Malina

Ingeborg Bachmann invites the reader on a linguistic journey into a world stretched to the very limits of language with Wittgensteinian zeal and Joycean inventiveness, where Ingeborg Bachmann ventriloquizes—and in the process demolishes—Proust, Musil, and Balzac, while filtering everything through her own utterly singular idiom. Since its original publication in 1971, Malina remains, quite simply, unlike anything else; it’s a masterpiece.

Malina uses the intertwined lives of three characters to explore the roots of society’s breakdown that led to fascism, and in Bachmann’s own words, “it doesn’t start with the first bombs that are dropped; it doesn’t start with the terror that can be written about in every newspaper. It starts with relationships between people. Fascism is the first thing in the relationship between a man and a woman, and I attempted to say that here in this society there is always war. There isn’t war and peace, there’s only war.”

“It seems in Malina there is nothing Bachmann cannot do with words.”
—LOS ANGELES TIMES

“A masterpiece!” —NAJA MARIE AIDT, PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“The most intelligent and important woman writer our land has produced this century.” —THOMAS BERNHARD

“A Viennese woman cooks dinner for her lover, waits by the telephone, delays embarking on a trip or writing the book she’s meant to write. And in that null-time, the abyss of twentieth-century trauma yawns wide open and engulfs her.” —TOM McCARTHY

INGEBORG BACHMANN (1926–1973) is widely regarded as one of the greatest German-language writers of the twentieth century. Her poems, plays, stories, and only finished novel, Malina, have been championed by Paul Celan, Hannah Arendt, Günter Grass, Peter Handke, Thomas Bernhard, Christa Wolf, and Elfriede Jelinek.

PHILIP BOEHM is an American playwright, a theater director, and the translator of numerous books, including Christine Wunnicke’s The Fox and Dr. Shimamura.

RACHEL KUSHNER is the bestselling author of The Flamethrowers, Telex from Cuba, and The Mars Room.
“I’ve said a thousand times that I always wanted to write just one book. Now, with Baron, I can close this story. With this novel I can prove that I really wrote just one book in my life. This is the book—Santantango, Melancholy, War and War, and Baron. This is my one book.”

—László Krasznahorkai
(the Paris Review Interview)

“Krasznahorkai constantly pushes beyond the expected, escalating everything to the brink of deliriousness.”

—Idra Novey, The New York Times Book Review

“László Krasznahorkai is a visionary writer of extraordinary intensity and vocal range who captures the texture of present-day existence in scenes that are terrifying, strange, appallingly comic, and often shatteringly beautiful.”

—Marina Warner, Announcing The Man Booker International Prize

“Hungarian maestro László Krasznahorkai is laconic and shrewd, as practical as he is existential, capable of wrestling huge laughs as well as immense profundity from the commonplace and the way in which we choose to respond to it.”

—Eileen Battersby, The Irish Times
László Krasznahorkai

Baron Wenckheim’s Homecoming

• Translated from the Hungarian by Ottilie Mulzet

At last, the capstone to Krasznahorkai’s four-part masterwork

Set in contemporary times, Baron Wenckheim’s Homecoming tells the story of a Prince Myshkin–like figure, Baron Bela Wenckheim, who decides to return at the end of his life to the provincial Hungarian town of his birth. Having escaped from his many casino debts in Buenos Aires, where he was living in exile, he wishes to be reunited with his high school sweetheart Marika. What follows is an endless storm of gossip, con men, and local politicians, vividly evoking the small town’s alternately drab and absurd existence. All along, the Professor—a world-famous natural scientist who studies mosses and inhabits a bizarre Zen-like shack in a desolate area outside of town—offers long rants and disquisitions on his own attempts to immunize himself from thought. Spectacular actions are staged, death and the abyss loom, until finally doom is brought down on the unsuspecting residents of the town.

