



ZACHARY KARABASHLIEV

Zachary Karabashliev is one of Bulgaria's leading contemporary storytellers, working across fiction, theatre and screen.

His books include the novels *The Last Dolphin Hunter*, *Wound*, *The Tail*, *Havra*, and *18% Gray*, as well as novellas, short stories and essays. He has received Bulgaria's highest literary honours, including four Novel of the Year awards, the Elias Canetti Award, the Helikon Award, the Hristo G. Danov Award, and numerous other national distinctions.

His work has been translated and published in the United States, France, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Egypt, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia, and other territories. His fiction has also appeared in the American anthology *Best European Fiction 2018*.

Karabashliev is also an acclaimed playwright and screenwriter. His plays have received the Askeer Award, Bulgaria's highest theatre distinction, and continue to be staged by leading theatres. His screen credits include the feature film adaptation of his novel *18% Gray*, as well as other projects. He is also co-screenwriter of the forthcoming six-part television adaptation of his novel *Havra*.

Alongside his creative work, Karabashliev serves as Editor-in-Chief of Ciela, Bulgaria's leading publishing house. He is also the founder and creative director of the VarnaLit International Literary Festival.

Across novels, theatre and film, his work explores memory, freedom, identity, and the ways personal lives intersect with larger political and historical forces.

He lives and works in Sofia, Bulgaria.

SELECTED NOVELS



THE LAST DOLPHIN HUNTER

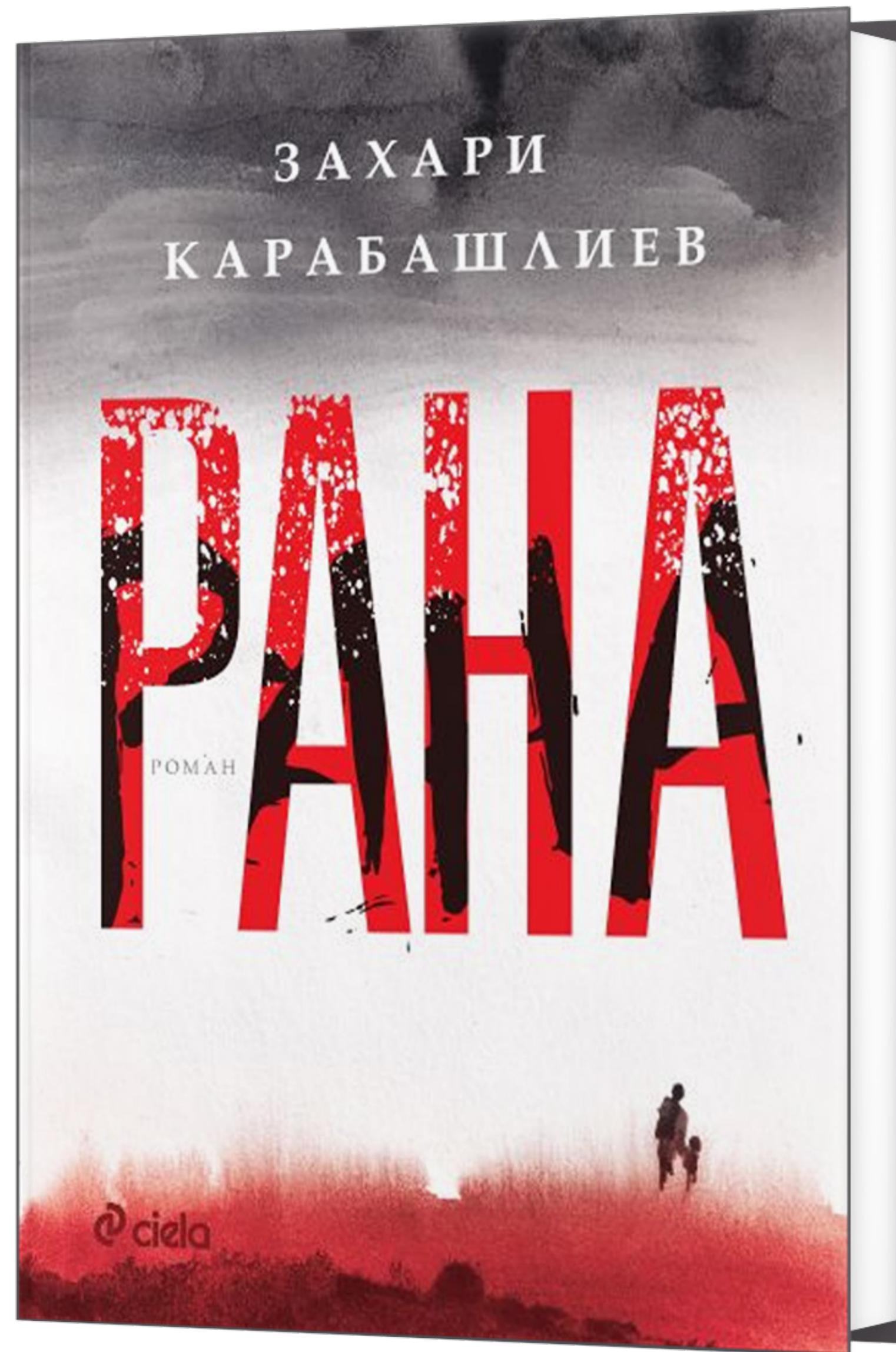
Literary/Historical Fiction · Dual Timeline · 70,000 words

Complete English translation by Booker Prize-winning translator Angela Rodel

While researching archival footage for an American feature film about the saving of Bulgarian Jews in WW2, the narrator stumbles upon documentary of a Black Sea dolphin hunt in the 50s and recognizes one of the hunters as his own grandfather—a man he knew almost nothing about except that he had died in prison.

Drawn into the mystery of his grandfather's life, he uncovers a hidden family history shaped by war, communist terror and decades of silence. Along the way, he meets Darina, a young marine biologist researching whether dolphins possess a collective memory. As their relationship gradually deepens, her work begins to illuminate his own search for truth and the ways memory survives across generations.

