Helen DeWitt

Some Trick: Thirteen Stories

At last a new book: a baker’s dozen of stories all with Helen DeWitt’s razor-sharp genius

For sheer unpredictable brilliance, Gogol may come to mind, but no author alive today takes a reader as far as Helen DeWitt into the funniest, most yonder dimensions of possibility. Her jumping-off points might be statistics, romance, the art world’s piranha tank, games of chance and games of skill, the travails of publishing, or success. “Look,” a character begins to explain, laying out some gambit reasonably enough, even if facing a world of boomeranging counterfactuals, situations spinning out to their utmost logical extremes, and Rube Goldberg-like moving parts, where things prove “more complicated than they had first appeared” and “at 3 a.m. the circumstances seem to attenuate.” In various ways, each tale carries DeWitt’s signature poker-face lament regarding the near-impossibility of the life of the mind when one is made to pay to have the time for it, in a world so sadly “taken up with all sorts of paraphernalia superfluous, not to say impedimental, to ratiocination.”

“Her books assert (and often attest) that a work of fiction can encompass many kinds of knowledge—probability theory, scatterplots of data, tables of non-Roman alphabets—without compromising its form.”
—LINDSAY GAIL, LOS ANGELES REVIEW OF BOOKS

“An intellectual powerhouse, laugh-out-loud funny in unexpected ways.”
—ILANA TEITELBAUM, THE HUFFINGTON POST

“DeWitt pushes against the limitations of the novel as a form; reading her, one wants to push against the limitations of one’s own brain.”
—MIRANDA POPKEY, THE PARIS REVIEW

Author of The Last Samurai and Lightning Rods, “HELEN DEWITT knows, in descending order of proficiency, Latin, ancient Greek, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Arabic, Hebrew, and Japanese: ‘The self is a set of linguistic patterns,’ she said. ‘Reading and speaking in another language is like stepping into an alternate history of yourself where all the bad connotations are gone’ (New York Magazine).”
Armand is a diplomat rising through the ranks of the Norwegian foreign office, but he’s caught between his public duty to support foreign wars in the Middle East and his private disdain for Western intervention. He hides behind knowing, ironic statements, which no one grasps and which change nothing. Armand’s son joins the Norwegian SAS to fight in the Middle East, despite being specifically warned against such a move by his father, and this leads to catastrophic, heartbreaking consequences.

Told exclusively in footnotes to an unwritten book, this is Solstad’s radically unconventional novel about how we experience the passing of time: how it fragments, drifts, quickens, and how single moments can define a life.

“His language sparkles with its new old-fashioned elegance, and radiates a unique luster, inimitable and full of elan.”
—KARL OVE KNAUSGAARD

“He’s a kind of surrealistic writer—serious literature.”
—HARUKI MURAKAMI

“Since he published his first book of stories in 1965, Dag Solstad has been to Scandinavian literature what Philip Roth has been to American letters or Günter Grass to German writing: an unavoidable voice.”
—THE PARIS REVIEW
T Singer

T Singer begins with thirty-four-year-old Singer graduating from library school and traveling by train from Oslo to the small town of Notodden, located in the mountainous Telemark region of Norway. There he plans to begin a deliberately anonymous life as a librarian. But Singer unexpectedly falls in love with the ceramicist Merete Saethehre, who has a young daughter from a previous relationship. After a few years together, the couple is on the verge of separating, when a car accident prompts a dramatic change in Singer's life.

The narrator of the novel specifically states that this is not a happy story, yet, as in all of Dag Solstad's works, the prose is marked by an unforgettable combination of humor and darkness. Overall, T Singer marks a departure more explicitly existential than any of Solstad's previous works.

"I find him an utterly hypnotic and utterly humane writer."
—JAMES WOOD, THE NEW YORKER

"Dag Solstad serves up another helping of his wan and wise almost-comedy."
—GEOFF DYER

"With sublime restraint and subtle modulation, Solstad conveys an entire age of sorrow and loss." —PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

"Solstad has a revered role in Norway as the chronicler of his country's changing times." —THE INDEPENDENT

TIINA NUNNALLY is the award-winning translator of more than 70 books from the Scandinavian languages, including Kristin Lavransdatter by Sigrid Undset, Niels Lyhne by Jens Peter Jacobsen, and The Land of Dreams by Vidar Sundstøl. She was appointed Knight of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit for her contributions to Norwegian literature in the United States.
Forrest Gander

