ALEXANDER KLUGE, born in Germany in 1932, is a world-famous author and filmmaker (his twenty-three films include Yesterday Girl, The Female Patriot, The Candidate), a lawyer, and a media magnate. He has won Germany’s highest literary award, the Georg Büchner Prize.

Alexander Kluge

Temple of the Scapegoat:
Opera Stories

• Translated from the German by Isabel Cole and Donna Stonecipher
• With photographs

Revolving around the opera, these tales are an “archaeological excavation of the slag-heaps of our collective existence” (W. G. Sebald)

Combining fact and fiction, each of the one hundred and two tales of Alexander Kluge’s Temple of the Scapegoat (dotted with photos of famous operas and their stars) compresses a lifetime of feeling and thought: Kluge is deeply engaged with the opera and an inventive wellspring of narrative notions. The titles of his stories suggest his many turns of mind: “Total Commitment,” “Freedom,” “Reality Outrivals Theater,” “The Correct Slowing-Down at the Transitional Point Between Terror and an Inking of Freedom,” “A Crucial Character (Among Persons None of Whom Are Who They Think They Are),” and “Deadly Vocal Power vs. Generosity in Opera.” An opera, Kluge says, is a blast furnace of the soul, telling of the great singer Leonard Warren who died onstage, having literally sung his heart out. Kluge introduces a Tibetan scholar who realizes that opera “is about comprehension and passion. The two never go together. Passion overwhelms comprehension. Comprehension kills passion. This appears to be the essence of all operas, says Huang Tse-we: she also comes to understand that female roles face the harshest fates. Compared to the mass of soprano victims (out of 86,000 operas, 64,000 end with the death of the soprano), the sacrifice of tenors is small (out of 86,000 operas 1,143 tenors are a write-off).

“Alexander Kluge, that most enlightened of writers.” –W. G. SEBALD

“Alexander Kluge is a gigantic figure in the German cultural landscape. He exemplifies—along with Pasolini—what is most vigorous and original in the European idea of the artist as intellectual, the intellectual as artist. Essential, brilliant.” –SUSAN SONTAG
Rainer Maria Rilke

Poems from the Book of Hours

• Translated from the German by Babette Deutsch
• Introduction by Ursula K. Le Guin

One of the most powerful poetry collections of the twentieth century, now in a beautiful new edition

Although *The Book of Hours* is the work of Rilke’s youth, it contains the germ of his mature convictions. Written as spontaneously received prayers, these poems celebrate a God who is not the Creator of the Universe but rather humanity itself and, above all, that most intensely conscious part of humanity, the artist. Babette Deutsch’s classic translations—born from “the pure desire to sing what the poet sang” (Ursula K. Le Guin)—capture the rich harmony and suggestive imagery of the originals, transporting the reader to new heights of inspiration and musicality.

“If Rilke cut himself shaving, he would bleed poetry.”
—STEPHEN SPENDER, *THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*

“Rilke remade the sturdy sonnet, recast the sonorous song. He quickened the German language itself!”
—RIKA LESSER, *THE NATION*

“Poets in English continue to line up for the inevitable failure of translating Rilke’s short lyrics. The best translations I have seen are from Babette Deutsch.”
—CLIVE JAMES

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Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) was one of the greatest poets who ever wrote in the German language. His most famous works are *Sonnets to Orpheus*, *The Duino Elegies*, *Letters to a Young Poet*, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, and *The Book of Hours*.

Winner of the National Book Award, Ursula K. Le Guin (b. 1929) has written over fifty books of prose and poetry.

Babette Deutsch (1895–1982) was a poet, critic, and novelist, as well as a translator.
Across the ages, cats have provided their adopted humans with companionship, affection, mystery, and innumerable metaphors; cats cast a mirror on their beholders; cats endlessly captivate and hypnotize, frustrate and delight. And to poets, in particular, these enigmatic creatures are the most delightful and beguiling of muses (Charles Baudelaire: “the sole source of amusement in one’s lodgings”) as they go about purring, prowling, hunting, playing, meowing, and napping, often oblivious to their so-called masters (Jorge Luis Borges: “you live in other time, lord of your realm—a world as closed and separate as a dream”).

