Readings Monthly

FREE | SUMMER 2026–27



Announcing the 2026 winner of The Readings Prize

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Introducing The Readings × Penguin Classics pop-up shop

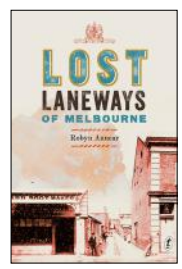
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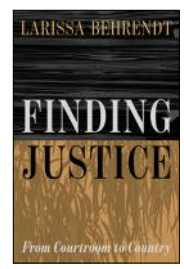
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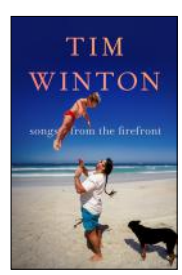
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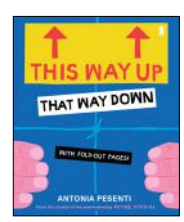
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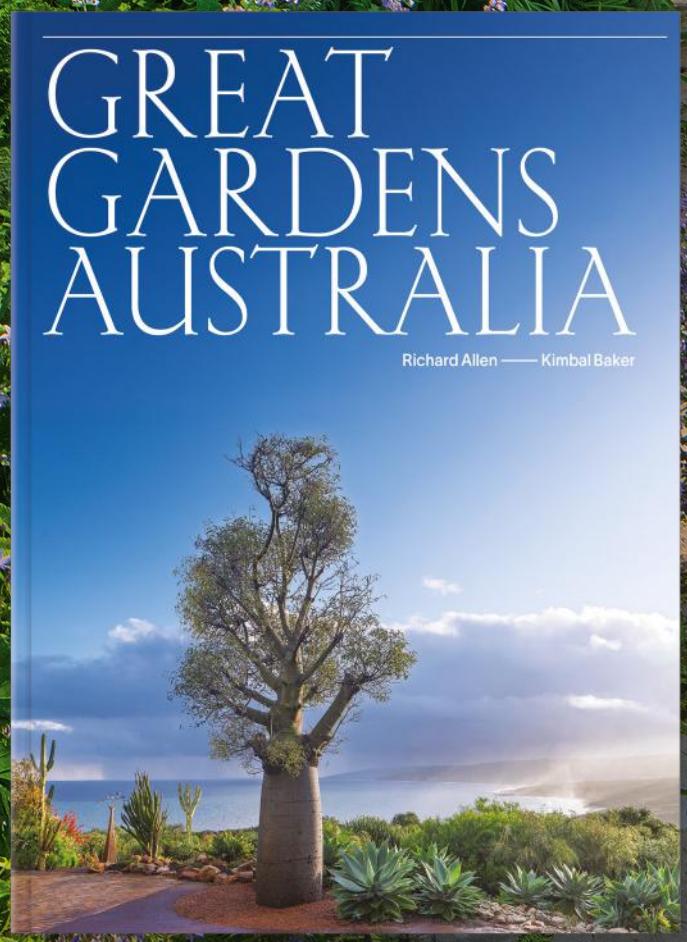
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A breathtaking collection of Australia's most beautiful gardens

Melbourne University Publishing

News

Get ready for Christmas

Shop early and shop local at Readings this festive season! Our shops are full of new releases, and our booksellers are ready to help you find everything you need. You'll find plenty of ideas throughout this edition of the Readings Monthly, as well as in our annual *Summer Reading Guide*, on our website and in our e-news. If you are shopping online, please place your orders of in-stock items by midnight Sunday 6 December for NT and WA, and by midnight Sunday 13 December for the rest of Australia for timely delivery for Christmas.

Readings' A Day in Carlton

A Day in Carlton is back! Running from Thursday 12 to Saturday 14 November, it's over 24 hours packed full of literary goodness in all its forms, creating the perfect opportunity for you to experience Carlton's hospitality and vibrancy. Discover the full program and book your tickets at readings.com.au/a-day-in-carlton

The Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction 2026 winner

We are delighted to announce the winner of The Readings New Australian Fiction Prize for 2026. To find out which book our judges chose, head to page 4.

Readings × Penguin Classics pop-up shop

To celebrate 80 years of Penguin Classics, we've partnered with Penguin Random House to create a pop-up shop dedicated to showcasing the wide array of Penguin Classics – from the iconic orange Popular Penguins to the Penguin Modern Classics and stunning clothbound range. Located next to Readings Emporium and open until the end of January 2027, come and explore the magic of Penguin Classics.

