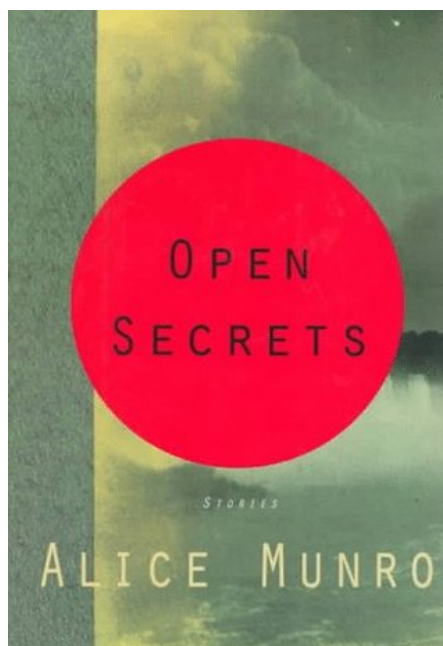




Open Secrets: Stories

Alice Munro

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Open Secrets: Stories

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Open Secrets: Stories Alice Munro

In these eight tales, Munro evokes the devastating power of old love suddenly recollected. She tells of vanished schoolgirls and indentured frontier brides and an eccentric recluse who, in the course of one surpassingly odd dinner party, inadvertently lands herself a wealthy suitor from exotic Australia. And Munro shows us how one woman's romantic tale of capture and escape in the high Balkans may end up inspiring another woman who is fleeing a husband and lover in present-day Canada.

"**Open Secrets** is a book that dazzles with its faith in language and in life."—*New York Times Book Review*

Open Secrets: Stories Details

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From Reader Review Open Secrets: Stories for online ebook

João Carlos says

Alice Munro (n. 1931)

Adoro contos...

"Falsos Segredos" (1994) é um livro com oito contos escritos pela canadiana **Alice Munro** (n. 1931), a quem foi atribuído o **Prémio Nobel da Literatura** em 2013, que nela reconheceu um **"mestre do conto contemporâneo"**, apenas com um único romance publicado em 1971, **"Vidas de Raparigas e Mulheres"**. **Alice Munro** escreve oito contos em que as mulheres "dominam", revisitando as paisagens físicas e emocionais de personagens femininas, que revelam o seu amor e a sua paixão, evidenciando a natureza subjectiva do comportamento humano, a sua especificidade e os seus estratagemas, para lutarem contra o "destino", procurando muitas vezes a "sua" liberdade emocional, numa vida feita de mal-entendidos e decepções, de rejeições e abusos.

Alice Munro - faz uma admirável descrição física e emocional das personagens - deixa-nos na incerteza e na dúvida, desenvolvendo sentimentos de dor e perda, que por vezes se acentuam, explorando a confusão e a perplexidade dos seus comportamentos, revelando a paixão, a alegria, o desespero, a aventura de mulheres com vidas comuns.

"Falsos Segredos" é um excelente livro de contos, com "histórias" dentro das "histórias", sobre mulheres de várias idades e de diferentes extractos sociais, onde a narrativa tem mudanças temporais abruptas, com desenvolvimentos e reviravoltas completamente imprevisíveis, revelando uma imaginação verdadeiramente prodigiosa.

Destaco os três melhores contos: **"ENTUSIASMO"**, **"UMA VIDA REAL"** e **"FALSOS SEGREDOS"**

"ENTUSIASMO" (6*) é provavelmente um dos melhores contos que li nos últimos anos...
(view spoiler)

"ENTUSIASMO" percorre um tempo feito de cartas e lembranças que se sobrepõem ao amor e às decepções da perda e da tragédia, da fuga à realidade e da inevitabilidade do destino, numa linha temporal indefinida, onde se podem estabelecer inúmeras leituras, entre o passado e o presente, de uma forma que desliza entre o amor e o não-amor.

