

## **Banned Books Week 2017**

### **A Guide to Censored, Banned, or Silenced Books and Authors, from Independent Presses**



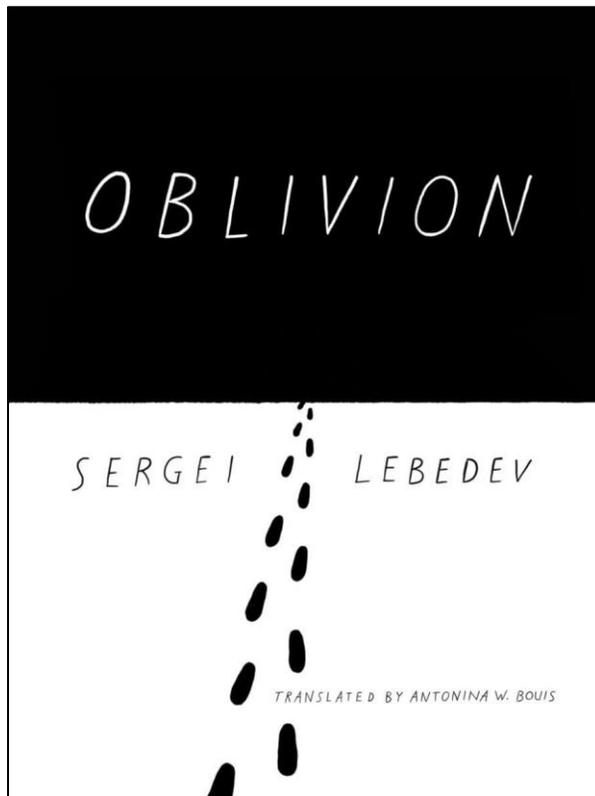
“Sergei Lebedev writes about our failure to understand the Stalinist era and to see that Russia is today a country torn into pieces. Lebedev’s characters seek ways to cut the umbilical cord with the past.”

—Svetlana Alexievich, 2015 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature

## *Oblivion*

by Sergei Lebedev

- 2017 Best Translated Book Award Finalist and *Wall Street Journal* Top 10 Novel of 2016



### **About *Oblivion*:**

In one of the first 21st century Russian novels to probe the legacy of the Soviet prison camp system, a young man travels to the vast wastelands of the Far North to uncover the truth about a shadowy neighbor who saved his life, and whom he knows only as Grandfather II. What he finds, among the forgotten mines and decrepit barracks of former gulags, is a world relegated to oblivion, where it is easier to ignore both the victims and the executioners than to come to terms with a terrible past. This disturbing tale evokes the great and ruined beauty of a land where man and machine worked in tandem with nature to destroy millions of lives during the Soviet century. Emerging from today’s Russia, where the ills of the past are being forcefully erased from public memory, this masterful novel represents an

epic literary attempt to rescue history from the brink of oblivion. *The Wall Street Journal* called it “a Dantean descent ... In a steely translation by Antonina W. Bouis, *Oblivion* is as cold and stark as a glacial crevasse, but as beautiful as one, too, with a clear poetic sensibility built to stand against the forces of erasure.”

### **About the author:**

Sergei Lebedev was born in Moscow in 1981 and worked for seven years on geological expeditions in northern Russia and Central Asia. Lebedev is a poet, essayist and journalist. *Oblivion*, his first novel, has been translated into many languages and was named one of the ten best novels of 2016 by *The Wall Street Journal*. Lebedev’s second novel, *The Year of the Comet*, has also received considerable acclaim.

