“I am in need of a word,” writes Lauren Markham in an email to the Bureau of Linguistical Reality, an organization that coins neologisms. She describes her desire to memorialize something that is in the process of being lost—a landscape, a species, birdsong. How do we mourn the abstracted casualties of what’s to come?

In a dazzling synthesis of reporting, memoir, and essay, Markham reflects on the design and function of memorials, from the traditional to the speculative—the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., a converted prison in Ljubljana, a “ghost forest” of dead cedar trees in a Manhattan park—in an attempt to reckon with the grief of climate catastrophe. Can memorials look toward the future as they do to the past? How can we create “a psychic space for feeling” while spurring action and agitating for change?

Immemorial is part of the Undelivered Lectures series from Transit Books.

“Markham brings people and places to rumbling life; she has that rare ability to re-create elusive, subjective experiences.”—THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Brilliant, timely. The threads [Markham] follows weave a tapestry as moving as it is illuminating.”
REBECCA SOLNIT

“Lauren Markham is . . . empathetic, honest, painstakingly factual, and fair. A generous book for an ungenerous age.”—THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

“Stunning . . . expansive. Markham proves admirably nimble on her converse-clad feet.”—LOS ANGELES REVIEW OF BOOKS

In the final weeks of her pregnancy, Ayşegül Savaş becomes fascinated by the mythology around the first forty days after giving birth, and the invisible beings that are said to surround the mother. “In Turkish, we speak of extracting the forty days, like a sort of exorcism. My grandmothers assure me that it will all get better after forty days are out.” A friend lends a book that suggests forty days of rest and fortifying broths and avoiding wind and cold.

In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, forty days are seen as a period of trial and transformation. They are often journeys into the wilderness and “its vast and unruly territories.” When the baby arrives, Savaş charts her own path into the wilderness of new motherhood—a space of contradiction, of chaos and care, mothering and being mothered. “What is the trial of the postpartum crossing?” writes Savaş. “Where will mother and child emerge once they have left the wild?”

In the first work of nonfiction by the author of The Anthropologists, Savaş invites the reader to journey with her into the wild—a place entered after creation, a place you never leave, and a place that, in a sense, never leaves you.

*The Wilderness* is part of the Undelivered Lectures series from Transit Books.

“Savaş writes with both sensuality and coolness, as if determined to find a rational explanation for the irrationality of existence.”—*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

“Ayşegül Savaş is an enormous new talent who writes with the rigor of Didion and the tenderness of Sebald.”—CATHERINE LACEY

It’s three days since we came home from the hospital, carrying the baby wrapped in a bear-jumpsuit. My mother had arrived from Istanbul to Paris the day before I gave birth, but wasn’t allowed to visit us at the hospital. Unable to sleep, she walked from our apartment to the hospital several times a day, pacing up and down the emergency entrance, while I labored for twenty-four hours.

On the day we were discharged, a kind nurse permitted my mother to come up to the room, to help us carry our bags. She burst inside and ran towards the baby. What I remember, though I may be mistaken, is that she didn’t kiss me. She didn’t come to her own child first.

But in truth, I remember very little. In truth, I have already forgotten everything.

AYŞEGÜL SAVAŞ is the author of *Walking on the Ceiling* and *White on White*. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, and elsewhere. She lives in Paris.
Pandora is a hallucinatory, tragicomic novel about the psychological dissolution of a literature professor during pandemic lockdown, as she tries to plan her remote classes while sharing her apartment with a cat she suspects is a spy, among other animals. Freshly divorced, she plunges into three relationships, first with her neighbor Alice, with whom she begins doing online sex work; then with a horny and overbearing pangolin; and finally with a giant bat. Increasingly concocting her own reality, she begins to incorporate literary experiments and anthropomorphized animals into her syllabus, despite warnings from her colleagues not to swim against the academic or political current in dark times.

Equal parts tender and grotesque, Pandora reveals the unsettling ease with which care can slip into violence and vice versa. Roberto Schwartz, one of Brazil’s most insightful critics, calls it “an extraordinary piece of fiction, unafraid of anything.”

I’m on firm ground. I hold steady, ignoring the disparity between my right side and my left. The devil had a limp too. So did Richard III. You’d think his lopsided legs would have balanced out his unusual features, but they didn’t. Richard III was hard on the eye and cruel at heart. Oedipus’s foot problems started when his ankles were bound to stop him from walking to his fate. Cunipira endlessly retraced his own steps every time he moved forward. I put on a brave face and a high heel (a single one) to compensate for the imbalance caused by the creature hitched to my right leg. Red. On the left foot. It serves the same purpose down there as makeup on your face or a tampon in your pussy.