Summer reading with Readings

This summer edition of the *Readings Monthly* is designed as a complementary companion to Readings' annual *Summer Reading Guide*, which is a comprehensive gift and holiday reading guide you can find in all our shops and online. In this *Readings Monthly*, we hear from the winner and judges behind The Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction 2026 on page 4. You'll find Melanie Barton's reading journey through the Booker Prize 2026 longlist on pages 8 and 9, and the story behind the Readings × Penguin Classics pop-up shop at Emporium on page 10. We have highlights of the publishing year from senior visual arts book buyer Zoë Croggon on page 18 and children's book division manager Kim Gruschow on page 19, along with Kim's round-up of this month's new children's books and her reflections on the Melbourne Alternative Comics Festival (also on page 19). As always, you'll find an abundance of new releases and Readings staff reviews, with recommendations to keep you reading right through the summer.





Podcast

with Nico Callaghan



Books have a wonderful habit of leading us towards subjects we might otherwise never have thought to explore. A novel might introduce us to an unfamiliar place, a memoir to a life unlike our own, or a work of nonfiction to an entirely new way of looking at the world. One of the great pleasures of reading, I think, is simply following our curiosity wherever it takes us.

Looking back over this past year of The Readings Podcast, I'm struck by just how far these conversations have taken us. We've spoken with novelists, poets, historians, critics and artists about everything from family and belonging to politics, the environment and the lives of other species.

Mind you, not every conversation has been quite so serious! There have also been mysteries, imaginative adventures, comics, children's literature and plenty of unexpected diversions along the way. That's part of what makes working on the podcast so enjoyable: moving between different kinds of books and discovering what interests the people who write them.

For those unfamiliar with The Readings Podcast, we regularly speak with Australian and international authors about their latest books. We also share recordings of literary events, conversations with booksellers and other special episodes. Best of all, it's entirely free to listen to, completely ad-free, and we often publish not one, but two episodes per week, so there's always something new to discover.

This year we've shared conversations with celebrated novelist Min Jin Lee, legendary music writer Simon Reynolds, Booker Prize winner Yann Martel, Stella Prize winner Lee Lai and Readings favourite Alice Pung. So – I hope you'll find something among our archive of over 400 episodes that surprises you, stays with you, or sends you in search of a book you might never have picked up otherwise.

To find out more about The Readings Podcast or to listen to new episodes and our extensive back catalogue, scan the QR code or visit **readings.com.au/the-readings-podcast**

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

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FRONT COVER
The Summer *Readings Monthly* cover features a photo by Lian Hingee of the Readings × Penguin Classics pop-up shop, which was designed by Readings' design team – Miranda La Fleur, Natasha Theoharous and Megan Tran – with Rowena Sy from Penguin Random House. Find out more about the pop-up on page 10.

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.

PRICES AND AVAILABILITY
Please note that all prices and release dates are correct at time of publication, however prices and release dates may change without notice. Special price offers valid until 31 January 2027. Readings donates 10% of its profits each year to the Readings Foundation. Learn more about the foundation at readings.com.au/the-readings-foundation

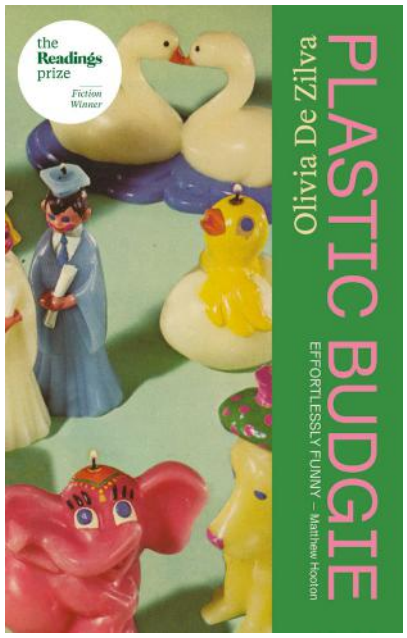
SHOP INFORMATION
See shop opening hours, browse and buy online at readings.com.au. Australian online, mail and phone orders have $9 flat rate shipping, with free shipping on orders $100 and over.

CARLTON	309 Lygon St	03 9347 6633
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KEY
Your key to getting the most out of the *Readings Monthly*

Review
Events
Special price

The Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction 2026 winner!