Be With

• Illustrated with photographs

Forrest Gander’s first book of poems since his Pulitzer finalist Core Samples from the World: a startling look through loss, grief, and regret into the exquisite nature of intimacy

Drawing from his experience as a translator, Forrest Gander includes in the first, powerfully elegiac section a version of a poem by the Spanish mystical poet St. John of the Cross. He continues with a long multilingual poem examining the syncretic geological and cultural history of the U.S. border with Mexico. The poems of the third section—a moving transcription of Gander’s efforts to address his mother dying of Alzheimer’s—rise from the page like hymns, transforming slowly from reverence to revelation. Gander has been called one of our most formally restless poets, and these new poems express a characteristically tensile energy and, as one critic noted, “the most eclectic diction since Hart Crane.”

“A complex reading experience punctuated by intense beauty.”

—WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD

“If Gander’s philosophical strain and flamboyant lingo suggest Wallace Stevens, and his conversance with science and his stress on the ‘ongoing’ recall A. R. Ammons, he insinuates a knotty, digressive intensity that is fully his own.”

—BOOKFORUM

“Gander’s love for formal, even archaic language and the quiet complexity of his syntax can build striking abstract landscapes in which the material and spiritual worlds seem equally intelligent.”

—AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW

FORREST GANDER was born in the Mojave Desert and grew up in Virginia. The recipient of grants from the Library of Congress, the Guggenheim, Howard, Whiting, and United States Artists Foundations, he is the AK Seaver Professor of Literary Arts & Comparative Literature at Brown University.
Clarice Lispector

Complete Stories

• Translated from the Portuguese by Katrina Dodson
• Edited and with an introduction by Benjamin Moser

One of the most phenomenally acclaimed and successful books of recent years is now available as a paperback—with three just-discovered stories

Here, gathered in one volume, are the stories that made Clarice a Brazilian legend. Originally a cloth edition of eighty-six stories, now we have eighty-nine in all, covering her whole amazing career, from her teenage years to her deathbed. In these pages, we meet teenagers becoming aware of their sexual and artistic powers, humdrum housewives whose lives are shattered by unexpected epiphanies, old people who don’t know what to do with themselves—and in their stories, Clarice takes us through their lives—and hers—and ours.

“Reading Lispector is like being handed a world on fire.” —JUAN VIDAL, NPR

“Translated beautifully and with a vigorous pulse by Katrina Dodson, 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 (STARRIED REVIEW)

“A dangerous book to read quickly or casually because it’s so consistently delirious. Her Complete Stories is a remarkable book, proof that she is one of the true originals of Latin American literature.” —TERRENCE RAFFERTY, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“Utterly original and brilliant, haunting and disturbing.” —COLM TÓIBÍN

“I felt physically jolted by genius.” —KATHERINE BOO, FINANCIAL TIMES

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 “better than Borges” (Elizabeth Bishop).

KATRINA DODSON won the PEN Prize for Translation for The Complete Stories. She is now at work on Macunaima, Mário de Andrade’s legendary novel.

BENJAMIN MOSER, the series editor of New Directions’ Lispector program, is the author of the landmark work Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector.

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Also by Katrina Dodson:

The Complete Stories
978-0-8112-2793-3 • $21.95
In this collection of prose, prose poems, and verse, The Shutters reconstructs vivid scenes of Morocco and its history, weaving and winding through antiquity, myth, and a fictional present; through cemeteries, battlefields, and sordid streets; through heaven and hell, the sky and the earth, and the shutters of his ancestor’s home. Bouanani’s poetry contains a vast inventory of references to the Second World War, the Rif War, the Spanish and French protectorates, dead soldiers, prisoners, and poets screaming in their tombs with mouths full of dirt—all of it bearing the brutal imprint of colonization, written in an imposed language with a “strange alphabet.” But what is perhaps most palpable in his writing is the violence inflicted on Morocco by its own government during the time period now referred to as les années de plomb—the years of lead. Fighting against the destruction of Moroccan cultural memory, Bouanani claws back through this forgotten landscape, plunging into the void to bring forth a heritage that was suppressed but not annihilated. In his words, “These memories retrace the seasons of a country that was quickly forgetful of its past, indifferent to its present, constantly turning its back on its future.”