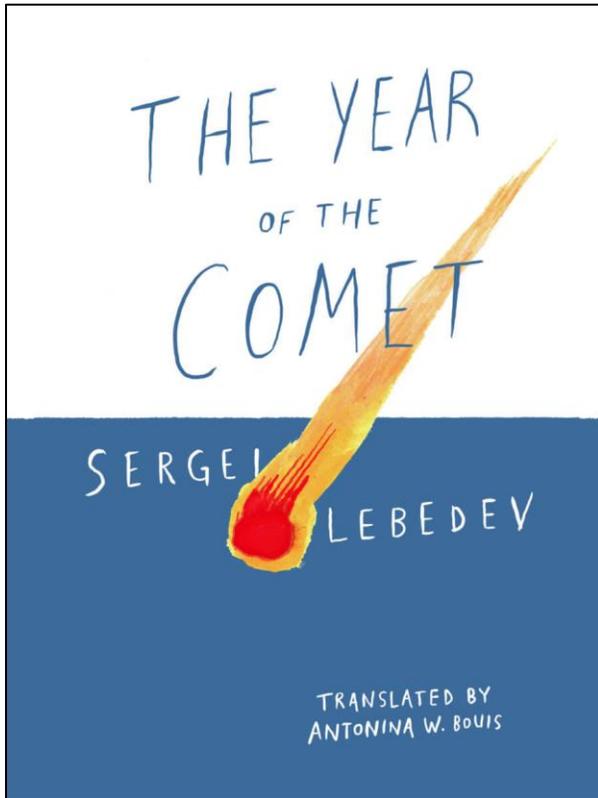
### **Oblivion by Sergei Lebedev**

**New Vessel Press—Fiction— 978-1-939931-25-2**

**292 pages—\$15.95 US**

# ***The Year of the Comet***

**by Sergei Lebedev**



## **About *The Year of the Comet*:**

From the critically acclaimed author of *Oblivion* comes *The Year of the Comet*, a story of a Russian boyhood and coming of age as the Soviet Union is on the brink of collapse. An idyllic childhood takes a sinister turn. Rumors of a serial killer haunt the neighborhood, families pack up and leave town without a word of warning, and the country begins to unravel. Policemen stand by as protesters overtake the streets, knowing that the once awe-inspiring symbols of power they wear on their helmets have become devoid of meaning. Lebedev depicts a vast empire coming apart at the seams, transforming a very public moment into something tender and personal, and writes with stunning beauty and shattering insight about childhood and the growing consciousness of a boy in the world. *Library Journal*, in a Starred Review, called the novel “absorbing ... a seamlessly written child’s-eye view that conveys an adult understanding of history’s burdens.”

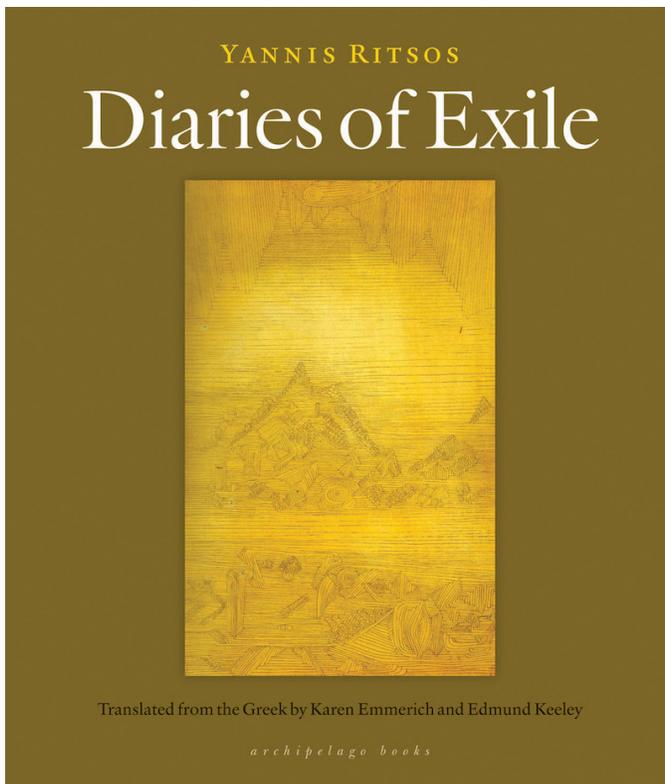
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## **The Year of the Comet**

**New Vessel Press—Fiction—978-1-939931-41-2**

**245 pages—\$17.95**



### **About *Diaries of Exile*:**

Yannis Ritsos is a poet whose writing life is entwined with the contemporary history of his homeland. This volume presents a series of three diaries in poetry that Ritsos wrote between 1948 and 1950, during and just after the Greek Civil War, while a political prisoner first on the island of Limnos and then at the infamous camp on Makronisos. Even in this darkest of times, Ritsos dedicated his days to poetry, trusting in writing and in art as endeavors capable of resisting oppression and bringing people together. These poems offer glimpses into the daily routines of life in exile, the quiet violence Ritsos and his fellow prisoners endured, the fluctuations in the prisoners' sense of solidarity, and their struggle to maintain humanity through language. This moving volume justifies Ritsos's reputation as one of the truly important poets in Greece's modern literary history.