Alice Munro explora admiravelmente os sonhos e as expectativas das relações humanas, muitas vezes assentes em pressupostos fantasiosos, que se sucedem de uma forma inesperada nas vivências diárias de personagens intimamente românticas e apaixonadas. As histórias são um pouco como as folhas das árvores... No final de **"ENTUSIASMO"**, **Alice Munro** leva-nos de volta ao dia em que Louisa chega pela primeira vez a Carstairs, **"Estava satisfeita com este recomeço, sentia-se calma e grata. Já tivera outros recomeços e as coisas não tinham corrido como esperava, mas acreditava na decisão rápida, na intervenção imprevista, na singularidade do seu destino."** (Pág. 53)

"UMA VIDA REAL" (5*) Dorrie Beck vive sozinha – depois da morte repentina do seu irmão Albert – **"O coração de Albert falhara... Morreu num sítio belíssimo junto à estrada, uma planície onde cresciam carvalhos negros e corria um riacho de águas límpidas."** (Pág. 58)

Dorrie que teve uma educação esmerada, acaba por depender da ajuda da sua amiga Millicent e do seu marido Porter, um agricultor com três quintas (incluindo a que fora da família Beck) e dezanove anos mais velho, que lhe faz muitas promessas, mas que **"Na sua noite de núpcias, ele dissera: "Agora tens de**

aguentar o que te vai cair em cima”, mas ela sabia que não fora com má intenção.” (Pág. 56); sobrevivendo com a venda das peles de coelho e de rato-almiscarado que caça, numa vivência rotineira e frugal.

Num jantar organizado por Millicent, é convidado o pastor anglicano e um seu amigo Mr. Wilkinson Speirs, hóspede temporário, um australiano rico, juntamente com Muriel Snow, a professora de música, uma mulher independente, bonita, solteira e Dorrie Beck.

E o inesperado acontece... ”... **tanta sorte inesperada podiam fazer uma pessoa acreditar também em desgraças.**”(Pág. 73)

Dúvidas e incertezas em relação ao futuro...

“FALSOS SEGREDOS” (5*)

Uma rapariga desaparecida.

Um final em “aberto” em que Maureen ”... **parece estar a observar um falso segredo, algo que não é surpreendente até pensarmos em contá-lo.**” (Pág. 150)

Um verdadeiro puzzle literário...

Um convite à releitura...

Pequete says

Este livro foi a minha estreia com Alice Munro e fiquei cliente. Apesar de, geralmente, preferir ler romances do que contos, acho que depois deste livro, fiquei mais próxima de me tornar adepta deste género, uma tendência que comecei a notar o Verão passado, com um livro de contos da Flannery O'Connor. E relação ao Falsos Segredos, gostei de praticamente todos os contos, o único que achei demasiado estranho e inconsequente foi o Hotel Jack Randa, mas mesmo sem ter gostado do final, achei todo o desenvolvimento da história bastante interessante. Todos eles são pequenas histórias que, sem terem aparentemente nada de especial, me prenderam bastante e me fizeram sentir como se estivesse a espreitar por uma fresta de uma janela a vida daquelas pessoas, com um certo sentimento de não dever estar ali, mas sem poder desviar o olhar... Um pouco estranho, mas é mais ou menos isso.

averybird says

Open Secrets was my second Munro after *Runaway*, and she has once again lived up to high expectations. The stories are all tied (loosely or strongly) to the fictional town of Carstairs, Ontario, which gives them cohesion in time and space. And true to form for Munro, the stories themselves are almost compulsively easy to read. They flow so well and have so many tantalizing details that the reader is fully absorbed. Sometimes the endings can be ambiguous leaving room for wonder, as in the case of **Carried Away**, a story in which a young librarian's correspondence with a soldier during WWII becomes an important event twice in her life (view spoiler). In that sense, these stories are layered with meaning and like all great literature are ripe for rereading.

The women of these stories shine like so many stars; some of my favorites from this collection: Dorrie the socially awkward rabbit trapper in **A Real Life** who gets a surprising suitor; Mrs. Monk, the stoic wife of a bootlegger in **Spaceships have Landed** who shows another woman an unexpected kindness; and the lovable “flapper at heart” Miss Christena Mullen from **A Wilderness Station**. It is she who recounts the story of

being one of the first residents of Walley (Carstairs' sister town on the lake) to own a "Stanley Steamer" automobile – those few that ran on steam from 1902 to 1924 prior to their obsolescence in lieu of the internal combustion engine. I will leave you with this indelible description from Miss Mullen, dressed in her hat and motoring-veil, of taking out grandmotherly Old Anna for a drive one day:

"Well, I loved taking jaunts in the Steamer. I had been driving since I was fifteen but this was the first car of my own and possibly the only Steam car in Huron County. Everybody would run to see it go by. It did not make a beastly loud coughing and clanking like other cars but rolled along silently more or less like a ship with high sails over the lake waters and it did not foul the air but left behind a plume of steam. Stanley Steamers were banned in Boston, because of the steam fogging the air. I always loved to tell people, I use to drive a car that was banned in Boston!"

Another outstanding group of stories by Alice Munro, first published in **1994**. I love her dearly – please seek her out if you haven't already. Highly recommended!