Blending archival documents, historical fact, and myth, *The Last Dolphin Hunter* spans the Second World War, the rise of the communist regime, and the present day. It is a novel about family, tyranny, salvation, and the stories we inherit—and how discovering the truth can change the course of a life.



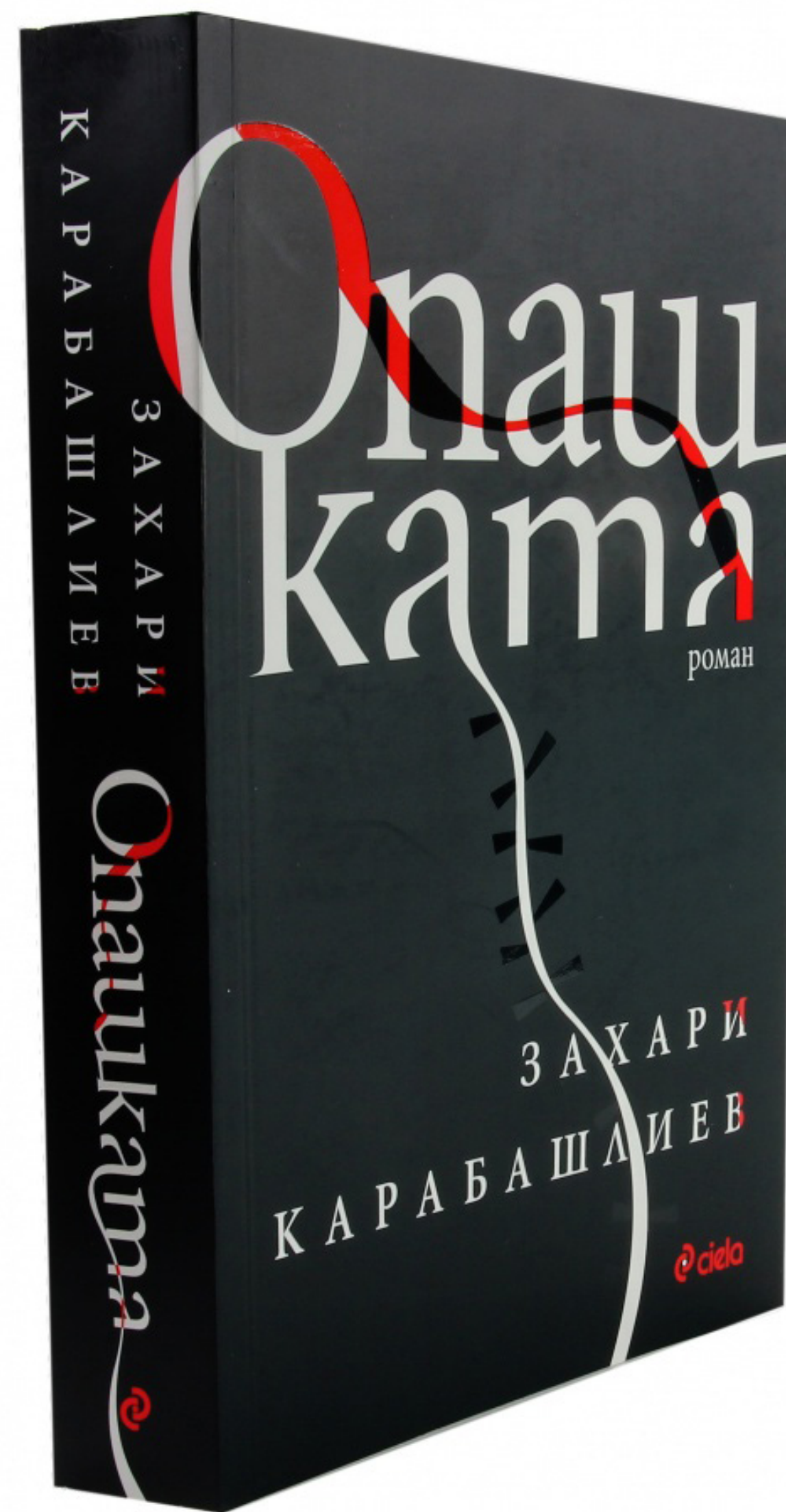
WOUND

Historical Fiction · 78,000 words

Sava, a young law student, is drafted into the First World War and sent to the Romanian Front. Wounded in the chest and left behind enemy lines, he finds an abandoned four-year-old girl whose parents were killed. Determined to save her, he leads the child across forests, battlefields and devastated villages, unaware that the journey will become one of salvation for them both.

Only when they finally reach safety does the truth emerge: Sava has been dead all along. Mortally wounded on the battlefield, it is his soul that has guided the child through the horrors of war, unable to find peace until he has fulfilled one final act of compassion.

Moving through the Balkan Wars, the First World War and their aftermath, *Wound* blends historical fiction with the final touch of magical realism. It is an epic novel about war's cruel and invisible wounds—and about the possibility that humanity may outlive even death.



