

Nyrb Classics Reading Group Guides

The Glory of the Empire is the rich and absorbing history of an extraordinary empire, at one point a rival to Rome. Rulers such as Basil the Great of Onessa, who founded the Empire but whose treacherous ways made him a byword for infamy, and the romantic Alexis the bastard, who dallied in the fleshpots of Egypt, studied Taoism and Buddhism, returned to save the Empire from civil war, and then retired “to learn to die,” come alive in The Glory of the Empire, along with generals, politicians, prophets, scoundrels, and others. Jean d’Ormesson also goes into the daily life of the Empire, its popular customs, and its contribution to the arts and the sciences, which, as he demonstrates, exercised an influence on the world as a whole, from the East to the West, and whose repercussions are still felt today. But it is all fiction, a thought experiment worthy of Jorge Luis Borges, and in the end The Glory of the Empire emerges as a great shimmering mirage, filling us with wonder even as it makes us wonder at the fugitive nature of power and the meaning of history itself.

Take a Girl Like You may well be Kingsley Amis’s most ambitious reckoning with the serious subject at the heart of his work: the sheer squalor—emotional, material, sexual, you name it—of modern life. It also introduces one of the rare unqualified good guys in Amis’s rogue-ridden world: Jenny Bunn, a girl from the (English) north country come south to teach school in a small smug town where she hopes to find love and fortune. Jenny is a beauty and men and women are crazy about her, most of all handsome Patrick Standish, who Jenny also likes. But Jenny and Patrick live in a world where it’s becoming ridiculously difficult—disastrously difficult—to sort out the claims of sex and the claims of love.

L.J. Davis’s 1971 novel, A Meaningful Life, is a blistering black comedy about the American quest for redemption through real estate and a gritty picture of New York City in collapse. Just out of college, Lowell Lake, the Western-born hero of Davis’s novel, heads to New York, where he plans to make it big as a writer. Instead he finds a job as a technical editor, at which he toils away while passion leaks out of his marriage to a nice Jewish girl. Then Lowell discovers a beautiful crumbling mansion in a crime-ridden section of Brooklyn, and against all advice, not to mention his wife’s will, sinks his every penny into buying it. He quits his job, moves in, and spends day and night on demolition and construction. At last he has a mission: he will dig up the lost history of his house; he will restore it to its past grandeur. He will make good on everything that’s gone wrong with his life, and he will even murder to do it. From the Trade Paperback edition.

This PEN/Hemingway Award winner about coming of age in Los Angeles is a “little gem of a novel . . . a masterwork of Hollywood fiction” (Salon). He’s a child of 1940s Hollywood—specifically, Casa Fiesta, a ranch in the Malibu hills that he shares with his mother, a onetime Broadway headliner, and his father, a star of Westerns. But when his parents fall out of favor in Tinseltown, the narrator of this exquisitely crafted dark comedy loses his youthful idyll and accompanies his lovesick mother on a vodka-soaked international quest for romance and redemption. Meanwhile, his father lives in “diminished circumstances” in California, clinging to his silver-screen mementos, trusting that, someday soon, his ex-wife and his career will return. Tired of tending bar at his mother’s parties and listening to his father’s sad tales of former glory, the boy moves in with his best friend’s family in Beverly Hills. But nothing in La-La Land is quite what it seems, and when his new home turns out to be just as dysfunctional as the last, our teenage hero must somehow learn to accept his parents while finding the courage to break free and become his own man. This award-winning novel, “a kind of Catcher in the Rye for the Cheap Trick generation” (GQ), was cited by the Guardian as one of the “ten best neglected literary masterpieces.” Written by a New York Times–bestselling author who was a child of Hollywood movie stars himself, it has been praised for its “spectacularly deadpan humor” by the Atlantic Monthly and called “an insightful coming-of-age tale” by the

Austin Chronicle.

This beloved account about an intrepid young Englishman on the first leg of his walk from London to Constantinople is simply one of the best works of travel literature ever written. At the age of eighteen, Patrick Leigh Fermor set off from the heart of London on an epic journey—to walk to Constantinople. *A Time of Gifts* is the rich account of his adventures as far as Hungary, after which *Between the Woods and the Water* continues the story to the Iron Gates that divide the Carpathian and Balkan mountains. Acclaimed for its sweep and intelligence, Leigh Fermor's book explores a remarkable moment in time. Hitler has just come to power but war is still ahead, as he walks through a Europe soon to be forever changed—through the Lowlands to Mitteleuropa, to Teutonic and Slav heartlands, through the baroque remains of the Holy Roman Empire; up the Rhine, and down to the Danube. At once a memoir of coming-of-age, an account of a journey, and a dazzling exposition of the English language, *A Time of Gifts* is also a portrait of a continent already showing ominous signs of the holocaust to come.

