

# ReadingsMonthly

FREE | MARCH 2025

## The most anticipated books of 2025

pages 6-7

## The Readings Foundation 2025 grant recipients

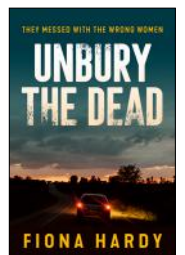
page 5

## ... and Readings Chadstone!

See Joe's Foreword on page 4



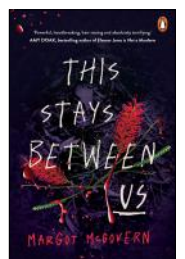
STEVE MINON  
page 8



FIONA HARDY  
page 15



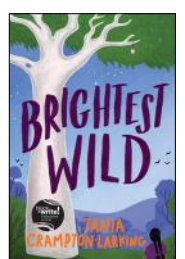
TOM MCILROY  
page 16



MARGOT MCGOVERN  
page 21



MANDY WILDSMITH & NANCY LIU  
page 22

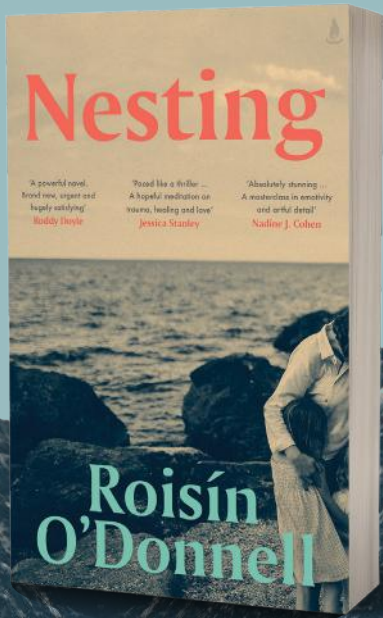


TANIA CRAMPTON-LARKING  
page 22



‘Paced like a thriller, *Nesting* is a deep, beautiful, hopeful meditation on trauma, healing and love.’

JESSICA STANLEY



‘A DEFT, HONEST NOVEL THAT REFUSES TO SHUN COMPLEXITY AS IT EXPLORES THE COSTS OF LOVE AND MOTHERHOOD.’

GERALDINE BROOKS



2025 Reading(s) challenge bingo



Broaden your reading(s) this year – take on the challenge to read 25 in 2025.

2024 prize winner	A debut author	Translated fiction	Fantasy or sci-fi	An Australian author
Poetry	Adapted into a show or movie	One-word title	Based on a true story	A new-to-you author
A classic you've never read	A bestseller	Suggested by a Readings bookseller	Set near where you live	Short stories or an anthology
First book in a series	Nonfiction	Read a cookbook and try a recipe	An animal on the cover	A banned book
Based on the cover	A Penguin classic	Crime or mystery	A First Nations author	Published in your year of birth

Browse our curated recommendations in the *Readings Monthly*, online at [readings.com.au](https://readings.com.au) or visit one of our shops.



SCULPTING IN TIME THE FILMS OF ANDREI TARKOVSKY

ANDREI TARKOVSKY FUSED PHILOSOPHY, TIME AND IMAGE TO CHART A COURSE THROUGH THE LANDSCAPES OF THE HUMAN SOUL AND REWRITE THE LANGUAGE OF CINEMA. WE'RE CELEBRATING THIS ENIGMATIC GENIUS — ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DIRECTORS OF ALL TIME — WITH A COMPLETE RETROSPECTIVE OF HIS FEATURE FILMS, RUNNING FROM MARCH TO MAY.

THURSDAYS AT 7PM  
PRESENTED WITH CINEMA REBORN

BOOK NOW AT  
[LIDOCINEMAS.COM.AU](https://lidocinemas.com.au)  
[CLASSICCINEMAS.COM.AU](https://classiccinemas.com.au)

PLAYING AT THESE SELECT CINEMAS —  
LIDO CLASSIC

News

Clunes Booktown Festival 2025

Clunes Booktown Festival is nearly here. A major regional event running from dawn to dark over the weekend of Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 March, the festival is full of author and artist talks, workshops and live entertainment for the whole family. To see the program and book tickets, head to [clunesbooktown.org.au](http://clunesbooktown.org.au)

2025 Readings Teen Advisory Board applications now open

The Readings Teen Advisory Board (TAB) is a volunteer group of teenagers that meets once a month on Zoom for a year. Members learn about careers in the book industry, chat about recent and forthcoming young adult books, talk with authors, write blog posts and short reviews, and provide feedback to Readings staff members and publishers on a range of subjects. We welcome applications from a diverse range of teenagers, aged 14–18, from anywhere in Australia.

Applications for 2025 close Monday 24 March. To learn more and submit your application, head to [readings.com.au/the-readings-teen-advisory-board](http://readings.com.au/the-readings-teen-advisory-board)

Reading(s) Challenge Bingo 2025

Want to expand your reading this year? Take on the challenge and read 25 books in 2025! Our Reading(s) challenge bingo card has 25 different prompts to inspire your reading this year. Find the bingo challenge opposite on page 2 or pick up a bingo card and a free journal in our shops, while stocks last.

Summer Reading Guide competition winner

Congratulations to Nina H. (age 11) for winning the Emily Rodda book pack.



"Hello Mr. Welker. Lose something at the beach?"

READINGS MONTHLY

The *Readings Monthly* is a free, independent newspaper published by Readings. The print edition is available in all our shops and a copy is included with every online order. Sign up to our e-news to receive a link to a digital copy of each new edition or view them online at [readings.com.au/readings-monthly](http://readings.com.au/readings-monthly)

**EDITOR**  
Elke Power

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS**  
Judi Mitchell & Lucie Dess

**PROOFREADER**  
Nico Callaghan

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**  
Natasha Theoharous

**CARTOON**  
Oslo Davis

**FRONT COVER**  
The March *Readings Monthly* cover features artwork from *Pranzo* by Guy Mirabella, courtesy of the publisher Hardie Grant. Collage and photography all by the talented Guy Mirabella. Read our review of *Pranzo* on page 19.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**  
Readings acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work. We pay respects to all First Nations people of Australia, and recognise their connection to the land. Sovereignty was never ceded.

The Readings Foundation 2025

The not-for-profit organisations and programs that will be receiving funding from The Readings Foundation this year have been announced. The Foundation is passionate about supporting literacy, community integration, and the arts in Victoria. Funds are contributed from a percentage of all Readings bookshop profits, as well as generous donations from Readings customers. To find out the recipients, see page 5.

Promos

3 for 2 nonfiction favourites

Throughout March, we have a special offer on a select range of popular nonfiction titles. Buy two books and choose a third book in the range (of equal or lesser value) for free! This offer is exclusively available in all Readings shops (except Kids) until 31 March 2025 on stickered, in-stock items only, while stocks last. This offer is not available online.

Gift with purchase of *A Heide Harvest*

Purchase a copy of *A Heide Harvest* by Alice Crowe and Maximilian and receive a free tea towel. This offer is exclusively available in all Readings shops (except Kids), while stocks last.

PRICES AND AVAILABILITY

Please note that all prices and release dates in *Readings Monthly* are correct at time of publication, however prices and release dates may change without notice. Special price offers apply only for the month in which they are featured in *Readings Monthly*.

Readings donates 10% of its profits each year to the Readings Foundation. Learn more about the foundation at [readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation](http://readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation)

SHOP INFORMATION

See shop opening hours, browse and buy online at [readings.com.au](http://readings.com.au)

Australian online, mail and phone orders have \$9 flat rate shipping, with free shipping on orders \$100 and over.

CARLTON	309 Lygon St	03 9347 6633
KIDS	315 Lygon St	03 9341 7730
DONCASTER	Westfield Doncaster	03 9810 0891
EMPORIUM	Emporium Melbourne	03 9810 0850
HAWTHORN	687 Glenferrie Rd	03 9819 1917
MALVERN	185 Glenferrie Rd	03 9509 1952
ST KILDA	112 Acland St	03 9525 3852
SLV	285–321 Russell St	03 8664 7540
CHADSTONE	The Market Pavilion	03 9810 0860

*Chadstone opening late-March, see page 4 for more details.*

**KEY**  
Your key to getting the most out of the *Readings Monthly*

- Review
- Events
- Special price

"IT IS A MUST-WATCH."

Screenrant

A Mike Leigh Film

# Hard Truths

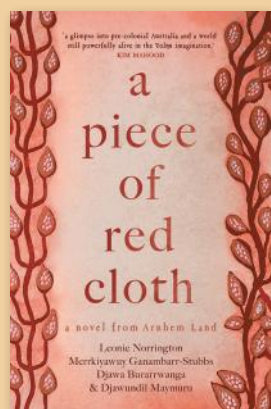
Marianne Jean-Baptiste  
Michele Austin

**MARCH 6**

**NOVA**

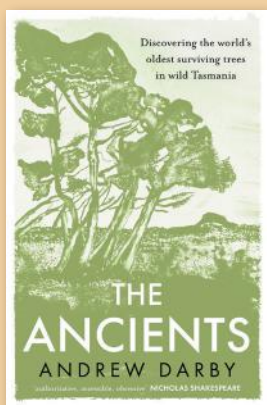
380 LYGON ST, CARLTON  
[CINEMANOVA.COM.AU](http://CINEMANOVA.COM.AU)





**‘Told through the voices of the people who know it best, all those deeply important events from times long before Cook imagined a Southern Land.’**

DEBRA DANK,  
author of  
*We Come With This Place*



**‘The Ancients will be relished by anyone who cares about the extraordinary island of Tasmania’**

NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE,  
novelist and biographer

ALLEN&UNWIN

## Foreword

with Joe Rubbo



Christmas is the busiest time for booksellers and the months of January and February are usually a time to slow down a bit,

recover and catch up on some reading. However, this year we’ve been off to a busy start.

We’ve just given our website a complete overhaul, with the help of design studio TRiC. What I like best about the new design is that it showcases the passion all our employees have for books and reading. If you take a second to look around, you’ll see it compiles all our reviews, blog posts, events, podcasts and recommendations.

The look is very classic, and I think very Readings, and we were also lucky enough to have Oslo, our long-time collaborator, contribute some new illustrations.

I’m also excited to announce that we are opening a new Readings shop in Chadstone shopping centre in March. The shop will be quite large, almost as big as our shop in Carlton and is designed by Kerstin Thompson Architects. We have commissioned the artist Edward Linacre to create a feature lantern that will run down the length of the shop. Ed has recycled damaged books to create the paper of the lantern and the result is going to be spectacular. And most importantly, the shop will feature an extensive and varied collection of books that our head

book buyer Alison Huber is busy curating as I type this. The shop will have a dedicated space for events and we look forward to hosting many book launches there in the years to come.

In this issue of the *Readings Monthly* we announce our Readings Foundation recipients on page 5. We’re all very proud of the foundation and the work it does in supporting grassroots organisations. And we’re also thrilled that our very own Fiona Hardy is publishing her debut crime novel, *Unbury the Dead*. It is up there with the best Australian crime writing, and we’re not just saying that. Join us for the launch at Readings Carlton on Wednesday 5 March – and if you can’t make it, you can find our Q&A with Fiona on page 14.

## Events

with Chris Gordon



I’ve worked at Readings now for 20 years. The landscape has changed in my time. Back when I began in this role, all the newspapers listed literary events, there was no Wheeler Centre, and the Melbourne Writers Festival ran seemingly for days and days. We advertised our events by placing

posters in the front windows of our shops. We used paper in a variety of different pastel hues to highlight the importance of our offerings. We didn’t take bookings.

We hoped for the best.

And we still do. We hope for readers and authors to meet among the bookshelves. I love it when an author tells us their reasons for writing. I have learnt over the years that those moments, those confessions of sorts, spark something wondrous in my imagination. Or perhaps I am simply feeling awe at an author’s courage to share.

Twenty years ago, Readings could only host events at our Hawthorn and Carlton shops. Now, we are spoilt for choice. Often we have multiple events on at the same time in different locations. We use the internet. We have a booking system. But the core – that call to creativity, that admiration of an

author’s tenacity and drive to write – remains pure. In that way nothing has changed: Melbourne readers still want that point of connection in their lives. And so, gratefully, together with authors and readers, our events program has grown.

There are so many events to look forward to this year, including way off in the far mists of November when we will be delighted to host our own sweet festival of sorts, A Day in Carlton, returning for a second year. In the meantime, we are planning more poetry nights, more celebrations of local authors, more visits by interstate authors, and more opportunities to meet people who have helped construct and rearrange our internal frameworks and thinking ... and more. Yes, ‘more’. It could be our word for the year. But the truth is, for those of us who have the time and the means to read, we already have so much. So let our word of the year be active; let it be – hope.

See you among the bookshelves.



Scan the QR code for our full events calendar, the latest events information and to book tickets; or visit: [readings.com.au/events](http://readings.com.au/events)

## March highlights

### How Australian Democracy Works Friday 7 March at 6pm

Church of All Nations,  
180 Palmerston Street, Carlton  
*Free, but bookings are essential*

Join *The Conversation*’s politics editor Amanda Dunn for a discussion about democracy and how power works in this country. Dunn will be in conversation with Denis Muller (senior research fellow, Centre for Advancing Journalism, The University of Melbourne), Paul Strangio (emeritus professor of politics, Monash University) and Michelle Grattan, (chief political correspondent, *The Conversation*).

In recent years, the trust in Australian politics and politicians has been at an all-time low. From political polarisation and the spread of disinformation to the lack of trust in the public institutions that underpin our government, the truth can often be hard to find.

Discover the best, most current analysis from people with valuable experience and expertise to better understand who we are, how we got here

and where we might go next. From *The Conversation*’s top academic writers comes an honest and informed call to examine, rethink and safeguard Australia’s unique democracy.

### Alison Pouliot in conversation Tuesday 25 March at 6.30pm

Readings State Library Victoria,  
285–321 Russell St, Melbourne  
*Free, but bookings are essential*

Join us to hear Alison Pouliot in conversation about her new book, *Funga Obscura*.

It’s a book about fungi, and the photography of fungi; the title *Funga Obscura* unites the two. Beginning in elemental landscapes of ice and rock, the book traces the evolutionary path of fungi as enablers of life on land, and creators of soils and forests.

Crossing continents and ecosystems, this tale navigates lichen-covered landscapes, crawls in the fungal undergrowth, scales glacial extremes and ducks between rainforest shadows.

### Kate Grenville in conversation Tuesday 1 April at 6pm

Cinema Nova, 380 Lygon St, Carlton  
*Bookings are essential.*  
*Tickets are \$40 per person and each includes a signed copy of Unsettled.*

Join us to hear Kate Grenville in conversation as she discusses her new book *Unsettled: A Journey Through Time and Place*, and asks, ‘What does it mean to be on land that was taken from other people? Now that we know how the taking was done, what do we do with that knowledge?’

Grenville is no stranger to the past. Her success and fame as a writer exploded when she published *The Secret River* in 2005, a bestseller based on the story of her convict ancestor, an early colonist on the Hawkesbury River. More than two decades on, and following the defeat of the Voice referendum, Grenville is still grappling with what it means to descend from people who were, as she puts it, ‘on the sharp edge of the moving blade that was colonisation’. **R**

# The Readings Foundation grant recipients for 2025



Angela Crocombe is The Readings Foundation and The Readings Prize Coordinator, and a senior children's book buyer

Since 2009, The Readings Foundation has distributed over \$2 million to organisations that support the most vulnerable people in our community. The Readings Foundation is passionate about supporting literacy, community integration and the arts in Victoria. Funds are contributed from a percentage of Readings' profits, and all donations from gift wrapping offered at Readings shops throughout the year.

This year, with lower funds available due to current economic conditions, rather than do an open call-out to not-for-profit organisations, The Readings Foundation chose to continue working with our ongoing community partners, whom we have loved supporting over many years. This included CAN Community Support in Carlton, which we have funded since we began in 2009, alongside Western Chances, Banksia Gardens and The Smith Family, with whom we have maintained an ongoing relationship over many years. We have also chosen to continue our work with Next Steps Australia, an organisation we supported for the first time in 2024, but one we feel is doing vital work in the community. Please read on to learn more about this work.

### Recipients of The Readings Foundation grants in 2025

- BANKSIA GARDENS | \$25,000**  
For Aiming High VCE Support Program
- CAN COMMUNITY SUPPORT | \$20,000**  
For Family Learning Program
- NEXT STEPS AUSTRALIA | \$25,000**  
To create libraries for children in family violence refuges
- THE SMITH FAMILY | \$25,000**  
To overcome educational inequality caused by poverty
- WESTERN CHANCES | \$22,000**  
For the Scholarships Program

## Case Study: Next Steps Australia

In 2024, The Readings Foundation supported the charity Next Steps Australia with a grant of \$20,000 to create libraries of children's books in five family violence refuges in regional locations throughout Victoria. This year the amount was increased to \$25,000 to contribute even more to this wonderful initiative.

Next Steps Australia was established in 2016 by Bernadette Blair, the chairperson, to help women and children fleeing domestic violence. The organisation does not receive government funding and relies solely on donations. It provides manchester packs to assist women when leaving a refuge and transitioning to independent homes. They also support survivors and their children to build secure and nurturing relationships by providing developmentally appropriate books to increase interaction and connection between the child and their caregiver as part of Next Steps Australia's 'Future Steps' program.

**Below** | Joanne Miller from the Centre Against Violence in one of the refuge accommodation library spaces created with The Readings Foundation 2024 grant.



As Blair explains: Children exposed to family violence are at higher risk of developing behavioural and emotional issues. Connecting and engaging with a parent or caregiver can alter the trajectory of a child's experience and aid recovery from family violence. Reading to and playing with a child are ways of sharing positive experiences. Reading not only develops language and literacy skills but allows an opportunity for the child and caregiver to bond.

Last year, The Readings Foundation worked with Next Steps Australia to place libraries of brand new, age-appropriate, high-quality books into five shelters for families in regional locations around the state, including Ballarat, Shepparton, Mildura, Wodonga and Morwell. One thousand carefully curated children's books were shipped in total, suitable for ages ranging from birth to 18 years. These were distributed to the shelters, which were also provided with bookshelves on which to display the books. This vibrant and enticing library of books is freely accessible for children and their caregivers to relax, spend quality time together and gain respite for a little while.

Joanne Miller of the Centre Against Violence (pictured) said: 'We are so grateful to Readings and Next Steps Australia for their incredible support in creating a beautiful library for our refuge accommodation. With their generous grant, one of our rooms has been transformed into a peaceful library, study space and meeting room for our clients. This beautiful new library offers children and their parent a safe, quiet space to discover the joy of reading, share stories, and create calm and positive experiences together.'

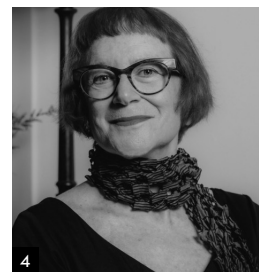
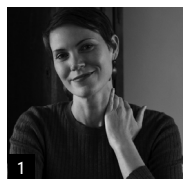
The feedback from domestic violence refuges who received a book library in 2024 was so positive that in 2025 we have increased the donation amount to \$25,000. We plan to continue working with Next Steps Australia to increase our reach to six or even seven shelters, within both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. We hope that by providing these book libraries in shelters we can support families escaping from domestic violence, give them an opportunity for regaining closeness, and champion the joys and importance of reading for pleasure to children of all ages and their caregivers.

Every time you donate to have a book gift wrapped at a Readings shop, 100% of the donation goes to The Readings Foundation to support our grants program. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to The Readings Foundation, go to: [readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation](https://readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation) **R**



**Author images** | Josephine Rowe<sup>1</sup>, Kate Mildenhall<sup>2</sup>, Tyson Yunkaporta<sup>3</sup>, Linda Jaivin<sup>4</sup>, Jamila Rizvi<sup>5</sup>, Maxine Beneba Clarke<sup>6</sup>, Garry Disher<sup>7</sup>, Sofie Laguna<sup>8</sup>, Jack Latimore<sup>9</sup>, Hannah Kent<sup>10</sup>, Gail Jones<sup>11</sup>, Evelyn Araluen<sup>12</sup>, Steve MinOn<sup>13</sup>, Katherine Brabon<sup>14</sup>

**Photo credits** | Cat Black<sup>6</sup>, James Henry<sup>3</sup>, Anna Hay<sup>4</sup>, Anna Robinson<sup>5</sup>, Darren James<sup>7</sup>, Rochelle van der Merwe<sup>8</sup>, Justine McManus<sup>9</sup>, Heike Steinweg<sup>11</sup>, Chris Crawford<sup>13</sup>, Marcin Wojcik<sup>14</sup>



Alison Huber is the head book buyer

# The most anticipated books of 2025

I can't quite believe it but my calendar says it is 2025. It's once again time to push through 'blank page fever' and write you my first missive for the year, but this time, I do feel differently inspired, and, just between you and me, the usual dread felt annually at the scale of the task ahead is thankfully evaporating as I recognise a renewed sense of purpose for the year. The world of books and publishing has already been in the news media this year, with opinion pieces flying around regarding the fates and fortunes of Australian publishing following the acquisition of Melbourne's own Text Publishing, one of the country's key independents, by Penguin Random House. Text has been home to many writers synonymous with Australia's literary field: Helen Garner, Garry Disher, and Kate Grenville among them, and has been the breeding ground for new generations of talent in recent years, writers such as Jennifer Down, Robbie Arnott, Tyson Yunkaporta, Melanie Cheng, and Nina Kenwood. They famously brought Elena Ferrante to our market and have also published international prize winners like Olga Tokarczuk and Ruth Ozeki here.

