



# O Cobrador

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## O Cobrador Rubem Fonseca

Most widely admired for his short fiction, *The Taker and Other Stories* is Fonseca's first collection to appear in English translation, and it ranges across his oeuvre, exploring the sights and sounds of the modern landscape of Rio de Janeiro.

Rubem Fonseca's Rio is a city at war, a city whose vast disparities- in wealth, social standing, and prestige- are untenable. In the stories of *The Taker*, rich and poor live in an uneasy equilibrium, where only overwhelming force can maintain order, and violence and deception are essential tools of survival.

## O Cobrador Details

Date : Published 2001 by Companhia das letras (first published 1979)

ISBN : 9788571640320

Author : Rubem Fonseca

Format : Board book 176 pages

Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, European Literature, Portuguese Literature

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# From Reader Review O Cobrador for online ebook

## 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.

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## M says

The first story is *Night drive* is only two pages but it is complete with an interesting character, some suspense, and a dark surprise. The title story about a rather vicious killer and I found it extremely unsettling (think American Psycho without the brand names--only this is set in Brazil).

I, somewhat reluctantly, read on thinking "I paid for this book!" The next story, *Betsy*, about a gentle death was easier to take. In *Angels of the Marquees* a lonely man tries to help homeless derelicts with dire consequences. In *Enemy* another lonely man seeks out his old high school buddies. It is both funny and sad. *Account of the Incident* concerns an accident between a bus and a cow. *Pride* is about a man who refuses to die because he has a hole in his sock. *Notebook* is a tale of seduction, with an amusing twist. *Eleventh of May* is the name of a terminal facility for the aging.

In *Book of Panegyrics* a man becomes a live-in caregiver to a dying man in order to use the place as a hideout, but we don't know exactly what he is hiding from. *Trials of a Young Writer* is the story of a man more interested in his press image than he is in his writing or his live-in girlfriend. In *Other* a busy is harassed on the street by a beggar. Things got violent again in *Happy New Year*; *Dwarf* is about an unemployed bank clerk with woman trouble; and *Flesh and the Bones* didn't make much sense to me.

All in all, it turned out to be a satisfying, varied collection, mostly on the dark side with some touches of humor, some macabre, some noir, all very readable. I'm not sorry I bought it.

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## Charlie says

I didn't get the Bukowski comparisons, until I did. The stories in Rubem Fonseca's *The Taker and Other Stories* often have more intricate scenarios than your average Bukowski, and some of the first couple stories (the stronger half of this slim collection) read as genre exercises in horror. The second half of the stories are a bit more soaked in alcohol, misogyny, and general malignancy. Maybe this is what being in Brazil is like, though? Maybe it's only a bit of an exaggeration to murder your wife, and your dwarf best friend, for some good sex? Highlights include the menacing and iconic "Night Drive," the incredible rebuke to good behavior in capitalist society "The Taker," the kinda corny nursing room horror story "The Enemy" and it's partner "Angels of the Marquees."

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## Julian Moreno says

No me esperaba eso. Relationship goals (?).

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## **David says**

I first came upon Fonseca in an anthology of international crime stories, a chilling little tale about a poor man who targets the rich not for their money, just to beat them at their own frivolous game. The title story of this macabre collection takes that same theme and runs with it into some very disturbing territory indeed, with its poor serial killer who is sort of a downtrodden shadow image of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*. The collection begins with a gut-wrenching short-short about a harried worker who lets off steam with vehicular homicide. Fortunately the darkness lets up a little in subsequent stories, adding in great little macabre twists and surreal flourishes that make these stories feel somewhere between Jorge Luis Borges and Flannery O'Connor. Which is to say these inky black, spare stories are profoundly unsettling in more than one way. They are the sort of unsettling that makes your brain itch in a pleasant way, but also makes your chest tight and your guts cold. Death is all over the place, and is handled with breathtaking casualness. I think I need to read his longer fiction now, which sound like the sort of offbeat mysteries I like, but with maybe a little more breathing space.

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## **Melquisedek says**

Excelentes contos. Grandes apimentadas no intelecto e na imaginação.

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## **Newton Nitro says**

O *Cobrador* é outra porrada literária do Rubão, cheio de sexo e violência absolutamente não escapista, e com contos criados para chocar, incomodar, incitar e tirar a sociedade brasileira de sua pasmaceira complacente com a desgraceira que é a nossa existência urbana.

Nesse livro, de 1979, publicado depois do "O Caso Morel" (que preciso ler urgentemente, estou viciado no Rubão), niilismo, ódio social e desconstruções pós-modernas misturadas com cachaça, nunca poupa o leitor do choque. Ou melhor, o conto vai em direção ao trauma, ao choque na mente do leitor.

A maioria dos contos, como é de praxe do Rubão, terminam antes de terminarem, isto é, muitos dos clímaxes acontecem dentro do leitor, depois da história terminada. Várias vezes me assusto com os finais abruptos, cortados como a golpes de facão (o machete brasileiro), o que faz que o conto fique ecoando na cabeça, ressoando, tentando se completar.

Os dez contos são fodas, mas "O Cobrador" é de um impacto absurdo, um manifesto psicótico de ódio social, quase um realismo fantástico pela sequência meio onírica - meio realista, das ações de um sociopata de classe miserável que explode e "cobra" tudo que a sociedade lhe deve a base de tiros e golpes de facão.

