



by Katerina Poladjan  
S. Fischer

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Fiction

🏆 Winner of the Großer Preis des Deutschen Literaturfonds (Great Prize of The German Literature Fonds): for her entire body of work, taking 'Golden Sands' into consideration as well

🏆 Winner Leipzig Book Prize 2026

## Golden Sands

### *Goldstrand*

#### review

Poladjan's latest novel refers to the famous Golden Sands resort on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. It is central to several events that are recounted on the analyst's couch, where Eli, an aging film director, is trying to cure himself of a creative block: it's where Aunt Vera, Eli's father's sister, threw herself overboard as the family were escaping from Odessa, never to be found; it's where his father Felix and grandfather Lew settled, hoping that they would eventually find Aunt Vera; and it is the setting of one of his films.

Eli's wife has left him and gone back to Germany, taking their daughter (named Vera after his aunt) with her. During his therapy sessions in Rome, Eli recounts how his father, Felix, became an architect and built a utopian resort in Golden Sands. Eli himself was born after a brief encounter between Felix and his mother, Francesca, a fun-loving Italian woman from a wealthy conservative family. Eli dreams of sailing back to the resort where he was conceived to see whether it has lived up to its utopian promise. He also dreams of meeting Aunt Vera and hearing her side of the story, which would finally help him reconcile the contradictions of his past and present. Whereas Eli stands on the side of the dreamers, his daughter Vera represents the harshness of the real world, illustrating the gap between generations.

In an *Arabian Nights*-style structure, the novel unfolds from Eli's point of view, through prompts by his psychiatrist, moving between present

and past, and between Eli's point of view and those of the other members of his family. His stories use witty, sharp dialogue and are skilfully blended with fragments of his films, reveries and descriptions. Poladjan's fifth novel has a distinctly European feel as she deftly jumps through periods of twentieth-century history and switches from Russia to Italy, from Germany to Bulgaria, and Romania to Turkey. While it has a similar feel to Olivia Manning's Balkan Trilogy, Poladjan's latest work is neither historical fiction nor travelogue nor war-focused novel: rather, it is a timely reminder that wars and ideologies have always divided nations. And beyond that, it is an important illustration of how people are always simply struggling to understand each other as humans.

Find out more:

<https://www.fischerverlage.de/verlag/rights/book/katerina-poladjan-goldstrand-9783103971767>

## about the author

**Katerina Poladjan** was born in Moscow, grew up in Rome and Vienna and now lives in Germany. A playwright and essayist, her prose debut *In einer Nacht, woanders* (One Night, Elsewhere) was followed by *Vielleicht Marseille* (Maybe Marseille). She also co-wrote the literary travelogue *Hinter Sibirien* (Beyond Siberia) with Henning Fritsch. She has been nominated for both the Alfred Döblin Prize and the European Prize for Literature and participated in the 2015 Festival of German-Language Literature in Klagenfurt. For *Hier Sind Löwen* (Here be lions) she received grants from the German Literature Fund, the Berlin Senate and the Tarabya Cultural Academy in Istanbul. *Zukunftsmusik* (Upheaval) was shortlisted for the Leipzig Book Fair Prize and the Grand Continent Prize 2022. [www.katerinapoladjan.de](http://www.katerinapoladjan.de)

Previous works: *In einer Nacht, woanders*, Rowohlt (2011); *Vielleicht Marseille*, Rowohlt (2015); *Hier sind Löwen*, S. Fischer (2019); *Zukunftsmusik*, S. Fischer (2022);

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