The Last Libertines, as Benedetta Craveri writes in her preface, “tells the story of a group of young aristocrats living in the last days of the French monarchy, when it was still possible for the members of the elite to reconcile a way of life based on status and privilege with a belief, born of the Enlightenment, in the necessity for social transformation and the new ideals of justice, tolerance, and civility.” Here we meet seven emblematic characters, whom Craveri has singled out not only for the “novelistic quality of their lives and loves” but also, perhaps above all, for the fully conscious way in which they confronted the crisis of the ancien régime while looking ahead to a new world being born. Displaying the aristocratic virtues of “pride, courage, fashionable elegance, culture, spiritedness, and conviviality,” the duc de Lauzun, the comte de Segur, the vicomte de Segur, the duc de Brissac, the comte de Narbonnes, the comte de Vaudreuil, and the chevalier de Boufflers were not only masters of the art of seduction, but also true sons of the Enlightenment, all ambitious to play their part in bringing about the great changes that were in the air. When the French Revolution came, however, they were condemned to poverty, exile, and in some cases execution. Telling the parallel lives of these seven dazzling but little-remembered historical figures, Craveri brings to light a vanished civilization and dramatizes a time of turmoil that may be said to anticipate our own.

Benedetta Craveri is a professor of French literature at Tuscia University in Viterbo and the Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa in Naples. She regularly contributes to The New York Review of Books and to the cultural pages of La Repubblica. Her books include Madame du Deffand and Her World and The Age of Conversation, which is available from New York Review Books.

Aaron Kerner is a translator, editor, and teacher who lives in Boston. His most recent translation was Christopher Kloeble’s Almost Everything Very Fast.
A Future for Israel is a wake-up call to liberal Zionists. In the last two decades, Israeli politics have been changing rapidly, but Zionist thinking on the left is lagging dangerously behind. Given the demise of a viable two-state solution, the struggle for a worthwhile political future in Israel depends not on establishing borders, but on securing human and citizen rights. Denying this is by now akin to denying global warming, and will lead to a catastrophe. Seventy years after Israel’s establishment, Palestinians are again verging on becoming the majority within Israel’s borders and Israeli leaders across the political spectrum can be heard speaking of ethnic cleansing. Ignoring reality will invite scenarios worse than apartheid.

A Future for Israel will reclaim the vital center from Zionist chauvinism on the right and anti-Zionism on the left, by articulating an alternative to two-state politics from within a liberal Zionist perspective. Omri Boehm argues Israeli patriots must now challenge Zionist taboos as we have come to know them and dare to imagine the country’s transformation, from a Jewish state into a federal, binational republic.


“Maël Renouard makes an adventure of the mind, meditates on traces and forgetfulness, notices the progressive annexation of our interiority to this external and infinite memory that is the ‘Net. He thus opens new ways of thinking; free to the explorers of this ‘intimate extension of the mind’ to borrow them.”
—Philosophie Magazine

“One day, as I was daydreaming on the boulevard Beaumarchais, I had the idea—it came and went in a flash, almost in spite of myself—of doing a Google search to find out what I had been up to and where I had been the previous evening, since my own recollections were confused.” So begins Maël Renouard’s Fragments of an Infinite Memory, a provocative and elegant inquiry into life in a wireless world. Renouard is old enough to remember life before the Internet but young enough to have fully accommodated his life to the Internet and the gadgets that support it. Here this young philosopher, novelist, and translator tests a series of conjectures on how human experience, especially the sense of self, is being changed by our continual engagement with a memory that is impersonal and effectively boundless. Renouard has written a book that is rigorously impressionistic, deeply informed historically and culturally, but also playful, ironic, personal, and formally adventurous, a book that stands with comparison with the best of Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard.

Maël Renouard is a French writer and translator. He was born in Paris and attended the École Normale Supérieure, where he would later teach philosophy. He served as the technical adviser for speeches in the cabinet of François Fillon from 2009 to 2012. Renouard has translated works by Nietzsche, Joseph Conrad, and Arthur Schnitzler, among others, and between 2004 and 2010 was a regular contributor to the magazine Trafic. In 2014 he was made a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Peter Behrman de Sinety was born in Maine and teaches at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris.
Temptation is a rediscovered masterwork of twentieth-century fiction, a Dickensian tale of a young man coming of age in Budapest between the wars. Illegitimate and unwanted, Béla is packed off to the country to be looked after by a peasant woman the moment he is born. She starves and bullies him, and keeps him out of school. He does his best to hold his own, and eventually his mother brings him back to live with her in the city. In thrall to his feckless father, Mishka, and living in a crowded tenement, she works her fingers to the bone, while Béla shares a room with a hardworking prostitute. Finally, Béla secures a job in a fancy hotel. Though exhausted by endless work, he is fascinated by the upper-crust world that his new job exposes him to; soon he is embroiled with a rich, damaged, and dangerous woman. The atmosphere of Budapest is increasingly poisoned by the appeal of fascism, while Béla grows ever more aware of how power and money keep down the working classes. In the end, with all the odds still against him, he musters the resolve to set sail for new future.

