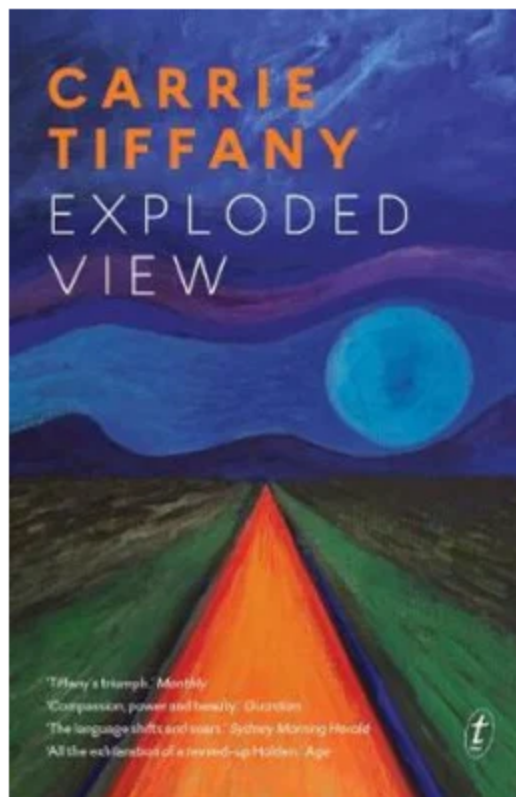


February 2021



Exploded View by Carrie Tiffany won the 2019 Queensland Fiction Book Award, and was shortlisted for the 2020 Miles Franklin Award, 2020 Australian Literature Society Gold Medal and 2020 Voss Literary Prize.

Exploded View is not a plot driven novel, but a dynamic piece of writing. The novel investigates the psychological space of a child familiar with danger. Readers will find the novel disturbing as they learn this is a story of a dysfunctional family narrated by a damaged adolescent girl with the stench of domestic violence and child sexual abuse.

This however is not a typical contemporary novel. The story is charged with the power of things that aren't said or expressed. The writing is concise and

pungent.

The novel is set in the 1970's in Western Australia. The unnamed narrator is a teenage girl living with her mother, brother and her car mechanic stepfather (knows as Father Man). The title *Exploded View* can be interpreted as a metaphor as it draws out the multiple implications of the idea that a nuclear family can be understood as a kind of machine, consisting of separate but interlocking parts, how they function as a single entity and what might cause such a finely attuned piece of machinery to break down.

The unnamed narrator sabotages her stepfathers' mechanic business with the Holden workshop manual as some measure of control. The middle part of the book details the long road trip with her family. The descriptions of the trip focus on the small details in nature, roads and relationships. "A car is the ideal container for a family. You can always be going to a better place and it keeps everyone stamped down neatly in their seats".

The author was nervous about the book's reception. "I don't want to be sensationalist or gratuitous. The small acts in which the dignity of a child is not respected can be tremendously traumatic. They can affect people throughout their whole lives". As with the book's narrator, the author has also experienced some abuse in her background and the group discussion about the book thought she was quite brave to write about this. The author said a lot of the book is drawn from experience and it is the most autobiographical book she has done.

The group generally thought the book was extremely well written, terrifying and evocative with an underlying menace. Some said it was very sad and too much menace. A difficult subject for some, a couple of readers found the language obscure and superfluous detail, brutal and disturbing and the road trip a tedious read. Some found a strong message from the damaged narrator trying to find control.

Ratings: Nicola 4, Margie 4, Pauline 4, Di 4, Dianne 3.5, Lynda 3.5, Janet 3.5, Sandy 3, Jenny 3 and Viv 2.

Our next meeting will be at Preece House on 8/03/21 at 6:30PM to discuss *Apeirogon* by Colum McCann. Hope to see you all there and happy reading!

Other Books We Read

February 2021

The Last Midwife by Sandra Dallas, 2.5

Rich People Problems by Kevin Kwan, 3

The Death of Mrs Westaway by Judith Ware, 2.5

Reaper Man by Terry Pratchett, 3.5

A History of the World in 10 ½ chapters by Julian Barnes, 4.5

Turbulence by David Szalay, 4

Landscape of Farewell by Alex Miller, 4

The Phone Box at the edge of the world by Laura Imai Messina, 3

The Vagrants by Yiyun Li, 4.5

The Beginning of Spring by Penelope Fitzgerald, 4

The Tax Inspector by Peter Carey, 3.5

An Imaginary Life by David Malouf, 3.5

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot, 3.5

The Lying Life of Adults by Elena Ferrante, 3

My Brilliant Friend by Elena Ferrante, 3

The Story of a New Name by Elena Ferrante, 3

The Vegetarian by Han Kang, 3

Burnt Sugar by Avni Doshi, 2.5

What are you going through by Sigrid Nunez, 3.5

Sputnik Sweetheart by Haruki Murakami, 3.5

Forgotten Women the Writers by Zing Tsjeng, 3.5

Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart, 4

Kim Jiyoung, born 1982 by Cho Nam-Joo, 3.5

Wild woods by Richard Nairn, 3

Girl, Woman, Other by Bernardine Evaristo, 3

Cool by Annette Asp, Steven Quartz, 4

The Improbability of Love by Hannah Rothschild, 3

And the birds rained down by Jocelyne Soucier, 3.5

The Details by Tegan Bennett Daylight, 3.5

The Italian Girl by Iris Murdoch, 3.5