“The universality of Krasznahorkai’s vision rivals that of Gogol’s Dead Souls and far surpasses all the lesser concerns of contemporary writing.”
—W. G. SEBALD

“One of the most mysterious artists now at work.” —COLM TÓIBÍN

“His work tends to get passed around like rare currency. One of the most profoundly unsettling experiences I have had as a reader.”
—JAMES WOOD, THE NEW YORKER

“A vision of painstaking beauty.” —NPR

“The Hungarian master of the apocalypse.” —SUSAN SONTAG

Winner of the 2015 Man Booker International Prize, LÁSZLÓ KRASZNAHKAI was born in Gyula, Hungary. In the New York Review of Books, Adam Thirlwell proclaimed that “Krasznahorkai has come up with his own original forms—there is nothing else like them in contemporary literature.” OTTILIE MULZET received the Best Translated Book Award in 2014 for her translation of Krasznahorkai’s Seiobo There Below.
Clarice Lispector

The Chandelier

• Translated by Magdalena Edwards and Benjamin Moser

Now in paperback, Clarice Lispector’s explosive and surprising second novel

The Chandelier, written when Lispector was only twenty-three, reveals a very different author from the college student whose debut novel, Near to the Wild Heart, announced the landfall of “Hurricane Clarice.”

Virginia and her cruel, beautiful brother, Daniel, grow up in a decaying country mansion. They leave for the city, but the change of locale leaves Virginia’s internal life unperturbed. In intensely poetic language, Lispector conducts a stratigraphic excavation of Virginia’s thoughts, revealing the drama of Clarice’s lifelong quest to discover “the nucleus made of a single instant”—and displaying a new face of this great writer, blazing with the vitality of youth.

“Sphinx, sorceress, sacred monster. The revival of the hypnotic Clarice Lispector has been one of the true literary events of the twenty-first century. The Chandelier conveys a special charge, an undeniable quantity of genius. A vulnerable and moving performance—with a heart-stopping payoff.”
–PARUL SEHGAL, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“The Brazilian literary titan Lispector expands on themes familiar to fans of her dense, rich, imitable style in this, her second novel, now translated into English for the first time. Lispector’s signature brilliance lies in the minutely observed gradations of her characters’ feelings and of their elusive, half-formed thoughts.”
–KIRKUS (STARRED REVIEW)

“A breathless, dizzying, and multisensory dive into the mind.”
–THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

“Every page vibrates with feeling. It’s not enough to say that Lispector bends language or uses words in new ways. Plenty of modernists do that. No one else writes prose this rich.”
–LILY MEYER, NPR

CLARICE LISPECTOR (1920–1977), the greatest Brazilian writer of the twentieth century, has been called “astounding” (Rachel Kushner), “a penetrating genius” (Donna Seaman, Booklist), and “better than Borges” (Elizabeth Bishop). MAGDALENA EDWARDS is a writer, translator, and actor. BENJAMIN MOSER, the author of Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector, is the editor of ND’s translation series of Lispector’s work.
Mourning Songs: Poems of Sorrow and Beauty

Edited by Grace Schulman

A beautiful, compact gift edition of some of the world's greatest poems about loss and death, to ease the heart of the bereaved

Who has not suffered grief? In Mourning Songs, the brilliant poet and editor Grace Schulman has gathered together the most moving poems about sorrow by the likes of Elizabeth Bishop, William Carlos Williams, Gwendolyn Brooks, Neruda, Catullus, Dylan Thomas, W. H. Auden, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, W. S. Merwin, Lorca, Denise Levertov, Keats, Hart Crane, Michael Palmer, Robert Frost, Hopkins, Hardy, Bei Dao, and Czeslaw Milosz— to name only some of the masters in this slim volume.

"The poems in this collection," as Schulman notes in her introduction, "sing of grief as they praise life." She notes: "As any bereaved survivor knows, there is no consolation. Time doesn’t heal grief; it emphasizes it;" wrote Marianne Moore. The loss of a loved one never leaves us. We don’t want it to. In grief, one remembers the beloved. But running beside it, parallel to it, is the joy of existence, the love that causes pain of loss, the loss that enlarges us with the wonder of existence."

