



## The Trouble I've Seen

*Martha Gellhorn*

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# The Trouble I've Seen

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## **The Trouble I've Seen** Martha Gellhorn

These four interlinked stories encapsulate Martha Gellhorn's firsthand observation of the Great Depression. Fiction crafted with documentary accuracy, they vividly render the gradual spiritual collapse of the simple, homely sufficiency of American life in the face of sudden unemployment, desperate poverty and hopelessness. They catch the mood of a generation 'sucked into indifference' and of young men who no longer 'believe in man or God, let alone private industry'. Martha was the youngest of a squad of sixteen, handpicked reporters who were paid to file accurate, confidential reports on the human stories behind the statistics of the Depression directly to Roosevelt's White House. In these pages, we understand the real cost of sudden destitution on a vast scale. We taste the dust in the mouth, smell the disease and feel the hopelessness and the despair. And here, too, we can hear the earliest cadences of the voice of a writer who went on to become, arguably, the greatest female war reporter of the 20th century.

## **The Trouble I've Seen Details**

Date : Published 1936 by Morrow

ISBN :

Author : Martha Gellhorn

Format : Hardcover 306 pages

Genre : Fiction, Literary Fiction

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## From Reader Review The Trouble I've Seen for online ebook

### Paul Taylor says

Agonising and viscerally poignant. Fiction but based on her travels around Depression America assessing the state of the impoverished. If ever you feel the need to know the cruelty and insidiousness of poverty then here would be a good place to start.

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### Patsybryant says

#### Nobody KNOWS THE TTOUBLE

A realistic account of the hard times of the depression years. The writing is is heart wrenching and the reader sees a time that people talked about and relived for the rest of their lives.

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### Sarah says

the 1930's depression USA, mid west, look at people's lives and family.

Depressing but well written.

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### Jennifer Brownlee says

Could not put this down! Incredible stories with such an impressive insight into lives of people living in a unique time in US history. I'm now looking for more gellhorn!

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### Elsabe says

I hate sentimental renditions of other people's troubles. I feel in order to keep dignity, the last thing you need is to be displayed to teach somebody a lesson or worse to evoke sympathy. Or am I a coward and ostrich, thinking that if I don't know about it, it does not exist? Martha Gellhorn tells how unemployment combined with hunger can render humans hopeless with veracity and completely "free of cant" (from the introduction). Brilliant. No sopiness in sight!

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### Evelyn says

I was struck by the recurring theme throughout these stories of the shame people felt when they had no choice but to go on Relief. My Dad was born in 1928 and raised on the Saskatchewan prairies during the Dirty Thirties, as they were known here. He also reacted to the thought of unemployment insurance and welfare as fates worse than death that must be avoided at all costs. I see now that as he was raised during

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those hard times when all people had was their pride, he couldn't feel any other way. The story of Ruby brought me to tears, such an innocent child.

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### **Juliet says**

Extraordinary, compelling, fact based fictional narratives describing 4 experiences of the Great Depression & the relief programme. Gellhorn's prose is beautiful and in contrast to the events.

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### **Jonathan Norton says**

As well as her travel and war reporting, Gellhorn also reported on social problems within the US in the mid 30s as part of a group of writers commissioned to supply an accurate picture of the plight of the poor to the heads of the new welfare programmes. This book consists of the 4 novellas she produced from her experience, and they make grim reading. They are all bleakly unsentimental depictions of poverty and despair, candid in the portrayal of racial attitudes and inequality, and with no glib suggestions or happy endings. Almost as tough as Harry Crews' memoir "Childhood", but with a 3rd-person detachment that doesn't provide any more warmth. Crews' account was full of desperate figures struggling for the most life they could get; Gellhorn's creations know they are defeated, and are slowly sinking down in to the ruins of a society that (for them) has failed.

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### **Kate says**

Utterly compelling.

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### **Alan says**

**Feb. 4, 2019 Update:** I noticed in today's historical fiction feature from GR that there is new novel about the life of photographer Dorothea Lange called Learning to See by Elise Hooper.

### **Gellhorn's Observations of the Great Depression**

*Review of the 2013 paperback reissue from Eland Publishing*

This 1936 collection of 4 novellas was Martha Gellhorn's 2nd book. Her first was the novel What Mad Pursuit based on her time in Paris in the early 1930's. The fictional novellas in "The Trouble I've Seen" are based on her fact finding trips as part of a group of 16 writers who fanned out around the USA during 1934-35 to send back reports to Harry Hopkins at the Federal Emergency Relief Association to provide ground level information on what people in the nation were experiencing during the Great Depression so that Hopkins could monitor the effectiveness of the "Relief". Photographer Dorothea Lange did similar work for the Resettlement Administration and the Farm Security Administration and her iconic 1936 photograph "Migrant Mother" is used as the cover image for this edition of Gellhorn's book.

The stories here are grim and often end in quite desperate and forlorn circumstances. Gellhorn still manages to convey notes of hope and small victories during each tale, even if these may seem of a tiny nature in the

relative scheme of things. "Mrs. Maddison" is an elderly woman who manages to pull a home together in the various bleak situations that she is in, even though she is often in conflict with her grown daughter and son. "Joe and Pete" are two union men battling through a strike and its aftermath. "Jim" is a son in a family that is breaking apart around him who makes a last grasp for happiness when he tries to ensure a memorable wedding day for his bride to be. "Ruby" is the story of an 11-year old girl, alone with mother after the father has walked out on them, who wants for simple childlike things such as candy and roller-skates. Her almost casual slide into prostitution makes for the most harrowing and disturbing of these tales.

Gellhorn is now known primarily for her journalism and her travel writing. Her fiction is often hard to find, but everything I've read of hers has been worth the search.

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### **Caroline says**

Brilliant, although completely harrowing.

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### **Richard Wise says**

Having previously read Gellhorn's 1940 novel *A Stricken Field*, written after her marriage to Ernest Hemingway I was interested to tackle *The Trouble I've Seen*, a group of novellas written during Gellhorn's sojourn as a New Deal reporter and published in 1938 and before she met the famous novelist.

Where *A Stricken Field* show Papa's influence, *The Trouble I've Seen* shows none. Were I to characterize the latter, I would call it Steinbeck-esq. It tells the intimate story of a poor and simple, uneducated old woman at a Cannery Row.

Gellhorn here is a young unformed writer seeking her muse. Still she tells an interesting and affecting story of the Great Depression. Her empathy and understanding is everywhere apparent. The fact is she cared a great deal more than Hemingway ever did and it shows particularly here. Paradoxically, whether you believe that her meeting with Hemingway was completely serendipitous or that she was a home wrecker who deliberately sought him out, she would have been much better off as a writer had she never met him. She never truly emerged from his shadow. Had she not met him, she just might have received the serious attention her work deserved.

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### **Liam says**

*Hauntingly apparent premonitions to future economic crises (of distinguished form) to come:*

**"And so they go on, the gaunt, ragged legion of the individually damned. Bewildered, apathetic, many of them terrifyingly patient"(6-7)**

"The daughter is ready to crack under the strain. She's intelligent, good-looking. But there's fire in her eyes"(10)

**"Their pride is dying but not without due agony...There are no protest groups, there is only decay. Each family in its own miserable home going to pieces. But I wonder if some day, crazed and**

**despairing, they won't revolt... It seems incredible to think they will go on living like this, patiently waiting for nothing''(12)**

"See the world is right, running like hell with some guy running after you"(139)

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### **Stuart says**

True grit. The American spirit and determination against the odds. All the stories in this collection should have been made into a classic Hollywood film. Managing to show both the terror & tenderness of the great depression. A Diamond in the rough.

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