JANUARY

Winter 2017 titles continue on inside back cover

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A Simple Story

• Translated from the Spanish by Frances Riddle

Obsession and mastery in their purest states: the story of one dancer’s attempt to win the biggest contest of his life

Every year, at the height of summer, the remote Argentine village of Laborde holds the national malambo contest. Centuries old, this shatteringly demanding traditional gaucho dance is governed by the most rigid rules. And this festival has one stipulation that makes it unique: the malambo is danced for up to five minutes. That may seem like nothing, but consider the world record for the hundred-meter dash is 9.58 seconds. The dance contest is an obsession for countless young men, who sacrifice their bodies and money as they strive to become the champion, knowing that if they win—in order to safeguard the title’s prestige—they can never compete again.

When Leila Guerriero traveled to Laborde, one dancer’s performance took her breath away, and she spent a year following him as he prepared for the next festival. The result is this superlative piece of journalism, told with tremendous economy and power.

“Guerriero irrefutably proves that journalism can be one of the beaux arts. Below the light and agile surface that grabs your attention from the first lines, she shows a sureness and a seriousness that confer on her work a powerful consistency.” —MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

“A Simple Story is about an expression of a culture that, unlike tango, has been passed over, neglected or forgotten by all but a few devotees, for whom it is an obsession. Its obscurity, this book suggests, is its salvation.” —THE ECONOMIST

“An epic of noble proportions—Guerriero is a mistress of the telling phrase or the revealing detail.” —SARAH CROMPTON, THE SPECTATOR

LEILA GUERRIERO was born in Junín, Argentina, in 1967 and moved to Buenos Aires in 1984. She is one of Argentina’s foremost journalists and writers and has published four books.

FRANCES RIDDLE is a freelance editor, translator, and writer based in Buenos Aires.
Raduan Nassar

A Cup of Rage

A pair of lovers—a young female journalist and an older man who owns an isolated farm in Brazil—spend the night together. The next day they proceed to destroy each other. Amid vitriolic insults and scorching cruelty, their sexual adventure turns into a savage power game between two warring egos. This intense, erotic masterpiece—written by one of Brazil’s most highly regarded modernists—explores alienation, arrogance, machismo meltdown, the desire to dominate, and the wish to be dominated.

“A Cup of Rage is a burning coal of a work, superbly translated by Stefan Tobler.” —THE GUARDIAN

“The book contains much: rich inner monologue, political allusions, and a mesmerizing pull between dominance and insolence in lovers' quarrels.”
—SARA WILSON, WORLD LITERATURE TODAY

“A savagely short novel of immeasurable ambition and violent beauty. This is the language of genius.” —JUAN PABLO VILLALOBOS
Raduan Nassar

Ancient Tillage

*Translated from the Portuguese by K.C.S Sotelino*

A Brazilian master novelist in English at last

For André, a young man growing up on a farm in Brazil, life consists of “the earth, the wheat, the bread, our table, and our family.” He loves the land, fears his austere, pious father, who preaches from the head of the table as if from a pulpit, and loathes himself as he begins to harbor shameful feelings for his sister Ana. Lyrical and sensual, written with biblical intensity, this classic Brazilian coming-of-age novel follows André’s tormented path. He falls into the comforting embrace of liquor as—in his psychological and sexual awakening—he must choose between body and soul, obligation and freedom.

“Raduan Nassar became a Brazilian sensation with his first novel. Now published in English, the world will come knocking.” —THE INDEPENDENT

“How often, honestly, does the unveiling in translation of a ‘forgotten genius’ live up to the hype? Well here’s one that does: Raduan Nassar.” —THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

“While reading, and marveling at, Ancient Tillage and A Cup of Rage—both of them set on farms in the Brazilian outback, both of them stylistically bold achievements—we are struck by two other feelings: disappointment that Nassar wrote so little, and disbelief that it took so long to render his unique voice into English.” —MALCOM FORBES, THE NATIONAL

KAREN C. SHERWOOD SOTELINO has translated novels and short stories from Portuguese into English. Recently, she has taught at Stanford University, where she is a visiting scholar in the department of Iberian and Latin American cultures.
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 later that very night! Sonomura has a history of lunacy and playing the amateur detective, so Takahashi is of course 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*).