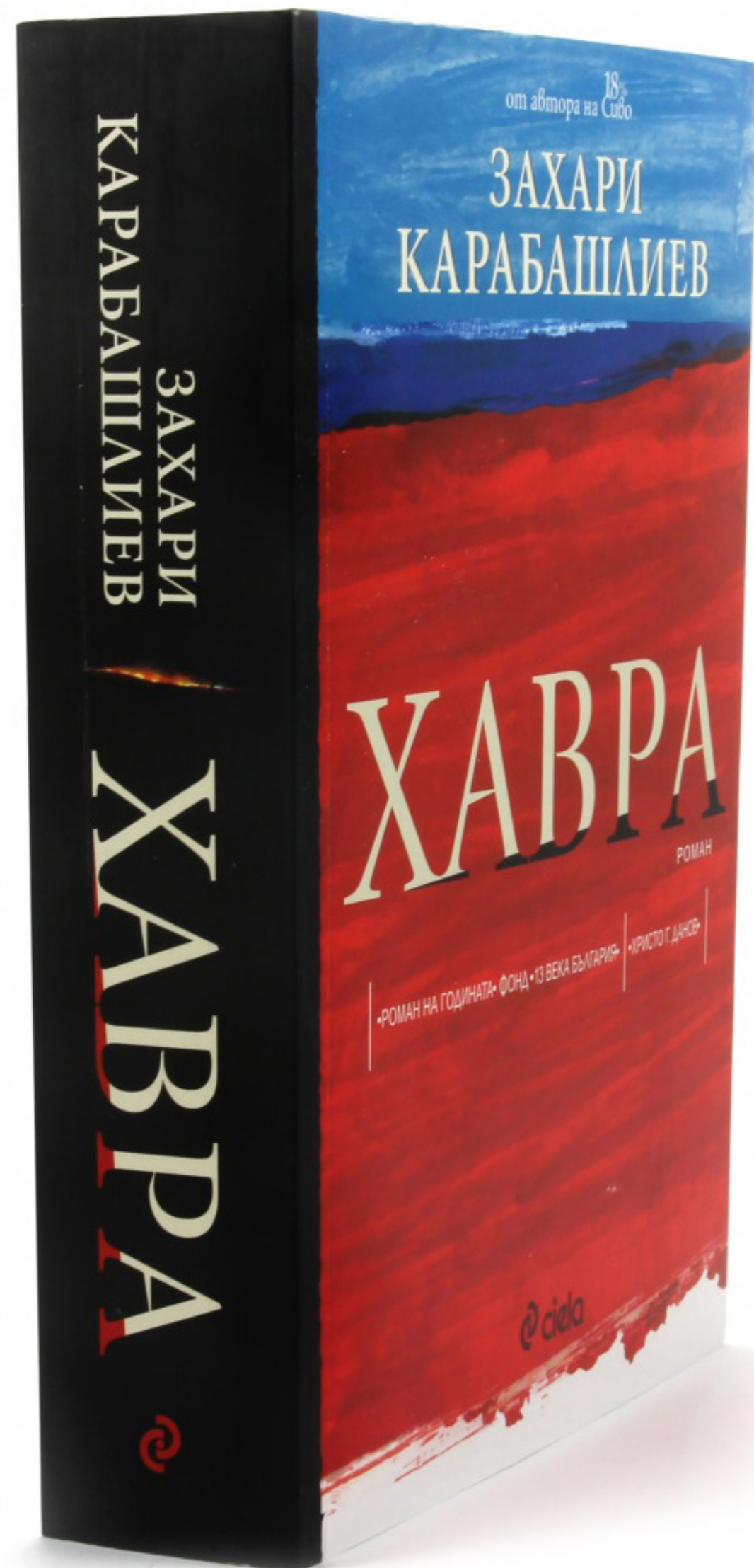
THE TAIL

Literary Thriller / Dystopian Fiction · 90,000 words

When Nevena, a young professional, inexplicably grows a tail, her fiancé, Pavel—a writer who has published only one novel—is swept into a political storm that lays bare the mechanisms of power and the fragility of democratic society.

As the country descends into permanent political crisis, Pavel is persuaded to run for president. What begins as an intimate story of love and otherness gradually becomes a ruthless struggle for power, where media, religion, science, and state institutions merge into a single machinery of manipulation. Convinced he can remain morally untouched, Pavel sacrifices one compromise after another until the woman he loves becomes the final obstacle to his political destiny.

The Tail is a political novel told with the suspense of a psychological thriller and the atmosphere of a near dystopia. It explores the seduction of power, the fragility of freedom, and the price one can pay when private desires become public destinies.



