



Lungs Full of Noise

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This prize-winning debut of twelve stories explores a femininity that is magical, raw, and grotesque. Aghast at the failings of their bodies, this cast of misfit women and girls sets out to remedy the misdirection of their lives in bold and reckless ways.

Figure skaters screw skate blades into the bones of their feet to master elusive jumps. A divorcee steals the severed arm of her ex to reclaim the fragments of a dissolved marriage. Following the advice of a fashion magazine, teenaged girls binge on grapes to dye their skin purple and attract prom dates. And a college freshman wages war on her roommate from Jupiter, who has inadvertently seduced all the boys in their dorm with her exotic hermaphroditic anatomy.

But it isn't just the characters who are in crisis. In *Lungs Full of Noise*, personal disasters mirror the dissolution of the natural world. Written in lyrical prose with imagination and humor, Tessa Mellas's collection is an aviary of feathered stories that are rich, emotive, and imbued with the strength to suspend strange new worlds on delicate wings.

Lungs Full of Noise Details

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Author : Tessa Mellas

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From Reader Review Lungs Full of Noise for online ebook

Amanda says

Lungs Full of Noise is a sharp collection of stories by award-winning author Tessa Mellas. The first two stories, "Mariposa Girls" and "Bibi from Jupiter" include elements of disfigurement, dangerous sex, and death. Many of the subsequent stories feature these same disturbing themes, as well as elements of magical realism, which are deftly handled. Many of the stories are told from a childlike perspective, which makes the violence more disturbing. A standout for its strangely approachable weirdness is "Quiet Camp". Many other reviews have mentioned Mellas' skill with the grotesque; I found her more realistic stories, like "Dye Job" equally compelling, if not more so. My favorite of the collection, "Blue Sky White", left me wanting more of that story.

Joseph says

Lungs Full of Noise by Tessa Mellas is a collection of twelve short stories. Mellas grew up in Northern New York and earned her BA from St Lawrence University. She earned her MFA from Bowling Green State University and her PhD from the University of Cincinnati. In 2013 She was awarded the Iowa Short Fiction Award. She currently lives in Columbus, Ohio and enjoys a vegan lifestyle.

Since I started reviewing books, I have had some hurdles to clear. Many publishers seem to want to box reviewers into little boxes. I imagine there is a note next to my name, saying this guy is good with World War I, Vietnam, and Poetry... Reject all other requests. I requested a Virginia Woolf biography from another publisher and was rejected because it was supposedly from the feminist perspective and well I am a guy. Luckily, the very nice people at University of Iowa Press gave me auto-approval for their publications.

What attracted me to *Lungs Full of Noise* was, to be honest, the weirdness. A girl with a hermaphrodite roommate from Jupiter (the planet, not the city) with greenish skin. The roommate, although very different, is taken no differently than someone from Nepal. There is no science fiction sense to the story, it's just accepted. In another story, a woman has a child with plant tendrils and flowers growing from his head. Again, people think it's a little odd, but nothing too far fetched. There is a story about girls being sent to a camp to learn to be quiet, and another story of the sky turning white. These are stories where very odd things happen and people simply accept them as normal.

There is, however, a catch with all these stories above the oddness taken for normal. There is an underlying message to each story. Mellas writes some extreme stories where the reader will immediately know the story is fiction, because it is fairly outrageous. What the careful reader will notice is there is something equally outrageous in our own society, that we as members totally ignore. Sometimes the message is very blunt and (maybe) crude as in "Dye Job", and other times it is a bit more hidden. Sometimes it is very plain.

The opening story "Mariposa Club" girls forgo using ice skates and screw the blades directly to their feet. They find that this improvement allows the completion for more advanced skating techniques. Furthermore, they shaved off all their body hair and performed naked. They eventually needed to paint tights on their body to match the permanent frostbite on their bodies. The girls who did not want to make the sacrifice moved to other rinks or took up other or less demanding activities like ballet. The Mariposa Girls rise to fame until

there is an accident and injury and suddenly the injured girl is just bald, naked, and unknown. The message is clear enough to me, and pretty shocking, yet, it happens everyday.