Winner of the Poetry Society of America’s highest award, the Frost Medal, GRACE SCHULMAN is the author of seven poetry volumes, a book of essays, and a new memoir, Strange Paradise: Portrait of a Marriage, about life with her beloved husband Jerome, who recently passed away. She is Distinguished Professor of English at Baruch College, CUNY, and the former director of the Poetry Center, 92nd Street Y, and was for thirty-five years the poetry editor of The Nation.
The Dry Heart begins and ends with the matter-of-fact pronouncement, “I shot him between the eyes.” Everything in between is a plunge into the chilly waters of loneliness, desperation, and bitterness—and as the tale proceeds, the narrator’s murder of her flighty husband takes on a certain logical inevitability.

In this powerful novella, Natalia Ginzburg’s writing is white-hot, fueled by rage, stripped of any preciousness or sentimentality; she transforms an ordinary dull marriage into a rich psychological thriller that might pose the question: why don’t more wives kill their husbands?

“Ginzburg never raises her voice, never strains for effect, never judges her creations. Though blessed with the rhythms and tensile strength of verse, her language is economical and spare, subordinate to the demands of the story. Like Chekhov, she knows how to stand back and let her characters expose their own lives, their frailties and strengths, their illusions and private griefs. The result is nearly translucent writing—writing so clear, so direct, so seemingly simple that it gives the reader the magical sense of apprehending the world for the first time.” —MICHIKO KAKUTANI, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“A flawlessly negotiated descent into the deep and dangerous chasm separating love’s fantasies from life’s realities.” —LOS ANGELES TIMES

“I’m utterly entranced by Ginzburg’s style—her mysterious directness, her salutary ability to lay things bare that never feels contrived or cold, only necessary, honest, clear.” —MAGGIE NELSON

NATALIA GINZBURG (1916–1991), “who authored twelve books and two plays; who, because of anti-Semitic laws, sometimes couldn’t publish under her own name; who raised five children and lost her husband to Fascist torture; who was elected to the Italian parliament as an independent in her late sixties—this woman does not take her present conditions as a given. She asks us to fight back against them, to be brave and resolute. She instructs us to ask for better, for ourselves and for our children” (Belle Boggs, The New Yorker).
Happiness, As Such

• Translated from the Italian by Minna Zallman Proctor

A hauntingly beautiful novel from the “glowing light of modern Italian literature” (The New York Times Book Review)

At the heart of Happiness, As Such is an absence—an abyss that draws everyone nearer to its edge—created by the departure of a family’s wayward only son, Michele, who has fled from Italy to England to escape the dangers and threats of his radical political ties. This novel is part epistolary: his mother writes letters to him, nagging him; his sister Angelica writes to him too; so does Mara, his former lover, who gave birth to a child who could be his own. Left to clean up Michele’s mess, his family and friends complain and commiserate, making mistakes and missteps, attempting to cope in the only ways that they know how. With a few brushstrokes, Natalia Ginzburg can flesh out an entire existence and all its pitfalls and disappointments with unmatched clarity.

One of Natalia Ginzburg’s finest achievements, Happiness, As Such is an experimental, wise, raw, comic novel, written in powerful prose that cuts to the bone with surgical precision.

“The voice of the Italian novelist and essayist Natalia Ginzburg comes to us with absolute clarity amid the veils of time and language. Ginzburg gives us a new template for the female voice and an idea of what it might sound like. This voice emerges from her preoccupations and themes, whose specificity and universality she considers with a gravitas and authority that seem both familiar and entirely original.” —RACHEL CUSK

“Her sentences have great precision and clarity, and I learn a lot when I read her.” —ZADIE SMITH

“Natalia Ginzburg is a fierce writer. She trusts in things—in the few objects that can capture the emptiness of the universe.” —ITALO CALVINO

The author of Landslide and the editor of the Literary Review, MINNA ZALLMAN PROCTOR translated Fleur Jaeggy’s These Possible Lives for New Directions.
Philippe Petit

On the High Wire

• Translated from the French, and with a new foreword, by Paul Auster

“On the High Wire is fascinating to read. You will learn about the man, his work, his passion, his tenacity and lucidity” (Marcel Marceau)

