

Title: Looking For Answers in Post Socialist Bulgaria: Elena Aleksieva's *Who?*
Margarita Marinova, Christopher Newport University

After the end of socialism Bulgarian literature went through a period of great struggle that produced an alarmingly small number of works of serious artistic merit. However, the situation has changed greatly over the last few years. Young authors like Z. Evtimova, D. Shumnaliev, D. Enev can be seen as the vanguard of a literary renaissance capable of creating a simultaneously culturally unique and distinctly European voice.

This paper focuses on one such voice—that of Elena Aleksieva, whose newest collection of stories, *Who?* [*Koi?*], received much attention from the Bulgarian critical establishment. Aleksieva's prose brings to mind the work of both native masters of the form such as Elin Pelin and Iordan Iovkov, and authors as different from hers in their historical and cultural backgrounds as Karel Chapek and Susan Sontag. The nine stories of the collection offer postmodern interpretations of Biblical themes, which, much like Kieślowski's cinematic masterpiece *Dekalog*, uncover universal human experiences in the localized existence of contemporary subjects. Of particular interest will be the theme of the co-creation and co-destruction of parents and children that runs through, and thus connects most of the stories in *Koi?* Grounded in Julia Kristeva's theories of subject formation, my analysis will look at the role that gender plays in the fictional representation of inter-generational conflicts in the book, and go beyond them to examine possible symbolic connections with the plight and anxieties of young women writers in Bulgaria today.

Selected Bibliography:

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Kristeva, Julia. *About Chinese Women*. Tr. by Anita Barrows, London: Marion Boyars, 1977.

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Sontag, Susan. I, etcetera. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.