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Posted on 09 August 2019 By Stefan Zweig

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**The**  
***Collected***  
***Stories of***  
***STEFAN***  
***ZWEIG***



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I was intrigued with Zweig after viewing *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. A collection of intriguing short stories, Zweig has an intricate writing style. Very stylistic with lots of detail. A unique collection of stories. Stefan Zweig was an Austrian writer who published many short stories, multiple biographies and historical text, and several plays and by the 1930s became the world's most translated author. His incredible popularity was cut short by Adolf Hitler's rise to power. As a pacifist and internationalist, Zweig was deeply opposed to Nazism and left his native Austria for England, where he met his second wife, Lotte Attman. As Hitler's troops successfully advanced westward, the Zweigs crossed the Atlantic Ocean and arrived in New York City, where they lived and traveled before settling down in Petrpolis, a mountain town in southeastern Brazil. Petrpolis was to be their last residence on February 23 in 1942, feeling that he had no country and strength to live in a world filled with Nazism and intolerance, Zweig committed suicide together with his wife. Their bodies were found holding hands. Although at one time Zweig enjoyed intentional popularity envied by most other authors, in contemporary times his work has been largely slipping out of print and into oblivion in the English speaking world. Several publishing houses have been trying to combat this trend and resurrect interest in Zweig and his work. *The Collected Stories of Stefan Zweig* by Pushkin Press is perhaps the most comprehensive single collection of his short fiction currently available in English. Translated from German by Anthea Bell, the volume collects 22 of Zweig's short stories, anthologized chronologically and spanning his whole career, including three published posthumously but does not include his most famous novella, *Chess Story* also known as *The Royal Game*, which I had to read separately and review here. The stories themselves are washed with melancholy and nostalgia for a world which was slowly disappearing at the time of their writing, and might not have ever entirely existed outside of his imagination. His characters are highly romantic and emotional, and his stories are set in lakeside resorts, grand hotels and small villages. His characters are often strangers dispatched to these places by various accidents, and struggle to find a place where they belong. Zweig enjoys employing the frame story in most of these, and his narrators meet and interact with the real protagonists of these stories in hotels, restaurants, bars or train carriages, and their plot often plays out through recollection. What is notable about the stories is the almost entire absence of humor. The stories are completely serious and melodramatic, sometimes to the point of unintentional humor. The only story which can be considered truly satirical involves a jealous dog, but the idea is spread too thin. The joke can only last for so long. Similar complain can be extended to the emotional melodrama of other stories. For than 700 pages this might prove too much for some readers. Zweig is best read one story at a time, with breaks inbetween. Still, Zweig's sentimentality is something that appealed to me and is likely to appeal to others. The lost world of lords and ladies, of great loves and emotional despair. These stories may lack humor, but also lack vulgarity. They're innocent romantic in ways not encountered in contemporary fiction. *The Collected Stories of Stefan Zweig* can be an excellent introduction to the author, but with one major

flaw it has neither an introduction or an afterword about the author and his life, and no notes regarding any of the stories. Lack of any complimentary material is puzzling in this otherwise elegant effort, and makes it look bare. Still, if you're looking for Zweig, this is it. You'll get all the Zweig than you can handle, if not. I rarely remember the stories of the books I've read. Even though I might have read this one at least 5 years ago, I can still go back to some of the characters and stories in it. Zweig's descriptions are vivid images, so much so that I feel like this book is somewhere I've been to, rather than something I've read. Powerful. I consider him a master of short poetic novels. Personal favorites: Letter from an unknown woman and Amok.

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The Lathe of Heaven

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