

THE US Review of Books

Variations on a Theme

by Thomas James Taylor

DiVerse Branding

book review by Dylan Ward

“...in that rapturous moment the universe in its totality was perfectly poised and precise, without mystery, without want or circumspection.” ”

Thomas James Taylor’s speculative short stories explore the psychological and emotional reactions one has within particularly difficult or dire situations. They are fascinating to read, quietly unsettling, and full of mystery which at times is both terrifying and beautiful. Whether confined to the darkness of deep space or the vast countryside, Taylor’s characters confront seemingly inescapable circumstances and truths. For example, in “Pod,” a man drifts through the eternity of deep space, haunted by its loneliness even when not entirely alone. In “Dougie’s Choice,” a young boy unwittingly faces up to the horrific realities of war. And in one of two novellas, “Rights of Passage,” police hunt a lawless drifter who is haunted by his past transgressions.

This Australian writer’s voice exhibits a specific energy that truly shines through these unique and imaginative stories. The reader is transported into Taylor’s tales, where one doesn’t always know where the narrative is going or how it might end. And when it does end, the reader is left contemplating them for some time. What Taylor does especially well is capture the inner thoughts of his characters, immersing the reader directly into whatever circumstances the character is coping with. One feels the same sense of loneliness, dread, or enthusiasm, momentarily forgetting everything else while enraptured with these larger-than-life tales that are cinematic in scope. Readers will likely discover a little more about their perspectives and beliefs regarding the world as they savor Taylor’s introspective, detailed stories in this engaging collection that surely will elicit conversation.

©2021 All Rights Reserved • [The US Review of Books](#)

This review was written by a professional book reviewer with no guarantee that it would receive a positive rating. Some authors pay a small fee to have a book reviewed, while others do not. All reviews are approximately half summary and half criticism. The US Review of Books is dedicated to providing fair and honest coverage to all books.