János Székely (1901–1958) was a novelist and screenwriter. At the age of eighteen, he fled World War I, leaving his native Hungary for Berlin, where he began writing screenplays. He emigrated to the United States in 1938, moving to Hollywood to work at the invitation of Ernst Lubitsch. Székely became a sought-after screenwriter and won the 1940 Academy Award for Best Story for Arise, My Love. He left the United States during the McCarthy era and eventually landed in East Berlin, where he lived until his death.

Mark Baczoni was born in Budapest and grew up in London. He studied in Cambridge and Budapest, and translates both prose and poetry from Hungarian and French. He lives in London.
“At once embracing and thwarting two worlds, two centuries, two sensibilities, what a subtle and powerful amalgam is Margery! Glück’s exquisitely controlled, sensuously textured writing evokes a deeply integrated ecstatic vision that in the end spares us nothing—being nuanced and brutal, passionate and colored with levity, elegant and outrageous.” —Lydia Davis

First published in 1994, Robert Glück’s *Margery Kempe* is one of the most provocative, poignant, and inventive American novels of the last quarter century. The book tells two stories of romantic obsession. One, based on the first autobiography in English, the medieval *Book of Margery Kempe*, is about a fifteenth-century woman from the town of Norfolk, a visionary, a troublemaker, a pilgrim to the Holy Land, and an aspiring saint, and her love affair with Jesus. It is complicated. The other is about the author’s own love for an alluring and elusive young Englishman, L. It is complicated. Between these two *Margery Kempe*, the novel, emerges as an unprecedented exploration of desire, devotion, abjection, and sexual obsession in the form of a novel like no other novel. Robert Glück’s masterpiece bears comparison with the finest work of such writers as Kathy Acker and Chris Kraus.

Robert Glück is a poet, fiction writer, critic, and editor. With Bruce Boone, he founded the New Narrative movement in San Francisco. His poetry collections include *Reader* and, with Boone, *La Fontaine*. His fiction includes the story collections *Denny Smith*, and the novel *Jack the Modernist*. Glück edited, with Camille Roy, Mary Berger, and Gail Scott, the anthology *Biting The Error: Writers Explore Narrative*, and his collected essays, *Communal Nude*, appeared in 2016. Glück served as the director of San Francisco State’s Poetry Center, co-director of the Small Press Traffic Literary Center, and associate editor at Lapis Press. He lives in San Francisco.

Colm Tóibín is Irene and Sidney B. Silverman Professor of the Humanities at Columbia. His latest book is *Mad, Bad, Dangerous to Know: The Fathers of Wilde, Yeats and Joyce*.
West Germany, 1988, just before the fall of the Berlin Wall: Jonathan Fabrizius, a middle-aged erstwhile journalist, has a comfortable existence in Hamburg, bank-rolled by his furniture-manufacturing uncle. He lives with his girlfriend Ulla in a grand, decrepit prewar house that just by chance escaped annihilation by the Allied bombers. One day Jonathan receives a package in the mail from the Santubara Company, a luxury car company, commissioning him to travel in their newest V8 model through the People’s Republic of Poland and to write about the route for a car rally. Little does the company know that their choice location is Jonathan’s birthplace, for Jonathan is a war orphan from former East Prussia, whose mother breathed her last fleeing the Russians and whose father, a Nazi soldier, was killed on the Baltic coast. At first Jonathan has no interest in the job, or in dredging up ancient family history, but as his relationship with Ulla starts to wane, the idea of a return to his birthplace, and the money to be made from the gig, becomes more appealing. What follows is a darkly comic road trip, a queasy misadventure of West German tourists in Communist Poland, and a reckoning that is by turns subtle, satiric, and genuine.

