



A Thousand Morons

Quim Monzó , Peter Bush (Translator)

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A Thousand Morons, Quim Monzó's latest collection of short stories, is rife with very unfortunate characters. There's the young boy in "A Cut" who is upbraided by his teacher when he rudely shows up for class with a huge gash in his neck. And the prince in "One Night" who tries everything to awaken a sleeping princess - yet fails completely.

Seeing that this is a Quim Monzó collection, absurdity offsets the "moronic" sadness. Such as "Love is Eternal," which features a man who decides to finally overcome his commitment issues and marry his dying girlfriend, only to have everything backfire; or, "The Fullness of Summer," in which a family meticulously records every meticulous moment of their gathering.

An excellent combination of longer, elegiac stories of "morons," aging, and the passage of time with short, flashier pieces that display Monzó's wit and playfulness make this one of the strongest collections in the oeuvre of Catalan's short fiction master.

"Today's best known writer in Catalan. He is also, no exaggeration, one of the world's great short-story writers."

-The Independent

"A gifted writer, he draws well on the rich tradition of Spanish surrealism . . . to sustain the lyrical, visionary quality of his imagination."

-The New Yorker

A Thousand Morons Details

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From Reader Review A Thousand Morons for online ebook

Storyheart says

3.5 stars. Satisfying stories, short and biting.

Núria says

Monzó mai em decepciona. És sempre divertit i lúcid, però cada vegada més dur. Prefereixo els contes de la primera part, que els de la segona, que més aviat són només anècdotes, tot i que són molt enginyoses. És sorprenent la capacitat que té per resultar sempre realista, tot i que moltes vegades els seus contes acabin amb exageracions grotesques, però és que aquestes sempre resulten totalment creïbles i lògiques. 'L'arribada de la primavera' és una obra mestra, tan ben escrita, tan absorbent i tan reconeixible.

Mireia says

Primer contacte amb la prosa de Monzó. Amb ganes de més.

Daniel says

I love Monzo's prose and perspective on the world. Some of these vignettes read like short meditations, some as a single scene that Monzo observed, whether in actuality or in his own head. The longer works that make the first half of this story allow for more emotional attachment, even if a story doesn't particularly go anywhere. In fact, the more I read of Monzo, the more I appreciate his prose as a source of reading enjoyment. I adore the written word and I feel a mutual sense of adoration in Monzo's words. There is genuine love of language and story in these stories, and it is wonderful to encounter this sentiment.

RH Walters says

These stories are so weird it's like having cranial sacral therapy. I love the minute phenomena he describes, like the mounting awkwardness that turns into a vendetta from not making a promised phonecall, to the bullying that results when a group tries to commandeer tables at a cafe. Also, of course, the deep plain sadness of a grown child dealing with parents who have become needy children. This writer has truly blocked everything else out and honed in on his own voice. An unusual and enlivening perfume.

Brad says

Terse nuggets of narrative that refuse to satisfy the reader's expectations.

Jonfaith says

Despite the charming Barcelona locale, this was an indifferent collection of stories, many which wrestle with the zentih of life: love and mortality share top billing with guilt. Most of the stories are undercooked, more sketches than even glimpses. I felt those stories concerning authors and writing were particularly obnoxious.

Microstories apparently don't suit me.

Angela Bernabeu says

Tiene cuatro o cinco relatos que me han gustado. Por lo demás, este libro no es para mí.

jeremy says

a thousand morons (mil cretins) is the third collection of short stories by catalan author, journalist, and translator quim monzó to appear in english translation. split into two sections, *a thousand morons* features (in addition to a most fantastic title) nineteen well-crafted stories, many of which are no longer than a couple of pages. introducing brio into the banal and fun into the funereal, monzó is able to make an intriguing tale of even the most commonplace incidents or interactions. his often melancholy characters, possessed as they sometimes are by ruminative personalities, endure the vagaries of everyday life with reluctance and resignation. while his stories on their face may appear uncomplicated, they frequently belie the simplicity and straightforwardness of life's more prosaic moments. "i'm looking out of the window," "praise," and "the coming of spring" are amongst the strongest of the collection's longer stories and "a cut," "one night," "another night," and "beyond the sore" are the best of the briefer ones. *a thousand morons* is further proof that quim monzó is one of the more proficient, distinctive, and exciting writers at work today.

hang up, if you want, i don't care, because the only thing i'm interested in now is looking out of the window and shutting myself off from the rest of the universe. all this time i've been looking out of the window, i've not thought about work, the family, or any of the problems that keep me awake at night. i've not thought, say, about the life i normally lead, or about how i spend my day pondering how things should be rather than savoring them as they come along. i do all i can to put reality in the right frame and to foresee everything so that, if i can avoid any surprises, tomorrow will be all the more tolerable. but foreseeing everything creates such boundless disquiet that things pass me by like a breath of air and i enjoy nothing. i only enjoy a kiss when it is over and done with; then i remember it with pleasure. i don't enjoy it at the time because, beyond the tenderness, i see the darkness, the horrific possibilities lurking behind all that is pleasant.

*translated from the catalan by peter bush (*guadalajara, the enormity of the tragedy*, onetti, goytisolo, et al.)

Javi Bóinez says

Solo por «La alabanza» y «La llegada de la primavera» ya valdría la pena su lectura, pero es que el resto de relatos son más que notables.

Monzó trata el amor, el desamor, la vejez, la muerte y, en resumen, la vida, de manera magistral.

