

**MARATON PUBLISHING HOUSE
CATALOGUE 2020–2021**

Mira Yakovenko, Agnessa Mironova
Agnessa

The recorded oral memories of Agnessa Mironova (1903-1982) is a must book for anybody who wants to know what was a personal life like under Stalinism. For the first time ever, Agnessa's notes open the secret door into living rooms and boudoirs of Stalin's "hangmen", top-ranked Soviet secret police officers during the purges of 1930-40ies. However, anyone who reads this book with the intention to better understand the past, will also discover an outstanding female character, a proud predator, who reveals all truths about herself frankly and without keeping anything back. A life story of this unique woman, so beautiful and repulsive at once, has developed during the most terrible and bloody period of modern history.

Agnessa's husband, 'the main love of her life' as she dubbed him, was the NKVD officer Sergei Mironov. Thanks to his extremely fast and successful career, Agnessa got to the very top society of the Stalin era. We follow the amazing trajectory of her life full of most drastic contrasts: first she talks with Stalin at the New Year celebration party in Kremlin, and next freezes in a Gulag camp lost in cold Kazakh steppes; first she lives alone with her husband in a huge mansion once belonging to the royal governor of Siberia, and next in a miserable pigeonhole in communal apartment in Moscow; first she travels in a luxury saloon cars and limos, and next is a prisoner of the NKVD jail.

Oral memories of Agnessa Mironova recorded by Mira Yakovenko in the 60s and 70s were first published in 2008 by Memorial Society. In 2012, Irina Sherbakova, the head of Moscow Memorial Society, has prepared an extensive commentary, a preface and the index of all historical figures mentioned in the book.

paperback; 304 pages + 24 pages of photographic annex; 348 CZK; IV. quarter of 2020

Mira Yakovenko (1917—2005), a physicist by training, was not a professional writer. Rather, she was endowed with a gift for language. But, above all else, she was motivated by a profound interest in the fates of people who survived the Gulag.

Already at the end of the 1950s she began taking an interest in the stories of those who had been released from Stalin's camps. During those years, she stood in line for hours at the USSR Procurator's Office, the High Court, the War Tribunal, agitating for the rehabilitation of her relatives who had been persecuted, or "repressed," as it is termed in Russian. She herself was descended from a family of the Ukrainian intelligentsia—academics and teachers. She listened to testimonies about former prisoners, told to her by others who were waiting, as she was, at the doors of these government offices. At that time, one could learn about the realities of Stalin's camps only from the accounts of eyewitnesses, who had returned from those distant places years later. It was already clear, however, that only a very few had the courage and ability to describe what they had lived through. For this reason, Mira Yakovenko considered it vitally important to try to convey and transmit what the witnesses would have tried to tell. The story of Agnessa Mironova was the apex of Mira Yakovenko's achievement.

Reviews:

"There are many fine works that offer harrowing accounts of the fate of Stalin's innocent victims. This book is different. Agnessa was the beautiful, strong-willed, frivolous, and loving wife of a regional boss of Stalin's secret police who shut her eyes to the murderous activities of her husband. She offers a unique account of what it was like to be the wife of a high-ranking member of the Soviet elite, enjoying fine food, high fashion, 'ladies-in-waiting,' and lavish holidays at a time when millions were starving or being worked to death. Her gripping story provides insight into the thuggish world of cronyism, backstabbing, and intrigue that typified the Stalinist elite, a world in which the guilty feared they would meet the same sticky end as that to which they had condemned millions of innocent people. Agnessa's life would be marked by tragedy, and she would rise to its challenges. But it is her partial complicity in the world of which she is a part, the fact that she is a very flawed heroine, that makes her account so compelling."

S.A. Smith, All Souls College, Oxford

Honoré de Balzac
The Lily of the Valley

The Lily of the Valley (Le Lys dans la Vallée) is a long confession of a passionate love of a young man, Félix de Vandenesse, for a mature woman, Madame de Mortsauf. Unlike many others novels from *La Comédie humaine* that serve as a critique of social, political and moral conditions of his time, *The Lily of the Valley* depicts a timeless private theme of first love and its agony.