I found *Lungs Full of Noise* to be a book with a powerful message. It has been the most influential of the twenty books I have read this year and in the top three of the two hundred books I read last year. I picked this book up looking for some bizarre short stories and found much, much more than that. I think, this year, I will be hard pressed to find a book to beat this one. Really an amazing book.

Maciek says

A bit of a disappointment - the story about the female alien, *Bibi from Jupiter*, who comes down to earth to study at an American university was great; even though the premise was truly absurd (an actual alien from Jupiter comes down to study at an American university like it's a normal thing, and gets roomed with the narrator who tries to make sense of the school and her - it's fun, quirky just enough and most importantly works - it begins and ends like a story should, and leaves an imprint on memory which might even stay there).

Sadly, the rest of the stories don't do that - they're like a crazy dream you had that one night but completely forgot after two days. They're pieces of odd ideas which are odd just for the sake of being odd, and become increasingly more frustrating in their randomness, unexplainable element and lack of cohesiveness...and the non-endings which plague this sort of short-story. It's like they were abandoned half-way through, when the author decided to ditch the idea and move onto something else - I have trouble remembering ideas contained in these stories, not to mention not knowing what they were supposed to be *about*. Outlandish ideas and images don't automatically turn into good stories - something which I think is often forgotten these days.

Jason says

NETGALLEY GIVE AWAY!!

First, what a freaking amazing cover!

I can't decide if I would associate these gems with Salvador Dalí or Degas. They demonstrate a writer skilled in the style of surrealism, but they capture the human sorrows in shades of obscure moments that take time to comprehend, but eventually raise the most human of emotions; sadness.

Each have elements of the ghastly, the dark and the whimsical. The stories are dreamlike in a distant elusive way. You can clearly identify with the larger themes of lost and sorrow, but it takes a careful mind and patience to notice the depth of each; the shrouded complexities that lay hidden. In fact the little delicate whispers hidden under a ridged exterior hit you harder than the overall subject matter. Pay close attention.

subject matter is sweeping, but anchored in a common over-arching theme.

A story about divorce that was crowded with the vulgarity of defense mechanisms that one only reserves for the most life shattering crises, is shattered and pierced to reveal the remanence of love. Another about the disappointments that lie beneath eager attempt to conform, and the outcome you surely perceived would happen, but pushed from your mind.

Six Sisters; I read you first in bed. I pushed the covers close to my chin and cringed. You felt real. I could reach out and touch your meaning. You ached and I ached. I read you again over coffee. My heart raced along with your deeply shocking self-awareness. I read you a final time now, even when I finished the book. I ate New York Super Fudge Crunch. Comfort food didn't help. I tossed back the feeling to throwing up. I clutched my fork (ran out of spoons; I am lazy this Thursday, don't judge.). I have never, in my entire life read something that made me feel so real, so honestly exposed to the world. The panic of motherhood that is most likely universal, but feeling so unique to each person, slammed against my ribcage and tunneled into my bone marrow. Have you seen Whoopi Goldberg perform Surfer Girl

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owJTQ...> This must have been the feeling Picasso felt when in the midst of his 'Blue Period' . Maybe you can, but I can not vocalize the white barenness I felt when reading Six Sisters.

"Beanstock" breathed the warmth of love from its lines and paragraphs, rejected the notion of standardized beauty—there is something bigger here, but I can't isolate it—, and cuddled against me like a down comforter. There is an air of letting go; of being one with change and growing with life, but it's small, and perhaps representing my own distortions. I don't care if I am mistaken, because I really needed a shallow hole to comfort myself against the full on assault of emotions that permeate my skin.

"Quiet Camp" is another one that I surely misinterpreted. I felt that it was about conforming to the standards of a male dominant world. Of sheltering one's own feelings and fervor for life, and attaching to a system of dulled conventionality.

The other works in Lungs Full of Noise" illustrate an author wildly deft at her craft, but "Beanstock" and "Quiet Camp" really explode with a loud roar. The ability to write such complex short stories, and present them in a manner that engaged a reader at an individual level is remarkable.