Marrow and Bone is an uncomfortably funny and revelatory odyssey by one of the most talented and nuanced writers of postwar Germany.

After World War II, Walter Kempowski (1929–2007) settled in Hamburg, but on returning to his hometown of Rostock in the late 1940s was sentenced by a Soviet military tribunal to twenty-five years in prison for espionage. His immense project Echo Soundings, which gathers firsthand accounts, diaries, letters, and memoirs of World War II, is considered a modern classic. NYRB Classics publishes his novel, All for Nothing.

Charlotte Collins studied English literature at Cambridge and was a radio journalist in Germany before becoming a literary translator. In 2017 she was awarded the Goethe-Institut’s Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator’s Prize for her translation of Robert Seethaler’s A Whole Life. She lives in London.
From the Egyptians on, no form of learning was more vital to the ancient world than the knowledge of symbols. The poet and art critic Juan Eduardo Cirlot’s Dictionary of Symbols first came out in 1958; soon translated into English, it has since proved an indispensable and endlessly stimulating resource for scholars and students of fields from art to literature to psychology to philosophy. Whether discussing the nature of the Mandala or the symbolic dimensions of the cow, heron, hippopotamus, or planet Saturn, Cirlot’s book is an unrivaled source of information, instruction, inspiration, and simple pleasure. This expanded edition of the Dictionary includes new entries as well as an epilogue by Cirlot’s daughter Victoria discussing her father’s poetry and work as an art critic and its close connection to Surrealism.

Juan Eduardo Cirlot (1916–1973) was a poet, art critic, hermeneutist, mythologist, and musician. He wrote several books on the history and theory of art, published several poetry collections, and composed music.


Valerie Miles, an editor, writer, and translator, co-founded the literary journal Granta in Spanish, and also established the NYRB Classics series in Spanish. She is author of A Thousand Forests in One Acorn and lives in Barcelona, Spain.

Victoria Cirlot is a medieval scholar and professor of Romance Philology at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. Her recent books include La visión abierta and Grial. Poética y mito.
“One very quiet touch from Mr. Hayes can convey more pain than any quantity of huffing and puffing from more insistent but less accomplished writers.”
—The Times Literary Supplement

Asher’s career as a Hollywood screenwriter has come to a humiliating end; so has his latest marriage. Returning to New York, where he grew up, he takes a room at a hotel and wonders what, well into middle age as he is, he should do next. It’s not a question of money; it’s a question of purpose, maybe of pride. In the company of the arch young poet Michael, Asher revisits the streets and tenements of the Lower East Side where he spent his childhood, though little remains of the past. Michael introduces Asher to Aurora, perhaps his girlfriend, who, to Asher’s surprise, seems bent on pursuing him, too. Soon the older man and his edgy young companions are caught up in a slow, strange, almost ritualized dance of deceit and desire.

The End of Me, a successor to Hayes’s In Love and My Face for the World to See, can be seen as the final panel of a triptych in which Alfred Hayes anatomizes, with a cool precision and laconic lyricism that are all his own, the failure of modern love. The last scene is the starkest of all.

Alfred Hayes (1911–1985) was a journalist, poet, screenwriter, and novelist. Having served in Italy during World War II, he stayed on to co-write several classic Italian neorealist films, including Roberto Rossellini’s Paisà and Vittorio De Sica’s Bicycle Thieves, as well as to gather material for two celebrated novels, All Thy Conquests and The Girl on the Via Flamina. In the late 1940s he went to work in Hollywood for Warner Brothers, RKO, and Twentieth Century Fox, where his screenplays included Clash by Night, The Left Hand of God, and Joy in the Morning.

“Tarka the Otter depicts a fierce struggle for survival in the wild that also carries echoes of Henry Williamson’s experiences in World War I. The result of years spent observing otters in the wild, this book is a celebration of life, of the eternal rhythms of nature, and of the English countryside.

Henry Williamson (1895–1977) was born in Brockley, London. During World War I he served on the front as an infantryman and later as a transport officer. In 1921 he left London for rural north Devon, where, apart from a period as a farmer in Norfolk from 1937 to 1946, he lived and worked as a writer for the rest of his life. He published some fifty books in all, among them The Patriot’s Progress, Salar the Salmon, and a fifteen-volume semiautobiographical novel cycle, A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight. Tarka the Otter, his seventh book, was awarded the Hawthornden Prize in 1928.
Lamian is a survivor, but a survivor of a very special kind. He was a Kapo, a prisoner who served as a camp guard in order to save himself. But has Lamian saved himself?

