



After The Carnage

Tara June Winch

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After the Carnage is the much-anticipated new fiction from best-selling Australian writer Tara June Winch. She is touring the east coast of Australia during August.

Tara's first novel, *Swallow the Air*, was published in 2006 and won the David Unaipon Prize as well as a plethora of other literary awards. Tara was hailed as one of Australia's finest young writers and her book became part of the HSC syllabus.

After the Carnage is another unforgettable work of fiction – this time a collection of stories about characters living all over the world, from New York to Istanbul and from Pakistan to Australia.

Tara's characters are living at a distance, displaced from their countries, marriages, families, friends and even identities. They are struggling with feelings of loss and of being adrift, trying to reconcile their dreams with reality.

A single mother resorts to extreme measures to protect her young son. A Nigerian student undertakes a United Nations internship in the hope of a better future. A recently divorced man starts a running group with members of an online forum for recovering addicts.

PRAISE FOR TARA JUNE WINCH

'Her writing is raw and sparky, her prose so charged with energy that it bursts, Melville-like, into occasional poetic firestorms.' Age

'The quality of her writing, her eye for the miniature of life, fleshes out both place and persona, and ultimately guides the reader's entry into her action. She is gifted.' Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate (Literature)

TARA JUNE WINCH is an Australian writer based in France. She has written essay, short fiction and memoir for *Vogue*, *Vice*, *McSweeney's*, and various Australian publications and anthologies. Her first novel, *Swallow the Air*, was published in 2006 and won numerous literary awards, including the David Unaipon Award and a Victorian Premier's Literary Award. It has been on the education and HSC syllabus for Standard and Advanced English in Australia since 2009. In the same year she was awarded the International Rolex Mentor and Protégé Award that saw her work under the guidance of Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka.

After The Carnage Details

Date : Published August 1st 2016 by UQP

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From Reader Review After The Carnage for online ebook

Carolyn Mck says

After I finished these stories I felt immediately that they were a 4 star collection but also that I needed to read them again to really work out why I thought that. Now I have read most of them a second time and I can point to a few reasons why I would recommend this set of short stories.

Winch is ambitious in her choice of voice, exploring various points of view of people from different countries and cultures. She is able to write convincingly about both men and women, young and old. She is sensitive to those who are marginalised, displaced, traumatised or simply isolated. She tackles serious subjects with a tone that has verve, energy and conviction. Many of her stories have wonderful opening sentences and others have closing sentences that really blow you away. She can write!

I loved Winch's first publication - her novel, *Swallow the Air* - and I look forward to another novel from her. But in the meantime, these stories have been very satisfying indeed.

Anna says

This is a powerful collection of short stories, with wide-ranging themes and settings. Some are uncomfortable, even painful, to read, and I felt many of the stories were connected by a sense of loss. The writing is moving and powerful.

As in most short story collections, some are more successful than others. I was particularly impressed with the opening story, 'Wager', but was also struck by 'After the Carnage, More', 'It's Too Difficult to Explain', and 'Mosquito'.

Alison says

"The woman could see the man kept staring at some girl. He looked at her as if she were the Turkish delight they'd brought to the party, as if she were the offered plate. The woman thought she might have imagined it. She knew she hadn't imagined it. She reached out and touched the elbow of the other woman. 'I'm just going to the bathroom. I'll be back.' The other woman squinted her eyes and nodded and smiled, as the music washed over the room. The woman walked past the bathroom entrance and onto the terrace and propped her elbows on the balcony rails, leaning against them, near the whirring of the pig. She looked up at the now dark sky, tinged orange, and then out to the other terrace windows. In one of the large terrace windows a woman was there, her back visible. Then a man appeared, and they were both facing away from the window. The man grabbed the woman's neck hard, he shook her side to side, and then he did something that seemed strange, and turned and looked out the window. He met the woman's gaze, from the window to the balcony, and then just stood, looking, with his hand tight on the neck as if from the distance the act was not so violent at all."

I could spend time wondering why Tara June Winch is not Australian literary royalty now*. Or I just enjoy this collection, which builds from good through to outstanding as it progresses. Winch is interested in the emotional turmoil under the surface, the ways emotional crescendos are reached in small moments, after long build-ups. It is not surprising her tapestry is 'political': tackling terrorism, refugees, colonialism, racism, and the impact of intergenerational trauma, but this is not a particularly polemical book. Winch's focus remains on emotional landscapes, never on grand narratives.

At its best, every line punches, Winch is particularly effective at alternating length and complexity of sentence - "The rain began to pour and stampede the street; the noise, she thought, was like a million quaking hearts, a frenzy of drumbeats signaling something else approaching.", or, "Later he would trawl through years of minor internet articles to recall the things that defined him. He did this when he became lonely and his life prematurely quiet." And the consistent quality and revelation is almost intoxicating, I wanted to laugh (Or whoop - is that what whooping is?) for the sheer pleasure of reading her prose. At moments, like the headline quote, she captures a feeling, a sense of *deja vu* so acutely.

Winch feels like the writer we need now. Someone who digs into our world behind the media cycle to find the humanity in who we are. Her characters do awful things, as well as survive them. Many are overwhelmed by their own constraint or helplessness, but in the midst of this, Winch sees them, gives them agency, recognises that we all live, and choose, and maybe struggle.

And look, really I just want her to write a leetle bit faster. And yes, get a lot more respect.

*So this was nominated for two state literary awards - not nothing - but not a Stella or a MF either. I'd assume it was a short story problem, except both have had short story compilations nominated in the last few years. Maybe it is simply generational. Maybe no-one shares my taste. But it still irritates.

Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says

Tara June Winch is a phenomenal author. A remarkable series of thought provoking and heartbreaking stories that will ensure readers are far more appreciative of their lives and the hardship that others experience. This one will stay with me for a long time to come.