I walk with casual elegance. If I don’t find it strange, then no one else will. Nothing to see here. Just some nine extra kilos on my right leg. I haven’t checked the scale. Best not to pick nits.

Carrying a monster around like a calf muscle roots me more firmly to the ground than most mortals. I must be fixed to the center of gravity. We all have our monsters. At least mine is out in the open. It wasn’t anyone’s fault. People just wanted to live life, get better, kill off the stragglers, eat a little, drink a little, laugh a little. Travel the world. Go viral.
In *Animal Stories*, Kate Zambreno turns her attention toward zoos and the art people make about them as a means of thinking through questions of mortality, boredom, alienation, and how we look at ourselves and others. Gary Winogrand’s *The Animals*, a book of black-and-white photographs taken at zoos in the 1960s, is a test of viewers’ “projected zoo feelings” and an invitation to consider zoos in relation to the cities and communities where they are situated, especially the zoo in the Bronx, where Zambreno’s mother grew up. Kafka’s animal stories branch into reflections on paranoia and surveillance, which in a sense turn the human into something akin to the zoo subject. A visit to the Jardines des Plantes inspires play with dichotomies, complicating our notions of animal and viewer, performer and audience, outside and inside, author and reader. Playful, smart, and provocative, this collection reaffirms Zambreno’s preeminence as an essayist.

*Animal Stories* is part of the Undelivered Lectures series from Transit Books.

“Kate Zambreno has invented a new form. It is a kind of absolute present, real life captured in closeup.”
—ANNE ERNAUX, WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE

“Mesmerizing. . . . Zambreno’s persona on the page is a tracker of moods and feelings that resist being stuffed and mounted with words.” —THE NEW YORKER

*The Jardin des Plantes* in Paris, which contains one of the world’s oldest zoos, is located across the street from the Austerlitz train station. During the French Revolution, the king’s royal zoo was pillaged at Versailles, and his collection of animals was mostly either eaten or destroyed. The animals that remained, including a lion and a rhinoceros, were spared a death sentence after the king was guillotined, and thus formed the beginnings of the first menagerie at the Jardin des Plantes: an abandoned royal collection joined by trained monkeys and dancing bears after the government seizure of circus animals in Paris, their former owners hired as the first zookeepers. Napoleon stocked the menagerie with a Noah’s ark of animals. Crowds gathered to see an elephant, a zebra, a giraffe, a polar bear. In the next century, due to conversations about the ethics of enclosed space, most of the large animals were transported to larger zoos, or died. There are now mostly small animals in the Jardins des Plantes’ outside enclosures, such as ostriches and flamingos, some grazing creatures, small red pandas carousing in the Napoleonic bear pit. But still, there are the glasshouses with a metallic framework, such as the rotonde des singes, constructed in 1934 in the art-deco style, like a glass palace for primates, where two sides can view each other: man watching ape, ape watching man. Much as John Berger writes in a 1991 essay on visiting the zoo in Basel, Switzerland, this open design makes the architecture of the monkey house feel like theater in-the-round, with multituded seating (as well as balconies from which the actors can urinate), and makes more pronounced the sensation that the great apes are pantomiming for an audience. It is a strange theater, he writes, where on either side of the glass, each group might think it is the audience.

**KATE ZAMBRENO** is the author of ten books, most recently the novel *Drifts* (Riverhead), a study of Hervé Guibert, *To Write As If Already Dead* (Columbia University Press), and *The Light Room*, a meditation on art and care (Riverhead). Her fiction and reports have been published in *The New Yorker, The Paris Review, Granta, VQR, BOMB*, and more. Her books have been or will be translated into Spanish, Swedish, Japanese, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Turkish and Arabic.
JOURNEY TO THE EDGE OF LIFE
TEZER ÖZLÜ
TRANSLATED FROM THE TURKISH BY MAUREEN FREELY

A woman travels to the gravesites of her favorite writers in this dark and expansive novel from the author of National Book Critics Circle Award–finalist Cold Nights of Childhood.

