A Fierce Green Place: New and Selected Poems

Pamela Mordecai

A fearless collection by a trailblazing writer whose poems “represent the people, culture, and topography of the Caribbean in multidimensional, complex ways” (Tanya Shirley)

A Fierce Green Place: New and Selected Poems brings together, across the span of thirty-plus years, the rebellious, innovative work of the Jamaican-born Canadian writer Pamela Mordecai. From her acclaimed first collection Journey published in 1989, to the moving elegy for her murdered brother in the true blue of islands, to the stories of freed slaves told in subversive sonnets, and on to her dazzling reimaginings of biblical stories, A Fierce Green Place highlights the astounding range and depths of a poet who mixes Jamaican Creole with standard English, profanity and reverence with dub and blues, the oral and vernacular with metrical virtuosity. Mordecai’s words, written out of a “womb-space” of sound and power, shine through neocolonial violence and patriarchy with such lines as: “Women together / in one place will / bleed in solidarity / till every last body / turn super bitch at once.”

“One of the most brilliant and witty of our poets.”
—KAMAU BRATHWAITE

“What to say of Pamela’s poetry? Juicy. The salt juice of living blood. The sweet, liquid whispers of desire dripping from full lips. The acid venom of righteousness spat in the eye of the wicked.”
—NALO HOPKINSON

PAMELA MORDECAI, born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1942, is the author of eight collections of poetry, several children’s books and language-arts textbooks for the Caribbean, a collection of short fiction, and a novel. She is the coauthor of a historical-cultural study of Jamaica and has edited numerous anthologies of Caribbean women writers and Jamaican poetry. Mordecai has worked as an educator, journalist, TV host, and the Publications Editor of the Caribbean Journal of Education, and later the publisher of Sandberry Press. STEPHANIE MCKENZIE is the author of four books of poetry and a literary monograph, Before the Country: Native Renaissance, Canadian Mythology. She is a professor in the English Programme at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland. CAROL BAILEY is an associate professor in the English Department at Westfield State University in Massachusetts, and the author of A Poetics of Performance: The Oral-Scribal Aesthetic in Anglophone Caribbean Fiction. TANYA SHIRLEY, a Cave Canem fellow, is the author of the poetry books She Who Sleeps With Bones and The Merchant of Feathers. She is a lecturer at the University of the West Indies.
Coral Bracho

It Must Be a Misunderstanding

- Translated from the Spanish by Forrest Gander
- Cover design by Joan Wong

A heartbreaking, unforgettable collection by the great Mexican poet Coral Bracho about her mother’s Alzheimer’s, exquisitely translated by the Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Forrest Gander

It Must Be a Misunderstanding is the acclaimed Mexican poet Coral Bracho’s most personal and emotive collection to date, dedicated to her mother who died of complications from Alzheimer’s. Remarkably, Bracho, author and daughter, seems to disappear into her own empathic observations as her mother comes clear to us not as a tragic figure, but as a fiery and independent personality. The chemistry between them is vivid, poignant, and unforgettable. As the translator Forrest Gander explains in his introduction, the book’s force “builds as the poems cycle through their sequences”—from early to late Alzheimer’s—“with non-judgmental affection and compassionate watchfulness.”

“Her work has altered the landscape of Mexican poetry in a way that is comparable to John Ashbery’s in the U.S.” —POETRY

“It is not dailiness with which her poems concern themselves, but ‘pure immensity.’” —C. D. WRIGHT

CORAL BRACHO was born in Mexico City in 1951. She is the author of several books of poems including Tierra de entraña ardiente, a collaboration with the painter Irma Palacios. Among her grants and prizes are the Aguascalientes National Poetry Prize in 1981 and a Guggenheim fellowship in 2000. Her poems have appeared in American Poetry Review, Bomb, Conjunctions, The Nation, and Poetry International.

FORREST GANDER lives in northern California and has published books of poems, translations, and essays. He has won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the Best Translated Book Award, as well as fellowships from the Library of Congress, the Guggenheim Foundation, and United States Artists.
Clarice Lispector

An Apprenticeship or The Book of Pleasures

Preface by Sheila Heti
Translated from the Portuguese by Stefan Tobler
Series editor Benjamin Moser
Cover design by Paul Sahre and art by Leanne Shapton

Now in paperback, a romantic love story by the great Brazilian writer

Lóri, a primary school teacher, is isolated and nervous, comfortable with children but unable to connect with adults. When she meets Ulisses, a professor of philosophy, an opportunity opens: a chance to escape the shipwreck of introspection and embrace the love, including the sexual love, of a man. Her attempt, as Sheila Heti writes in her afterword, is not only “to love and to be loved,” but also “to be worthy of life itself.”