“This is a book of instructions to those who will dare one day the impossible. It shows the art to fill and illuminate the Void, a void between two towers, two edges of a ravine, or two planets, or the space between heart and mind. A wire connects what would have been separated in loneliness forever. I salute you, Philippe, the Fragile Man of the Wire, the Emperor of the air. Like Fitzcarraldo you are one of the ever so rare and wondrous men: a Conquistador of the Useless. I bow my head in reverence.” – WERNER HERZOG

In this poetic handbook, the world-famous high-wire artist Philippe Petit offers a window into the world of tightrope walking. Petit masterfully explains how preparation and self-control contributed to such feats as walking between the towers of Notre Dame and the World Trade Center. Addressing such topics as the rigging of the wire, the walker’s first steps, his salute and exercises, and the work of other renowned high-wire artists, Petit offers us a book about the ecstasy of conquering our fears and reaching for the stars. “After long hours of training, the moment comes when there are no more difficulties,” Petit writes. “Everything is possible, everything becomes easy. It is at this moment that many have perished. But that, no, that is not at all what I am afraid of.”

“What sets Philippe in a class all his own is his restless quest to conquer the greatest physical heights, achieving a precise balance of chaos and creativity. He is an inspiration.” – MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV

“Philippe Petit is an artist whose theater is the sky.” – ROBIN WILLIAMS

PHILIPPE PETIT (b. 1949) is a French high-wire artist whose celebrated walk between the Twin Towers was the subject of the Academy Award-winning documentary Man on Wire and the feature film The Walk. He is also author of Why Knot?, To Reach the Clouds: My High Wire Walk Between the Twin Towers, and Creativity: The Perfect Crime.

A novelist, essayist, and translator, PAUL AUSTER (b. 1947) lives in Brooklyn and is the author of many novels, including 4321, The New York Trilogy, and City of Glass. New Directions publishes his The Red Notebook and his translation of Stephane Mallarmé’s A Tomb for Anatole.
Nabarun Bhattacharya

Herbert

Poor, poor, hard-luck Herbert Sarkar: born into a fancy Calcutta family but cursed from birth (his philandering movie director father is killed in a car crash and his mother dies soon after, when he’s still just a baby), he is taken as an orphan into his uncle’s house, only to fall further and further down the family totem pole. Despite good looks ("Hollywood-ish, Leslie Howard-ish") and native talents, he is scorned by all but his kind aunt. Cheated of his inheritance, living on the roof in cast-off clothing, he pines for love, but all is woe: his own nephews beat him up. Poor Herbert: so lovable but so little loved.

At twenty, however, he suddenly seems to possess the gift of speaking with the dead. Suddenly Herbert is bathed in glory. From less than zero to starry heights—what an apotheosis. But then the wheel of fortune turns again, all too soon …

Legendary, scathingly satiric, wildly energetic, deeply tender, Herbert is an Indian masterwork.

"An astonishing novel, zany, terrifying, and liberating in equal measure, by a writer who was a visionary." —SIDDHARTHA DEB

"Often described as a ‘magic realist’ and compared with Bulgakov, Mr. Bhattacharya won the Sahitya Akademi award for Herbert, which many critics have called anarchic. He relentlessly wrote about the marginalized, the city streets, slums and dark alleys, using satire, dark humor, and fantasy to telling effect to highlight oppression and exploitation." —THE HINDU

"Bhattacharya occupies an uneasy place in the pantheon of Bengali greats—celebrated, disillusioned, and most subversive." —THE INDIAN EXPRESS

NABARUN BHATTACHARYA (1948–2014) was an Indian Bengali writer who was committed to a revolutionary and radical aesthetics. He was the only child of the acclaimed actor and playwright Bijon Bhattacharya and the writer and activist Mahashweta Devi. The author of a dozen major novels, the most famous of which is Herbert, he was also a poet.

SUNANDINI BANERJEE is the chief editor and senior designer of Seagull Books.