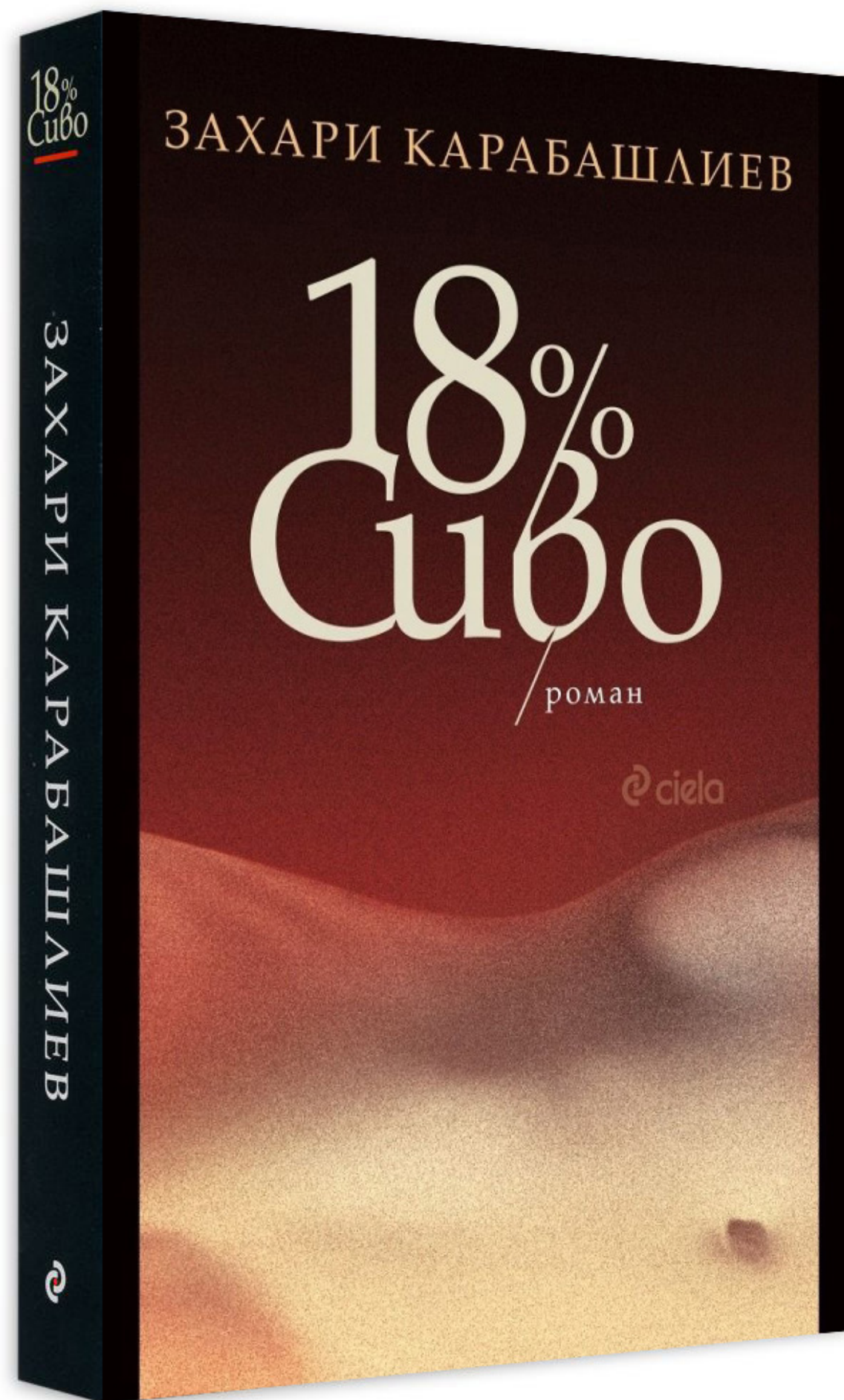
HAVRA

Historical Fiction / Literary Thriller · Dual Timeline · 229,000 words

Complete English translation available

After his father's suspicious death in a fire, Nikola Markov returns from California to Bulgaria. While investigating a possible murder and negotiating the sale of family land, he helps eighty-five-year-old Vera translate an 1878 memoir. The document tells the story of her great-aunt Vera Elegina and American war correspondent John (Januarius) MacGahan, whose reports on the 1876 April Uprising helped ignite the Russo-Turkish War. The two stories—historical and contemporary—intertwine in unexpected ways as Nikola searches for the truth about his father's death and his own redemption.

Moving across continents and generations—from late nineteenth-century Russia and the Ottoman Empire, through Central Asia and England, to post-totalitarian Bulgaria and the United States—*Havra* is an epic historical novel told within the framework of a literary thriller. It is a novel about memory, freedom, exile, and the forces that shape both private lives and national destinies.



18% GRAY

Literary Fiction · 90,000 words

Translated by Booker Prize-winning translator Angela Rodel

Nine days after Stella—the love of his life—leaves him, Zack crosses the border into Mexico, desperate to escape his grief. By dawn, he has witnessed a brutal assault, stolen a van loaded with marijuana, and set in motion a journey that will change his life forever.

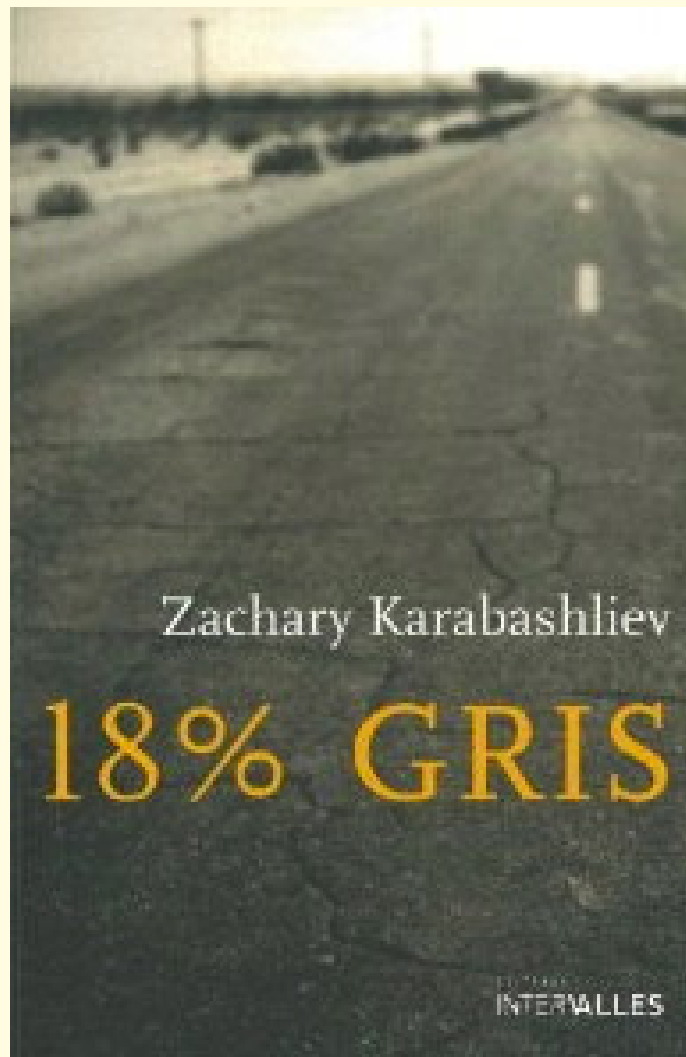
Travelling from the Mexican border to New York with nothing but a vintage Nikon and a dangerous load in the trunk, Zack is drawn into a dark criminal underworld while rediscovering both America and himself through the lens of an old camera. As the road unfolds, so does the story of his passionate love for Stella, revealing a life shaped by exile, memory, and impossible choices.

Set between Bulgaria and the United States, *18% Gray* is a literary road novel told with the suspense of a crime thriller. Darkly funny, deeply romantic, and ultimately heartbreaking, it explores love, freedom, and the search for meaning in a world where nothing is ever simply black or white.

