



The Selected Stories

Mercè Rodoreda , Martha Tennent (Translator)

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Collected here are thirty of Mercè Rodoreda's most moving and inventive stories, presented in chronological order of their publication from three of Rodoreda's most beloved short-story collections; *Twenty-Two Stories*, *It Seemed Like Silk and Other Stories*, and *My Christina and Other Stories*. These short fictions capture Rodoreda's full range of expression, from quiet literary realism to fragmentary impressionism to dark symbolism. Few writers have captured so clearly, or explored so deeply, the lives of women who are stuck somewhere between senseless modernity and suffocating tradition-Rodoreda's "women are notable for their almost pathological lack of volition, but also for their acute sensitivity, a nearly painful awareness of beauty" (Natasha Wimmer).

The Selected Stories Details

Date : Published February 15th 2011 by Open Letter (first published 1958)

ISBN : 9781934824313

Author : Mercè Rodoreda , Martha Tennent (Translator)

Format : Paperback 250 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Cultural, Spain, Literary Fiction

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Lacy says

The range of Rodoreda's stories is astounding. You can certainly follow her development as a writer (the stories are printed in chronological order). There are so many gems in this collection. I absolutely loved it. Looking forward to reading more by her. Up next will be Death in Spring.

Aaron Mcquiston says

Merce Rodoreda is one of those authors that should be more read, more known, more in the discussion on the world's best short story writers. The stories selected here span Rodoreda's entire career, presented here chronologically. The first half of the book seem like sweet stories about loss of innocence. These stories are very well structures and smart, but there is a little bit of tedium to the first half. The second half, as Rodoreda's career is stronger, her stories turn darker and more metaphorical. Starting with "Ada Liz" and going through the rest of the collection, each story is just as impressive as the last. This is not saying that the first stories are junk, far from it, because this is far from the truth, but the difference between the first half and the last half is glaring and disturbing. It took a while for me to get through this collection reading it chronologically, but I think that the best thing to do would be to skip around. This could make it quicker to get through.

Bill Hsu says

While I enjoyed this, the selection from Twenty-Two Stories seem a bit pale. My favorites are the more disorienting and bizarre stories, mostly from the collection My Christina.

Kathleen says

The writing itself of the stories was good, and some of the character's voices were excellent, such as in Before I Die. The repetition of theme, particularly the man/woman relationship and more particular aging woman nags husband into the arms of another woman, seemed a bit overwrought. I really like The Time of the Doves, this collection just wasn't "my cup of tea".

Chad Post says

DISCLAIMER: I am the publisher of the book and thus spent approximately two years reading and editing and working on it. So take my review with a grain of salt, or the understanding that I am deeply invested in this text and know it quite well. Also, I would really appreciate it if you would purchase this book, since it would benefit Open Letter directly.

OK, so I know that no one buys short story collections (too long to be a tweet, too short to be FREEDOM?), but this is a pretty amazing collection. More or less chronological in order, there are pieces in here as

brilliant and moving as THE TIME OF THE DOVES, and ones as strangely surreal as DEATH IN SPRING. A particular highlight is "Before I Die," which shows off all of Rodoreda's skills in terms of story structure, interesting characters, heartfelt emotions, incredible style . . . We'll serialize something from here on Three Percent when the book comes out, but in the meantime you can read (most of) "The Thousand Franc Bill" here: <http://catalog.openletterbooks.org/au...>

(And no, I'm not giving this five stars *just* because it's an Open Letter book . . . this is beyond brilliant.)

Lawrence says

My first exposure to this Catalan author. I found these stories to contain a odd - and disconcerting - mixture of drama in the storyline and a passive, acceptance of the outcome, resignation by the narrators in the particular stories. It's not exactly that the narrators simply give up but rather they see their fates as inevitable, something that despite an expressed desire to see things change they don't seem inclined to expend the energy required to take any action to really make things change. Not sure exactly what to make of that passivity. Nevertheless, the collection maintain my interest through all 30 included stories.

Tuck says

This collection is a master class on how to write stories, but also those stories are so so sad, they'll break you heart eventually. Most all deal with women dealing with men. I guess this note needs to be brief, because the only alternative is a dissertation. for the serious out there.

Michelle Despres says

Earlier stories much better. Thought of giving it 3 stars because I didn't enjoy the later stories as much, but still an impressive collection.

