Franz Kafka

The Lost Writings

- Translated from the German by Michael Hofmann
- Edited and with an afterword by Reiner Stach

A windfall for every reader: sixty-four marvelous Kafka stories only now in English

So, you want to leave me? Well, one decision is as good as another. Where will you go? Where is away-from-me? On the moon? Not even that is far enough, and you’ll never get there. So why the fuss? Wouldn’t you rather sit down in a corner somewhere, and be quiet? Wouldn’t that be an improvement? A warm, dark corner? Aren’t you listening? You’re feeling for the door. Well, where is it? So far as I remember, this room doesn’t have one. At the time this was built, no one had imagined such earth-shattering plans as yours. Well, no matter, a thought like yours won’t get lost, we will discuss it over dinner, and our laughter will be your reward.

Unearthed by the master Kafka biographer and scholar Reiner Stach and translated by the peerless Michael Hofmann, this collection comes as a prize and a joy. Some stories are several pages long; some run about a page; a handful are only a few lines long. Lost to English-language readers until now, all are marvels: even the most fragmentary texts are revelations.

“Wonderful,” Hofmann remarked, as he was translating. “It’s full of the love of narration, surprises, and the sweetness and purity of invention. It’s amazing how inexhaustible Kafka is. We think we ‘know’ him and have him down. He pops up somewhere else, as something different. It’s my (sober) assessment that nothing will have changed our view of Kafka more than this book in fifty years.”

“Kafka is the greatest German writer of our time. Such poets as Rilke or such novelists as Thomas Mann are dwarfs or plaster saints in comparison to him.”

—VLADIMIR NABOKOV

“I think of a Kafka story as a perfect work of literary art, as approachable as it is strange, and as strange as it is approachable.”

—MICHAEL HOFMANN

REINER STACH, born in 1951 in Saxony, worked extensively on the vast definitive German edition of Kafka’s work (wherein he found the sixty-four texts gathered here), before embarking on his monumental “superb” (PW) three-volume biography. For his translations, the acclaimed poet MICHAEL HOFMANN has won countless prizes and been hailed by John Ashbery as a “brilliant, stirring, singular translator.”
“Jenny Erpenbeck’s writing is a lure that leads us—off-center, as one travels into a vortex—into the most haunted and haunting territory.”
—Anne Michaels, author of *Fugitive Pieces*

Praise for *Go, Went, Gone*:

“Wonderful, elegant, and exhilarating—ferocious as well as virtuosic.”
—DEBORAH EISENBERG, *THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*

“Among the *Go, Went, Gone*’s many virtues is that it is not only alive to the suffering of people who are very different from us but alive to the false consolations of telling ‘moving’ stories about people who are very different from us… Magnificent.”
—JAMES WOOD, *THE NEW YORKER*

“The best novel to date about the migration refugee crisis, German novelist Jenny Erpenbeck’s *Go, Went, Gone* felt both urgent and tender, taking on depicting Europe on the brink of its next profound change—as seen through the eyes of a professor from Berlin’s former East, a man who knows something of what it means to lose one’s place in the world.”
—MEGAN O’GRADY, *VOGUE*

“Calls to mind J.M. Coetzee, whose flat, affectless prose wrests coherence from immense social turmoil. By making the predicament of the refugee banal and quotidian, Erpenbeck helps it become visible.”
—THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“A stunning novel: lyrical, absorbing, so accurate as to the ways we resist engagement and then are pulled in.”
—JULIA ALVAREZ, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*
JENNY ERPENBECK was born in East Berlin in 1967. Her previous books, The Old Child, The Book of Words, Visitation, The End of Days, and Go, Went, Gone, are all available from New Directions. KURT BEALS teaches in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Washington University in St. Louis. He has previously translated books by Regina Ullmann, and Reiner Stach.
A lush, disorienting novel, *The Caretaker* takes no prisoners as it explores the perils of devotion and the potentially lethal charisma of things.

Following the death of a renowned and eccentric collector—the author of *Stuff*, a seminal philosophical work on the art of accumulation—the fate of the privately endowed museum he cherished falls to a peripatetic stranger who had been his fervent admirer. In his new role as caretaker of The Society for the Preservation of the Legacy of Dr. Charles Morgan, this restive man, in service to an absent master, at last finds his calling. The peculiar institution over which he presides is dedicated to the annihilation of hierarchy: peerless antiquities commune happily with the ignored, the discarded, the undervalued and the valueless. What transpires as the caretaker assumes dominion over this reliquary of voiceless objects and over its visitors is told in a manner at once obsessive and matter-of-fact, and in language both cocooning and expansive. A wry and haunting tale, *The Caretaker*, like the interplanetary crystal that is one of the museum’s treasures, is rare, glistening, and of a compacted inwardness.