David Plante's dazzling portraits of three influential women in the literary world, now back in print for the first time in decades. *Difficult Women* presents portraits of three extraordinary, complicated, and, yes, difficult women, while also raising intriguing and, in their own way, difficult questions about the character and motivations of the keenly and often cruelly observant portraitist himself. The book begins with David Plante's portrait of Jean Rhys in her old age, when the publication of *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, after years of silence that had made Rhys's great novels of the 1920s and '30s as good as unknown, had at last gained genuine recognition for her. Rhys, however, can hardly be said to be enjoying her new fame. A terminal alcoholic, she curses and staggers and rants like King Lear on the heath in the hotel room that she has made her home, while Plante looks impassively on. Sonia Orwell is his second subject, a suave exploiter and hapless victim of her beauty and social prowess, while the unflappable, brilliant, and impossibly opinionated Germaine Greer sails through the final pages, ever ready to set the world, and any erring companion, right.

An enthralling story of revolution, idealism, and a savage struggle for utopia by one of China's greatest living novelists. In 1898 reformist intellectuals in China persuaded the young emperor that it was time to transform his sclerotic empire into a prosperous modern state. The Hundred Days' Reform that followed was a moment of unprecedented change and extraordinary hope—brought to an abrupt end by a bloody military coup. Dashed expectations would contribute to the revolutionary turn that Chinese history would soon take, leading in time to the deaths of millions. *Peach Blossom Paradise*, set at the time of the reform, is the story of Xiumi, the daughter of a wealthy landowner and former government official who falls prey to insanity and disappears. Days later, a man with a gold cicada in his pocket turns up at his estate and is inexplicably welcomed as a relative. This mysterious man has a great vision of reforging China as an egalitarian utopia, and he will stop at nothing to make it real. It is his own plans, however, which come to nothing, and his "little sister" Xiumi is left to take up arms against a Confucian world in which women are chattel. Her campaign for change and her struggle to seize control over her own body are continually threatened by the violent whims of men who claim to be building paradise.

A New York Review Books Original *Hav* is like no place on earth. Rumored to be the site of Troy, captured during the crusades and recaptured by Saladin, visited by Tolstoy, Hitler, Grace Kelly, and Princess Diana, this Mediterranean city-state is home to several architectural marvels and an annual rooftop race that is a feat of athleticism and insanity. As Jan Morris guides us through the corridors and quarters of *Hav*, we hear the mingling of Italian, Russian, and Arabic in its markets, delight in its famous snow raspberries, and meet the denizens of its casinos and cafés. When Morris published *Last Letters from Hav* in 1985, it was short-listed for the Booker Prize. Here it is joined by *Hav of the Myrmidons*, a sequel that brings the story up-to-date. Twenty-first-century *Hav* is nearly unrecognizable. Sanitized and monetized, it is ruled

by a group of fanatics who have rewritten its history to reflect their own blinkered view of the past. Morris's only novel is dazzlingly sui-generis, part erudite travel memoir, part speculative fiction, part cautionary political tale. It transports the reader to an extraordinary place that never was, but could well be.