The story "So Much Rain" took me off guard. It most likely deserves a mind that can relate to it; hold it tight in bare hands. I am not this person, and as a result I felt lost within its words. I quickly read this piece, and felt afterwards that it was more an example of teasing out a shapeless unrefined style. I equated it more to an experiment, rather than having a focus on meaning making and the exploration of human experiences as was represented in the rest of the book. It contrasted too greatly against the backdrop of the brisk acidity, texture, depth and courage of the other pieces. It felt immature, priding itself on its originality, rather than its substance. Its notes remained flat, and unbalanced.

Landscapes in White was a pretty piece. It demonstrated a well developed writer, but the style wasn't crisp and little complexity was noted. It echoed 'Queer' in style, but I don't think this was intentional. I think the author got caught up in the tendrils of lustng for variation, rather than conforming, or rather aligning with the drama—both overt and subtle—of her other works. It was lukewarm and lighter than the rest, with stronger, more forced prose. The light notes of the other works birthed a unique contrast compared to 'Landscapes in White'. This piece illustrated the way the other stories finished strong and powerful without using thicker, more dramatic language.

there are others like 'So Much Rain' and "Landscapes in White", but I feel strongly to restrain the urge to explore them. My experience in reviewing short stories is to examine them side by side; to tease them out and apply my subjective understanding. This collection is for the casual sipper; those able to savor. It would be a mistake for me to trespass on that experience.

Daniel says

This review originally published in Looking For a Good Book. Rated 4.75 of 5

We know we shouldn't judge a book by a cover, but you can look at the cover of a book to get a general idea of what you might find inside, and *Lungs Full of Noise* here is a great example. Looking at the cover as pictured above you might get the impression that the contents within will be a little bit different and highly imaginative, and perhaps a touch frightening. And you would be right!

Tessa Mellas' collection *Lungs Full of Noise* is everything I like in a collection of short stories. While you can't really pigeon-hole any of these stories (some might try calling these stories speculative fiction ala Harlan Ellison or Thomas Disch) there is something unexpected at every turn. We start out with "Mariposa Girls" which seem like the perfect beginning. The realism of the story sets a mood reminiscent of Margaret Atwood or even Anne Tyler but the story ... no the people *in* the story ... slowly descend into a state of obsession and competitive fortitude that they alter their bodies, beyond repair, to give them a competitive edge. It's eerie. It's a bit revolting. And it's all too possible.

"Bibi From Jupiter" steps a little further into the science fiction realm, as Bibi is indeed from the planet Jupiter, now rooming in school with our narrator. But what Mellas does as a writer, a very talented writer, is give us a sideways glance at our own society through these stories. "Bibi From Jupiter" isn't so much about Bibi from Jupiter as it is about how we react (poorly) toward something that is at first 'different' and then find a way to take advantage of that difference.

All the stories herein take realism and skew it slightly, just enough to make us sit up and take notice. A child with flowers growing from his head; girls who over-indulge in specific fruit-eating in order to develop a color tint to their skin in order to get prop dates; the sky becomes white and residents assume it's an anomaly, waiting for it to become blue again.

In addition to telling strange stories, Tessa Mellas tells a story well. Her prose is very poetic:

The ponds in the park untidy with chickadee bodies, breasts buoyant, claws branching up without leaves. A gull bursts his larynx murdering sound.

This is a sample of her lyrical prose.

This is easily some of the best science fiction I've read in a very long time. Perhaps Mellas wouldn't appreciate her work being labelled "science fiction" but then neither does Harlan Ellison or Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and yet the three of them (Ellison, Vonnegut, Mellas) write some of the most powerful prose out there, which happens to have a science fiction bent to it.

This collection includes:

"Mariposa Girls"
"Bibi From Jupiter"
"Blue Sky White"
"The White Wings of Moths"
"Quiet Camp"
"Beanstalk"
"Landscapes in White"
"So Much Rain"
"Six Sisters"
"Dye Job"
"opal one, opal two"
"So Many Wings"

It is highly recommended.

Looking for a good book? If you like short stories with some bite and that will take you beyond the edge of reality, then this collection is a must for you. Keep an eye out for the name, Tessa Mellas, because her work is worth watching for.

Mairita (Marii gr?matplaukts) says

Visd?vain?kie st?sti k?dus n?cies las?t. Nemieru raisoši, skaisti, absurdi, nesaprotami.

Most bizarre and disturbing stories I have read so far. At the same time hauntingly beautiful. Strange.