18% GRAY - INTERNATIONAL EDITIONS



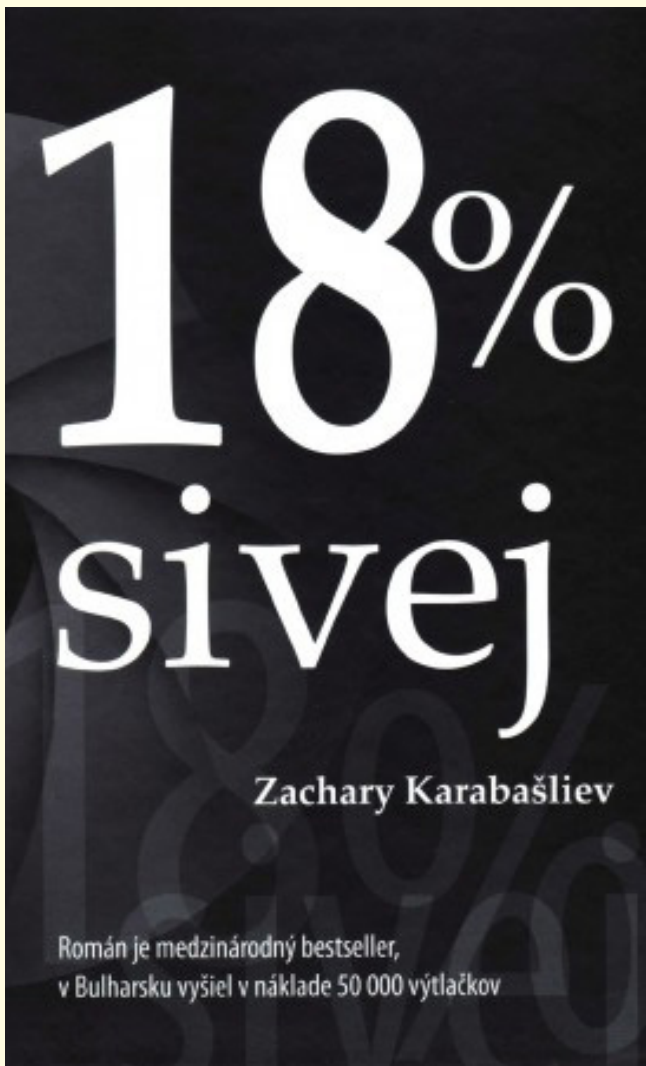
UNITED STATES



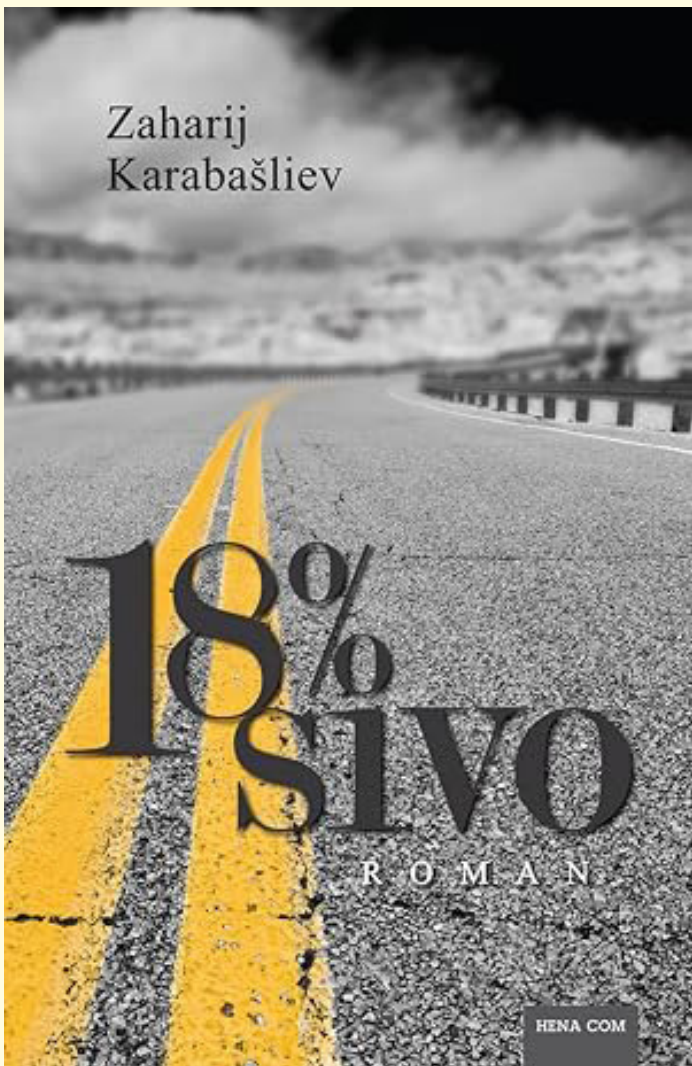
FRANCE



POLAND

