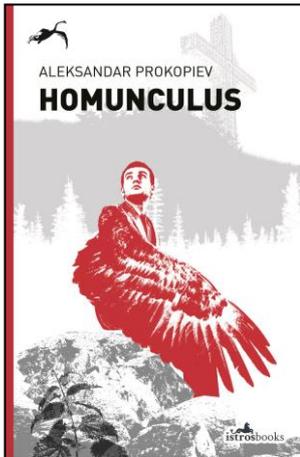


## ISTROS NEW BOOK: PRESS RELEASE

**A remarkable collection of haunting short stories – some based on traditional fairy tales – but with very adult themes. Winner of the Balkanika Prize 2012 now available in English.**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 20 MAY 2015**



# HOMUNCULUS

## FAIRY TALES FROM THE LEFT POCKET

by Aleksandar Prokopiev

(Macedonia's most famous writer and musician)

Translated by Will Firth

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*'These shape-shifting stories remain adamantly, radically open for us to interpret. They challenge us to accept, even to embrace, our own confusion: implying, perhaps, that life itself is as confusing as any fable. To read them is to glimpse the wildness at the heart of Europe.'*

Fiona Sampson (poet and *Guardian* reviewer) in the Foreword

This collection of sixteen dark “fairy tales for adults” offer something for everyone. The author has largely retained the classical fairy tale structure with its elements of surprise and the constant intertwining of the real and unreal, but he transcends the sugar-sweet endings that are so familiar to us. In other words, these stories are unlikely to end with the words, “happily ever after.”

Along with typical fairy tale features such as the interplay of humans and animals, Prokopiev presents us with a wide range of “mature” themes. He concocts a potent mix of the erotic and the tragic, of guilt and of longing – and of existential alienation.

Some of the stories are based in well-known fairy tales such as “Tom Thumb”, where the main character struggles with an oedipal bond with his mother, or “The Huntsman”, told from the perspective of the hunter sent out to kill Snow White. Others go back to Macedonian folk roots or have been freely composed by Prokopiev himself.



**About the author: Aleksandar Prokopiev** graduated at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Philology, General and Comparative literature department, and finished his postgraduate education in Belgrade and at the Sorbonne. He has published 13 books of stories and essays, as well as a novella, *The Peeper* (2007) and his collection, *Homunculus* received the Balkanika Prize 2012. He has worked as a editor of several magazines, and was a member of the editorial board of *Orient Express* (Oxford, UK) and *World Haiku* (Kyoto, Japan); and presently for *POEM Magazine* (University of Roehampton). He has written screenplays for film, theatre, TV shows, radio dramas and comic books, and his works have been translated into many languages. Prokopiev is also the Artistic Director of the Pro-Za Balkan International Festival of Literature, Skopje, Macedonia.

*'Often surreal, sometimes inexplicable, Aleksandar Prokopiev is one of the “must-reads”. He is a teasing, telling interlocutor who likes to play the naïve; the brilliant Fool who is a figure as recognizable from our traditions as from his own.'* Fiona Sampson, (poet and *Guardian* reviewer) in the Foreword to the book.

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