Brenda says

Recently, while researching magical realism for a workshop proposal, I discovered a blog post by Rae Bryant at *The T.J. Eckleberg Review*, in which Bryant responded to the disdain for fabulist prose that is held by some participants in creative writing workshops. "For staunch realism and prose traditionalists," Bryant wrote, "magic realism might as well be poetry." That statement struck me as funny as well as sad since I don't perceive poetry to be a lesser art form. However, this blog post did lead me to reflect on the attractions that magical realism and lyricism both hold for me. Some language is truly inebriating.

Indeed, a reader could get drunk off words while reading Tessa Mellas' first collection of short stories, *Lungs Full of Noise*, soon to be released by the University of Iowa Press.

Although I was able to immerse myself in the voices of each story in Mellas' collection, including those that were more stylistically experimental such as "Landscapes in White," "So Much Rain," and "opal one, opal two," I was most exhilarated by selections that startled me with their grotesque originality.

In "Mariposa Girls," for example, the dedicated female ice skaters shave their body hair, eschew clothing,

and screw blades directly into their bare feet. The damage caused by such devotion to sport/art may seem fantastically extreme, but readers can't help but recognize the similarity between these featherless ice swans and young, female Olympians or ballerinas, who stunt their sexual development by eating little more than pea pods while engaging in intensive training.

The protagonist of the second story in Mellas' volume, "Bibi from Jupiter," is my favorite alien grotesque since Michel Faber's *Under the Skin*. Bibi is not as dangerous as Faber's heroine, although human males are unable to resist the allure of her exotic nymphomania, despite her anatomical differences from human females. Instead of a vagina, Bibi has a nickel-sized funnel where a belly button would exist on a human being. When Bibi is invited to celebrate Thanksgiving at her roommate's home on earth, she is stricken because, she says, the "turkey reminds [her] of [her] mother" (13). This story manages to be amusing as well as harrowing.

Another one of my favorites, "Beanstalk," reminded me of Jan Svankmajer's film *Little Otik*, which is based on an Eastern European fairy tale in which a barren woman mothers a tree stump that grows into a child with voracious appetite. The green baby in Mellas' story also appears to be associated with fairy tale as his mother names him Jack. This newborn seems to be cast as a kind of fertility spirit with tendrils for hair, which grows faster than Rapunzel's. Jack's growth rate may also remind some readers of the carnivorous plant, Seymour, in *The Little Shop of Horrors*, only Jack's appetite isn't quite so frightening. Still, this infant does not need the Miracle Grow pellets that a nurse gives to his mother when they are released from hospital.

I am grateful to Netgalley for providing the pre-publication copy—and I hope that I'll be able to introduce *Lungs Full of Noise* to future students in a class that explores varied incarnations of Magical Realism.

Aj Sterkel says

I'm pretty sure this book has one of the greatest covers ever. It's so perfectly weird. Whoever designed it is brilliant and needs to design more books.

Lungs Full of Noise won the Iowa Short Fiction Award in 2013. I loved one of the other collections that won the Iowa Award, so I decided to give this one a try. Judging by the synopsis, the stories sounded like my kind of bizarre. Now that I've read the book, I can confirm that it definitely is bizarre.

Many of these stories focus on characters who are trying to do what society expects from them. Competitive figure skaters make painful alterations to their bodies so they can win competitions. Little girls go to quiet camp and learn to be mute because children should be seen and not heard. Freshman girls dye their skin peacock colors in the hope that senior boys will invite them to prom. This collection makes readers question why people do the things they do. The stories take society's norms and twist them into grotesque extremes. **Even though the plots are fantastical, the characters are relatable.** A lot of us have had moments where we think, *What the heck am I doing? This is stupid.* This book is made up of those moments.

Like most collections, **I didn't love every story. I have to admit that I skimmed a few of them because they are too abstract for my tastes.** I lose patience with stories that are all pretty words and no action. Once a piece of writing gets rambley, I'm done.

Still, **most of the stories are well-written and have surprising bursts of humor.** These are my favorites:

In “**Mariposa Girls**,” figure skaters discover that some skating maneuvers are easier if they screw the skate blades directly into their feet. Soon, all the best skaters have blades on their feet. To stand out from the crowd, some of the skaters become more extreme. They shave all the hair off their bodies. Then they start skating naked. Then they start painting their bodies. When everybody is extreme, you have to be *really* extreme to get attention.