“The outstanding Japanese novelist of this century.” —EDMUND WHITE

“Tanizaki was a great writer. He understood the fetish-making fecundity of love, and the satisfactions it offers even while giving pain, and its perverse, inverse accountings.” —JOHN UPDIKE

“Tanizaki is one of my favorites. His books are about love and very often perverse aspects of love.” —HENRY MILLER
The Maids is a jewel: an astonishing complement to The Makioka Sisters, set in the same house, in the same turbulent decades, but among the servants as much as the masters. 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, his wife Sanko, and her younger sister. 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 helps to explain Raikichi’s extremely close observation of the maids and their daily lives, although 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.

In the sensualist, semi-innocent, sexist patrician Raikichi, Tanizaki offers a richly ironic self-portrait, but he presents as well a moving, nuanced chronicle of change and loss: centuries-old values and manners are vanishing, and here—in the evanescent beauty of the small gestures and intricacies of private life—we find a whole world to be mourned. And yet, there is such vivacity and such beauty of writing that Tanizaki creates an intensely compelling epic in a kitchen full of lively girls.

Ethereally suggestive, sensational yet serious, witty but psychologically complex, The Maids is in many ways The Makioka Sisters revisited in a lighter, more comic mode.

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Nathaniel Mackey

Late Arcade

A new volume of the singular, ongoing, great American jazz novel

Nathaniel Mackey’s *Late Arcade* opens in Los Angeles. A musician known only as N. writes the first of a series of letters to the enigmatic Angel of Dust. N.’s jazz sextet, Molimo m’A’tet, has just rehearsed a new tune: the horn players read from *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* with lips clothespinned shut, while the rest of the band struts and saunters in a cosmic hymn to the sun god Ra. N. ends this breathless session by sending the Angel of Dust a cassette tape of their rehearsal.

Over the next nine months, N.’s epistolary narration follows the musical goings-on of the ensemble. N. suffers from what he calls “cowrie shell attacks”—oil spills, N.’s memory of his mother’s melancholy musical Sundays—which all becomes the source of fresh artistic invention.

Here is the newest installment of the National Book Award-winner Nathaniel Mackey’s *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*, the great American jazz novel of “exquisite rhythmic lyricism” (*Bookforum*).

“It feels, sentence to sentence and page to page, like a work in the act of being created. It is not simply writing about jazz, but writing as jazz…. There is a cliche about music writing, sometimes attributed to Thelonious Monk, among others: ‘Writing about music is like dancing about architecture.’ If so, Nathaniel Mackey is compelled, rather than deterred, by the multiform madness of the enterprise. He is the Balanchine of the architecture dance.”

—DAVID HAJDU, NEW YORK TIMES

“Nathaniel Mackey is a poet of ongoingsness involved in a kind of spiritualist or cosmic pursuit.”

—EDWARD HIRSCH, THE WASHINGTON POST

Author, editor of *Hambone*, and radio show host, NATHANIEL MACKEY (b. 1942), was the winner of the 2015 Bollingen Prize, and his collection, *Splay Anthem*, won the 2006 National Book Award for Poetry.
Julio Cortázar

Literature Class, Berkeley
1980

* Translated from the Spanish by Katherine Silver

A master class from the exhilarating writer Julio Cortázar

“I want you to know that I’m not a critic or theorist, which means that in my work I look for solutions as problems arise.” So begins the first of eight classes that the great Argentine writer Julio Cortázar delivered at UC Berkeley in 1980. These “classes” are as much reflections on Cortázar’s own writing career as they are about literature and the historical moment in which he lived. Covering such topics as “the writer’s path” (“while my aesthetic world view made me admire writers like Borges, I was able to open my eyes to the language of street slang, *lunfardo*...”) and “the fantastic” (“unbeknownst to me, the fantastic had become as acceptable, as possible and real, as the fact of eating soup at eight o’clock in the evening”), *Literature Class* provides the warm and personal experience of sitting in a room with the great author. As Joaquin Marco stated in *El Cultural*, “exploring this course is to dive into Cortázar designing his own creations.... Essential for anyone reading or studying Cortázar, cronopio or not!”