In Henriette de Mortsauf's tyrannical husband Balzac paints the portrait of a decadent aristocracy: heirs of their father's illness, his children are condemned to a feverish life and Madame de Mortsauf sacrifices her happiness to keep them alive. Félix has never known true maternal love: attracted by the devotion of this mother, he ties himself to her with a strange and morbid eroticism. Félix and Henriette, two suffering beings, unite to oppose the violence of the world and search refuge in an impossible relationship.

An unexpected closure of the novel brings liberating irony and authenticity to this masterpiece in which Balzac honoured the first woman of his life, Madame de Berny.

The Lily of the Valley is a first title of our WORLD'S CLASSICS edition that presents both renowned and forgotten works of the great masters of world literature of the last centuries. We select stories that have stood the test of time and are able to appeal to today's reader, regardless of whether they have been translated to Czech before.

hardcover; 312 pages; 348 CZK; World's Classics edition; IV. quarter of 2020

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In his works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and chronicler of contemporary French society. These novels are unsurpassed for their narrative drive, their large casts of vital, diverse, and interesting characters, and their obsessive interest in and examination of virtually all spheres of life: the contrast between provincial and metropolitan manners and customs; the commercial spheres of banking, publishing, and industrial enterprise; the worlds of art, literature, and high culture; politics and partisan intrigue; romantic love in all its aspects; and the intricate social relations and scandals among the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie.

Edward N. Luttwak
Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook

Coup d'État astonished readers when it first appeared in 1968 because it showed, step by step, how governments could be overthrown. Translated into sixteen languages, it has inspired anti-coup precautions by regimes around the world. In addition to these detailed instructions, Edward Luttwak's revised handbook offers an altogether new way of looking at political power—one that considers, for example, the vulnerability to coups of even the most stable democracies in the event of prolonged economic distress.

The world has changed dramatically in the past half century, but not the essence of the coup d'état. It still requires the secret recruitment of military officers who command the loyalty of units well placed to seize important headquarters and key hubs in the capital city. The support of the armed forces as a whole is needed only in the aftermath, to avoid countercoups. And mass support is largely irrelevant, although passive acceptance is essential. To ensure it, violence must be kept to a minimum. The ideal coup is swift and bloodless. Very violent coups rarely succeed, and if they trigger a bloody civil war they fail utterly.

Luttwak identifies conditions that make countries vulnerable to a coup, and he outlines the necessary stages of planning. But much more broadly, his investigation of coups – updated for the twenty-first century – uncovers important truths about the nature of political power.
paperback; 280 pages; 328 CZK; IV. quarter of 2020

Edward N. Luttwak served as a consultant for the Office of Net Assessment of the U.S. Department of Defense, for the U.S. armed forces, and to the U.S. National Security Council. His official – and unofficial – advisory work has been praised by generals and secretaries of state.

He believes in what he calls “the logic of strategy”, which usually involves doing the least efficient thing possible in order to gain the upper hand over your enemy by confusing them. His books and articles have devoted followings among academics, journalists, businessmen, military officers and prime ministers. His 1987 book *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* is a set text at universities and military academies across the world.

In his long career, Luttwak has been asked by the president of Mexico to help eliminate a street gang that was burning tourist buses in the city of Mexicali; the Dalai Lama has consulted him about relations with China, European governments have hired him to root out al-Qaida operatives.

But Luttwak is still best known for his book *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Guide*, published in 1968. The book explains in clinical detail how to seize power in various types of states. The book was praised by John le Carré and warmly reviewed by critics on the left and the right. But for Luttwak the best notice came in 1972, when General Mohammad Oufkir was assassinated during an attempted coup against King Hassan in Morocco; it was rumoured that a blood-spattered copy of *Coup d'État* was found on the general's corpse. The Czech version follows the edition from 2016 – updated for the twenty-first century – and is prefaced by the author himself.

Reviews:

“This book is long on practice and short on theory. It remains in print more than forty years after it was written and still commands sales. The reason may be that it is a good read: wry, observant and practical.”