“**Bibi from Jupiter**” is about an alien who comes to Earth to study at an American university. The boys in the dorm building quickly fall in lust with her exoticness. The narrator of this story is an angry, judgmental bitch, which would usually be a turn off for me, but the story is so quirky that I was able to overlook it.

The girls in “**Quiet Camp**” talk too much. They wear muzzles so that they learn to keep their opinions to themselves, to not ask questions, to not complain when they’re uncomfortable. Good girls are quiet girls.

My favorite story is “**Dye Job**.” It reminds me of high school and the ridiculousness of teenagers. A group of freshman girls are desperate to attend prom, but they’re not allowed to go unless a junior or senior boy asks them. To get the boys’ attention, the girls try a fad diet that turns their skin purple. The boys definitely notice the purple skin, but as the girls squabble with each other over prom dates, they fail to notice that the boys have a competition of their own going on.

TL;DR: This isn't the best collection I've ever read, and I skimmed some of the stories, but it did give me a lot to think about.

James says

not often i find a relatively unknown author with such talent... not often do i read short fiction collections from these same authors and enjoy the experience... Mellas' book is rather special in that respect... quite unique conceptual frameworks, skewed visions of the world, mysterious beings, and wondrous tales of the other side of things... the stories were just long enough to have weight, but not so overly drawn out to beggar their truths...

Nicole Craswell says

4.5 stars.

Weird is definitely a good word to describe most of the stories in this book. However it's the kind of weird that is almost beautifully haunting in it's strangeness. Mellas has a way with language that is unprecedented.

My personal favorite stories were Quiet Camp and Mariposa Girls. Both of those have really strong feminist themes that are weaved in with the stories in an incredibly elegant way.

This is not a story collection for those of the faint of stomach, several of the stories describe graphic scenes of gore and body mutilation. In addition, several of the stories feature sexual assault.

I have never read anything quite like this story collection before but I want more.

Valentina says

This is another fabulous short story collection that was difficult to put down.

For anyone who loves the macabre, like I do, the book's cover alone will make you pick it up and read the blurb. Let me tell you, this was one crazy ride. I think my favorite story, though, was the very first one, in which figure skaters nail their skates to their feet in an attempt at being something else, no longer women, but "Mariposa Girls", or butterfly girls. It's a visceral story that makes the reader feel a bit ill as she reads. Definitely one of the more nuanced stories in the collection.

The writing is beautifully dark. It's the kind of book that should be read at night, surrounded by silence, so that you can feel the isolation that some of these characters feel. So that the world feels just as stark as the stories.

This is one I'd definitely recommend to all lovers of literary fiction and to those who have a bit of a dark side in their reading habits.

Ben says

Assaults our senses with abject weirdness and the bizarre.

More - <http://bentanzer.blogspot.com/2015/10...>

Diane S ? says

These are some of the strangest short stories I have ever read and some of the best. Women in desperation doing outlandish and sometimes dangerous things to be better at their craft or to fit in with society's expectations. It is amazing how quickly the strange becomes normal and is just accepted and many times followed.

Wonderfully different and stories I will not soon forget.

Zoe Brooks says

Sometimes a book comes along in my magic realism challenge which makes me rethink what makes magic

realism work so well for me. Pedro Paramo was one such book and this is another. This is magic realism which is pushing the boundary of form, at times distinctly weird and often verging on poetry. Do all the stories work equally well? No, of course not, but then Mellas' writing wouldn't be experimental if it was predictable.

The subject matter - about being female - is something that I interests me. Mellas' stories cover a number of feminist issues - the menopause, empty nest syndrome, body image, motherhood, the repression of girls' voices, competition for the attention of men - in a way that is at once fantastical and very, very real.

The best story for me was The White Wings of Moths, which is about a woman trying to cope with the menopause and her relationship with her absent daughter by adopting and caring for caterpillars. Not only is it wonderfully poetic and lyrical, it also has some accurate descriptions of the heat of menopause:

Menopause has made sleep a difficult thing, a hidden room in a hidden house in a hidden town... Her body burns and tingles. And there's a quaking inside her limbs. The bones in her spine have turned to ice. Her ovaries too. She feels them heavy and cold like stones nestled against her womb.

