna. Plovdiv: Žanet 45, 2013.

- . The Physics of Sorrow (novel). Rochester, NY: Open Letter, 2015. First published as: Fizika na tagata. Plovdiv: Žanet 45, 2012. German: Physik der Schwermut. Graz: Droschl, 2014.

- . Natural Novel (novel). Dalkey Archive Press, 2005. First published as: Estestven roman. Plovdiv: Žanet 45, 2000. German: Natürlicher Roman. Graz: Droschl, 2007.

The Time Capsule of Storytelling. What's in There

"Only the fleeting and ephemeral are worth recording."

Gaustine, "The Forsaken Ones"

I will read short excerpts and will talk on a few miscellaneous topics that have haunted me through years and books, finished and unfinished, including my current one.

Why does the un-happened (personal and historical) matter, sometimes even more than things that actually happened? If we paraphrase Tolstoy, we could say all things that happened are alike; each un-happened one is un-happened in its own way.

Could the small, personal, and everyday give us a glimpse of the sublime?

Where is "the saddest place in the world" and how are we to pronounce the Bulgarian word for sorrow?

The anti-monumental fly ("Natural Novel"); the Minotaur as the abandoned child of Antiquity; and the slug that can cure an ulcer ("The Physics of Sorrow"): narrating through different points of view.

The titles of my novels oblige me to say a few words about the possible osmosis between literature and science (natural history, biology, physics, sociology...).

Through all of these, I will try to speak about the place I come from. Though, according to Gaustine, a character who roams across times and texts, we are all emigrants from our childhood country.

I will also share the questions and research hidden behind the novels and some documentary and social projects related to them.

P.S. Childhood, its first fears, and memory of the recent past are in the center of the novel that is my current work-in-progress. So, feel free to contribute your personal childhood fears to the fear capsule.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOWS' LIBRARY

Gospodinov, Georgi (Berlin,2022)

Zeitzuflucht : Roman

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1778987710>

Vremeubežište

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1778987710>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Plovdiv,2020)

Vremeubežište

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=174417217X>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Berlin,2017)

Lapidarium

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1007469021>

Lapidarium

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1007469021>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Graz,2016)

8 Minuten und 19 Sekunden : Erzählungen

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1618893831>

I vsichko stana luna

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1618893831>

Gospodinov, Georgi (München,2016)

Physik der Schwermut : Roman

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=857687875>

Fizika na tagata

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=857687875>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Rochester, NY,2015)

The physics of sorrow

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1667302922>

Fizika na tīgata

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1667302922>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Köln, Weimar, Wien,2010)

Die Geschwindigkeit der Seele

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1668986701>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Graz,2010)

Kleines morgendliches Verbrechen : Gedichte

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=614691389>

Baladi i razpadi <dt.>

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=614691389>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Graz,2007)

Natürlicher Roman

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=529142155>

Estestven roman

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=529142155>

Gospodinov, Georgi (Evanston, Ill,2007)

And other stories

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=526731230>

I drugi istorii

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=526731230>