Plastic Budgie
Olivia De Zilva
Pink Shorts Press. PB.
Was $32.99
$27.99

The Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction was judged this year by 15 Readings staff members of varying ages. The debate was fierce and the shortlist is impressive, but there can only be one winner. Our chair of judges, **Gene Pinter**, reflects on the judging experience, the shortlist and the 2026 winner.

In a change of pace from the usual bookseller–customer relationship, I'm going to ask *you* for a recommendation: What do you get the reader who has everything? This is a particularly precocious reader we're talking about; they love Australian literature, of course, but they have a thing for debut and emerging authors. We're looking for something inventive and well-crafted, a book that showcases the best of Australian publishing's rich and varied landscape.

It's no mean feat, so to make the process a little easier this year we cast the judging net wide and gathered 15 Readings staffers from across the company to whittle down a shortlist of six brilliant titles. That hard part is done (with egos only slightly bruised), so here's where you come in: Can you help us choose the 13th winner of The Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction?

These are novels that span deep time to the near future; half a world away to the soil beneath your feet; familiar faces from history to strangers you'll come to know like family. There's Hossein Asgari's *Desolation*, a story-within-a-story that trails a young man through personal tragedy and the political upheaval of 1980s Iran; and over here, *Mantle* by Romy Ash, a fungi-filled piece of eco-fiction with shades of gothic unease. What about *Arborescence*, Rhett Davis's apocalyptic look at capitalism, the climate crisis and people turning into trees? Or *Learned Behaviours*, a twisting examination of race, class and gender in contemporary Western Sydney from Zeynab Gamieldien? And we can't forget *Henry Goes Bush* by Wayne Marshall, a wild ride that bends Henry Lawson's 1892 trip to Bourke around a surreal loop-de-loop of speculative history.

Ah, but you're a step ahead of me – you've already spied our winner. This is a title that stood out from our competitive shortlist from the very start, a book our judges agreed was doing something completely different from its peers. It's whip-smart, funny like a hit nerve, and devastating in its emotional precision: it couldn't be anything but *Plastic Budgie* by Olivia De Zilva.

Open the kitsch, verdant cover and you'll find a baby who remembers being born. In a hospital on Kaurna Country, Adelaide, her father's watching the 1996 Formula One World Championship while her mother sweats and cries and delivers our protagonist into the arms of a hungover Indian Doogie Howser. Bucking tradition, her parents name her after the spandex-clad singer getting physical on *Rage* late one night; welcome to the world, Olivia.

A work of exquisite autofiction in the vein of Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip* and Michelle de Kretser's *Theory & Practice*, *Plastic Budgie* traces the topography of Olivia's childhood with a clear eye and steady hand – until she breaks it all apart. What starts as a menagerie of sticky Y2K recollections becomes a deeply considered meditation on the boundaries of memory and self, on inheritance and storytelling. What does it mean to write yourself into a narrative? Who is given the creative and social space to do this, and how? When you see yourself reflected in a story, does the twin in that tale take on a life of their own? Once you release them into the world, do they ever come back to you?

Plastic Budgie is a question, an argument, a haunting and a release. At a sliver under 150 pages, the great expanse between the covers had our judges coming back time and again to wrestle with the complexity De Zilva has rendered so exactly. This is a book for the experimental fiction lovers, the existential Noughties kids (how are we almost/just turned 30?!), the migrant diaspora; for the curious, the bold and the unreserved. Although every book on our shortlist would have been a worthy winner – and we highly recommend you read them all! – there's a special something to *Plastic Budgie* that has our judging panel excited for what De Zilva does next.

For her excellent work, Olivia De Zilva receives $5,000 in prize money and the title of 2026 winner of The Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction. In addition to *Plastic Budgie*, De Zilva has also penned *Eggshell*, a Young Adult (YA) novel, and *Sick Note*, her debut poetry collection (which, as an aside, reads as a perfect companion to *Plastic Budgie*). Beyond writing, she is an educator and consultant who works with schools across South Australia and New South Wales to develop and strengthen young people's own creative abilities. We wish her the very best with all aspects of her career, and hope her Prize win provides her with even more opportunities to produce truly inspired writing.

Oh, and you – yes, you, the reader, don't think I've forgotten about you. While you're here, maybe you can help me find something? I'm looking for a book; I think it had a green cover ...



