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WOKEN: A SHORT STORY COLLECTION

Introduction

It was only in September 2016 that TSL published my first collection of short stories for adults – after nearly thirty full-length novels, most of them for children or teenagers. I was deeply heartened by the fifty-five appreciative reviews of individual stories printed in *Ravelled*, and by fulsome praise of the whole collection. Such comments, many of them from authors, librarians or teachers, mean a great deal more to me than sales figures, which of course is just as well!

Since then, my appetite for the short story has kept me busy both as a reader and writer, and I knew soon after publication that there would be a follow-up collection. Again, I have aimed for diversity. I hope you will find lyricism but also a style that's spare and sharp; one story emulates Victorian elegance intercut with pithy modern vernacular. There's a fable amongst the many contexts that are both very real and acutely contemporary (inasmuch as the publication process allows). Some aspire to humour of a satirical kind but there's tenderness too; many made me cry.

Is *Woken* darker than *Ravelled*? I suspect the simple answer is yes, and perhaps inevitably so, given the increasing darkness around us. One story climaxes at the Women's March on London: Stand Up to Trump. My writing has always been the most active part of my activism for peace, human rights and the environment, and of a celebration of difference. Love *must* Trump Hate. It's the most powerful force we know and these stories are, in their different ways, full of it.

There's a short commentary at the end of each story about what inspired it and what it means to me.

I hope they mean something to you too.

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