Sub_zero says

Los relatos de Alice Munro normalmente me suelen cautivar. La escritora canadiense es una creadora nata de atmósferas y personajes, espacios ficticios que resuenan cuento tras cuento y conforman una caleidoscópica composición final. Sin embargo, nada de lo que he encontrado en este recopilatorio, pese a ostentar las características más sobresalientes de Munro, ha logrado despertar mi interés al nivel que lo han hecho otros libros suyos. Quizá he echado en falta un hilo conductor más contundente, temáticas más vigorizantes o la calidez y el afecto habituales en los que tanto me recuerda a Marilynne Robinson, y no la prosa espesa, estéril, que impregna estas páginas. Válido para fans de Munro, pero no lo recomendaría para empezar con la autora.

Maxwell says

2.5 stars I read Dear Life a couple years back and thoroughly enjoyed it, so I'd been meaning to read more of Munro's work since. I picked up a copy of this one in Canada (seems fitting) when I was there earlier this month. And sadly it was pretty disappointing. None of the stories were flat-out bad, but they weren't very memorable. Even now having just finished the collection after reading it for the last week or so, nothing stands out to me. I don't expect to love every story in a collection, but I usually have a couple that stick with me and are worth recommending. Not so in this case. I will still try more Munro in the future, but I'm not rushing to get to them.

Robert says

Open Secrets by Alice Munro is a collection of her stories published in 1994 that I had not read before,

which was something of a surprise to me since I've read so much of her work with so much pleasure.

Here she continues to achieve her almost novelistic effects in the most deceptively simple way: she often sticks to one location in rural Canada, a mill town on the way down, she builds significant changes in time into her narratives, and she manages to conclude her stories with a sense that the fullness of a life has now been revealed.

One story, "The Albanian Virgin," is a classic captivity story that almost seduces the captive—a woman—into accepting her fate but for the intervention of a Franciscan priest, who, one speculates, connects with her in freedom later on.

Another story, "The Jack Randa Hotel," plays a game of hide-and-seek between a separated couple who have to travel from Canada to Australia to reach one another. Or maybe it's a game of tag . . . could be.

Munro writes with specificity about faces, moods, landscapes, and characteristics. Her subjects have not yet found the homogenizing effect of Prozac and other hi-tech drugs that squeeze the weirdness out of them. A girl from an orphanage is married to a young man setting out in the wilds to build a farm with his brother, but as the story unfolds, great uncertainty develops as to how the young married man actually died. At the end, we know, although the girl from the orphanage still keeps many secrets to herself.

I particularly like two tricks Munro plays with time: Sometimes she shifts into the present tense without explanation, only to return to the past tense, also without explanation. No explanation is necessary, of course. The present tense, when used judiciously, intensifies a story. Munro also occasionally drops a piece of a narrative in a spot that is chronologically all wrong but creates an out-of-time fulness and completion, even though it suggests the same story, the one that has just been told, is now going to be told all over again.

Without a doubt, Munro is a lady, meaning a gentlewoman, but her writing can be earthy and spicy and quite realistic about old men who want their younger wives to talk dirty to them or boys who want to jump girls so bad they call them ugly first, as if to drive them away, not embrace them.

Not infrequently Munro flashes forward toward the end of a story to show how things turned out decades after the main events. Two things stand out about this: the characters have gotten old and feeble and suffered many losses . . . and hypocrites usually receive what they always had coming to them.

Perhaps Munro's effectiveness in deploying all these techniques lies in the humbleness and unpretentiousness of her principal characters and settings and her straightforward, clean style.

She goes to the heart of the matter—how life grabs you there and makes your pulse race or seize up. She's not a writer who blinks at joy or misery. She lets each have its due.

Tony says

On Tuesday morning, while Frances was getting breakfast and Maureen was helping her husband to finish dressing, there was a knock at the front door, by someone who did not notice or trust the bell.

I love sentences like that, ones that stop me, draw me in; ones that introduce, define, portend. Alice Munro can not help herself from writing sentences like that, inventing such people.

Like this:

When Bea spoke of having had a checkered career, she was taking a sarcastic or disparaging tone that did not reflect what she really felt about her life of love affairs....love affairs were the main content of her life, and she knew that she was not being honest when she belittled them. They were sweet, they were sour; she was happy in them, she was miserable. She knew what it was to wait in a bar for a man who never showed up. To wait for letters, to cry in public, and on the other hand to be pestered by a man she no longer wanted. (She had been obliged to resign from the Light Opera Society because of a fool who directed baritone solos at her). But still she felt the first signal of a love affair like the warmth of the sun on her skin, like music through a doorway, or the moment, as she had often said, when the black-and-white television commercial bursts into color. She did not think that her time had been wasted. She did not think it had been wasted.