“Anyone who doesn’t read Cortázar is doomed.” –PABLO NERUDA

“A first-class literary imagination.” –THE NEW YORK TIMES

“He was, perhaps without trying, the Argentine who made the whole world love him.” –GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ
Raymond Roussel

Locus Solus

*Translated from the French by Rupert Copeland Cunningham*

An intoxicating sui generis novel by “the greatest mesmerist of modern times” (André Breton)

The wealthy scientist Martial Canterel guides a group of visitors through his expansive estate, Locus Solus, where he displays his various deranged inventions, each more spectacular than the last. First, he introduces a machine propelled by the weather, which constructs a mosaic out of varying hues of human teeth, then shows a hairless cat charged with a powerful electric battery, and next a bizarre theater in which corpses are reanimated with a special serum to enact the most important movements of their past lives.

Wondrously imaginative and narrated with Roussel’s deadpan wit, Locus Solus is unlike anything else ever written.

“There is hidden in Roussel something so strong, so ominous, and so pregnant with the darkness of the ‘infinite spaces’ that frightened Pascal, that one feels the need for some sort of protective equipment when one reads him.”

—JOHN ASHBERY

“Genius in its pure state. The Proust of dreams.” —JEAN COCTEAU

“Raymond Roussel’s works immediately absorbed me: I was taken by the prose style even before learning what was behind it—the process, the machines, the mechanisms—and no doubt when I discovered his process and his techniques, the obsessional side of me was seduced a second time by the shock of learning of the disparity between this methodically applied process, which was slightly naive, and the resulting intense poetry.”

—MICHEL FOUCAULT

RAYMOND ROUSSEL was born into a wealthy Parisian family in 1877 and died in a hotel room in Palermo in 1933. His works have influenced such artists and writers as Marcel Duchamp (“Roussel showed me the way”), Alberto Giacometti, Kenneth Koch, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Leonardo Sciascia, Italo Calvino, Paul Auster, Georges Perec, and Jim Jarmusch.
As night falls over Vienna, Franz Ritter, an insomniac musicologist, takes to his sickbed with an unspecified illness and spends a restless night drifting between dreams and memories, revisiting the important chapters of his life: his ongoing fascination with the Middle East and his numerous travels to Istanbul, Aleppo, Damascus, and Tehran, as well as the various writers, artists, musicians, academics, orientalists, and explorers who populate this vast dreamscape. At the center of these memories is his elusive, unrequited love, Sarah, a fiercely intelligent French scholar caught in the intricate tension between Europe and the Middle East.

With exhilarating prose and sweeping erudition, Mathias Énard pulls astonishing elements from disparate sources—nineteenth-century composers and esoteric orientalists, Balzac and Agatha Christie—and binds them together in a most magical way.

"Mathias Énard has found a way to restore death to life and life to death, and so joins the first rank of novelists, the bringers of fire, who even as they can’t go on, do." —GARTH RISK HALLBERG, THE MILLIONS

"A narrative of infinite detail and esoteric knowledge blurs the boundaries between traditional genres, with fiction shading into nonfiction, poetry bleeding into history." —NEW YORK TIMES

"Mathias Énard is the most brazen French writer since Houellebecq." —NEW STATESMAN

Mathias Énard is the award-winning author of Zone and Street of Thieves, and a translator from Persian and Arabic. He won the Prix Goncourt in 2015 for Compass.

Charlotte Mandell has translated works from a number of important French authors, including Proust, Flaubert, Genet, Maupassant, and Blanchot.
Personified animals (snakes, wolves, sheep), natural things (a swamp, a lake, a rainbow, trees), mankind’s creations (trucks, swords, zeroes) are all characters in The Teeth of the Comb. They aspire, they plot, they hope, they destroy, they fail, they love. These wonderful small stories animate new realities and make us see our reality anew. Reading Alomar’s sly moral fables and sharp political allegories, the reader always sits up a little straighter, and a little wiser. Here is the title story:

Some of the teeth of the comb were envious of the class differences that exist between humans. They strived desperately to increase their height, and, when they succeeded, began to look with disdain on their colleagues below. After a little while the comb’s owner felt a desire to comb his hair. But when he found the comb in this state he threw it in the garbage.