Olivia De Zilva on her win:

> Winning The Readings Prize has been a massive confidence boost. Working on a debut book with an independent publisher was always going to be a gamble in terms of coverage and recognition, so to be acknowledged by this wonderful prize – and by booksellers themselves – is such a welcome and honest surprise. I am so excited to join a long history of exciting, innovative authors, and I look forward to seeing how the prize transforms and further supports my career. I wrote this book as a deconstructed life story, following different strains and segments, to understand what it means to be whole, not only in a familial and narrative sense, but as someone who operates with a chronically ill body. The gaps deliberately left in the margins highlight how completeness and the search for truth are not always the most necessary ways to achieve a sense of meaning. I never really got to say goodbye to my grandfather, as I was so afraid of the concrete conclusion of death, so writing this book was cathartic in the sense that I could properly meet him again without fear that the story had to close. This book is really for him, and the idea that grief and trauma don't have to signify the end of something, rather, a profound and exciting beginning.

Hear more from the winner and chair of judges – listen to an interview with Olivia De Zilva and Gene Pinter on *The Readings Podcast*. It's available wherever you listen to podcasts. **R**

Gene Pinter is from Readings Chadstone

Olivia De Zilva is a writer and educator based in Kaurna Yerta (Adelaide)

Fiction

Anthologies

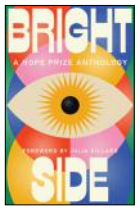
Veins Open, Hands Closed: Australian Stories from the Latinx Diaspora
Natalia Figueroa Barroso (ed.)
Sweatshop. PB. $24.95
Available 13 November



There has been a disturbing surge in racial profiling, discrimination, persecution, detainment and deportation of Latinx and Indigenous peoples across North America, reflecting a broader trend across the West. Yet amid this crisis, we also find resilience, pride and cultural power, especially here in our own backyard. In this first-ever collection of stories, essays and poems by Australian writers from the Latinx diaspora, you are invited to experience the beauty, vibrance and strength of the Latin American community.

Bright Side: A Hope Prize Anthology
Various authors &
Julia Gillard (foreword)
S&S. PB. $24.99
Available 10 November

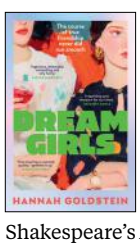
This book launches at A Day in Carlton, see the program for details



Bright Side reveals the prize-winning and highly commended stories from the 2026 Hope Prize, one of the world's leading short story competitions. These 20 stories from 20 distinctive voices span continents, generations and perspectives, revealing one enduring belief: that hope can be found in even the most troubled times. With judges including Julia Gillard, Dame Quentin Bryce and Kathy Lette, the royalties from *Bright Side* support CAMFED (The Campaign for Female Education).

Australian Fiction

Dream Girls
Hannah Goldstein
A&U. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



R Hannah Goldstein's debut novel is a journey through the dreamscapes and hellish reality of life, love and friendship in your 20s. The story of Helena and Ruthie is set to the beat of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and littered with other well-deployed references (think classic paintings and pop songs). Through a sharp lens, you're reminded how big everything feels when you're young and figuring out who you want to be and comparing it to who you might actually be.

Female friendships can be the great anchors of our lives. Yet they can easily oscillate from fierce love and loyalty to resentment and confusion – then back again. It's refreshing to welcome another novel into the world that celebrates the grittiness and intensity so many of us knew at that age – a time when we tested the boundaries and limits on those closest to us.

Through Helena's incessant yearning, we are reminded that in life what happens in waking hours can be much more cryptic and hard to grasp than what occurs in dreams or fantasy. Though these are well-trodden tales, Goldstein makes them modern and fresh without sacrificing any of their impact. She skilfully shines a light on the way these formative friendships burn so brightly in those early years. Like moths to a flame, the girls dance around each other, blinded by the light, and suddenly far too close, bumping their heads and getting burnt. Through lively writing, the novel grabs your wrist and pulls you right along with Helena and Ruthie, all the way into the lake.

Just as the moth returns to her flame, Goldstein again reminds us that lessons in love are never linear. One for lovers of Madeleine Gray and Diana Reid, this novel will serve as a perfect, refreshing read, whether you're taking it to a park bench, a pool, or your summer book club.

Jodie Mae Holm is from Readings online

What Gentlemen Do
Todd Babiak
Text. PB. $34.99
Available 1 December



Things haven't been going well for Waylon Gans. His hometown of Walleye is a shithole, he's barely employed and Derby Froese is keeping him in the friendzone. When he falls in with a right-wing influencer and accidentally starts a riot, people on the internet turn against him and his friends feel betrayed. With nothing to lose, Waylon enrols in an ancient philosophy class and discovers Stoicism. While the class might not change everything, it could help to improve his life and life in Walleye.