The Times Literary Supplement, June 3, 2016

Stefan Zweig
Balzac

Zweig devoted ten years of research and writing to *Balzac*, which he regarded as his crowning achievement. This late work reads like a picaresque novel, with Balzac's quest for "a woman with a fortune" and recurrent episodes of the author chasing an elusive pot of gold driving the story. This biography of one classic author by another is filled with Zweig's characteristic psychological insights. He portrays the energy and "exuberance of imagination" that produced some two thousand characters in *La comédie humaine*, as well as the daily details of the coffee-chugging writer's life, his manic writing schedule, method of correcting proofs, dealing with publishers and reviewers, signing contracts, doing marketing and publicity.

Balzac blends biography and literary history in a highly readable volume that will teach you French cultural history as you laugh out loud.

This new Czech edition serves as an introduction to a selection of Balzac's best works prepared by Maraton publishing house.

hardcover; 416 pages + 24 pages of photographic annex; 468 CZK; IV. quarter of 2020

Stefan Zweig (born November 28, 1881 in Vienna) was an Austrian writer who achieved distinction in several genres – poetry, essays, short stories, and dramas – most notably in his interpretations of imaginary and historical characters.

His first book, a volume of poetry, was published in 1901. He travelled widely in Europe before settling in Salzburg, in 1913. In 1934, driven into exile by the Nazis, he emigrated to England and then, in 1940, to Brazil by way of New York. Finding only growing loneliness and disillusionment in their new surroundings, he and his wife committed suicide in 1942.

Zweig's interest in psychology and the teachings of Sigmund Freud led to his most characteristic work, the subtle portrayal of character. Zweig's essays include studies of Friedrich Hölderlin, Heinrich von Kleist, Friedrich Nietzsche and many others. He also wrote a psychological novel, *Beware of Pity* (1938), and translated works of Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, and Émile Verhaeren.

Yuri Buida
Blue Blood

Buida's *Blue Blood* (2011) tells the story of Ida Zmoiro, whom Buida based on Soviet actress Valentina Karavaeva. "Actress" sounds glamorous, but Ida's life is filled with pain: a brief marriage to an Englishman, an accident that ruins her film career by making her face look like a broken plate, the Stalinist repression, and the sudden appearance of a former husband's wife and child. As Ida likes to say, "happiness makes you fat". In this dark, Soviet-era transformation of a fairy tale, Buida creates his own myth of a bright soul in a world inhabited by drunkards, madmen and crooks.

Yuri Buida (1954), whose short stories, novellas, and novels combine historical, grotesque and metaphysical elements, won the 1999 Apollon Grigoriev Award for his short story collection *The Prussian Bride*.

paperback; 227 pages; 278 CZK; 1. quarter of 2021

Yuri Buida was first published as a fiction writer in the early 1990s after a career in journalism. He grew up in the small town of Znamensk in the Kaliningrad region. The much-disputed territory of former East Prussia was occupied by Soviet troops in 1945; the German inhabitants were deported en masse. The Russians among whom Buida was born were effectively immigrants, and a sense of the transitory courses right through his short stories and novels. Deprived of a sense of the past, his war cripples, bereaved wives, madmen and magicians inhabit a dislocated world. Death is all around them, yet Buida animates their lives with unforgettable vitality and humour, and with a peculiarly Russian sense of the miraculous. His own prose style, by turns baroque, magic realist and savagely terse, is a formidable match for the subject.

Yuri Buida is one of the most exciting discoveries of post-Soviet literature and a worthy winner of the prestigious Apollon Grigoriev award in Russia. His novel *Blue Blood*, which uses literary allusions and quirky Soviet-era situations to transform Soviet actress Valentina Karavaeva into a fictional heroine, was a 2011 Big Book award finalist, winning third prize among readers.

Reviews:

"Buida is often compared to the magic realists of Latin America. In his measured, succinct style, Buida creates a seemingly imaginary universe. Little girls called „doves“ march in funeral processions with birds in their hands, a clock accidentally immured in a building called „Africa“ chimes at three every morning, and the local policeman Pan Paratov drinks his customary gass of double-strength vodka. Few authors manage to convey the reality of this very unimaginary world better than Yuri Buida."

