

and was repeatedly revised until 1969, the year before Ungaretti's death. Although selections from it appeared in half a dozen English-language editions of Ungaretti's poetry (Allen Mandelbaum, 1958 and 1975; Patrick Creagh, 1971; Charles Tomlinson, 1983; Kevin Hart, 1990; Diego Bastianutti, 1997; and Andrew Frisardi, 2002), Geoffrey Brock's is the first complete translation of the 1931 edition, "Ungaretti's first full-length volume of poetry and a seminal work of Italian modernism."

In a brief and informative section of "Afterthoughts," Brock explains that "its title is most often rendered as *Joy*, though tin-eared dictionaries may prefer *merriment*, *gaiety*, or *mirth*." *Joy* is indeed Brock's choice, as it was Mandelbaum's and Frisardi's before him (while Creagh and Bastianutti refer to the collection by its Italian title but do not translate the poem "Allegria di naufragi"). It is also the best if not the only choice, even though *allegria* is more distinctly an external manifestation of an inner feeling, and one which may involve and unite multiple individuals (as in the case of a shipwreck). Plus, the orthographic similarity between *allegria* and *allegoria* suggests "Allegory of Shipwrecks" as a plausible and, indeed, fascinating alternative for the title of both the poem and the eponymous 1919 collection.

Written between 1914 and 1919, during Ungaretti's active service on the Italian and the western fronts, most of these poems burn like sparks of emotion, flashes of understanding, splinters of insight. However, despite their diaristic form, intensified by the horrors of war in the trenches, there is nothing fragmentary or unfinished about them; on the contrary, they aim to represent the totality of experience in the infinite and fathomless details of its unfolding, and they are carved and polished like the Karst Plateau on which they were originally crafted.

As an editor and translator of Italian poetry who is also a poet in his own right, Brock is uniquely qualified to meet the challenges presented by one of the most difficult poets to render in any language. For

the most part his versions improve upon those of his predecessors (except perhaps Frisardi), keeping close to the text, avoiding the pitfalls of interpretation, and generally striving for a middle ground between faithfulness and clarity. Occasionally, one feels that he could have cut closer to the bone of Ungaretti's compact and parched poetic diction, instead of domesticating the text both syntactically and lexically, and making it "friendlier" to the anglophone reader than it is to an Italian. But if the latter may ask, cynically, "Why bother translating at all?" (Ungaretti or, for that matter, any other poet), the former will be grateful to Brock for a version that outlines and occasionally transcends the limits of what translation can do.

Graziano Krätli  
New Haven, Connecticut

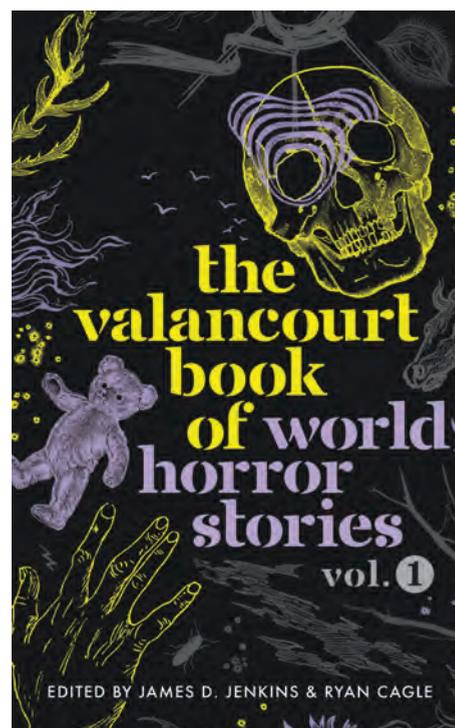
*Editorial note:* While our mandate is focused on literature written in the twenty-first century, I couldn't pass up this opportunity to have Ungaretti's first collection, published in its entirety for the first time and sporting a fresh English translation, reviewed to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the poet winning the inaugural Neustadt Prize in 1970. – Rob Vollmar

### *The Valancourt Book of World Horror Stories, Volume 1*

Ed. James D. Jenkins & Ryan Cagle

Richmond, Virginia. Valancourt. 2020. 428 pages.