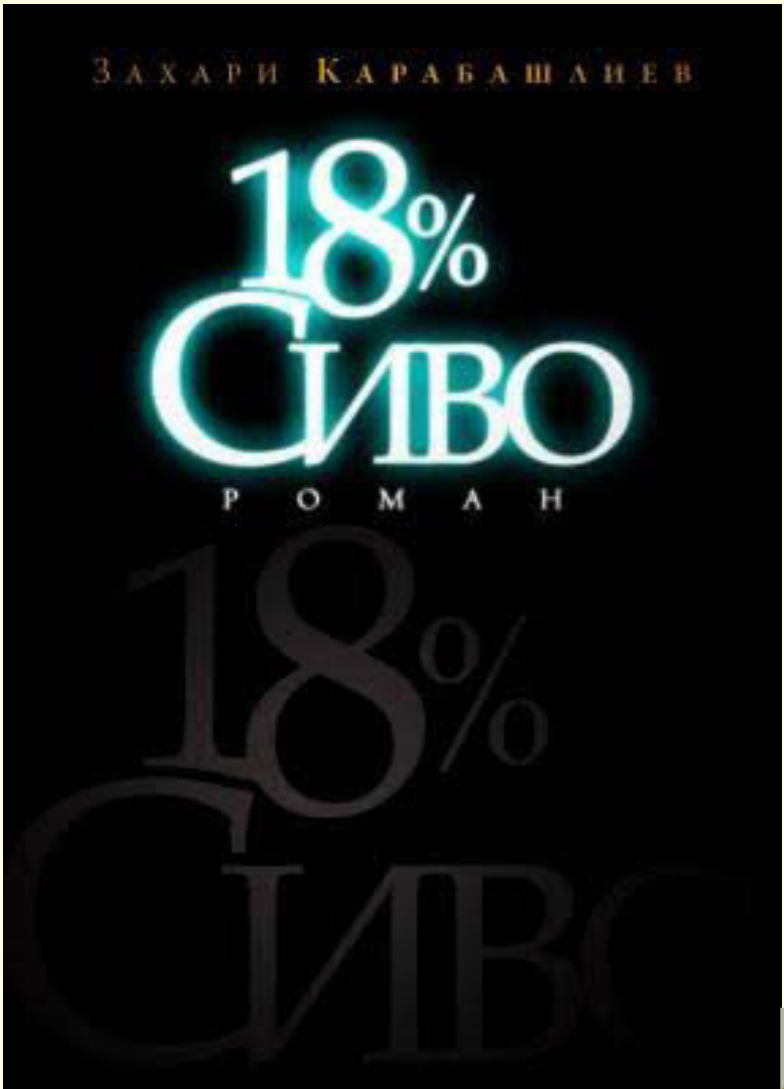
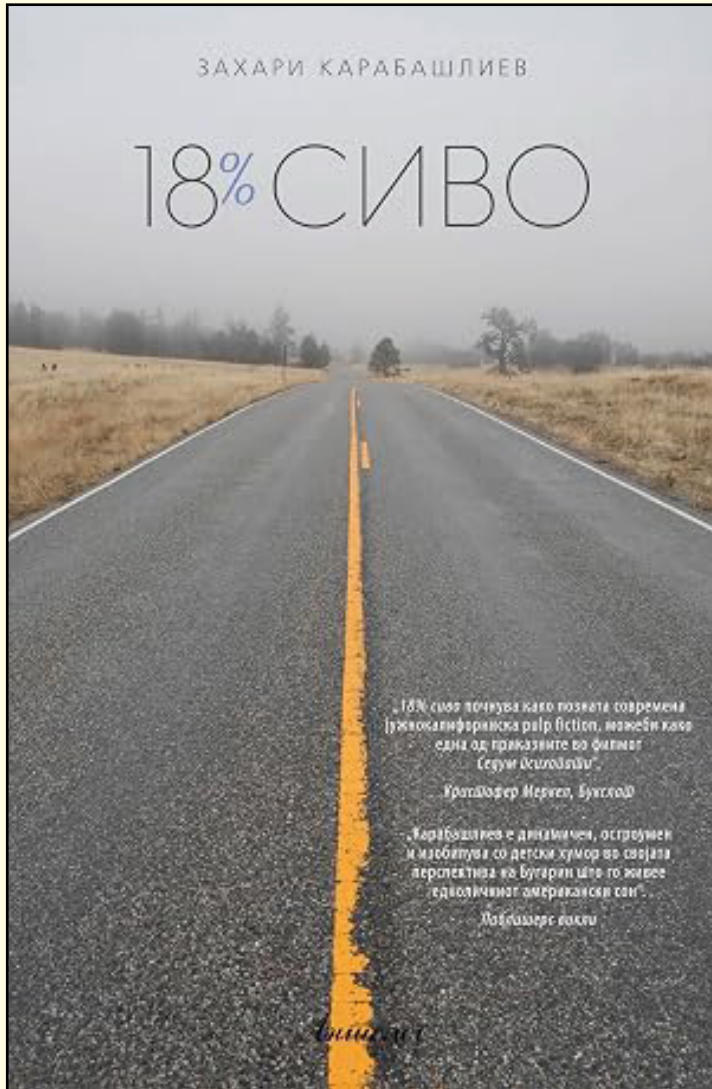
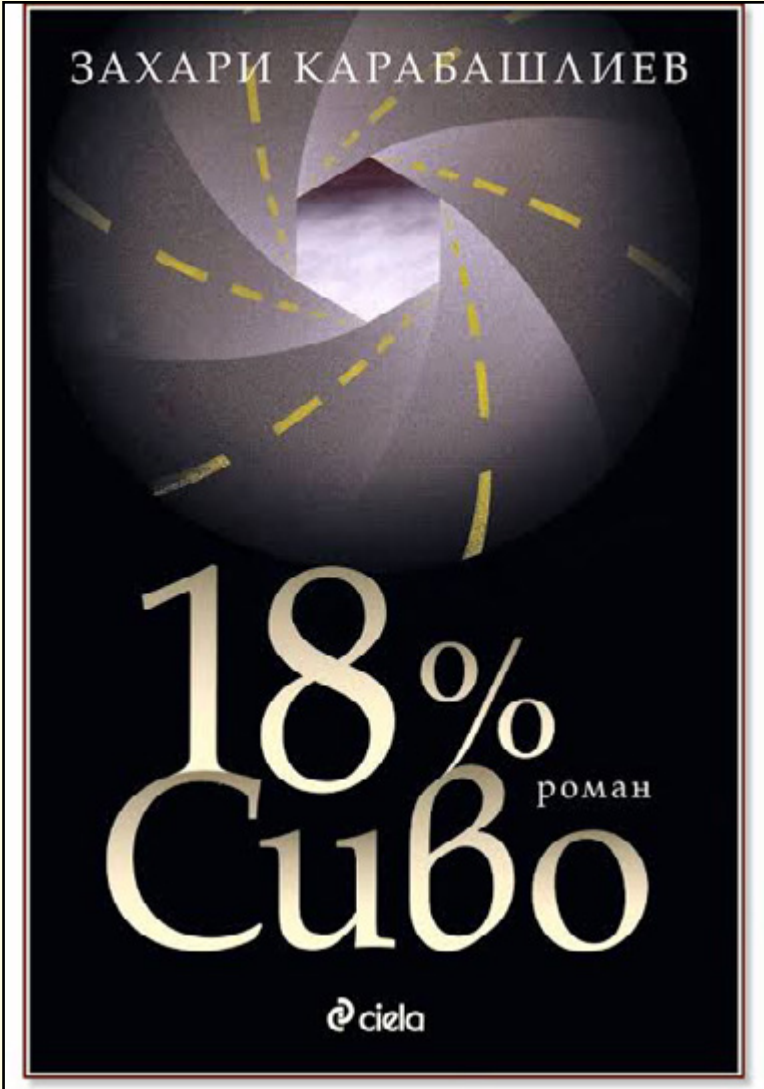
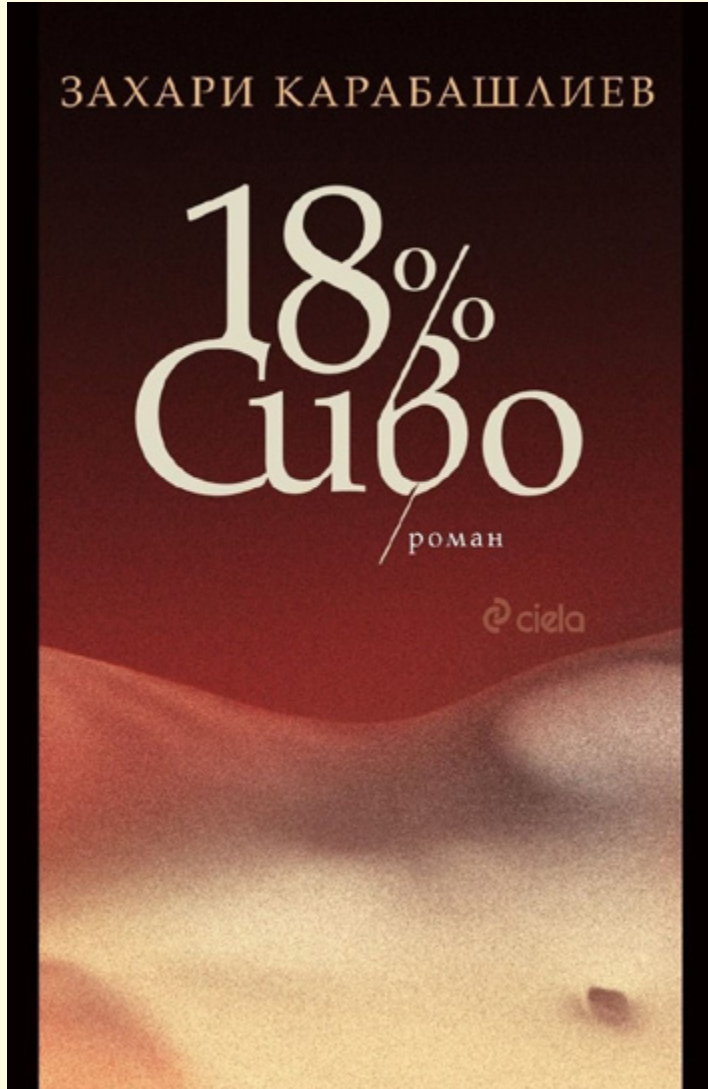