One for Sorrow
Favel Parrett
Hachette. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



R This is a devastatingly powerful yet quiet novel set in Trondheim, Norway, at the start of the Second World War. Einar is an only child – his sister tragically died – and in his sad household, with his silent but hardworking father and unhappy mother, life is just school and home, and playing with his best friend Gunnar. The brutal teachers, advocates of the 'firm hand' of discipline, have few expectations of their students, believing the most they can ever achieve is a job at the local fish-processing factory. But everything changes when Johan Kristiansen, a new teacher, commences at the school, far away from his home in Oslo. He is the first teacher to read aloud to the students, and through him Einar discovers the magic of stories. When he breaks his arm, Einar welcomes the chance to spend more time with this inspirational teacher, who introduces him to the likes of Ernest Hemingway. Einar learns that storytelling is about caring for the people in the story.

As for Johan, he struggles to fit in with other teachers but assuages his loneliness in an unexpected way, striking up an illicit love affair that would surely make him an outcast in the community if it were revealed: 'I know that it is wrong and that I want it very much.' But the passion of love collides with the reality of war. The illusion that war will bypass Trondheim because 'no one cares about us all the way up here in the Arctic' is shattered.

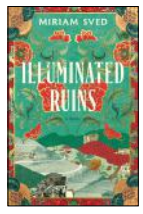
Life under Nazism brings restrictions and cruelty, with food and essentials in short supply, community buildings re-purposed, limitations on movement and terrible retributions. But there is also resistance, both covert and overt, and reading is one of its forms.

This is a moving and heartbreaking story about the power of love and the devastation that betrayal brings, and about how words can be tools to deal with grief and pain, but can also inflict harm. It explores the tension between flouting and obeying rules; between freedom and compliance; and how sorrow and regret can be lifelong companions.

Economical with words but with an incredible depth, Favel Parrett manages to do what Johan and Einar so admire in the stories of others – make us care about her characters. A wonderful book.

Pauline Hopkins is the manager of Readings Hawthorn

Illuminated Ruins
Miriam Sved
Ultimo. PB. $34.99
Available now



R High above the sprawl of 1950s Hong Kong, doctors Uri and Luzja Weiss are perfecting the grim art of burying their past. Hungarian Jewish refugees who fled Europe as the fascist wave began to break, their precarious existence in the British enclave of the Peak is predicated on their ability to assimilate into its upper echelons. For their children, Millie and Tommy, the world beyond their playground of overgrown bunkers and bombed-out ruins is immaterial; they know nothing of their parents' lives under the colony's Japanese occupation, nor why they left Hungary at all.

No peak, however, is tall enough to escape the rising simmer of the Cold War. When the all-American Mackays – charming banker Hugh, his debonair wife Nancy and their singularly tenacious daughter Anne – arrive in the months before the Suez Crisis, the careful standing Uri and Luzja have acquired begins to tilt. The strict lines they've drawn between the personal, the political and the professional blur the closer their lives merge with the Mackays – especially for Millie and Anne, who forge a friendship so steadfast it forms the bulwark against which all their lives are threatening to break.

Like a trail of gunpowder winding through a hedge maze, the slow build of twisting tension in *Illuminated Ruins* can only lead to an explosive end. The brightest spark to lead us there – Millie – has the kind of earnest and headstrong voice that makes her a truly magnetic, yet completely tragic, preteen narrator; this is *Atonement*'s Briony holding hands in a white-knuckled freefall with *My Brilliant Friend*'s Elena. Though there are stretches where the strength of Millie's coming of age chafes against the foregone conclusions present in her parents' perspectives, Miriam Sved has nonetheless crafted a compelling novel that traces the contours of the past with a keen and prescient touch.

Gene Pinter is from Readings Chadstone

The Centre
Hannah Tunnicliffe
Ultimo. PB. $34.99
Available now



When Annie turns up at her sister Clover's doorstep, heartbroken and jobless, Clover happily takes her in. Living her best life on Sydney's Northern Beaches, Clover is attending workshops led by a wellness influencer and personal transformation guru at a centre that seems to have everyone under its spell. As Annie realises the Centre may be hiding dark secrets, she tries to pull Clover from its allure, but that only pushes her deeper. Will the Centre tear the sisters apart, or can Annie save Clover before it's too late?