The Times Literary Supplement, March 2, 2012

Muriel Spark
The Girls of Slender Means

“Long ago in 1945 all the nice people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions.”

In the May of Teck Club – a London hostel ‘three times window shattered since 1940 but never directly hit’ – the young lady residents do their best to act as if the war never happened. They practice elocution, and jostle one another over suitors and a single Schiaparelli gown. But behind the girls’ giddy literary and amorous peregrinations they hide some tragically painful secrets and wounds.
paperback; 180 pages; 248 CZK; 1. quarter of 2021

Muriel Spark (1918–2006) was born and educated in Edinburgh. She was active in the field of creative writing since 1950, when she won a short-story writing competition in the Observer, and her many subsequent novels include *Memento Mori* (1959), *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) and *Aiding and Abetting* (2000). She also wrote plays, poems, children’s books and biographies. She became Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1993, and died in 2006.

Reviews:

“Reading the novel as a young woman was a random gift; rereading it today is to encounter the rarest of fiction and to appreciate the early and enduring genius of Muriel Spark.”

Carol Shields, Guardian

“One of Spark’s most evocative novels.”

Anne Taylor

John Rodden

Becoming George Orwell: Life and Letters, Legend and Legacy

Is George Orwell the most influential writer who ever lived? Yes, according to John Rodden's provocative book about the transformation of a man into a myth. Rodden does not argue that Orwell was the most distinguished man of letters of the last century, nor even the leading novelist of his generation, let alone the greatest imaginative writer of English prose fiction. Yet his influence since his death at midcentury is incomparable. No other writer has aroused so much controversy or contributed so many incessantly quoted words and phrases to our cultural lexicon, from "Big Brother" and "doublethink" to "thoughtcrime" and "Newspeak." *Becoming George Orwell* is a pathbreaking tour de force that charts the astonishing passage of a litterateur into a legend.

Rodden presents the author of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in a new light, exploring how the man and writer Orwell, born Eric Arthur Blair, came to be overshadowed by the spectral figure associated with nightmare visions of our possible futures. Rodden opens with a discussion of the life and letters, chronicling Orwell's eccentricities and emotional struggles, followed by an assessment of his chief literary achievements. The second half of the book examines the legend and legacy of Orwell, whom Rodden calls "England's Prose Laureate," looking at everything from cyberwarfare to "fake news." The closing chapters address both Orwell's enduring relevance to burning contemporary issues and the multiple ironies of his popular reputation, showing how he and his work have become confused with the very dreads and diseases that he fought against throughout his life.

paperback; 340 pages; 378 CZK; II. quarter of 2021

John Rodden has taught at the University of Virginia and the University of Texas at Austin. His books include *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, *The Cambridge Introduction to George Orwell*, and *The Politics of Literary Reputation: The Making and Claiming of "St. George" Orwell*. He lives in Austin, Texas.

Reviews:

"Rodden's book keeps alive the spirit of the man and his imagination."

Shelley Walia, *The Hindu*

"Rodden's timely and important book is clearly written, briskly paced, and very informative – a significant contribution to Orwell studies. Engaging from start to finish, Becoming George Orwell is an outstanding piece of critical and scholarly work."

William E. Cain, coeditor of *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*

"Becoming George Orwell combines biography with attention to literary analysis in a way that is both rare and illuminating. John Rodden has established himself as one of the premier authorities on Orwell."

Paul A. Cantor, author of *Shakespeare's Roman Trilogy*

Alena Wagnerová
The Double Chapel

The Double Chapel is an intimate confession about the childhood and adolescence of a young woman, about relationships between parents and children.

The novel is powerful in its intensity; although it is an introspective prose, a current of internal dialogues and memories of the main heroine, the reader sees a true and profound drama of one family.
paperback; 180 pages; 248 CZK; II. quarter of 2021

Alena Wagnerová (born 18 May 1936) is a Czech author and journalist writing in both Czech and German.