Kafka or Shirley Jackson may come to mind, and *The Caretaker* may conjure up various genres—parables, ghost stories, locked-room mysteries—but Doon Arbus draws her phosphorescent water from no other writer’s well.

“Doon Arbus’s beautiful, moving, original novel does just what we want a novel to do: It creates a fictional world that reflects, illuminates and reveals the ‘real’ world we live in. This wryly funny, subversively philosophical book is brief—yet deep enough to contain humans and objects, love and death, memory and amnesia, oblivion and survival. It generates its own musical score: a phrase of Satie, a few notes of the Well-Tempered Clavier, and then the Beethoven sonata.” —FRANCINE PROSE

“Doon Arbus’s debut novel is a kind of mystery—about who we become, what the absent leave us with, and why. Dense, visual, and true, this short book speaks volumes about the theater of the mind, and how the ensuing comedic drama we call life unfolds inside and outside our control. A marvelous new voice.” —HILTON ALS

DOON ARBUS is a writer who lives in New York City. *The Caretaker* is her first novel.
In *Box Hill*, a vivid coming-of-age novel, a young man suddenly wakes up to his gay self—on his eighteenth birthday, when he receives the best gift ever: love and sex. In the woodsy cruising grounds of Box Hill, chubby Colin literally stumbles over glamorous Ray—ten years older, leather-clad, cool, handsome, a biker, and a top. (Colin, if largely unformed, is nevertheless decidedly a bottom.) Colin narrates his love—conveying how mind-blowing being with Ray is—in comically humble-pie terms. “If there are leaders then there must be followers, and I had followership skills in plenty just waiting to be tapped. To this day I can’t see a fat kid in shorts without wanting to rush over and give him what comfort I can. To tell him it won’t always be like this.”

Mars-Jones uses Colin’s naivete to give a fresh view of the world and of love. Before long, however, homophobia, class, family strife, and loss rear their ugly heads. Yet in the end, it seems Colin’s modest view oddly takes in the widest horizon: he learns that “people can care about anything.” A surprise and a pleasure, *Box Hill* is an intensely moving short novel.

“Mars-Jones’s prose is exceptionally nimble, dry, humorously restrained, very English, with a little Nabokovian velvet too. He can describe more or less anything and make it interesting.”

—JAMES WOOD, THE LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS

“I very much enjoyed *Box Hill*. It is a characteristic Mars-Jones mixture of the shocking, the endearing, the funny, and the sad, with an unforgettable narrator. The sociological detail is as ever acutely enduring.”

—MARGARET DRABBLE

Angels have soared through Western culture and consciousness from Biblical to contemporary times. But what do we really know about these celestial beings? Where do they come from, what are they made of, how do they communicate and perceive? The celebrated essayist Eliot Weinberger has mined and deconstructed, resurrected and distilled centuries of theology into an awe-inspiring exploration of the heavenly host.

From a litany of angelic voices, Weinberger’s lyrical meditation then turns to the earthly counterparts, the saints, their lives retold in a series of vibrant and playful capsule biographies, followed by a glimpse of the afterlife.

Threaded throughout Angels and Saints are the glorious illuminated grid poems by the eighteenth-century Benedictine monk Hrabanus Maurus. These astonishingly complex, proto-“concrete” poems are untangled in a lucid afterword by the medieval scholar and historian Mary Wellesley.

"Eliot Weinberger is a master essayist, a furious thinker and an exceptionally elegant writer." —JENNY DISKI

“Like Thomas Aquinas before him, Weinberger is a brilliant scholar in a dark age.” —RAIN TAXI

“My favorite essayist is Eliot Weinberger. His remarkable breadth of calm concern is impressive." —GARY SNYDER, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Eliot Weinberger’s books of literary essays include Karmic Traces, Oranges and Peanuts for Sale, An Elemental Thing, and The Ghosts of Birds. His political writings are collected in What I Heard About Iraq and What Happened Here: Bush Chronicles. The author of a study of Chinese poetry translation, 19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei, he is a translator of the poetry of Bei Dao, the editor of The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry, and the general editor of the series Calligrams: Writings from and on China. His work has been translated into over thirty languages, and appears frequently in the London Review of Books. He was born in New York City, where he still lives, and has been publishing with New Directions since 1975.

