

And Yet It Moves

Erin Stalcup

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In Erin Stalcup's *And Yet It Moves*, science, physics, and electricity (the reliably immutable phenomena that connect our universe) are the background for short stories of startling human disconnection and alienation. "Einstein" envisions the letters an aging and ailing Albert Einstein might have written to the daughter he and his future wife conceived, gave away, and never spoke of again. In the longest piece, "All These Stairs," an elevator operator sandwiches the meager but heartbreaking facts of her lonely life into a stream of consciousness, including rich, detailed descriptions of objects and strangers, while a much-anticipated reunion with the son she hasn't seen in over a decade becomes another missed connection. "Ochre is the Color of Deserts and Dried Blood" follows newlyweds as they search for evidence of the tribes, families, and rituals that once connected people to the land and to each other.

The beauty in each story is that, though alienation has become the default in each character's life, the desire to connect is ever present, like a beating heart, no matter how bruised. In some cases, most notably "Keen," in which a professional mourner sings a lost soul back from the brink, connection prevails. The writing throughout leaves subtle spaces that allow readers to form their own conclusions. Two stories, "In the Heart of the Empire" and "Brightest Corners," are a bit less successful because these spaces are absent, filled in with set-ups and explanations. This is a solid debut collection with strong cross-genre appeal.

SUSAN WAGGONER (Fall 2016)

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