Text's story follows a similar acquisition in 2024 of another Melbourne independent, Affirm Press, by another international big player, Simon & Schuster, and of Sydney-based Pantera Press by Melbourne's large independent Hardie Grant. What, ask some commentators, will become of Australian writers and Australian stories if our independent sector shrinks, some publishers absorbed by entities reporting their profits offshore, where opportunities to publish become fewer and more concentrated within a global publishing ecosystem that is also consolidating? Will the local needs of the relatively small Australian market become collateral damage? These questions are not new, and are not specific to the news about Text, but have been reanimated by it in the public domain. They're concerns that are live across all forms of Australian cultural production, and in the context of our industry, which often feeds content to local film and television, the effects of fewer cultural producers are potentially very significant. That said, the real-world changes in the opportunities for Australian writers to publish their writing are at this stage unknown: whether these recent changes actually do result in fewer Australian-authored books being published or not will unfold in the years to come. I wonder too about the impact of these changes on career pathways in publishing itself, and where students graduating from the popular publishing programs in the tertiary sector might spend their working lives in the future.

It's very easy to write a doom and gloom narrative about this situation – indeed, it almost writes itself, or actually would write itself if you asked ChatGPT to provide you with an essay about the state of Australian publishing – but I'd like to think about it another way, to pose the question from the other direction. What is to become of Australian writers and their stories if there are no readers to read this work? If a writer writes a book and a publisher (independent or otherwise) publishes it and no one (or very few people) buys and reads it, does it (can it, should it, will it) really exist? And of course, that's where you and I make our entrance into the story of a book's life. Your choices for what and who you read really do make a difference. If you value Australian culture and its specificity, our vernacular, perspectives, voices, histories (and really, you must), it's up to you, dear Reader, to make good on that commitment, and Read Local. Of course, this is not a plea to become parochial and eschew all that is not from where we are, and I'm certainly not suggesting that you stop reading international authors because we've got to do that too: we are and need to remain global reading citizens. It's also not my intention to (heaven forbid!) overstate the power of consumption at this pointy late stage of capitalism. Instead, this is a very modest request to read mindfully and with purpose in 2025 and see how much local writing and publishing you can pack into your reading schedule. It's what we all need to do to support an industry under pressure.

When you, the reader, find your way to buying an Australian-authored work, it does, at the end of it all, support the local publishing ecosystem. If we readers buy and read with this intent, it can be at a scale of support that secures local content in our market. Keep all that in mind as I tell you that in the face of the consolidation I've noted here, a new imprint called Pink Shorts Press with two experienced young publishing professionals at its helm is launching its first book during Adelaide Writers' Week this month (see page 8 for this rediscovered classic that starts their list, *Sea Green* by Barbara Hanrahan). I was pleased to read in the trade news as I began writing this column that they've acquired two new books that will come out later in the year. Go, Pink Shorts Press, go!

Coincidentally (no, really it is a coincidence!), my colleagues have devised a 2025 Reading(s) challenge for those looking to broaden their reading in the new year, a form of bingo to help you to expand your literary horizons. You can pick up a card at any of our shops (and you'll receive a journal to record your reading journey

in at the same time), or you'll find it on page 2. If you're inspired by what I've said here and are up for a 'next level' version of this bingo challenge, I put it to you that you can Read Local in almost every one of the categories, especially if you interpret your understanding of 'Australian' to include one of our independent publishers (for example, need to read a book in translation to check that box? Why not find something published by Scribe, another Melbourne independent publisher with an incredible list of translated fiction). Readings (and the *Readings Monthly*) is here, as always, to guide you through the monthly book avalanche. And how about that, I've engineered a rather clunky and inevitable segue into my usual breakneck rundown/embellished list of books to look out for in 2025, with my focus, as it always is, on the publishing of Australian writers. Ready, set, here we go!

Back to me for a second though, because like many people I go on a beach holiday each year, and try to read as much as I can without the usual life distractions, just the sounds of surf and cicadas to bend my focus. This year I smashed through six great books in six glorious days, three local and three international writers. I read our brilliant colleague Fiona Hardy's first book for adults and our March Crime Book of the Month, *Unbury the Dead*. This covers several tiles on my bingo card (An Australian author, Crime or mystery, Set near where you live) and I predict will be able to tick off a few more in the not-too-distant future (A bestseller, Adapted into a show or movie, First book in a series). I'm not an habitual crime reader, so this definitely broadened that horizon, and I found that I enjoyed this book so much I had to sit at it until I found out what the heck was going on! It's funny, pacy, gripping, and surprising.

I won't keep narrativising my bingo card, but the rest of my beach reading did span a few other criteria. I read and admired Luke Horton's second book, *Time Together*, conveniently also set during a holiday at the beach but with a rather different dynamic to my break (see my review on page 9), as well as the winner of last year's prize for an unpublished manuscript at the VPLAS, *The Sun Was Electric Light* by Rachel Morton. This one is out in April from UQP, and my proof is covered with many breathless endorsements including from Helen Garner, who one does have to listen to for book advice. This is an original and unusual book with serious emotional reach. The international books I read include two in translation. One was the new book from the author of *A Whole Life* (a beautiful short book I read a long time ago and still think about a lot), Robert Seethaler. It's called *The Café*



with *No Name* and explores similar themes to that debut, namely the experience of ordinary people living through change and within history. The other was the brilliantly titled (and covered) *Eurotrash* by an acclaimed Swiss author, Christian Kracht, which follows a wild road trip taken around Switzerland by the narrator and his ailing wealthy mother. The third international book I read was published by Scribe in February and I urge you to seek it out: it's a debut called *Fire Exit* by Morgan Talty who is an author from the Penobscot Indian Nation in Maine, USA. I just adored this book, and it gives me chills to think about it again as I write now. It's a book about longing and belonging, family histories and people living on the edge of things, and was such a special reading discovery, I can't wait to read his acclaimed short story collection *Night of the Living Rez* (which Scribe will also publish in October).

As always, I like to have a little look at what the writers whose work we have showcased with the Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction have been up to. The Readings Prizes are now in their 11th year and are one of the many ways we support emerging Australian writers in their early careers. Just last year, Eleanor Elliott Thomas was shortlisted for her debut, *The Opposite of Success* (Text), and, impossibly, she has a second book due out in October this year intriguingly titled, *Do We Deserve This?* (Text). You might recall Moreno Giovannoni's lovely novel of migrant experience shortlisted in 2018's round, *The Fireflies of Autumn* (Black Inc.); he's back in July with his second book, *The Immigrants*. I was a big fan of Rhett Davis's *Hovering* (Hachette, 2022), and very much look forward to reading his second book (also Hachette, August) entitled *Arborescence* (this is a wonderful word that I like very much, which refers to something whose structure resembles a tree). In that same 2022 round, Robert Lukins was shortlisted for his book *Loveland*; his third novel is reviewed on page 9 and is called *Somebody Down There Likes Me* (Allen & Unwin). Hannah Kent was shortlisted in 2017 for her second novel, *The Good People*, and this year she has a memoir on the way called *Always Home, Always Homesick* (May, Picador). In that same round, Marija Perić was shortlisted for *The Lost Pages* (which had won that year's Vogel's Award), and her new book is out in June (*Foreign Country*, Ultimo). Also in that same year, Jane Rawson was shortlisted for her novel, *From the Wreck*, and I was very pleased to see an advance copy of her new book come across my desk this week: a work of creative nonfiction entitled

*Human/Nature* (NewSouth Publishing, April). Yumna Kassab's *The House of Youssef* (Giramondo, 2019) made an impression on the 2020 round's judges, and she has a book out this month called *The Theory of Everything* (Ultimo). And of course, Diana Reid was shortlisted in 2022 for the blockbuster breakthrough book for then-new publisher Ultimo, *Love & Virtue*, which went on to win many prizes including the ABIA Book of the Year. All eyes will be on Diana's third work, *Signs of Damage*, out this month (and reviewed on page 9).

Ultimo is no longer an emerging publisher, but has grown a strong and extensive list, year on year. Also out this year from them is a book I've reviewed on page 10, the impressive second novel by previous Miles Franklin shortlistee Madeleine Watts, *Elegy, Southwest* (also a road trip novel, and poses the question: should this category have been included on our bingo card?). As the year goes on, they'll bring us the debut adult novel from Vijay Khurana, *The Passenger Seat* (April) which was shortlisted for the 2022 Novel Prize, plus new work from Melbourne authors Pip Finkemeyer (*One Story*, October), Anna Snoekstra (*The Ones We Love*, June) and Katherine Brabon (*Cure*, July), and in exciting news recently announced, they'll publish Maxine Beneba Clarke's poetry collection *beautiful changeling* in November. Speaking of poetry, which happily continues to find new audiences, Stella Prize-winning poet Evelyn Araluen's new collection, *The Rot* (UQP) will be out in September, and promises to document, '... what happens when poetry swallows more rage than it can console'. This follow-up to *Dropbear* will definitely be a big deal.

You may not have heard of Summit Books; it's a legacy imprint of Simon & Schuster which was relaunched internationally in 2024, and here as Summit Books Australia with the legendary Jane Palfreyman at the helm. The imprint published its first book last year, Gina Chick's irresistible memoir, *We Are the Stars*, and its first work of fiction will arrive in May from a Melbourne-born writer living between here and Athens, Dominic Amerena. It's called *I Want Everything* and is a twisty-turny story about authenticity and creativity set in the world of books and writing and sounds right up my street. Then along comes *Pissants* (I do really love that word, so evocative!) the debut novel by former AFL player Brandon Jack in July, which is described by the publisher as '*Fight Club* meets *A Visit from the Goon Squad*': I am ready for this.

Tony Birch is a great friend of Readings, and I personally will never have enough of our shop floor catch ups exchanging tips on what we've recently read. UQP will be publishing a retrospective of Tony's short stories in October, *Pictures of You*. Laura Elvery has written two acclaimed collections of short stories, and this year we'll be able to read her first in the long form, a book inspired by the life of Florence Nightingale (also UQP, May). Samuel Wagan Watson is also published by UQP, known for his award-winning works of poetry. This July you can read his first collection of short stories, *New + Used Ghosts*. Josephine Rowe was named a *Sydney Morning Herald* Best Young Novelist in 2017 and has a new work called *Little World* out in May via Black Inc. Anyone who read Miranda Darling's *Thunderhead* last year (one of our staff faves for 2024) will be delighted to learn that a follow-up of sorts will be published in September called *Fireweather* (Scribe), picking up the story of Winona as her world turns on its head.

As my eyes continue down the extensive list of Australian novels on the way this year, it's becoming evident that there's just no way I can mention enough of them: a familiar feeling of failure I experience around about now in this column-writing process. Gail Jones, Toni Jordan, Sofie Laguna, Chris Flynn, Jennifer Mills, Kate Mildenhall, Mark Brandi, Dervla McTiernan, Jacqueline Maley, Hilde Hinton, Michelle Johnston, Benjamin Stevenson, Garry Disher ... they all have new works of fiction in 2025, and there'll be more announcements throughout the year, as ever. But maybe you'd like to start with our Fiction Book of the Month? It's a debut by Brisbane-based Steve MinOn, *First Name, Second Name*, a highly original book about identity in this place we call Australia, and our reviewer said it knocked her socks off! See the full review on page 8.

And then of course there's nonfiction, a whole other aspect of my suggested Read Local pledge. Any book from Kate Grenville is a highlight of the literary calendar and

this year she publishes a nonfiction work, *Unsettled: A Journey Through Time and Place* (April). Kate takes a kind of road trip (see, that category really needed to be there!) as she returns to the places where her family lived on the Hawkesbury River and which formed the context for *The Secret River*. Her publisher for this book is Black Inc., another of our local independents, which turns 25 this year and holds a crucial role publishing works of Australian nonfiction. The Quarterly Essays alone are so important in capturing the nation's contemporary debates, and this year we'll have ones from Jess Hill, Hugh White, Marian Wilkinson and an as-yet-unnamed author of the 100th QE in November. They'll also publish several additions to the 'shortest history' series including from Larissa Behrendt, Mark McKenna, and Don Watson, and works of history from Sheila Fitzpatrick and Linda Jaivin.

Jack Latimore, former Indigenous Affairs reporter for *The Age*, has written an important book which is due out this year, *Kumanjaya: Death and Indifference* (S&S), a work of investigative reporting that takes readers behind the story of the death of Kumanjaya Walker and the trial of police officer Zachary Rolfe, and deeper into the brutal practices of policing in remote Indigenous communities. When this book was announced, Latimore said, 'In matters of Aboriginal justice, it's essential to foreground Aboriginal voices and to bring the perspectives of our communities to broader audiences and general readers across the country', and it could not be more important to have this book for the nation to read.

Jamila Rizvi and Rosie Waterland have written a very personal collective work on the brain called *Broken Brains* (May, Penguin). Jenny Macklin's *Making Progress* (MUP, April) outlines many of the ALP's big thinking policy changes that happened on her watch, and argues for the necessity of more reform. Virginia Haussegger will publish an account of the various waves of feminism from 1975 onwards called *Genderquake* (NewSouth, September). Jacinta Parsons collects the words of older women in her ongoing project to reframe our discussions around aging in *A Wisdom of Age* (HarperCollins, May). Tyson Yunkaporta will release the third in his trilogy of books on Indigenous thinking (following *Readings'* bestsellers *Sand Talk* and *Right Story, Wrong Story*) in September with *Snake Talk* (written with Megan Kelleher, Text). Steve Vizard (yes, that Steve Vizard!) holds research positions at Monash University and the University of Adelaide, and he's publishing a book on the Gallipoli myth, *Nation, Memory, Myth* (MUP, April). A new addition to the First Knowledges series will be out in July (T&H), this time on Ceremony, co-authored by Georgia Curran and Wesley Enoch.

At the risk of reminding people of that time when we knew the names of every single one of the nation's senior epidemiologists, you'll surely recall Professor Raina MacIntyre's expertise delivered so eloquently through many television interviews. She has a new book out in May called *Vaccine Nation: Science, Reason and the Threat to 200 Years of Progress* (NewSouth). Historian Henry Reynolds sets his sights on Queensland with *Looking from the North*, a work that covers the Frontier Wars, land rights, and the important legal cases of Mabo and Wik. And for those keeping track, it's 50 years since *The Dismissal* (yes, it's 50 years since 1975). If you're reading that sentence wondering WTF does 'The Dismissal' mean, you should definitely check out some of the publishing that will commemorate the event, including *The Dismissal: The Untold Story* by Peter Edward (November, NewSouth), or the new edition of Gough Whitlam's own words about the whole affair, *The Truth of the Matter*, with a new introduction by the current PM (out this month!). Speaking of Gough, he's also a key figure in our Nonfiction Book of the Month, in which Tom McIlroy tells of the history and cultural impact of the nation's acquisition of Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*, which our reviewer calls 'a terrific book' and 'a must-read for the year'.

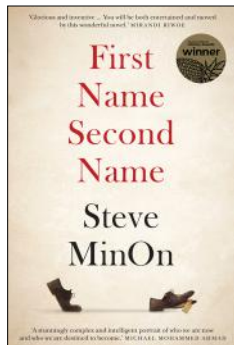
And this, dear Reader, is where I run out of puff (and space, and issue my annual apology and gratitude to my dear Ed.) and also realise with horror that I have told you NOTHING about cookbooks, or ANY big international writers with books on the way, and have COMPLETELY MISSED entire genres and categories, but my faith in our ability to discuss these releases throughout the year endures, and means I am quite happy to remind you to grab your bingo card and leave you right here. **R**




# Fiction

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Australian Fiction



**First Name Second Name**  
Steve MinOn  
UQP. PB. \$32.99  
Available 4 March

 **R** To begin a book with the death of its protagonist is brave, but Steve MinOn's gamble pays off brilliantly in his stunning debut novel, *First Name Second Name*. Defying categorisation into any one genre, MinOn blends modern and historical fiction with supernatural aspects, and reworks elements from his own family history of migration from China and Scotland during the gold rush.

Overcome by a sudden conviction in a moment of lucidity, the dying Stephen charges his sisters with the sacred task of transporting his body back to the town of his birth in Far North Queensland. Upon realising that this final wish will not be granted, his body comes to and begins the treacherous journey on foot. This re-animated corpse, a *jiāngshī*, still bearing the mortuary tag on his big toe, traverses the landscape and his own ancestry, as the narrative alternates chapters from Stephen's perspective with that of his family.

While the jumps between perspectives could feel sudden or abrupt in the hands of a less skilled writer, MinOn uses each ancestor to weave a web that reveals the origins of his protagonist's desires, comforts, weaknesses and motivations. As Stephen marches 1,000 kilometres across the outback, compelled to return to his birthplace, his journey mirrors that of his forebears in their travels to and across Australia, and their own yearning for the lands of their birth.


This modern iteration of the Chinese *jiāngshī* grapples with the most fundamental of human fixations – legacy, family and the meaning of home – while starkly contrasting those timeless needs with Stephen's personal quest for intersectional identity, community and connection as a gay Chinese-Australian man in the 21st century. Lyrical, vulnerable, existential and often extremely funny, *First Name Second Name* heralds the arrival of a powerful new voice in Australian literature, and I, for one, can't wait to see what Steve MinOn writes next.

Tamuz Ellazam is from Readings Malvern

## Australian Fiction

**The Thrill of It**  
Mandy Beaumont  
Hachette. PB. \$32.99  
Available now



 **R** One morning a newsreader's words stop Emmerson Kerr dead. The body of an 84-year-old woman has been found in her apartment building on Sydney's lower North Shore. She remembers back to a day 12 years before, in 1977, the never-solved murder of her grandmother, Marlowe Kerr. Now, years later, a string of crimes against older women will begin. As Emmerson starts to unearth her beloved grandmother's shady past could Emmerson be the link to solving Marlowe's murder and help catch the killer before they kill again?

**Eat Your Heart Out**  
Victoria Brownlee  
Affirm Press. PB. \$24.99  
Available now



 **R** If you're in the mood for a full-flavoured degustation of romance, intrigue, fabulous French cuisine and lashings of champagne, look no further than the fun and frothy *Eat Your*

*Heart Out*, a cheeky foodie rom-com by local-born international food critic and author Victoria Brownlee.

Tassie girl Chloe is loving single life in the City of Love. She may hate her day job writing copy for a luxury hotel, but by night, she's having a wonderful time feasting on fabulous food and getting even better reader feedback on her food blog. When her heroine – celebrity chef Carla Duris, daughter of the late, great, chef Jean Duris – invites her to a mysterious dinner, Chloe can't say no.

Chloe's fellow diners are all successful foodies in their own right, including uptight, tweed-wearing travel writer Christopher, bubbly Californian FoodTuber Belle, poison-pen-wielding Balthazar, judgemental Juliette and the handsome, privileged, and frustrating Henri de la Fontaine. Guided by Carla's cryptic assistant Max, this motley crew of diners enjoys a fabulous meal of Carla's classic French fare, paired with an intriguing side dish: an offer to spend a weekend at Carla's family villa on the Côte d'Azur, duking it out for a well-paid but mysterious writing job.

Will Chloe's chance to work with her hero override her family's pleas that she return home? Will she find allies or enemies in her fellow competitors? And where exactly is their magnanimous but mysterious hostess?

Packed with lavish descriptions of tasty morsels (of food and the occasional shirtless Frenchman), this is a sweet and speedy PG-rated read with a hint of danger. Great for fans of *Emily in Paris*, but with a little sprinkling of *The Menu* for flavour and all the competitive drama of a season of *Top Chef*. Best served on the beach, but make sure you've got snacks on hand – this one will have you reaching for the *fromage*!

Tamuz Ellazam is from Readings Malvern

**The Oasis**  
(Menzies Mental Health, Book 2)  
Anne Buist & Graeme Simsion

Hachette. PB. \$32.99  
Available now



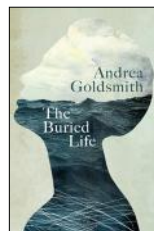
Trainee psychiatrist Doctor Hannah Wright has only just got her head above water in the acute psychiatric ward at Menzies Hospital when she's thrown into the deep end of the outpatient clinic. Keen to develop her skills in talking therapies, she finds herself up against a boss who's focused on medication and a senior colleague with a score to settle. While Hannah's fellow first-years face problems of their own she comes under pressure to seek therapy herself to confront a traumatic past.


**The Seal Woman**  
Beverley Farmer  
Giramondo. PB. \$34.95  
Available 1 March



In mourning for her husband lost at sea, Dagmar leaves the wintry landscapes of the north for the tranquillity of a seaside village in Victoria and a healing Australian summer. In the house where she spent her honeymoon 20 years before, she begins another journey, from grief to serenity and unexpected harvest. First published to acclaim in 1992, *The Seal Woman* is suffused with exquisite imagery charting the interplay of myth and language between the hemispheres.

**The Buried Life**  
Andrea Goldsmith  
Transit Lounge. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 March



 **R** This is the ninth novel from Miles Franklin-shortlisted author and Melbourne Prize winner Andrea Goldsmith. Through three characters, she explores the notions of death, love and friendship, and, at the same time, she throws in a fair dose of Mahler. The result is a novel that, despite its title, brims with life.

A feature of much of Goldsmith's work is the exploration of ideas and how they impact our everyday lives. She manages to produce work that both stimulates and entertains. *The Buried Life* is probably her finest novel, with characters with whom you can fully empathise – and a few villains whom you can despise.