Spring 2025
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A writer who shares a birthday with Pavese undertakes an obsessive journey through Berlin, Hamburg, Prague, Vienna, Zagreb, and Belgrad, set according to the locations of her favorite writers’ graves. Tracing the footsteps of these luminaries, including Pavese, Franz Kafka, and Italo Svevo, she puts her life, her writing, and her politics in conversation with theirs, sometimes addressing herself, and sometimes addressing a remembered friend or lover. All the while she moves away from patriarchal Turkish society, relentlessly pushing outward in search of self-understanding. A deeply inquisitive, atmospheric, and rebellious novel that shows what such a journey can mean for a woman who has spent her life thus far within the confines established by others.

PRAISE FOR COLD NIGHTS OF CHILDHOOD

“In Özlü’s posthumous English-language debut, a young woman describes her 1950s childhood and her treatment for mental illness in her 20s. ‘All I ever wanted was to be free to think and act beyond the tedious limits set by the petit bourgeois,’ says the narrator. . . . The edition includes a magnificent introduction from Ayşegül Savaş, who puts Özlü (1943–1986) in a lineage with Italo Svevo and Franz Kafka and praises her frank approach to sexuality as ‘neither sensational nor metaphorical.’”
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, Starred Review

“A profoundly moving account of desperation, exhilaration, and endurance.”—KIRKUS REVIEWS

“It’s uncanny how clearly Özlü speaks of a different time yet, simultaneously, of this moment.”
—THE FINANCIAL TIMES

“Cold Nights of Childhood . . . is the most distilled articulation of Özlü’s heart.”
—Kaya Genç, LOS ANGELES REVIEW OF BOOKS

TEZER ÖZLÜ (1943–1986) claimed her place in Turkish letters by breaking every rule imposed on her. Though she was misunderstood by most throughout her short life, her writings have gone on to inspire a new generation of feminist writers and readers. Cold Nights of Childhood, her first book to be translated into English, was published by Transit Books in 2023 and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

MAUREEN FREELY grew up in Istanbul and now lives in England. The author of seven novels, and formerly the President and Chair of English PEN, she has translated many Turkish classics as well as Orhan Pamuk. She teaches at the University of Warwick.
Altering examines the grief of losing an unborn twin child through a lens of alteration and adaptation, connecting narratives of textiles and texts—from spacesuits and burial garments to Emily Dickinson’s poetic fragments and Goodnight Moon—and the unexpected garments rendered from and contained within personal tragedy. The existence of one is a constant reminder of the other. Using Winrock’s own lexicon of variant sentences, Alterations threads together seemingly disparate narrative themes of text and textile into an elliptical and lyric examination of the invisibility of women’s labor and maternal grief.

Alterations is part of the Undelivered Lectures series from Transit Books.

In the city where I was born there is a collective of women taking apart donated wedding dresses. Seam-ripping and taking off lace, uprooting stitches and unstringing beads—one by one by hand in their spare time. All across the country there are similar knots of women reversing someone else’s handwork. These women are always looking for more women—particularly ones who would rather not sew—to help take the garments apart. They are looking for those of us with patience + for something’s undoing. Like many collectives whose existence and skills might seem unfathomable, most of us won’t know about them until there is a need to know. Even then, I didn’t know of them. + I only know of them belatedly.

Recently they were bequeathed a gown with an exceptionally long train, every inch covered in lace appliqué. They say it takes a very long time to undo a dress like this. To carefully remove every thread. Time and skill better spent repatterning the fabric—sewing something up to offer those that will need these undone dresses.

These women also look for people to collect dresses from their neighborhoods around town—drivers to deliver the gowns. Every few months the women then gather for a sew-in to unsew, to replenish their supply of what is + undone. After an article appears in the local paper, they soon have an overly abundant archive of garments for taking apart. Too many to be useful. After all, a single unstitched dress can turn from one into so many. The women who need to know—or who have heard of women who need to know—continue to pull their wedding dresses from their closets.

Cori Winrock is a poet and multimedia essayist/artist. Her second collection of poetry, Little Envelope of Earth Conditions (2020), was awarded Editor’s Choice for the Alice James Books Prize. Her debut book, This Coalition of Bones (Kore Press), received the Freund Prize for a first collection. Winrock holds a PhD in Creative Writing and Literature from the University of Utah, where she was a 2019-2020 Tanner Humanities Fellow. Formerly an Assistant Professor at Cleveland Institute of Art, she recently joined the creative writing faculty at Western Washington University, where she teaches hybrid forms and other experimental literature classes.
Usman Khan was convicted of terrorism-related offenses at age 20, and sent to high-security prison. He was released eight years later, and allowed to travel to London for one day, to attend an event marking the fifth anniversary of a prison education program he participated in. On November 29, 2019, he sat with others at Fishmongers’ Hall, some of whom he knew. Then he went to the restroom to retrieve the things he had hidden there: a fake bomb vest and two knives, which he taped to his wrists. That day, he killed two people: Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt.