Dr. Mary Wellesley is a Research Affiliate at the British Library. Her book Hidden Hands: Manuscripts that Made Us is forthcoming.
Asa’s husband is transferring jobs, and his new office is located near his family’s home in the countryside. During an exceptionally hot summer, the young married couple move in, and Asa does her best to quickly adjust to their new rural lives, to their remoteness, to the constant presence of her in-laws and the incessant buzz of cicadas. While her husband is consumed with his job, Asa is left to explore her surroundings on her own: she makes trips to the supermarket, halfheartedly looks for work, and tries to find interesting ways of killing time.

One day, while running an errand for her mother-in-law, she comes across a strange creature, follows it to the embankment of a river, and ends up falling into a hole—a hole that seems to have been made specifically for her. This is the first in a series of bizarre experiences that drive Asa deeper into the mysteries of this rural landscape filled with eccentric characters and unidentifiable creatures, leading her to question her role in this world, and eventually, her sanity.

Praise for The Factory:

“Oyamada is fond of jump cuts and scenes that dissolve mid-paragraph and flow into the next without so much as a line break. A pleasant vertigo sets in. Objects have a way of suddenly appearing in the hands of characters. Faces become increasingly vivid and grotesque. Nothing feels fixed; everything in the book might be a hallucination.” —Parul Sehgal, The New York Times


“Horrific and scary, while at the same time affirming and beautiful.” —Rumaan Alam, The New Republic
Clarice Lispector

“Sphinx, sorceress, sacred monster. The revival of the hypnotic Clarice Lispector has been one of the true literary events of the twenty-first century.”
—Parul Sehgal, The New York Times

“You could call Lispector’s stories telegraphs from the flames of hell, but that would discount how innocent and funny they could be. Manna from the shtetl? Prayers at the high-rise window before the tranquilizers kick in?”
—BENJAMIN ANASTAS, THE NEW REPUBLIC

“Her early work already reads like the mature productions of most writers. Each story demands such attention. Lispector never repeats a subject or an approach except to push it further. Moser, in his introduction, calls her a ‘female Chekhov’, but Lispector is no one so much as the fullest version of herself.”
—JOANNA WALSH, THE NATIONAL

“A genius on the level of Nabokov.”
—JEFF VANDERMEER, SLATE

“The Complete Stories is bound to become a kind of bedside Bible or I Ching for readers of Lispector, both old and new.”
—VALERIA LUISELLI, PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (STARRED REVIEW)

“Lispector reads with lively intelligence and is terrifically funny. Language, for her, was the self’s light.”
—LORRIE MOORE
Clarice Lispector

The Hour of the Star
(Centenary Edition)

• Translated from the Portuguese by Benjamin Moser
• Introduction by Colm Tóibín
• Afterword by Paulo Gurgel Valente

Clarice Lispector’s best-selling masterpiece—“her finest book” (The Nation)—now in a special hardcover edition to celebrate the centenary of her birth, with an illuminating new afterword by her son

The devastating final work by Brazil’s greatest modern writer, The Hour of the Star tells the haunting tale of Macabéa—a typist who lives in the slums of Rio—underfed, sickly, and unloved, yet inwardly free.

“Most late work has a spectral beauty, a sense of form and content dancing a slow and skillful waltz with each other. Lispector, on the other hand, as she came to the end of her life, wrote as though her life was beginning, with a sense of a need to stir and shake narrative itself to see where it might take her, as the bewildered and original writer that she was, and us, her bewildered and excited readers.” –COLM TÓIBÍN

“I’m really obsessed by this writer from Brazil, Clarice Lispector. I love her because she writes whole novels where not one thing happens—she describes the air. I think she’s such a great, great novelist.” –JOHN WATERS

“This new translation of The Hour of the Star reveals the mesmerizing force of the revitalized modernist’s Rio-set tale of a young naïf, who, along with the piquantly intrusive narrator, challenges the reader’s notions of identity, storytelling, and love.” –MEGAN O’GRADY, VOGUE

CLARICE LISPECTOR (1920–1977), the greatest Brazilian writer of the twentieth century, has been called “astounding” (Rachel Kushner), “a penetrating genius” (Donna Seaman, Booklist) and “one of the twentieth century’s most mysterious writers” (Orhan Pamuk). COLM TÓIBÍN, the author of Brooklyn, The Master, and Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know: The Fathers of Wilde, Yeats and Joyce, has won the Costa Book Award and the Dublin IMPAC Prize. BENJAMIN MOSER is the author of Why This World: the Biography of Clarice Lispector, and Sontag: Her Life and Work. He is general editor of the new translations of Clarice Lispector’s complete works at New Directions. PAULO GURGEL VALENTE, Clarice Lispector’s son, was born in Washington, DC, in 1953, while his father was stationed in the Brazilian embassy. He has published books on economics and finance.
NEW DIRECTIONS

