Rivka Galchen’s *Little Labors* is a droll and dazzling compendium of observations, stories, lists, and brief essays about babies and literature. Sei Shonagon’s *The Pillow Book*—a key inspiration for Rivka Galchen’s new book—contains a list of “Things That Make One Nervous.” And wouldn’t the blessed event top almost anyone’s list?

Little Labors is a slanted, enchanted literary miscellany. Varying in length from just a sentence or paragraph to a several-page story or essay, Galchen’s puzzle pieces assemble into a shining, unpredictable, mordant picture of the ordinary-extraordinary nature of babies and literature. Anecdotal or analytic, each part opens up an odd and tender world of wonder. The 47 Ronin; the black magic of maternal love; babies morphing from pumas to chickens; the quasi-repellent concept of “women writers”; origami-ophilia in Oklahoma as a gateway drug to a lifelong obsession with Japan; discussions of favorite passages from the Heian masterpieces *Genji* and *The Pillow Book*; the frightening prevalence of orange as today’s new chic color for baby gifts; Frankenstein as a sort of baby; babies gold mines; babies as tiny Godzillas …

Little Labors—atomized and exploratory, conceptually byzantine and freshly forthright—delights.

“To read Rivka Galchen is to enter a wonderland where the bizarre and the mundane march in unlikely lockstep.”

—Michael Lindgren, *The Washington Post*

“A brilliant young writer.” —*Elle*

“Galchen’s sentences catch your attention and hold it with a tight fist: Delicious.” —*Alan Cheuse, NPR*

“Galchen has a knack for taking a thread and fraying it, so that a sentence never quite ends up where you expect.” —*James Wood, The New Yorker*

Rivka Galchen’s 2008 first novel *Atmospheric Disturbances* and her 2014 story collection *American Innovations* were both *New York Times* Best Books of the Year. She received her MD from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. “Conspicuously talented” (*Time*), Galchen lives in New York City.
John Keene

Counternarratives

Now in paperback, a bewitching collection of stories and novellas that are “suspenseful, thought-provoking, mystical, and haunting” (Publishers Weekly)

Ranging from the seventeenth century to the present, and crossing multiple continents, Counternarratives draws upon memoirs, newspaper accounts, detective stories, and interrogation transcripts to create new and strange perspectives on our past and present. “An Outtake” chronicles an escaped slave’s take on liberty and the American Revolution; “The Strange History of Our Lady of the Sorrows” presents a bizarre series of events that unfold in Haiti and a nineteenth-century Kentucky convent; “The Aeronauts” soars between bustling Philadelphia, still-rustic Washington, and the theater of the U. S. Civil War; “Rivers” portrays a free Jim meeting up decades later with his former raftmate Huckleberry Finn; and in “Acrobatique,” the subject of a famous Edgar Degas painting talks back.

“Counternarratives is an extraordinary work of literature. John Keene is a dense, intricate, and magnificent writer.”—CHRISTINE SMALLWOOD, HARPER’S

“Of the scope of William T. Vollmann or Samuel R. Delany, but with a kaleidoscopic intuition all its own, Counternarratives is very easily one of the most vividly imagined and vitally timed books of the year. I haven’t felt so refreshed in quite a while as a reader.”—BLAKE BUTLER, VICE

“Keene exerts superb control over his stories, costuming them in the style of Jorge Luis Borges. Yet he preserves the undercurrent of excitement and pathos that accompanies his characters’ persecution and their groping toward freedom.”—SAM SACKS, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“Yet it is a book of such richness that it’s hard to know where to begin. Keene fights, and does so with grace, an agile and often vicious wit, and a stubborn, crackling beauty.”—BEN EHRENREICH, THE NATION

JOHN KEENE is a former member of the Dark Room Writers Collective, a graduate fellow of Cave Canem, and the recipient of many awards and fellowships, including a Whiting Foundation Prize for poetry and fiction. Keene teaches at Rutgers-Newark.
Helen DeWitt

The Last Samurai

Called “remarkable” (The Wall Street Journal) and “an ambitious, colossal debut novel” (Publishers Weekly), Helen DeWitt’s The Last Samurai is back in print at last.

Helen DeWitt’s 2000 debut, The Last Samurai, was “destined to become a cult classic” (Miramax). The enterprising publisher sold the rights in twenty countries, so “Why not just, ‘destined to become a classic?’” (Garth Risk Hallberg) And why must cultists tell the uninitiated it has nothing to do with Tom Cruise?

