

## TLC Book Tour

IN JULY 2014, *NO LONGER AND NOT YET* WAS REVIEWED BY BLOGGERS WHO ARE PART OF TLC BOOK TOURS. THE ORGANIZATION WAS FOUNDED BY BLOGGERS TRISH COLLINS AND LISA MUNLEY.

by **A Curious Gal**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 3, 2014*

I so enjoyed getting a glimpse into what it's like to live in the Upper West-side, so much that I might decide to retire there someday. The characters are well written and I could relate to a few of their situations. If you're a mom, you'll relate to the story of Tess and her toddler son, Paul. It's a tale that both encompasses the guilt and glee involved in raising an active and curious toddler boy. I also enjoyed a story about a unique friendship that developed between Sophie (an elderly woman) and her neighbor Richard (a middle aged married man). Giving each other advice, lending books, and gossiping about their fellow doormen, such a cute relationship. My favorite character was a simple doorman (I loved him so much I'm thinking of hiring him for my suburban home) and after you read this book, you'll see why. Lots of characters here and I had to go back a few times to remember who was who. But that's me, sometimes it takes more than a once over to sink in. A wonderful collection of short stories that I highly recommend!



by **Books, Reviews, Etc.**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 5, 2014*

Manhattan's Upper West Side — These stories are about what is past but what is yet to come.

The author takes you through shops, hallways and the parks of the neighborhood. This upscale big city is sometimes just a tiny neighborhood that holds the not so good parts of today and tomorrow. The author wrote as an Upper West Sider since she was one. The characters were described as though you were seeing them as the reader. I enjoyed the fact that the stories were more of the gestures of the people rather than what they did as a living or socially. I felt the author set forth in her stories that sometimes actions speak what tongue won't allow. Ms. Herman took little things such as the ghost that haunts Hannah Arendt's home where she once lived, and putting them together to show the whole person. I found there were many things that a person doesn't really take notice of such as the squeak of a bed, the different types of lighting in different places and those words that are not spoken. I think that the book shows people are often remembered from their actions rather than their words. A group of stories that will make you smile and sometimes make you sad. To me the author wrote of the different people who make up different worlds within our world.

I would give this book 3 STARS



by **A Bookish Way of Life**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 9, 2014*

I'm a huge fan of the short story and *No Longer and Not Yet* solidified that sentiment. Joanna Clapps Herman has created a fantastic set of stories that accurately capture everyday life in the Upper West Side of NYC. We get a glimpse into the urban dwellers sensible and rather mundane life style - the one that consists of juggling playgroup, homework, dinner, and laundry. This book is an exploration of normalcy through a group of characters that are unlikeable, relatable, and rather flawed. We get the fear, doubt, unhappiness, loneliness that emanate from these characters as they endure struggles within their lives and relationships. In fact, some of the stories interlink, which really helped to provide a much deeper and richer understanding of the characters' "no longer" and "not yet" moments in their lives. I just loved that Herman chose to focus on these small moments in life that really do make a difference (without us really knowing it at the time.) To get lost in a someone's moment makes us more aware and present for our own "no longer" and "not yet" moments. I found that Herman's writing had a feeling of sparseness that added an emotional depth to the stories - it helped evoke such strong emotions and reactions with the simplest description of a look or movement. I just loved this book and Herman's writing - it was terrific!

I would happily recommend *No Longer and Not Yet* to fans of the short story and to fans of great writing.



by **I'd Rather Be At The Beach**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 14, 2014*

I've recently become a huge fan of short story collections, and this book is a great example of how good they can be.

This book is full of characters whose stories will transport you to the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and into their lives as if you were actually there. The author made sure of that with a writing style that brings the characters to life.

The stories are about friends and neighbors, mothers and sons, brothers and sisters. It's about the people closest to us, people that you don't really know, but who are a part of your everyday life. It's about the hum drum of everyday. The little things that happen daily and the people in our lives that make us who we are. The stories are happy, sad, funny, and even a bit on the scary side. If you want to read a book that will give you a wide range of emotions, this book will do that. It's a quick read, just over 200 pages, but is a book you won't soon forget.



by **No More Grumpy Bookseller**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 17, 2014*

Hi, everyone! Today I'm a stop on the TLC book tour for Joanna Clapps Herman's short story collection, *No Longer and Not Yet*.

In this interconnected series of stories, Joanna Clapps Herman illustrates the everyday. The pieces of life one might take for granted. The relationships all around us. Tess travels Italy with a new lover, Max. Back home, her friend Naomi makes a big life change. Olivia faces the loss of her brother. Upon their return, Max faces the reality of new love. Clapps Herman offers up a look at these characters and more, giving readers a glimpse into the stories that surround us.