Published in 1968, An Apprenticeship is Clarice Lispector’s attempt at reinvention following the exhausting effort of her metaphysical masterpiece The Passion According to G. H. Here, in this unconventional love story, she explores the ways in which people try to bridge the gaps between them, and the result, unusual in her work, surprised many readers and became a bestseller.

Some appreciated its accessibility; others denounced it as sexist or superficial. To both admirers and critics, the Olympian Clarice gave a typically elliptical answer: “I humanized myself,” she said. “The book reflects that.”

“In An Apprenticeship, Lóri performs a sort of gonzo-philosophy, putting her body in service of an internal monologue in which she struggles to understand herself, her writing, and sexual desire as a whole.” —LOS ANGELES REVIEW OF BOOKS

“This deep immersion into the vicissitudes of love will delight Lispector devotees.” —PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

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). SHEILA HETI is the acclaimed author of Motherhood and How Should a Person Be? BENJAMIN MOSER is the author of Why This World: The Biography of Clarice Lispector and Sontag: Her Life and Work. He is the series editor of the new translations of Clarice Lispector’s complete works at New Directions. Born in Belem, Brazil, in 1974, STEFAN TOBLER is a translator from Portuguese and German. He has won English PEN’s Writers in Translation prize and been long-listed for the 2016 Booker International Prize.

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Alhierd Bacharevič

Alindarka’s Children: Things Will Be Bad

• Translated by Jim Dingley & Petra Reid
• Cover design by Janet Hansen

Alindarka’s Children is the masterful English debut of Alhierd Bacharevič, a new voice from Belarus

Alicia and her brother Avi are imprisoned in a camp on the edge of a forest. There, children are trained to forget their language through therapy, coercion, drugs, and larynx surgery. The Leid (or Belarusian language) is considered a perversion or sickness to be cured and replaced by the only pure form of language, the Lingo (Russian). But the children slip away through a hole in the fence. Abducted by their father—who had been performing his own dubious experiments—the siblings soon escape him, too, and set out on their own. Pursued by many, the little boy and girl use an antique map of Germany which leads them closer to a checkpoint—and great danger.

A contemporary Hansel and Gretel tale told in exhilarating, prickly, and slippery prose, Alindarka’s Children is a manifesto for the survival of the Belarusian language and soul. A feat of translation, Bacharevič’s story is brilliantly rendered into English and Scots from Russian and Belarusian.

“A dark fantasy by one of Belarus’s most original contemporary writers. Alindarka’s Children captures the depths of frustration, grief, and resolve that have been building up for decades under the deceptively placid surface of Belarusian life.”—JAROSLAW ANDERS, NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

“Kafkaesque and with elements of cyberpunk. Alhierd Bacharevič is the foremost figure of today’s Belarusian literature.”—NEW EASTERN EUROPE

ALHIERD BACHAREVIČ was born in Minsk in 1975. In the 1990s, he was the lead singer of the Belarusian-language punk band Pravakacyja (“Provocation”). Bacharevič has worked as a teacher of Belarusian and a journalist, and is one of the founders of the avant-garde group Bum-Bam-Lit. Bacharevič was awarded the 2021 Erwin Piscator Prize, and nominated for the 2021 Republic of Consciousness Prize. His books have been translated into German, French, Polish and Russian. He recently fled Belarus and is now based in Austria. JIM DINGLEY has translated fiction by Uładzimir Arłou, Natałka Babina, Tania Skarynkina, and Alhierd Bacharevič. PETRA REID is a translator and the author of MacSonnetries.
An abandoned package is discovered in the Paris Metro: the subway workers suspect it’s a terrorist bomb. A Vietnamese woman sitting nearby, her son asleep on her shoulder, waits and begins to reflect on her life, from her constrained childhood in communist Hanoi, to a long period of study in Leningrad during the Gorbachev period, and finally to the Parisian suburbs where she now teaches English. Through everything runs her passion for Thuy, the father of her son, a writer who lives in Saigon’s Chinatown, and who, with the shadow of the China-Vietnam border war falling darkly between them, she has not seen for eleven years.

Through her breathless, vertiginous, and deeply moving monologue from beside the subway tracks—interspersed with extracts from Thuy’s own novel—the narrator attempts to once and for all face the past and exorcise the passion that haunts her.