(Written earlier):

I'm not done and this is not a review. Pay no attention to the page counter because I go back and forth in short-story collections and almost never read in order.

Just pausing to report that one story in particular, *The Wilderness Station*, is so good everyone should stop whatever you are doing and read this.

This is brilliantly epistolary, about an older time and place (but maybe not so much) and about a mid-19th century woman named Annie McKillop. She is delightfully unreliable.

Somewhere, Munro is still smiling at the memory of this creation.

Trish says

I don't think it's Alice Munro's fault. I think I just overdosed on her short stories. I loved *Runaway*, I liked *Hateship*, *Friendship*, *Courtship*, *Loveship*, *Marriage*, and this one ... eh. Nothing in this collection really grabbed me.

The stories I enjoyed most were:

-- Open Secrets, because it's about a crime. A girl disappears while on a hiking trip. Because of a tale told by a woman who lives near the woods, a strange elderly man falls under suspicion, but no body is found and there is no evidence that could lead to criminal charges. But the wife of a once-prominent, now-retired local lawyer knows who the real culprit is, although her knowing consists of intuition (and reasoning) and is not the sort of knowing that can be made public.

-- The Jack Randa Hotel. A woman who has been dumped can't let go. She tells everyone she's off on a vacation, but she's really off to Australia where her ex lives with his new (and very young) wife. She filches a returned-to-sender letter from his mailbox and then impersonates the intended recipient through letters. Eventually her ex realizes he has been corresponding with the woman he left behind. He feels adrift in his new country and new marriage and seems interested in rekindling his past romance. But she packs up and heads back to Canada, forcing him to be the one to follow.

-- A Wilderness Station also involves crime. Three people are living alone on a homestead: two brothers and the wife of the eldest (who he obtained by writing to an orphanage and requesting a hard-working woman). The eldest brother dies, apparently in a freak accident in the woods, and the youngest goes to live (more comfortably) with a neighboring family. The young widow stays behind and seems unhinged; after a few months, she hikes to the nearest town and tries to turn herself in to the authorities, confessing to the murder of her husband. She's taken in at the jail, but no one really believes her story, which doesn't quite fit the facts

and doesn't remain consistent on repeated tellings. What happened in the woods and why is the young woman seeking refuge in the jail?

From Spaceships Have Landed

You cannot let your parents anywhere near your real humiliations.

Aubrey says

My first Munro. A good thing? A bad thing? I acquired her books before the Nobel Prize pronouncement, but only got around to reading them after. I'm the sort that often needs to be led by the nose like that.

I'm reiterating a common complaint when I say that reviewing short story collections is difficult, but still. I thought my luck with finding my way through O'Connor's *The Complete Stories* heralded a new found ability to transition between varying lengths, but whereas O'Connor drives you into a corner again and again until you either get out or go insane, Munro floats.

Or slides. I found myself looking thorough beginnings and middles and ends, trying to orient around what exactly I thought of each, wondering if my speed of reading had impacted my understanding more than I thought. But no, it's all there, especially here, in a story titled *The Albanian Virgin*:

We have been very happy.

I have often felt completely alone.

There is always in this life something to discover.

The days and the years have gone by in some sort of blur.

On the whole, I am satisfied.

Most of the people in Munro's world don't know what they want. They'll write letters and marry others that they'll most certainly cheat on and live on in a summary after the facts of the matter are through. It's not so simple as all that, though, as here it is my "show, not tell" spiel come back to bite me as Munro leads me through each and every story without ever really giving up the ghost. Several oddities of event and character that both entertained and sent my thinking into a frenzy, a few literature references that I latched onto like a lighthouse, but otherwise I left off each ending with a "Well."

You could look up from your life of the moment and feel the world crackling beyond the walls.

I'd say that they're peaceful, but they're not. I'd say that they're the small town honings as Munro is so often characterized by, but it's not, or at least is far more sedate and uncanny and lush. It's that crackle that I'm trying to find the words for, but have the feeling that it'll take me a few more collections to pin it down to the count. In the meantime, I'll leave behind the idea that the music of Ludovico Einaudi goes a fair way in evoking the same theme of emotion, and send you on your way.

Often these sentences seemed so satisfying to me, or so elusive and lovely, that I could not help abandoning all the surrounding words and giving myself up to a peculiar state.