All of the stories progress in a way that is somewhat atypical of a short story collection. Generally each piece would stand on its own with little or no return to the characters you've met in previous tales. Here we return again and again to the characters already introduced, catching bits and pieces here and there. This is a benefit, I think, to *No Longer and Not Yet* because otherwise it would be exactly the kind of short stories I don't enjoy. Instead, where there's no question that this is a collection of connected shorts, it can somewhat be read as a novel. You get more of a look at each character along the way. And so a look at the more mundane aspects of life does somehow become a more encompassing look at these people's lives.

Joanna Clapps Herman has a knack for drawing the reader's attention to small details while not being overly verbose (as you might expect by my pointing out the small details). And while there's something there, the collection did miss the mark a bit for me as a reader. I have to say, however, it's been getting really positive reviews on the tour and I'd highly encourage you to check out those other reviews. *No Longer and Not Yet* is likely a Goldilocks book — for some it'll be too big and others it'll be too little, but for many it'll be just right.

Rating: 3/5



by **Cruising Susan Reviews**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 18, 2014*

I loved reading *No Longer And Not Yet*. It is a story containing mini stories in it. All stories are about separate people, but contain elements that connect them together. Whether it is a building, a person, or a dream that are many common parts between each story.

I can't really say I found a favorite story. I just enjoyed them all. Although, I focused more on what was happening between Tess and Max.

What I saw in the story that made me ponder it was how each main focal character had a dream or a desire for something greater. It might have been a great career, or even having kids. I loved the story had in its title the words Not Yet. I had someone once teach me that Yet stood for your eligible too. I thought about that as I read the stories. All of these people were eligible for something greater depending on what choices they made. Take for instance Tess' story, in order to receive her Yet badge she had to make some hard decisions to get to where she was and what she wanted. She went through trials and tribulations of wondering if what she desired was truly what she wanted. Take a chance, and I think you will like *No Longer And Not Yet*.

4.5 stars



by **Fiction Zeal**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 21, 2014*

Get your microscope; we're about to look at the detail of various people in the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The primary characters are Max and Tess. The other characters are related or linked to them in various means. Some live in the same or adjacent building; some are friends and/or acquaintances. The stories take us on a journey spanning many years from the time Max and Tess meet to the point at which their son, Paul, is a teenager with ambitions of his own.

The title itself intrigues me. No longer would be past; not yet would be future. So the book is both past and future — past successes and failures and future dreams and fears. One of the story towards the end spoke of cheating husbands but the dialogue in the passage did not identify its speakers. So, either there were hints of who was speaking that just went beyond my grasp or it was symbolic of being any couple going through this trial. I felt as if there was closure for Max and Tess's story, but I didn't feel like that same closure existed for all of the characters. I rated *No Longer and Not Yet* at 3 out of 5.



### Q&A WITH JOANNA CLAPPS HERMAN

**What inspired you to write a collection of short stories about your Manhattan apartment building?**

It was just about living there and seeing the whole canvas of the vertical village as an obvious one to use to write a collection of stories.

**Why will this book interest those who have never set foot in Manhattan?**

This is really a book about raising a family and having friends and struggling with the daily stuff that takes over all our hours, including drinking great wine in the evening. Don't we all do that?

**Why did you choose the short story form instead of a novel?**

This one just started as a collection of stories on its own. You always have to listen to what is pushing you inside to work well. This was the material that took me over and I listened to it. It wasn't about to listen to me.

**What is it that short stories can do, that makes them so exciting, so special?**

It's compact—it all has to work like a swiss watch and I like working to those demands.

**Briefly describe how the stories in this collection interconnect.**

The most obvious way in the world —they all live in the same world—most of them in one building, a few in that same neighborhood, and others who are friends of those same characters. But really what connects them is that they are all struggling with their families and their own personal histories and the way those histories have shaped them.

**Who are your favorite writers of short fiction?**

I love Alice Munro. I'm crazy about Babel, Chekhov, Tolstoy/Turgenev, but for more contemporary people, Alice Munro, Tobias Wolff—has anyone written a better story than *Bullet in the Brain*, so concise and stunning, Joshua Ferris, Roddy Doyle has a story about a group of fathers going on vacation together and all he really cares about is having raised his kids, Andrea Lee, Stuart Dybek. I love podcasts but one of my all time favorites is Deborah Triesman's *New Yorker* Fiction. One well known writer picks a *New Yorker* story that they love. They talk about why they chose that story, they read the story and then afterward they talk with Deborah about what is interesting to them about this piece of short fiction. It's like being at the very best dinner party you've even been to and being in on the most fascinating conversation, except you don't have to think of anything brilliant to say because if you are me —you're in bed in your nightgown, under your blankets being a part of the world and at home in your most private world at the same time.

