Born Into This

Adam Thompson
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The short stories of Adam Thompson's collection *Born Into This* center on the lives of Aboriginal and immigrant Tasmanians.

In these natural, ethereal tales, characters' moral struggles and victories are highlighted, as is courage, even in the middle of heartache. A father and son pair on a muttonbirding expedition have a heated exchange; elsewhere, three men in a bar discuss "their" Aborigines after the government issues each taxpayer a dependent. In another story, a plucky college student tricks a psychologist into signing his house, which he proclaims lies on Aboriginal land, back over to its original owners. Aboriginal culture is a strong feature of the entire collection, throughout which systemic racism is revealed, including how it impacts people on a personal level.

The stories' unpredictable plots and unapologetic revelations are realistic and imaginative. In "The Old Tin Mine," a hardened survival leader pushes young campers too far, but ends up submitting to the changing times. And each story is also steeped in Palawa culture and colloquial language, with descriptions that are forthright and immersive. Through "cottonwool-like kunzea flowers" and storms on mountainous islands, the narrators remain authentically themselves. They are described in laconic, understanding terms: Kara in "Born Into This" arrives in a beat-up red Corolla with bald tires, grabbing her puffer jacket from a mountain of clutter while practicing deep breaths to defrag from work mode. Such details reveal her as a rogue; indeed, she plants Indigenous flora back into milled land.

With elements of history and current affairs, the short stories of *Born Into This* take on the gravity of Tasmanian colonization in an artful and entertaining manner.

SAMANTHA ANN EHLE (July / August 2021)

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