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# Prototype announce landmark novel by ‘lost’ Russian émigré author Yuri Felsen

**Felsen’s debut novel *Deceit*, originally published in Paris in 1930, will be published for the first time in English on 31 May 2022, in a new translation by Bryan Karetnyk**

Independent publishing house **Prototype** have announced the upcoming publication of a novel by Russian émigré author **Yuri Felsen**, a significant writer of the 20th century Russian diaspora who died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz in 1943, and whose legacy and archive was destroyed by the Nazis.

Referred to by his contemporaries as ‘the Russian Proust’, Felsen’s work has recently been rediscovered in Russia, where his collected works were republished in 2012. His modernist debut novel ***Deceit*** was originally published in Russian in 1930 by Paris-based publisher J. Povolozky and Co, and the upcoming edition by Prototype will be the first time that any of Felsen’s books have been published in English. This new translation and publication of Felsen’s work has been supported by the Mikhail Prokhorov Foundation.

Set in interwar Paris and taking the form of a diary, the novel relates the complex and fraught relationship between an unnamed narrator and his love interest and sometime muse, the beguiling Lyolya Heard. Subtle and profound in its exploration of love, deceit and betrayal, Felsen’s novel is a daring and highly original work of psychological fiction.

**Translator Bryan Karetnyk said:** “*Felsen is one of the great undiscovered Russian writers of the twentieth century, so the opportunity to bring his debut novel into English is both an honour and a career highlight. It’s especially pleasing that the novel’s exceptional merit has been recognised by the Prokhorov Fund through its generous support of the publication.*”

During his lifetime Felsen published three novels — *Deceit* (1930), *Happiness* (1932), and *Letters on Lermontov* (1935) — as well as over a dozen short stories, and extensive essays and criticism for the émigré literary magazines *Zveno* and *Chisla*.

## ABOUT YURI FELSEN

**Yuri Felsen** was the pseudonym of Nikolai Freudenstein. Born in St Petersburg in 1894, he emigrated in the wake of the Russian Revolution, first to Riga and then to Berlin, before finally settling in Paris in 1923. In France, he became one of the leading writers of his generation, alongside the likes of Vladimir Nabokov; influenced by the great modernists such as Marcel Proust, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, his writing stood at the forefront of aesthetic and philosophical currents in European literature. Following the German occupation of France at the height of his career, Felsen tried to escape to Switzerland; however, he was caught, arrested and interned in Drancy concentration camp. He was deported in 1943 and killed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz.



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## ABOUT BRYAN KARETNYK

**Bryan Karetnyk** is a British writer and translator. His recent translations include major works by Gaito Gazdanov, Irina Odoevtseva and Boris Poplavsky. He is also the editor of the landmark Penguin Classics anthology *Russian Émigré Short Stories from Bunin to Yanovsky*.

## FURTHER NOTES FOR EDITORS ON *DECEIT*

“Throughout his literary career, Felsen worked on a great literary project, variously titled ‘The Recurrence of Things Past’ and ‘A Romance with an Author’. Constituting by the time of his death almost a dozen short stories and three novels—*Deceit*, *Happiness* and *Letters about Lermontov*—Felsen’s ambitious project, published in some of the emigration’s most prestigious literary journals, earned him the moniker ‘the Russian Proust’. Tracing the tormented love of the protagonist, as well as his artistic evolution, Felsen’s chef d’oeuvre stands at the forefront of aesthetic and philosophical currents in European modernism.

Indeed, the fine psychological portraiture of the protagonist and his love interest, as well as the beautifully wrought philosophical meditations on love, art and human nature, bear parallels not only with Proust, but also with other greats of modernism including Nabokov, Woolf and Joyce. In the so-called ‘Russia Abroad’, Felsen was unanimously held up by his contemporaries—from the doyens of belles-lettres such as Bunin and Adamovich, to the young ‘forgotten generation’ including Gazdanov and Yanovsky—to be one of the most original and significant writers of his generation, next to Nabokov.

Felsen’s plunge into obscurity came about for a variety of reasons. Not content with having sent him to the gas chambers, the Nazis did everything in their power to destroy his legacy, and his archive disappeared without trace following his arrest. Felsen’s writing has only recently been rediscovered in Russia, and his collected works were republished in their entirety in 2012. To date, only brief extracts of Felsen’s writing have been translated in obscure, out-of-print anthologies; as such, this translation is an exciting, landmark publication in the author’s history.”

**Words by Bryan Karetnyk.**

***Deceit* will be published by Prototype on 31 May 2022.**

## ABOUT PROTOTYPE

Prototype was founded in 2019 by Jess Chandler, co-founder of the independent publishing houses Test Centre and House Sparrow Press. Established to continue and develop the work begun by Test Centre, Prototype is committed to creating new possibilities in the publishing of fiction and poetry through a flexible, interdisciplinary approach. Through the discovery of high-quality work across genres, Prototype strives to increase audiences for free-form contemporary literature.

Recent titles have included Caleb Klaces’ acclaimed debut novel *Fatherhood* (longlisted for the Republic of Consciousness Prize), Jen Calleja’s short story collection *I’m Afraid That’s All We’ve Got Time For*, Sheffield Poet Laureate Otis Mensah’s collection *Safe Metamorphosis*, and *The Boiled in Between*, the debut novel by Turner Prize-winning artist Helen Marten.