

## Critical responses to *Sabazius*:

'*Sabazius* talks to us about the shift of social layers in Bulgaria after '89, the accumulation of capitals, the political changes and the birth of the mafia, the advance of kitsch and profanation, the former VIPs who still profess authority. But Dimitrova does it – I would like to emphasize this once again – by a clever plot, by popular and interesting mythological characters, with no excessive pathos and dramatizing, with strong visuality, skillful language and clear messages.

And that is the success of the book. On the one hand, it meets the challenge of the other authors from The Myths series, because it fits myths together adeptly and learnedly, arranging worlds, putting itself into the characters' shoes, broadening the possibilities of language. And on the other hand, *Sabazius* is one of the few good Bulgarian novels we should read in order to know ourselves and everything that is our own.'

**Amelia Licheva**, *Capital Light Magazine*, 24.08.2007, from *Myths and Realities*

'...*Sabazius* tells his story beautifully, gets you from the very start and is a real page-turner. Kristin Dimitrova gives an excellent example of writing which is dense and substantial...'

**Angel Igov**, *Kultura Weekly*, 01.17.2007, from *Olympus around Us*

'The new literary hero is the person whose childhood passed under the ideological tsunami of the so called "transition"; when Marx, Engels, Lenin and all the contemporary leaders were substituted by the pragmatic Lincoln on the dollar bill. In those days the world started to uncover a twofold character, resembling that of Kristin Dimitrova's *Sabazius* – both magnetic and hyperrational, bordering on callousness...'

**Boiko Lambovski**, *Sega Daily*, 23.06.2007, from *The novel of the Transition Got Written*

'...*Sabazius* smoothly lands the Greco-Thracian legends on the Bulgarian scene. The transformation, effected by Kristin Dimitrova, is far too different from what happens in the newspaper-inspired action novels...'

**Irina Vagalinska**, *Tema Magazine*, 01.17.2007, from *Orpheus Descends in the Underworld of Transition*

‘A novel that sees things through the eyes of its characters - both as a plot and as a structure. (...) It is through this optical technique that *Sabazius* (Dionysus) is being told. He is the story itself, so far as he is not presented as a personal view, but as a nucleus round which the stories rotate. Being the center of speaking, Sabazius is the inside figure which carries the story's logic in the text. That is why Kristin Dimitrova's novel is bold, courageous and even eccentric, like its hero.’

**Kristina Yordanova**, Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria Website

‘...Kristin Dimitrova mounts on the cothurni of mythology the easily recognizable personages of present day Bulgarian media and political scum. Once having raised them above us, the novelist helps us take a better look at those sinister actors who mock our lives and try to topple them down. Every other page one or another character in *Sabazius* reels so menacingly above our heads that we are able to see his ulcers under the tragic make-up. And the banality of our own evil.

In the ancient theatre only free people could become actors. Judging by the talented frankness of *Sabazius*, however, the only free person is its author.’

**Marin Bodakov**, *Kultura* Weekly, 15.06.2007, from *The Choice of Kultura: Sabazius by Kristin Dimitrova*

‘I tried to read skeptically, keeping to my intention for about thirty pages, when the text got me and never let me go until the very end. That is why now I would like to say: in spite of the award, in spite of the contest, *Sabazius* is a very good novel. Moreover, it is a very important novel for Bulgarian literature.

The language of the novel is also an achievement – it is clear and communicative. In my opinion this will be the language of good Bulgarian prose during the next decade.’

**Prof. Milena Kirova**, *Kultura* Weekly, 28.09.2007, from *Can Success Be Safely Presupposed?*

‘...Sabazius is a horned god. Pan, the Minotaur, the Devil are horned too. Even the cornucopia is horned or at least all abundance is said to have flown out of a horn. The horn is a symbol of power – the warriors all over the world wore horns – from the Gauls, through the samurais, as far as the Germans during WWI. (...) Vigour, bellicosity, but debauchery as well – that is what the horns crowning the head of Sabazius-Dionysus denote. Is it by chance that the two East European writers [from the Myth series], published at home so far, chose to write about horned mythical characters? Perhaps not: the lack of restraint, the violence comprising our lives here, to the “East of Eden”, have

surely influenced the choice. A choice, however, which is determined by the absences and not by the presences: the horn means power, we are weak; the horn means abundance, we are poor; the horn means victory, we are defeated. Sabazius is horned because we are hornless...'

**Mitko Novkov**, *Kultura Weekly*, 06.07.2007, from *The Horniad*

'In *Sabazius* Kristin Dimitrova gives full way to her penchant for the sinister and her inner drive for truth.'

*Monitor Daily*, 25.08.2007, from *Sabazius by Kristin Dimitrova and the All-Conquering Truth*

'Everybody likes Kristin Dimitrova. That is why everybody who liked her as a poet knew that her characters were struggling to get out of her verses one day. Because they lacked the action there. ... Today, holding her first novel *Sabazius* in hands, they know that what determines her choice of writing is not the genre, but the scale of her design.'

**Svetlomira Dimitrova**, *Politika Weekly*, 10-16.08.2007, from *The Heroes from the Pantheon of Nonhumans*

'The plot of *Sabazius* is about our present-day reality in its hybrid capitalist-postsocialist-gangster manifestation, but the characters' names are only mythological masks behind which the faces of real politicians, writers and public figures can be glimpsed. The mythological plane is very important. It works as a kind of compositional platform on which contemporary events are presented as the incidental embodiments of something that has been with us from the beginning of time.'

**Vladimir Trendafilov**, *Kultura Weekly*, 31.10.2008, from *The Crisis which Raises Hopes*

*Sabazius* has been the choice of *RFI (Radio France Internationale - Sofia)* for book of June; of *Kultura Weekly* for piece of art of the week (15.06.2007); of *Monitor Daily* for one of the ten books that must be read for the summer (including Amos Oz, John Updike and Jorge Amado). The novel won the national *Hristo G. Danov Prize 2008* for fiction.