"Extraordinary...beautifully precise...[an] earnestly ambitious debut."—The New York Times Book Review "A wild, angry, and devastating masterpiece of a book."—NPR "[A] descendent of the Dickensian 'social novel' by way of Jonathan Franzen: epic fiction that lays bare contemporary culture clashes, showing us who we are and how we got here."—O, The Oprah Magazine One sweltering night in 2013, four former high school classmates converge on their hometown in northeastern Ohio. There's Bill Ashcraft, a passionate, drug-abusing young activist whose flailing ambitions have taken him from Cambodia to Zuccotti Park to post-BP New Orleans, and now back home with a mysterious package strapped to the undercarriage of his truck; Stacey Moore, a doctoral candidate reluctantly confronting her family and the mother of her best friend and first love, whose disappearance spurs the mystery at the heart of the novel; Dan Eaton, a shy veteran of three tours in Iraq, home for a dinner date with the high school sweetheart he's tried desperately to forget; and the beautiful, fragile Tina Ross, whose rendezvous with the washed-up captain of the football team triggers the novel's shocking climax. Set over the course of a single evening, Ohio toggles between the perspectives of these unforgettable characters as they unearth dark secrets, revisit old regrets and uncover—and compound—bitter betrayals. Before the evening is through, these narratives converge masterfully to reveal a mystery so dark and shocking it will take your breath away.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of NYRB Classics, a handpicked anthology of selections from the series. In Greek mythology, Ariadne gave Theseus a ball of red thread to guide him through the labyrinth, and the Red Thread offers a path through and a way to explore the ins and outs and twists and turns of the celebrated NYRB Classics series, now twenty years old. The collection brings together twenty-five pieces drawn from the more than five hundred books that have come out as NYRB Classics over the last twenty years. Stories, essays, interviews, poems, along with chapters from novels and memoirs and other longer narratives have been selected by Edwin Frank, the series editor, to chart a distinctive, entertaining, and thought-provoking course across the expansive and varied terrain of the Classics series.

This Booker Prize-short listed dark satire of 20th-century Irish society is back in print. Is it possible to kill with kindness? As Molly Keane's Booker Prize–short-listed dark comedy suggests, not only can kindness be deadly, it just may be the best form of revenge. The novel opens as Aroon St. Charles prepares to serve her invalid mother a splendid luncheon—the silver gleams, the linens glow—of rabbit mousse, a dish her mother despises. In fact, a single whiff of the stuff is enough to knock the old lady dead. "All my life so far I have done everything for the best reasons and the most unselfish motives," says Aroon soon after. In the pages that follow she will make her case, reminiscing about her youth among the hunting-and-fishing classes of Ireland, a faded aristocracy dedicated to distraction even as their fortunes dwindle. Keane's brilliant sleight of hand is to allow her blinkered heroine to narrate her own development from neglected child, to ungainly debutante, to bitter spinster: Aroon understands nothing, yet she reveals all.

Best known for her classic book *Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden*, Eleanor Perényi led a worldly life before settling down in Connecticut. *More Was Lost* is a memoir of her youth abroad, written in the early days of World War II, after her return to the United States. In 1937, at the age of nineteen, Perényi falls in love with a poor Hungarian baron and in short order acquires both a title and a struggling country estate at the edge of the Carpathians. She throws herself into this life with zeal, learning Hungarian and observing the invisible order of the Czech rule, the resentment of the native Ruthenians, and the haughtiness of the dispossessed Hungarians. In the midst of massive political upheaval, Perényi and her husband remain steadfast in their dedication to their new life, an alliance that will soon be tested by the war. With old-fashioned frankness and wit, Perényi recounts this poignant tale of how much was gained and how much more was lost.

A slim but powerful work of metafiction by a Nobel Prize-winning French writer and intellectual. André Gide is the inventor of modern metafiction and of autofiction, and his short novel *Marshlands* shows him handling both forms with a deft and delightful touch. The protagonist of *Marshlands* is a writer who is writing a book called *Marshlands*, which is about a reclusive character who lives all alone in a stone tower. The narrator, by contrast, is anything but a recluse: He is an indefatigable social butterfly, flitting about the Paris literary world and always talking about, what else, the wonderful book he is writing, *Marshlands*. He tells his friends about the book, and they tell him what they think, which is not exactly flattering, and of course those responses become part of the book in the reader's hand. *Marshlands* is both a poised satire of literary pretension and a superb literary invention, and Damion Searls's new translation of this early masterwork by one of the key figures of twentieth-century literature brings out all the sparkle of the original.

