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Narrow Lives

Tyler R. Tichelaar

Marquette Fiction (2008)

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Reviewed by Kam Aures for RebeccasReads (4/08)

“Narrow Lives” is a stand-alone novel that consists of a collection of short stories which are all linked together. However, as an added bonus if you are familiar with the author’s “Marquette Trilogy,” several of the characters in this newest novel will be familiar to you. For those that haven’t read any of the “Marquette Trilogy” books, like myself, there is a handy list at the beginning of the book naming all of the main characters with a brief description of exactly who they are. I found this reference list to be extremely useful and found myself referring to it quite often so that I could keep all of the characters straight. Without this character outline I would have been very confused as there are so many different people involved in the story.

Each chapter in the book is set in a different time period in the 20th century and is told from a different person’s perspective. The main linking factor among all of the people in the book is that their lives were affected by Lysander Blackmore in some way. Lysander Blackmore is a wealthy banker who takes advantage of people and isn’t exactly the most faithful person to his wife. It is interesting to see the effects that his character and his indiscretions have on everyone.

Tichelaar does an excellent job of developing interesting, memorable characters and an even better job at tying them all together with a common thread. This is the first of his books that I have read, but reading this book definitely made me interested in going back and reading his trilogy to find out more about these diverse characters.

The novel is set in the U.P. of Michigan and, as a former resident of Northern Wisconsin I was familiar with the towns mentioned in the book which made it all the more interesting. I think that anyone from the U.P. or the surrounding areas would really enjoy this book. Tichelaar himself is a resident of Marquette so he is definitely familiar with the area that he writes of and it shows. Full of drama, “Narrow Lives” is a great work of historical fiction and I look forward to reading more from Tichelaar in the future!