The war over, he resumes life in the Bosnian town of Banja Luka, works in a land-surveying office, rents a room, eats as many hot potatoes as he likes, not even bothering to salt them—the quantity is what matters. If only he could stop looking over his shoulder and flinching on the street in the fear that some stranger will step forward, smack his face, and say in a loud voice, “Here’s one!”

If only he could stop worrying about Helena Lifka, who turned out to be a Yugoslav, and Jewish too; one of the women he made come naked into the toolshed where he hid the gold, and sit on his lap in exchange for bread and butter and a little warm milk. She could turn up any day, an old woman now, and point an accusing finger.

In this masterful novel, Aleksandar Tišma shows step by step how fear can turn an ordinary human being into a monster.

Aleksandar Tišma (1924–2003) was a fiction writer, journalist, and poet who grew up and lived much of his life in Novi Sad. His other novels include The Book of Blam and The Use of Man (both available in the NYRB Classics series).

Richard Williams is a translator of Serbo-Croatian literature.
“Lost Property stands up to comparison with the great romantic autobiographies.... Its style is just right: darting, anecdotal, slightly bemused, possessing a lilting irony that makes for compulsive readability. There is also something funny, sexy, or shocking on every page.” —Michael Dirda, The Washington Post

Lost Property is a book of memoirs and confessions. The memoirs are of 19 Gramercy Park, once described by The New Yorker as “the greatest house... in private hands in New York.” Much like an ocean liner, it was commanded by the author’s immensely powerful and seductive father, Benjamin Sonnenberg Sr., the man said to have invented the modern business of public relations. The memoirs are also of a son’s aesthetic, sexual, and political education, as he both rejects his father’s influence and strives to be his equal.

The confessions in Lost Property are of Ben Sonnenberg’s sometimes absurd flight into “anarchy and sabotage”: of an infidel life in sex and politics in Europe during the Cold War (at one point he was reporting to both the CIA and East German intelligence) and in New York City in the late 1960s. Lost Property is also about marriage, children, debt, divorce, and multiple sclerosis.

A savage comedy, Lost Property is deepened by reflections upon class, culture, and illness. “At last,” writes James Salter, “a defiant life that does not end in bathos, drugs, or stacks of old newspapers, one that draws its distinction from, and ends up as, art.”

Ben Sonnenberg (1936–2010) was a playwright, poet, and publisher. In 1981 he started the literary magazine Grand Street, which he edited for nine years. He lived in New York City with his wife, the writer Dorothy Gallagher.


“The True History of the First Mrs. Meredith and Other Lesser Lives
DIANE JOHNSON
With a new preface by the author
Introduction by Vivian Gornick

“Many people have described the Famous Writer presiding at his dinner table.... He is famous; everybody remembers his remarks.... We forget that there were other family members at the table—a quiet person, now muffled by time, shadowy, whose heart pounded with love, perhaps, or rage.” So begins The True History of the First Mrs. Meredith and Other Lesser Lives, an uncommon biography devoted to one of those "lesser lives." As the author points out, "A lesser life does not seem lesser to the person who leads one." Such sympathy and curiosity compelled Diane Johnson to research Mary Ellen Peacock Meredith (1821–1861), the daughter of the famous artist Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866) and first wife of the equally famous poet George Meredith (1828–1909). Her life, treated perfunctorily and prudishly in biographies of Peacock or Meredith, is here exquisitely and unhurriedly given its due. What emerges is the portrait of a brilliant, well-educated woman, raised unconventionally by her father only to feel more forcefully the constraints of the Victorian era. First published in 1972, Lesser Lives has been a key text for feminists and biographers alike, a book that reimagined what biography might be, both in terms of subject and style. Biographies of other “lesser” lives have since followed in its footsteps, but few have the wit, elegance, and empathy of Johnson’s seminal work.

Diane Johnson is a novelist and critic. She is the author of Lulu in Marrakech and Le Divorce, among other novels, and a memoir, Flyover Lives. She lives in Paris and San Francisco.

