



Yara

Tamara Faith Berger

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A young woman with voracious appetites wonders if she is a victim, vixen, or somewhere in between in Tamara Faith Berger's libidinous novel *Yara*.

At fifteen, Yara's mother gifted her a new nose; she was ungracious. Two weeks later, Gloria—the nurse who'd soothed Yara with perhaps-too-close touch as the anesthesia took hold—called her with a confession of desire. Gloria was twenty-five.

Yara didn't know what she wanted. She knew that she was fascinated by others' want. So she met Gloria in a park. Near silent on her part, that meeting led her in prurient directions, toward danger and desire.

Wanting a break, Yara agreed to her mother's Birthright-led escape plan five years later. But she still emailed Gloria from Masada, and she had an act of fellatio filmed in anger. Packed off to Toronto with one other girl responsible for the grainy film, she was encouraged to report Gloria for sexual abuse. Others heaped their traumas on her as encouragement.

Yara did not want to call her erstwhile relationship rape. She wanted control, illusory or not. So she escaped again—this time to LA, to see what filming pornography might do for her sense of worth.

Yara's story skirts lines between lewdness and sex-positivity, between her knowing who she is and feeling adrift. She drops accusations here and there, saying "my girlfriend started this. She made everything sex," without believing what she's saying. Her coming-of-age is fraught, colored both by mature realizations and insatiability:

Crime doesn't correspond to justice, I learned in Israel.

Justice needed a confession, Canada revealed.

I was a loping Jewish female, pain-free and California-bound.

I knew scapegoats shed their delusions to reach higher ground.

Electric with hunger and fear, *Yara* is a novel about coming into one's own and rejecting how others define you.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September / October 2023)

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