Wolfgang Koeppen

Pigeons on the Grass

*Translated and with an afterword by Michael Hofmann*

Wolfgang Koeppen’s postwar masterpiece in a luminous new translation by the poet Michael Hofmann

*Pigeons on the Grass* is told over a single day in Munich in 1948. The first new cinemas and insurance offices are opening atop the ruins, Korea and Persia are keeping the world in panic, planes rumble in the sky (but no one looks up), newspaper headlines announce war over oil and atomic bomb tests. Odysseus Cotton, a black man, alights at the station and hires a porter; Emilia sells the last of her jewelry; Philipp gives himself up to despair; with their interracial love affair, Carla Behrend and Washington Price scandalize their neighbors—who still expect gifts of chocolate and coffee; a boy hustles to sell a stray dog; Mr. Edwin, a visiting poet, prepares for a reading; Frau Behrend disowns her daughter; Alexander stars as the Archduke in a new German Super-production; and Susanne seeks out a night to remember. In Michael Hofmann’s words, “in their sum, they are the totality of existence.”

Koeppen spares no one and sees all in this penetrating and intense novel that surveys those who remain, and those who have just arrived, in a damaged society. As inventive as Joyce and as compulsively readable as Dickens, *Pigeons on the Grass* is a great lost classic.

“Almost eerily contemporary in its concerns, and remarkable as a sidelong, searing appraisal of the legacy of the Nazi years, it is a recovered masterpiece.”—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (STARRED)

“Koeppen’s voice—cold, defiant and relentless in its fury at the deadly amnesia he saw emerge from Germany’s ruins after World War II—neither transforms nor imbues the world around him, but rather indicted it.”—PETER FILKINS, THE NEW YORK TIMES

*WOLFGANG KOEPPEN* (1906–1996) was born in Greifswald and died in Munich. He worked as a junior chef, a dramaturge, and an editor. In the early 1950s three novels were published to high acclaim for accurately capturing the atmosphere of the republic under Konrad Adenauer: *Pigeons on the Grass*, *The Hothouse*, and *Death In Rome*. MICHAEL HOFMANN has won numerous prizes for his German translations.
Georges Perec

Ellis Island

Georges Perec, employing prose meditations, lists, and inventories (of countries of origin, of what the immigrants carried), conjures up in *Ellis Island* the sixteen million people who, between 1890 and 1954, arrived as foreigners and stayed on to become Americans. Perec (who by the age of nine was an orphan: his father was killed by a German bullet; his mother perished in Auschwitz) is wide-awake to the elements of chance in immigration and survival: “To me Ellis Island is the ultimate place of exile. That is, the place where place is absent, the non-place, the nowhere… Ellis Island belongs to all those whom intolerance and poverty have driven and still drive from the land where they grew up.” *Ellis Island* is a slender Perec masterwork, unique among his many singular works.

The acclaimed poet and scholar Mónica de la Torre contributes an afterword that keeps Perec’s writing front and center while situating *Ellis Island* in the context of current fierce battles over immigration.

“The lyric study of Ellis Island is a mournful counterfactual about what might have been had his parents—and many others—made it across the ocean. If Perec took pride in not repeating himself, it did not stop him from returning, as if in an elliptical orbit, to the same obsessions: police states, citizens going missing, organized brutality, human fragility.” —PAUL GRIMSTAD, THE NEW YORKER

“While exploring the island—its history, its buildings, its leftovers—Perec identifies Ellis Island as a non-place, an isle of tears, and reveals Emma Lazarus’s metaphor of America’s ‘golden door,’ which is emblazoned upon the Statue of Liberty, to be little but a false promise.” —FRIEZE

Beatriz Bracher

Antonio

* Translated from the Portuguese by Adam Morris

A brilliant, magisterial novel of family secrets simmering beneath the surface

In Beatriz Bracher's *Antonio*—her third novel and her breakout book in Brazil—Benjamin, on the verge of becoming a father, discovers a tragic family secret involving patrimony and determines to find out how it happened. Those most immediately involved are all dead, but their three closest confidantes are still alive—his grandmother, Isabel; Haroldo, his grandfather’s friend; and Raul, his father’s friend—and each will tell him different versions of the facts. It is by collecting these shards of memories that Benjamin will piece together the painful puzzle of his family history. As with a Faulkner novel, putting together these three perspectives leads to contradictions as often as to the truth.

“No one but Beatriz Bracher,” the *Jornal do Brasil* observed, “would be able to write a book like *Antonio* in Brazil today, because only she manages to write so intimately and forcefully, so ironically and bitterly, about the bourgeois upper class.”