### **About the Author:**

One of Greece's most prolific and widely translated poets, **Yannis Ritsos** (1909-1999) was born in Monemvasia. He lost his mother and an older brother to tuberculosis, and later contracted the disease himself. A lifelong, committed Communist, he fought in the Greek Resistance to the Axis occupation, sided with the Communists in the Greek Civil War, and subsequently spent years in detention centers and camps for political prisoners. The dictatorship of 1967-1974 landed him in internal exile yet again. Despite these many obstacles, Ritsos wrote more than a hundred volumes of poetry, plays, and translations. In 1976 he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize.

### **About the Translators:**

**Karen Emmerich's** translations from the Greek include books by Margarita Karapanou, Amanda Michalopoulou, Ersi Sotiropoulos, and Vassilis Vassilikos. Her translations of *Poems (1945-1971)* by Miltos Sachtouris was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award in Poetry. She has received translation grants and awards from PEN, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Modern Greek Studies Association.

**Edmund Keeley** is the Charles Barnwell Straut Professor of English Emeritus and the Director Emeritus of the Creative Writing Program at Princeton University. His collaborative translations of the modern Greek poets, including C. P. Cavafy and the Nobel laureates George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis, received the PEN/Ralph Manheim Medal for Translation, and his translations of Yannis Ritsos earned him the Harold Morton Landon Translation Award of the Academy of American Poets and the First European Prize for the Translation of Poetry. In 1999 he received an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

# IN PRAISE OF DEFEAT

Poems by Abdellatif Laâbi



Translated from the French by Donald Nicholson-Smith

*archipelago books*

## About *In Praise of Defeat*:

Abdellatif Laâbi is without a doubt the major francophone voice of Moroccan poetry today. Shaped by struggle and the pain of exile, Laâbi's expressive simplicity reflects both a life worn to the bone and a resilient, embracing spirit. Laâbi's is a poetry of protest – internally tumultuous yet delicate verse that grapples with political and spiritual oppression. This collection of poems, selected by Laâbi himself, shows the evolution of his style. From the mutilated syntax and explosive verse of his early work to the subtle lyricism and elegant constructions of phrase that characterize him now, Laâbi never ceases searching, demanding, and penetrating.

## About the Author:

**Abdellatif Laâbi**, poet, novelist, playwright, translator, and political activist, was born in Fez, Morocco in 1942. He was the founder of *Souffles*, a left-leaning literary review banned by the Moroccan government in 1972. An outspoken critic of the authoritarian and theocratic regimes of the Maghreb, Laâbi was imprisoned in Morocco for eight years and later exiled to France. Deemed by Amnesty International a prisoner of conscience, Laâbi received the Prix de la Liberté and the Prix International de Poésie while imprisoned. He went on to receive the Prix Robert Ganzo de Poésie in 2008, the Prix Goncourt de la Poésie for his *Oeuvres complètes* in 2009, and the Grand Prix de la Francophonie from the Académie Française in 2011. Also available from Archipelago are his debut collection of poetry *The Rule of Barbarism* and his autobiographical novel *The Bottom of the Jar*.

## About the Translator:

**Donald Nicholson-Smith** is a translator and freelance editor. Born in Manchester, England, and a longtime resident of New York City, Nicholson-Smith's many translations include the works of Jean-Patrick Manchette, Thierry Jonquet, Guy Debord, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Henri Lefebvre, Raoul Vaneigem, Antonin Artaud, Jean Laplanche, and Guillaume Apollinaire. He has also translated many texts dealing with psychology and social criticism. He won the 2015 French-American Foundation Translation Prize for his translation of Manchette's *The Mad and the Bad*.