In Dye Job teenage girls turn themselves blue by gorging on fruit in the hope of gaining prom partners. Their health and friendships are strained as they compete for that all important young man. In Mariposa Girls the girls are aspiring figure skaters, willing to sacrifice everything for perfection in their sport.

Beanstalk is a story which has similarities with the Czech folk story Otesánek about a woman who adopts a baby made out of a tree root, who grows and takes over her life and her world (the tale was adapted into the film Little Otik by Jan Svankmejer). In this story it is implied that the baby the woman gives birth to may have been fathered by a plant rather than her rather boring neighbour. It is about the desire for motherhood, but it also could be considered a story about the power of nature.

Other stories also have an environmental theme. Blue Sky White is a mythic or folkloric account of a world in which one day the sky ceases to be blue. Landscapes in White is a prose poem of a world in which birds fall from the sky: *The sky full of feathers, a quarrel of wings. Plumage blooms across our windows, the glass smeared cloudy with milky streaks. The beltway a blur of sparrows. City towers beaten by doves.*

As the book progresses the stories tend to lose their conventional story structure and become more experimental, in grammar as well as form. These will not be for everyone, but I enjoyed and was inspired by them, although I will not claim to have understood them all.

The book concludes with the story of a woman who steals the severed arm of her former husband in an effort to reconnect with the life she once had. At once lyrical, shocking and thought-provoking it is typical of the stories in this wonderful collection.

I received this book from the publisher via Netgalley in return for a fair review.

This review first appeared on the Magic Realism Books blog - <http://magic-realism-books.blogspot.com>

Monika says

Originally posted on my blog, A Lovely Bookshelf on the Wall:

Lungs Full of Noise begins with "Mariposa Girls," a short story about figure skaters who go to lengths more and more bizarre in order to be the absolute best. I was instantly reminded of the quirky, outlandish fables in Aimee Bender's The Color Master, so my first reaction was one of pure glee. That feeling never waned.

Although I was reminded of the thrill I get from reading Aimee Bender, Tessa Mellas has a unique and distinct voice that is her own. The twelve stories in this collection are diverse, incredibly creative and most peculiar, sometimes even Kafkaesque. "opal one, opal two" was unlike anything I've ever read. "Bibi from Jupiter" was probably my favorite, about a college student whose roommate is an alien. From Jupiter. The planet, not Florida. "You'd think she at least would have tried to fit in. I think she liked being different" may have been prompted by a green alien, but it reminds readers of attitudes that are all too familiar.

Tessa Mellas won the 2013 Iowa Short Fiction Award with Lungs Full of Noise; she's certainly one to keep an eye on. I was completely enthralled by these stories, and can't wait to read more from her!

I received a copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. I did not receive any other compensation for this review.

Rae M. says

I loved the stories "Mariposa Girls", "Quiet Camp", and "So Much Rain". But out of all of them, I think I loved "So Much Rain" the most, it was just so strange and lyrical. But "Mariposa Girls" was a wonderful way to start, and I must say the morbidness of it really got me excited to read the rest of the stories.

I think that's what I really love about this collection of stories (though I found some of them boring), they can be grotesque and strange and a little gross, but the writing style is so soft and dare I say, feminine. I just really adore the author's writing.

But despite that, there were some weak stories, including two of them where I have no idea what was going on at all and I found them pretty boring. Thankfully in general the stories are pretty short here, so you're off to the next one pretty quickly.

I didn't like "Bibi from Jupiter". I found the narrator grating, and their ~friendship~ at the end was weird and fake. Bibi was more interesting in the beginning, when her and the narrator weren't friends. But I thought the narrator was kind of a brat. Out of all of the stories, I think this is the one that doesn't fit in with the collection the most. It didn't feel like it had such a different tone and style than the rest of the stories.

I love the cover. Its so strange and soft, its really the perfect cover for this book.

Xavier Carroll says

Lungs Full of Noise was a horrific and graphic collection of short stories and I was enchanted with every appalling detail. Tessa Mella has created a masterpiece comparable to some of Banksy's darker pieces. The series of short stories mainly pertains to feminine oriented situations. She also writes with a strong sense of metaphor. Unfortunately, some of these metaphors have been butchered to the point that they create

confusion that can carry throughout the story.