Bouanani was hesitant to publish much of his work during his lifetime, leaving behind chests full of hundreds of unpublished manuscripts when he died. All nearly lost in a devastating apartment fire, Bouanani’s works are now finally appearing for the first time in English.

“Bouanani offers a precious contribution to Morocco’s collective memory.”

—LE MONDE

AHMED BOUANANI (1938–2011) was a writer, poet, illustrator, filmmaker, and an important figure in the Moroccan literary and artistic scene. His novel The Hospital was first published in 1990 and fell into obscurity until it was republished in France in 2012 to great critical acclaim.

EMMA RAMADAN is a literary translator based in Providence, Rhode Island. She is the recipient of a PEN/Heim grant, an NEA Translation Fellowship, and a Fulbright for her work on Bouanani.
The Hospital

• Translated from the French by Lara Vergnaud
• Introduction by Anna Della Subin

A tour de force: an utterly singular modern Moroccan classic

“When I walked through the large iron gate of the hospital, I must have still been alive…” So begins Ahmed Bouanani’s arresting, hallucinatory 1989 novel The Hospital, appearing for the first time in English translation. Based on Bouanani’s own experiences as a tuberculosis patient, the hospital begins to feel increasingly like a prison or a strange nightmare: the living resemble the dead; bureaucratic angels of death descend to direct traffic, claiming the lives of a motley cast of inmates one by one; childhood memories and fantasies of resurrection flash in and out of the narrator’s consciousness as the hospital transforms before his eyes into an eerie, metaphorical space. Somewhere along the way, the hospital’s iron gate disappears.

Like Sadegh Hedayat’s The Blind Owl, the works of Franz Kafka—or perhaps like Mann’s The Magic Mountain thrown into a meat-grinder—The Hospital is a nosedive into the realms of the imagination, in which a journey to nowhere in particular leads to the most shocking places.

“The Hospital has attained cult status.” —THE BROOKLYN RAIL

LARA VERGNAUD is an editor and literary translator who currently lives in Washington, D.C.

Marcia Douglas

The Marvellous Equations of the Dread: A Novel in Bass Riddim

The ancestors have awakened. Somebody has called them. The long-dead are stirring. Jah ways are mysterious ways.

“Is me—Bob. Bob Marley.” Reincarnated as homeless Fall-down man, Bob Marley sleeps in a clock tower built on the site of a lynching in Half Way Tree, Kingston. The ghosts of Marcus Garvey and King Edward VII are there too, drinking whiskey and playing solitaire. No one sees that Fall-down is Bob Marley, no one but his long-ago love, the deaf woman, Leenah, and, in the way of this otherworldly book, when Bob steps into the street each day, five years have passed. Jah ways are mysterious ways, from Kingston’s ghettos to London, from Haile Selassie’s Ethiopian palace and back to Jamaica, Marcia Douglas’s mythical reworking of three hundred years of violence is a ticket to the deep world of Rasta history. This amazing novel—in bass riddim—carries the reader on a voyage all the way to the gates of Zion.

“A vast panorama of a small corner of Kingston, a musical novel where the music is reggae, a historical documentary set in the present: As the illustrious and anonymous living and dead materialize to reenact, retell, and undo their life stories, it’s impossible to resist reading these voices out loud, adding your own to this orchestrated hubbub.” —ELIOT WEINBERGER

“A magical realist journey through the history of Rastafarianism, Bob Marley & Jamaica—not necessarily in that order. Rhapsodic, poetic, scripturally engaged and endlessly inventive. Not only is the electric atmosphere of Jamaica evoked with sensuousness, delicacy and love; so is the ‘dub-side,’ a studio yard just the other side of death, where Bob Marley and a toothless and lisping Haile Selassie discuss the relative merits of routes to Zion.” —REVIEW 31

MARcia DOUGLAS is the author of novels and poems and performs the one-woman show, “Natural Herstory.” She teaches creative writing and Caribbean literature at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her The Marvellous Equations of the Dread was longlisted for the 2016 Republic of Consciousness Prize and the 2017 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature.
I Didn’t Talk