On the author:

Over the past three decades, Dubravka Ugresic has established herself as one of Europe's greatest—and most entertaining—thinkers and creators, and it's in her essays that Ugresic is at her sharpest. With laser focus, she pierces our pop culture, dissecting the absurdity of daily life with a wit and style that's all her own. In 1991, when war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, Ugresic took a firm anti-nationalistic stand and was proclaimed a "traitor," a "public enemy," and a "witch," and was exposed to harsh and persistent media harassment. As a result, she left Croatia in 1993 and currently lives in Amsterdam. In 2016, she was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature for her body of work.

On the book:

Whether it's commentary on jaded youth, the ways technology has made us soft in the head, or how wrestling a hotel minibar into a bathtub is the best way to stick it to The Man, Ugresic writes with unmatched honesty and panache. *Karaoke Culture* is full of candid, personal, and opinionated accounts of topics ranging from the baffling worldwide-pop-culture phenomena to the detriments of conformist nationalism. Sarcastic, biting, and, at times, even heartbreaking, this new collection of essays fully captures the outspoken brilliance of Ugresic's insights into our modern world's culture and conformism, the many ways in which it is ridiculous, and how (deep, deep down) we are all true suckers for it.



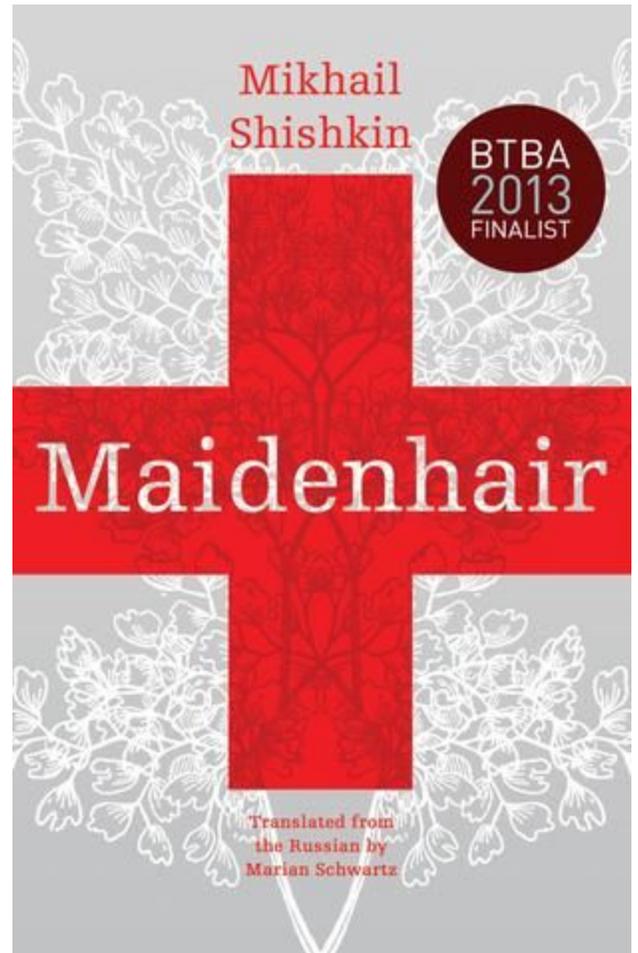
On the author:

Mikhail Shishkin has lived in Switzerland since 1995 and is an unwelcome figure in Putin's Russia. In 2013 he refused to represent Russia at Book Expo America and has been a fierce and public critic of Putin, Russian political violence, and the invasion of Ukraine in particular, with translations of his writing appearing in both the Guardian and the New York Times. Considering the fate of journalists critical of Putin, there is no safety in Russia for a fiction writer willing to call the country one "where power has been seized by a corrupt, criminal regime, where the state is a pyramid of thieves, where elections have become farce, where courts serve the authorities, not the law, where there are political prisoners, where state television has become a prostitute, where packs of impostors pass insane laws that are returning everyone to the Middle Ages – such a country cannot be my Russia."