Winner of the PEN/Open Book Award for The Beautiful and the Damned, SID-DHARTHA DEB is an acclaimed novelist.
Junichiro Tanizaki

Devils in Daylight

• Translated from the Japanese by J. Keith Vincent

Now in paperback, a suspenseful early novella from “the outstanding Japanese novelist of this century” (Edmund White)

One morning, Takahashi, a writer who has just stayed up all night working, is interrupted by a phone call from his old friend Sonomura. Barely able to contain his excitement, Sonomura claims that he has cracked a secret cryptographic code based on Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Gold-Bug” and now knows exactly when and where a murder will take place—and they must hurry if they want to witness the murder, because it’s happening later that very night! Sonomura has a history of lunacy and playing the amateur detective, so Takahashi is reluctant to believe him. Nevertheless, they stake out the secret location, and through tiny peepholes in the knotted wood, become voyeurs at the scene of a shocking crime...

Atmospheric, erotic, and tense, Devils in Daylight is an early work by the master storyteller who “created a lifelong series of ingenious variations on a dominant theme: the power of love to energize and destroy” (Chicago Tribune).

“This captivating short novel exemplifies why Tanizaki is considered an innovator of modern Japanese literature. The prose is cunning and compelling, evoking classic Asian folklore and elements of Don Quixote.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Devils in Daylight, from 1918, reads like a breathless snuff film cowritten by Poe and Simenon.” —PICO IYER, THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

“A rumination about the nature of fiction itself.” —KIRKUS

Author of The Makioka Sisters, In Praise of Shadows, and A Cat, a Man, and Two Women, JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI (1886–1965) is arguably the greatest Japanese writer of the twentieth century.

J. KEITH VINCENT is professor of Japanese and comparative literature at Boston University, and his translation of Okamoto Kanoko’s A Riot of Goldfish won the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission Prize for the Translation of Japanese Literature.
The Maids

The Maids concerns all the young women who work—before, during, and after WWII—in the pampered, elegant household of the famous author Chikura Raikichi. Though quite well-to-do, Raikichi has a small house: the family and the maids (usually a few, sharing a little room next to the kitchen) are on top of one another. This proximity allows Raikichi to observe the maids and their daily lives extremely closely, and while the house may be straight from The Makioka Sisters, his interest carries with it more than a dash of the erotic, calling to mind Tanizaki’s raciest books, such as Diary of a Mad Old Man and The Key.

“The final novel of the greatest Japanese novelist of the twentieth century. It is also—as Michael P. Cronin’s translation, the first into English, shows—one of his best. Written with Tanizaki’s usual narrative brio and sly intimacy, with a focus on the pleasure and drama of everyday life so all-encompassing that when the eruptions of history intrude—in the form of the second Sino-Japanese war and World War II—they ring, as desired, like pistol shots at a party. Even without these cataclysms, we come to see—Tanizaki is an insistently elegiac writer—that the world is always in flux. Tanizaki’s great success is to make us see how it is not only the masters who mourn the passing of such a world, but also the old maids.” –THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“Skillfully and subtly, Tanizaki brushes in a delicate picture of a gentle world that no longer exists.” –SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

“The Maids is altogether lighter, freer, and more playful than The Makioka Sisters—a busily peopled and remarkably sensual group portrait. The short novel teems with life and has a flavor all its own, a joyful, comic, improvisational quality rupturing the elegiac tone announced in its opening pages. Tanizaki’s remarkably fresh and intimate voice is speaking to us across a gulf of years and cultures.” –EDMUND GORDON, THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT
Dunya Mikhail

In Her Feminine Sign

A brilliant poetic exploration of language and gender, place, and time, seen through the mirror of exile

“I don’t want to be the princess. I only want to be her sleep / for 100 years”
–Dunya Mikhail

At the heart of In Her Feminine Sign, Dunya Mikhail’s luminous new collection of poems, is the Arabic suffix ta-marbuta, “the tied circle,” a circle with two dots above it that indicates a feminine word, or sign. This tied circle transforms into the moon, a stone that binds friendship, birdsong over ruins, and a hymn to Nisaba, the goddess of writing. Her “Iraqi haiku” in one section unfold like Sumerian symbols carved onto clay tablets, transmuted into the stuff of our ordinary, daily life and into the digital tablets we carry to Mars. In another poem, Mikhail ponders the Sumerian word for “freedom,” Ama-ar-gi: “what seeps out / from the dead into our dreams.”