While still a teenager, Patrick Leigh Fermor made his way across Europe, as recounted in his classic memoirs, *A Time of Gifts* and *Between the Woods and the Water*. During World War II, he fought with local partisans against the Nazi occupiers of Crete. But in *A Time to Keep Silence*, Leigh Fermor writes about a more inward journey, describing his several sojourns in some of Europe's oldest and most venerable monasteries. He stays at the Abbey of St. Wandrille, a great repository of art and learning; at Solesmes, famous for its revival of Gregorian chant; and at the deeply ascetic Trappist monastery of La Grande Trappe, where monks take a vow of silence. Finally, he visits the rock monasteries of Cappadocia, hewn from the stony spires of a moonlike landscape, where he seeks some trace of the life of the earliest Christian anchorites. More than a history or travel journal, however, this beautiful short book is a meditation on the meaning of silence and solitude for modern life. Leigh Fermor writes, "In the seclusion of a cell—an existence whose quietness is only varied by the silent meals, the solemnity of ritual, and long solitary walks in the woods—the troubled waters of the mind grow still and clear, and much that is hidden away and all that clouds it floats to the surface and can be skimmed away; and after a time one reaches a state of peace that is unthought of in the ordinary world."

Wes Anderson on Stefan Zweig: "I had never heard of Zweig...when I just more or less by chance bought a copy of *Beware of Pity*. I loved this first book. I also read the *The Post-Office Girl*. The *Grand Budapest Hotel* has elements that were sort of stolen from both these books. Two characters in our story are vaguely meant to represent Zweig

himself — our “Author” character, played by Tom Wilkinson, and the theoretically fictionalised version of himself, played by Jude Law. But, in fact, M. Gustave, the main character who is played by Ralph Fiennes, is modelled significantly on Zweig as well." 2009 PEN Translation Prize Finalist The logic of capitalism, boom and bust, is unremitting and unforgiving. But what happens to human feeling in a completely commodified world? In *The Post-Office Girl*, Stefan Zweig, a deep analyst of the human passions, lays bare the private life of capitalism. Christine toils in a provincial post office in post-World War I Austria, a country gripped by unemployment. Out of the blue, a telegram arrives from Christine's rich American aunt inviting her to a resort in the Swiss Alps. Christine is immediately swept up into a world of inconceivable wealth and unleashed desire. She feels herself utterly transformed: nothing is impossible. But then, abruptly, her aunt cuts her loose. Christine returns to the post office, where yes, nothing will ever be the same. Christine meets Ferdinand, a bitter war veteran and disappointed architect, who works construction jobs when he can get them. They are drawn to each other, even as they are crushed by a sense of deprivation, of anger and shame. Work, politics, love, sex: everything is impossible for them. Life is meaningless, unless, through one desperate and decisive act, they can secretly remake their world from within. *Cinderella meets Bonnie and Clyde* in Zweig's haunting and hard-as-nails novel, completed during the 1930s, as he was driven by the Nazis into exile, but left unpublished at the time of his death. *The Post-Office Girl*, available here for the first time in English, transforms our image of a modern master's achievement.

Political theorist Michael Walzer's classic guide is a perfect introduction to social activism, including what-to-do advice for deciding which issues to take on, organizing, fundraising, and providing effective leadership *Political Action* is a how-to book for activists that was written at one of the darkest moments of the Nixon administration and remains no less timely and intelligent and useful today. Michael Walzer draws on his extensive engagement in the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s to lay out the practical steps necessary to keep movement politics alive both in victory and in defeat. What do people need to do when out of outrage or fear of looming disaster they come together to demand change? Should they focus on one or several issues? Should they form coalitions? What can and can't be accomplished through electoral politics? How can movements operate democratically? What is effective leadership? Walzer addresses such questions with clarity, concision, wisdom, and wit in a book that everywhere insists not only on the centrality of movement politics to the health of democratic societies but on the deep satisfaction that is to be found there. *Political Action* is both an indispensable resource for activists and a lasting and inspiring summons to arms.

Sophia Willoughby, a young Englishwoman from an aristocratic family and a person of strong opinions and even stronger will, has packed her cheating husband off to Paris. He can have his tawdry mistress. She intends to devote herself to the serious business of raising her two children in proper Tory fashion. Then tragedy strikes: the children die, and Sophia, in despair, finds her way to Paris, arriving just in time for the revolution of 1848. Before long she has formed the unlikeliest of close relations with Minna, her husband's sometime mistress, whose dramatic recitations, based on her hair-raising childhood in czarist Russia, electrify audiences in drawing rooms and on the street alike. Minna, "magnanimous and unscrupulous, fickle, ardent, and interfering," leads

Sophia on a wild adventure through bohemian and revolutionary Paris, in a story that reaches an unforgettable conclusion amidst the bullets, bloodshed, and hope of the barricades. Sylvia Townsend Warner was one of the most original and inventive of twentieth-century English novelists. At once an adventure story, a love story, and a novel of ideas, *Summer Will Show* is a brilliant reimagining of the possibilities of historical fiction.