Lisa says

The first two melancholy representations of women defined entirely by their relationships to men depressed me, so I skipped to the last story, 'White Geranium'. Again there is a helpless woman, but this time there is a male narrator so subsumed by jealousy that he tortures his wife in her dying days so that she will die quicker. It's quite horrible: he won't let her change her clothes and he blows a stolen trumpet in her ears to disrupt her sleep. But after she dies he dresses her in the pink dress that she made to make Cosme, his boss, fall in love with her. He desecrates her body in other ways too, including breaking off a tooth which he uses to tease the cat that Cosme had given her. The story then weaves into dark symbolism with magical elements. Horrible as it is, and though again it features a woman with no agency, it's a much better story than the first two, which seem quite ordinary to me and notable only for the old-fashioned helplessness of the women. It's this story which makes the helplessness make sense...

lightbulb moment in Lisa's brain

Spain was helpless under the iron rule of General Franco for generations, from 1939 to 1975. The Spouse tells a story from when he was living in the inner suburbs about how the streets erupted into celebratory dance and song from former Spanish refugees when Franco died. Like present day North Koreans enduring a merciless rule, there was nothing they could do except wait for deliverance or to escape. So Rodoreda's stories of women with no volition can be read as an analogy for her country in submission to a tyrant, under constant surveillance, fantasising about a future that can only be hastened by violence, and desecrated by one so desperate to cling to power that he destroys the thing he loves.

To read the rest of my review please visit <https://anzlitlovers.com/2017/07/16/t...>

Daniel says

Wow: looking down at the dates that GR tracked for this book, I am discovering that it took me ten days shy of six months to finish this book. Why the unusual delay, especially in light of the high marks I am awarding this book?

This anthology is a retrospective of Merce Rodoreda's writing, and it suffers from the a problem that I suspect is chronic to retrospectives--that of mixing in earlier work that can run into mediocre waters with later work that exhibits a mastery of craft and a well-developed narrative voice. Put simply, the second half of this anthology was light years ahead of the first, and until I reached that point, I found the whole affair a slog.

That second half, though, is fantastic. After wallowing in numerous little vignettes about broken relationships and unrequited loves and bad romances, Rodoreda's stories turn to themes such as warfare and poverty and, well, more bad romance--only now these latter stories have more teeth to them. These stories also run a few pages longer than the earlier works, and I wonder if Rodoreda wasn't more confident at this stage in her writing. Whatever the case, she moved me with far less prose than other writers use to achieve the same result.

I am glad that I stuck with this anthology; I am also very glad that I discovered Open Letter Books, and that I have maintained a subscription to them for over a year now. Without them, I would never have picked this up, and I might not have found Rodoreda. On that note, I am eager to read one of her novels, and to see how she uses a larger canvas.

Rebecca H. says

It's been a while since I finished *The Selected Stories of Merce Rodoreda*, published by Open Letter Books, so details of individual stories are a little hazy, but overall, the collection impressed me. The stories are full of drama and passion, not at all like the quiet stories with small epiphanies that you find so often in American short fiction. I like quiet stories as well, but it was a nice change to have more action, more bright, vibrant characters and overpowering emotions.

Rodoreda is a Catalan writer who died in 1983; these stories come from three collections published in 1958, 1978, and one that (as far as I can tell) was collected after her death. These stories are published in chronological order, and become more experimental toward the end, moving toward a more impressionistic, stream-of-consciousness style. I was less taken with these stories than with the more realistic ones, but it was interesting to see her moving in new directions and experimenting with new styles.

Read the rest of the review at [Of Books and Bicycles](#).

Peter Edelman says

Thanks to the University of Rochester OPEN LETTER publishing effort for translating wonderful writers like this for us. From the Catalan...great stuff.

Theresa says

The Thousand Franc Bill was three and a half pages long and utterly devastating; it made it so that I can't give this anything less than a 5/5.

I'm glad I didn't read these stories in my early 20s, when I was feeling super-sad all the time. They would have been too overwhelming and I wouldn't have been able to like them so much.

Marcos says

What a haunting, sick, terse collection! Relationships, symbolic uses of blood-red images, frustrated dreamers, men and women all looking for a sense of belonging; trapped in feelings of resignation and anger within their provincial lives. Characters such as the whore of the sea, and men and women all playing perverted sexual games with one another make this a wonderful gem of disturbing riches!