Lisa says

Last night as I was idly watching the ABC news, I was struck once again by the contrasts in the worlds we live in. There was a report about some footballers being pensioned off for new blood... a disproportionately long report, I thought, featuring a lot of hand-wringing by the decision-makers and some desolation by fans. Normally I just glaze over during sport reports and read whatever's on the coffee table while I wait for the weather report, but when one of the people behind this decision used the word 'horrific' to describe the emotion of wielding the axe, I took notice. Because in the same news bulletin there was a report about the earthquake in Umbria and further news about the deteriorating situation in South Sudan with a young woman telling us she was raped within eyesight of UN peacekeepers supposed to be providing a safe haven.

Well, of course, the footy guy didn't know about Umbria when he was interviewed, and possibly not about Sudan either, (though the news editor obviously did) and all things are relative anyway, aren't they? But still, it is a real pleasure to pick up a book by an Australian author who's been and seen a bit of the world and knows what the word 'horrific' really means.

A Wiradjuri woman, Tara June Winch burst onto the Australian literary scene with the publication of her award-winning first novel *Swallow the Air*. (See my review). Aged only 20 when she wrote it, she showed that she already knew more about horrific situations than most Australians do, but as the recipient of the international Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Award in 2008-2009, she has been mentored by Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka. (I have his memoir *Aké: The Years of Childhood* on the TBR). This is what he says about her writing:

The quality of her writing, her eye for the miniature of life, fleshes out both place and persona, and ultimately guides the reader into her action. She is gifted.

Short stories are not my thing, but this collection overcame my reservations for the same reason that *Family Room* by Lily Yulianti Farid did. (See my review). These stories have serious intent. They challenge thinking. They demand attention to the issues raised. Where Farid was wrestling with feminist issues in the context of a corrupt patriarchal society, Winch is dissecting the displacement that disrupts the lives of individuals as well as the wider society.

To read the rest of my review please visit <https://anzlitlovers.com/2016/08/25/a...>

Deborah says

this collection of stories is amazing. so many distinctly different people, worlds, experiences. all beautifully written.

every one of these stories needed to exist

Calzean says

The book could be called the world in 13 stories. The author shows her considerable talent with her stories in many countries (Australia, USA, Pakistan, Turkey, China...), her characters are black, white, Asian, married, divorced, single, gay, working, unemployed or unemployable. Her stories are of today and the challenges faced in daily life. The variety of people, places and topics worked well for me.

Tina says

A book of short stories where the personal is political, and thanks to the author also quite poetic. Each story packs a punch and they cover a very broad canvas of characters and geographies. It was like being tossed out of bed suddenly to start the next story in a different country, with almost polar opposite characters before me. So I simply gave myself a palette cleansing time out between each course, and ended up finding this book

quite delicious.

Bec says

The first 2 stories in this collection are brilliant, especially the second one about migrant women to Paris. The ending made my breath catch & I looked forward to reading the next story. Which was not up to the same standard, nor were any of the others. They read like writing exercises, taking on another voice & playing with style. It is more like the work of a student than an accomplished writer, which she is judging by the first 2 stories. The difference in the first 2 is one of authenticity, I believed she knows her subjects in the first stories but the rest are exercises. This opinion is influenced by what I know about her, that she is a young Australian Aboriginal woman living in Paris & seeing as how the first story was about a young Aboriginal man returning home & the second about migrant women learning to speak French the reader benefits from her insights but when she is writing from the perspective from an older man involved in a terror attack, the voice becomes less authentic.

The second book is as difficult as the second album & i feel that perhaps she was pushed to publish before she was ready, I'm sorry if the author holds each of these stories dear to her heart. I will read more of this author's work, she definitely has more to say, just a bit more polish is needed.

So it turns out this book came 7 years after her novel & everyone else loved it. I still stand by my opinion, just not the part about being pressured to publish. Maybe she is surrounded by too many sycophants.

EDIT: One story I can't get out of my mind is Happy. (view spoiler)

Herna says

Thirteen Tales of Fleeing / Longing

An unrequited love. Trying to fit in. Stuck in a job you hate while not getting over your ex. The end of a relationship. Most of us would be able to relate to the plight of the narrators in this short story collection. Yet Winch also brings up darker issues that many of us know of but may not experience first-hand: refugees, violence, dysfunctional families, and addiction.

Her writing is gripping from the first paragraph. She writes with nuance and details that one wonders how she can be all and have seen all she has written about. She makes these tales believable. They are not just stories made up by an award-winning writer, but they show us slices of humanity. We can't help but feel for the protagonists, identify with them, and root for them.

This book shows what a great fiction does: creates empathy, broadens your knowledge, and stays with you.

Jaclyn Crupi says

3.5 207. My last read for the year and I loved how thought-provoking these stories were. Thrilled to read Tara June Winch's follow-up to *Swallow the Air*.

Melissa says

Australian (Wiradjuri) writer Tara June Winch's follow up to 2006's *Swallow the Air - After The Carnage* - is a collection of short stories about people who are striving for something they might never reach. Whether a new country, an old love, or their former selves. (In typical short story fashion, you usually don't find out if they reach that thing or not.)

Steve Daykin says

Easy to read. 'Mosquito' is the standout story in this collection.

Keira Edwards-Huolohan says

[spousal and child abuse, death, child abduction, drug abuse mention (hide spoiler)]

Michael Livingston says

Tara June Winch is a wonderful writer, wringing deep pathos out of tiny moments in this collection of stories spanning hugely diverse settings and characters. It's a short book, so you'll finish it in no time, but there are some moments that will stay with you for ages. It's not perfect - there are a couple of stories that felt overdone to me - but it's definitely got me interested in picking up *Swallow the Air*.