Vanda says

Rendi-me a Alice Munro, muito embora pense que ela põe os leitores de "castigo".

As histórias são magistralmente tecidas, com personagens muito ricas e aí estamos nós a segui-las arduamente quando, sem mais nem porquê, o narrador nos rouba o envolvimento. Sentimo-nos como que despidos, e chegamos a achar que a história tem tudo para continuar por mais páginas, mas não, o "castigo" aguarda-nos.

Todos os contos poderiam ser retirados do dia-a-dia de qualquer um de nós, contudo é a forma como A.M. narra e descreve essas situações tão banais que fazem da sua escrita uma escrita diferente e fértil.

Só consigo lembrar-me de um fotógrafo "à moda antiga" na sua câmara escura, a revelar os seus negativos. Por cima de si, há um fio onde as fotos são presas por molas, para secar. Depois, escolhe uma que parece ser a melhor daquela série, no entanto, há um pormenor noutra que tinha passado despercebido e essa passa para primeira escolha.

Assim são os contos de Alice Munro - mantas retalhadas, mas cozidas com uma linha de seda que atravessa todos os pedaços de tecido com uma subtilidade de mestra, onde não se vêem os pontos.

Nós, os leitores, vamos tão embalados, que quase não nos apercebemos que deixámos para trás uma fase da vida de uma certa personagem; e eis-nos já a falar com outra, a qual, mais tarde, se irá reencontrar com a primeira ou, pelo menos, servirá de pretexto para entendermos o porquê do muito ou pouco que aquela viveu.

São quase jogos infantis de construções de cubos que encaixam aqui ou ali, que tombam, que se tornam a montar, mas que no fim nos revelam um castelo magnífico e imponente, de sólida construção.

Alice Munro FALA-NOS.

Não importa que todas as pequenas grandes acções de "Secretos a voces" se passem no Canadá. Poderiam ter sido aqui mesmo em Portugal ou em Espanha, porque são histórias universais.

Não vou falar de cada um dos contos, vou somente dizer os que me embalaram mais:

"Entusiasmo" e "Secretos a voces"

Oscar says

Escribir relatos no es fácil. En pocas páginas han de caber el planteamiento, el nudo y el desenlace (aunque esta norma no se aplica necesariamente a según qué cuentos y qué escritores). El germen de una historia ha de estar presente. Ésto es algo, quizás al no ser escritor, que me resulta difícil de entender, el que tenga (el escritor) una idea que podría desarrollar y convertirla en novela, pero que al final decida cortar por lo sano y darle un fin en pocas páginas. Está claro que muchos cuentos son como pequeñas postales, perfectos en su longitud, y es mejor que se hayan quedado así; pero también es verdad que existen casos en los que un cuento podría haber dado para mucho más, o menos, que nunca se sabe. Y no es que esté minusvalorando el género del relato corto en favor de las tramas de larga distancia, únicamente es que me da pena que una gran historia y unos buenos personajes no sean más aprovechados.

Y es en este género tan complicado donde destaca con nombre propio la canadiense Alice Munro, adorada por la gran mayoría de sus compañeros escritores. Si bien es verdad que la mayoría de escritores de cuentos buscan un final potente, lo más importante en los relatos de Alice Munro es el desarrollo. Su capacidad para ir hilvanando la trama es sencillamente prodigiosa. No sabría explicarlo, pero en pocas páginas es capaz de meterte en una gran historia, con vida propia. Te está contando un hecho o presentándote a un personaje,

para pasar a continuación a explicarte otro hecho relacionado con el hecho o el personaje anterior. O también hace un inciso para seguir parte de la historia de un personaje que ha influido o influirá posteriormente en la vida del personaje protagonista. Casi es como si se tratasen de cuentos corales, si ésto puede ser. Hay que leer a Alice Munro para entenderlo.

Los cuentos que se incluyen en 'Secretos a voces' son independientes, pero aun así hay nombres que se repiten, como el de Carstairs, Ontario, ciudad donde van a parar en un momento u otro algunos de los personajes, o los Doud, los potentados durante décadas en Carstairs. De esta manera, al final del libro da la impresión de que los relatos forman como un caleidoscopio.

Estos son los ocho cuentos contenidos en 'Secretos a voces', aunque las sinopsis no les hacen justicia:

- ENTUSIAMO (*****). La nueva bibliotecaria de Carstairs ha recibido una carta de un soldado que lucha en la gran guerra, vecino del pueblo, que quedó hechizado por ella, y a la que pedirá poder seguir manteniendo esta relación epistolar. Puede ser el mejor cuento que he leído en años, de verdad. Uno no puede sino quitarse el sombrero ante la inteligencia de Munro al plantear esta historia, que tras su lectura parece perseguirte durante días.