"H.M.S. Cormorant em Paranaguá" é outro conto muito legal, e que quebra um pouco o estilo do Rubão e narra as impressões de um romântico do século dezenove, um conto justificado por um delírio do narrador. Muito legal!

"O Jogo do Morto", único narrado em terceira pessoa, sobre matadores e comerciantes cariocas, é muito bom, com uma história fechada e um final daqueles que a gente fala "aha!".

Todos os contos são muito legais, tem um conto com o Mandrake, o detetive carioca cafajeste doidimais viciado em mulheres e em amores rápidos, entre outros.

Fica a recomendação, mais um clássico do Rubão, no mesmo nível do Feliz Ano Novo, principalmente por causa do fantástico "O Cobrador".

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## **Fernando says**

Um dos melhores e mais brutais livros de contos que li.  
Rubem sabe o que diz sempre, e tem o tempo certo.

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## **Estermann Meyer says**

"Fui até a jaula dos animais. Dentro de poucos anos não existiria mais nenhum, toda a fauna amazônica estava sendo dizimada. Quando me viu, a onça começou a brincar; corria e rolava de barriga para cima, como se fosse um gato. Outro animal muito bonito e elegante era a sussuarana, uma espécie de leopardo; seu pêlo lilás lavado brilhava na claridade matutina. Os macacos, porém, pareciam animais tristes, infelizes e maníacos. Havia um que escondia o rosto agarrado nas barras de ferro. Suas mãos eram parecidas com as minhas. O rosto e o olhar do macaco tinham um ar de desilusão e derrota, de quem perdeu a capacidade de resistir e sonhar." (Encontro no Amazonas)

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## **karen says**

i swear, i am the queen of four stars lately. does that mean i just have very good instincts for picking books or am i just lazily rating? i feel like i have to write reviews now to defend my fourstar worldview (that will be a band name within a year)

so

these stories are brutal and frequently unexpected (with one glaring exception, which reads like a really dated twilight zone episode) and sometimes incomprehensible - characters behave erratically and seemingly without motive. and yet, its actually a strength of the stories because it highlights the instability of this modern rio and the clashing between criminals and victims, wealthy and poor. plus i love this new open letter publisher. cheap, pretty hardcover world lit.  
one a month. genius.

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## **Versos Incoherentes says**

MEH.

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## **Jumo says**

Libro con grandes cuentos, sobretodo el Cobrador y el de Mandrake.

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## **Matt says**

This is a strange little connection, with some really varied kinds of stories here-- I'd like to believe that's because it's not an organic collection but instead a group of stories from different points in Fonseca's career, slapped under one cover because they were all translated by the same guy. But I think I might be wrong about this-- they feel like three different kinds of stories, but I guess they do all belong together.

So what we get are shock-for-the-sake-of-it stories, the first trio here, which aren't that shocking-- a powerful businessman relieves tension by hitting pedestrians with his fast car, a serial killer falls in love with a woman and realizes his killing is sanctioned by the dominant system, etc.

Then there are stories like *The Book of Panygerics*, which have similarly disturbed characters (what did the narrator do to make him on the lam?) but which are much more interior, more interested in other people and weird elements of textuality-- questions of the way our self-perception puts us at odds with the world we live in. These are pretty good, solid stories that have magical elements but are also grounded in a recognizable moral universe.

Finally, we've got stories like "The Enemy," which are more or less pure linguistic excess, which I really enjoyed, but which might drive other readers to distraction. Some magical realism here, but definitely inflected by the tones of language as much as circumventing what we conventionally think of as real. Good stuff.

I really didn't like the first batch of stories, and thought the others were good, but I kept wondering what was Fonseca's real style and what was a put on. It left me feeling confused, and less sure about what I was reading.

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## **Cymru Roberts says**

Some authors show you disturbing images of murder and rape and horror with absolutely no remorse or mercy because... they are actually sensitive people. I hope I'm correct in putting Mr Fonseca in this category. There were sittings where I read three or four stories in a row and by the end I began to doubt it. With material such as this one reaches a certain point where the author is either enjoying himself, granting himself the powers to kill and rape in a fictive universe, or there is something besides de Sade-ian pleasure at work. There is enough social commentary in this volume to suggest the latter. That doesn't mean anyone, including the author himself, gets a pass though. And it doesn't mean that we can pat ourselves on the back and go to

sleep at night telling ourselves we're good people either just because we're appalled at the criminal acts and wanton disregard for life found within. Fonseca doesn't let you off the hook.

If not for "Betsy" and "The Enemy" one could easily think this guy is a serial killer armed with a pen. Funny that he was a cop then, in Brazil mind you, in real life. The commentary of "The Other" and "The Flesh and the Bones" walks on the edge of a razor. And btw the man is readable; I dare say the man's prose is chuggable. He out-Bolaños Bolaño in the urban crime category. (I heard about him from the late RB, thanx m8 :j) Two more of his books are available in English and I shall read them.

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## **Ignatius says**

Qué potentes estos cuentos. Van directo, sin rodeos, a nuestra parte más oscura.

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