Preti Taneja taught fiction writing in prison for three years. Merritt oversaw her program; Khan was one of her students. “It is the immediate aftermath,” Taneja writes. “I am living at the centre of a wound still fresh.” The I is not only mine. It belongs to many.

In this searching lament by the award-winning author of *We That Are Young*, Taneja interrogates the language of terror, trauma and grief; the fictions we believe and the voices we exclude. Contending with the pain of unspeakable loss set against public tragedy, she draws on history, memory, and powerful poetic predecessors to reckon with the systemic nature of atrocity. Blurring genre and form, *Aftermath* is a profound attempt to regain trust after violence and to recapture a politics of hope through a determined dream of abolition.

PRETI TANEJA is a writer and activist. Her first novel, *We That Are Young* (Galley Beggar Press/Knopf), won the Desmond Elliot Prize for the UK’s best debut of the year and was listed for international awards, including the Folio Prize, the Prix Jan Michalski, and the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize. It has been translated into several languages. Taneja lectures in creative writing at Newcastle University and broadcasts on world literature and culture for the BBC.
In her prize-winning debut, Mexican essayist Mariana Oliver trains her gaze on migration in its many forms, moving between real cities and other more inaccessible territories: language, memory, pain, desire, and the body. With an abiding curiosity and poetic ease, Oliver leads us through the underground city of Cappadocia, explores the vicissitudes of a Berlin marked by historical fracture, follows naturalist Bill Lishman alongside his migrating cranes, and recreates the intimacy of the spaces we inhabit. Blending criticism, reportage, and a travel writing all her own, Oliver presents a brilliant collection of essays that asks us what it means to leave the familiar behind and make the unfamiliar our own.

“We should adopt words across languages into our everyday vernacular. Pronounce them as confidently as we do those of our childhood, mark them with our accents, vocal modulations, and necessary pauses. Speak them as though they were ours, find a context for them in which their meanings explode, enveloping us. Turn our mother tongues into open spaces that can accommodate any word we choose or happen to come across at a particular time. Recognize others for the words they’ve chosen. Say “home,” “body,” or “ghost” in any language and assume every nuance.”

PEN Translation Prize Winner

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MARINA OLIVER was born in Mexico City in 1986. She received a master degree in comparative literature from the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM) and is currently working towards a doctoral degree in modern literature at the Iberoamerican University in Mexico City. Oliver was granted a fellowship for essay writing at the Foundation for Mexican Literature and was awarded the José Vasconcelos National Award for Migratory Birds.

JULIA SANCHES is a translator of Portuguese, Spanish, and Catalan. She has translated works by Susana Moreira Marques, Claudia Hernández, Daniel Galera, and Eva Baltasar, among others.
If evolutionary biologists, ethical philosophers, and social media gurus are to be believed, the face is the basis for what we call “humanity.” The face is considered the source of identity, truth, beauty, authenticity, and empathy. It underlies our ideas about what constitutes a human, how we relate emotionally, what is pleasing to the eye, and how we ought to treat each other. But all of this rests on a specific image of the face. We might call it the ideal face.

What about the strange face, the stranger’s face, the face that thwarts recognition? What do we make of the face that rides the line of legibility? In a collection of speculative essays on a few such stranger faces—the disabled face, the racially ambiguous face, the digital face, the face of the dead—Namwali Serpell probes our contemporary mythology of the face. Stranger Faces imagines a new ethics based on the perverse pleasures we take in the very mutability of faces.

Namwali Serpell is a Zambian writer and Professor of English at Harvard University. She’s a recipient of a 2020 Windham-Campbell Prize for fiction and the 2015 Caine Prize for African Writing. Her first novel, The Old Drift (Hogarth, 2019), won the 2020 Anisfield-Wolf Book Prize for Fiction and the 2020 Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction, and was named a New York Times Notable Book of 2019.
Mary Cappello’s Lecture is a song for the forgotten art of the lecture. Brimming with energy and erudition, it is an attempt to restore the lecture’s capacity to wander, question, and excite. Cappello draws on examples from Virginia Woolf to Mary Ruefle, Ralph Waldo Emerson to John Cage, blending rigorous cultural criticism with personal history to explore the lecture in its many forms—from the aphorism to the note—and give new life to knowledge’s dramatic form.