“Chinatown is a fever dream, a hallucination, a loop in time and life that Thuận masterfully deploys to capture the disorienting and debilitating effects of migration, racism, and a broken heart in both Vietnam and France. I was completely immersed in this spellbinding novel.” —VIET THANH NGUYEN

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**THUẬN** (Doan Ánh Thuận) was born in 1967 in Hanoi. She studied at universities in Russia and France and now lives in Paris. **Chinatown** is her twelfth novel. She is a recipient of the Writers’ Union Prize, the highest award in Vietnamese literature. **TA HUONG NHI** works as an editor at a publishing house in Saigon, Vietnam. She has also translated several works from English into Vietnamese. **Chinatown** is her first translation into English.
Xi Chuan

Bloom & Other Poems

Translated from the Chinese by Lucas Klein
Cover design by Jamie Keenan

A rhapsodic meditation on the dreams and defeats, disparities and excesses, mythologies and absurdities of contemporary life

“Bloom and change your way of living,” Xi Chuan exhorts us. “Bloom / unleash a deep underground spring with your rhizome.” In his wildly roving new collection, Bloom & Other Poems, Xi Chuan, like a modern-day master of the fu-rhapsody, delves into the incongruities of daily existence, its contradictions and echoes of ancient history, with sensuous exaltations and humorous observations. Problems of mourning and reading, thoughts on loquaciousness, Manhattan, the Luxor Temple, and socks are scrutinized, while in other poems we encounter dead friends on a visit to a small village and fakes in an antique market. At one moment we follow the river’s flow through the history of Nanjing, in another we follow an exquisite meditation on the meaning of the golden. Brimming with lyrical beauty and philosophical intensity, the collection ends with a transcript of a conversation between Xi Chuan and the journalist Xu Zhiyuan that earned seventy million views when broadcast online. Award-winning translator Lucas Klein demonstrates in this remarkable bilingual edition that Xi Chuan is one of the most electrifying international poets writing today.

“Xi Chuan doesn’t just ‘let a hundred flowers bloom’: even three thousand isn’t enough, ‘bloom one hundred eight thousand times!’ Within this abundance, he shuttles between East and West, lets his thoughts roam from the time of the Warring States to Disney, from ‘the joy of stinky feet’ to ‘Cultural Revolution armbands.’ With delightful wit and irony. What remains unstated is the possible cost of such blooming in China. But it is there as an undertone in the humor and gives the poems their extraordinary power.” —ROSMARIE WALDROP

“Xi Chuan’s new poems, in Lucas Klein’s splendid translations, reveal an important body of work American readers should know.” —ARTHUR SZE

XI CHUAN, born in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province in 1963 and raised in Beijing, is one of China’s most celebrated poets, essayists, and literary translators. Among the numerous prizes and honors he has received are the national Lu Xun Prize for Literature, the Cikada Prize for poetry in Sweden, and the Tokyo Poetry Prize in Japan. He is now a professor at the International Writing Center at Beijing Normal University. LUCAS KLEIN is a father, writer, and translator, and an associate professor of Chinese at Arizona State University. In addition to Xi Chuan he has translated contemporary Chinese poets Mang Ke and Duo Duo as well as medieval Chinese poet Li Shangyin.
Marlen Haushofer

The Wall

• Translated from the German by Shaun Whiteside
• Afterword by Claire-Louise Bennett
• Cover design by Matt Dorfman

A haunting feminist sci-fi masterpiece and international bestseller that is “as absorbing as Robinson Crusoe” (Doris Lessing)

While vacationing in a hunting lodge in the Austrian mountains, a middle-aged woman awakens one morning to find herself separated from the rest of the world by an invisible wall. With a cat, a dog, and a cow as her sole companions, she learns how to survive and cope with her loneliness.

Allegorical yet deeply personal and absorbing, The Wall is at once a critique of modern civilization, a nuanced and loving portrait of a relationship between a woman and her animals, a thrilling survival story, a Cold War-era dystopian adventure, and a truly singular feminist classic.