On the book:

Day after day the Russian asylum-seekers sit across from the interpreter and Peter—the Swiss officers who guard the gates to paradise—and tell of the atrocities they've suffered, or that they've invented, or heard from someone else. These stories of escape, war, and violence intermingle with the interpreter's own reading: a history of an ancient Persian war; letters sent to his son "Nebuchadnezzasaurus," ruler of a distant, imaginary childhood empire; and the diaries of a Russian singer who lived through Russia's wars and revolutions in the early part of the twentieth century, and eventually saw the Soviet Union's dissolution.

Mikhail Shishkin's *Maidenhair* is an instant classic of Russian literature. It bravely takes on the eternal questions—of truth and fiction, of time and timelessness, of love and war, of Death and the Word—and is a movingly luminescent expression of the pain of life and its uncountable joys.





[Fardwor, Russia! A Fantastical Tale of Life Under Putin](#)

By Oleg Kashin

Translated from the Russian by Will Evans

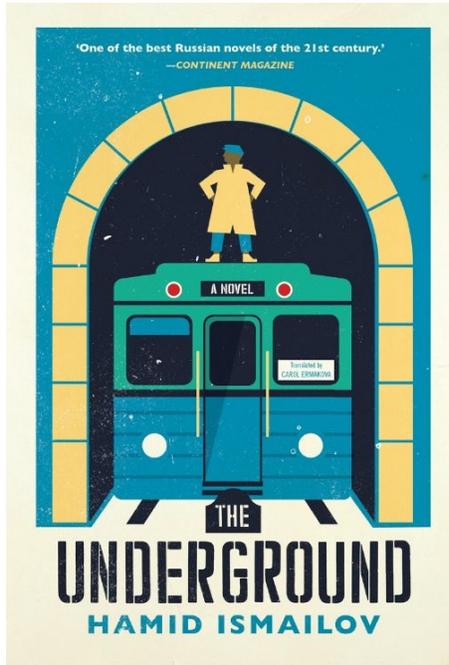
Introduction by Max Seddon

When a scientist experimenting on humans in a sanatorium near Moscow gives a growth serum to a dwarf oil mogul, the newly heightened businessman runs off with the experimenter's wife, and a series of mysterious deaths and crimes commences. Fantastical, wonderfully strange, and ringing with the echoes of real-life events, this political parable fused with science fiction has an uncanny resonance with today's Russia under Putin.

Oleg Kashin is a notorious Russian journalist and activist who, in 2010, two months after he'd delivered the manuscript of this book to his publishers, was beaten to within an inch of his life in an attack with ties to the highest levels of government. While absurdly funny on its face, *Fardwor, Russia! A Fantastical Tale of Life Under Putin* is deadly serious in its implications. Kashin's experience exemplifies why so few authors dare to criticize the state—and his book is a testament of the power of literature to break the bonds of power, corruption, and enforced silence.

*Banned because....*

Born in 1980 in Kaliningrad, Russia, **Oleg Kashin** is one of Russia's most famous journalists and political commentators. A former navigator in the Russian Navy and current opponent of Putin, he was severely beaten nearly to death by assailants connected to the Russian government in November 2010, two months after he submitted *Fardwor, Russia!* to his publisher and two months before it went to print. Kashin is known for his reporting on political protests, much to the ire of many pro-Kremlin groups.



## [The Underground](#)

By Hamid Ismailov

Translated from the Russian by Carol Ermakova

“I am Moscow’s underground son, the result of one too many nights on the town.” So declares Mboobo, the unforgettable twelve-year-old narrator of this captivating novel by exiled Uzbek author and BBC journalist Hamid Ismailov. Born to a Siberian woman and an African athlete competing in the 1980 Moscow Olympics, Mboobo spends his days navigating the subterranean arteries of the Metro and the challenges of being a fatherless, mixed-race boy in the precarious days of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

While paying homage to great Russian authors of the past—Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Gorky, Nabokov, Pushkin—Ismailov emerges as the master of a new kind of Russian writing that probes the sordid post-Soviet present. *The Underground* is a dizzying and moving tour of the Soviet capital, on the surface and beneath, before its colossal fall.