“In Alomar’s stories, fantasy never devolves into mere whimsy. His magical imaginative creations are, every one, inspired by his deeply felt philosophical, moral, and political convictions, giving these tales a heartfelt urgency.”
—LYDIA DAVIS, THE NEW YORKER

“In the Arab world, the Syrian writer Osama Alomar has a growing reputation as the author of short, clever parables that comment obliquely on political and social issues. But here in Chicago, where he has lived in exile since 2008, he spends most of his time as the driver of Car 45 at the Horizon Taxi Cab company.”
—LARRY ROHTER, THE NEW YORK TIMES

OSAMA ALOMAR was born in Damascus, Syria, in 1968, and is now living in Chicago. He is the author of three collections of short stories and a volume of poetry in Arabic, and also performs as a musician. His Fullblood Arabian is one of New Directions’s most successful Poetry Pamphlets.

C. J. COLLINS is a student of Arabic and a librarian currently based in Grafton, New York.
In 2001, to visit his sick father, the exiled poet Bei Dao returned to his homeland for the first time in over twenty years. The city of his birth was totally unrecognizable. “My city that once was had vanished,” he writes: “I was a foreigner in my hometown.” The shock of this experience released a flood of memories and emotions that sparked City Gate, Open Up.

In this lyrical autobiography of growing up—from the birth of the People’s Republic, through the chaotic years of the Great Leap Forward, and on into the Cultural Revolution—Bei Dao uses his extraordinary gifts as a poet and storyteller to create another Beijing, a beautiful memory palace of endless alleyways and corridors, where personal narrative mixes with the momentous history he lived through. At the center of the book are his parents and siblings, and their everyday life together through famine and festival. City Gate, Open Up is told in an episodic, fluid style that moves back and forth through the poet’s childhood, recreating the smells and sounds, the laughter and the danger, of a boy’s coming of age during a time of enormous change and upheaval.

“Intense, elegant and impressionistic.” —Dwight Garner

“Bei Dao uses words as if he were fighting for his life with them. He has found a way to speak for all of us.” —Jonathan Spence

China’s premier poet, Bei Dao has lived in exile since Tiananmen Square. New Directions publishes eight of his books.

Jeffrey Yang won the PEN/Osterwell Prize for best first book of poetry with Aquarium and translated Liu Xiaobo’s June Fourth Elegies.
In the course of compiling his highly acclaimed three-volume life of Kafka, Reiner Stach made one astounding discovery after another: original writings, unexpected photographs, inconsistencies in handwritten texts, surprising excerpts from letters, and testimonies from Kafka’s contemporaries that shed surprising light on his personality and his writing.

Is that Kafka? presents tasty morsels all about the real Kafka: he couldn’t lie, but he cheated on his high-school exams; bitten by the fitness fad, he avidly followed the regime of a Danish exercise guru; he drew beautifully; he loved beer; he read biographies voraciously; he made the most beautiful presents, especially to children; odd things made him cry or made him furious; he adored slapstick. Every discovery by Stach chips away at the stereotypical version of Kafka as the dark, sexless, tortured neurotic—and laughter, of all things, becomes the keynote.

“Moves beyond the myths and clichés.”
—MICHAEL DIRDA, THE WASHINGTON POST

“A playful new book from Reiner Stach, one that pulls together ninety nine facts and observations from the Czech author’s life, all with the purpose of clearing the brush of falsehoods about the man that linger in the public imagination.”
—JONATHON STURGEON, FLAVORWIRE

“A mishmash of ephemera, curiosities and confessional, the finds range from the banal to the deeply personal, yet collectively paint as engaging and illustrative a portrait of the artist as any I’ve read.”
—PASHA MALLA, GLOBE AND MAIL

REINER STACH, born in 1951 in Saxony, is the author of a three-volume landmark biography of Kafka that received starred reviews from Publishers Weekly (“superb”), Library Journal (“a monumental accomplishment”), Kirkus (“essential”), and Booklist (“masterful”). His work has also been acclaimed as “resplendent” (Gary Giddins, Wall Street Journal), “magnificent” (John Carey, Sunday Times), and “splendid” (William H. Gass, Harper’s Magazine).