Cat Poems offers a litter of odes to our beloved felines by Charles Baudelaire, Stevie Smith, Christopher Smart, Denise Levertov, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Rainer Maria Rilke, Muriel Spark, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, and many others.

“If I were not a Christian, I would worship the cat.” —MURIEL SPARK

“There are too many poems About cats. Beware of cat Lovers, they have a hidden Frustration somewhere and will Stick you with it if they can.” —KENNETH REXROTH, “CAT”

“I stumbled on the fact that Ezra Pound sees himself as a cat man.” —CHARLES OLSON

TYNAN KOGANE is an editor at New Directions.
Muriel Spark

The Informed Air: Essays

• With a preface by Penelope Jardine

Now in paperback, here are the sparkling essays of Muriel Spark, author of “the best sentences in English” (The New Yorker)

A fantastic essayist, the inimitable Muriel Spark addresses here the writing life, cats, favorite writers (the Brontës, T. S. Eliot, Robert Burns, Mary Shelley), love, Piero della Francesca, life in wartime London and in glamorous “Hollywood-on-the-Tiber” 1960s Rome, faith, and parties (on her first New Year’s Eve, as a baby sipping her mother’s sherry: “I always loved a party”).

No one was as “fearless and original” (TLS) as Muriel Spark, who believed that “art is an act of daring.” Here she glides from the mysteries of Job’s sufferings to Dame Edith Sitwell’s cocktail advice about how to handle a nasty publisher: “My dear,” she said, ‘you must acquire a pair of lorgnettes, make an occasion to see that man again, focus the glasses on him and sit looking at him through them as if he was an insect. Just look and look’.

“Witty, exacting, and wholly original. Muriel Spark’s writing is sui generis, her influence unquantifiable. These essays reveal in diamond-cut fragments the things that most amused and most touched her, each facet reflecting some new, surprising aspect of the deep inner workings of her mind.”
—MAUD NEWTON, SALON

“Muriel’s sparky prose is the best way to start your day. Reading a blast of her prose every morning is a far more restorative way to start a day than a shot of espresso.” —THE TELEGRAPH (LONDON)

MURIEL SPARK (1918–2006) was the author of dozens of novels, including The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, Memento Mori, A Far Cry from Kensington, The Girls of Slender Means, The Ballad of Peckham Rye, The Driver’s Seat, and many more. She became Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1993.
A Good Comb: The Sayings of Muriel Spark

Celebrate the immortal Muriel Spark’s hundredth birthday by imbibing a delicious glass of her bubbly wit.

*A Good Comb*, a small gift edition of Muriel Spark’s brilliant asides, sayings, and aphorisms, is a book for sheer enjoyment. No writer offers such lively, pointed, puckish insights: “Neurotics are awfully quick to notice other people’s mentalities.” “It is impossible to persuade a man who does not disagree, but smiles.” “The sacrifice of pleasure is of course itself a pleasure.” “It is impossible to repent of love. The sin of love does not exist.” “She wasn’t a person to whom things happen.” “You look for one thing and you find another.” “It calms you down, a good comb.”

Her scope is great and her striking insights are precise and unforgettable. This book will entertain you—it will even help you live your life. Drink in the pleasures of this little volume along with the benefits of taking up such advice as “Never make excuses but if you must, never make more than one—it gives the appearance of insincerity.”