**TODAY YOU CAN** watch horror films from just about everywhere. We are truly living in a golden age of horror films, not only in terms of global availability but also of artistic quality and thematic versatility. Horror *fiction*, however, is another story entirely. The US market rules the anglophone horror world and is almost entirely white, with a few authors like Stephen Graham Jones, Victor LaValle, or Gabino Iglesias accumulating a respected but still small readership. Though scholarship has



recovered a great deal with regard to the gothic in German, French, Italian, and Spanish literature (mostly in the period prior to World War II), and some anthologies like the VanderMeers' thousand-page *The Weird* (2012) have collected a wider view of the genre, what's going on in horror outside the anglophone world is virtually unknown to English monolinguals. Volume 1 of *The Valancourt Book of World Horror Stories* changes that.

Founded by James D. Jenkins and Ryan Cagle in 2005, Valancourt has won accolades among horror readers for bringing hundreds of long out-of-print gothic and horror novels into affordable, sleek new editions. Among their regular publications are annual anthology series like *The Valancourt Book of Horror Stories* or, more niche, *The Valancourt Book of Victorian Christmas Ghost Stories*. Now, in recognition of the massive trove of nonanglophone horror fiction available just out of reach to so many readers, Jenkins and Cagle have pulled together a type of anthology that collects and translates twenty-one contemporary horror stories originally published in Spanish, French, Dutch, Italian, Romanian,

## Books in Review

Swedish, Finnish, Catalan, Norwegian, Afrikaans, and Hungarian by writers who are regarded as leading the genre's edge in their respective countries (only Spain is represented more than once).

From the collection's first story, Italian author Luigi Musolino's "Uironda" (a story about a divorced trucker reminiscent of the best culture-critical writing of Stephen King and the most nihilistic impulses of Thomas Ligotti), to the last, late Spanish author José María Latorre's "Snapshot" (a macabre but humorous story of a man obsessed with snapping shots of himself in a photo booth, revealing the grim truth of what he is), *The Valancourt Book of World*

*Horror Stories* is a grand guignol of horrific oddities from across the world, representing as many subgeneric impulses and terrifying plays with the genre's possibilities as there are stories. Of particular interest and terrifying conclusion are Attila Veres's "The Time Remaining" (Hungary), Flore Hazoum's "Menopause" (Ivory Coast), Marko Hautala's "Pale Toes" (Finland), and Yvette Tan's "All the Birds" (Philippines). Lars Ahn's "The Collection" (Denmark), about a couple who discover they'll do anything to prove they are right for each other, is probably my favorite of the bunch. But the range

of stories presented suggests no one will be without something to love.

Many of these stories are translated by Jenkins and Cagle themselves, a remarkable feat, and particular attention was paid in the anthologizing process to diversity of gender, nation, race, and colonial subjectivity. The stories come from Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, some from minority languages like Catalan, and all are interested at some level in power disparities (poor/rich, men/women, colonizer/colonized). Jenkins and Cagle have promised a second volume of *The Valancourt Book of World Horror Stories*, and I can only hope that future anthologies in the series