The classic novel of a middle-aged man's affair with a worldly younger woman. One of *The New York Times Book Review's* "10 Best Books of 2015" An NYRB Classics Original *The Door* is an unsettling exploration of the relationship between two very different women. Magda is a writer, educated, married to an academic, public-spirited, with an on-again-off-again relationship to Hungary's Communist authorities. Emerence is a peasant, illiterate, impassive, abrupt, seemingly ageless. She lives alone in a house that no one else may enter, not even her closest relatives. She is Magda's housekeeper and she has taken control over Magda's household, becoming indispensable to her. And Emerence, in her way, has come to depend on Magda. They share a kind of love—at least until Magda's long-sought success as a writer leads to a devastating revelation. Len Rix's prizewinning translation of *The Door* at last makes it possible for American readers to appreciate the masterwork of a major modern European writer.

The great travel writer Jan Morris was born James Morris. James Morris distinguished himself in the British military, became a successful and physically daring reporter, climbed mountains, crossed deserts, and established a reputation as a historian of the British empire. He was happily married, with several children. To all appearances, he was not only a man, but a man's man. Except that appearances, as James Morris had known from early childhood, can be deeply misleading. James Morris had known all his conscious life that at heart he was a woman. *Conundrum*, one of the earliest books to discuss transsexuality with honesty and without prurience, tells the story of James Morris—s hidden life and how he decided to bring it into the open, as he resolved first on a hormone treatment and, second, on risky experimental surgery that would turn him into the woman that he truly was.

AN INSTANT #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER *Beautiful World, Where Are You* is a new novel by Sally Rooney, the bestselling author of *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends*. Alice, a novelist, meets Felix, who works in a warehouse, and asks him if he'd like to travel to Rome with her. In Dublin, her best friend, Eileen, is getting over a break-up, and slips back into flirting with Simon, a man she has known since childhood. Alice, Felix, Eileen, and Simon are still young—but life is catching up with them. They desire each other, they delude each other, they get together, they break apart. They have sex, they worry about sex, they worry about their friendships and the world they live in. Are they standing in the last lighted room before the darkness, bearing witness to something? Will they find a way to believe in a beautiful world?

In *The Dud Avocado*, Elaine Dundy revealed the life of the young expatriate in Paris in all its hilarious and heartbreaking drama. With *The Old Man and Me*, written when Dundy was living in England in the early 1960s, she tackles the American girl in London, a bit older but certainly no wiser. Honey Flood (if that's her real name) arrives in London with only her quick wits and a scheme. To get what she wants, she'll have to seduce the city's brightest literary star, no matter how many would-be bohemians she

has to charm, how many smoky jazz clubs she has to brave, or how many Lady Something-Somethings she has to humor. But with success within her reach, Honey finds that in making the Soho scene, she's made a big mistake.

Age has done everything except mellow the characters in Kingsley Amis's *The Old Devils*, which turns its humane and ironic gaze on a group of Welsh married couples who have been spending their golden years—when “all of a sudden the evening starts starting after breakfast”—nattering, complaining, reminiscing, and, above all, drinking. This more or less orderly social world is thrown off-kilter, however, when two old friends unexpectedly return from England: Alun Weaver, now a celebrated man of Welsh letters, and his entrancing wife, Rhiannon. Long-dormant rivalries and romances are rudely awakened, as life at the Bible and Crown, the local pub, is changed irrevocably. Considered by Martin Amis to be Kingsley Amis's greatest achievement—a book that “stands comparison with any English novel of the [twentieth] century”—*The Old Devils* confronts the attrition of ageing with rare candor, sympathy, and moral intelligence.