*Banned because....*

**Hamid Ismailov** is an Uzbek novelist and poet who was forced to leave his home in Tashkent when his writing brought him to the attention of government officials. Under threat of arrest, he moved to London and joined the BBC World Service, where he is now Head of the Central Asian Service. In addition to journalism, Ismailov is a prolific writer of poetry and prose, and his books have been published in Uzbek, Russian, French, German, Turkish, English and other languages. His work is still banned in Uzbekistan.

## Country of Ash by Edward Reicher



**Country of Ash** is the gripping chronicle of a Jewish doctor who miraculously survived near-certain death, first inside the Lodz and Warsaw ghettos, where he was forced to treat the Gestapo, then on the Aryan side of Warsaw, where he hid under numerous disguises. He clandestinely recorded the terrible events he witnessed, but his manuscript disappeared during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After the war, reunited with his wife and young daughter, he rewrote his story.

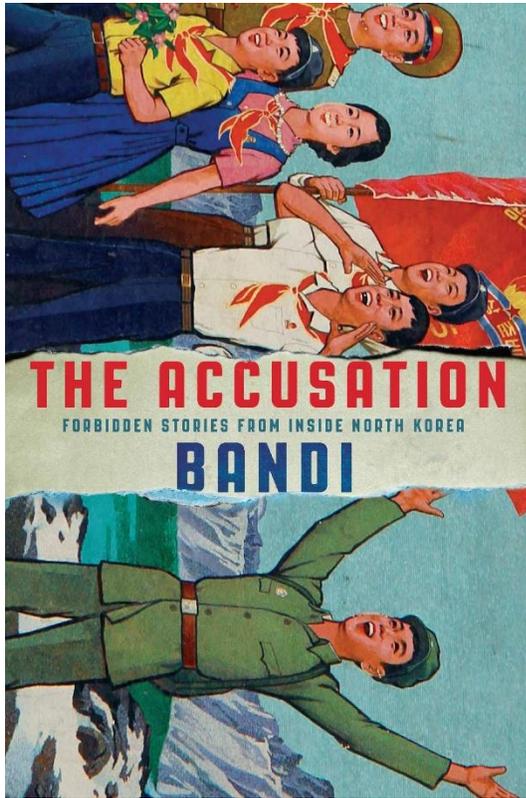
Peopled with historical figures from the controversial Chaim Rumkowski, who fancied himself a king of the Jews, to infamous Nazi commanders, to dozens of Jews and non-Jews who played cat and mouse with death throughout the war, Reicher's memoir is about a community faced with extinction and the chance decisions and strokes of luck that kept a few stunned souls alive.

### Brief Excerpt from Foreword to *Country of Ash*

His original manuscript, written as events unfolded, was destroyed in the ruins of Warsaw following the uprising of 1944. He rewrote it from memory after liberation and completed it with testimony from other witnesses—Roza, for example, the prostitute who saved his life, when she came to collect her promised reward, or Hermann Höfle, the coordinator of Operation Reinhard, whom my father was forced to treat while he was in the Warsaw ghetto. How could my father have known that he would one day encounter him again before a tribunal in Salzburg, where Höfle would deny having ordered the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Jews?

My father wanted his memoir to be published. Yet in Germany, where he had settled, no one was interested for years. To be more exact, everything having to do with the Holocaust was purged, and this meant in history books, too. Things have changed now. Today, the history books are no longer silent, but now people say there have been books enough on the subject. And so, when my father died in 1975, his manuscript was still unpublished

—Elisabeth Bizouard-Reicher, Paris, September 1990



Bandi's *The Accusation* is one of the most unusual and powerful books that Grove Atlantic has ever published. It is a collection of short stories written by an anonymous North Korean writer – believed to be the first piece of fiction by a dissident writer that has made it out of the country. The manuscript was smuggled out of North Korea and published first in South Korea and now around the world. Described as “searing. . . a fierce indictment” by the Korea Correspondent of the *New York Times*, and brought into English by Man Booker International Prize-winning translator Deborah Smith, *The Accusation* is a vivid and frightening portrait of what it means to live in a completely closed-off society, and a heartbreaking yet hopeful portrayal of the humanity that persists even in such dire circumstances.

