The Permanent Resident by Roanna Gonsalves (UWA Publishing)

Judges' Comments

Immigration and multiculturalism are woven into the fabric of Australia, and have been for centuries, yet we’re often still starved when it comes to raw, honest and relatable stories about migrant experiences. With The Permanent Resident, Roanna Gonsalves has achieved something remarkable: a brilliant, entertaining and moving exploration of migrant life that, despite focusing on one migrant community, manages to tell universal truths.

Across 16 short accomplished stories Gonsalves tackles racism, marriage, family, friendship, work and more. The superbly written narratives tell of the hardships of migration, but do so using characters and stories that still remain largely unexplored and in many instances taboo. Not only do the stories invite us to relate individually to the characters Gonsalves has created, but they force us to interrogate what Australia really means to those of us who live in it today.

This diverse collection of short stories is often funny and at times a gut punch, each story representing an important facet of what is not just a migrant experience, but what is really an Australian experience. Beautifully realised and sharply drawn, The Permanent Resident has the capacity to change and reshape what we expect from literature on this issue, as well as to redefine our sense of Australianness. It is this engagement with the questions and stories of multiculturalism in Australia that makes The Permanent Resident a worthy winner.


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