With a deceptive simplicity and disquieting humor reminiscent of Wisława Szymborska, and a lyricism wholly her own, Mikhail slips between her childhood in Baghdad and her present life in Detroit, between Ground Zero and a mass grave, tracing new circles of light.

PRAISE FOR THE BEEKEEPER: RESCUING THE STOLEN WOMEN OF IRAQ:

“Rare and powerful: Mikhail has created a searing portrait of courage, humanity and savagery, told in a mosaic of voices. Her gifts as a poet infuse these narratives with unexpected beauty.”
–DEBORAH CAMPBELL, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“A brilliant poetic exploration of language and gender, place, and time, seen through the mirror of exile

Dunya Mikhail was born in Baghdad, Iraq, and after graduating from university, she worked as a journalist and translator for the Baghdad Observer. Facing censorship and interrogation, she left Iraq, first to Jordan and then in 1995 to America, settling in Detroit.
Dag Solstad

Professor Andersen’s Night

A dark and moving examination of one man’s derailed life, by the Norwegian master who is “without question, Norway’s bravest, most intelligent novelist” (Per Petterson)

In this existential murder mystery, it is Christmas Eve, and fifty-five-year-old professor Pål Andersen is alone, drinking coffee and cognac in his living room. Lost in thought, he looks out of the window and sees a man strangle a woman in the apartment across the street. Failing to report the murder, he becomes paralyzed by indecision. Professor Andersen’s Night is an unsettling yet highly entertaining novel, written in Dag Solstad’s signature concise, dark, and witty prose. “He’s a kind of surrealistic writer of very strange novels,” Haruki Murakami wrote, “I think he is serious literature.”

“With sublime restraint and subtle modulation, Solstad conveys an entire age of sorrow and loss.” —PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“His language sparkles with its new old-fashioned elegance and radiates a unique luster, inimitable and full of élan.” —KARL OVE KNAUSGAARD

“I find him an utterly hypnotic and utterly humane writer.”
—JAMES WOOD, THE NEW YORKER

DAG SOLSTAD (b. 1941) has written nearly thirty books. Admired worldwide by writers as diverse as Lydia Davis, Geoff Dyer, Haruki Murakami, and Peter Handke, Solstad has won the 2006 Brage Prize, the 1998 Nordic Council’s Prize for Literature, and the Norwegian Critic’s Prize in 1969, 1992, and 1999.

AGNES SCOTT LANGELAND was born in Scotland and moved to Norway in 1971. Previous translations include poems by Rune Christiansen in The Edinburgh Review and Petter Mejlænder’s book Pushwagner.
Vladimir Nabokov

Nikolai Gogol

A book New Directions loves: one of Nabokov’s greatest creations is too little known

“Gogol was a strange creature, but genius is always strange; it is only your healthy second-rater who seems to the grateful reader to be a wise old friend, nicely developing the reader’s own notions of life. Great literature skirts the irrational. Hamlet is the wild dream of a neurotic scholar. Gogol’s The Overcoat is a grotesque and grim nightmare making black holes in the dim pattern of life. The superficial reader of that story will merely see in it the heavy frolics of an extravagant buffoon; the solemn reader will take for granted that Gogol’s prime intention was to denounce the horrors of Russian bureaucracy. But neither the person who wants a good laugh, nor the person who craves books ‘that make one think’ will understand what The Overcoat is really about. Give me the creative reader; this is a tale for him.” —VLADIMIR NABOKOV

“Nabokov’s Gogol book is one of the most exhilarating, engaging, and original works ever written by one writer about another.” —ELIZABETH HARDWICK

“When Nabokov, like Gogol, has really ‘let himself go and pottered happily on the brink of his private abyss,’ he has produced great chunks of creative criticism as interesting as anything in the language. And as for this language, Nabokov’s mastery of it is complete.” —THE NEW YORK TIMES

“The creative reader who wishes to soar on Gogol’s own wingéd-steed troika will choose Nabokov as his courier.” —B. G. GUERNEY, NEW REPUBLIC

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