She was born in Brno and studied biology at Masaryk University. Wagnerová went on to study teaching, theatre, German and comparative literature. She taught at the Dům pionýrů in Brno, then was head of the Veterinary Faculty laboratory at the Agricultural University and later was a playwright at the Divadlo Julia Fučíka. From 1968 to 1969, she was editor of Studentské listy. She went to Germany in 1969 and was married there. Wagnerová also worked on the Paměť žen (Women's Memories) project in Prague.

She has written about German authors from Prague such as Franz Kafka and Milena Jesenská and Bohemian cultural figures such as Sidonie Nádherná von Borutín. In both her fiction and non-fiction, she explores issues such as the status of women and Czech-German relations.

Ève Curie
Madame Curie

Marie Skłodowska-Curie (1867–1934) was the first woman scientist to win worldwide fame, and indeed, one of the great scientists of this century. Winner of two Nobel Prizes (for physics in 1903 and for chemistry in 1911), she performed pioneering studies with radium and contributed profoundly to the understanding of radioactivity.

The history of her story-book marriage to Pierre Curie, of their refusal to patent their processes or otherwise profit from the commercial exploitation of radium, and her tragically ironic death are legendary and well known but are here revealed from an inside perspective. But, as this book reveals, it was also true. An astonishing mind and a remarkable life are here portrayed by Marie Curie's daughter in a classic and moving account.

paperback; 340 pages; 378 CZK; III. quarter of 2021

Ève Curie (1904–2007) was a French and American writer, journalist and pianist, and the younger daughter of Marie Skłodowska-Curie and Pierre Curie.

She worked as a journalist and authored her mother's biography *Madame Curie* and a book of war reportage, *Journey Among Warriors*. *Madame Curie* was instantly popular; in many countries including the United States, it was a bestseller. In the U.S. it won the third annual National Book Award for Non-Fiction.

From the 1960s Ève Curie committed herself to work for UNICEF, providing help to children and mothers in developing countries.

Honoré de Balzac

The Unknown Masterpiece and Other Stories

[Novels about artists]

Besides the large novels that make up the so-called *Human Comedy*, Honoré de Balzac is the creator of a vast number of small-scale works, unknown masterpieces waiting to be rediscovered. This collection presents readers with five acclaimed stories about art and artists in which Balzac endowed a theme particularly close to his heart with a fusion of romance and realism.

In *The Unknown Masterpiece* and *Gambara* Balzac portrays a painter and a composer who, each in their own way, become obsessed with their search for utter perfection. These examinations of the conflict between an artist's commitment to his work and his obligations to others offer a perfect introduction to Balzac's masterly storytelling.

In *Sarrasine* an impetuous young sculptor falls in love with a diva of the Roman stage, but rapture turns to rage when he discovers the reality behind the seductiveness of society. By contrast, *Pierre Grassou* is an amusing caricature of a mediocre painter who gains success by virtue of pleasing to the social taste.

Finally, the novel *At the Sign of the Cat and Racket* confronts two different worlds with a love story between a bohemian painter and a simple bourgeois girl.

All the stories are published in new original translations. The novel *Gambara* is presented to the Czech reader for the first time.

hardcover; 230 pages; 298 CZK; World's Classics edition; III. quarter of 2021

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His family wanted him to become a lawyer. It was in 1819, that the young Balzac won from his parents a temporary respite from his legal studies in order to try his luck in his own chosen career as a writer. He set to work with a fury, while living in a garret in Paris, producing mostly potboilers – gothic, humorous, historical novels – written under composite pseudonyms.

Then he tried a business career as a publisher, printer, and owner of a typefoundry, but disaster soon followed. From then on his life was to be one of mounting debts and almost incessant toil. Balzac led a tumultuous existence, spending his earnings in advance as a dandy and man-about-town.

In his works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and chronicler of contemporary French society. These novels are unsurpassed for their narrative drive, their large casts of vital, diverse, and interesting characters, and their obsessive interest in and examination of virtually all spheres of life: the contrast between provincial and metropolitan manners and customs; the commercial spheres of banking, publishing, and industrial enterprise; the worlds of art, literature, and high culture; politics and partisan intrigue; romantic love in all its aspects; and the intricate social relations and scandals among the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie.