SLOVAKIA



CROATIA

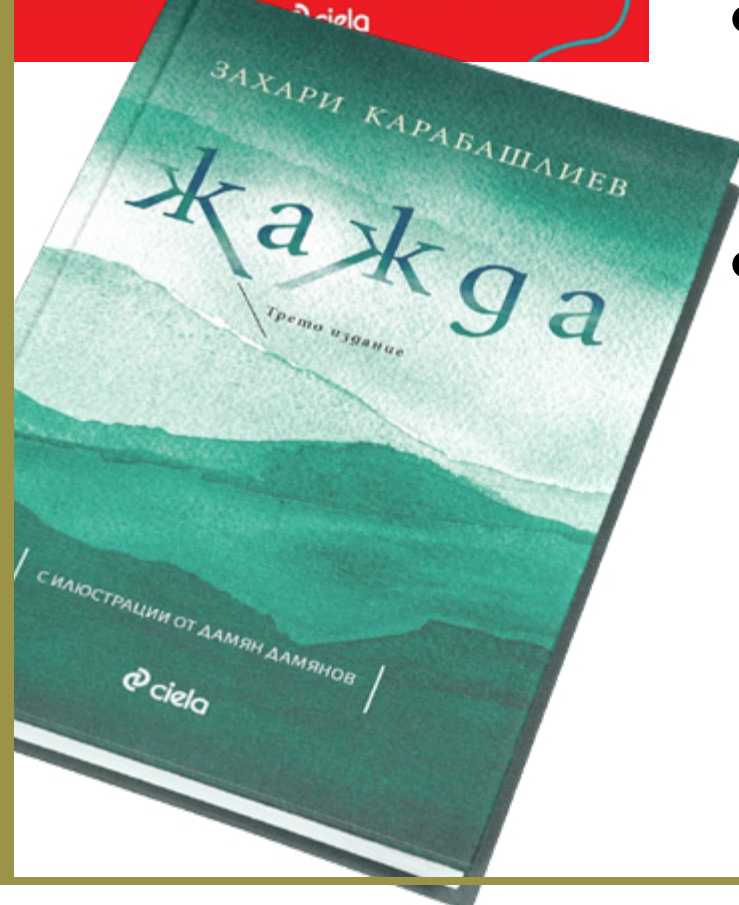
18% GRAY - BULGARIAN EDITIONS



ЗАХАРИ КАРАБАШАЛИЕВ

OTHER LITERARY WORKS

- **THIRST (2018)** - *Novella*
- **NOT SUCH A SHORT HISTORY OF THE AIRPLANE (2019)** - *Stories and essays*
- **A SHORT HISTORY OF THE AIRPLANE (2009)** - *Short story collection*
- **SYMMETRY (2011)** - *Short story collection*
- **FAIRYTALE (2010)** - *Illustrated children's book (co-author)*
- **RECOIL (2010)** - *Collection of stageplays*
- **LOVES ME, LOVES YOU NOT (2014)** - *Short story collection (editor and author)*
- **OVERCOMING (2015)** - *Short story collection (editor and author)*
- **OUR CHRISTMAS 1, OUR CHRISTMAS 2 and OUR CHRISTMAS 3** - *Story collections (editor and author)*



INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION

His works have been translated and published across multiple territories including the United States, France, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Russia, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, and North Macedonia.