Academic Adrian Moor's field is Death Studies; it's rather specialised, but it's gotten him tenure at a prestigious university, inspired a couple of books and every two years there is the Biennial International Congress of Death Studies, where the attendees seem to have a rather jolly time. However, Adrian's 10-year relationship with Irene has ended suddenly, Irene accusing him of being more interested in death than in life, and he's struggling to move on. By chance, on a trip back from the conference in Adelaide, he discovers the music of Mahler, which helps him escape from his

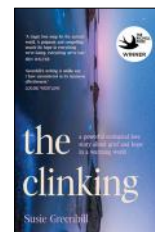
thoughts of Irene. He is also supported by his friend Kezi, a young lesbian artist, who is struggling with demons from her past. Their friendship is one of mutual support and is beautifully drawn.

In a cheese store, Adrian is entranced when he meets Laura, an accomplished town planner. However, Laura is married to Tony, a man she idolises and whom she believes is responsible for her growth as a person. In spite of this she is attracted to Adrian, to the ease with which they can converse and his uncritical acceptance of her; with Tony, she is constantly afraid that she might offend him or say or do something which he might criticise. The book's exploration of this emotional abuse is particularly – excruciatingly – fascinating.

When Tony is away for four weeks, the relationship between Adrian and Laura develops, and she starts to question Tony's controlling behaviour. Laura also wonders about the impact on Adrian of losing his mother at three and his father at seven; Adrian has always denied that these losses have had any impact on his attitude to death, but Laura's questioning leads him to reassess. When Adrian's friend Kezi initially finds out about Laura, she is angry with him, angry at the inappropriateness of his relationship with Laura and not being consulted, but she is drawn to Laura despite this. *The Buried Life* is a big, terrific book that will entertain and inspire you.

Mark Rubbo is chairman of Readings

**The Clinking**  
Susie Greenhill  
Hachette. PB. \$32.99  
Available now



In the not-too-distant future on the island of lutruwita (Tasmania) an ecologist working on extinctions knows the world he loves is unravelling around him. Tom cares deeply for his wife Elena and their daughter Orla, but he is haunted by disappearing species and the news of bushfires, floods and famine. In his mind, the damage done to the Earth is now irreversible and his grief consumes him. Then one day, Tom vanishes. Elena sets out to find answers and the hope she needs for herself and her daughter. But is there hope left to find?

**Sea Green**  
Barbara Hanrahan  
Pink Shorts Press. PB. \$32.99  
Available 5 March



Virginia is on a ship bound for London, lured by her creative dreams and leaving behind her parents in Adelaide. On the journey, she is struck by the messiness of relationships and her uncontrollable body. But things on the other side of the world are no neater. Barbara Hanrahan plunges us into the possibility-filled London of her youth while reflecting the all-but-unchanged experience of finding independence as a creative woman. Originally published in 1974, *Sea Green* has a life and immediacy all its own. This jewel-like new edition features an introduction from Laura Elizabeth Woollett and Hanrahan's own artwork.



**Time Together**

Luke Horton

Scribe. PB. \$34.99

Available 4 March



**R** In Luke Horton's *Time Together*, a group of old friends, now in their 40s, get together at a beach house to hang out for the first time in a long time. The house belongs to the parents of Phil. Phil's mother has

recently died after a long illness, and while his father is away travelling, Phil has invited the friends to regroup and relive some good times, maybe create new memories. One couple brings their two children, including an emotional almost-teen, another friend has a much younger kid and a partner who isn't part of the original crew, another friend again is uncoupled, and then there's Phil himself, still waist-deep in grief though trying to avoid thinking about it too much – on face value, the chances of this vacation running to plan or at all smoothly seem unlikely. Everyone is agreed on the aim to 'have a good time', but when life is happening right now and the minutiae and histories keep getting in the way, the 'good time' seems elusive, perhaps impossible. It sure isn't like it used to be.

This book, Horton's second novel, is a carefully crafted and gorgeously written character study that captures the ways in which friendships, especially long-term ones, are challenged by the pressures of middle age, where differences between experiences, ambitions and values become more pronounced, and where being friends for a long time might not be enough to keep people together. I found myself utterly engrossed in the group's lazy days and the relationships unfolding on the page, learning the longer histories of the characters, the messiness of their love and lust, and changing loyalties. There's an undercurrent of nostalgia too, and a sadness that middle age brings is captured perfectly here: who were we then, who are we now, how much time do we have left? At times claustrophobic and inviting serious self-reflection, this is a beach read unlike any other.

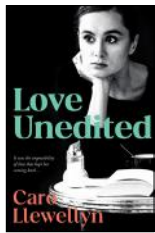
Alison Huber is the head book buyer

**Love Unedited**

Caro Llewellyn

Picador. PB. \$34.99

Available now



**R** *Love Unedited* is the story of a love affair haunted from the very beginning by guilt and by grief.

After a decade apart, Edna meets up with 'the writer' at the elegant Melbourne institution The European restaurant. The writer, a Pulitzer Prize-winning English author who lives in America, is five years older than Edna. He has returned to Australia on a book tour; he now looks older, tired and sad. Edna was 35 when she first met the writer. She worked in publishing when he toured Australia, and they began a secret intimate relationship. Edna was bereft when the writer left to continue his world tour. When the writer returned to America they shared daily personal emails; Edna pretended she was happy.

Both Edna and the writer share tragic events in the past that have shaped them: Edna's parents both 'left' her; the

writer's wife and 5-year-old child were killed in a car accident many years before. Months after the book tour, Edna visits New York, spending fragments of time with the writer. There are no guidelines in their relationship; whenever they get close he pulls away, perhaps feeling he is cheating on the ghosts of his wife and child. Edna observes that he still wears his wedding ring.

Meanwhile Molly, a young Australian publisher living in New York, has come across a manuscript that feels familiar and she's desperate to find the author and publish it.

Caro Llewellyn is from the world of publishing; she has directed the Sydney Writers' Festival, written a memoir called *Diving Into Glass*, was the director of the PEN World Voices Festival, and CEO of The Wheeler Centre. She is now back in the United States working as the executive director of the City of Asylum. There are fascinating parallels between the lives of Edna and Caro Llewellyn.

*Love Unedited* questions the various power imbalances in relationships, while charming us with lush descriptions of New York, Paris and, of course, The (cosy) European in Spring Street, Melbourne.

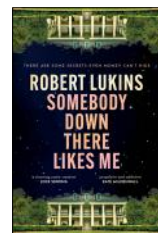
Lou Ryan is manager of Readings Carlton

**Somebody Down There Likes Me**

Robert Lukins

A&amp;U. PB. \$32.99

Available now



**R** Honey and Fax Gulch, billionaire owners of the Gulch empire, summon their adult children to their Connecticut mansion to announce that their empire is coming to an end. Within the week,

the FBI will raid their properties, seize their assets and arrest the parents, leaving the children with nothing. The family is not fighting this – with decades of criminal business proceedings behind them, they know this ending is inevitable.

If the Gulch family have experienced the American dream, they must now face the American nightmare – riches-to-rags, public humiliation, jail time, ruin: a bureaucratic murder of Gatsby – this time, not by gun, but by reputation. And a nightmare it is – Robert Lukins methodically dissects the unravelling of each family member. Honey Gulch – matriarch, genius – cannot drop her cold facade, and, instead, becomes it; Fax Gulch descends further into his madness and severs his last remaining connections to the world. Of the children, Lincoln Gulch has remained working for his parents, and becomes more power hungry as he loses the only claim to power he ever had, while Kick Gulch returns to Belle Haven and fails again to disavow the family of which she has never managed to let go. Kick seems to trade one ghost town for another; the ultra-rich community of Belle Haven is no more alive than a ghost town, including the one from which she has just arrived, and her life is still populated by ghosts of the past. Amid these ruins, what can remain? What is left when wealth, family and consciousness crumble away?

Lukins anatomises wealth, privilege and empire as mercilessly as a dismembering. With the collapse of the American family comes the collapse of the American mind. By turns humorous and tense, comic and tragic, Lukins carves

out a new Americana that will leave all trembling in its wake.

Teddy Peak is from Readings Carlton

**Fire in the Head**

Daniel Oakman

Melbourne Books. PB. \$34.99

Available 4 March



In March 1999, 27-year-old James Harper, a shy public servant living in Canberra, is called to a police station to provide evidence on the suicide of his youngest sister nine years earlier. As the investigation gets

underway, James confesses that he had been abused by his stepfather when he was a child. Could the two events be connected? But as he dives headfirst into the legal system in a quest for justice, James must face some truths about himself and the past he thought he had left behind.

**One Hundred Years of Betty**

Debra Oswald

A&amp;U. PB. \$34.99

Available 4 March



Meet Betty: storyteller, feminist, eternally curious and phenomenally old. On the eve of her 100th birthday party, Betty tells us her story. Born into poverty in pre-war London, and growing up

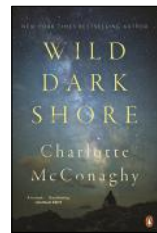
fast during the Blitz, Betty grabs the chance at a bigger life by migrating to Australia. On board the SS *Asturias* she meets three people who will influence the course of her life. Set against a century of world events and social upheavals Betty takes us through the 1950s to the AIDS crisis during the 1980s, and beyond.

**Wild Dark Shore**

Charlotte McConaghy

Penguin. PB. \$34.99

Available 4 March



**R** Shearwater, a tiny subantarctic island, is home to millions of penguins and seals, and four humans. It is a wild, isolated, desolate place which also protects the creatures who live there. Or at least it always has, until now. With temperatures rising and storms worsening, the island is at risk, and with it the seed bank originally set up to safeguard the future of humanity.

Dominic Salt and his three children have been caretakers on the island for nine years, ever since his wife died and they fled to the far end of the earth. They love their home, and the exotic fauna and flora surrounding them, and they are heartbroken to have to leave it. The children aren't sure they will be able to convince their father to abandon the place when the time comes, and yet, it could also be a new beginning for them. The scientists and researchers who have come and gone during their stay on Shearwater have long departed, and the Salt family has only a few weeks to go when a ferocious storm leaves a woman washed up on the shore. The arrival of this stranger, one who should never have survived her time in the ocean, causes conflicting emotions for all, and as their last weeks pass, chaos sets in.

This book is a riveting thriller, an atmospheric literary gem and a masterclass in nature writing all rolled into one. The island itself drags you in, the characters are so real you can't help but fall for them, and the mystery underlying it all is completely enthralling. But at its heart this book is a reminder of what we all may lose in the not-too-distant future: 'Why maybe none of us will be [all right], because we have, all of us humans, decided what to save, and that is ourselves.'

Kate McIntosh is manager of Readings Emporium

**Signs of Damage**

Diana Reid

Ultimo. PB. \$34.99

Available 4 March



**R** As one of Australia's youngest and most successful authors, Diana Reid is not to be underestimated. Reid considers exactly what message she wants to send. Each of her novels

is a parcel of activism with an issue at the core to be discussed. Reid writes to illustrate heartbreak, or misused power, or trauma. Her work has an anthropological element to it in that if we understand this particular action, then we will get this particular result. I believe this is what draws so many of us to Reid's type of writing: it seems evidence based, it seems real. Sally Rooney's writing, as an example, has a similar impulse.

In her third novel, Reid is focused on childhood trauma and the long-term effect this can have on one's body. It is a clever story that begins when Cass, a 13-year-old girl, travels to the south of France with her friend's family. At the end of the holiday, Cass is missing and found several hours later, locked in an underground space. As she's discovered with no visible signs of injury, the incident is seemingly dismissed. Years later, at a reunion of sorts (a funeral), Cass collapses and everything begins to unravel right back to that moment, or to put it another way, to that beginning.

On the one hand, this is a fast-paced book reminiscent of a crime novel, centred on a family that hides secrets from one another. Don't all families? On the other hand, throughout the tale, questions are raised and every action has a corollary story. Every butterfly wing reverberates through the universe. Does it help if we understand specific incidents or do we pay anyway with our bodies, our hearts – our lives, even? *Signs of Damage* expects us to consider these questions, and like all compelling novels, answers none of them, but rather holds up a mirror for us to examine the scene.

Chris Gordon is community engagement and programming manager

**The Knowing**

Madeleine Ryan

Scribe. PB. \$29.99

Available now



**R** Madeleine Ryan's *The Knowing* is a seemingly simple story about a woman who leaves her phone charging at home and must then survive the train ride to work alone with her own thoughts.

Yet, in a brilliantly executed way, it is so



much more than that. The train Camille is on leads her straight to her toxic boss, Holly, who is as intrusive and condescending as they come. Back home, Camille's boyfriend is a tortured poet who, after publishing one book, has a crippling fear of facing the writing process again. Furthermore, Camille is trying to remember why she agreed to live in regional Victoria – her boyfriend's idea – right after being hired to work at a florist in Armadale. To top things off, she also has her period and it's Valentine's Day.

While this book is really set over the course of one day, Camille's memories leading up to this disastrous Valentine's Day lay bare the consequences of following what others tell you to do rather than doing what you want. Full of effortless humour, all-too-relatable moments, and a metaphysical realisation regarding first-world problems, *The Knowing* is an easy, addictive read about womanhood, relationships, social media and body image. Camille's evolution from the beginning of the novel, where she swears she would still shave her legs even if she wasn't dating someone, to the ending, when she reaches the sense of female empowerment she's been yearning for, is a woman's odyssey towards self-worth and personal freedom.

Whether it's the work environment you're stuck in, the relationship you're not sure you should be in, your housing situation, or simply loathing Melbourne transportation without your headphones or mobile phone, Ryan speaks to the reader in a way that makes you feel seen, heard and truly understood.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

### By Her Hand Marion Taffe

Fourth Estate. PB. \$34.99  
Available 5 March



**R** *By Her Hand* is a work of remarkable feminist historical fiction about survival, female rage, and writing your own narrative.

Set in Mercia, 910 AD, Freda has grown up being no stranger to the violence of men, either by the constant threat of the Danes seizing their lands or by her father's own hand. She longs to write more than anything else and tell her own stories of heroism and adventure. But when her sister is killed in a savage raid by the Danes and her father goes missing, Freda has no choice but to find solace in the local church. There, she falls under the wing of Bishop Ælla, who devises a cunning plan to exploit her story as the sole survivor of a Viking attack, and thus attract pilgrims, who bring wealth. Freda's dream to learn how to write comes true, but is it worth the cost of the bishop's growing ownership and control over her? What will she have to do when the Vikings return for more pillaging and war?

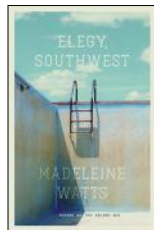
Marion Taffe easily belongs alongside renowned authors of the genre such as Geraldine Brooks, Maggie O'Farrell, Lauren Groff, and Robyn Cadwallar, making it all the more impressive that *By Her Hand* is Taffe's debut. Towards the end of the novel, Freda bluntly states that 'for a woman, living in the world of men is to be always ready for battle.' In various centuries and nations, all of the authors I've mentioned have

shown us the hardships and traumas of women in the past, and how they chose to fight the destinies set out for them – either by sword, pen or their own words – and discover a sense of freedom for themselves. *By Her Hand* is another thread woven into the beautiful tapestry emerging today of women's stories and female empowerment.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

### Elegy, Southwest Madeleine Watts

Ultimo. PB. \$34.99  
Available 4 March



**R** The narrator of *Elegy, Southwest* is Eloise, an Australian living and working in New York, who is telling the story to 'you', her husband. Her husband has recently lost his mother and has become

overwhelmed and changed by the grief of this event in a way that is profound, unfolding, and unexpected. Narrator and husband are on a road trip together, taking in some places of his childhood, but also so that she can carry out research about the history of and prognosis for the Colorado River for her dissertation. Along the way, the landscape becomes a key character in the novel, a known and unknown background for the couple's work and relationship, as they visit places of wild and excessive human intervention (Las Vegas, the Hoover Dam) and awesome natural spectacles (the Grand Canyon), and punctuate their epic travel with mundane searches for lunch and dinner and places to stay on the road. As the story progresses, the reader begins to understand that the narrator is telling the story to her husband's absence. 'You' are not there, but where have 'you' gone? The book is an elegy of many kinds.

Watts has done a wonderful job here, melding the deep emotional terrains of personal grief with the enormity of climate grief in a genuinely moving story that is somehow both a classic American road trip novel and a very Australian book about living in the world right now. Concerns the characters (and we all) have for the Earth and how we live on it and with each other at this time co-exist in the novel with the very personal day-to-day experience of being in a relationship under pressure, in which love, in the end, just might not be enough. In both cases, Watts speaks to an overwhelming sense that we are witnessing the end of things, and teaches us to sit with the discomfort, distress, and ultimately the impossibility of trying to reconcile loss in whatever form it takes. *Elegy, Southwest* is sad and funny, grand and intimate, informed and inquisitive, and above all, a beautiful piece of writing.

Alison Huber is the head book buyer

### Better Days Claire Zorn

Atlantic Books Australia. PB. \$34.99  
Available 4 March



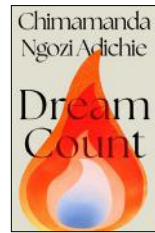
Twenty years ago, Grace only wanted to be with Trent – a boy with a guitar and a lot of promises. Her mother, Dorothy, wanted her to fulfil her potential. In a fit of fury and heartbreak, Grace

boards a plane to London where she builds a dazzling career in the music industry, marries Ed and has two children. That lifestyle is now a distant memory as Grace drags her kids back to the Blue Mountains, where Dorothy is waiting with questions about why Ed is no longer in the picture. On a McDonald's pit stop, Grace bumps into a ghost from the past – Trent.

## International Fiction

### Dream Count Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Fourth Estate. PB. \$34.99  
Available 5 March



In a sparkling, transcendent novel that takes up the very nature of love itself

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie trains her fierce eye on four women: Chiamaka, a Nigerian travel writer living in America; her best friend Zikora, a lawyer; Omelogor, her bold, outspoken cousin; and Kadiatou, her housekeeper. A reflection on the choices we make and those made for us, on daughters and mothers, on our interconnected world, *Dream Count* pulses with emotional urgency and poignant, unflinching observations on the human heart.

### The Unworthy Agustina Bazterrica & Sarah Moses (trans.)

Pushkin. PB. \$29.99  
Available 18 March

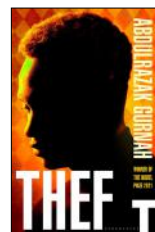


In the House of the Sacred Sisterhood, the unworthy live in fear of the Superior Sister's whip. Seething with resentment, they plot against each other and await who will ascend to the level of the

Enlightened, and who will be punished. Risking her life, one of the unworthy keeps a diary in secret. Slowly, memories surface from a time before the world collapsed, before the Sacred Sisterhood became the only refuge. Then Lucia arrives. She, too, is unworthy – but she is different. And her presence brings a spark of hope to a world of darkness.

### Theft Abdulrazak Gurnah

Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99  
Available 18 March



**R** *Theft* is Abdulrazak Gurnah's 11th novel, and his first since winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2021. Set between Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam on the cusp of the 21st century, memories of

revolution and colonial rule cast long shadows over a rapidly changing nation. It is here that we are introduced to two precocious students, Fauzia and Karim, and Badar, a boy whose life is hemmed in by the choices of his absent father.

This is a quiet novel of unquiet lives, following the slow-winding fates of three

youths as their paths converge and come apart again. A quite literal theft, which at first glance appears central to the plot, is quickly subsumed by the realisation that this is a novel of immeasurable thefts – between people and their governments, each other and themselves. Rather than a tale of interpersonal drama, Gurnah offers us a very real tapestry of the choices made by people and for them; the ways in which life's potential becomes whittled down, or, preciously, branches out.

A subtle writer through and through, Gurnah does not rush to explain to you his purpose. As the layers of circumstance and meaning culminate, the wider picture slowly becomes clear, and is all the more impactful for how carefully he brings the reader to see it for themselves.

Molly Smith is from Readings Emporium

### Broken Country Clare Leslie Hall

John Murray. PB. \$32.99  
Available 11 March



Beth was 17 when she first met Gabriel. Over that summer, he made her think and feel and see differently. When Gabriel left to become who his mother expected him to be, she was broken. It was Frank

who picked up the pieces and together they built a home very different from the one she'd imagined. But when Gabriel returns, Beth's certainty about who she is and what she wants crumbles. She knows it's wrong and she knows people could get hurt. But how can she resist a second chance at first love?

### We Do Not Part

Han Kang, e. yaewon & Paige Aniyah Morris (trans)

Hamish Hamilton. HB. \$35  
Available now



**R** The latest work to be translated into English from the 2024 Nobel Prize for Literature Laureate, Han Kang, is finally here, and it's pulled off a rare feat. By encapsulating everything she stands for as a writer,

it is both a more than worthy entry point for new readers, and a literary feast that rewards long-term readers of her work.

In many ways, *We Do Not Part* feels like a natural progression of her earlier work, and yet it's in the borrowings from her previous novels that something new and even more accomplished has been born. Largely focused on the 1948–1949 Jeju massacre and its decades-long censorship, *We Do Not Part* is considered by Han to form a pair with her novel *Human Acts*, which centred on the military crackdown of pro-democracy protests in Gwangju in 1980. Rife with poetic symbolism and a dreamlike quality reminiscent of *The White Book*, it also experiments with non-linearity, perspective and memory, unravelling with a beautiful sense of originality.

