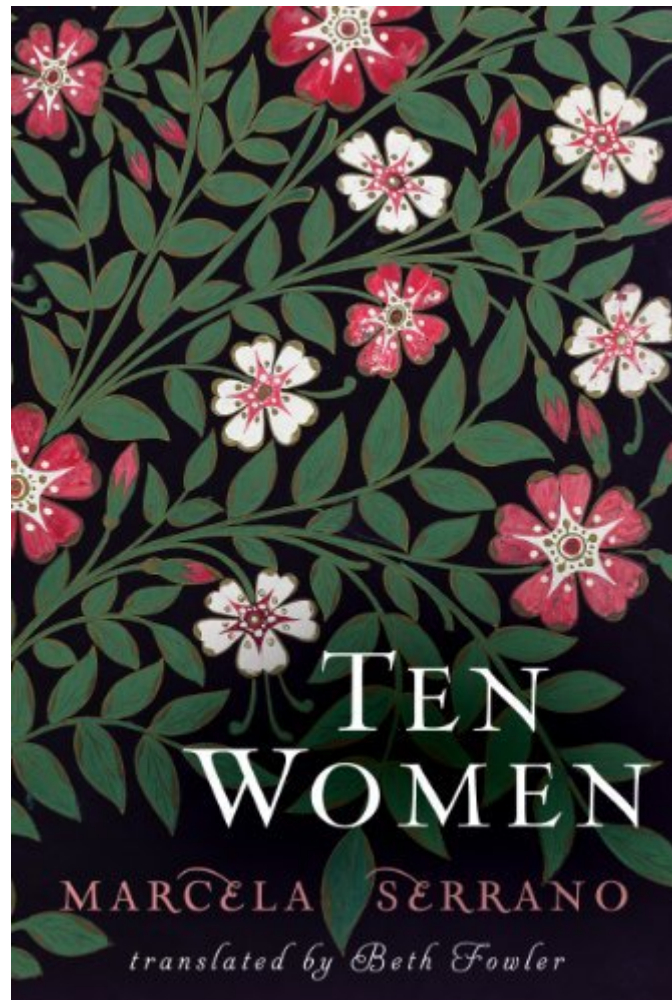


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Ten Women



Synopsis

Nominated for the 2016 International DUBLIN Literary Award, *Listening to stories gives you many lives, telling them dims loneliness.* • *Marcela Serrano* Nine Chilean women with divergent life stories—from a teenaged lesbian struggling to find acceptance to a woman confronting the loneliness of old age—come together to talk about their triumphs and heartaches. They all have one person in common, their beloved therapist Natasha who, though central to the lives of all of the women, is absent from their meeting. The women represent the many cultural and social groups that modern Chile is comprised of—from a housekeeper to celebrity television personality. They are of disparate ages and races and their lives have been touched by major political events from the dictatorship of Pinochet to the Israel-Palestine conflict. But despite their differences, as the women tell their stories, unlikely bonds are formed, and their lives are transformed in this intricately woven, beautifully rendered tale of the universal bonds between women from one of Latin America's most celebrated novelists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Marcela Serrano is a well-known writer in Chile, but *Ten Women* is the first of her books to be

translated into English. The concept underlying the book is straightforward: nine women, all clients (some paying, some pro bono) of the same psychologist come together to tell their stories to one another. After the nine speak, an assistant to the psychologist tells the psychologist's story as well. These chapters are framed by very brief opening and closing vignettes describing the psychologist viewing the women at a distance as they arrive for this group session. I wanted very much to love this book. I'm particularly interested in literature from post-Pinochet Chile, and the idea of such a multiplicity of narrative voices was tantalizing. I wanted to love this book. But I didn't. I'm not sorry I read it. I learned from it. But that act of reading was rather like eating a large serving of Swiss chard: I knew it was good for me, but the experience wasn't intrinsically rewarding. The women in *Ten Women* represent a broad range of classes, ages, and life experiences, including a young lesbian; the wife of a man who was "disappeared" during the Pinochet regime; a well-known television host; a poor woman struggling to provide not only for herself, but for her bipolar daughter and disabled mother as well. Unfortunately, and I don't know if this is a characteristic of the original or a result of the translation, these voices come across in a sort of monotone, difficult to differentiate from one another. The structure Serrano uses, while interesting in concept, is part of the problem here. The book is essentially ten monologues with almost no cross reference. Each woman speaks about herself, but we hear only her voice as she speaks. There's no exchange of words among characters.

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