**What would you like readers to "take with them" from this collection?**

I'd love for people to be interested in what my characters are facing. I'd like them to feel as if they are walking around in a place that interests them. I'd like them to feel moved by my language when I'm turning it on and trying to make something beautiful or emotional. I'd like them to be impacted by those things.

**If you could use five words to describe your work what would they be?**

Local, intense, visceral, familial, parenting

**If someone can only read one story in your book, which story?**

That's hard. I guess it would be either *Falling* or *Passing History*. But I love some of the tiny ones too like *A Hawk in the City*.

**Who is your ideal reader?**

Anyone who loves to read about ordinary people, especially people who like to read about raising children.



by **Cosmos Mariners**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 22, 2014*

While I was on vacation, I got some much needed reading in. I'm a reader through and through, and when I don't get to snuggle up with a book, I start to feel as if my brain is atrophying.

I like books that make me think and visit me where I live. Books that make me want to know the characters and make their lives.

Sadly, I don't come across books like that as often as you'd think, so when I do, it's like a fresh breeze.

Joanna Clapps Herman's book (novel? short story collection?), *No Longer and Not Yet*, was one of these books, and I enjoyed reading it immensely.

At its heart, the book is about the interactions and the moments that make our lives what they are. It's hard to give a more detailed description than that because of the way that the book ebbs and flows around different characters. It's not quite a novel, and it's not quite a collection of short stories — it's something in between that I don't know that I've encountered before in my reading journey.

Each section (which is usually pretty short — less than 10 pages) deals with two or three of the characters and their journeys. While many characters come and go, the main ones include Tess and Max, two Americans who met while traveling in Italy; Naomi, who connects many of the characters and who loves to help other people; and David, who is constantly trying to find where he should be in life. Children are born, jobs are gained, the elderly characters face death — in other words, the book is about what we all experience in life.

Only Herman provides beautifully written, short snapshots of these lives. My favorite was the one where we follow Tess and her three-year-old Paul around for a day. Tess, a former nursery school teacher, always dreamed of being a mother, but the reality is different than she expected. At three, Paul is still getting up multiple times a night, and he is extremely hyper-active. The representation of Tess as a mother encompasses many of the same feelings that I think all parents have at some point: we love these little creatures beyond what is rational, but sometimes, we just want to sleep uninterrupted. And we don't want to feel guilty about doing so, either. (This is far easier said than done.)

Even though I've never set foot in New York City, and I couldn't find the Upper West Side of Manhattan on a map, Herman manages to keep my interest throughout. The setting of this novel, I found myself in just as much a character as the human ones, and I short story collection with a new perspective of NYC. Since I've never been there, I imagine it to be all lights and crowds and frantic shoving (blame the movies). Instead, Herman shows us a different New York: it's a community, a neighborhood, a place with an identity and pull. She writes like she lives there (and, no surprise, Herman does hail from the area), and I want to go visit!

It isn't a book that I normally would have picked up in the library, but like many of my favorite books that I was assigned in grad school, I am reminded that I need to expand my horizons. It's great texts like this that help me remember that stepping out of one's comfort zone is a good thing.



by **Books on the Table**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 23, 2014*

*What are those currents that run between us, filling our rooms, hallways, streets, connecting us the one to the other?*

— *Joanna Clapps Herman, NO LONGER AND NOT YET*

When I was a teenager, my mother took me on my first trip to New York City. We did all the usual touristy things — shopped on Fifth Avenue, walked through Central Park, and went to the top of the Empire State Building. What made the biggest impression on me, though, was visiting relatives who lived in an apartment building on the Upper East Side. We walked around their neighborhood together, and everywhere we went someone greeted Mary and John by name. They stopped to chat with friends, neighbors, shopkeepers, and doormen. "You see?" I remember Mary saying. "It's no different from living in a small town."

Joanna Clapps Herman's lovely collection of linked short stories, *No Longer and Not Yet*, drives my cousin Mary's point home again and again. The characters in the stories live within a few blocks of each other on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. They are connected to each other the same way people in any community are connected to each other. They fall in love, raise children, make friends, mourn the loss of family members, struggle with career decisions.