A New York Review Books Original *Élisabeth Gille* was only five when the Gestapo arrested her mother, and she grew up remembering next to nothing of her. Her mother was a figure, a name, Irène Némirovsky, a once popular novelist, a Russian émigré from an immensely rich family, a Jew who didn't consider herself one and who even contributed to collaborationist periodicals, and a woman who died in Auschwitz because she was a Jew. To her daughter she was a tragic enigma and a stranger. It was to come to terms with that stranger that Gille wrote, in *The Mirador*, her mother's memoirs. The first part of the book, dated 1929, the year David Golder made Némirovsky famous, takes us back to her difficult childhood in Kiev and St. Petersburg. Her father is doting, her mother a beautiful monster, while Irene herself is bookish and self-absorbed. There are pogroms and riots, parties and excursions, then revolution, from which the family flees to France, a country of “moderation, freedom, and generosity,” where at last she is happy. Some thirteen years later Irène picks up her pen again. Everything has changed. Abandoned by friends and colleagues, she lives in the countryside and waits for the knock on the door. Written a decade before the publication of *Suite Française* made Irène Némirovsky famous once more (something Gille did not live to see), *The Mirador* is a haunted and a haunting book, an unflinching reckoning with the tragic past, and a triumph not only of the imagination but of love.

Seemingly the simplest of stories—a passing anecdote of village life—*Rock Crystal* opens up into a tale of almost unendurable suspense. This jewel-like novella by the writer that Thomas Mann praised as “one of the most extraordinary, the most enigmatic, the most secretly daring and the most strangely gripping narrators in world literature” is among the most unusual, moving, and memorable of Christmas stories. Two children—Conrad and his little sister, Sanna—set out from their village high up in the Alps to visit their grandparents in the neighboring valley. It is the day before Christmas but the weather is mild, though of course night falls early in December and the children are warned not to linger. The grandparents welcome the children with presents and pack them off with kisses. Then snow begins to fall, ever more thickly and steadily. Undaunted, the children press on, only to take a wrong turn. The snow rises higher and higher, time passes: it is deep night when the sky clears and Conrad and Sanna discover

themselves out on a glacier, terrifying and beautiful, the heart of the void. Adalbert Stifter's rapt and enigmatic tale, beautifully translated by Elizabeth Mayer and Marianne Moore, explores what can be found between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day—or on any night of the year.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • From the Booker Prize–winning author of *Lincoln in the Bardo* and *Tenth of December* comes a literary master class on what makes great stories work and what they can tell us about ourselves—and our world today. **NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY ESQUIRE** • “[A] worship song to writers and readers.”—Oprah Daily For the last twenty years, George Saunders has been teaching a class on the Russian short story to his MFA students at Syracuse University. In *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, he shares a version of that class with us, offering some of what he and his students have discovered together over the years. Paired with iconic short stories by Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Gogol, the seven essays in this book are intended for anyone interested in how fiction works and why it’s more relevant than ever in these turbulent times. In his introduction, Saunders writes, “We’re going to enter seven fastidiously constructed scale models of the world, made for a specific purpose that our time maybe doesn’t fully endorse but that these writers accepted implicitly as the aim of art—namely, to ask the big questions, questions like, How are we supposed to be living down here? What were we put here to accomplish? What should we value? What is truth, anyway, and how might we recognize it?” He approaches the stories technically yet accessibly, and through them explains how narrative functions; why we stay immersed in a story and why we resist it; and the bedrock virtues a writer must foster. The process of writing, Saunders reminds us, is a technical craft, but also a way of training oneself to see the world with new openness and curiosity. *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain* is a deep exploration not just of how great writing works but of how the mind itself works while reading, and of how the reading and writing of stories make genuine connection possible.

This extraordinary, poetic portrait of two peregrine falcons is one of the most beloved works of nature writing ever published. From fall to spring, J.A. Baker set out to track the daily comings and goings of a pair of peregrine falcons across the flat fen lands of eastern England. He followed the birds obsessively, observing them in the air and on the ground, in pursuit of their prey, making a kill, eating, and at rest, activities he describes with an extraordinary fusion of precision and poetry. And as he continued his mysterious private quest, his sense of human self slowly dissolved, to be replaced with the alien and implacable consciousness of a hawk. It is this extraordinary metamorphosis, magical and terrifying, that these beautifully written pages record.

