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The Complete Stories



Synopsis

Clarice Lispector's Complete Stories, 85 in all, are an epiphany, among the important books of this or any year. The recent publication by New Directions of five Lispector novels revealed to legions of new readers her darkness and dazzle. Now, for the first time in English, are all the stories that made her a Brazilian legend: from teenagers coming into awareness of their sexual and artistic powers to humdrum housewives whose lives are shattered by unexpected epiphanies to old people who don't know what to do with themselves. Clarice's stories take us through their lives and ours. From one of the greatest modern writers, these stories, gathered from the nine collections published during her lifetime, follow an unbroken time line of success as a writer, from her adolescence to her death bed.

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Customer Reviews

Clarice Lispector is one of the greatest cultural treasures of Brazil. Her razor-sharp insight into the ordinary (and the extraordinary) aspects of the human condition was unmatched, and her writing honored the Portuguese language with a beauty and nobility that is difficult to match. Having grown up as a devoted reader of her stories and novels, to which I return constantly in search of unqualified aesthetic pleasure, I was very happy to see this beautifully produced and magisterially translated volume. Lispector's voice is embedded in my mind through her chiseled and astonishingly beautiful Portuguese, but I have to say that I cannot imagine her stories better translated than they are here. In sampling a few of my old favorites, I was thoroughly convinced

that, had Lispector written in English, this is how she would have written. I sincerely hope that this new book will bring many readers to her unique universe and help to secure a place for Lispector among a wider audience and next to those with whom she truly belongs: Jorge Luis Borges, Virginia Woolf, Joyce, and Kafka, to name a few. She is an artist of the greatest magnitude and of universal scope.

As a prolific reader, for some reason there are a few things I rarely do, for no particularly logical reason, over the last 30 years or so > Buy and read novellas; books which are collections of an author/s short stories and rarely books that were originally written in a foreign language and later reinterpreted into English. I incidentally happened to read an article a few weeks ago about a mid-twentieth century author (Clarice Lispector) which left me beguiled. The newspaper article also referenced this particular book (collection of short stories) by Lispector, which would soon be released. I decided to buy it on a whim. What a great decision! I have been completely enthralled for the last week with the diversity, drama, wit, humor and human introspection in this brilliantly creative collection of stories. While the book will likely hold less appeal to younger readers (under 20 or so) I believe it will definitely hold interest for a wide diversity of mature readers (those among us with a few more years of life experience behind us to provide perspective).

No one starts a story off better than Clarice Lispector, one of my favorite authors. From the first story: "The clock strikes nine. A loud, sonorous peal, followed by gentle chiming, an echo" to the last: "I doubt that death will come. Death? Could it be that the days, so long, will end?" I'm not satisfied that those are the best examples. There are much better ones, but I couldn't be bothered to type them out because they just don't stop. The beginning just seamlessly flows into the rest of the story. Many of the stories here are more traditional than her longer works, less experimental. But there are definite exceptions, like "Brasilia," where she effortlessly paints impressionist atmosphere rather than realist portraiture. She's so skilled at writing a mood, a fear, a hope, more than a straightforward narrative arc. Philosophical, charming, witty, stark, surprising, unusual. She deserves mention alongside Borges, Italo Calvino, Chekov. I finished The Complete Stories a few days ago but couldn't bring myself to write a review because it feels like the book deserves much more than that. It really does. And the translator, Katrina Dodson, did an incredible job, although her translations made me wish I could read Portuguese. The edition is beautifully designed and crafted. The intro focused a bit more on her looks than I liked. Oh well. PS- If you want to check her word out, start with her book Agua Viva. It's only 9 bucks.

Compared to Giovanni Pontiero's translations in his Lispector collection "Family Ties," these translations by Katrina Dodson are execrable. For instance, the conclusion of "The Chicken."Pontiereo: "Once in a while, but ever more infrequently, she remembered how she had stood out against the sky on the roof edge ready to cry out. At such moments, she filled her lungs with the stuffy atmosphere of the kitchen, and, had females been given the power to crow, she would not have crowed but would have felt much happier. Not even at those moments, however, did the expression on her empty head alter. In flight, or in repose, when she gave birth or while pecking grain, hers was a chicken's head, identical to that drawn at the beginning of time. Until one day they killed her and ate her, and the years rolled on."Dodson: "Every once in a while, though increasingly rarely, the chicken would again recall the figure she had cut against the air on the edge of the roof, about to proclaim herself. That's when she'd fill her lungs with the kitchen's sullied air and, even if females were given to crowing, wouldn't crow but would feel much happier. Though not even then would the expression change on her empty head. Feeding, resting, giving birth or pecking corn -- it was a chicken's head, the same one designed at the start of the centuries."Until one day they killed her, ate her and the years went by."

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