Sibylla, an American-at-Oxford turned loose on London, finds herself trapped as a single mother after a misguided one-night stand. High-minded principles of child-rearing work disastrously well. J. S. Mill (taught Greek at three) and Yo Yo Ma (Bach at two) claimed the methods would work with any child; when these succeed with the boy Ludo, he causes havoc at school and is home again in a month. (Is he a prodigy, a genius? Readers looking over Ludo’s shoulder find themselves easily reading Greek and more.) Lacking male role models for a fatherless boy, Sibylla turns to endless replays of Kurosawa’s masterpiece Seven Samurai. But Ludo is obsessed with the one thing he wants and doesn’t know: his father’s name. At eleven, inspired by his own take on the classic film, he sets out on a secret quest for the father he never knew. He’ll be punched, sliced, and threatened with retribution. He may not live to see twelve. Or he may find a real samurai and save a mother who thinks boredom a fate worse than death.

“A triumph—a genuinely new story, a genuinely new form.”
–A. S. Byatt, The New Yorker

“The Last Samurai is an original work of brilliance about, in part, the limits of brilliance.”
–TIME

“The book has been a great source of motivation for me. I must outdo Ludo, because he is younger than I am but smarter than I am. My father says that this is ridiculous, as Ludo is a fictional character. But this is precisely my point: how can I let a character who isn’t even real outdo me?”
–Daniel (Age 14)

HELEN DEWITT was born in a suburb of Washington, D.C., in 1957. She studied at the University of Oxford and is also the author of Lightning Rods (New Directions, 2011). She lives in Berlin.
A brand spanking new collection, *Works and Days* is classic Bernadette Mayer: fresh, learned, exciting, and endlessly surprising

Part springtime journal (“why are there thorns?”), *Works and Days* meditates on the first wasps and chipmunks of the season, times’ passage, grackle hearts, and dandelions, while also collecting dozens of poems considering the Catholic Church, Sir Thomas Browne, “Go Away” welcome mats, books, floods (“never of dollar money”), the invention of words, local politics, friendships, property development, dogs, and Hesiod. Every page delights. As the poet herself notes: “My name is Bernadette Mayer, sometimes / I am at the head of my class.”

“I don’t mean to get all Parallel universey on you
But I am at once the spider
The spider web, and
Me observing them

“The richness of life & time as they happen to us in tiny explosions all the time are grasped and held up for us to view in her magnificent work.”

—JOHN ASHBERY

“One of the most interesting, exciting, and open experimental poets.”

—TOM CLARK, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

“Mayer’s work is marked with Dorothy Parker’s bite and bawdiness and Gertrude Stein’s inventive discourse.” —THE ANTIOCH REVIEW

“Love and the seasons and the exigencies and opportunities of daily survival are the inevitable occasions of a body of work that is as radical as it is Horatian, able as little else is both to delight and instruct.”

—EDWIN FRANK, BOSTON REVIEW

BERNADETTE MAYER was born in Brooklyn in 1945. A most prolific poet, she is a recipient of a 2015 Guggenheim Fellowship and now lives in East Nassau, New York. *Works and Days* is her seventh book with New Directions.
Michael Palmer

The Laughter of the Sphinx

A powerful, indelible new collection by Michael Palmer—“one of America’s most important poets” (The Harvard Review)

Michael Palmer’s new book—a collection in two parts, “The Laughter of the Sphinx” and “Still (a cantata—or nada—for Sister Satan)”—contains 52 poems.

The title poem begins “The laughter of the Sphinx / caused my eyes to bleed” and haunts us with the ruin we are making of our world, even as Palmer revels in its incredible beauty. Such central tensions in The Laughter of the Sphinx—between beauty and loss, love and death, motion and rest, knowledge and ignorance—glow in Palmer’s lyrical play of light and entirely hypnotize the reader. The stakes, as always with Palmer, are very high, essentially life and death: “Please favor us with a reply / regarding our one-time offer / which will soon expire.”

“Magnificent … an astringent blend of surrealism and symbolism.” —THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“Exemplarily radical.” —JOHN ASHBERY

“The foremost experimental poet of his generation, and perhaps of the last several generations.”
—CITATION FOR THE POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA’S WALLACE STEVENS AWARD

“The most influential avant-gardist working, and perhaps the greatest poet of his generation. His genius is for making the world strange again.”
—VILLAGE VOICE

“Even more than its music, it emanates silence.” —COMMON KNOWLEDGE

“Palmer is among America’s most elegant—and abstract—heirs to modernist poetry.” —THE BELIEVER

Winner of the Shelley Memorial Prize and translated into over twenty-five languages, MICHAEL PALMER was born in New York City in 1943 and lives in San Francisco. The Laughter of the Sphinx is his eighth book with New Directions.
French Love Poems

- Bilingual edition
- Edited by Tynan Kogane
- Includes poems by Louise Labé, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry, Paul Éluard, Albertine Sarrazin, and many others.