Across her bibliography, I've been awed by how consistently and precisely Han articulates where we are as a society, and the unspeakable things we repeat throughout history and perpetuate into the present and future. How these acts have become who many of us are – and that, quite horribly, it's not



shocking anymore. This preoccupation with violence is always coupled with an unshakeable conviction that we can and must keep going, because, as she writes in *The White Book*, there is no other way. And, indeed, the urgency of her conviction feels stronger here than ever; that it's become more imperative than before to keep from slipping into the cycle of violence; to keep ourselves from parting with what makes us human, and with what makes us see each other as human. In her Nobel Prize Lecture, Han talks about the questions at the heart of *We Do Not Part*: 'to what extent can we love? Where is our limit? To what degree must we love in order to remain human in the end?'

Tracy Hwang is from Readings Emporium

**Eurotrash**  
Christian Kracht &  
Daniel Bowles (trans.)  
Serpent's Tail. PB. \$26.99  
Available now



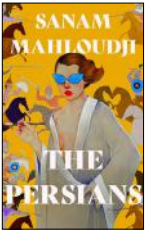
Realising he and she are the very worst kind of people, our unnamed middle-aged narrator embarks on a road trip through Switzerland with his terminally ill and drunken mother. They try to give away or squander the fortune she has amassed from armament industry shares. Along the journey they bicker over the past, throw handfuls of francs into a ravine and exasperate the living daylight out of their long-suffering taxi driver. *Eurotrash* is a bitterly comic, vertiginous mirror-cabinet of familial and historical reckoning.

**The Dream Hotel**  
Laila Lalami  
Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99  
Available 4 March



Sara is returning home from a conference abroad when agents from the Risk Assessment Administration pull her aside at the airport and inform her that she will commit a crime. Using data from her dreams, their algorithm has determined that she presents an imminent risk to the person she loves most and must now be transferred to a retention centre for 21 days to lower her 'risk score'. But it's soon clear returning to her family will cost more than three weeks of good behaviour.

**The Persians**  
Sanam Mahlouji  
Fourth Estate. PB. \$32.99  
Available 5 March



Meet the women of the Valiat family. In Iran, they were *somebodies*. In America, they're *nobodies*. There's Elizabeth, the regal matriarch who remained in Tehran despite the revolution. Then, Niaz, her young, Islamic-law-breaking granddaughter and companion. In America, Elizabeth's two daughters: Shirin, a high-flying event planner in Houston, and Seema, a bored housewife in LA and finally, Bitu, the other granddaughter, a disillusioned law student in New York. When an annual holiday in Aspen goes wildly awry, Shirin

must embark upon a grand quest to restore the family name to its former glory. But what does that mean in a country where the Valiats never mattered to anyone? Spanning 1940s Iran through to a splintered 2000s, *The Persians* is an irresistible portrait of a unique family in crisis that explores timeless questions of love, money, art and fulfilment.

**Twist**  
Colum McCann  
Bloomsbury. PB. \$32.99  
Available 4 March



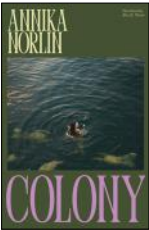
**R** It is, I suppose, the job of the teller to rearrange the scattered pieces of a story so that they conform to some sort of coherence. Between fact and fiction lie memory and imagination. Within memory and imagination lies our desire to capture at least some essence of the truth, which is, at best, messy.

So begins Part Two of *Twist*, a beguiling and fascinating novel from National Book Award-winning author Colum McCann. Anthony Fennel is an Irish writer and journalist on board an Internet cable repair vessel. His personal life is in tatters, his last novel disappeared without trace, his ex-wife and son are living in South America, he is unable to control his drinking and he has taken this ocean-bound journalism job as a last resort to gain some control over the shambles of his life.

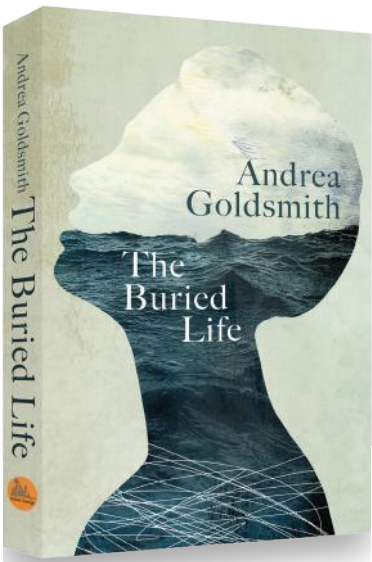
John Conway is the chief of mission onboard the *George Lecointe*, a vessel tasked with repairing the ruptured cables undersea that transmit billions of bytes of data, allowing us to communicate almost instantaneously. The ship and crew do so by trawling along the sea floor with a grappling hook, looking for a burst pipe the size of a garden hose and its ruptured twin, so they can repair the break and restore communication between continents. McCann is far too astute to belabour the fact that almost everyone in this novel is disconnected from themselves, their loved ones and each other. The metaphor of connecting themselves in the blink of an eye while at sea, yet being unable to do so in person repeats throughout. It definitely feels as though McCann spent many months at sea researching and writing this timeless and modern novel.

Pierre Sutcliffe is from Readings St Kilda

**Colony**  
Annika Norlin & Alice E. Olsson (trans.)  
Scribe. PB. \$32.99  
Available 4 March



One morning, Emelie can't get out of bed. Her therapist calls it burnout. She needs to get away from the city, the noise of people, the constant demands, so she goes to the woods, pitches her tent overlooking the lake, and breathes. That's where she sees them, the Colony. Who are they? What do they mean to each other? And why do they behave in such strange ways. As Emelie becomes more and more drawn to the Colony, she begins to re-evaluate her own lifestyle. Wouldn't it be nice to live as they do?



**THE BURIED LIFE**  
ANDREA GOLDSMITH

*A novel about death and life, Mahler, poetry and cheese. Goldsmith writes so well about friendship, her characters come to feel like your own friends.* Andrew Ford

*A rumination on death and the complexity of love from one of our nation's most brilliant minds.* Marieke Hardy



www.transitlounge.com.au



**NON-FICTION**

'A diversity of experiences that combats stereotypes and expands understandings of what it is to be Autistic.'

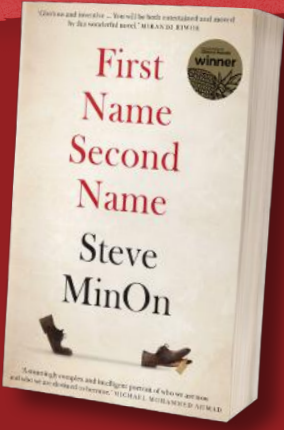
Clem Bastow & Jo Case

## DIVE INTO IDENTITY

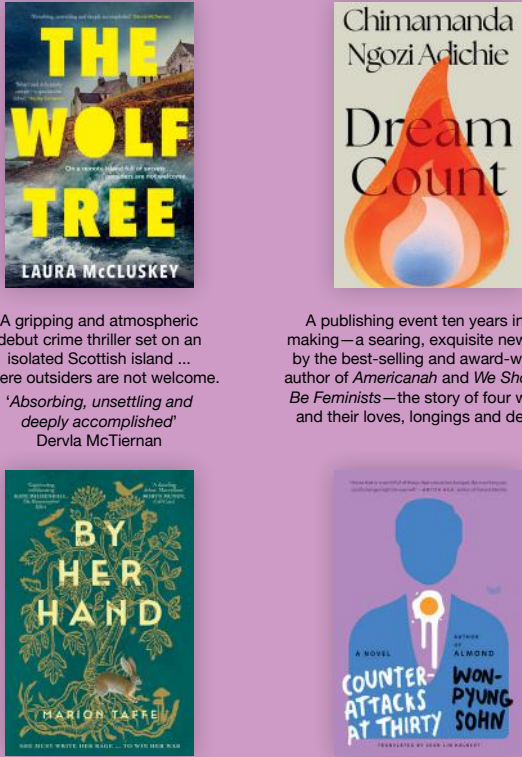
**FICTION**

'MinOn delivers a spellbinding odyssey through the past of a migrant family from Far North Queensland.'

Lech Blaine







**THE WOLF TREE**  
LAURA MCCLUSKEY

A gripping and atmospheric debut crime thriller set on an isolated Scottish island ... where outsiders are not welcome.  
'Absorbing, unsettling and deeply accomplished'  
Dervla McTiernan

**Dream Count**  
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

A publishing event ten years in the making—a searing, exquisite new novel by the best-selling and award-winning author of *Americanah* and *We Should All Be Feminists*—the story of four women and their loves, longings and desires.


**BY HER HAND**  
MARION TAFTE

The engrossing and propulsive historical fiction debut from a talented new writer, for readers of Geraldine Brooks' *Year of Wonders*, Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet*, Lauren Groff's *Matrix*, Robyn Cadwallader's *The Anchoress*, Pip Williams's *The Dictionary of Lost Words*

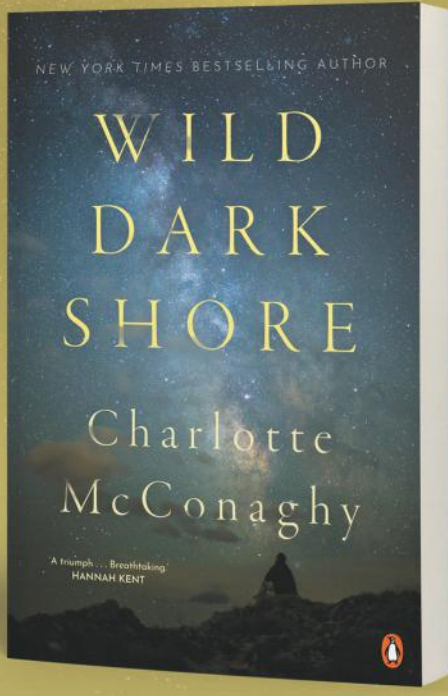
**COUNTER-ATTACKS AT THIRTY**  
WON-PYUNG SOHN

From the bestselling author of *Almond*, *The Devil Wears Prada* meets *The Office* in this witty, humane, and ultimately transformative story of a group of young workers who rebel against the status quo.

**OUT NOW**



'McConaghy writes about both nature and human frailty with eloquent generosity. Readers won't want to leave behind the imagined world of pain and beauty that McConaghy has conjured.'  
- STARRED REVIEW FROM KIRKUS




**WILD DARK SHORE**  
Charlotte McConaghy

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

A triumph... Breathtaking  
HANNAH KENT

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Migrations* and *Once There Were Wolves*, a novel about a family living alone on a remote island, when a mysterious woman washes up on shore.

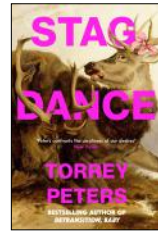


### Stag Dance

Torrey Peters

Serpent's Tail. PB. \$32.99

Available 18 March



**R** In her genre-bending and gender-bending novella collection, Torrey Peters de/reconstructs gender, transness and identity. Each story set in a different time, place, genre and world, Peters annihilates any possibility of categorisation, of binary, problematising not only the binary between man and woman, but also that of cisgender and transgender. Like her first novel, *Detransition, Baby*, Peters is uninterested in making her trans and gender-diverse characters palatable, likeable, or relatable to cisgender people. Instead, her characters are messy, amoral, and achingly human.

The stories range from dystopia, to romance, to fable, to horror. Peters writes of a future in which the body becomes unable to produce gender hormones, so everybody must take hormone enhancement therapy; a Quaker boarding school in which two roommates fool around and discover more about gender and sexuality than they expected; isolated loggers throwing a 'stag dance' in which the men can choose to dress as women to be courted by other men; and a trans and cross-dressing event where the lines between gender and fetishism seem to blur.

All characters construct their genders in such complicated ways that in each story, there is no clear boundary between the transgender and the cisgender characters. What do we lose when we make arguments for being a true transwoman, a true crossdresser? Who do we lose when we refuse to allow entry to our communities and identities? What good does it do to us to be a 'good' trans person?

These stories are carnal, intimate, raw around the edges – they show a trans femininity that is not always soft and polite, nor hard and harsh. I fell into each story like I was drowning – they were suffocating, inevitable, purifying, lovely. Torrey Peters is a writer I know I will turn to again and again and again.

Peters asks many questions throughout these stories, and answers very few. What does shine throughout is a bone-deep love for trans women, especially trans women who refuse to play by the rules.

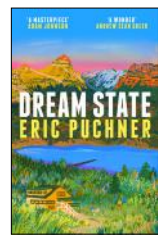
Teddy Peak is from Readings Carlton

### Dream State

Eric Puchner

Sceptre. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Cece is in love. She has arrived early at her in-laws' house in Montana to finish planning her wedding to Charlie, an anaesthesiologist with a brilliant future. When Charlie asks his best friend, Garrett, who doesn't believe in marriage, to officiate the ceremony, Cece can't imagine anyone less appropriate for the task. But as she spends time with him and his gruff mask slips, she grows uncertain about her future, leading to a decision that will alter the three friends' lives forever – the events of that summer

reverberating across 50 years and spanning generations.

### The Antidote

Karen Russell

C&W. PB. \$34.99

Available 18 March



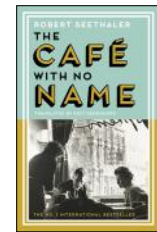
Visit the Antidote of Uz – a prairie witch who can keep your memories safe. Speak into her earhorn, and your secrets, shames, private joys, will leave your mind and enter hers. Until the Black Sunday storm which vaporises every memory she has stored. If her customers discover the truth, her life will be in danger. To the Antidote's surprising defence comes Asphodel, an aspiring prairie witch, who, along with her uncle and a photographer with an enchanted camera, confront what has cursed the town and face down the storm coming their way.

### The Café with No Name

Robert Seethaler & Katy Derbyshire (trans.)

Canongate. PB. \$32.99

Available 4 March



It is 1966, and Robert Simon has just fulfilled his dream by taking over a café on the corner of a bustling Vienna market. He recruits a barmaid, Mila, and soon the customers flock in from factory workers to market traders, and elderly ladies to a painter, each bring their stories and their plans for the future. As Robert listens and Mila refills their glasses, romances bloom, friendships are made and fortunes change. And change is coming to the city around them, to the little café, and to Robert's dream.

### Too Soon: A Novel

Betty Shamieh

Avid Reader/S&S. PB. \$32.99

Available 5 March



**R** In *Too Soon*, we are introduced to 35-year-old Arabella, a child of Palestinian American immigrants. She is a New York theatre director who finds herself at a crossroads in her career

and dating life. She's been offered an exciting opportunity to put on a gender-swapped interpretation of *Hamlet* in the West Bank, a chance that could reinvigorate her career.

Meanwhile, her grandmother Zoya conspires to match Arabella with Aziz, a Palestinian-American doctor volunteering in Gaza. Yet, Arabella finds herself with growing feelings for Yoav, an Israeli-American theatre designer.

Naya is the youngest of Zoya's daughters and defies her mother the most. She was married off before she was ready, becoming Arabella's mother at 16. This tension between personal desires and familial obligations speaks to the generational struggles that can define the lives of women.

This novel touches on the stories of these three generations of Palestinian women, and the generational trauma caused by the mass displacements



of Palestinians. Betty Shamieh offers readers an opportunity to explore themes of belonging and the complexities of changing identity in a new country. She also weaves these stories seamlessly, making *Too Soon* a highly immersive read that draws the reader into the emotional landscapes of all three perspectives.

Personally, Zoya's perspective stood out to me the most, with an interesting outlook on the American immigrant experience, as well as the complexities of motherhood and womanhood. I also feel like I've gained insight into how it might feel having the weight of history on your shoulders, as through Arabella's perspective Shamieh shows us another viewpoint: one that shares what it's like to be constantly reminded of the need to continue the legacy of your nation, especially when the legacy is in danger of disappearing.

I would recommend *Too Soon* for anyone looking for an accessible read to introduce them to the wonderful world of Palestinian literature.

Nicole Vasilev is from Readings Emporium

Counterattacks At Thirty

Won-pyung Sohn & Sean Lin Halbert (trans.)

HarperCollins. PB. \$29.99

Available 19 March



In her administrative job at the Academy Jihye silently tolerates office politics and the absurdities of Korean bureaucracy. Only one misplaced email away from career catastrophe, she becomes a master of

the silent eyeroll and the tactical coffee run. All this is upended when new intern, Gyuok Lee, arrives. Gyuok recruits a trio of office allies to carry out plans for minor revenge. But as their attacks increase, the initial joy they felt becomes something more and Jihye and the others will discover the beauty of friendship and the extraordinary power of unity against adversity.

Show Don't Tell

Curtis Sittenfeld

Doubleday. PB. \$34.99

Available now



Curtis Sittenfeld fans rejoice, Sittenfeld is back with her signature wit, impeccable prose and acute insight. In *Show Don't Tell*, a collection of perfectly polished short stories, Sittenfeld delves below the equally polished veneers of her mainly white, middle-class, middle-aged female characters, to explore the ideas of ambition, success, female friendship, marriage, power dynamics and white privilege. I feel like this book could easily be called *Write What You Know*.

Sittenfeld and her audience have aged with her characters and these are issues that will strike a chord with many. If this sounds boring to you, it is not. The stories are sharp, sincere and linger: from the movie exec who must travel to middle America to convince a conservative Christian author to include a gay couple in his film adaptation, only to be thrown off guard by their sexual chemistry, to the woman juggling her job, her marriage and her teenager while waiting for a follow-

up mammogram – all the while texting her best friend who lives miles away for support. Or the woman meeting an ex at the height of the pandemic and deciding she'll hug him. It is with small details that these stories are built. The details almost seem mundane, but they sink in and stick.

These stories are intimate and challenging, holding up a mirror to the mid-life abyss. Sittenfeld writes character and dialogue so well that I did more than once check if the story correlated to her own life (it did not). In *Show Don't Tell*, she is exploring the idea of what makes a good and meaningful life, in all its mess and glory. And for the die-hard fans (of which there are rightly plenty), Lee Fiora, from Sittenfeld's 2005 debut novel, *Prep*, returns in 'Lost But Not Forgotten', with a visit to Ault for her 30-year reunion.

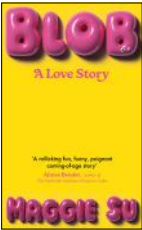
Rosalind McClintock is head of marketing

BLOB: A Love Story

Maggie Su

Sceptre. PB. \$32.99

Available now



Vi Liu's life is a mess. Having dropped out of college, she's stuck in a job she hates at a local hotel. Her ex-boyfriend has blocked her and she's lashing out at her family and co-workers. One night, drunk outside a drag club, she stumbles across a mysterious sentient blob. She takes it home, where she feeds it a diet of sugary cereal and reality TV. Slowly, she realises that she can shape the blob into her perfect man. But is Bob the blob really the answer to all her problems, or a catalyst for further disaster?

Flesh

David Szalay

Jonathan Cape. PB. \$34.99

Available 4 March



Istvan is a 15-year-old boy who has moved with his mother to a new town in Hungary. He has one (unnamed) friend and is forced by his mother to help the middle-aged woman next door with

her shopping. His friend soon informs him that he is having regular sex with a girl from the other side of town and that she is also willing to do the same with him. Istvan anxiously goes to her flat with his friend, but is so intimidated by the scenarios running through his mind that he is left immobilised and mute. She orders him out, interpreting his reaction as a complete lack of interest, and so his first foray into the carnal life fails due to his outward apathy.

This is the first of many instances where he is led by his flesh into a world where he is incapable of expressing any of his desires or inclinations. He is soon seduced by his neighbour after the grocery run, but is a passive and possibly reluctant participant.

As far as narrative goes, he kills someone, goes to prison, enlists in the Hungarian army and is sent to Desert Storm, becomes a bouncer and learns the skills that take him to London as a security expert.

This summary does no justice whatsoever to one of the strangest and most haunting books I have read. David Szalay has said elsewhere that he wanted

to write a novel where the challenge was to dramatise waiting. To make nothing happening as interesting as something happening.

Everyone in *Flesh* is inarticulate, emotionally detached and passive in the flow of the story, yet, I have not stopped thinking about this audacious novel since I read it. A friend of mine read his earlier novel *All That Man Is* on a plane and then, jetlagged, in an industrial hotel on the outskirts of an airport where the sizzle of neon lights over empty giant car parks and the vending machine in the hallway were the soundtrack. I thought this was almost the perfect way to read Szalay.

This ambitious novel is an outstanding achievement by a writer in complete control of his gifts.

Pierre Sutcliffe is from Readings St Kilda

Fire Exit

Morgan Talty

Scribe. PB. \$32.99

Available now



Charles Lamosway has watched the life he might have had unfold across the river on Maine's Penobscot Reservation. He caught brief moments of his neighbour Elizabeth's life, but he has a secret he is no longer willing to keep that divides him from her and the tribal community. Elizabeth is his daughter. It's been weeks since he's seen her, and Charles is worried. As he becomes increasingly haunted by his past he is forced to confront a lost life on the reservation. Is his secret about Elizabeth his to share? And would his daughter want to know the truth?

May You Have Delicious Meals

Junko Takase & Morgan Giles (trans.)

Hutchinson Heinemann. PB. \$34.99

Available now



In their Saitama office, Ashikawa is the kind of woman Nitani knows he will likely marry: sweet, obliging, and determined to wean him off his addiction to instant noodles. But he finds himself increasingly unable to respect her. His drinking buddy, Oshio, is bolder and uninhibited. In the oppressive office atmosphere, the pair grows closer, both outsiders struggling with the rigid status quo. Driven to behave in increasingly absurd ways by the workplace rules that govern their lives, they must navigate the tensions of modern life.