“A wonderful writer.” –JAMES WOOD

“The most original and innovative British novelist.” –THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

“Spark is an enduring literary influence.” –VOGUE

“Surely the most engaging, tantalizing writer we have.” –FRANK KERMODE, THE LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS

“A major twentieth-century writer and an extraordinary and unique talent: her gifts were unusual—a piercing eye; an acute ear; an incisive, often caustic wit; a voice so distinctive; and a style so inimitable.” –THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE
Octavio Paz

The Poems of Octavio Paz

• Edited and translated by Eliot Weinberger
• With additional translations by Elizabeth Bishop, Paul Blackburn, Denise Levertov, Muriel Rukeyser, and Charles Tomlinson

Now in paperback, the definitive, life-spanning, bilingual edition of the poems by the Nobel Prize laureate

The Poems of Octavio Paz is the first retrospective collection of Paz’s poetry to span his entire writing career from his first published poem, at age seventeen, to his magnificent last poem. This landmark bilingual edition contains many poems that have never been translated into English before, plus new translations based on Paz’s final revisions. Assiduously edited by Eliot Weinberger—who has been translating Paz for over forty years—The Poems of Octavio Paz also includes translations by the poet-luminaries Elizabeth Bishop, Paul Blackburn, Denise Levertov, Muriel Rukeyser, and Charles Tomlinson. Readers will find Weinberger’s capsule biography of Paz, as well as notes on many poems in Paz’s own words, taken from various interviews he gave throughout his long and singular life.

“The living conscience of his age”—MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

“The question of who or what writes a poem, which agency creates which pieces, even if none of the players is exactly automatic, takes us a long way into Paz’s work, handsomely represented in this new collection.”

—LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS

“Readers will marvel at Paz’s variety: haiku-like miniatures; the tempestuous book-length poem ‘Sunstone’; fast-moving prose poems; abstract odes; extended descriptions of places in Mexico, India, Afghanistan, and Japan.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

OCTAVIO PAZ (1914–1998) was born in Mexico City. He wrote many volumes of poetry, as well as a prolific body of nonfiction on subjects as varied as poetics, literary and art criticism, politics, culture, and Mexican history. He was awarded the Jerusalem Prize in 1977, the Cervantes Prize in 1981, the Neustadt Prize in 1982, and finally the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1990.

ELIOT WEINBERGER is an essayist, editor, and translator. He lives in New York City.
Since 2014, Daesh (ISIS) has been brutalizing the Yazidi people of northern Iraq: sowing destruction, killing those who won’t convert to Islam, and enslaving young girls and women. The Beekeeper, by the acclaimed poet and journalist Dunya Mikhail, tells the harrowing stories of several women who managed to escape the clutches of Daesh. Mikhail extensively interviews these women—who’ve lost their families and loved ones, who’ve been repeatedly sold, raped, psychologically tortured, and forced to manufacture chemical weapons—and as their tales unfold, an unlikely hero emerges: a beekeeper, who uses his knowledge of the local terrain, along with a wide network of transporters, helpers, and former cigarette smugglers, to bring these women, one by one, through the war-torn landscapes of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, back into safety.

In the face of inhuman suffering, this powerful work of nonfiction offers a counterpoint to Daesh’s genocidal extremism: hope, as ordinary people risk their lives to save those of others.

Praise for Dunya Mikhail:

“Remarkable. A child’s perspective mingles freely with the poet’s mature voice, both baffled by the paradoxes of so much beauty and so much destruction.”
–RON CHARLES, THE WASHINGTON POST

“Shakespeare would have enjoyed the poetry of Dunya Mikhail, who has spoken of love as a response to a war-torn world—an aesthetic, a value, and a practice.”
–ELIZABETH TOOHEY, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

DUNYA MIKHAIL was born in Iraq in 1965. While working as a journalist for the Baghdad Observer, she faced increasing threats from the authorities and fled to the United States in the mid 1990s. Her first poetry book in English, The War Works Hard, was named one of twenty-five Books to Remember by the New York Public Library and Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea won the 2010 Arab American Book Award for poetry.