- UNA VIDA DE VERDAD (*****). *"Apareció un hombre que se enamoró de Dorrie Beck. Al menos, quería casarse con ella. Era verdad."* Historia contada con cierto sentido del humor, narrada por Millicent, vecina de Dorrie, aunque deja un cierto regusto amargo.

- LA VIRGEN ALBANESA (****). Por una parte tenemos a una turista que ha sido secuestrada en albania, donde tendrá que integrarse a la fuerza al pueblo campesino al que es llevada. Y por otra parte tenemos una librera que está escuchando una interesante historia ocurrida en Albania... Me gustó más esta parte.

- SECRETOS A VOCES (*****). En este caso también tenemos trama y subtrama. La subtrama trata sobre la reciente desaparición de una chica cuando iba con sus compañeras y la señorita Johnstone de excursión. La trama nos habla de Maureen, antigua alumna y que también recuerda a la Johnstone, y de su marido, gran abogado, que vive retirado a medias debido a una parálisis. Imprescindible.

- EL JACK RANDA HOTEL (*****). Gail está en un avión cuyo destino conoceremos más tarde. Will, su pareja, la ha dejado. Se trata de un gran relato donde prima la ambición de Gail por conseguir lo que desea, a toda costa.

- ESTACIÓN DEL VÍA CRUCIS (*****). En 1852, dos hermanos de Hurón del Norte piden, con la ayuda de la recomendación de un sacerdote, les envíen dos muchachas casaderas. De nuevo la maestría de Munro brilla en este cuento a la hora de ir mostrándonos los acontecimientos.

- HAN LLEGADO NAVES ESPACIALES (***). La historia cuenta cómo Rhea conoció a Eunie y se hicieron amigas. Ahora, con más edad, Rhea está con su novio Billy Doud y su amigo Wayne, novio de Lucille, en casa del contrabandista Monk, bebiendo y pasando el rato, justo la noche de la desaparición de Eunie.

- VÁNDALOS (****). Bea y Ladner, Liza y Warren, son personajes que ocultan más de lo que se pueda apreciar en un primer momento. Todo empezó cuando Bea le pidió un pequeño favor a Liza...

Este libro de Alice Munro me ha gustado mucho, y no cabe duda de que volveré a leer más cuentos suyos.

notgettingenough says

Damn you Alice Munro. Your stories are the work of a misery guts. And I stick to my feeling that these are not short stories. They are shrivelled up novels, like you can't be bothered with filling in the details. An impressionistic dab here, a by-your-leave reference there and chunks of life are presumed to have substance. Not enough words for how much are in them. Never mind the movie, most of these stories could fill a mini-series or a BBC serial, the ones they used to do that never seemed to end.

Continued....

<http://alittleteaalittlechat.wordpress...>

Teresa says

4.5 stars

This is my sixth volume of Munro stories and she has yet to disappoint me. Her stories are as dense and deep as the best of novels. In *Dear Life* it was the themes I fell for; here, though the characters and plots are very strong, it's the sense of place. Munro found her *own little postage stamp of native soil* (thank you, Mr. Faulkner) in Carstairs, Ontario, though not all the stories are restricted to that one place.

I was left breathless by the first story, "Carried Away", (probably my favorite) and devastated by the final one, "Vandals", which could've turned maudlin but most definitely did not. In between, we are treated (and I do mean treated) to the stories of six more women: many left motherless at a young age; some ahead of their time; and most of their place in that time. The one story I was disconcerted by ("The Jack Randa Hotel") felt out of place to me, but I now realize that was probably intentional, as Gail is an outsider by deed and by nature. Ms. Munro, you are a genius.

Eh?Eh! says

I've been meaning to read Alice Munro for a while. karen put Canadian authors on my radar as a group with George Elliot Clarke, and brian's reviews of her books have been tantalizing. Then the gauntlet was thrown down by that sleazy architect-loving Blake. Well, not really, but I perceived a gauntlet. Architects suck!