Fundamentally

Nussaibah Younis

W&N. PB. \$32.99

Available now



When academic Nadia is disowned by her puritanical mother and dumped by her lover, she decides to accept a UN job in Iraq. Tasked with rehabilitating ISIS women, Nadia becomes mired in the world of international aid, surrounded by bumbling colleagues. But then she meets Sara, an East Londoner who joined ISIS at 15, and she is struck by how similar their stories are. Sara and Nadia immediately connect and a powerful friendship forms.

When Sara confesses a secret, Nadia is forced to make a difficult choice.

Science Fiction & Fantasy

The River Has Roots

Amal El-Mohtar

Arcadia. HB. \$34.99

Available 11 March



**R** *The River Has Roots* is an absolutely enchanting read. Inspired by classic folk tales and poetry, like Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* and the folksong 'Tam Lin', Amal El-Mohtar introduces us

to a world where grammar works like magic, flowing along a river called Liss, conjugating or transforming the land as it passes by. The story follows two sisters, Esther and Ysabel Hawthorn, whose job is to sing to the willows that grow beside the river. Close to where the sisters live, there is also a gateway to Arcadia, also called Faerie, or the Land Beyond. The sister's paths start to diverge when Esther meets one of the Arcadians who crosses over and finds her love drawn in two directions.

*The River Has Roots* is a clever and joyous exploration of language, music and encountering the strange. It takes pleasure in riddles and transformations, and the different kinds of bonds between characters. It doesn't shy away from ambiguity; in fact, it seeks out the uncanny, and not as a way of scaring or warning the reader. Rather, the story embraces the queer joy in transformation and fluidity. It reminded me of classic stories of elves and fairies, full of riddles and bargains, but reimagined to unexpectedly take a different path, or have a slightly different ending.

Amal El-Mohtar's previous novella, co-written with Max Gladstone, *This Is How You Lose the Time War* swept up awards, including the Hugo, Nebula, Locus, Aurora and British Science Fiction and Fantasy awards, and was shortlisted for many others. El-Mohtar is also an award-winning short story writer, poet and essayist – talents that were on full display in her latest novella. I loved *This Is How You Lose the Time War*, but I was deeply impressed by the thought and care that went into crafting the world of *The River Has Roots*. I will be rereading this novella over and over.

Stephanie King is from Readings Emporium

Onyx Storm (The Emyrean, Book 3)

Rebecca Yarros

Piatkus. PB. \$34.99

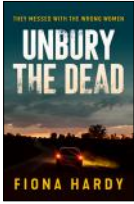
Available now



After nearly 18 months at Basgiath War College, Violet Sorrengail knows there's no more time for lessons, because the battle has truly begun. With enemies closing in from outside their walls and within their ranks, it's impossible to know who to trust. Violet must journey beyond the failing Aretian wards to seek allies from unfamiliar lands to stand with Navarre. The trip will test every bit of her wit, luck, and strength. She will do anything to save what she loves, but not everyone can survive. **R**



# Unbury the Dead



**Unbury the Dead**  
Fiona Hardy  
Affirm Press. PB. \$34.99  
Available now

Read Lian Hingee's Crime  
Book of the Month review of  
*Unbury the Dead* on page 19.

Our editor **Elke Power** interrogates former *Readings Monthly* 'Dead Write' columnist and current Readings bookseller, reviewer and award-winning writer **Fiona Hardy** about her debut crime novel, *Unbury the Dead*.



Fiona Hardy is one of our very own Readings booksellers, as well as a writer and reviewer from Melbourne.

**Photo credit** | Lian Hingee

**EP** Like most booksellers, you are widely read and have more than one favourite genre/topic/style. You take that even further by being a gifted writer in more than one area! What has it been like writing and publishing a crime novel after publishing several acclaimed middle grade novels?

**FH** It's been wild! I've been lucky to stay with the same publisher – Affirm Press – and I knew I was in good hands with them. Their crime stable includes the likes of Christian White, Anna Downes, and Kate Solly, among MANY others, so they know what makes a good crime book. Much is the same – editors scolding me about excessive word count and reminding me to make terrible things happen to my characters when I just want them to have a nice time hanging out. A big difference is that some of my always-supportive friends who are resolutely not children's book readers have said, 'Oh, I might read this one!' Also, I appreciate that it has a much shorter title, which is way easier to remember.

**EP** For those who have not yet read Lian's rave review on page 15, can you briefly introduce *Unbury the Dead*?

**FH** Alice and Teddy are sometime private detectives, sometime hooligans for hire, and always have each other's backs. At the start of *Unbury*, Alice is driving the coffin of a very wealthy man to his final resting place in regional Victoria before the rest of Australia finds out he's dead, and Teddy is hunting a missing man in Melbourne's suburbs. The two cases collide (as cases tend to do), and the violent fallout changes everything for them.

**EP** When you were the crime reviewer for the *Readings Monthly*, we used to talk about the kinds of characters who frequently appeared in

the investigative roles, and those that were most commonly put in the victim-of-crime roles. When you were writing *Unbury the Dead*, were there conventions or tropes you wanted to honour in your novel, or any you particularly wanted to avoid?

**FH** A great question! It's interesting, because for readers, there are always tropes one person will love that other people roll their eyes at. All crime fiction is good crime fiction, of course, but for me, I really love stories with protagonists that aren't necessarily cops, but still have a lot of parallel skills, and work in that fascinating grey area outside the constraints of police investigation. (Though, of course, any police procedural worth its salt will have cops throwing the rule book at their superiors at some point anyway.) I remember being back in my 20s, reading crime, and feeling vastly underrepresented – so I made my characters in their late 20s, but with a lifetime's worth of knowledge in the field in Teddy's case, at least, thanks to her criminal upbringing. I deliberately avoided any sexual assault in the book, so nobody has to be shaken by an unexpected reference to it. And as you say, I love partners in crime that support and adoringly antagonise each other – Teddy and Alice's relationship was a dream to write, and I loved every moment of it.

**EP** One of the most immediately compelling aspects of *Unbury the Dead* is the superb characterisation. I already feel like Teddy and Alice are old friends and I cannot wait to go on more adventures with them. I definitely need to know more about Choker's backstory, too! How did these multidimensional characters and their relationships come to you?

**FH** Thank you so much! Teddy and Alice's story has been building for years and years – the first spark of them began with an unfinished idea I had that involved Teddy, who wasn't quite complete until I wrote Alice in as her partner – then they became real people, essentially, in my mind. I wrote much more about the two of them and their history than will ever see the light of day, thanks to my editor, Laura Franks, who is unfortunately of the opinion that quality is superior to quantity when it comes to word count. Every word I've written of Teddy and Alice speaking has fed into their relationship, and made their interactions easier to predict. Mostly I'm in control of what they do; sometimes they change the plot's trajectory because they would never do what would conveniently work more easily for me. I've always loved books where every side character has their own story and life worth hearing, and one of the hardest things for me is paring that back for sensible readability reasons.

**EP** For women whose jobs routinely involve acting as unsentimental messengers, Teddy and Alice really care about the missing teenager and the dead rich guy they've been allocated, as well as the important people in their lives. Is the tension between their jobs and their capacity for compassion or warmth something you were keen to explore?

**FH** It really was. Victims often become faceless, nameless, reduced to how they died – in both news stories and fiction. I know it's because of space constraints, but I really wanted to expand on both of the people related to their cases, and the lengths Alice and Teddy go to trying to figure these people out. While there's a certain distance between investigators

and the people they've never met and are trying to find, sometimes that can help them look at a big picture that the people near them can no longer see; that aspect was hard but also worthwhile to write (I hope!). And it seemed necessary to make Teddy and Alice warm and compassionate when their jobs put them squarely in a very seedy grey area, narrator-wise – how sympathetic can you be to characters that have kicked someone's teeth in before the book even starts? Hopefully, the answer is 'very'.

**EP** Were there other issues you wanted to tackle in a crime novel, or that arose in the writing of this specific tale?

**FH** Writing is such a living beast at times – ideas change, plotlines get evicted, whole characters disappear. On a surface level, it's a little bit about Melbourne's food scene, and a bit about car chases, and partly about what a criminal enterprise might look like if it was run like a small business with a chipper attitude and also, occasionally, had to deal with dead bodies. On a deeper level, it's about who you can trust in an untrustworthy career, or a little about recovering from bone-wrenching guilt. Then there's also the larger question that Teddy and Alice face: what makes somebody a good person, and worth other people's time?

**EP** There are consequences for a few characters after a lawn-mowing episode goes awry. Do you have strong feelings about roses, or gardens generally?

**FH** Ha, I would have said 'no' but when I think about my first middle grade book – where kids make a horror movie about a killer rosebush – I can't help but think that maybe I have more of an issue with roses than I thought? As an apartment-dweller with a sorry garden situation (I'm in an ongoing legal dispute with the hungry neighbourhood possum), I think imagining a beautiful rose garden seems like fiction; maybe that's why I keep writing them, and then unthinkingly roughing them up.

**EP** Please tell me this is just the first of many, many Teddy and Alice stories to come? And are there any more books for middle grade or other young readers in the pipeline?

**FH** Fingers crossed this isn't the only Teddy and Alice story – I have so many more plans for them that I'm already working on, and a short story I wrote about the two of them called 'Green Thumbs' won the Scarlet Stiletto Prize HQ Fiction Award for Best Thriller in 2024, which was a huge honour. I've also been writing some school readers recently that primary school kids might find in their reading tubs soon, and I'm never far away from working on another kids' book – I'm always working on about three things at the same time as ideas are rarely a problem for me, but making time for them sure is!

**EP** And one last question: what are you reading at the moment? Any recommendations?

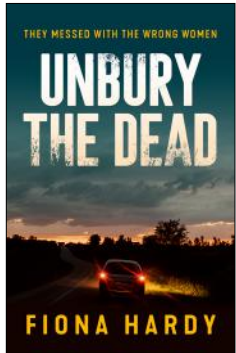
**FH** Crime-wise, I recently loved Lainie Anderson's historical novel *The Death of Dora Black*, Mark Mupotsa-Russell's gritty and local (to me) *The Hitwoman's Guide to Reducing Household Debt*, and the new twisty book by Christian White, *The Ledge*. I'm also attempting to read Samantha Harvey's Booker Prize-winning *Orbital*, which is beautiful and visceral, but I want to take my time with it. **R**



# Crime

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Crime



**Unbury the Dead**  
Fiona Hardy  
Affirm Press. PB. \$34.99  
Available now

An investigative-thriller-cum-road-trip-adventure that meanders delightfully through the familiar surrounds of Melbourne and regional Victoria, *Unbury the Dead* is a cracking mystery, but where it really shines is in the tender depiction of the ride-or-die friendship between our two protagonists.

Hardy's exquisite grasp of human emotion is shown to full effect as she deftly walks the tightrope between grief and humour. Like Alice and Teddy themselves, *Unbury the Dead* is sharp-edged but full of heart, distinctly funny, and seriously clever. I can't wait to see what happens next.

Lian Hingee is the digital marketing manager

**R** Readers are in for a treat with *Unbury the Dead*, award-winning writer Fiona Hardy's hugely anticipated debut crime novel. Long-term *Readings Monthly* readers will be familiar with Hardy's warmth and wit over her 12-year tenure as our crime columnist, and it's a thrill to see her back on those pages, this time as a crime writer.

*Unbury the Dead* is a cracking mystery, but where it really shines is in the tender depiction of the ride-or-die friendship between our two protagonists.

*Unbury the Dead* revolves around two 'cleaners' (in the mafia sense of the word, not the housekeeping kind), Teddy and Alice, who are called in from their well-deserved holidays for two straightforward jobs that prove to be anything but. Alice has been hired to drive the body of the richest man in Australia to his final resting place, while Teddy is on the hunt for a disaffected young man who's gone missing. Before too long it becomes clear the two jobs have more in common than expected, and that's where things start to get dangerous.

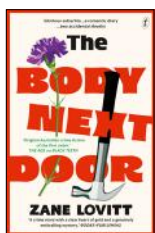
**The Bluff**  
Joanna Jenkins  
A&U. PB. \$34.99  
Available 4 March



Ruth Dawson has taken a break from big city law to fill in for a few months at a mate's small-town legal practice. When Bea Baulderstone's mum comes to the office worried that she hasn't

seen her 17-year-old daughter for five days, Ruth tries to find Bea. The town is a wall of indifference, and Constable Gazza Parker refuses to report Bea missing, but then Dash Rogers is found at his farm gate, dead from a gunshot wound, and suddenly the town is very interested in Bea's whereabouts.

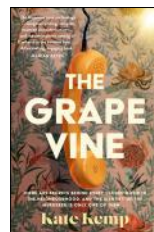
**The Body Next Door**  
Zane Lovitt  
Text. PB. \$34.99  
Available 4 March



When Claire Corral goes missing from her home on Carnation Way, her neighbour Jamie isn't too concerned. He's busy – caring for his dad and recovering from a broken heart. Then the police turn up. Is Claire's disappearance connected with the body found next door 13 years ago? Does Jamie's father, now grappling with dementia, know more about these events than he should? And then there's Tess who just moved in at number 35. As Jamie asks around, an unsettling picture begins to form.

When Claire Corral goes missing from her home on Carnation Way, her neighbour Jamie isn't too concerned. He's busy – caring for his dad and recovering from a broken heart. Then the police turn up. Is Claire's disappearance connected with the body found next door 13 years ago? Does Jamie's father, now grappling with dementia, know more about these events than he should? And then there's Tess who just moved in at number 35. As Jamie asks around, an unsettling picture begins to form.

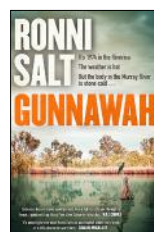
**The Grapevine**  
Kate Kemp  
Hachette. PB. \$32.99  
Available now



It's summer in Australia, 1979, and on a quiet cul-de-sac in Canberra a housewife is scrubbing the tiles of the bathroom floor. She is trying desperately to remove all traces of blood before they stain.

Her husband seems remarkably calm, considering he has just murdered their neighbour. The news of Antonio Marietti's death spreads and suspicion mounts. Twelve-year-old Tammy launches her own investigation, determined to find out what happened, but she is not the only one who uncovers more mysteries than they solve.

**Gunnawah**  
Ronni Salt  
Hachette. PB. \$32.99  
Available now



When 19-year-old farmgirl Adelaide Hoffman applies for a cadetship at the *Gunnawah Gazette*, she sees it as her ticket out of a life that feels too small for her. The paper's owner, Valdene,

puts her straight to work on a routine assignment covering an irrigation project, but it soon puts Adelaide on the trail of a much bigger story. Water is money in farming communities, and when Adelaide starts asking questions, it's like she's

poked a bull ants' nest. Someone will do whatever it takes to stop Adelaide and Val finding out how far the river of corruption and crime runs.

**The Wolf Tree**  
Laura McCluskey  
HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99  
Available now



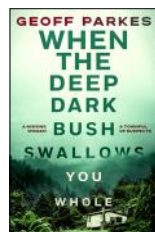
**R** A number of tropes exist in the crime fiction world, such as cosy crime, the police procedural and the locked room mystery, the latter being a great legacy of Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers and other 'golden age' writers. An established variation on this is the remote location: think Jane Harper's *The Lost Man*, or Christie's *And Then There Were None*, where the remote setting – be it the environmental conditions or the inhabitants – can obfuscate the solution. Laura McCluskey's terrific debut is a novel that exploits this to great effect and combines additional elements: folkloric tradition and two (famously named) detectives with a dash of interpersonal conflict.

The setting for *The Wolf Tree* is Eilean Eadarm, an isolated Scottish island which is little more than a rock. Broody, windswept, and thoroughly uninviting to the two detectives – George Lennox and Richie Stewart – tasked with investigating a mysterious death. The inhabitants are insular, unfriendly, and wary of the outside interference in their day-to-day lives while they grapple with the death of one of their own. Eighteen-year-old Alan Ferguson was found dead at the base of the lighthouse, over a century after three lighthouse keepers disappeared without a trace. The two detectives find that nothing is as it seems, and with the weather preventing them from leaving the island until the case is resolved, neither the weather nor their slow progress is helping their relationship.

I loved the slow burn of this book, its gothic undertones, and characters I'd expect to find in *Lanny*. It's one for lovers of Scottish folklore, viewers of the recent series *The Red King*, and more generally anyone who loves an atmospheric and suspenseful thriller!

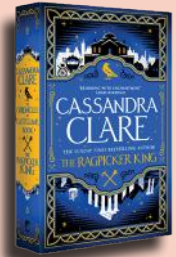
Julia Jackson is from Readings Carlton

**When the Deep Dark Bush Swallows You Whole**  
Geoff Parkes  
Penguin. PB. \$34.99  
Available now



It's January 1983. During his university summer break, Ryan Bradley returns to the remote town of Nashville in New Zealand. He's working long, punishing hours as a wool presser, he needs to sell his late mother's house, and he's increasingly feeling like an outcast in his childhood town. But mostly he's haunted by memories of Sanna Sovernen, a Finnish backpacker and his secret lover, who worked with him in the shearing shed the summer before – then vanished without trace. Now Sanna's sister Emilia has arrived from Finland, determined to get answers. **R**

## Stories Worth Savouring



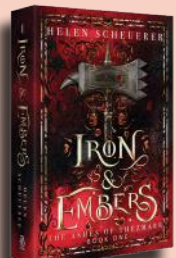
**THE RAGPICKER KING**  
CASSANDRA CLARE

Cassandra Clare's spellbinding epic fantasy series is packed with magic, power, and political intrigue, and continues the saga begun in the *Sunday Times* bestseller *Sword Catcher*.



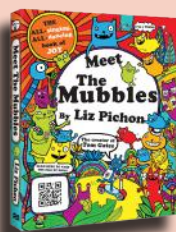
**COOK AHEAD**  
JUSTINE SCHOFIELD

Popular TV cook Justine Schofield shows you how to make your freezer do the hard work for you, saving time and money in the kitchen.



**IRON & EMBERS**  
HELEN SCHEUERER

The breathtaking first instalment in the new epic fantasy romance series *The Ashes of Thezmarr*, from rising romantasy star Helen Scheuerer.



**MEET THE MUBBLES**  
LIZ PICHON

From Liz Pichon, the creator of the multimillion-copy global bestseller *Tom Gates*, comes a hilarious new, full colour series.



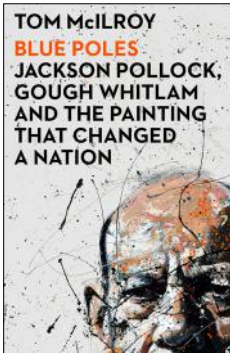
Macmillan  
Pan Macmillan Australia



# Nonfiction

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Australian Studies



**Blue Poles: Jackson Pollock, Gough Whitlam and the Painting That Changed a Nation**  
Tom McIlroy  
Hachette. PB. \$34.99  
Available now

**R** I'm going to go out on a sturdy limb and say, from the outset, that I LOVE *Blue Poles*. It's a terrific painting. I have great memories of a school trip to Canberra – exactly as Gough Whitlam wished for schoolkids – to see this national treasure. Tom McIlroy's jaunty full-length debut offers readers a more contemporary look at this acquisition, now that some 50 years have passed, and the dust has settled. With the benefit of that distance, younger generations can shake their heads with alacrity at the moral panic that surrounded the purchase of this magnificent painting.

You'll mostly know McIlroy from his shorter-form journalism, but here he demonstrates that he's more than capable of turning his hand to complex subjects. He does a fine job distilling the essence of American Modernism and forays into Abstract art, and Abstract Expressionism for general readership.

**Tom McIlroy's** jaunty full-length debut offers readers a more contemporary look at this acquisition [... and the] moral panic that surrounded the purchase of this magnificent painting.

The first half of the book contextualises Jackson Pollock's life, and his myriad struggles: with alcoholism, mental health, and impostor syndrome to name a few, and within artist and patron circles, giving due recognition to the role of Lee Krasner. As Pollock's wife, she supported him fully, often coaxing him from an alcoholic fug back into everyday life, managing to balance all of this with her own successful career as an artist.

The middle section is devoted to the *Blue Poles* artwork itself, with a good account of its history prior to arriving in Canberra, while the final section is devoted to the painting's acquisition and the resulting flap. While Whitlam seized on the big moment he was offered when he greenlit this purchase for the nation, credit is also due to James Mollison for his brilliant *raison d'être* when building the collection in that first decade. The national gallery didn't need to ape the state's collections, which is why the holdings of 20th-century American art are so strong. This is a terrific book, a must-read for the year!

Julia Jackson is from Readings Carlton

## Australian Studies

### Trouwerner: A Tasmanian Elder's Story of Ancient Wisdom and Hope

Aunty Patsy Cameron & Martin Flanagan  
Magabala. PB. \$34.99  
Available now



*Trouwerner* is an inviting yarn between Elder Aunty Patsy Cameron, the 28th Tasmanian Governor Kate Warner, and journalist Martin Flanagan. It weaves through the coming-into-being time, Trouwerner's colonisation and the lies of history, to the power of truth-telling and hope for the future. It is a story of kinship and respect, of realism and optimism, welcoming the reader into the conversation. Down the gravel road where Patsy lived as a child is a stretch of tall bush. Like a stage curtain, it hides the vista of Franklin Sound. Walking through that bush with Patsy is like entering a crowded room where you are a stranger and your companion seems to know everyone.

