

reviews

“Discovering the World: Thirteen Stories is an outstanding anthology set in the disappearing rural South, the New South, and the grand world at large. Variety spices the tales, from a little boy who discovers the wonder of flight to the rocky relationship between a German woman who has immigrated to the Deep South and her troubled teenage daughter. In the title novella, a ‘Southern Native’ and a veteran of the Vietnam War travel to an island in Fiji to repair a damaged sailboat. A common theme of looking within the self unites all the tales, which take a hard look at America's class structure and at human spirituality. Thomas Jeffrey Vasseur's stories are as original and thought-provoking as they are highly recommended.”

—*Midwest Book Reviews*

“‘**The Life and Death of Stars**’ gives voice to an injured man lying in a hospital bed, entertained by a book about stars as he rethinks his life, his options, and his hard luck. One of the reasons why Southern literature is a distinct national resource is that it takes seriously ‘the pure products of America’ to use William Carlos Williams’s phrase. These are not loveable losers or defiant rebels; they are hard cases, damaged goods, who to echo Faulkner’s formulation from *The Sound and the Fury* gain honor because they endure.”

—Patrick White, *Literary Magazine Review*

“How many books do you know can tempt fate, carry human drama on the head of a pin, or inside the blooming rose of an exploding star? Thomas Jeffrey Vasseur's varied collection of stories, *DISCOVERING THE WORLD*, is the kind of book that makes you feel uncomfortably at home, even when the characters or scenery bear no real resemblance to your own everyday life...whether in California, Vietnam, the Far East waters, or in an open field in Kentucky, we are somehow re-living a familiar story; the author's ease and intimate language makes us eager participants in every story. This book takes the kind of risks university workshops hope to inspire.

—Elena Karina Byrne, author of *The Flammable Bird* and *Masque*

“**Imagine Joseph Conrad.** Imagine Joseph Conrad influenced by Octavio Paz and Reinhold Niebuhr with some of the Southern storytelling gifts of Pat Conroy sprinkled about. Imagine Joseph Conrad with these influences and a good sense of psychopharmacology, Vietnam, and the 1960s. I’m being grand and playful, but *Discovering the World* is more grand and playful. Though its landscape is primarily American, its vision draws more from European and Latin visions. It has reach. It has spirit. Like its novella’s central character, Robert C. Fitzgerald, it navigates the globe. It discovers. We discover. Read it.”

— David Kranes, author of *Low Tide in the Desert*, *Making the Ghost Dance*, *Keno Runner*, *The National Tree*, and *Margins*. Winner of a 1996 Pushcart Prize, he has received three Best American Short Play Awards and served for fourteen years as artistic director of the Sundance Playwrights' Lab.

"Thomas Jeffrey Vasseur has written stories I have waited to read all my life. These narratives unfold like poems etched on the tender heart of the world. They comprise the brave, agonizing, stubborn, awesome autobiography of us all."

—Marita Golden, author of *The Edge of Heaven*, *Long Distance Life*, and *Wild Women Don't Wear No Blues*, founder & director of the Zora Neal Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation

"When one of my girlfriends suggested that I read this collection of short stories and a novella, I went to my bookstore and started reading a story about a Mom and Dad with a rebellious daughter. Thomas Jeffrey Vasseur wrote me. He, a middle aged man, understood the mind of a female rebel with parents who were really, really into each other. My girlfriend bought the book for someone else as a present but decided to read a story while she was waiting. She was hooked by the story of a couple and their reactions to losing their firstborn. She said that she cried as she recalled a loss. She marked a passage as she read so the present became a present to herself. This author understands the impact of daily life and how it shapes us for the big challenges. He seems not to be bored with the routine events of life. The cover says that he is writing a novel. I hope it comes out soon."

—anonymous/online review

"*Discovering the World* is a wonderfully diverse collection. I read one story, marveling at its comic, angry speed, pockets of light and dark like sunlight filtered into a forest, and said: this is Southern. I read another and thought this is Balzac in our century, the quiet surface of ordinary lives belying the frantic crosscurrents underneath. The story 'Pig Summer' blew me away. The stories set in France seem both ancient and radically new."

— Debra Monroe, winner of the Flannery O'Connor Award for Fiction, and author of *The Source of Trouble*, *A Wild Cold State* and *Newfangled*.