MAX WEISS is an Associate Professor of History and Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. He is the author of In the Shadow of Sectarianism, and the translator of Samar Yazbek’s A Woman in the Crossfire and Nihad Sirees’s The Silence and the Roar.
John and Paul were also visitors to the town. They were twins, as identical as can be. They wore the same clothes, chino trousers and open-neck sweaters, in John’s case adorned with a faded maroon neckerchief. Both were addicted to the shellfish harvested year-round from the rocks and sands of the coast: little clams, winkles, cockles, crabs, and above all sea urchins—their dessert, as both said. They drank only McEwan’s India pale ale and smoked the same thin black Brazilian cigars …

So begins the great writer Harry Mathews’s final novel, The Solitary Twin, a rollicking yet incredibly moving story of two young men who come to a picturesque beach town. Seen prismatically through the viewpoints of the towns’ residents, they offer a variety of worldviews. Yet are they really twins or a single person?

Harry Mathews, the first American member of the French avant-garde literary society Oulipo, and long associated with the New York School of Poets, passed away this year, and The Solitary Twin is his last novel. “I believe this novel is his finest,” his friend John Ashbery has declared.

“An imagination and an ingenuity that are often just astonishing.”

—HARPER’S

“Like Roubaud and Perec, Mathews engineers a funhouse labyrinth in which guise disfigures guise and the logic that reigns is that of representation.”

—VILLAGE VOICE

“Comic extravaganza that plays mockingly with every device of fiction.”

—WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD

HARRY MATHEWS (1913–2017) was born in New York. A founding editor of the literary journal Locus Solus, he wrote novels, poetry, short fiction, essays, and translations from the French. His many books include Cigarettes (1987), The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium (1999), and The Human Country (2002).
Fresh from the enormous success of her debut novel *Near to the Wild Heart*, Hurricane Clarice let loose something stormier with *The Chandelier*. In a body of work renowned for its potent idiosyncratic genius, *The Chandelier* in many ways has pride of place. “It stands out,” her biographer Benjamin Moser noted, “in a strange and difficult body of work, as perhaps her strongest and most difficult book.” Of glacial intensity, consisting almost entirely of interior monologues—interrupted by odd and jarring fragments of dialogue and action—the novel moves in slow waves that crest in moments of revelation. As Virginia seeks freedom via creation, the drama of her isolated life is almost entirely internal: from childhood, she sculpts clay figurines with “the best clay one could desire: white, supple, sticky, cold. She got a clear and tender material from which she could shape a world. How, how to explain the miracle …” While on one level simply the story of a woman’s life, *The Chandelier*’s real drama lies in Lispector’s attempt “to find the nucleus made of a single instant … the tenuous triumph and the defeat, perhaps nothing more than breathing.” *The Chandelier* pushes Lispector’s lifelong quest for that nucleus into deeper territories than any of her other amazing works.

“One of the twentieth century’s most mysterious writers.” —ORHAN PAMUK

“Better than Borges.” —ELIZABETH BISHOP

“Utterly original and brilliant, haunting and disturbing.” —COLM TÓIBÍN

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**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 “a truly remarkable writer” (Jonathan Franzen). “Her images dazzle even when her meaning is most obscure,” noted the *Times Literary Supplement*, “and when she is writing of what she despises, she is lucidity itself.”

**MAGDALENA EDWARDS** is a writer, translator, and actor. Her work has appeared in the *Boston Review*, the *Paris Review Daily*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and the *Millions*.
Mathias Énard

Compass

* Translated from the French by Charlotte Mandell

Winner of the Prix Goncourt and shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize, Compass is an astounding novel that bridges Europe and the Islamic world

As night falls over Vienna, Franz Ritter, an insomniac musicologist, takes to his bed with an unspecified illness. He spends a restless night drifting between dreams and memories, revisiting an ongoing fascination with the Middle East and his numerous travels to Istanbul, Aleppo, Damascus, and Tehran, as well as—over the centuries—the various writers, artists, musicians, academics, translators, and explorers who populate this vast dreamscape. At the center of these reveries is 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—from Balzac and Proust, from Thomas Mann and Sadegh Hedayat—and binds them together in a hypnotic, magical way.