A professor prepares to retire—Gustavo is set to move from São Paulo to the countryside, but it isn’t the urban violence he’s fleeing: what he fears most is the violence of his memory. But as he sorts out his papers, the ghosts arrive in full force. He was arrested in 1970 with his brother-in-law Armando: both were viciously tortured. He was eventually released; Armando was killed. No one is certain that he didn’t turn traitor; I didn’t talk, he tells himself, yet guilt is his lifelong harvest. I Didn’t Talk pits everyone against the protagonist—especially his own brother. The torture never ends, despite his bones having healed and his teeth having been replaced. And to make matters worse, certain details from his shattered memory don’t quite add up... Beatriz Bracher depicts a life where the temperature is lower, there is no music, and much is out of view. I Didn’t Talk’s pariah’s-eye-view of the forgotten “small” victims powerfully bears witness to their “internal exile.” I didn’t talk, Gustavo tells himself; and as Bracher honors his endless pain, what burns this tour de force so indelibly in the reader’s mind is her intensely controlled voice.

"Crisp, dizzying." —JORNAL DO BRASIL

"Extraordinary force and beauty—also a reflection on the construction of memory and the power of the tale." —O ESTADO DE S. PAULO

“Beatriz Bracher: intense and precise." —FOLHA DE S. PAULO

BEATRIZ BRACHER, born in São Paulo in 1961, grew up under the Brazilian military dictatorship. Her memories of that time intersect with the lives of people whose friends and lovers were tortured, exiled, and killed, as well as with those who did the killing. An editor, screenwriter, and the author of six books of fiction, 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 translated novels by Hilda Hilst and João Gilberto Noll.
The Galloping Hour: French Poems

A beautifully produced and exquisitely translated edition of French poems by “the best exponent of the poetry of introversion and metaphorical delirium” (Italo Calvino)

The Galloping Hour: French Poems—never before rendered in English and unpublished during her lifetime—gathers for the first time all the poems that Alejandra Pizarnik (revered by Octavio Paz and Roberto Bolaño) wrote in French. Conceived during her Paris sojourn (1960–1964) and in Buenos Aires (1970–1971) near the end of her tragically short life, these poems explore many of Pizarnik’s deepest obsessions: the limitations of language, silence, the body, night, sex, and the nature of intimacy.

Drawing from personal life experiences and echoing readings of some of her beloved/accursed French authors—Charles Baudelaire, Germain Nouveau, Arthur Rimbaud, and Antonin Artaud—this collection includes prose poems that Pizarnik would later translate into Spanish. Pizarnik’s work led Raúl Zurita to note: “Her poetry—with a clarity that becomes piercing—illuminates the abysses of emotional sensitivity, desire, and absence. It presses against our lives and touches the most exposed, fragile, and numb parts of humanity.”

“To bear down on Pizarnik’s scant lines is to find their essential rigor: nothing is brittle, nothing breaks.” —JOSHUA COHEN, HARPER’S

“Each of Pizarnik’s poems is the hub of an enormous wheel.”
—JULIO CORTÁZAR

A happily produced and exquisitely translated edition of French poems by “the best exponent of the poetry of introversion and metaphorical delirium” (Italo Calvino)

NEW DIRECTIONS
Boris Leonidovich, a North American professor who specializes in the history of prison architecture, has been invited to Buenos Aires for an academic conference. He’s planning to present a paper on Moscow’s feared Butyrka prison, but most of all he’s looking forward to seeing his enigmatic, fiercely intelligent colleague (and sometime lover) Ana again. As soon as Boris arrives, however, he encounters obstacle after unlikely obstacle: he can’t get in touch with Ana, he locks himself out of his rented room, and he discovers dog-feeding stations and water bowls set before every house and business. With night approaching, he finds himself lost and alone in a foreign city filled with stray dogs, all flowing with sinister, bewildering purpose through the darkness…

Shadowed with foreboding, and yet alive with the comical mischief of César Aira and the nimble touch of a great stylist, Dog Symphony is an unnerving and propulsive novel by a talented new American voice.

PRAISE FOR SAM MUNSON:

“Sam Munson has written one of the funniest, most heartfelt novels in recent memory.” —THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

“Munson is a writer with something to say.” —THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

In 1613, four low-ranking Japanese samurai, accompanied by a Spanish priest, set sail for Mexico to bargain for trading rights with the West in exchange for a Catholic crusade through Japan. Their arduous journey lasts four years, as they travel onward to Mexico then Rome, where they are persuaded that the success of their mission depends on their conversion to Christianity. In fact, the enterprise seems to have been futile from the start: the mission returns to Japan to find that the political tides have shifted. The authorities are now pursuing an isolationist policy and a ruthless stamping out of Western influences. In the face of disillusionment and death, the samurai can only find solace in a savior they’re not sure they believe in.