I want to know if it is possible to re-inhabit what was great and stirring about the lecture when it was a form of art. This requires restoring the lecture’s affiliation with the essay, not, in the process, to arrive at a lecture that comes to its point, and does so with dazzling aplomb, but to re-value wandering ways: to distinguish the boredom that lectures characteristically instill from the even-hovering attention they can incite; to court the counterintuition of going on a journey with a wandering guide, then to share what is noticed—the marginal, the ephemeral—precisely because of the way that lecture holds you, as the necessary effect of its hover and drift.

Mary Cappello’s six books of literary nonfiction include a detour on awkwardness; a breast-cancer anti-chronicle; a lyric biography; and the mood fantasia, Life Breaks In. A former Guggenheim and Berlin Prize Fellow, she is a professor of English and creative writing at the University of Rhode Island. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island, and Lucerne-in-Maine, Maine.
COMPLETE BACKLIST

ANDRÉS BARBA ................................................................. SUCH SMALL HANDS (WE)
ANDRÉS BARBA ................................................................. THE RIGHT INTENTION (WE)
CAROL BENSIMON .......................................................... WE ALL LOVED COWBOYS (WE)
ÁNGEL BONOMINI ......................................................... THE NOVICES OF LERNA (WE)
MARY CAPPELLO .................................................................. LECTURE (W)
ALEJANDRA COSTAMAGNA ........................................... THE TOUCH SYSTEM (WE)
ANWEN CRAWFORD .......................................................... NO DOCUMENT (NA)
MARÍA SONIA CRISTOFF ................................................... INCLUDE ME OUT (WE)
MARÍA SONIA CRISTOFF ...................................................... FALSE CALM (NA)
DOŁA DE JONG ..................................................................... THE TREE AND THE VINE (WE)
MARIANA DIMÓPULOS ....................................................... ALL MY GOODBYES (NA)
MARIANA DIMÓPULOS ....................................................... IMMINENCE (NA)
JON FOSSE ........................................................................... I IS ANOTHER (NA)
JON FOSSE ........................................................................... A NEW NAME (NA)
JON FOSSE ........................................................................... SEPTOLOGY (NA)
JON FOSSE ........................................................................... A SHINING (NA)
JON FOSSE ........................................................................... A SILENT LANGUAGE: THE NOBEL LECTURE (NA)
RYAD GIROD ......................................................................... MANSOUR´S EYES (WE)
WIOLETTA GREG ................................................................. SWALLOWING MERCURY (NA)
WIOLETTA GREG ................................................................ ACCOMMODATIONS (WE)
JACQUELINE HARPMAN .................................................... I WHO HAVE NEVER KNOWN MEN (NA)
DAVID HAYDEN ....................................................................... DARKER WITH THE LIGHTS ON (NA)
ESTHER KINSKY ..................................................................... RIVER (NA)
ESTHER KINSKY ..................................................................... GROVE (NA)
NOÉMI LEFEVRE ................................................................ BLUE SELF–PORTRAIT (NA)
NOÉMI LEFEVRE ................................................................ POETICS OF WORK (NA)
JENNIFER NANSUBUGA MAKUMBI ..................................... KINTU (NA)
JENNIFER NANSUBUGA MAKUMBI ..................................... LET´S TELL THIS STORY PROPERLY (NA)
LAURENT MAUVIGNIER ...................................................... THE BIRTHDAY PARTY (NA)
IMAN MERSAI ....................................................................... TRACES OF ENAYAT (NA)
MARIANA OLIVER ............................................................... MIGRATORY BIRDS (W)
TEZER ÖZLÜ ........................................................................... COLD NIGHTS OF CHILDHOOD (NA)
SUNEETA PERES DA COSTA .................................................. SAUDADE (NA)
BRIGITTE REIMANN ............................................................ SIBLINGS (NA)
NAMWALI SERPELL .............................................................. STRANGER FACES (W)
PREETI TANEJA ................................................................. AFTERMATH (W)
MARIA TUMARKIN ............................................................. Axiomatic (NA)
JOANNA WALSH ............................................................... MY LIFE AS A GODDARD MOVIE (NA)
GABRIELA YBARRA ............................................................. THE DINNER GUEST (NA)
KANG YOUNG–SOOK ........................................................... AT NIGHT HE LIFTS WEIGHTS (WE)
CARLOS YUSHIMITO ............................................................ LESSONS FOR A CHILD WHO ARRIVES LATE (WE)
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