Inspired by the great tradition of French love poetry, New Directions presents a beautiful, small gift edition, dedicated to what makes the world go round

In 1853, bursting with emotion, Charles Baudelaire confessed to his muse Madame Sabatier: “Sometimes, I can find relief only in composing verses for you.” Is there any better way of expressing feelings of passion and longing than with poetry? The French have excelled at this, resulting in a rich tradition of love poetry: theirs is the language of love.

Filled with devotion and lust, sensuality and eroticism, fever and overture, these poems showcase some of the most passionate verses in the French language. From the classic sixteenth-century love sonnets of Louise Labé, to the piercing lyricism of the Romantics, to the dreamlike compositions of the love-drunk Surrealists, French Love Poems is the perfect, seductive gift for the one who makes your heart flutter.

So what the door was guarded
So what we were imprisoned there
So what the street was barred off
So what the town was under attack
So what she was famished
So what we were without arms
So what night had fallen
So what we made love.

(Paul Éluard, translated by William Carlos Williams)

Naked, then, she was to all of my worship,
Smiling in triumph from the heights of her couch
At my desire advancing, as gentle and deep
As the sea sending its waves to the warm beach.

(Charles Baudelaire)

TYNAN KOGANE is an editor at New Directions.
Horacio Castellanos Moya

Revulsion: Thomas Bernhard in San Salvador

• Translated from the Spanish by Lee Klein
• Winner of a 2015 PEN Heim Translation Award

The 1997 novel that put Horacio Castellanos Moya on the map, now published for the first time in English

An expatriate professor, Vega, returns from exile in Canada to El Salvador for his mother's funeral. A sensitive idealist and an aggrieved motor mouth, he sits at a bar with the author, Castellanos Moya, from five to seven in the evening, telling his tale and ranting against everything his country has to offer. Written in a single paragraph and alive with a fury as astringent as the wrath of Thomas Bernhard, Revulsion was first published in 1997 and earned its author death threats. Roberto Bolaño called Revulsion Castellanos Moya’s darkest book and perhaps his best: “A parody of certain works by Bernhard and the kind of book that makes you laugh out loud.”

“Castellanos Moya has turned anxiety into an art form and an act of rebellion, and redeemed paranoia as a positive indicator of rot.”
—NATASHA WIMMER, THE NATION

“A welcome eye-opening addition to this new literature of the Latin American nightmare.”
—ANDERSON TEPPER, TIME OUT NEW YORK

“Humor amid the madness and evil. Don’t let the breezy, often funny and frequently irreverent tone fool you.”
—JOHN GREENYA, WASHINGTON TIMES

“Acid humor, like a Buster Keaton movie or a time bomb.”
—ROBERTO BOLAÑO

HORACIO CASTELLANOS MOYA was born in 1957 in Honduras and grew up in El Salvador. The author of eleven novels (including Senselessness, The She-Devil in the Mirror, Tyrant Memory, and The Dream of My Return), he is now living in exile in Iowa City.

LEE KLEIN’s fiction, essays, reviews, and translations have appeared in various publications. His novel The Shimmering Go-Between was published in 2014 by Atticus Books.
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS (1911–1983) was the greatest American playwright of the twentieth century. New Directions publishes his short stories, poems, letters, essays, a memoir, two novels, and over a hundred of his plays.
Tennessee Williams

Now the Cats With Jeweled Claws & Other One-Act Plays

• Edited, with an introduction and notes, by Thomas Keith
• Contains 10 one-acts—5 previously unpublished

“The peak of my virtuosity was in the one-act plays—like firecrackers in a rope.” –Tennessee Williams

This new collection of fantastic, lesser-known one-acts contains some of Williams’s most potent, witty and wild late plays written from 1971 to 1982—Upper East Side ladies dine out during the apocalypse in Now the Cats With Jeweled Claws; a pair of nonagenarians struggle to cope on the Queen Elizabeth II in Lifeboat Drill; the poet Hart Crane makes peace with his mother at the bottom of the ocean in Steps Must Be Gentle; and madness bewitches the occupants during a nursing home strike in This Is the Peaceable Kingdom. Previously unpublished late plays include Aimez-Vous Ionesco?, a parody of the Theater of the Absurd; A Recluse and His Guest, a fable about a traveling woman in a dark world who can only go forward, never back; and Ivan’s Widow, in which a psychiatrist and his young female patient engage in sexual power play that leads to murder.

