Long ago, the writer Peter Handke left us his story *Repetition* . . . (“I covered you at night.” “I listened to your breathing.” “I smelled your skin.”) . . . The perception of phenomena and the experiencing of the world—even testing the reality of books—were changing under the burden of “historical events” . . . (“Are you there?” “Have you changed?” “Do you still walk with that kind, clumsy gait of yours.”). . .

For a decade, then, (one translating, the other transmitting, as lecturer),¹ we were “indefatigable” readers of Handke’s stories. And we considered the book *Repetition* to be the crowning glory. And we saw the tail end of the decade in which the book had come into being (eighth in the twentieth century) as “evil”: with its discourse that killed perception, its perception that killed feeling, its feeling that killed thought, its thought that killed storytelling . . .

Handke’s book remained an emblem of the Beautiful (love, harmony) in the late, ecological, storytelling-era. A lyrical appeal to defend the geography of the Written . . . As we read, therefore, we did not remain in the closed space of a room. We went “out” to read: not *out of* the book but *with* it: into “the open” (“ins Offene”) . . .

This, then, is Corporeal Travel-reading and Travel-writing. This is the Conquest of Geography. The Fixing of Tracks. And, by means of the sensual truth of bookish space, the Measuring of Oneself in the Book and the Testing of the Book in Us. And Repetition. That is, Inscription: of the One (who was born in the country of Handke’s Landscapes—under the “new order,” however, “dispossessed of” “that

¹ Scott Abbott is a university professor and writer; Žarko Radaković is a writer and translator.
soil there”) and of the Other (coming from far away to Handke’s
space—“from there,” yet closer to the here-residing than many of those
“from here”) . . .

The book recounts the movements of “foreigners.”

The action begins in Handke’s story *Repetition*. There, its
beginning runs as follows:

A quarter of a century, or a day, has passed since I arrived in
Jesenice. . . . I ought to have felt free, for . . . the summer months
lay open before me. But I had set out with mixed feelings. . . .
Besides . . . during the past year . . . I suddenly found myself
alone. . . . (The truth was that I simply didn’t have the money
. . . .) Another reason . . . was that I had never been outside of
Austria.

After a glance at my . . . passport, the border guard in Jesenice
spoke to me in his language. When I failed to understand, he told
me in German that . . . my name would have been better suited
to . . . the border guard. The elderly official . . . in civilian clothes,
white-haired, with the round, rimless glasses of a scholar . . .
suddenly grew grave, came a step closer, and looked me solemnly
in the eye. . . .

---