Vivian Gornick is a journalist, essayist, and memoirist. She is the author of eleven books, most recently The Odd Woman and the City. She lives in New York.
NO ROOM AT THE MORGUE
JEAN-PATRICK MANCHETTE
Translated from the French by Alyson Waters
An NYRB Classics Original

“This is as if [Origo] has set up camp in the fourteenth century and is simply reporting what she finds there.” —London Review of Books

This extraordinary re-creation of the life of the medieval Italian merchant Francesco di Marco Datini is one of the greatest historical portraits written in the twentieth century. Drawing on an astonishing cache of some 150,000 letters unearthed centuries after Datini’s death, The Merchant of Prato reveals a shrewd, enterprising, anxious man as he makes deals, furnishes his sumptuous house, buys silks for his outspoken young wife, and broods on his legacy. It is an unequaled source of knowledge about the texture of daily life in the small, earthy, violent, striving world of fourteenth century Tuscany.

Iris Origo (1902–1988) was a British-born biographer and writer. She lived in Italy and devoted much of her life to the improvement of the Tuscan estate at La Foce, which she purchased with her husband in the 1920s. During World War II, she sheltered refugee children and assisted many escaped Allied prisoners of war and partisans in defiance of Italy’s Fascist regime and Nazi occupation forces. NYRB Classics publishes Origo’s A Chill in the Air: An Italian War Diary, 1939–1940, War in Val d’Orcia: An Italian War Diary, 1943–1944, and Images and Shadows: Part of a Life.

Jean-Patrick Manchette (1942–1995) was a genre-redefining French crime novelist, screenwriter, critic, and translator. Throughout the 1960s he supported himself with various jobs writing television scripts, screenplays, young adult books, and film novelizations. In 1971 he published his first novel, a collaboration with Jean-Pierre Bastid, and went on to produce ten subsequent works over the course of the next two decades, establishing a new genre of French novel, the néo-polar (distinguished from the traditional detective novel, or polar, by its political engagement and social radicalism). NYRB Classics also publishes Manchette’s Fatale, The Mad and the Bad, Ivory Pearl, and Nada.

Alyson Waters has translated works from the French by Albert Cossery, Louis Aragon, René Belletto, and others. She teaches literary translation in the French department of Yale University and is the managing editor of Yale French Studies. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.
Yoshiharu Tsuge is one of the most celebrated and influential comics artists, but his work has been almost entirely unavailable to English-speaking audiences. *The Man Without Talent*, his first book to be translated into English, is an unforgiving self-portrait of frustration. Swearing off cartooning as a profession, Tsuge takes on a series of unconventional jobs—used-camera salesman, ferryman, stone collector—hoping to find success among the hucksters, speculators, and deadbeats he does business with.

Instead, he fails again and again, unable to provide for his family, earning only their contempt and his own. The result is a dryly funny look at the pitfalls of the creative life, and an off-kilter portrait of modern Japan. Accompanied by an essay from the translator Ryan Holmberg that discusses Tsuge’s importance in comics and Japanese arts, *The Man Without Talent* is one of the great works of comics literature.

Yoshiharu Tsuge is a cartoonist and essayist best known for his surrealistic, avant-garde work. He began drawing comics in 1955, working primarily in the rental comics industry that was popular in impoverished postwar Japan. In the 1960s, Tsuge was discovered by the publishers of the avant-garde comics magazine *Garo* and gained increasing recognition. He withdrew from *Garo* in the 1970s and his work became more autobiographical. Tsuge has not published cartoons since the late 1980s, elevating him to cult status in Japan. He lives in Tokyo.

Ryan Holmberg is an arts and comics historian. He has taught at the University of Chicago, City University of New York, the University of Southern California, and Duke University; is a frequent contributor to *Art in America, Artforum, Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Japanese Art,* and *The Comics Journal;* and has edited and translated books by Seiichi Hayashi, Osamu Tezuka, Maki Sasaki, and others. He translated Tadao Tsuge’s *Slum Wolf* for NYR Comics.

Blutch is one of the most inventive storytellers in comics, and nothing reveals it like *Mitchum*. Serialized and collected in the mid-1990s and never before available in English, this is Blutch at his most wide-ranging. From Puritan fever dreams to an encounter with a shape-shifting Robert Mitchum, Blutch builds stories out of his dreams, visions of America, and anything else he can get his hands on.

Drawn in his unmistakable line that veers in a moment from crude to elegant, blotchy to crisp, horrific to serene, these comics show Blutch searching for new artistic frontiers. What he finds is sometimes surprising, occasionally unsettling, and endlessly fascinating.