In *The Summer Book* Tove Jansson distills the essence of the summer—its sunlight and storms—into twenty-two crystalline vignettes. This brief novel tells the story of Sophia, a six-year-old girl awakening to existence, and Sophia’s grandmother, nearing the end of hers, as they spend the summer on a tiny

unspoiled island in the Gulf of Finland. The grandmother is unsentimental and wise, if a little cranky; Sophia is impetuous and volatile, but she tends to her grandmother with the care of a new parent. Together they amble over coastline and forest in easy companionship, build boats from bark, create a miniature Venice, write a fanciful study of local bugs. They discuss things that matter to young and old alike: life, death, the nature of God and of love. “On an island,” thinks the grandmother, “everything is complete.” In *The Summer Book*, Jansson creates her own complete world, full of the varied joys and sorrows of life. Tove Jansson, whose Moomintroll comic strip and books brought her international acclaim, lived for much of her life on an island like the one described in *The Summer Book*, and the work can be enjoyed as her closely observed journal of the sounds, sights, and feel of a summer spent in intimate contact with the natural world.

Storytelling as a fundamental human impulse, one that announces itself at the moment, hidden in infancy, that dreams begin—this is what the poet and critic Randall Jarrell set out to illuminate in this extraordinary book. Here Jarrell presents ballads, parables, anecdotes, and legends along with some of the finest work of Chekhov, Babel, Elizabeth Bowen, Isak Dinesen, Kafka, Peter Taylor, and Katherine Anne Porter. This wonderful anthology, with its celebrated introductory essay, enlarges and deepens our perception of the storyteller's art and its central place in the world of our feelings. Contents RANDALL JARRELL: Introduction FRANZ KAFKA: A Country Doctor ANTON CHEKHOV: Gusev RAINER MARIA RILKE: The Wrecked Houses; The Big Thing ROBERT FROST: The Witch of Coös GIOVANNI VERGA: La Lupa NIKOLAI GOGOL: The Nose ELIZABETH BOWEN: Her Table Spread LUDWIG TIECK: Fair Eckbert BERTOLT BRECHT: Concerning the Infanticide, Marie Farrar LEO TOLSTOY: The Three Hermits PETER TAYLOR: What You Hear from 'Em? HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN: The Fir Tree KATHERINE ANNE PORTER: He ANONYMOUS: The Red King and the Witch ANTON CHEKHOV: Rothschild's Fiddle THE BROTHERS GRIMM: Cat and Mouse in Partnership E. M. FORSTER: The Story of the Siren THE BOOK OF JONAH FRANZ KAFKA: The Bucket-Rider SAINT-SIMON: The Death of Monseigneur ISAAC BABEL: Awakening CHUANG T'ZU: Five Anecdotes HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL: A Tale of the Cavalry WILLIAM BLAKE: The Mental Traveller D. H. LAWRENCE: Samson and Delilah LEO TOLSTOY: The Porcelain Doll IVAN TURGENEV: Byezhin Prairie WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: The Ruined Cottage FRANK O'CONNOR: Peasants ISAK DINESEN: Sorrow-Acre

An NYRB Classics Original Stefan Zweig was particularly drawn to the novella, and *Confusion*, a rigorous and yet transporting dramatization of the conflict between the heart and the mind, is among his supreme achievements in the form. A young man who is rapidly going to the dogs in Berlin is packed off by his father to a university in a sleepy provincial town. There a brilliant lecture awakens in him a wild passion for learning—as well as a peculiarly intense fascination with

the graying professor who gave the talk. The student grows close to the professor, becoming a regular visitor to the apartment he shares with his much younger wife. He takes it upon himself to urge his teacher to finish the great work of scholarship that he has been laboring at for years and even offers to help him in any way he can. The professor welcomes the young man's attentions, at least on some days. On others, he rages without apparent reason or turns away from his disciple with cold scorn. The young man is baffled, wounded. He cannot understand. But the wife understands. She understands perfectly. And one way or another she will help him to understand too.

Back in Print After Fifty Years Clark Gifford? A cipher. A disaffected, vaguely idealistic politician in a nameless media-driven modern state where representative politics has dwindled to the corrupt transaction of business as usual and a new foreign war is always breaking out. One night Gifford and his followers seize some radio stations and broadcast a call for freedom—a rebellion that is immediately put down by the government and whose motive will remain forever obscure. Even so, it leads to twenty years of war. A paranoid tour de force of political noir, Clark Gifford's *Body* skips back and forth in time, interspersing newspaper clippings and court transcripts with the reactions and reminiscences of the politicians, generals, businessmen, journalists, waiters, and soldiers who double as the actors and the chorus in a drama over which, finally, they have no control. Who here is leading? Who is being led? Fearing's novel is a pseudo-documentary of a world given over to pseudo-politics and pseudo-events, a prophetic glimpse of the future as a poisonous fog. "I have not developed the habit of reading thrillers, but I have read enough of them to know that from now on Mr. Fearing is my man."—The New Yorker