**“[A] remarkable collection . . . This courageous book offers an important reminder that not all dystopias are invented.”—Sam Sacks, *Wall Street Journal***

**“*The Accusation* shines a light on the dark half of the Korean peninsula with stories that are as readable as they are important . . . Like its great literary predecessor *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *The Accusation* is a powerful work that seems destined to serve as the go-to example, and indictment, of life in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.”—*National Post***

Bandi, a name derived from the Korean for “firefly”, is a pseudonym for a writer who is still living in his homeland of North Korea. *The Accusation*, which was written in secret and smuggled out of the country, is his only published book to date.

*The Accusation*

Bandi

Translated from the Korean by Deborah Smith

Grove Press

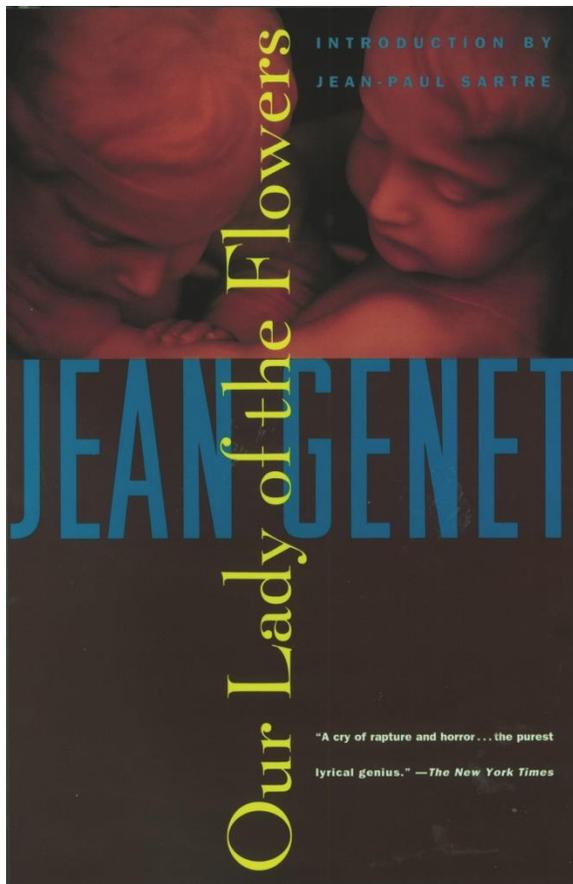
ISBN-13: 978-0-8021-2735-8

Price: US \$24.00 / CAN \$32.99

5.5 x 8.25, 240 pp

March 2017; forthcoming in paperback January 2018

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First published in France in 1943 but not brought out into English until 20 years later, *Our Lady of the Flowers* is Genet's masterful and groundbreaking novel of the erotic life of the Paris underworld. Banned for its frank depictions of homosexuality, it is an important literary text and a testament to a world that was brutally criminalized. Genet himself had an extraordinary life and composed *Our Lady of the Flowers* in his Paris prison cell. Born to a mother who was working as a prostitute, he was given up for adoption, and incarcerated for three years at the age of fifteen, after which he joined the French Foreign Legion. He was dishonorably discharged for "lewd acts", henceforth spent the next several years traveling around Europe, funded in part by sex work. In 1937 he came to Paris, where again he was arrested and imprisoned, writing *Our Lady of the Flowers* in his cell. Other celebrated works of Genet include the novel, *A Thief's Journal* (1949), about his experiences in prison, and *The Screens* (1963), a biting political play about the Algerian War of Independence. Genet died at the age of seventy-five in 1986.