“An extraordinarily interesting writer, always underappreciated.”
—ELFRIEDE JELINEK

“The Wall is a wonderful novel. It is not often that you can say only a woman could have written this book, but women in particular will understand the heroine’s loving devotion to the details of making and keeping life, every day felt as a victory against everything that would like to undermine and destroy.”
—DORIS LESSING

“The Wall is a novel that contrives to be, by turns, utopian and dystopian, an idyll and a nightmare. In her isolation behind the wall, together with her animals, the woman discovers a new life, in comparison with which her existence before she came to the mountains seems trivial and pointless. The natural world which it describes with such rapt attention is cupped in the larger receptacle of a vivid and sinister dream, a dream we seem to have had many times before and which on each retelling leads to the same scene of horror at its climax.”
—NICHOLAS SPICE, LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS

Marlen Haushofer (1920–1970) was an Austrian author of short stories, novels, radio plays, and children’s books. Her work has had a strong influence on many German-language writers, such as the Nobel Prize–winner Elfriede Jelinek, who dedicated one of her plays to her. The Wall was adapted into the 2012 film, directed by Julian Pölsler and starring Martina Gedeck. SHAUN WHITESIDE is a translator of French, Dutch, German, and Italian literature.
Created and curated by the writer and translator Gini Alhadeff, Storybook ND—a new series of slim hardcover fiction books—aims to deliver the pleasure of reading a marvelous book from cover to cover in an afternoon. The series, beautifully designed by Peter Mendelsund, will feature original works by beloved New Directions authors, and will also introduce new writers to the list. As Alhadeff notes, “There’s nothing sweeter than to fall, for a few hours, between the covers of a perfect book! And the image on the front, by a contemporary artist such as Francesco Clemente or Wayne Thiebaud, will draw you in. Longer stories or shorter novels with a beautiful face: that’s Storybook ND.”
A modern amorality play about a 17-year-old girl, the wilder shores of connoisseurship, and the power of false friends

Maman was exigeante—there is no English word—and I had the benefit of her training. Others may not be so fortunate. If some other young girl, with two million dollars at stake, finds this of use I shall count myself justified.

Raised in Marrakech by a French mother and English father, a 17-year-old girl has learned above all to avoid mauvais ton ("bad taste" loses something in the translation). One should not ask servants to wait on one during Ramadan: they must have paid leave while one spends the holy month abroad. One must play the piano; if staying at Claridge's, one must regrettably install a Clavinova in the suite, so that the necessary hours of practice will not be inflicted on fellow guests. One should cultivate weavers of tweed in the Outer Hebrides but have the cloth made up in London; one should buy linen in Ireland but have it made up by a Thai seamstress in Paris (whose genius has been supported by purchase of suitable premises). All this and much more she has learned, governed by a parent of ferociously lofty standards. But at 17, during the annual Ramadan travels, she finds all assumptions overturned. Will she be able to fend for herself? Will the dictates of good taste suffice when she must deal, singlehanded, with the sharks of New York?

“Brilliant and inimitable Helen DeWitt: patron saint of anyone in the world who has to deal with the crap of those in power who do a terrible job with their power, and who make those who are under their power utterly miserable.”
—SHEILA HETI, ELECTRIC LITERATURE

The style of HELEN DEWITT—the author of The Last Samurai, Lightning Rods, and Some Trick—has been acclaimed “brilliantly heartless and cork-dry” (James Wood, The New Yorker) and “lethal, limitless, and economical” (The Rumpus).
Three Streets

Yoko Tawada

“Magnificently strange. Tawada is reminiscent of Nikolai Gogol, for whom the natural situation for a ghost story was a minor government employee saving up to buy a fancy coat, the natural destiny of a nose to haunt its owner as an overbearing nobleman.” —RIVKA GALCHEN, NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

“Tawada’s strange, exquisite book toys with ideas of language, identity, and what it means to own someone else’s story or one’s own.” —THE NEW YORKER

“Tawada’s stories agitate the mind like songs half-remembered or treasure boxes whose keys are locked within.” —THE NEW YORK TIMES

Yoko Tawada—winner of the National Book Award—presents three terrific new ghost stories, each named after a street in Berlin.

The always astonishing Yoko Tawada here takes a walk on the supernatural side of the street. In “Kollwitzstrasse,” as the narrator muses on former East Berlin’s new bourgeois health food stores, so popular with wealthy young people, a ghost boy begs her to buy him the old-fashioned sweets he craves. She worries that sugar’s still sugar—but why lecture him, since he’s already dead? Then white feathers fall from her head and she seems to be turning into a crane . . . Pure white kittens and a great Russian poet haunt “Majakowskiring”: the narrator who reveres Mayakovsky’s work is delighted to meet his ghost. And finally, in “Pushkin Allee,” a huge Soviet-era memorial of soldiers comes to life—and, “for a scene of carnage everything was awfully well-ordered.” Each of these stories opens up into new dimensions the work of this magisterial writer.