The hand-drawn map in the beginning of the book shows the important landmarks in the characters' lives — the schools, parks, and shops they visit almost every day. Beyond the River and the Atlantic Ocean are "other places." The opening story in the collection, "Roman Bath," takes place in Italy, where Max and Tess are beginning their marriage. The reader doesn't yet know anything about the couple, except that they have recently been married and they are traveling in Italy. The story succeeds in its own, but also functions as an introduction to two key characters in *No Longer and Not Yet*. In subsequent stories, Max and Tess negotiate marriage, parenthood, and the ups and downs of life. Despite their differences in temperament, they share a deep and abiding bond:

*Max, the husband, opened. Tess, the wife, closed. Max spilled, dropped, stirred. Tess, wiped, picked up, quieted. He flung, scattered, cast off. She caught, held, fastened. He set sail; she harbored Max got up early, opened cupboards, drawers, left them where they landed. . . . He got their son, Paul, up and out of the house in the morning, brought Tess a cup of coffee in bed. He started the day going. . . . She stayed up late, turned off all the lights, made sure Paul was in the vicinity of his bed, pulled the blankets up around Max's shoulders. She brought the day home.*

Some of the stories in the collection are very short — vignettes, really. Others are much longer and stand alone as short stories, with individual plots. I particularly enjoyed "Two Latins," about a young mother's conflict with her daughter's preschool teacher, and "Passing History," about a young man's friendship with an elderly woman in his building. (The building happens to be the former residence of Hannah Arendt.)

I'm a fan of short stories (in fact, I wrote a blog post about my love of short stories: 5 Reasons to Read Short Stories), but I think even readers who claim they don't like short stories would like *No Longer and Not Yet*. Although there isn't an overarching narrative, the characters develop throughout the linked stories. In that way, the book reminded me of *Olive Kitteridge* and *A Visit From the Goon Squad*. I also thought the book was reminiscent of Cheryl Mendelson's wonderful trilogy about the Upper West Side — *Morningside Heights*, *Anything for Jane* and *Love, Work, Children*.

Joanna Clapps Herman, a resident of New York City, is a creative writing professor at the MFA Graduate Program at Manhattanville College and at the Center for Worker Education, a division of City College of New York, CUNY. When asked what she'd like readers to take away from their experience of reading *No Longer and Not Yet*, she says:

*I'd love for people to be interested in what my characters are facing. I'd like them to feel as if they are walking around in a place that interests them. I'd like them to feel moved by my language when I'm turning it on and trying to make something beautiful or emotional.*

Herman's "ideal reader" is "anyone who loves to read about ordinary people, especially people who like to read about raising children."



by **Patricia's Wisdom**  
*TLC Book Tours — July 24, 2014*

*"Death, when you weren't actually faced with it, was something like that. A small boat in a large body of water going toward a vague line that never came any closer—death always the same safe distance from your boat. No matter how long you moved toward it, it continued to move off ahead of you. Then when someone you knew died, death appeared in your boat, and you were supposed to contend with its abrupt, confusing arrival, for which you had no talent, no gift. It was never as if you came to believe it. You were just very confused. Full of refusal. After a time of stunned confusion it moved back out there far away where it belonged. And wasn't considered again until it had to be again. The horizon what is not yet."* (Page 102)

*No Longer and Not Yet* is a collection of 26 stories which are all connected to the Upper Westside of New York City. As of late, I have been reading a number of books that for varied reasons keep me reading long into the night and wanting to savor and finish them right away. As much as I love short stories and like to read one a day when partaking, this was an exception to my rule for the fact that I have a fixed review date and because the stories touched each other in ways that made the reader want to know.

Tess, Max and eventually Paul were the thread that held the weave of the stories together. Tess has a wealth of friends right in the neighborhood and they then became their own stories and found connection back to Tess for advice and support. Tess told the stories of living and what she is aware of and then interpreted these ideas to the reader to get the whole picture. Her best friend Naomi lived in a building on Riverside Street and the residents within added the breadth of the friendships. The reader is able to get a clear picture and attend to the day's experience.

It made a section of NYC cozy and connecting and the writing and details brought clarity with the exquisite use of words. The reader is connected and feels present; for me particularly about the "mother thoughts" going on inside each woman during her day or excerpt. The problems seemed normal and not overblown and were infused with moments of wine, a sigh of relief and laughter.

These are everyday stories which make sense in our everyday and yet we are privy to the thinking and the actions in a way which reminds us that we are not alone. There are others living plain lives and having questions and concerns just like ours and yet they are drawn together because of their communications and sharing. The words tighten the threads of connection and understanding. There are two thinking about the crazy flower woman in the park and two attempting to help the box man not freeze to death on a rare cold snowy night. Can you imagine being the only mother and son playing in a NYC park — no one else on the swings? Is the teacher always right or does she say the wrong things to your child?

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and it was so wonderful to have a summer rainy day to wander and walk through years with these delightful characters into their lives and resolutions. *No Longer and Not Yet* is a 5 star read.