**"A cry of rapture and horror . . . the purest lyrical genius." —*The New York Times***

**"Only a handful of twentieth century writers, such as Kafka and Proust, have as important, as authoritative, as irrevocable a voice and style." —Susan Sontag**

**"Genet has taken a tabooed subject and created a world that is out of this world. He is a magician, an enchanter of the first order." —Richard Wright**

Our Lady of the Flowers

Jean Genet

Translated by Bernard Frechtman, with an introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre

Grove Press

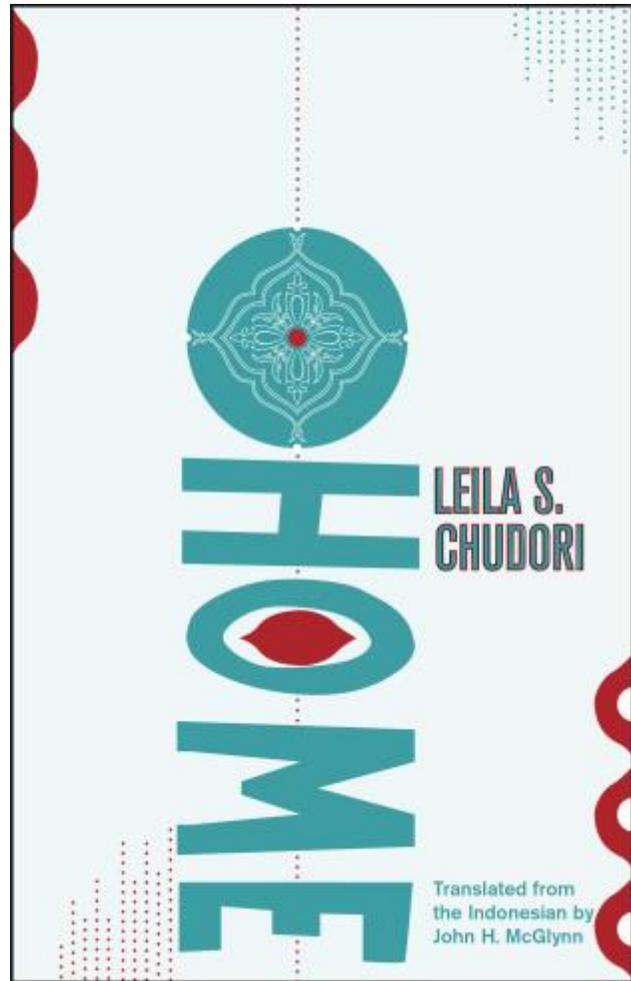
ISBN-13: 978-0-8021-3013-6

Price: US \$14.00 / CAN \$18.00

5.5 x 8.25, 272 pp

Leila S. Chudori's *Home*, translated by John H. McGlynn, is a novel based on Suharto's regime in the 1960s and his eventual overthrow in 1998. The regime is responsible for the 1965 anti-communist massacre of over a million alleged Communists and their sympathizers. It is also responsible for numerous wrongful imprisonments and for the banishment of books that depicted the regime negatively. The history of the 1965 massacre was manipulated by the Suharto regime to portray its involvement in this atrocity in a favorable light, a history explored by director Joshua Oppenheimer in his extraordinary Oscar-nominated documentary *The Act of Killing*, and its powerful follow-up, *The Look of Silence*.

*Home* is one of the first novels in Indonesia to present the regime's victims' side of the story versus the official state-sponsored version of Indonesia's history. Chudori spent six years researching the novel, interviewing exiles and their families in Paris and throughout Indonesia, basing her characters on these real individuals trapped in the tides of history.



The hope was that the overthrow of Suharto would lead to a more open Indonesian democracy, including fewer government restrictions on literature. However, the recent and controversial cancellation of events paying tribute to the victims of the 1965 anti-communist massacre at the 2015 Ubud Writers and Readers Festival is evidence of continued censorship within Indonesia.

### **About the Book:**

Dimas Suryo, abroad in 1965 and unable to return to Indonesia after Suharto's rise to power, winds up in Paris, where he helps found a restaurant, based on the real Restaurant Indonesia, a place where exiles could join together and celebrate their longed-for home culture through food, dance, and song, while suffering a lifetime of forced homelessness away from Indonesia. Years later, Lintang Utara, Suryo's daughter with a Frenchwoman, arrives in Jakarta for her thesis in film studies just as the student protests that bring down Suharto get underway. Father and daughter each become central characters in a complex, ambitious novel exploring the history of Indonesia's tragic 20th century, marked by the rise and fall of a brutal dictatorship.