KAZIM ALI

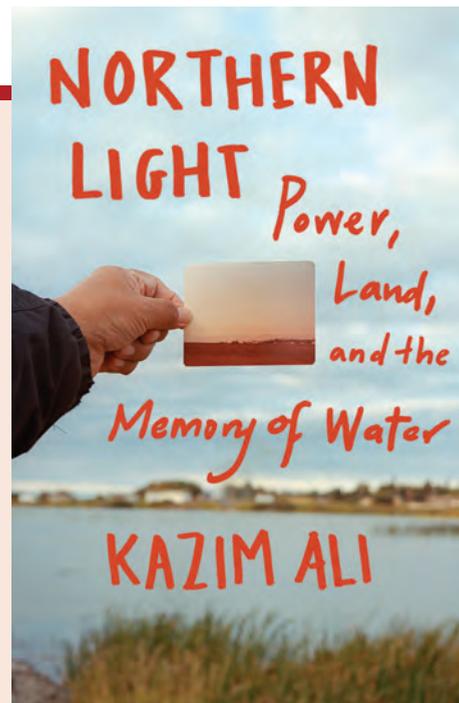
Kazim Ali

*Northern Light: Power, Land, and the Memory of Water*

Minneapolis. Milkweed Editions. 2021. 200 pages.

ON A NIGHT WHEN icy winds blew south off Lake Erie and shook the windows of Kazim Ali's house in Oberlin, he remembered the Canadian winters of his youth and searched online for images of Jenpeg—the company town he'd lived in as a child. He finds little online about Jenpeg. It's mostly gone, the modest network of residential homes for employees at the hydroelectric dam under construction on the Nelson River.

Other regional headlines piqued his interest instead. In Cross Lake, across the waters from Jenpeg and home to the First Nations Pimicikamak community, Chief Cathy Merrick had made headlines for serving eviction papers to Manitoba electric-utility giant Manitoba Hydro. Chief Merrick had contended that Manitoba Hydro, the province of Manitoba, and the federal government of Canada had not fulfilled their agreements in the Northern



Flood Agreement, the 1977 treaty with five northern Bands under which Manitoba Hydro received easement rights to build the generating station. The Jenpeg Generating Station and the former town of Jenpeg where Ali lived were on Pimicikamak sovereign territory. Now, the dam his father had built was negatively impacting the Pimicikamak's community and changing the biodiversity of their unceded lands and waters.

He read more: last winter, in Cross Lake, six young people between the ages of

fifteen and eighteen had died by suicide in the space of two months. The Pimicikamak had declared a mental-health emergency, and, Ali writes, "the Elders in the community had gathered and performed a sacred ceremony calling on the spirits of the land and water to assist."

In the weeks that followed, he couldn't get Cross Lake out of his mind. The contemporary concerns in Cross Lake alarmed him and recalled the years that Ali, who is queer, Muslim, and the child of South Asian migrants, had spent traveling through the Palestinian territory in the West Bank teaching yoga and training yoga teachers. "I'd seen the impacts of occupation and political disenfranchisement up close," Ali writes, and "the sociopolitical impacts of colonialism." He wonders about his own family's complicity in the dam that his father had worked on at the Jenpeg Generating Station. Reflecting on his family's culpability in the dam beside his work in Palestine, Ali probes his own blind spots: "What made it possible for me to recognize the damage that colonialism far from home had wrought when I'd thought so little about the damage that I myself might have played a role in?"

continue the quality of terrifying tales presented while also giving us a better look at the world of horror in Asia, Africa, and eastern Europe.

Sean Guynes  
Michigan State University

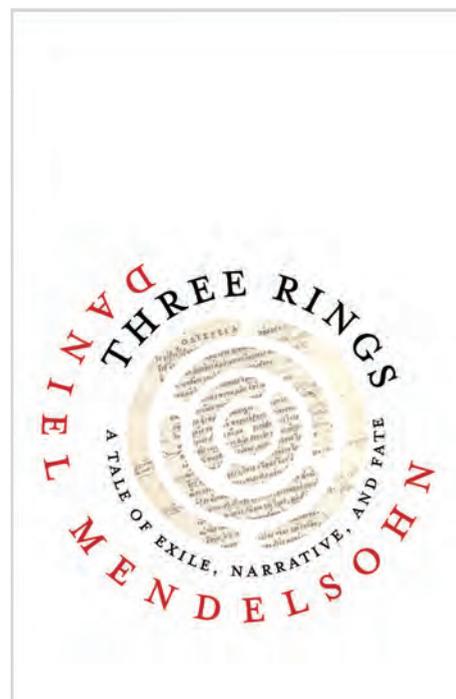
Daniel Mendelsohn  
*Three Rings: A Tale of Exile,  
Narrative, and Fate*

Charlottesville. University of Virginia Press.  
2020. 128 pages.