With the first story, I'm hooked. Amazing. I'm not even done with it yet, the very first story, but...so good. A simple tale that touches down on a solitary librarian's life like a skipping stone, glimpses of her interactions, all shown and not told. But what I get out of it is this deeply loving embrace of the written word. In each episode of her life, there is something combed into it about words - epistles that form a bond, stolen library books, a typewriter salesman, a wealthy man who forsakes his living room for the library armchairs, and I'm sure there will be more as I read on. I love this. I wish I hadn't waited so long to read this author.

arcobaleno says

Jack Delano, "Reitz farm near Falls Creek, Pennsylvania, Agosto 1940" *

Otto racconti, otto donne, otto vite. Storie che oscillano tra l'ordinarietà e l'imprevisto, tra problemi quotidiani e avvenimenti inusuali; ritmi pacati e semplici che vengono sconvolti da fatti drammatici, tetri, perfino sanguinosi. Un mondo femminile presentato con lucidità e senza ostentazione. Protagoniste di tempi passati, ma con personalità moderne; donne sole e forti. Con un protagonista comune: un paesino del Canada sudoccidentale (*Carstairs era appena agli inizi, c'era una costruzione rudimentale che fungeva da spaccio e da locanda, e un tedesco di nome Roem che stava costruendo una segheria...*), con le sue immagini di vita dura e di sopravvivenza, eppure con risvolti colti e coscienti (*Leggevano entrambi molti libri che prendevano in biblioteca...*).

Ogni volta la Munro, dopo essere entrata con impeto nella nostra stanza, "balla" tra le vicende con armonia ed equilibrio; domina le situazioni con essenzialità; legge e trasmette i pensieri più intimi; gioca tra ricordi e realtà con piglio asciutto, disinvolto ed efficace; e riesce sempre a coinvolgere e a stupire.

** Il padre di Rhea si alzò presto per raccogliere le uova e prepararsi ad andare a Hamilton, come faceva una domenica sì e una no. I ragazzi sarebbero andati con lui, viaggiando nel retro del camion. Rhea sarebbe rimasta a casa perché davanti non c'era posto. [...]*

- Se non sai cosa fare, puoi pulire le uova sul tavolo, - disse.

Rhea voleva gridare a tutti di andarsene. Doveva pensare, c'erano delle cose nella sua testa che non riuscivano a uscire per via della pressione della gente in casa. [...]

Le uova stavano sul tavolo, in ceste da due dozzine. Erano sporche di sterco di gallina e di pezzetti di paglia che aspettavano di essere rimossi con la lana d'acciaio. [...]

Non voleva rientrare in casa, non voleva guardare le ceste di uova sporche.

"Sono atterrate le navi spaziali"

Jennifer (aka EM) says

The thing about Alice Munro is that she makes it look so *easy*. But what she does is simply (complexly) genius-slash-magic.

Phil says

These stories are kind of peculiar. Very subdued, and on the surface often uneventful, they're also filled with little details that give a sense of magnitude and richness to their world. If you imagine narrative as a path, these details are like things clustered closely to the path's sides, even spilling over into it, giving you a sense of the wider and ultimately interconnected reality which enmeshes any sequence of events in the life of an individual, fictional or otherwise. Several of the stories are set, at least in part, in Carstairs, Alberta, and there are other connections between them. Descendants or other relatives of a character in one story will appear in others, for instance. These links seem less important, though, than the analogies Munro draws between various events within a story. Some of these are very easy to miss. Others are, I guess, red herrings of a sort. Sometimes the twist that brings a story to its climax is barely hinted at and far from certain. A couple of times I found myself wondering if what I thought had happened really had. I imagine some people might find that kind of ambiguity frustrating, but I like the way it gives these stories a somewhat dreamlike quality that's even a little creepy at times. But where Munro really shines is in the way she creates characters that behave like real people, with all their flaws: the frantic imperiousness of one young child tattling on another, a superficially pious but dimwitted and destructive young couple, the impulsive, useless stupidity of drunken insults, people who lie to others, people who lie to themselves. Munro's characters live and breathe.

Guille says

Comentaba en el libro de Richard Russo, La hija de la puta, que sus cuentos eran como trocitos de vida, relatos que se centraban totalmente en algún momento concreto en el que un personaje descubría algo importante de su existencia. Los cuentos que reúne Munro en este libro son de un tipo muy distinto: en ellos nos narra vidas enteras. Pero al igual que en aquel, también aquí los protagonistas, las protagonistas, son gente sencilla, mujeres sin historias apasionantes, vidas que son abarcables en 30 o 40 páginas y en las que de pronto una lupa se acerca para mostrarnos con más detalle -gran cazadora de detalles esta Munro-, algunos momentos críticos de esa vida, siempre pocos.