My favorite story is Mariposa Girls, in which a group of girls alter themselves to improve their ice skating abilities. In this story, I found myself more emotionally invested in the concept of the lost humanity of the self-altered girls more compelling than the actual characters themselves. The fact that there were young impressionable children looking up to these mutated creatures, and one day hoping to become one of them, was the scariest part.

My second favorite story from Lungs Full of Noise was Blue Sky White. In this short story, a strange fog rolls into a remote village. At first, nobody thinks anything strange of this fog. After two weeks of white skies, the men and women of the village start to worry about this seemingly endless sky. This story brought up the question of what is actually necessary to maintain the human psyche.

My third favorite story was Bibi from Jupiter. This story opens with a girl meeting her college roommate. To her surprise, the roommate sitting in her room isn't a girl but an alien with dull green skin and large black eyes. As the alien had no features that specified a certain gender, the girl's first question was "what are you?". After Bibi goes on many adventures with her roommate, Bibi becomes impregnated by a human boy. The problem is that when Jupiterians are pregnant, the child must eat its way out of the womb and during the pregnancy they feel like their on heroin.

Bibi was definitely my favorite character. To be honest, I didn't like her until after her impregnation at which she becomes hyper, happy-go-lucky and "girly". I found her change of personality to be a refreshing shift in the story. I soon became emotionally invested in the Jupiterian girl and was completely heartbroken when she suddenly went missing.

I felt a connection to the son in the story The White Wings of Moths. Although you never actually meet the character. He is nothing more than a side character created to help give more depth to the personality of the more central character of the daughter. I felt that his way of trying to please his family and keep others happy greatly resembles how I act. Other than this specific character, I found no connections to my real life. The main reason is that I am and identify as a male and all of the stories are oriented around females. It is not that I have no insight to these parts of life but they deal with subjects that only a women can experience like menopause, childbirth, etc. I think my age and gender kept me from relating to and fully empathizing with some of these characters.

I found this book to be very thoughtful, It brings up serious questions about the moral code that we hold ourselves and others to. This book was a hard to read in a positive way. The graphic detail was organized immaculately to keep your eyes glued to the page. I found many of her metaphors to be thought provoking. They made for a strong way for the author to get her point across.

I also found myself easily discombobulated by the text, particularly in distinguishing between characters perspective and what was actually going on in the story. It would have been easier to understand if she had identified thought from reality. This may just be my personal perception of her writing style.

I would recommend this book to a very specific audience. This book is not for the weak of heart or stomach. This book would be good for someone who has insight into the life of women. Without this, understanding many of these events will seem queer and inconceivable.

Gabrielle Carolina says

A very odd assortment!

I DNFed two of the short stories, would love to see two lengthened into full-length novels, felt a few had it all, but noticed the author had a real problem with finding a satisfying ending to her plot arcs.

I would recommend this to fans of the literary, the macabre, those who love thinking out of the box and enjoy magical realism!

Melissa Stacy says

I greatly enjoyed this collection of short stories, from the obsessed figure skaters in "Mariposa Girls" to the alien roommate in "Bibi from Jupiter" to sad Mary Lou clinging to her dead ex-husband's arm in "So Many Wings," which was the last story in the book and my favorite. The story "opal one, opal two" was so completely unique and different that I just had to marvel at its novelty, written like poetry with so many gorgeous lines like this one, "a daughter made from velvet and glass and guilt." So many beautiful sentences in this collection! These stories are short, dark, and very much alive, told with the clear-eyed, fearless view of a writer with startling observations to share. This is an excellent, award-winning collection of short stories, and I look forward to reading the next book by Tessa Mellas.

Adela Cacovean says

Lungs Full of Noise seemed like an interesting read when I picked it up, but it just wasn't anything close to what I was expecting. The first story, Mariposa Girls, was rather strange, bizarre. The characters in this story were girls who embedded skates in their feet. It had a mysterious atmosphere and made me feel thrilled to continue but the following stories were a disappointment. In the end, I decided to drop its reading as I had other books I was more excited about reading. This one was just not for me.