**THIS UNIQUE BOOK** by memoirist and classicist Daniel Mendelsohn traces with deep learning and imagination the relation

between stories and the world. It revolves, on first glance, around groups of threes. Its three chapters consider the works of three unlikely literary companions: Erich Auerbach, François Fénelon, and W. G. Sebald. All three were exiles, and all three considered or reflected in their greatly varying works questions about narrative, fiction, and reality—and the relation of all three to one another.

As the reader discovers, though, other authors and books also play profound roles in Mendelsohn's meditations: his own widely admired memoirs, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* and *An Odyssey: A Father, a Son, and an Epic*; Homer's *Odyssey*; Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*; and the



What rights and responsibilities does “being from” a place saddle a person with? Ali, who has called many places home, asks: What does it mean to have a point of origin, a community to belong to, or several? With richly layered questions about place, home, colonialism, complicity, indigenous sovereignty, and his own activism and childhood memories in mind, Ali emailed Chief Cathy Merrick. He wanted to learn more about the daily social and environmental issues facing Cross Lake and told Merrick he’d grown up in Jenpeg. Her email back was brief but generous: “It is wonderful that you would reflect on your childhood. You are more than welcome to visit our Nation.”

Shortly thereafter, he boarded a plane and flew north.

*Northern Light* is a journey story that troubles the maxim “You can never go home again.” Ali *does* go home, but that home, the town of Jenpeg, is gone to boreal forests growing back in the glow of Manitoba Hydro. He goes home to humble himself before the Pimicikamak community on whose ancestral lands he’d lived, unbeknownst to him, as a child. Ali returns to listen and be in dialogue with

a community that has long called the waterways of the Nelson River their home. He returns to look closer and more tenderly at a place that is and is not familiar, that does and does not belong to him.

His journey to Cross Lake is full of connections, burgeoning friendships, late-night hockey games, brunches honoring mothers, and school visits. Ali is a kind and attentive listener, curious, always a warm presence on the page. Always eager for more.

What do we each owe to the places we call home, and what can we give back to them, and to each other? Ali’s ethical imaginariy is as finely honed and illuminating as his prose. “We belong to the places of our earliest griefs, belong to where we left our dead, and belong to places where those younger than us were born.” What a privilege his fine book is, what a joy to spend a week in Cross Lake beside Ali. Returning home, he observes: “Places do not belong to us. We belong to them.”

Kathryn Savage  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Turkish translation of Fénelon’s *Télémaque*, by Kamil Pasha, to mention just a few. All are carefully examined, thoroughly or briefly, in Mendelsohn’s subtle consideration of how narrative works and how it is related to reality. Mendelsohn is especially interested in how his three main authors deploy or discuss a number of challenging narrative strategies—elaborate digressions and attention to peripheral matters crucially among them—and how those strategies both serve and challenge their representations of the world.

Mendelsohn is intensely aware, though, of how differently these sundry authors regard these narrative strategies. What the reader senses early on, and what gradually becomes an explicit theme of Mendelsohn’s book, is the divide between the “optimists,” for whom narrative strategies—no matter how digressive and seemingly aimless—lead to coherence and unity, and the “pessimists,” for whom those same strategies lead to disorientation and dead ends. Sebald exemplifies this pessimistic strain most thoroughly, as opposed to the optimist Homer. “Like Homer,” Mendelsohn concludes, “Sebald uses ring composition to great effect. But unlike the narrative rings, circles, digressions, and wandering that we