Featured in the American anthology *Best European Fiction* 2018 (USA)

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS INCLUDE:

- Open Letter Books (USA)
- Dalkey Archive (USA)
- Editions Intervalles (France)
- Ksiazkowe Klimaty (Poland)
- HenaCom (Croatia)
- Vydavateľstvo (Slovakia)
- Antolog (N. Macedonia)

SELECTED REVIEWS

“ Karabashliev entered Bulgarian literature at the beginning of the century to become part of its renewal and one of its most read writers. His talent as a storyteller is combined with a broad and engaged view of the world. He is a writer who has an eye for the contemporary and for the big canvas of the historical, masterfully interweaving the two perspectives in his novels.

GEORGI GOSPODINOV,

Winner of the 2023 Booker International Literary Prize

“ In *Havra*, Zachary Karabashliev interweaves a gorgeously fictionalized story of Januarius Macgahan, a late 19th-century American war correspondent crucial to Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman Empire, with a painfully realistic pulp fiction tale of 20th-century mafia war after the fall of socialism. With a fresh balance of wit, vulnerability, and fast-paced action, this novel illustrates how the dormant seeds of the past have sown the barren fields of our political and personal present.

ANGELA RODEL,

Winner of the 2023 Booker International Literary Prize

“ It's hard not to read *18% Gray* as a love letter to the great American novel. The great American novel as interpreted by a Bulgarian author.

TARA OLMSTED, *Necessary Fiction*

“ Zachary Karabashliev's writing is fearless, raw, and beautiful. *18% Gray* makes it impossible to look away . . . not that you'd want to.

MAYA SLOAN, author of *High Before Homeroom*

“ Zack takes off on a transcontinental journey with a new camera, rediscovering his passion and undergoing a personal revelation... Karabashliev is fast-paced, quick-witted, and filled with humor in his perspective of a Bulgarian living the drab American Dream.

Publishers Weekly

“ *The Tail* is a book defined in many ways—a political thriller, an anti-utopia of the present, a parable about the corruption of power. It is above all a conceptual novel. It is no coincidence that it begins with a quote from Plato. It reads lightly and engagingly, not because of the plot, but rather because of Karabashliev's mesmerizing language—rich without being kitschy, erudite without being intrusive. For any enthusiast on the subject of signs and symbolism, *The Tail* is a feast.

ARIADNE VEX, *Shadow Dance*

“ But this novel is so much more than that, it's so much more than anything we've known before. This novel is about personal and communal wounds, about open and bleeding wounds and the stories behind them. Rather, World War I and the two wars that preceded it are the canvas on which Zachary paints a personal and touching story in detail.

BRIGITTE MARCUSO, *Literary Journal on Wound*

THEATRE

Karabashliev's plays and stage adaptations have been produced by leading theatres in Bulgaria and abroad. His theatre combines psychological acuity, political edge and strong dramatic architecture.

The Askeer Award-winning production of *The Tail* became one of the most visible stage adaptations of his work, while other plays continue to be revived and staged.

THE TAIL
in The National Theatre
Ivan Vazov, Sofia, 2024



SELECTED PRODUCTIONS

A wider view of Karabashliev's theatre—from intimate chamber drama and rehearsal-room process to stylized ensemble work and politically charged stage adaptations.



- SUNDAY EVENING
- RECOIL
- LISBON
- THE TAIL
- TALENT



FILM WORK

Feature Films

- **18% GRAY (2020)**, *screenwriter*
Dir. Victor Chuchkov
Chuchkov Brothers Production
- **YAN BIBIAN**, *screenwriter*
Dir. Yavor Gardev
Concept Studio Production
Scheduled for filming Summer 2026
- **ONCE UPON A TIME IN A WESTERN**
(co-writer)
Dir. Boris Despodov
ArtHouse Blockbuster Production, 2014
- **SON** *(in development)*, *screenwriter*
- **SUNDAY EVENING** *(in development)*,
screenwriter
- **HAVRA**, *co-screenwriter, in production*

Short films based on his works

- **THE COMMA (2023)**
Dir. Iveta Ivanova
- **STRANGERS (2016)**
Dir. Kamelia Petrova
- **THE CAKE STORY (2009)**
Dir. Milko Yovchev

ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

- Founder and Creative Director of VarnaLit International Literary Festival (est. 2017)
International festival connecting writers from all over the world with over 80 schools in Varna region, promoting literacy, literature, and art.
- Former Creative Writing Lecturer at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (2014-2019)
- Doctor Honoris Causa, Shumen University “Bishop Konstantin Preslavski” (2021)
- Member of the Board of Trustees, New Bulgarian University, Sofia



Shumen University,
2021

F I L M

SCREEN ADAPTATION

18% Gray feature film adaptation

Novel to screen.

Karabashliev's work has also reached the screen through the feature-film adaptation of *18% Gray*. The film extends the emotional and psychological world of the novel into cinema, carrying its atmosphere of memory, solitude, and desire into a distinctly visual form. This screen adaptation adds another dimension to his body of work, demonstrating the cinematic potential of his fiction and its resonance beyond the page.



BOOK SIGNINGS & APPEARANCES

From independent bookstores and literary festivals to universities and cultural institutions, Zachary Karabashliev engages audiences through conversations that bridge literature and human experience.

Whether signing books, delivering keynote addresses, or participating in public dialogues, his presence is marked by authenticity, insight, and a deep respect for the power of storytelling.



Warwick's Book Store, La Jolla, California, 2013



Varna, 2025



Sofia, 2024