Blutch (born Christian Hincker) is an award-winning, highly influential French cartoonist. He has published almost two dozen books since his 1988 debut in the legendary avant-garde magazine *Fluide Glacial*, including *Le Petit Christian*; *So Long, Silver Screen*; and *Peplum* (available from NYR Comics). His illustrations have appeared in *Les Inrockuptibles, Libération,* and *The New Yorker.*

Matt Madden is a translator and cartoonist. He is the author of *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style,* which is a comics adaptation of Raymond Queneau’s *Exercises in Style,* and of two textbooks co-written with his wife, Jessica Abel, *Drawing Words & Writing Pictures* and *Mastering Comics*. Madden and Abel were the series editors of *The Best American Comics* for six years. Madden translated Edmond Baudoin’s graphic novel *Piero* for NYR Comics. He lives in Philadelphia.
Richard Howard is widely recognized as one of America’s finest poets, and he has been especially celebrated for his sparkling and trenchant dramatic monologues based on the lives of historical figures. Howard’s monologues have brought to life the voices of all sorts of different people, but two of his favorite subjects are two of his favorite writers—Walt Whitman and Henry James—and at the heart of this book are the numerous poems he has devoted to these great forebears, which are gathered here in a single volume for the first time. Howard’s angles of approach are always unexpected: He shows us Whitman reckoning with Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde; Henry James trying to make sense of Los Angeles, where he is being set up for lunch with L. Frank Baum; and much more. Howard’s monologues are above all inspired and revelatory dialogues, as expansive and celebratory as Walt Whitman and as subtly inquiring as Henry James. The book also includes long poems about Hart Crane and Wallace Stevens.

Richard Howard is a poet, critic, and translator. He has published more than 150 translations from the French and nearly twenty volumes of poetry, which often find him speaking through—or to—literary figures ranging from Charles Baudelaire to Oscar Wilde. He is a recipient of numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the PEN Translation Prize. He lives in New York City.
“Like Wallace Stevens, Monroe can be abstract and specific at once, in a way that makes the abstract specific—and lets us glimpse a few of the many ramifications of its power.” —Tom Bolt, Bomb

For many years, Melissa Monroe has been assembling one of the most distinctive bodies of work in contemporary American poetry, drawing on all different kinds of writing, from technical manuals to books of spells to dictionaries of slang, to explore the many ways—poetry is, after all, one of them—in which we human beings seek to know and control the elusive realities of the world around and within us. Her subject is both the strangeness of things and the strangeness of the things we think, and she has an unsurpassed eye for the wilderness between them that we inhabit. The poems collected in Medusa Beach include “Planetogenesis,” recording the life of an imaginary planet; “Whiz Mob,” a sequence of haikus composed in the criminal argot of 1940s America; “Frequently Asked Questions About Spirit Photography”; and the title poem, which interweaves an account of the life and thought of the great German philosopher and marine biologist Ernst Haeckel with a meditation on the many historical and natural historical avatars of the figure of Medusa. As formally adventurous as they are rigorous, disconcertingly comic, and deeply strange, the poems in Medusa Beach are the work of a true American original.

Melissa Monroe is a poet and linguist. Her previous volume of poetry, Machine Language, was published by Alef Books in 1997. She teaches at the New School for Social Research in New York.
“With unerring touch, Mrs. Burnford draws the threads of people and animals together in resolution, by instinct as sound as that which once guided Homer in such a matter. Bel Ria is a magical story; Mrs. Burnford has benevolent witchery.” —The Wall Street Journal

Sheila Burnford, the author of *The Incredible Journey*, offers the spellbinding tale of a small dog caught up in World War II, and of the extraordinary life-transforming attachments he forms with the people he encounters in the course of a perilous passage from occupied France to besieged England.

Nameless, Burnford’s hero first turns up as a performing dog, a poodle mix earning his keep as part of a Gypsy caravan that is desperately fleeing the Nazi advance. Taken on ship by the Royal Navy, he is given the name of Ria and serves as the scruffy mascot to a boatload of sailors. Marooned in England in the midst of the Blitz, Ria rescues an old woman from the rubble of her bombed house and finds himself unexpectedly transformed into Bel, the coiffed and pampered companion of her old age.

*Bel Ria* is an exciting story about a compellingly real, completely believable dog. Readers of all ages will find in *Bel Ria* a companion to take to heart.

Sheila Burnford (1918–1984) was born in Scotland and emigrated to Canada in the 1950s. Her first novel, *The Incredible Journey*, was a modest success when it was first published in 1960, but became a best seller after it adapted for film by the Walt Disney Company in 1963 and again in 1993 (as *Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey*). In 1977 she published *Bel Ria*, her final book, which drew on her experience as a volunteer ambulance driver during World War II.