First time in Paperback *The Family Mashber* is a protean work: a tale of a divided family and divided souls, a panoramic picture of an Eastern European town, a social satire, a kabbalistic allegory, an innovative fusion of modernist art and traditional storytelling, a tale of weird humor and mounting tragic power, embellished with a host of uncanny and fantastical figures drawn from daily life and the depths of the unconscious. Above all, the book is an account of a world in crisis (in Hebrew, *mashber* means crisis), torn between the competing claims of family, community, business, politics, the individual conscience, and an elusive God. At the center of the book are three brothers: the businessman Moshe, at the height of his fortunes as the story begins, but whose luck takes a permanent turn for the worse; the religious seeker Luzi, who, for all his otherworldliness, finds himself ever more caught up in worldly affairs; and the idiot-savant Alter, whose reclusive existence is tortured by fear and sexual desire. The novel is also haunted by the enigmatic figure of Sruli Gol, a drunk, a profaner of sacred things, an outcast, who nonetheless finds his way through every door and may well hold the key to the brothers' destinies.

The Dud Avocado follows the romantic and comedic adventures of a young American who heads overseas to conquer Paris in the late 1950s. Edith Wharton and Henry James wrote

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about the American girl abroad, but it was Elaine Dundy's Sally Jay Gorce who told us what she was really thinking. Charming, sexy, and hilarious, *The Dud Avocado* gained instant cult status when it was first published and it remains a timeless portrait of a woman hell-bent on living. "I had to tell someone how much I enjoyed *The Dud Avocado*. It made me laugh, scream, and guffaw (which, incidentally, is a great name for a law firm)." —Groucho Marx "[*The Dud Avocado*] is one of the best novels about growing up fast..." -*The Guardian*

A New York Review Books Original Whether you call her a coldhearted grifter or the soul of modern capitalism, there's no question that Aimée is a killer and a more than professional one. Now she's set her eyes on a backwater burg—where, while posing as an innocent (albeit drop-dead gorgeous) newcomer to town, she means to sniff out old grudges and engineer new opportunities, deftly playing different people and different interests against each other the better, as always, to make a killing. But then something snaps: the master manipulator falls prey to a pure and wayward passion. Aimée has become the avenging angel of her own nihilism, exacting the destruction of a whole society of destroyers. An unholy original, Jean-Patrick Manchette transformed the modern detective novel into a weapon of gleeful satire and anarchic fun. In *Fatale* he mixes equal measures of farce, mayhem, and madness to prepare a rare literary cocktail that packs a devastating punch.

In J. L. Carr's deeply charged poetic novel, Tom Birkin, a veteran of the Great War and a broken marriage, arrives in the remote Yorkshire village of Oxgodby where he is to restore a recently discovered medieval mural in the local church. Living in the bell tower, surrounded by the resplendent countryside of high summer, and laboring each day to uncover an anonymous painter's depiction of the apocalypse, Birkin finds that he himself has been restored to a new, and hopeful, attachment to life. But summer ends, and with the work done, Birkin must leave. Now, long after, as he reflects on the passage of time and the power of art, he finds in his memories some consolation for all that has been lost.

This "sort of detective story" by the New York Times bestselling novelist offers "farical, reflective, luscious, gritty [and] stylish entertainment" (*The New York Times*). As a Boy Scout, Johnny Lundgren was given the nickname Warlock. Now, at forty-two years of age, Johnny has decided to take up that moniker again. It might be an odd name for an unemployed business executive living in Traverse City, Michigan. But perhaps it fits his new job working for an eccentric doctor as a personal trouble-shooter and private investigator. Warlock suddenly finds himself on a range of bizarre assignments—everything from battling poachers in the haunted wilderness of northern Michigan to investigating his employer's wife and son in the seamy underside of Key West. A comedy with one foot in the abyss, Warlock is "a rich and sparkling novel" by one of America's most critically acclaimed authors. "Contemporary macho in a funhouse mirror . . . a hybrid born out of Faulkner's dark hero of Satoris and all the Buster Keaton comedy that we love."—*Los Angeles Herald Examiner*

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