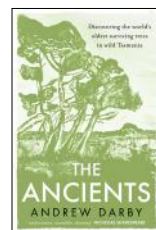
### What's the Big Idea? 30 Years of the Australia Institute Anna Chang & Alice Grundy (eds) Australia Institute Press. PB. \$34.99 Available 4 March



To mark The Australia Institute's 30 years of big ideas, Melbourne University Press have asked some of the leading thinkers from Australia and around the world to share a big idea for a better

Australia. This inspiring anthology offers fresh thinking about climate action, safeguarding our democracy, and the importance of bravery in policymaking.

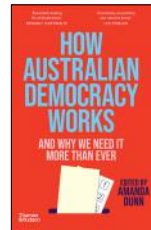
### The Ancients: Discovering the World's Oldest Surviving Trees in Wild Tasmania Andrew Darby A&U. PB. \$34.99 Available 4 March



In wild Tasmania there are trees whose direct ancestors lived with dinosaurs. Many of those alive today are thousands of years old, and some have been growing for ten millennia or more. They

are mostly hard to reach, hidden in forest valleys or on remote mountains, survivors of human greed and fire. Prize-winning nature writer Andrew Darby goes on a journey to find these trees, the oldest in the world. He tells of their exploitation and loss to fire even as their true value was revealed, and of the people offering hope for their future.

### How Australian Democracy Works: And Why We Need It More Than Ever Amanda Dunn (ed.) & The Conversation T&H. PB. \$34.99 Available 4 March



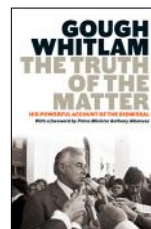
**R** In recent years, the trust in Australian politics and politicians has been at an all-time low. From political polarisation and the spread of disinformation to the lack of trust in the public institutions that underpin our government, the truth can often be hard to find. *How Australian Democracy Works* is a pulse check of our country's political health and a helpful guide to understanding our nation's political history and our place in the world, from government, parliament, the Constitution and pressing policy issues.

### Quarterly Essay 97: Losing It – Can We Stop Violence Against Women and Children? Jess Hill Black Inc. PB. \$29.99 Available 17 March



Australian governments promised to end violence against women and children in a single generation. Instead, it is escalating: men have been murdering women at an increased rate, coercive control and sexual violence is becoming more complex and severe, and we see a marked rise in youth-on-youth sexual assault. Why? In *Losing It*, Jess Hill investigates Australia's National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children to find out what's working and what's not – and what we can do to turn things around. This compassionate, groundbreaking essay lifts the lid on a national crisis.

### The Truth of the Matter: His Powerful Account of The Dismissal Gough Whitlam MUP. PB. \$29.99 Available 5 March



Passionate, pithy, learned, witty, and vigorously combative, *The Truth of the Matter* tells the extraordinary story of the only Prime Minister of Australia ever deposed from office, Gough Whitlam. It is his own account of the events on Remembrance Day 1975 when the Governor-General of Australia, Sir John Kerr, sacked him from office. The Dismissal was the culmination of almost three years of political conflict, as Whitlam's progressive Labor government rammed home legislative reform in the

face of implacable and increasingly bitter conservative resistance. This 50th-anniversary edition has a new foreword from Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

## Anthologies

### Someone Like Me: An Anthology of Non-fiction by Autistic Writers Clem Bastow & Jo Case (eds) UQP. PB. \$36.99 Available 4 March



**R** While the 'nerdy white man' stereotype of Autism dominates in media and popular culture, other Autistic people miss out on seeing themselves, their unique experiences, their hardships and their triumphs. In this groundbreaking anthology, 25 Autistic gender-diverse and women writers explore their experiences. Ranging from sex, living room dance parties and the natural world to eating disorders, all-encompassing passions and religion, autistic people of all kinds are invited to find company in these pages – and maybe even see themselves, too.

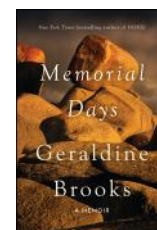
## Biography

### Looking at Women, Looking at War: A War and Justice Diary Victoria Amelina HarperCollins. PB. \$34.99 Available 5 March



When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Victoria Amelina was busy writing a novel, taking part in the country's literary scene, and parenting her son. Then she became someone new: a war crimes researcher and the chronicler of extraordinary women like herself who joined the resistance. On the evening of 27 June 2023, Amelina and three international writers were hit by a Russian cruise missile while eating at a restaurant. She died on July 1st, aged 37, leaving behind an incredible account of the ravages of war and the cost of resistance.

### Memorial Days: A Memoir Geraldine Brooks Hachette. HB. \$32.99 Available now



**R** 27 May 2019, Memorial Day. Geraldine Brooks, alone at her home on Martha's Vineyard, receives a phone call that changes her life instantly and profoundly. Tony Horowitz, her partner of over 35 years, has died, collapsing on the street alone in Washington DC while on tour promoting his new book, a world away. Brutal. How does one even begin to process such finite news? In *Memorial Days*, Brooks questions and details this deeply



personal journey of grief, one that is uniquely different for every individual yet for which expectations are universal. Recounted through two storylines in alternating chapters, the first recounts the events at the time of Horowitz’s death and in the immediate months following. The second storyline takes place on Flinders Island three years later, when Brooks escapes there and allows herself the time and permission to finally grieve.

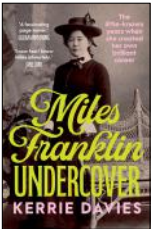
The complexities of ‘duties’ in the aftermath of Horowitz’s sudden death, and the blur of the details – of identifying the body; breaking the news to her sons, siblings and Tony’s elderly mother; the generosity of community; and the rigmarole of dealing with overburdened healthcare systems and impersonal financial institutions – are all beautifully told with warmth and candour. We learn of the details of Horowitz’s last meal, an unremarkable breakfast at a cafe, but share in the comfort that this knowledge of a regular, commonplace activity of daily life can bring. All this while trying to complete her novel, *Horse*.

On the rugged Australian coastline of Flinders Island, reflective, Brooks recalls a relationship both professional – two accomplished Pulitzer Prize-winning writers and journalists with an adventurous shared past across different continents – and everyday, filled with love and humour.

Brooks is a remarkably gifted storyteller and writer, whatever the genre may be. Give yourself the time to read *Memorial Days*, you will want to read it in one sitting if you can. I highly recommend it.

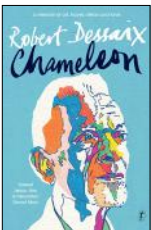
Danielle Mirabella is a senior book buyer

**Miles Franklin Undercover: The Little-Known Years When She Created Her Own Brilliant Career**  
Kerrie Davies  
A&U. PB. \$34.99  
Available 4 March



After the success and celebrity of her coming of age novel *My Brilliant Career*, published when Miles Franklin was only 21, she disappeared. Kerry Davies unveils a little-known period in Franklin’s life as a fearless advocate for working women. Drawing on a never-before-published manuscript, diary extracts from Miles’ year undercover as a servant, intimate correspondence with poet Banjo Paterson, and other archival sources this is a powerful story of a young woman’s enduring resilience, and her determination to always be her own heroine.

**Chameleon: A Memoir of Art, Travel, Ideas and Love**  
Robert Dessaix  
Text. PB. \$36.99  
Available 4 March



**R** Honesty being the best policy: this is the first book by Robert Dessaix I have read. Indubitably, I feel a certain shame in this admission. I am a bookseller after all, and Robert Dessaix is one of Australia’s most gifted writers. Of course, I have read articles penned by him, reviews, and considerations he has given over the

years, but not a book, cover to cover. Strangely now, after reading this memoir of sorts, I feel like I know him. Reading this offering is a crash course on his style, his wit and his being.

*Chameleon* is a personal conversation about being Robert Dessaix. It is a delightful, meandering cavort from childhood till now. Like all the most interesting people in the world, he queries himself over and over. He draws on his literary influences, or his travels or love of languages (particularly Russian) and his love affairs to either consolidate his story or, indeed, question it. And he does not stop there. He examines changing morality, education, and films. He searches everywhere for the axis of this work. Is he who he thought he would be? Is he the man he wants to be? And why?

I gobbled this unique read all up. I basked in his humour, intellect, and sensitivity. His musings on literary influences inspired me to make a list of books to read again: anything by Milan Kundera (but not James Joyce, despite Dessaix’s devotion) and films to rewatch: *Lawrence of Arabia*, for example. Having now read *Chameleon*, I firmly believe that Dessaix would not hold it against me that I had not read his previous works; but rather, like all great intellectuals, query my next read.

It will be *A Mother’s Disgrace*, by the by. It’s written by this bloke I know.

Chris Gordon is community engagement and programming manager

**The Tell: A Memoir**  
Amy Griffin  
Ebury. PB. \$36.99  
Available 18 March



For decades, Amy ran. Through the dirt roads of Amarillo, Texas, where she grew up; to the streets of New York, where she built her adult life; through marriage, motherhood, and a thriving career.

But Amy was running from a terrible secret from her past. When her young daughter confronts her on the distance between them, Amy is propelled to confront what she has been trying to escape. So begins Amy’s journey through the world of MDMA-assisted psychedelic therapy, to the limits of the judicial system and home, where her story began.

**White Hibiscus: A Portrait in Words**  
Loribelle Spirovski  
Upswell. PB. \$29.99  
Available 4 March



*White Hibiscus* is a poetic memoir that circles around an archived memory unlocked by a woman during the captivity of a cruise ship journey. While her husband, Simon Tedeschi, prepares for his piano recitals, Loribelle Spirovski encounters portholes into her childhood, reliving memories of the Philippines with vivid clarity, and, at times, pain. For all its luxury, she can’t help being affected by what she observes on the ship, the passengers’ wealth, the crew’s subservience. Always prone to motion sickness, onboard her nausea is constant.

**Craft**

**How to Keep Your Clothes Forever: Simple Planet-friendly Projects to Love Your Wardrobe Back to Life**  
Leah Giblin  
Harper By Design. HB. \$39.99  
Available 5 March

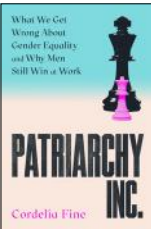


Leah Giblin grew up spending hours styling and playing dress-ups with her siblings. She has always loved making clothes and always cared about the environment. In

an era of fast fashion where too many clothes are being made and discarded, Giblin reinvents the clothing she already owns instead of buying something new. Learn how to apply this ‘dress-up box’ philosophy to your own life, so you can buy fewer new clothes, take better care of your old ones, and give well-loved pieces a new lease on life. Whether you’re new to sewing or a professional looking to level up, Giblin’s clear step-by-step projects will help you to fall (back) in love with the clothes you already own.

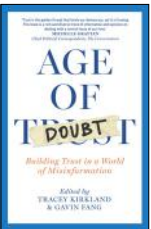
**Cultural Studies**

**Patriarchy Inc.: What We Get Wrong About Gender Equality and Why Men Still Win at Work**  
Cordelia Fine  
Atlantic. PB. \$34.99  
Available 11 March



*Patriarchy Inc.* offers a razor-sharp and quick-witted analysis of why we need a new approach to fixing the gender inequality embedded in work. Work is at the heart of social justice. Even today, the gender system brings about a gendered division of labour that is both cause and consequence of men’s greater status and power. These dynamics limit what we can do and be, unfairly tip the scales when it comes to what we get in return, create gendered distortions of competence and productivity, and irrational resistance to reforms.

**Age of Doubt: Building Trust in a World of Misinformation**  
Tracey Kirkland & Gavin Fang (eds)  
Monash University Publishing. PB. \$34.99  
Available 1 March



Today, trust seems harder to find than ever before. Our politics is polarised, our online world is awash with misinformation, and we’ve lost faith in our bedrock institutions. Yet, without trust, we cannot work together to solve the big problems we face. But there is a way to rediscover trust in our leaders and institutions, and to tackle the doubt. This collection of essays brings together top thinkers from across the globe to examine how and why trust is disappearing, and how together we might navigate these confusing times.

**Gardening**

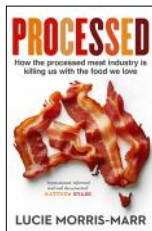
**Where the Old Roses Grow: Vita Sackville-West and the Battle for Beauty During Wartime**  
Janelle McCulloch  
Gemini Adult. HB. \$39.99  
Available now



During the Second World War, and in the decades after it, a group of rose lovers, including the writer and gardener Vita Sackville-West, the florist Constance Spry, and the horticulturist Graham Stuart Thomas, realised that heritage roses were becoming endangered. Fearing for their future, they began collecting rare, old roses to save them from dying out while England’s gardeners were away fighting on the front. This book celebrates the achievements of an inspired group of rose lovers, who saved Britain’s favourite flower, so it could survive and bloom for future generations.

**Health**

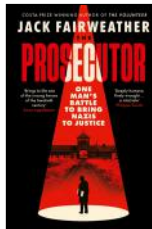
**Processed: How the Processed Meat Industry is Killing Us with the Food We Love**  
Lucie Morris-Marr  
A&U. PB. \$34.99  
Available now



We love crispy bacon with our eggs for breakfast, ham sandwiches for lunch and snags on election day. Lucie Morris-Marr’s family was no different but when the Walkley Award-winning journalist was diagnosed with advanced bowel cancer, she learned the chilling truth about our love affair with processed meats. As Lucie fights for her life, she takes us on a jaw-dropping ride, uncovering the scientific evidence linking our deli favourites with cancer and other serious conditions.

**History**

**The Prosecutor: One Man’s Battle to Bring Nazis to Justice**  
Jack Fairweather  
WH Allen. PB. \$36.99  
Available 11 March

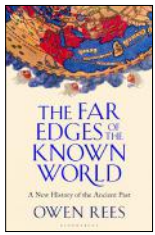


At the end of the Nuremberg trial in 1946, some of the greatest war criminals in history were sentenced to death, but hundreds of thousands of Nazi murderers and collaborators remained at large. The Allies were ready to overlook their pasts, and the horrors of the Holocaust were in danger of being forgotten. Jack Fairweather brings to life the remarkable story of Fritz Bauer, a gay German Jewish lawyer who survived the Nazis and made it his mission to force his countrymen to confront their complicity in the genocide.



### The Far Edges of the Known World: A New History of the Ancient Past

Owen Rees  
Bloomsbury. PB. \$34.99  
Available now



When Ovid was exiled from Rome to a border town on the Black Sea, he despaired at his new bleak and barbarous surroundings. Like many Greeks and Romans, Ovid thought the outer reaches of his

world was where civilisation ceased to exist. Thanks to archaeological excavations, we now know that the borders of the empires were in fact thriving, vibrant cultures. Taking us along the caravan routes of Morocco to the northern Black Sea, from Co-Loa in the Red River valley of Vietnam to the forts south of Hadrian's Wall, Owen Rees explores the powerful empires and diverse peoples in Europe, Asia and Africa beyond the reaches of Greece and Rome, offering a new lens to understand the ancient world.

## Natural History

### Funga Obscura: Photo Journeys Among Fungi

Alison Pouliot  
NewSouth. HB. \$49.99  
Available 1 March



**Funga Obscura** is about fungi, and the photography of fungi. Beginning in elemental landscapes of ice and rock, the book traces the evolutionary path of

fungi as enablers of life on land, and creators of soils and forests. Crossing continents and ecosystems, we navigate lichen-covered landscapes, crawl in the fungal undergrowth, scale glacial extremes and duck between rainforest shadows. Alison Pouliot, the renowned ecologist, environmental photographer and author, captures these remarkable lifeforms in a visual love letter to fungi.

## Politics

### One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This

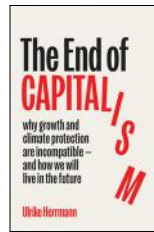
Omar El Akkad  
Text. PB. \$32.99  
Available 4 March



As an immigrant, Omar El Akkad believed the West would be a place of freedom and justice for all. But in the past 20 years, reporting on the various Wars on Terror, climate change, Black Lives Matter protests, watching the unmitigated slaughter in Gaza and more, he has concluded that much of what the West promises is a lie. This book is a chronicle of that painful realisation, a moral grappling with what it means to live in the West today and carve out some sense of possibility during these devastating times.

### The End of Capitalism: Why Growth and Climate Protection are Incompatible and How We Will Live in the Future

Ulrike Herrmann & David Shaw (trans.)  
Scribe. PB. \$37.99  
Available 4 March



**R** German journalist Ulrike Herrmann provides a definitive account of the unsustainability of capitalism in our emerging climate crisis. She argues that capitalism will end: this end can be on account of our choice, or the result of an economic breakdown caused by climate emergency. Knowing this, she makes the case that we must choose to shift to a more sustainable, circular economic model to reduce climate change and ultimately save our planet.

Herrmann does not argue that capitalism is bad – in fact, she explains many positives that capitalism has brought us: longer life expectancy, modern medicine, food surpluses. She even refutes many common criticisms of capitalism before delivering the fatal blow herself: the infinite growth required by capitalism is impossible on a finite planet. Capitalism requires an ever-increasing use of fossil fuels, which are plentiful and cheap, but release the greenhouse gases that cause climate change. Our only alternative to fossil fuels are green energy sources, which are more expensive and scarce. Methodologically proving that green energy is incompatible with economic growth, Herrmann describes the inevitability of what she calls 'green shrinkage' – that our economy will shrink from relying on green energy. The use of green energy is a necessity that is irreconcilable with capitalism. We need to find another economic model.

She describes a utopian model, in which we live greener, healthier lives, consume less but do more, a circular economy in which resources are shared and the planet is saved. However, Herrmann is not an idealist – she knows that this future cannot rise from the ashes of capitalism. We need a transition, immediately implementable, in which jobs will be reallocated, no one will go hungry, and there will be no violent revolution. Here she suggests the British wartime economy model, a survival economy that requires sacrifice but supports the people and the changing industries.

Combining historical, cultural, scientific and economic analysis with a hopeful yet realistic model, Herrmann paves our way out of the climate crisis, and into a new beginning.

Teddy Peak is from Readings Carlton

### Deficit: How Feminist Economics Can Change Our World

Emma Holten  
WH Allen. PB. \$36.99  
Available 18 March

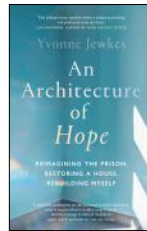


How are the contributions of half the population seen as a loss? In *Deficit*, Emma Holten traces how economic thinkers created a value framework that left out 'women's work' and acts of care. She reveals how the economic models that drive political

decisions today are just as flawed. They shape our world with rhetoric that sounds objective but is really based on centuries of oversight and omission, with terrible consequences for us all. If we cannot properly value the things that matter, how can we build a better future?

### An Architecture of Hope: Reimagining the Prison, Restoring a House, Rebuilding Myself

Yvonne Jewkes  
Scribe. HB. \$39.99  
Available 4 March



Should architecture be used for punishment? How might the spaces we inhabit nurture or damage us? How can we begin to start over after the worst has happened? Yvonne Jewkes grapples with these questions

every day as the world's leading expert on rehabilitative prison design. Challenging our expectations of what prisons are for, Jewkes takes us along their corridors, into cells, communal spaces, visitors' areas, and staff rooms, to the architects' studios where they are designed, and even into her own home, to show us the importance of an architecture of hope.

## Travel Writing

### Melanesia: Travels in Black Oceania

Hamish McDonald  
Black Inc. PB. \$36.99  
Available 18 March



**R** In *Melanesia*, Hamish McDonald travels through the islands of Oceania, interviewing locals, elders and academics, and engaging in historical analysis to paint a vivid portrait of Australia's neighbours. Travelling through Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, the book explores cultural practices, politics and oral histories of the diverse Melanesian people, tying the fragmented present of Melanesia with the region's complex history.

McDonald explains that over the last century, these islands have been subjected to power struggles in the form of colonisation, invasion and neo-colonialism, prominently at the hands of European powers, Japan and China. Australia is not exempt from this unsavoury history, though – McDonald implicates Australia in many issues facing Melanesia. Much of Melanesia was colonised by James Cook, whose first contact spread diseases that decimated Indigenous populations of Melanesia, inflicting similar harm to that caused to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. After colonisation of Melanesian states, Australia historically and continually has exploited the labour of Melanesian people, including in the infamous 'blackbirding' practice.

Despite this ongoing abuse and exploitation, McDonald repeatedly highlights that Melanesian people are not helpless. Resistance to colonialism and fights for independence have empowered Melanesians. Traditional beliefs and customs known as kastom still flourish, and strength is drawn from ancestors. There is still hope.

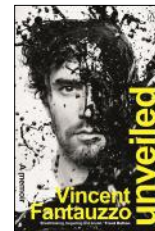
McDonald compellingly crafts this account of Melanesia, balancing the personal with the political, the historical with the contemporary, the traditional with the modern. At the forefront is always the unique identities and unique histories of Melanesians, united by a shared cultural pride and common fight for independence. As readers we can lavish in McDonald's beautiful details and prose, and as Australians, we have much we can learn – about our Oceanic neighbours, about our own role in their colonisation, about their relationship to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But we can also learn much from their efforts towards independence and decolonisation. Through this book, we can share their hope.

Teddy Peak is from Readings Carlton

## Visual Arts

### Unveiled: A Memoir

Vincent Fantauzzo  
Penguin. PB. \$36.99  
Available 4 March



Raised amid poverty and violence on the poor streets of Melbourne, Vincent Fantauzzo was just a boy when he accepted he would either die very young, become a gangster or end up behind bars.