YOKO TAWADA writes in both Japanese and German and has received the Akutagawa, Lessing, Noma, Adelbert von Chamisso, and Tanizaki prizes. Her novel The Emissary won the National Book Award. MARGARET Mitsutani is a translator of Yoko Tawada (sharing her National Book Award) and Kenzaburo Oe (Japan’s 1994 Nobel Prize laureate).
Osamu Dazai

Early Light

• Translated from the Japanese by Ralph McCarthy & Donald Keene

Early Light gathers three tales by Osamu Dazai, author of the wildly popular No Longer Human

Early Light offers three very different aspects of Osamu Dazai’s genius: the title story relates his misadventures as a drinker and a family man in the terrible fire bombings of Tokyo at the end of WWII. Having lost their own home, he and his wife flee with a new baby boy and their little girl to relatives in Kofu, only to be bombed out anew. The father explains to his daughter: “‘Everything’s gone. Mr. Rabbit, our shoes, the Odagiri house, the Chino house, they all burned up.’ ‘Yeah, they all burned up,’ she said, still smiling.”

“One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji,” another autobiographical tale, is much more comic: Dazai finds himself unable to escape the famous views, the beauty once immortalized by Hokusai and now reduced to a cliche. In the end, young girls torment him by pressing him into taking their photo before the famous peak: “Goodbye,” he hisses through his teeth, “Mount Fuji. Thanks for everything. Click.”

And the final story is “Villon’s Wife,” a small masterpiece, which relates the awakening to power of a drunkard’s wife. She transforms herself into a woman not to be defeated by anything, not by her husband being a thief, a megalomaniacal writer, and a wastrel. Single-handedly, she saves the day by concluding that “There’s nothing wrong with being a monster, is there? As long as we can stay alive.”

“Dazai offers something permanent and beautiful.” —THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

“I like Dazai a lot.” —WONG KAR-WAI

OSAMU DAZAI was born in 1909 into a powerful landowning family of Northern Japan. A brilliant student, he entered the French Department of Tokyo University in 1930, but later boasted that in the five years before he left without a degree he had never attended a lecture. Dazai was famous for confronting head-on the social and moral crises of postwar Japan when he committed suicide by throwing himself into Tokyo’s Tamagawa Reservoir. His body was found on what would have been his 39th birthday. RALPH McCARTHY has lived in Japan for almost two decades. He is the translator of two collections of stories by Osamu Dazai, “Self Portraits” and “Blue Bamboo,” and of Ryu Murakami’s novel 69. DONALD KEENE, the author of dozens of books in both English and Japanese as well as the famed translator of Dazai, Kawabata, and Mishima, was the first non-Japanese to receive the Yomiuri Prize for Literature.
César Aira

The Famous Magician

A writer is offered a devil’s bargain: will he give up reading books in exchange for total world domination?

A certain writer (“past sixty, enjoying ‘a certain renown’”) strolls through the old book market in a Buenos Aires park: “My Sunday walk through the market, repeated over so many years, was part of my general fantasizing about books.” Unfortunately, he is suffering from writer’s block. However, that proves to be the least of our hero’s problems. In the market, he fails to avoid the insufferable boor Ovando—“a complete loser” but a “man supremely full of himself: Conceit was never less justified.” And yet, is Ovando a master magician? Can he turn sugar cubes into pure gold? And can our protagonist decline the offer Ovando proposes granting him absolute power if the writer never in his life reads another book? And is his publisher also a great magician? And the writer’s wife?

Only César Aira could have cooked up this witch’s potion (and only he would plop in phantom Mont Blanc pens as well as fearsome crocodiles from the banks of the Nile)—a brew bubbling over with the question: where does literature end and magic begin?