Hollowspine says

Many of these stories, I thought, were pure genius. Monzo really brings out the truth of ridiculous situations, absurd realities, silly assumptions and the thousand moronic things that people do all the time.

One of my favorites in the collection was Praise, about a famous author who makes an off-handed comment about a good book he'd read, creating celebrity around a new writer. It made me laugh and was completely accurate about the world of publicity and public opinion.

The first section of the book was composed of longer works, ranging from around 7-10 pages long. The second part was flash fiction, some stories only a paragraph or two long. Throughout I was astounded by Monzo's ability to write a complete story, moving, funny, and a perfect bite of life from just one and a half-pages.

Many of the stories take place in the obsessive minds of their narrators, going over the options, what they want to do, what they should do, what others may think, and on, that is completely natural to me and reminded me of some of my own moronic inner monologues.

I was also especially taken by the story Saturday, which had so many levels to it and was a suspenseful story despite the lack of excitement in it. I kept wondering about the motives and trying to figure out what happened, death or abandonment, only at the end did I partially satisfy my curiosity. The story builds until the end, which was a very interesting ending.

The collection is very well-written (and translated) and every word seems specifically chosen for it's effect. The end result is a wonderful read that will stick with readers well after the last word is read.

Raro de Concurso says

Libro de cuentos que tan bien se le da al Sr.Monzó. No a la altura de otros volúmenes, pero que se deja leer con gusto y como no, con cierta inquietud y desasosiego.

Algunos son como una canción de Astrud novelada y otros, como el príncipe azul frente a la bella durmiente que no se despierta ni abusando de ella, me recuerda mucho a los cuentos de "Guadalajara".

Hay de todo, como digo, pero desde luego no deja indiferente.

Beth Wheeler says

A quick, more than enjoyable read. What a short story craftsman: Monzo writes with perfect pacing, delightfully absurd characters, and endings that surprise and satisfy.

Maria says

Lettura molto strana.

Un racconto, *Sabato* è molto valido. Bello. Ma tanto.

Qui altri racconti però sono una noia mortale.

Altri passano più tranquillamente, ma niente rimane.

Sono rimasta molto delusa da questo libro. Vero è che nelle raccolte c'è sempre quella parte che piace di più e quella che colpisce meno. Ma un solo racconto non può reggere il valore di un intero libro. Almeno per me.

karen says

open letter has given me another book by quim monzo!

which i liked somewhat less than the first one.

i loved the second half of this book, which showcases short-short stories, the longest of which is three-and-a-half pages. the first half has some standouts, to be sure, but some of them just didn't do anything for me, sad to say. *love is eternal*, *saturday*, and *praise* were great. they cover such topics as romantic entanglements built on misguided altruistic intentions, the inability to eradicate the stains other people leave on our lives, and the end results of our empty promises. and all three of them are superb. but the opening story, *mr. beneset*, is one of those short stories that i just don't "get." not that i don't understand the words, or the plot; i am not myself one of the thousand morons, it's just a story that i read, shrugged, and said "why was that story necessary?" which is how i used to feel about most short stories, until i came around, so it is an uncomfortable regression.

but then i get to the second half, and this story, *thirty lines*, and i have to laugh at the way he seemed to know what i was thinking, questioning the usefulness of the short story itself:

the writer begins typing cautiously. he has a short story to write. recently, people have been talking about the virtues of short fiction, but, if he were to be frank, he would confess that he detests stories in general and short ones in particular. nonetheless, to keep in the swim, he has been forced to join the band of fakers pretending to be passionate about brevity. consequently, he is terrified by how lightly his fingers run across the keys, one word flowing after another, and another, and then another, finally shaping into a line behind which another - and another! - are already forming, yet still he can't focus on a theme, because he is trained for long distances: he sometimes needs a hundred pages before he gets a glimpse of what he is going to write about, and at others not even two hundred suffice. he has never once worried about length. the longer, the better: blessed be each new line, because, one after the other, they reveal the size and splendor of his work, and consequently, even though two or fifty lines add nothing to the story he is telling, at the end of the day, he never axes a single one. conversely, to write this story he would almost need to take a tape measure and

measure it. it is absurd. it's like asking a marathon runner to run a hundred meters with dignity. in a story, each new line isn't one more line, but one less, and in this case, specifically, one line less up to thirty, because the rubric is: "between one and thirty lines," in the voice of the old fellow who called him from a newspaper's sunday supplement to ask him for a story. the writer reluctantly lifts his fingers off the keys and counts the lines he has written so far: twenty-three. he has only seven to go to reach thirty. but, after he has registered that insight - plus this one - even less remain: six. good god! he is incapable of having a thought and not typing it, so each new one eats up a new line and that means by line twenty-six he realizes he is only four lines from the end and he hasn't succeeded in focusing on the story, perhaps because - and he has suspected this for a long time - he has nothing to say, and although he usually manages to hide the fact by dint of writing pages and yet more pages, this damned short story makes it quite clear, and explains why he sighs when he reaches line twenty-nine and, with a not entirely justified feeling of failure, puts the final full-stop on the thirtieth.

because it manages to simultaneously poke fun at people who think it is easy to write a short story, and at, you know, those overinflated windbags who write huge volumes of inflated postmodernist prose.

IS LIGHTHEARTED RIBBING, FRIENDS!!

so, yeah. i think the shorter pieces on this collection are stronger than the slightly longer ones on the first half, but he is unquestionably a writer i enjoy, and i also do strongly recommend the first collection open letter put out of his, Guadalajara. you know, if you like *stories*.

also: (view spoiler)