Kyle Harper

The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire

How devastating viruses, pandemics, and other natural catastrophes swept through the far-flung Roman Empire and helped to bring down one of the mightiest civilizations of the ancient world

Here is the monumental retelling of one of the most consequential chapters of human history: the fall of the Roman Empire. *The Fate of Rome* is the first book to examine the catastrophic role that climate change and infectious diseases played in the collapse of Rome's power – a story of nature's triumph over human ambition.

Interweaving a grand historical narrative with cutting-edge climate science and genetic discoveries, Kyle Harper traces how the fate of Rome was decided not just by emperors, soldiers, and barbarians but also by volcanic eruptions, solar cycles, climate instability, and devastating viruses and bacteria. He takes readers from Rome's pinnacle in the second century, when the empire seemed an invincible superpower, to its unraveling by the seventh century, when Rome was politically fragmented and materially depleted. Harper describes how the Romans were resilient in the face of enormous environmental stress, until the besieged empire could no longer withstand the combined challenges of a "little ice age" and recurrent outbreaks of bubonic plague.

A poignant reflection on humanity's intimate relationship with the environment, *The Fate of Rome* provides a sweeping account of how one of history's greatest civilizations encountered and endured, yet ultimately succumbed to the cumulative burden of nature's violence. The example of Rome is a timely reminder that climate change and germ evolution have shaped the world we inhabit – in ways that are surprising and profound.

paperback; 520 pages; 678 CZK; IV. quarter of 2021

Kyle Harper is professor of classics and letters and senior vice president and provost at the University of Oklahoma. He is the author of *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* and *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*. He lives in Norman, Oklahoma.

Reviews:

"A work of remarkable erudition and synthesis, Harper's timely study offers a chilling warning from history of "the awesome, uncanny power of nature"."

P.D. Smith, The Guardian, Thu 11 Apr 2019

"An excellent new book... [Harper] has managed a prodigious scholarly output that uses date-driven, twenty-first-century methods to solve enduring problems of ancient history."

Noel Lenski, Times Literary Supplement

Honoré de Balzac

Farewell and Other Stories

One of the greatest French novelists, Balzac was also an accomplished writer of shorter fiction. This volume includes seven of his finest short stories on a wide range of topics and fully demonstrates the mastery of suspense and revelation that were the hallmarks of Balzac's genius.

Farewell depicts the horrors of wars and the mutilating effect of warfare on human lives.

The *Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan* is a tale about a society woman who attempts to recycle her slightly seedy past by pursuing a minor literary figure of great probity and innocence.

In *Melmoth Reconciled*, a variation on the Faustian theme, Balzac meditates on subjects as life, love, destiny, guilt and faith.

Beginning with a romantic intrigue, *Love in a Mask* introduces a rather unusual topic of woman emancipation.

The novel *The Red Inn* represents the criminal genre and relates a brutal tale of murder and betrayal.

In *The Atheist's Mass*, we learn the true reason for a distinguished atheist surgeon's attendance at religious services.

Finally, *A Passion in the Dessert* is a brilliantly memorable story about the relation of nature and culture.

hardcover; 260 pages; 298 CZK; World's Classics edition; IV. quarter of 2021

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Václav Polívka
Diaries 1945–1948

Václav Polívka (1927-1971) was born into Czechoslovakia's elite, roughly eight years after the country emerged from the ruins of Austria-Hungary. In this diary, which was found in an attic in Oslo, Norway in 2012, the young medical student with a strong interest in classical music describes three crucial years for Europe, which, beginning in 1945, was moving from World War with Nazi occupation to Cold War with communist dictatorship.

In the summers of 1946 and 1947, Václav travels to Denmark, where he meets a young Danish woman, Vibeke Hauer, with whom he falls in love, and later marries. In this respect, Václav Polívka's diary is a Czech-Nordic love story with a happy ending. But Czechoslovakia would not enjoy such good fortune.

Almost immediately after the country was liberated, Polívka expresses his doubts about the intentions of the Russians. He realizes early on that indoctrination, censorship, and outright lies do not bode well for the future of freedom, and he shares his thoughts with surprising clarity in the pages of his diary.

paperback; 360 pages; 398 CZK; IV. quarter of 2021