In 2012 KURT BEALS won the first German Book Office Translation Prize. His translation of Regina Ullmann’s The Country Road was published by New Directions in 2015.
After a nervous breakdown in 1929, Robert Walser spent the remaining twenty-seven years of his life in mental asylums, closed off from the rest of the world in almost complete anonymity. While at the Herisau sanitarium, instead of writing, Walser practiced another favorite activity: walking. Starting in 1936, Carl Seelig, Walser’s friend and literary executor, visited and accompanied him on these walks, meticulously recording their conversations. As they strolled, Walser told stories, shared his daily experiences of the sanatorium, and expressed his opinions about books and art, writing and history. When Seelig asked why he no longer wrote, Walser famously replied: “I’m not here to write, I’m here to be mad.” Filled with lively anecdotes and details, *Walks with Walser* offers the fullest available account of this wonderful writer’s inner and outer life.

“That Walser is not today among the forgotten writers we owe primarily to the fact that Carl Seelig took up his cause. Without Seelig’s accounts of the walks he took with Walser, without his preliminary work on the biography, without the selections from the work he published and the lengths he went to in securing the Nachlass—the writer’s millions of illegible ciphers—Walser’s rehabilitation could never have taken place, and his memory would in all probability have faded into oblivion.” —W. G. SEBALD

“Seelig kindly visited Walser and started keeping a record of his opinions, creating over the course of time an indispensable document for all those who love Walser’s surprising prose, which, silent as snowfall, cries out from the nothingness. Walser—as can be observed in Seelig’s book—lectured on beer and twilight.” —ENRIQUE VILA-MATAS

“*Walks with Walser* is filled with Walser’s philosophy about leading a modest life, finding beauty in mundane things, and getting by with less.” —MOYRA DAVEY

**CARL SEELIG** (1894–1962) was a Swiss editor and writer and Robert Walser’s friend, guardian, and literary executor. He was a selfless supporter of countless other writers, and was also Albert Einstein’s first biographer.

**ANNE POSTEN** is a literary translator based in New York.
Kenneth Patchen

The Journal of Albion Moonlight

An unforgettable, apocalyptic novel from a distinctly American prophet

Inspired by one of the finest lyrics in the English language, the anonymous, pre-Shakespearean “Tom o’Bedlam” (“By a knight of ghosts and shadows / I summoned am to tourney / Ten leagues beyond the wide world’s end / Methinks it is no journey…”), Kenneth Patchen sets off on an allegorical journey to the furthest limits of love and murder, madness and sex. While on this disordered pilgrimage to H. Roivas (Heavenly Savior), various characters offer deranged responses, conveying an otherworldly, imaginative madness.

A chronicle of violent fury and compassion, written when Surrealism was still vigorous and doing battle with psychotic “reality,” The Journal of Albion Moonlight is an American monument to engagement.

“The Journal of Albion Moonlight is a work of unmistakable genius; in all of English literature it stands alone. Albion Moonlight is the most naked figure of a man I have encountered in all literature.” —HENRY MILLER

“This novel is quite possibly the book that made the biggest impression on me, ever.” —MICHAEL BERGER, THE RUMPUS

“With this particular book I attribute some degree of salvation. Let’s get one thing straight: I’m not trying to tell you this is a great book. I’m not sure there is such a thing, and if there is, I’m not sure I’d argue this is one of them. But I am saying it’s a pivotal book—both for me, and, in a way, for you.”

—J.C. HALLMAN, TIN HOUSE

KENNETH PATCHEN (1911–1972) was one of the most prolific American poets of his time. Aside from his many books of poetry, his acclaimed novels, and his concrete visual works, Kenneth Patchen also collaborated with John Cage on the radio-play The City Wears a Slouch Hat and worked with Charles Mingus developing jazz poetry.
Recent Highlights

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