“Mesmerizing. Énard is constructing an intricate, history-rich vision of a persistently misunderstood part of the world.” —THE NEW YORKER

“A swirling, hypnotic stream-of-consciousness narration. This sad yet invigorating novel is both a love letter to a vanishing discipline and an elegy.” —SAM SACKS, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“Énard has written a masterful novel.” —THE WASHINGTON POST

“A novelist like Énard feels particularly necessary right now, though to say this may actually be to undersell his work. He is not a polemicist but an artist, one whose novels will always have something to say to us.” —CHRISTOPHER BEHA, HARPER’S MAGAZINE

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 by a number of important French authors, including Proust, Flaubert, Genet, Maupassant, and Blanchot.
César Aira

The Linden Tree

In The Linden Tree the narrator—born the same year, in the same provincial town, and now living in the same great city (Buenos Aires) as César Aira—could be the author himself. Nothing, however, is guaranteed once you plunge into any of his books.

In any case, beginning with an enigmatically beautiful black father who gathered linden flowers to make a sleep-inducing tea, and his irrational, physically deformed mother of European descent, the narrator continues to catalog his best childhood friends and the many gossiping neighbors. Aira creates a colorful mosaic of an epoch in Argentina when the poor, under the guiding hand of Eva Perón, aspired to a newfound middleclass.

Moving from anecdote to anecdote, alternating between touching, funny, and sometimes surreal, this is a charming short novella that invites the reader to visit the source of Aira’s own extraordinary imagination.

“South America’s answer to Haruki Murakami.”
—ANDREW IRVIN, THE MIAMI HERALD

“Ail César!”
—PATTI SMITH, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“Once you start reading Aira, you don’t want to stop.”
—ROBERTO BOLAÑO

Nominated for a Neustadt Award and the Man Booker International Prize, CÉSAR AIRA was born in Coronel Pringles, Argentina, in 1949. He has published at least eighty books and was most recently the creator of a limited edition, “Valise,” for the Museum of Modern Art, NYC.

The poet CHRIS ANDREWS teaches at the University of Western Sydney, Australia, where he is a member of the Writing and Society Research Center. He has translated books by Roberto Bolaño and César Aira for New Directions.
Japan, after suffering from a massive irreparable disaster, cuts itself off from the world. Children are so weak they can barely stand or walk: the only people with any get-go are the elderly. Mumei lives with his grandfather Yoshiro, who worries about him constantly. They carry on a day-to-day routine in what could be viewed as a post-Fukushima time, with all the children born ancient—frail and gray-haired, yet incredibly compassionate and wise. Mumei may be enfeebled and feverish, but he is a beacon of hope, full of wit and free of self-pity and pessimism. Yoshiro concentrates on nourishing Mumei, a strangely wonderful boy who offers “the beauty of the time that is yet to come.”

A delightful, irrepressibly funny book, *The Emissary* is filled with light. Yoko Tawada, deftly turning inside-out “the curse,” defies gravity and creates a playfully joyous novel out of a dystopian one, with a legerdemain uniquely her own.

Praise for Tawada’s *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*:

“Persistent mystery is what is so enchanting about Tawada’s writing. Her penetrating irony and deadpan surrealism fray our notions of home and combine to deliver another offbeat tale. An absorbing work from a fascinating mind.” —KIRKUS REVIEWS (STARRED REVIEW)

“Wonderful—what is truly affecting is Tawada’s language, which jumps off the page and practically sings.” —NPR, NAMING *MEMOIRS OF A POLAR BEAR* ONE OF THE YEAR’S BEST FIVE BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

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**Yoko Tawada**—“strange, exquisite” (*The New Yorker*)—was born in Tokyo in 1960 and moved to Germany when she was twenty-two. She writes in both Japanese and German and has received the Akutagawa Prize, the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize, the Goethe Medal, and the Tanizaki Prize.