Varias son las razones de mi entusiasmo y de las ganas de recomendársela a todo el mundo: la sencillez con la que describe la complejidad de relaciones, de esos mundos interiores de sus protagonistas casi siempre mucho menos inocentes de lo que aparentan (el relato que da título al libro es un claro ejemplo); la brillantez de los personajes secundarios que enmarcan y resaltan la historia principal; los caminos que se abren en cada relato y que te convierten en interesado copartícipe y, en ocasiones, turbado copartícipe del relato; las brillantes y sugerentes imágenes que nos presenta (me viene ahora a la mente la imagen de esa mujer caminando sola hacia su boda y esas amigas que la esperan y que lo primero que observan es su mano desnuda sosteniendo el ramo); ese giro en las historias en el último o penúltimo momento; y, finalmente, esa sensación de verdad que consigue transmitir en todas ellas.

Denisa Ballová says

Mám rada pomalé plynutie príbehov od Alice Munro. Pozornos?, ktorí od ?itate?a vyžaduje, ke? strieda postavy, ktoré sa zdajú byť nepodstatné, aby im v závere prideliť najdôležitejšie poslanie. Detaily, ktorým sa venuje, ke? opisuje farbu závesov, k?ukatos? lesnej cesty, domy v slepej uli?ke. Mám rada napätie, ktoré je prítomné od prvých odsekov, potom sa na chvíľu vytratí, aby sa krátko pred koncom vystup?ovalo a zavalilo ?itate?a v neo?akávanom závere. Mám rada vety, ktoré radí za sebou a ukrýva medzi ne holé pravdy, ktoré sú trefné a zároveň také prchavé.

"I slova, po kterých tak velmi toužíme, se mohou zm?nit. ?ekáme na n?, a mezitím se s nimi n?co stane. Milovat – pot?ebovat – odpoušt?t. Miloval – pot?ebovat – navždycky. Už to nejsou slova, ale hluk, rámus, bušení kladiv na ulici. A my m?žeme jen prchat, utéct od nich pry?, abychom je nebrali vážn? jen ze zvyku."

Mám rada Alice Munro, avšak táto zbierka poviedok patrí medzi menej vydarené. Kanadská autorka ju napísala takmer desať rokov pred skvelou knihou Nenávis?, priateľstvo, zvädzanie, láska, manželstvo, a je to vidno. Príbehy zasadila do konca 19. storočia a začiatok 20. storočia do malého mesta Carstairs, ktoré spája všetky poviedky. Len jeho obyvatelia miznú a znova sa vynárajú ako dievčatá, ktoré sa stratili v lese alebo vojaci, ktorí sa z prvej svetovej vojny vrátili zohavení.

Alice Munro píše výborne, len tu akoby potrebovala viac času aby to dotiahla do úrovne, ktorá je príznačná pre jej neskoršie zbierky.

the gift says

i think i have read everything published by alice munro. i have just finished her collection 'runaway', and decided to try a review of one or two of her stories i have not read in years (decades...). the first collection i had read was as a curious child, a paperback of 'lives of girls and women', then found an old copy of 'dance of the happy shades'. i read these easily, swiftly, and this was the first time i wanted a story to be longer. i was curious about lives of girls if not yet women for i had no sisters and only an elder brother... but i guess my serious interest as a youth was spurred when i took my girlfriend to hear munro read from 'the moons of jupiter' at a new library...

i read her collections every few years, liking most stories, confused by some, loving others. for a long time my favourite was possibly the first of hers i read and the first in 'dance...': 'walker brothers cowboy'. for me it was a loving depiction of the mysteries of adult love as seen by a child, and plot, character, theme inseparable from the way it was told and by whom. i am not from her part of the world though my father is. she told me more of it than he ever did...

skipping far ahead (as her stories increasingly do...), i come to 'open secret': i had heard her explain that a story was for her like wandering through a house, judging its solidity, going from room to unknown room, maybe going upstairs, maybe going down, looking out the windows, checking the quality of the kitchen... and it was this collection i saw this best, rather more how i was reading it like wandering through a house, than how she wrote it. i 'got' it. actually i got stories that for example my mother never did, too literary for any girlfriends, any friends, but no less wonderful for me...

'spaceships have landed' has a long section of disassociated wandering interpreted as alien abduction- she has either read such testimony or such walking has history, familiarity, before her times in witches and magic, in her time aliens, in our time... mistaken medication. 'a wilderness station' is almost a novella and an exacting portrayal of settlers and justified murder and guilt and escape, all wrapped up as very old characters riding an old (steam!) automobile... this is how history tells itself and why there is always more to a story than we might get in first reading...