“Now the Cats With Jeweled Claws is a loopy send-up of New York society, written in a gleefully absurdist mode.”
—BRUCE WEBER, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Mr. Williams is a master of the short play.”
—CLIVE BARNES, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Williams was always confronting the future; a shaman with a typewriter, he dug into the darkest depths of the American psyche in search of dramatic truths.”
—RANDY GENER, AMERICAN THEATRE MAGAZINE

THOMAS KEITH is an editor, teacher, and noted Tennessee Williams scholar.
House Mother Normal

A wild, experimental, polyphonic novel, recounting a typical day of diminishing returns at a nursing home

House Mother Normal, subtitled "A Geriatric Comedy," is the English writer B. S. Johnson’s fifth novel. Unusual in both its subject and structure, this novel is a remarkable study of old age, stripped of sentimentality and spiked with bizarre language and perceptions. Made up of eight monologues describing a single day at a nursing home, House Mother Normal explores the failing minds of the elderly with precision, humor, and unflagging compassion, and Johnson achieves, with inventiveness and escalating absurdity, a vivid multidimensional effect.

“A most gifted writer.” —SAMUEL BECKETT

“The future of the novel depends on people like B. S. Johnson.”
—ANTHONY BURGESS

“Like his admirer Samuel Beckett, Johnson locates his voices among conditions of such deprivation that even the most miserable memories are gilded by comparison: this paradox fuels equal parts of comedy and pathos. Never sentimental, at once corrosive and elegiac, House Mother Normal is a remarkable achievement.” —THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“Britain’s one-man literary avant-garde.” —JONATHAN COE

B. S. JOHNSON (1933–1973) was an English experimental novelist, poet, literary critic, and filmmaker.

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The three pieces gathered in *The Strange Case of Rachel K* roughly map the genesis of Rachel Kushner’s fiction. From the fate of a conquistador in “The Great Exception,” to the illegal radio broadcasts and then bombs in “Debouchment,” to a Havana courtesan’s “strange” case, these stories build into a vision of Cuba that is black-humored, brutal, and beautiful.

In this collection, which “overflows in atmosphere as it shows off the burgeoning talent of one of our best writers” (NPR), Rachel Kushner is forging her own original path into the wilds of contemporary fiction.

“Kushner’s writing is fluid and clear and possesses a rhythm as determined as an ocean current. Readers will encounter three stories of terrific depth.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Her prose has a poise and wariness and moral graininess that puts you in the mind of weary-souled visionaries like Robert Stone and Joan Didion.”

—DWIGHT GARNER, *THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW*

“Full of vibrantly different stories and histories, all of them particular, all of them brilliantly alive.”

—JAMES WOOD, *THE NEW YORKER*

“Kushner is the champion of something strange, wonderful and real.”

—RIVKA GALCHEN

In this selection of stories and essays, Henry Miller elucidates, revels, and soars, showing his command over a wide range of moods, styles, and subject matters. Writing “from the heart,” always with a refreshing lack of reticence, Miller involves the reader directly in his thoughts and feelings. “His real aim,” Karl Shapiro has written, “is to find the living core of our world whenever it survives and in whatever manifestation, in art, in literature, in human behavior itself. It is then that he sings, praises, and shouts at the top of his lungs with the uncontrollable hilarity he is famous for.”

Here are some of Henry Miller’s best-known writings: an essay on the photographer Brassai; “Reflections on Writing,” in which Miller examines his own position as a writer; “Seraphita” and “Balzac and His Double,” on the works of other writers; and “The Alcoholic Veteran,” “Creative Death,” “The Enormous Womb,” and “The Philosopher Who Philosophizes.”

“I think he’s the greatest American writer.” —BOB DYLAN

“Here is an artist who re-establishes the potency of illusion by gaping out at the open wounds, by courting the stern, psychological reality which man seeks to avoid through recourse to the oblique symbolism of art.” —ANAÏS NIN

“There is an eager vitality and exuberance to the writing which is exhilarating; a rush of spirit into the world as though all the sparkling wines have been uncorked at once; we watchfully hear the language skip, whoop and wheel across Miller’s page.” —WILLIAM H. GASS, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

HENRY MILLER (1891–1980) was born in New York, and spent his childhood in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. In the late ’20s, Miller went to Paris with his wife June, and became acquainted with Anaïs Nin, who would become his lover and patron. Miller was one of the most controversial American novelists during his lifetime. New Directions publishes over twenty of his books.
César Aira

“The novelist who can’t be stopped” (NYRB)

“Aira’s cubist eye sees from every angle. His matter-of-fact approach, accepting even the most outlandish episodes, suspends disbelief and encourages one’s own sense of displacement, of being released from the commonplace. Hail César!” —PATTI SMITH, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

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