“César Aira is writing a gigantic, headlong, acrobatic fresco of modern life entirely made up of novelettes, novellas, novelitas. In other words, he is a great literary trickster, and also one of the most charming.” —ADAM THIRLWELL

“Aira’s works are like slim cabinets of wonder, full of unlikely juxtapositions. His unpredictability is masterful.” —RIVKA GALCHEN, HARPER’S

“Aira’s cubist eye sees from every angle.” —PATTI SMITH, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Nominated for a Neustadt award and the Man Booker International Prize, CÉSAR AIRA was born in Coronel Pringles, Argentina, in 1949. He has published at least one hundred books and recently created a limited edition, “The Valise,” for the Museum of Modern Art, NYC. The poet CHRIS ANDREWS teaches at the University of Western Sydney, Australia, where he is a member of the Writing and Society Research Centre. He has translated books by Roberto Bolaño and César Aira for New Directions. He has won the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize for his poetry and the Valle-Inclán Prize and the French-American Foundation Translation Prize for his translations.
László Krasznahorkai

Spadework for a Palace

*Translated from the Hungarian by John Batki*

A joyful ode—in a single soaring, crazy sentence—to the interconnectedness of great (and mad) minds

*Spadework for a Palace* bears the subtitle “Entering the Madness of Others” and offers an epigraph: “Reality is no obstacle.” Indeed. This high-octane obsessive rant vaults over all obstacles, fueled by the idées fixes of a “gray little librarian” with fallen arches whose name—mr herman melvill—is merely one of the coincidences binding him to his lodestar Herman Melville (“I too resided on East 26th Street … I, too, had worked for a while at the Customs Office”), which itself is just one aspect of his also being “constantly conscious of his connectedness” to Lebbeus Woods, to the rock that is Manhattan, to the “drunkard Lowry” and his Lunar Caustic, to Bartók. And with this consciousness of connection he is not only gaining true knowledge of Melville, but also tracing the paths to “a Serene Paradise of Knowledge.” Driven to save that Palace (a higher library he also serves), he loses his job and his wife leaves him, but “people must be told the truth: there is no dualism in existence.” And his dream will be “realized, for I am not giving up: I am merely a day-laborer, a spade-worker on this dream, a herman melvill, a librarian from the lending desk, currently an inmate at Bellevue, but at the same time—may I say this?—actually a Keeper of the Palace.”

“One of the most important—and eccentric—writers working today.”
—HARI KUNZRU, THE SPECTATOR

“A celebration of tiny moments of odd, inexplicable joy.”
—NPR

“Krasznahorkai establishes his own rules and rides a wave of exhilarating energy. Apocalyptic, visionary, and mad, it flies off the page and stays lodged intractably wherever it lands.”—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (STARRED)

“Wild and wonderful.”
—ADAM THIRLWELL, THE GUARDIAN

The winner of the Man Booker International Prize for lifetime achievement, LÁSZLÓ KRASZNAHORKAI was born in Gyula, Hungary. JOHN BATKI is a kilimologist, writer, translator, and visual artist. He was born in Hungary and has lived in the United States since age fourteen.
Clarice Lispector

The Woman Who Killed the Fish

• Translated from the Portuguese by Benjamin Moser

Four beguiling tales for children of all ages—a surprising new facet of Clarice Lispector's genius

“That woman who killed the fish unfortunately is me,” begins the title story, but “if it were my fault, I’d own up to you, since I don’t lie to boys and girls. I only lie sometimes to a certain type of grownup because there’s no other way.” Enumerating all the animals she’s loved—cats, dogs, lizards, chickens, monkeys—Clarice finally asks: “Do you forgive me?”

“The Mystery of the Thinking Rabbit” is a detective story which explains that bunnies think with their noses: for a single idea a bunny might “scrunch up his nose fifteen thousand times” (he may not be too bright, but “he’s not foolish at all when it comes to making babies”). The third tale, “Almost True,” is a shaggy dog yarn narrated by a pooch who is very worried about a wicked witch: “I am a dog named Ulisses and my owner is Clarice.” The wonderful last story, “Laura’s Intimate Life” stars “the nicest hen I’ve ever seen.” Laura is “quite dumb,” but she has her “little thoughts and feelings. Not a lot, but she’s definitely got them. Just knowing she’s not completely dumb makes her feel all chatty and giddy. She thinks that she thinks.” A one-eyed visitor from Jupiter arrives and vows Laura will never be eaten: she’s been worrying, because “humans are a weird sort of person” who can love hens and eat them, too. Such throwaway wisdom abounds: “Don’t even get me started.” These delightful, high-hearted stories, written for her own boys, have charm to burn—and are a treat for every Lispector reader.

“Better than Borges.” —ELIZABETH BISHOP

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

“Lispector should be on the shelf with Kafka and Joyce.” —LOS ANGELES 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 “one of the twentieth century’s most mysterious writers” (Orhan Pamuk). BENJAMIN MOSER is the author of Why This World: The Biography of Clarice Lispector, and Sontag: Her Life and Work. He is the series editor of the new translations of Clarice Lispector’s complete works at New Directions.
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