“A historical fiction with meanings for many cultures and all seasons, and a great travel narrative; its re-creations of place, from marshy north-east Japan, to the storm-tossed eastern and western oceans, to the deserts of Central Mexico, to the pomps of Baroque Madrid and Rome, are extraordinary. The Samurai is animated by a rich and full spiritual vision.”

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“Endo to my mind is one of the finest living novelists.” —GRAHAM GREENE

“A narrative of austere power.”
—ADAM MARS-JONES, FINANCIAL TIMES

SHUSAKU ENDO (1923–1996) is widely regarded as one of the most important Japanese authors of the late twentieth century. He won many major literary awards and was nominated for the Nobel Prize several times. His novel Silence was recently made into a major film directed by Martin Scorsese.

VAN C. GESSEL has published six translations of works by Endo.
William Carlos Williams

The Red Wheelbarrow & Other Poems

Here is a perfect little gift: the most beloved poems by the most essential American poet of the last century

Gathered here are the gems of William Carlos Williams’s astonishing achievements in poetry. Dramatic, energetic, beautiful, and true, this slim selection will delight any reader—The Red Wheelbarrow & Other Poems is a book to be treasured.

“It is ever more apparent that Williams was this century’s major American poet.” —CHICAGO TRIBUNE

“Williams is the author of the most vivid poems of modern American poetry.” —OCTAVIO PAZ

“He had a thirst for now. And he had his own beat, ‘a certain unquenchable exaltation’ as he said of his renowned wheelbarrow. The excitement the writing exuded is as contagious today as when he made his rounds ‘quickened by the life about him.’ The reader is induced to stay awake. Make contact. Look ahead.” —C.D. WRIGHT

“Possibly no modern American poem is more widely known than Williams’s ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’, that tiny epiphany. Williams himself, not given to making high claims for his own work, considered this poem ‘quite perfect’. If you look at the lingua franca of American poetry today—a colloquial free verse focused on visual description and meaningful anecdote—it seems clear that Williams is the twentieth-century poet who has done most to influence our very conception of what poetry should do, and how much it does not need to do.” —ADAM KIRSCH, THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

A poet of “power and dazzling variety” (Library Journal), WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1883–1963) was the author of Paterson, Spring & All, In the American Grain, and Pictures from Brueghel, which won the Pulitzer Prize.
The Blue Flowers follows two unlikely characters: Cidrolin, who alternates between drinking and napping on a barge parked along the Seine in the 1960s, and the Duke d'Auge as he rages through history—about 700 years of it—refusing to crusade, clobbering his king with a cannon, and dabbling in alchemy. But is it just a coincidence that the Duke appears only when Cidrolin is dozing? And vice versa? As Raymond Queneau explains: “There is an old Chinese saying: ‘I dream that I am a butterfly and pray there is a butterfly dreaming he is me.’ The same can be said of the characters in this novel—those who live in the past dream of those who live in the modern era—and those who live in the modern era dream of those who live in the past.”

Channeling Villon and Céline, Queneau attempts to bring the language of the French streets into common literary usage, and his mad wordplays, puns, bawdy jokes, and anachronistic wackiness have been kept amazingly and glitteringly intact by the incomparable translator Barbara Wright.

“In our century Queneau is a unique example of a wise and intelligent writer, who always goes against the grain of the dominant tendencies of his age and of French culture in particular—and he combines this with an endless need to invent and test possibilities. The Blue Flowers makes fun of history, denying its progress and reducing it to the substance of daily existence.”

—ITALO CALVINO

“Queneau’s role of combined scientist and pataphysician makes him seem more clearly than ever the forerunner of those other disintegrators of language: Ionesco and Beckett.” —THE NEW YORK TIMES

Born in 1903, RAYMOND QUENEAU was a French novelist, poet, editor, mathematician, pataphysician, and playwright. In 1960, along with Francois Le Lionnais, he founded Oulipo. He died in 1976.

BARBARA WRIGHT (1915–2009) was “one of the foremost British translators of modern French literature” (The Times).
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