Praise for Beatriz Bracher’s *I Didn’t Talk*:

"Brilliant, enigmatic, haunting, powerful: Bracher is a force to be reckoned with.” —*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*

“Above all, it’s the writing that shines in *I Didn’t Talk*. It’s a novel that’s intelligent but not showy, and Bracher’s restraint makes the story all the more potent. And the story is an important one. *I Didn’t Talk* isn’t just about one emotionally bruised man; it’s about the lasting effects of violence, and the way cruelty causes its victims to torture themselves.” —*NPR*

BEATRIZ BRACHER, born in São Paulo in 1961, grew up under the military dictatorship. Her memories intersect with those of the people whose friends and lovers were tortured, exiled, and killed, as well as with those who did the killing. Bracher has won three of Brazil’s most prestigious literary awards: the Clarice Lispector Prize, the Rio Prize, and the São Paulo Prize. A writer and translator based in California, ADAM MORRIS has also translated novels by Hilda Hilst and João Gilberto Noll.
Bohumil Hrabal

The Gentle Barbarian

• Translated from the Czech by Paul Wilson
• Illustrated

An unforgettable portrait of a major pioneering artist, by “Czechoslovakia’s greatest writer” (Milan Kundera)

The Gentle Barbarian is Bohumil Hrabal’s homage to Vladimír Boudník, one of the greatest Czech artists of the 1950s and 1960s, whose life came to a tragic end shortly after the Soviet invasion of 1968. Boudník and Hrabal had a close and often contentious friendship. For a brief period, in the early 1950s, they worked together in the Kladno steel works and lived in the same building in Prague.

Written in the early seventies, Hrabal’s anecdotal portrait of Boudník includes another controversial member of that early group of the Czech avantgarde: the poet Egon Bondy. While Hrabal and Bondy were evolving their aesthetic of “total realism,” Boudník developed his own artistic approach, “Explosionalism,” in which the boundaries between life and art become blurred, and everyday events take on the appearance and the substance of art.

Hrabal’s portrait of Boudník captures the strange atmosphere of a time in which the traditional values and structures of everyday life in Czechoslovakia were being radically dismantled by the Communists. But as The Gentle Barbarian demonstrates, creative spirits are able to reject, ignore, or burrow beneath the superficial “revolutionary” atmosphere of the time and find humor, inspiration, and a kind of salvation amid its general intellectual and creative poverty.

“A master.” —THE NEW YORKER

“Hrabal is quite capable of a Chekhovian realism, but always watchful for the splendid and sublime.” —JAMES WOOD, LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS

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BOHUMIL HRABAL (1914–1997) was born in Moravia. He is the author of such classics as Closely Watched Trains (made into an Academy Award–winning film by Jiří Menzel), The Death of Mr. Baltisberger, I Served the King of England, and Too Loud a Solitude. PAUL WILSON has translated books by Václav Havel, Bohumil Hrabal, Ivan Klime, and Josef Škvorecký. He lives in Canada.
Thalia Field

Personhood

A remarkable and moving cross-genre work about animal rights, by one of America’s foremost experimental writers

At the edges of history, territories, species, and theories, arbitrary lines mark us, mapping the living and the dead. Where animals overlap or get tangled in the lines, we beg the question. Where the lines fall apart, we jump to simple answers, and land in deadly consequences.

Whether exploring refugee parrots, indentured elephants, the revolving absurdity of the human role in the “invasive species crisis,” or the pathetic futility, Personhood reveals that the unmistakable problem remaining between humans and our nonhuman relatives is one of language. Thalia Field’s bold and engaging new work takes a wide lens on how power justifies itself at the extremes, where violence and story attempt to quell the complexity of a shared planet. In this brilliant study of the irrational, Personhood combines and repositions the real experience of animal lives as the poetic test for how we can move beyond our delusions of some special status. Crossing genres of poetry, essay, drama, and fiction, Field offers us an enthralling, heartbreaking look at the fragility of our natural world and the species that occupy it.

“Field’s frequently shifting scenes evoke Alice Notley, Anne Carson, and James Joyce.” —PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Between the inward tension of the point and the outward push of the line, Thalia Field maps a force field of relations, power games, shifting configurations, in a language both cool and intense, and with a surveyor’s precision.” —ROSMARIE WALDROP

“Thalia Field’s curiosity and probe are infectious, tantalizing, irrepressible. She is one of our most startling, original younger writers.” —ANNE WALDMAN

Thalia Field is the Adele Kellenberg Seaver Professor of Creative Writing at Brown University. Her most recent novel is Experimental Animals (A Reality Fiction) from Solid Objects. Her previous New Directions books are Point and Line (2000), Incarnate: Story Material (2004), and Bird Lovers, Backyard (2010).
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