Penelope Taberner Cameron is a solitary and a sickly child, a reader and a dreamer. Her mother, indeed, is of the opinion that the girl has grown all too attached to the products of her imagination and decides to send her away from London for a restorative dose of fresh country air. But staying at Thackers, in remote Derbyshire, Penelope is soon caught up in a new mystery, as she finds herself transported at unforeseeable intervals back and forth from modern to Elizabethan times. There she becomes part of a remarkable family that is, Penelope realizes, in terrible danger as they plot to free Mary, Queen of Scots, from the prison in which Queen Elizabeth has confined her.

Penelope knows the tragic end that awaits the Scottish queen, but she can neither change the course of events nor persuade her new family of the hopelessness of their cause, which love, loyalty, and justice compel them to embrace. Caught between the present and the past, Penelope is ever more torn by questions of freedom and fate. To travel in time, Penelope discovers, is to be very much alone. And yet the slow, recurrent rhythms of the natural world, beautifully captured by Alison Uttley, also speak of a greater ongoing life that transcends the passage of years.

Alison Uttley (1884–1976) developed a love of science at school and won a scholarship for physics at Manchester University. Her husband died in 1930, and in order to support herself and her son, she began to write a series of imaginary stories about animals such as Little Grey Rabbit, Little Red Fox, Sam Pig, and Hare. She wrote more than one hundred books.

Phyllis Bray (1911–1991) was an English painter, illustrator, and muralist.
Have you met Monster? He’s not scary or mean like other monsters. He’s kind of tall and his head is skinny, and he’s purple. He’s curious about everything: the city, the river, houses, cars, trains, and what people look like, the park, the kids, the swings, the stores and clothes and stuff. It is all new to him. “Monster thinks the city is fine so he thinks he will live here.” So begins the story of gentle, playful Monster, who conducts himself with grace and courtesy, and in short order finds a home, a best friend, and a bunch of kids to play with.

First introduced in 1973, Monster returns in this omnibus edition of the first six stories of an extended emerging-reader series written not only for children, but also by them. Educators Ellen Blance and Ann Cook worked with schoolchildren to write stories a child would want, and be able, to read. While most children’s books are meant to be read by adults to children, these are stories children can read to themselves or to adults. The book includes illustrations by the illustrious Quentin Blake, and a new letter to children (and one to parents) by the authors.

Ellen Blance studied alternative methods of developing language and reading skills for children at the University of London. She taught classes at the New School for Social Research and at City College of New York and then at various schools in Connecticut and New York. Now retired, Blance spends some time in New York City and Connecticut schools reading the Monster books and talking about writing.

Ann Cook works with kids and teachers in New York City public schools. She has written three series of books for beginning readers along with numerous articles advocating for child-centered school reform and teacher collaboration. She lives in New York City.

Quentin Blake is one of the most celebrated children’s book illustrators working today, having illustrated more than three hundred books by such authors as Russell Hoban, Joan Aiken, and Roald Dahl.

Apostolos Doxiadis was a toddler when he first met Parlapán, his father’s closest friend. Parlapán’s uncommon height (at six foot three, he was practically a giant in 1950s Athens), his uniform of a captain of the Greek Royal Navy, and the constant references to him as war hero made him all but superhuman in the eyes of the young Doxiadis.

Parlapán’s story came to him in different versions: As a child, he heard that Parlapán was a great hero. But by the time Doxiadis reached mid-adolescence, he knew that the hero had been destroyed by calumny, accused of high treason in the midst of a bloody civil war, sentenced to death, and saved at the last moment from the firing squad through the love of a woman.

Parlapán died childless at fifty-six. Doxiadis was sixteen at the time and felt he should tell Parlapán’s story. But as he started to write, in midlife, he was informed by official history that what he knew about Parlapán was a fantasy. Or worse: a pack of lies. Refusing to accept this, he spent fifteen years trying to dig out, assemble, and understand the truth, a process in which he had to un-learn and re-learn everything he knew about stories—and about life itself.

Doxiadis is a novelist and essayist writing in Greek and English. Among his books are the international bestsellers Uncle Petros and Goldbach’s Conjecture and Logicomix. He is the recipient of the Bertrand Russell Society Book Award. He lives in London and Athens.

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