Beneath his tough exterior was a sensitive and creative boy who, kicked out of school at fourteen, only wished to be loved and to break free from his troubled home life. Fantauzzo could never have imagined that his dream of a better life would lead him to become one of Australia's most celebrated and successful portrait artists. This is his incredible story.

## At Home

with Chris Gordon

### A Heide Harvest: Menus, Feasts and Stories Inspired by Sunday Reed's Kitchen Gardens

Alice Crowe, Maximilian & Robyn Lea (photog.)  
T&H. HB. Was \$64.99

**\$49.99**

Available 4 March



*A Heide Harvest* invites you to spend a day in the life of the Heide kitchen gardens, with a foreword by Lesley Harding and menus to inspire you from breakfast to lunch and from there to afternoon

drinks and beyond.

In 1934, when John and Sunday Reed purchased an acreage in Heidelberg, they had a vision of a bohemian artistic community living in harmony with the earth. The Heide gardens became a place where everyone contributed and heritage roses grew side-by-side with herbs and heirloom vegetables. It remains so today.

Inspired by the Reeds' values of nourishment and communality, this seasonal cookbook features 90 original recipes from leading Australian chefs as they share their interpretations of and



reflections on the Heide kitchen gardens. Alongside the recipes, each chapter delves into the history of the garden and charts the evolution of this dairy farm turned cultural institution.

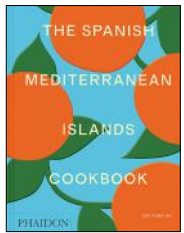
Combining food, art and history, *A Heide Harvest* is an ode to Sunday's kitchen and garden, and to the continuing legacy of Heide Museum of Modern Art.

### The Spanish Mediterranean Islands Cookbook

Jeff Koehler

Phaidon. HB. \$59.95

Available 11 March



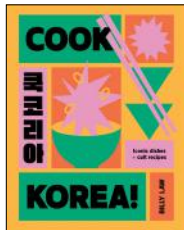
I do know some people who have been to this coastline and stuffed themselves silly on fish and salads, barbecued meats and rice dishes. Sadly, I have never been, but after reading this beautiful book, it is certainly on my destination list. Located off the Spanish Mediterranean coast, the Balearic Islands are renowned for their natural beauty, yet their cuisine has been largely underappreciated. That stops now. This book is mouthwateringly good: the photos are transporting, with delicious recipes listed alongside images of coastal drama. This book has easy-to-follow dishes of vegetables, seafood and local produce. It's enough to make you want to grab your cane basket and head to the local food market immediately. Or perhaps, as it is for me, it is simply an enticement to begin saving my funds.

### Cook Korea! Iconic Dishes & Cult Recipes

Billy Law

Smith Street. HB. \$49.99

Available 4 March



Billy Law is a treat of a cook. You might remember him from *MasterChef*, or you might read his infamous blog, or perhaps you simply have his first Malaysian cookbook.

He has now turned his attention towards Korean food, and we are very happy he has done so. Billy Law is a gift to all of us not brought up on Korean dishes because his recipes are easy, they are fun, delicious and, most importantly, they are accessible. This book is filled with recipes of Korean barbecued meats and vegetables, or kimchi with a twist and deliberately bold flavours. This is the perfect cookbook for those who are tentatively making their way towards the wonders and delights of Korean food. Billy Law is holding our hands here.

### Pranzo: Sicilian(ish) Recipes & Stories

Guy Mirabella

Hardie Grant. HB. \$60

Available 4 March



Oh, we are so happy to have a new cookbook by the wonderful Guy Mirabella. This celebration of Italian food is a pure delight. He uses his home in the Mornington Peninsula and his love of his

grandkids as a backdrop to recount stories,

memories and recipes from his Sicilian upbringing. And by doing so, captures something very pure and utterly wonderful about cooking for family. The recipes included in this book are vibrant, generous, and beautifully photographed with clear and unassuming instructions. The overall effect of this cookbook is of an artist's journey through tables laden with food and wine, baskets filled with fresh produce, and stories that evoke long meals spent listening, laughing and sharing.

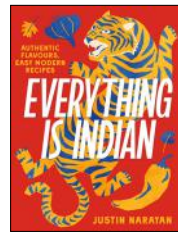
This is the book you buy because everyday beauty makes everything easier, because you have family and friends coming to spend a weekend with you and because, in the end, it all boils down to our senses: the smells, the colours, the tastes, the texture and, of course, the heartbeat.

### Everything is Indian: Authentic Flavours, Easy Modern Recipes

Justin Narayan with Nicholas Jordan

Murdoch. HB. \$39.99

Available 4 March



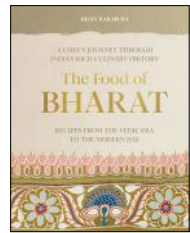
This is a brilliant idea: a cookbook that is a plan of attack for adding more spice and more seasoning to everyday cooking. We all love the flavours of Indian food, but why are they not as routine in Australian home cooking as Italian methods or even Japanese? This book encourages you to look further. Justin Narayan invites you to take his family recipes and add a little something extra. There are no rules, he suggests, if it tastes great. Drawing on his Fijian Indian heritage and his multicultural upbringing, Narayan shares recipes that need a good going over. (Think Marsala with roast potatoes, cardamom in brownies, and the list goes on.) This cookbook is perfect for those who need a little encouragement to try something new and to have an adventure in their own kitchen.

### The Food of Bharat: A Chef's Journey Through India's Rich Culinary History

Helly Raichura

Hardie Grant. HB. \$60

Available 4 March



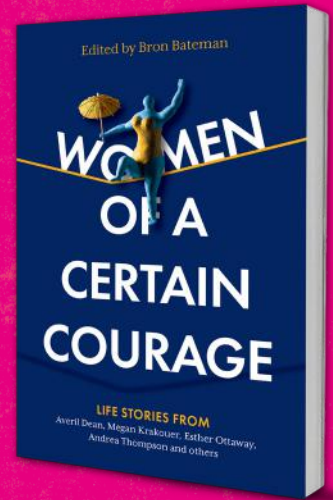
This cookbook will do more than that: it will change the way you eat. *The Food of Bharat* is a deep dive into India's culinary history, exploring how Indian cuisine has evolved. Chef and true inspirational goddess Helly Raichura charts a course through thousands of years of culinary history and highlights recipes that are diverse, mouthwatering, and creative.

This book is not for the novice or the experienced, but rather for all of us who want to sharpen our senses, and produce a dish that celebrates our own location, alongside traditional Indian dishes. It is the type of cookbook you read from cover to cover and by doing so, you learn something new, something kind and good. Dare I say, something utterly transformative. **R**

## Ordinary women Extraordinary stories



The story of a woman who changes the world that wants to change her, Geraldine will use music to unlock her soul and be accepted for herself.



'A thought-provoking look at the resilience of women in contemporary Australia.'

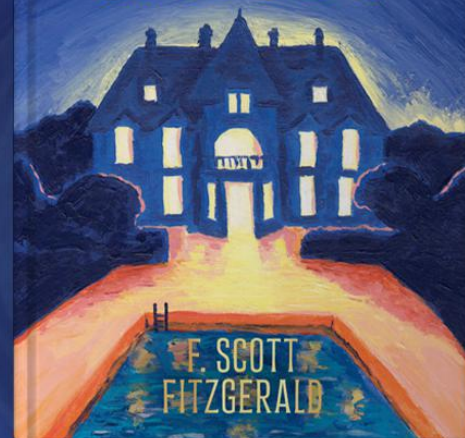
*Books+Publishing*

Instagram Facebook @FremantlePress fremantlepress.com.au

AVAILABLE NOW

Edited by James L. W. West III with an introduction by Sarah Churchwell  
THE CAMBRIDGE CENTENNIAL EDITION OF

The GREAT GATSBY



'This fascinating and comprehensive new edition of *The Great Gatsby*, which includes detailed analysis in its riveting notes and introduction, will delight fans and newcomers alike.'

Jillian Cantor, USA Today bestselling author of *Beautiful Little Fools*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

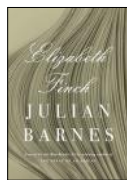


# Bargains

## Elizabeth Finch

Julian Barnes

HB. Was \$54 **Now \$19.99**

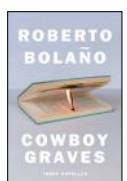


This novel of platonic unrequited love centres on Elizabeth Finch, a stoic and exacting professor. Neil, the narrator, takes Elizabeth's adult 'Culture and Civilisation' class; we are drawn into his intellectual crush on this private yet commanding woman. While other relationships, and even Neil's family, drift from his grasp, Elizabeth's application of her material to the matter of daily living remains important to him, even after her death, in a way that nothing else does.

## Cowboy Graves: Three Novellas

Roberto Bolaño & Natasha Wimmer (trans.)

HB. Was \$48 **Now \$16.99**

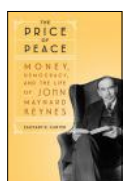


Roberto Bolaño's imagination and talent for shaping the chaos of his reality into fiction is unmistakable in the three novellas of *Cowboy Graves*. 'Cowboy Graves', 'French Comedy of Horrors' and 'Fatherland' bear the signatures of Bolaño's extraordinary body of work, echoing the strange characters and uncanny scenes of his triumphs, while deepening our reverence for his gifts.

## The Price of Peace

Zachary D. Carter

HB. Was \$59.99 **Now \$24.99**

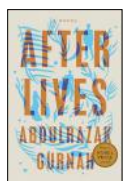


This riveting biography unearths the lost legacy of one of history's most fascinating minds, the world-changing economist John Maynard Keynes. *The Price of Peace* revives a forgotten set of ideas about democracy, money, and the good life with transformative implications for today's debates over inequality and the power politics that shape the global order.

## Afterlives

Abdulrazak Gurnah

HB. Was \$54.95 **Now \$19.99**



As a young boy in east Africa, Ilyas was stolen from his parents by German colonial troops. After years fighting in a war against his own people, he returns home to find his parents gone and his sister, Afiya, abandoned into slavery. Hamza also returns home from the war, having been sold into it, seeking work, security and love. Fate knots these young people together, but a new war on another continent threatens.

## Agent Running in the Field

John le Carré

HB. Was \$58 **Now \$16.99**



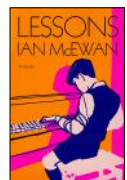
Nat believes his years as an agent runner are over. He is back in London with his wife, but with the growing threat from Moscow Centre, the office has one more job for him. Nat is to take over The Haven with a rag-tag band of spies. The only bright light on the team is young

Florence. Nat's regular badminton opponent, the introspective and solitary Ed, hates Brexit, Trump and his job. But it is Ed who takes them all down the path of political anger that will ensnare them all.

## Lessons

Ian McEwan

HB. Was \$56.95 **Now \$16.99**

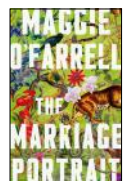


From the Booker Prize-winning author of *Atonement* and *Saturday* comes the epic and intimate story of one man's life, Roland Baines, across generations and historical upheavals. From the Suez Crisis to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the fall of the Berlin Wall to the current pandemic, Baines sometimes rides with the tide of history, but more often struggles against it.

## The Marriage Portrait

Maggie O'Farrell

PB. Was \$32.99 **Now \$13.99**



Winter, 1561. Sixteen-year-old Lucrezia, Duchess of Ferrara, has led a sheltered life in Florence's grandest palazzo. Taken on an unexpected visit to a country villa by her husband, Alfonso, she realises that he intends to kill her. Here, in this remote villa, she is entirely at his mercy. Set at the heart of the treacherous political world of the Italian Renaissance, this is the story of a young woman's battle for her very survival.

## Liberation Day: Stories

George Saunders

HB. Was \$66.99 **Now \$16.99**

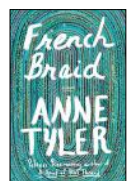


This masterful short story collection explores ideas of power, ethics, and justice and cuts to the very heart of what it means to live in community with our fellow humans. With his trademark prose George Saunders continues to challenge and surprise. *Liberation Day* is a collection of nine prismatic, resonant stories that encompass joy and despair, oppression and revolution, bizarre fantasy and brutal reality.

## French Braid

Anne Tyler

HB. Was \$50.95 **Now \$16.99**

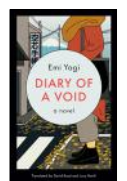


Full of heartbreak and hilarity, *French Braid* is classic Anne Tyler: a stirring, uncannily insightful novel bursting with warmth and humour that illuminates the kindnesses and cruelties of our daily lives, the impossibility of breaking free from those who love us, and how close – yet how unknowable – every family is to itself.

## Diary of a Void

Emi Yagi, David Boyd & Lucy North (trans)

HB. Was \$53.99 **Now \$16.99**



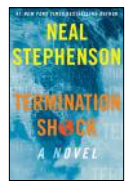
Ms Shibata is fed up with all the tasks she's expected to do in her workplace just because she's a woman. One day in a fit of exasperation, she announces she can't clear away her colleagues' dirty cups because she's pregnant. She isn't, but her 'news' does yield results: people treat her better now. Written in the form of a

fake pregnancy diary, this is a hilarious, and subversive feminist debut.

## Termination Shock

Neal Stephenson

HB. Was \$59.99 **Now \$19.99**

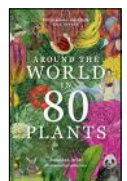


A visionary billionaire has a Big Idea for reversing global warming, a master plan perhaps best described as elemental. But will it work? *Termination Shock* brings together a group of characters from different cultures and continents who grapple with the real-life repercussions of global warming, ultimately asking, might the cure be worse than the disease?

## Around the World in 80 Plants

Jonathan Drori & Lucille Clerc (illus.)

PB. Was \$32.99 **Now \$13.99**

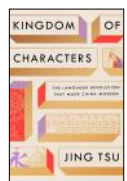


Jonathan Drori brings to life the science of plants by revealing how their worlds are intricately entwined with our own history, culture and folklore. From the seemingly familiar tomato and dandelion to the eerie mandrake and Spanish 'moss' of Louisiana, each of these stories is full of surprises. Brought to life by illustrator Lucille Clerc, this is a botanical journey of beauty and brilliance.

## Kingdom of Characters

Jing Tsu

HB. Was \$54 **Now \$18.99**



China today is one of the world's most powerful nations but just a century ago, it was a crumbling empire with literacy reserved for the elite few. As the world underwent a massive technological transformation, China's most daunting challenge was a linguistic one. *Kingdom of Characters* follows the innovators who reinvented the Chinese language to make it accessible to the modern world.

## David Bowie Rainbowman: 1967–1980

Jérôme Soligny

PB. Was \$39.99 **Now \$13.99**

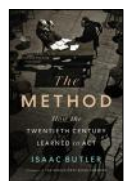


This uniquely exhaustive work on Bowie's 1967–1980 albums draws on over 150 interviews with the musicians, producers and friends who knew Bowie best. With an essay by Jérôme Soligny on each album followed by oral histories from the most trusted and influential figures in Bowie's musical life, *David Bowie Rainbowman* is the definitive guide to a singular and mercurial genius.

## The Method

Isaac Butler

HB. Was \$45 **Now \$19.99**

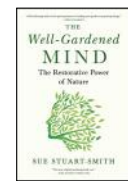


How do actors draw from their bodies and minds to turn their selves into art? What is the craft of being an authentic fake? More than a century ago one of the most talented actors ever, Konstantin Stanislavski, asked these very questions. Isaac Butler chronicles the history of Stanislavski's Method and traces a group of American actors who refashioned his ideas, forever transforming American theatre and film.

## The Well-Gardened Mind

Sue Stuart-Smith

HB. Was \$66.99 **Now \$19.99**

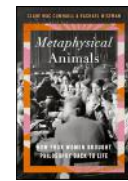


The garden is often seen as a refuge, a place to forget worldly cares, somewhere removed from the 'real' life that lies outside. Gardening is one of the quintessential nurturing activities, and yet we understand so little about it. *The Well-Gardened Mind* provides a new perspective on the power of gardening, its healing effects, and its ability to decrease stress and foster mental wellbeing.

## Metaphysical Animals

Clare Mac Cumhaill & Rachael Wiseman

HB. Was \$59.99 **Now \$19.99**



*Metaphysical Animals* is a pioneering group biography of four college friends – Iris Murdoch, Philippa Foot, Elizabeth Anscombe, and Mary Midgley – who formed a new philosophical tradition while Oxford's men were away fighting the Second World War. This book shows how, from the disorder and despair of the war, these brilliant women created a way of ethical thinking that remains today.

## Time Is a Mother

Ocean Vuong

HB. Was \$59.99 **Now \$19.99**



In this poetry collection, Ocean Vuong searches for life among the aftershocks of personal and social loss, embodying the paradox of sitting in grief while being determined to survive beyond it. Shifting through memory, and in concert with the themes of his novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, Vuong contends with the meaning of family and the cost of being the product of war.

## Humankind: A Hopeful History

Rutger Bregman, Elizabeth Manton & Erica Moore (trans)

HB. Was \$59.99 **Now \$19.99**



If there is one belief that has united us all, it is the tacit assumption that humans are bad. It's a notion that drives headlines and guides the laws that shape our lives. But what if it isn't true? Rutger Bregman provides new perspective on the past 200,000 years of human history, setting out to prove that we are hardwired for kindness, geared toward cooperation rather than competition, and more inclined to trust than distrust one another.

## Kiffy Rubbo: Curating the 1970s

Janine Burke & Helen Hughes (eds)

PB. Was \$29.99 **Now \$9.99**



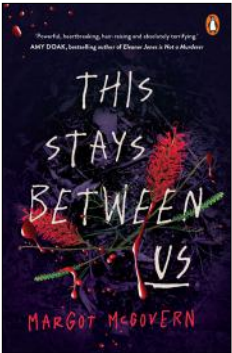
Kiffy Rubbo was a unique force in Australian art in the 1970s. It was under her leadership, and visionary and progressive approach, that the George Paton Gallery, at the University of Melbourne, was transformed becoming known as a vital, nationally recognised centre for contemporary art. This book explores Rubbo's legacy and the immense role she played in Australian visual art culture at such a crucial time in its history. **R**



# Young Adult

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

Young Adult



**This Stays Between Us**  
Margot McGovern  
Penguin. PB. \$19.99  
Available 4 March

**R** Mack, Raffi and Priya were looking forward to their school camp for a chance to hang out and cut loose away from watchful parents. But in an abandoned mining town, filled with stories of a sinister ghost called Smiling Jack, things don't go as planned. Raffi isn't talking to Mack, Priya just wants to get some alone time with her boyfriend, and they're stuck sharing a cabin with the unsettling new girl, Shelley. A séance around a bonfire starts out as a fun distraction to smooth things over, but it ends up taking an ominous turn that none of the girls could have predicted.

*This Stays Between Us* is a gripping thriller that had me flying through chapters, desperate to know what happens. Not only has Margot McGovern told a horror story that is truly frightening, but she's also balanced that with a rich and nuanced cast of characters that I absolutely loved. Switching perspective in each chapter, we get an unfiltered look at the thoughts and feelings of each girl, and their well-drawn humanity makes the ever-present threat of Smiling Jack all the more terrifying.

The blurb describes this novel as an homage to '90s horror movies – note that content warnings include sexual assault and graphic violence – and it certainly equals the dread and fascination created by any teen slasher movie, but with a diverse cast of intelligent young women. I recommend this for horror readers aged 14+, especially those interested in feminist tales.

Bella Mackey is the digital content lead

**The Lovely and the Lost**  
Jennifer Lynn Barnes  
Penguin. PB. \$19.99  
Available now



Kira vividly remembers the moment Cady Bennett found her as a child, living alone in the wild, with no memories of her life before. Years later Kira has spent most of her life training in search and rescue herself. So, when Cady's estranged father appears with news of a missing child out in the wilderness, Kira vows to bring the girl home. To find her, Kira must question everything she thinks she knows.

**Sunny At the End of the World**  
Steph Bowe  
Text. PB. \$22.99  
Available 4 March



**R** The Gold Coast, 2018. It should have taken longer than four days for the world to end, but within that time Sunny's mum becomes a zombie, her dad dies, and Sunny goes on the run, looking for any place to survive. She finds refuge in her school library, where she meets Toby, a classmate, and Veronica, a baby Toby has been taking care of since her parents became zombies. But soon Toby and Veronica are taken away from Sunny too.

Sydney, 2034. Sunny is now a zombie and a prisoner in an underground facility. However, something different happened when she was bitten: although flesh is literally falling off her body, her mind remains intact, and so does her conscience. This means she is plagued with questions she doesn't know how to answer – where is she now? How can she survive when everyone is intent on killing her? And what happened to Toby and Veronica?

*Sunny at the End of the World* comes five years after Steph Bowe's sad passing from cancer at the age of 25 in January 2020. This novel was later discovered on her laptop, and is incredibly prophetic regarding the worldwide Covid pandemic. The novel questions how it all began and why, and contemplates conspiracy theories of biological warfare, all of which Sunny investigates. Written with wit, dark humour and warmth, Bowe's posthumous novel is a beautiful and tragic story of family, of survival, and of appreciating everything we have only when we've lost it. For ages 14+.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

**How to Be Normal**  
Ange Crawford  
Walker. PB. \$21.99  
Available 5 March



**R** This debut novel and winner of the inaugural Walker Manuscript Prize is a story about a family under the influence of a controlling father.