**MARGARET MITSUTANI** has also translated Japan’s 1994 Nobel Prize laureate Kenzaburo Oe.
Only now discovered in English, a modern Argentinian classic based on the tragic lives of the notorious writer (and wealthy politician) Raúl Barón Biza and his tragic wife

The Desert and Its Seed opens with a taxi ride to the hospital: a recently-separated wife’s face is disintegrating from acid thrown by her ex-husband while they signed divorce papers. Mano, their son, tries to wipe the acid from his mother’s cheeks but his own fingers burn.

What follows is a fruitless attempt to reconstruct her face—first in Buenos Aires, thereafter in Milan. Mario, the narrator, becomes the shadow and witness of the reconstruction attempts to repair his mother’s outraged flesh. In this role, he must confront his own terrible existence and identity, both of which are bound to an Argentina he sees disintegrating around him.

Based on his own true, tragic family story, Jorge Barón Biza’s The Desert and Its Seed was rejected by publishers in Buenos Aires and was finally self-published in 1998, three years before the author committed suicide. Written in a captivating plain style with dark, bitter humor, The Desert and Its Seed has become a modern classic, published to enormous acclaim throughout the Spanish-speaking world and translated into many languages and now, for the first time, into English.

“A cult masterpiece. The author has been compared to Joyce and Proust.”
—ENRIQUE VILA-MATAS

“Grips and perturbs the reader simultaneously.”
—LES MONDE DES LIVRES

“A great novel.”
—ALEJANDRO ZAMBRA

“A sublime explosion that results from an unpredictable art.”
—EL PAIS

“An Argentinian masterpiece.”
—LA STAMPA

JORGE BARÓN BIZA (1942–2001) was a journalist and professor, who also worked for various Argentinian publishing houses. His family’s tragic lives are documented in several books, including The Desert and Its Seed.

CAMILO RAMIREZ is a Colombian literary translator, editor, and media strategist based in New York City.
Luljeta Lleshanaku

Negative Space

*L Translated from the Albanian by Ani Gjika

Lleshanaku’s poems are “full of objects and souls, transformed and given wings in Chagall-like metaphor” (Sasha Dugdale, Poetry Nation Review)

"Language arrived fragmentary / split in syllables / spasmodic / like code in times of war," writes Luljeta Lleshanaku in the title poem to her powerful new collection Negative Space. In these lines, personal biography dispenses into the history of an entire generation that grew up under the oppressive dictatorship of the poet’s native Albania. For Lleshanaku, the “unsaid, gestures” make up the negative space that “gives form to the woods / and to the mad woman—the silhouette of goddess Athena / wearing a pair of flip-flops / and an owl atop her shoulder.” It is the negative space “that sketched my onomatopoeic profile / of body and shadow in an accidental encounter.” Lleshanaku instills ordinary objects and places—gloves, used books, acupuncture needles, small-town train stations—with subtle humor and profound insight, much as a child might discover a world in a grain of sand.

“Twilit melancholy suffuses her Albania, where ‘Soft rain falls like apostrophes in a conversation between two worlds,’ family trees are ‘struck down by a bolt of lightning,’ and most days echo with ‘a gray metallic loneliness.’ These details coalesce to paint the Albania of her internal exile and, in the end, we feel blessed that Ms. Lleshanaku has invited us to ‘the takeoffs and landings / on the runway of her soul.’” –DANA JENNINGS, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Hers are certainly poems about history, politics, and power. But Lleshanaku is also original. When she turns her attention to love, the sense of human fate is unsparing. The tyrant’s insistence that there is no private realm has the unintended effect of making it necessary to write powerful and durable poems.” –SEAN O’BRIEN, THE GUARDIAN

The author of seven poetry collections, LULJETA LLESHANAKU was born in Elbasan, Albania, in 1968, and grew up under house arrest during Enver Hoxha’s Stalinist regime. She has worked as a teacher, literary magazine editor, journalist, screenwriter, and currently is the research director at the Institute of Studies of Communist Genocide in Albania.

ANI GJIKA is an Albanian-born writer, a literary translator, and the author of Bread on Running Waters (2013), a finalist for the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize and May Sarton New Hampshire Book Prize.
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