Astrid is starting Year 12 and going to high school for the very first time. She's been homeschooled because her father doesn't trust the outside world and keeps a tight leash on her and her mother. He doesn't allow her to be a normal teenager, and she and her mother must tiptoe around him, catering to his every whim, or else he will explode. Astrid resents her older brother, who escaped a few years ago and left them behind. All she wants is to blend in and be normal, but she doesn't know all the unspoken codes of communication, she's shy, and is hiding a terrible secret about her family.

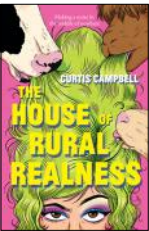
Astrid makes a friend, Cathy, who loves music like her, and she is attracted to cool girl Leila, but she can't trust either of them with her secrets, which makes her uncommunicative and makes

forming friendships a challenge. There are misunderstandings and confusion, but eventually Astrid and her mum devise a plan to escape her father's controlling influence for good, and she will need her new friends to help.

*How to Be Normal* is a deeply engaging read about coercive control written by an author with personal experience of it, who never lets the narrative get too dark or confronting. I highly recommend this novel for readers aged 12+ who like contemporary stories.

Angela Crocombe is a senior buyer

**The House of Rural Realness**  
Curtis Campbell  
UQP. PB. \$21.99  
Available now



Peter needs a public image overhaul after his vicious clapback against the most popular gay in school goes viral. When his best friend Alan, aka teen drag queen Aggie Culture, announces the first public drag performance by The House of Rural Realness, Peter steps forward as their producer. It might be the only way he can restore his reputation. And will Peter and Alan's friendship even survive beyond curtain call?

**The Boy I Love**  
William Hussey  
Andersen. PB. \$19.99  
Available 1 April



At 19, Stephen has already survived a year at the front. Broken-hearted from the loss of his first love, he returns to the trenches to lead a platoon. Then he meets Danny, a smart and talented young recruit.

From their first meeting, there's an undeniable connection – something forbidden by the army and society. Determined to protect Danny, Stephen must face down the prejudices and ignorance of his superiors, as well as the German shells and sniper fire.

**All Better Now**  
Neal Shusterman  
Walker. PB. \$22.99  
Available now



**R** Covid is a thing of the past and there's a new virus in town, going by the name Crown Royale! This virus is nothing like Covid. Instead of losing your sense of smell and having a foggy brain, you lose all the stress and depression you once felt. 'Recoverees' of Crown Royale are no longer greedy and selfish; they are just utterly content. Some say the virus is body snatching and will do anything to avoid catching it; others see it as a gift that they must share with the world.

In the midst of this pandemic, *All Better Now* follows four characters: Ron Escobedo, who struggles with depression and is the son of the third richest man in the world; Mariel Murdoch, a homeless teen who appears to be immune to the virus; Margot Willmon-Wu, whose ambition and ruthlessness wins her an

inheritance from Dame Glynis Havill. Dame Glynis's fear of Crown Royale and what it will do to her leads her to relinquish her fortune, only to instantly regret her decision once she becomes a recoveree. The four characters' lives intertwine while a search for a vaccine collides with the mission to spread Crown Royale far and wide.

It's a good year when Neal Shusterman has a new book out; his imagination knows no bounds and *All Better Now* certainly doesn't disappoint. It's a dystopian thriller that will have you constantly questioning what is wrong and right and who the real heroes are. This book is addictive. It's fast-paced, and the unique storyline and strong character development make it utterly captivating. I highly recommend this to fans of Shusterman, lovers of dystopian tales and sci-fi, or anyone who loves a good story. For ages 14+.

Lucie Dess is the marketing and events coordinator

**Darkest Night, Brightest Star**  
Barry Jonsberg  
A&U. PB. \$19.99  
Available 4 March



Thirteen-year-old Morgan lives with his dad and his older brother. His mum left when he was two. He works hard on his football skills, striving to meet his father's high expectations and 'be a man'. When Morgan makes a friend at school, gets injured in a game, and his long-lost mum turns up, everything changes. Then, when he meets an old woman in need of help, Morgan must decide what kind of man he wants to be.

**Our Infinite Fates**  
Laura Steven  
Penguin. PB. \$24.99  
Available now



Evelyn can remember all her past lives. In every one, she's been murdered before her 18th birthday. She's quite fond of the life she's in now, and her sister needs her alive for bone marrow transplants. So, Evelyn must find and destroy the centuries-old enemy who hunts her through each life, learn why she's being hunted in the first place, and try hard not to fall in love with them ... again.

**Prince of Fortune**  
Lisa Tirreno  
Atheneum. PB. \$24.99  
Available now



Shy Prince Edmund will be a great king one day: it has been Seen again and again. He feels the pressure to make the perfect diplomatic alliance through marriage, but then he meets charming Seer Lord Aubrey Ainsley. As the two become more and more intertwined, the nation of Saben falls under attack. Edmund and Aubrey must resist the outside forces seeking to drive them apart, and find the power within themselves to create a future for Saben, and each other. **R**



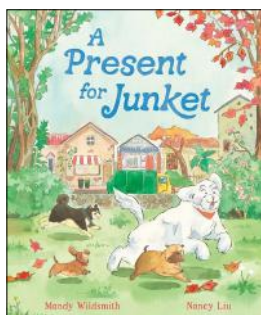
# Kids

## PICTURE BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Picture Books

#### A Present for Junket

Mandy Wildsmith & Nancy Liu (illus.)  
Little Hare. HB. \$24.99  
Available 4 March



**R** In an unnamed Melbourne suburb, a Groodle named Gherkin ventures out in search of a birthday present for her best friend, Junket. In the tradition of Hairy Maclary, Gherkin catches up with a varied squad of neighbourhood dogs and learns that each of them is missing a belonging that has been recently replaced with something newer and shinier. When the rubbish truck arrives at the dog park with a CRUNCH! BANG! CRASH! Gherkin may have found the answer.

Having worked in the book industry for many years Mandy Wildsmith knows well what makes a book work; her debut picture book is an excellent read-aloud. Nancy Liu's lovely, playful watercolour illustrations are perfectly pitched for a young audience. It's a sweet and thoughtful book, but also very fun. The story gently cautions against replacing things unnecessarily, and I'm sure it will be a big hit with rubbish-truck fans and dog enthusiasts everywhere. For ages 3+.

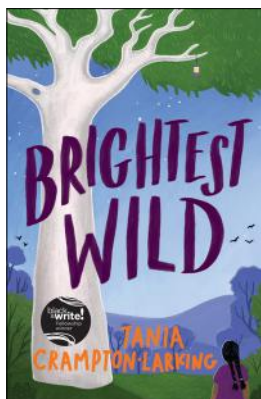
Kim Gruschow is co-manager of Readings St Kilda

## KIDS BOOK OF THE MONTH

### Middle Grade

#### Brightest Wild

Tania Crampton-Larking  
Lothian. PB. \$16.99  
Available now



**R** Eleven-year-old Alex has just moved halfway around the globe from London to live with her mother's partner and his son in South Australia. It's a lot of big changes for a young person to contend with at once: a new climate, school and family life. Alex finds comfort in the natural world as she endures bullying and struggles to feel at home in her new environment. Gradually though, she makes new friends, and the bonds with new family members strengthen as she experiences the wonder of Country with them. When their environment is threatened by fire, Alex is driven to help protect it alongside what is now her community. The big themes of this book are treated skilfully by Mirning author Tania Crampton-Larking; no one is perfect, and all of the characters are given opportunity to grow as they adjust to the various big changes in their lives. It's an exciting book and a story that values courage and honesty as well as respect for each other and our environment.

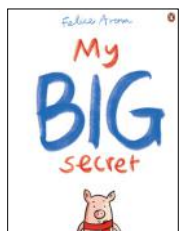
This is a heartfelt and relevant read for ages 9+.

Kim Gruschow is co-manager of Readings St Kilda

## Picture Books

#### My Big Secret

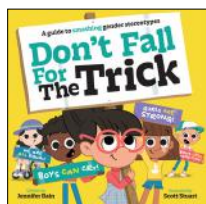
Felice Arena  
Penguin. HB. \$19.99  
Available now



Everyone in my family goes for the RED team. My dad goes for the RED team. My mum goes for the RED team. EVERYONE goes for the RED team. But I go for the BLUE team! Will this little pig ever have the courage to tell everyone his big secret? And will that be okay? A fun, funny story about love and acceptance, no matter what team your heart belongs to!

#### Don't Fall for the Trick: A Guide to Smashing Gender Stereotypes

Jennifer Bain & Scott Stuart (illus.)  
Affirm Kids. HB. \$22.99  
Available now



Have you ever heard something that doesn't sound true? Something that you know for a fact is false? It feels like a trick, doesn't it?

Every day, we come across many tricks that keep the world from being a truly equal place. This book helps kids and their grown-ups to learn the tricks that are holding us all back so that together we can smash gender stereotypes and create positive change.

#### Bigfoot vs Yeti: A Love Story

James Foley  
Fremantle. HB. \$24.99  
Available 4 March



The Bigfoots and the Yetis live on either side of the great rift. Every day, the Bigfoots throw fruit at the Yetis, and the Yetis throw snowballs at the Bigfoots. But one day, one Bigfoot and one Yeti decide to find what lies at the end of the rift. What they find is completely unexpected. And the relationship between the Bigfoots and the Yetis is about to change forever.

#### The Big Backyard Plan

Kirsten Ealand & Laura Stitzel (illus.)  
Affirm Kids. HB. \$24.99  
Available now



What they don't have are gates, so these four close friends hatch a plan to tear down the fences that keep them apart. When they pitch their grand concept to their parents, will their vision of one big shared backyard get the tick of approval?

Written by Kirsten Ealand and expressively illustrated by Laura Stitzel, this book celebrates the boundless

**R** *The Big Backyard Plan* is a joyful, rhyming story about four friends – Azumi, Theo, Bree and Jack – who live 'side-by-side and back-to-back' but want to live even closer! Between the four households, they have a pool, veggies, chickens and room to pitch a tent.

imaginations of children, and the power of community, nature and friendship. Representing a range of families and cultures, *The Big Backyard Plan* lovingly portrays the Australian suburbs, and the power of a few outspoken and inventive children to make a plan for a more fun, free and friend-filled tomorrow! For ages 3+.

Tamuz Ellazam is from Readings Malvern

#### The Colours of Home

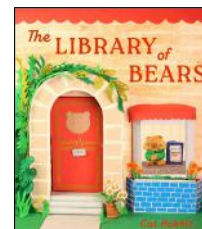
Sally Soweol Han  
T&H. HB. \$26.99  
Available 4 March



When Bomi moves to a new country everything seems different except for the silver moon. Making a faraway place feel like home isn't easy, but as she explores, Bomi finds comfort in matching new with old. Soon she discovers the colours of home everywhere she looks. A sun-speckled story about one little girl connecting the two countries she calls home through the matching of colours.

#### The Library of Bears

Cat Rabbit  
Berbay. HB. \$26.99  
Available now



**R** Melbourne textile artist Cat Rabbit is wonderfully talented at creating soft, fluffy creatures that are cute and filled with personality. In her latest picture book, she has made a menagerie of tiny, felt bears and given them their very own world. The bears live in a toy library

where, if they are lucky, they are borrowed and have adventures with their borrower before being returned. Poor little Softie, a sweet bear, feels sad about the fact she has never been borrowed. But when the day finally comes for her to be borrowed by a koala named K.B., she has a lot of expectations about what will happen and it doesn't quite work out the way she expects.

This is a charming story with so much to look at and enjoy on every single page. It will be pored over with utter delight by little ones aged 2+, as well as the grown ups reading it to them!

Angela Crocombe is a senior buyer

## Junior Grade

#### Bling Jollygood (The Fairly Secret Files)

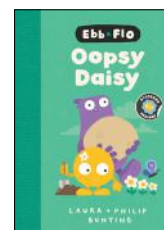
Nick Bland  
HarperCollins. PB. \$16.99  
Available 5 March



Meet Bling Jollygood: half-penguin, half-canary, full-time undercover reporter. Bling discovers that an egg-shaped comet is hurtling towards Earth! So, she puts together a makeshift crew to blow it up and save the planet. Everyone they meet along the way is extremely helpful. Perhaps too helpful. A witty and slapstick adventure from bestselling creator Nick Bland.

#### Ebb & Flo Oopsie Daisy

Laura Bunting & Philip Bunting (illus.)  
Hardie Grant. PB. \$11.99  
Available 4 March



Small words, big feelings! Learn to read! Love to read! When Ebb squashes Flo's flowers, Flo feels sad. And, maybe, a little bit mad. Ebb feels bad. How can he make Flo feel happy again? This book is perfect for enjoying together as a read-aloud for pre-readers, ages 4+, and as a read-together for emerging readers and newly independent readers, ages 5 to 8. Also available in a library edition.



**Sunny & Shadow**

Helen Milroy

Fremantle. PB. \$14.99

Available now



Calla is born with a precious gift – she can talk to the dingoes. It's her special job to look after them. But when new people come to her land, Calla and her family are forced to move away from her beloved dingoes. Meanwhile, one of Calla's favourite dingoes, a cheeky little pup named Chichi, escapes from danger through a special cave. When he emerges in a different time and place and is befriended by a young girl named Sunny, she takes him to meet her grandmother, and discovers that they already know each other – Sunny's grandmother is Calla! Together they work to get the dingoes safely back to Country.

## Middle Grade

**Little Bones**

Sandy Bigna

UQP. PB. \$16.99

Available 4 March



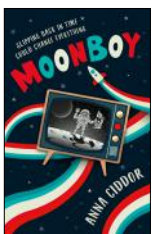
Since the accident, 11-year-old Bones has drifted away from her friends. One night, Bones wishes on a full moon and unintentionally resurrects the skeleton of a baby bird. Bird wants to return to his natural (dead) state. As she and Bird work out the secrets of the magic, Bones remembers what it's like to have a friend. How can she let Bird go when she doesn't want to say goodbye?

**Moonboy**

Anna Ciddor

A&amp;U. PB. \$17.99

Available 4 March



When a boy called Keith appears in Letty's bedroom and accuses her of invading his room, Letty is astonished – but things get even stranger when she discovers she's able to slip back and forth in time. Keith lives in the world of 1969, and Letty joins in the excitement of the first moon landing. But her trips to the past are changing history. What if she messes up the moon landing?

**Attack of the Black Rectangles**

Amy Sarig King

Scholastic. PB. \$16.99

Available 1 March



When Mac first opens his classroom copy of Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* and finds some words blacked out, he thinks it must be a mistake. But when he discovers what the missing words are, he's outraged. He and his friends head to the principal's office to protest the censorship ... but she wants Mac to keep his words to himself. Mac's about to see the power of letting them out.

**Washpool**

Lisa Fuller

Lothian. PB. \$16.99

Available now



**R** This First Nations story about two sisters who find themselves lost in a magical land is written by the 2020 winner of The Readings YA Prize.

Cienna is cool and confident, but her younger sister Bella is quiet and picked on at school. When the two go swimming at a waterhole known as Washpool, they disappear into a portal and appear in a land called Muse, which resembles their own but is populated by magical, talking creatures. Keen

to get home, they are told that they cannot return the way they came, so they venture further into Muse to attend a Summer Feast, losing one another but discovering more about themselves, this strange world and the myriad enchanted creatures that live within it.

This heartfelt story empathetically explores the dynamics between sisters and will be enjoyed by readers aged 10+ who enjoy *The Magic Faraway Tree* and other stories about siblings having magical adventures.

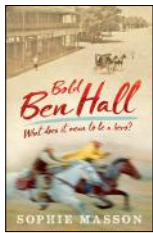
Angela Crocombe is a senior buyer

**Bold Ben Hall (Our History)**

Sophie Masson

Walker. PB. \$17.99

Available 5 March



Along with the people of Canowindra, travelling performers Lily and her parents are held hostage by bushranger Ben Hall and his gang. Instead of threats, they hold a giant three-day party. Enthralled, Lily writes a secret play 'Bold Ben Hall' and dreams of sending it to a famous theatre company. Meanwhile, stable boy Sam works for Sir

Frederick Pottinger, Ben Hall's nemesis. Sam dreams of helping him catch Hall. When Lily and Sam meet, they are determined to prove the other wrong about their heroes. In this gold rush adventure, award-winning author Sophie Masson asks what makes a hero – or a villain?

**Ice Apprentices**

Jacob North

S&amp;S. PB. \$17.99

Available now



Tundra is the last settlement in a frozen world of ice, monsters and spellbinding magic. Oswin Fields is its only stray, rescued from the Endless Expanse. So, when he's summoned to the school for ice apprentices, he sets out to prove his worth. But all isn't as it seems in this enchanted place, and when the beasts begin to strike, Oswin must risk all he holds dear. Can he look deep within himself to find the strength to prove that he belongs?

## Nonfiction

**Wonders Under the Moon:****A Collection of Night-Time Creatures**

Tai Snaith

T&amp;H. HB. \$29.99

Available now



**R** In *Wonders Under the Sun*, local artist and author Tai Snaith introduced us to a treasure trove of 270 diurnal (active during the day) creatures all wonderfully grouped in unique and fascinating ways.

We now explore the night with the companion book *Wonders Under the Moon*, in which 200 nocturnal

(active during the night) creatures are brought together in unusual collections, such as Sonic Superheroes, Pouncers and Purrers, Haunting Hooters and Radiant Radicals, among many other great consortiums. Snaith illustrates all with her beautiful paper art. We are shown the traits and features of each night dweller, with helpful sizing guides to express scale, and a key indicating if an animal is vulnerable or endangered.

Snaith shares fascinating facts about each animal throughout the book, but also draws your attention to the plight of these wonderful creatures. For most, the main cause for concern is the disappearance of their habitat. With the encouraging 'Ways we can help' page, Snaith aims to educate the next generation on how they can make a difference and improve the chances of our planet's biodiversity surviving.

Educational and gorgeous, this is a valuable read for young environmentalists or future scientists. For ages 3+.

Claire Atherfold is manager of Readings State Library Victoria

## Graphic Narrative

**Chickenpox**

Remy Lai

A&amp;U. PB. \$19.99

Available now



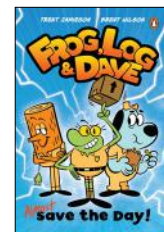
Abby Lai is sick of being trapped at home with her four younger siblings! All she wants is to spend more time with her friends. But when chickenpox leaves the Lai kids covered in scratchy red spots and stuck at home for two weeks, Abby thinks this might be the end of her sanity. But as her best friend brought chickenpox into their home

**Frog, Log and Dave Almost Save the Day**

Trent Jamieson &amp; Brent Wilson (illus.)

Penguin. HB. \$18.99

Available 5 March



Meet Frog, Log and Dave – three new almost-heroes (and Jeremy) for kids to really rally behind as the trio (and Jeremy) hustle their way through Count Evil von Evil's plot to wreak havoc on the city. Can they convince Pollutobomb to NOT explode and save the day? Almost ...? A hilarious and explosive new graphic novel from an award-winning author and artistic genius.

**Meet the Mubbles**

Liz Pichon

Pan Mac. PB. \$17.99

Available 11 March



Welcome to the Isle of Smile – home of The Mubbles, where the beautiful island runs on SUN, WIND and FLOWER POWER. Like the Wibbles of Wobble mountain, the Earworms and the one-eyed Drib Drabs, everyone on the Isle of Smile lives in perfect harmony – most of the time. Until the Clouds of Joy BUMP together making a wonky rainbow that means one thing: someone or something is coming to VISIT.

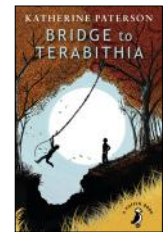
## Kids Classic of the Month

**Bridge to Terabithia**

Katherine Paterson

Puffin. PB. \$16.99

Available now



**R** When I read *Bridge to Terabithia* as a child, it was a brilliant and heartbreaking coming-of-age tale filled to the brim with adventure. Revisiting it as an adult feels like utter magic; Katherine Paterson captures the inner workings of adolescents as though bottling sunshine. Captivating and moreish, I don't think I could possibly write a review that does its prose justice.

Jess is lonely. As a young boy in a small country town, the boxes he's being forced into are becoming more claustrophobic by the day. That is, until new girl Leslie turns up, demonstrating exactly how to break out of the boxes, seemingly effortlessly. Together, using their imaginations, they gain the power to create a world of their own as the one they've been given fails them.

Tackling complicated themes, *Bridge to Terabithia* teaches us about loss, the unexpected ways grief manifests, and how those it hurts the most to lose give us the strength to survive the loss. Brilliant, whimsical, poignant, and highly recommended for ages 10+.

Celeste Perry is from Readings Emporium **R**



22-23  
MARCH  
2025

# CLUNES BOOK TOWN FESTIVAL

[clunesbooktown.org.au](http://clunesbooktown.org.au)

**AUTHOR TALKS  
& WORKSHOPS**

**100+ BOOK  
VENDORS**

**MAD MAX  
MOVIE NIGHT**

**KIDS VILLAGE  
HAY BALE MAZE IS BACK!**

**FESTIVAL ENTRY \$10  
UNDER 16s FREE  
TICKET PACKAGES  
AVAILABLE**



BOOKS ARE AWESOME, ART BY PAULINE O'SHANNESY-DOWLING

**IMMERSE  
YOURSELF FROM  
COVER TO COVER...**

**HELEN GARNER  
COSTA GEORGIADIS  
DAVID HOLMGREN  
KATE GRENVILLE  
CLARE WRIGHT  
HEATHER EWART  
BRIAN CASTRO  
LILI WILKINSON  
AOIFE CLIFFORD  
TT.O AND MORE!**