Australian Poetry

Asterion
Amy Crutchfield
Giramondo. PB. $27
Available 1 November



This new collection by award-winning poet Amy Crutchfield employs a minimalist technique. Using fragmentary and epigrammatic forms as well as mythic retellings and narrative sequences, it explores the grounds for human motivation and the often-painful truths at the core of our personalities. Balancing candour with restraint, the poems in *Asterion* examine the tensions that arise between incompatible impulses, in a world that is, in Louis MacNeice's famous phrase, 'incorrigibly plural'.

Best of Australian Poems 2026
Michael Farrell (ed.)
Puncher & Wattmann. PB. $32.95
Available now

Best of Australian Poems is an annual anthology collecting previously published and unpublished poems to create a poetic snapshot of the year. Capturing the richness and diversity of Australian poetry across a timeframe of July 2025–June 2026, the series explores how poetic responses to the contemporary moment develop with each passing year. Now in its sixth year, the anthology opens with an introduction by 2026 editor Michael Farrell and displays the broad and vibrant range of contemporary Australian poetry.

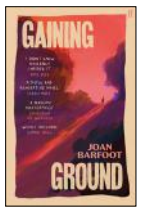
International Fiction

On the Calculation of Volume: Book V
Solvej Balle, Sophia Hersi Smith & Jennifer Russell (trans.)
Faber. PB. $29.99
Available 3 November



Tara has returned to Thomas. But having spent 12 years in the 18th of November, and Thomas repeating his identical day, Tara is no longer the person he remembers. He struggles to reconcile the Tara she is now with the one he loves. So, Tara rejoins her friends and they set off for Val Benoît, where other time-stranded people have created a community. As the 18th of November continues to expand, Tara's connection with those around her deepens, and a life beyond Thomas comes unexpectedly into view.

Gaining Ground
Joan Barfoot
Faber. PB. $24.99
Available 3 November



Abra locks up the lovely, tidy house she has shared with her husband and two children, slides her key under the side door, and drives away to a new, solitary life in a woodland cabin. Nine years later, a young woman appears at the cabin and the radical quiet Abra has cultivated is disrupted.

Originally published in 1978, *Gaining Ground* imagines the tense, relieved, joyous, dissociative and painful experience of a daughter, wife and mother who reaches a pinnacle of wrongness in her life and chooses to leave it all behind. But the musings and questions this introspective novel delivers are relevant to anyone who has experienced doubt or disquiet about the life they lead. There is something deeply familiar in the experience of questioning a life that does not quite feel like your own.

Joan Barfoot's prose is at times gentle and always exacting, bringing the reader into the mundane beauties of a slow life in nature. And yet her portrayal of the dissociative quality of living through societal expectations, all with an underlying disquiet and suspicion that this may not actually be the path for you, is masterfully done. The experience of solitude is neither entirely peaceful nor uncomplicated, and the novel makes space for the discomfort and contradictions of such a radical departure from an ordinary life.

I'm sure many of us can relate to the desire, and possibly at times desperation, to escape the pace of modern life for a space of silence and solitude. Nearly 50 years after its publication, in a world of ever-accelerating technology and increasing demands on our attention, Abra's longing for solitude feels perhaps even more resonant today. *Gaining Ground* brings the reader along through the transformations and sticky questions of what a life of truth could look like. Barfoot's thoughtful observations and resonant prose raise questions that can be confronting and uncomfortable, particularly when we begin to consider what might be required to live differently.

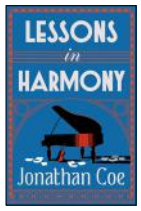
Catie Bridgeman is from Readings Emporium

The Hill
Harriet Clark
Sceptre. PB. $34.99
Available 5 November



Suzanna Klein was a baby when her mother robbed a bank with a group of fellow radicals. Now, every Saturday, Suzanna visits her at Hillcrest Prison, a place her mother will never leave. Suzanna is being raised by her grandmother, who refuses to visit her daughter, as well as her grandmother's friends, who were in the Communist Party together. They are torn between teaching Suzanna how the world works and shielding her from it. Suzanna vows to return to the prison forever, but her mother wants her to be free.

Lessons in Harmony
Jonathan Coe
Viking. PB. $36.99
Available 17 November



It is 1907 and Maurice Ravel is one of the most admired young composers in France. In Belle Époque Paris, he cuts a charismatic figure, and his talent is as hard to pin down as his personal life. When Ravel takes on a new pupil, the British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, an unlikely cross-channel friendship develops. But as war approaches and tragedy strikes those close to them, they must pursue their art through one of the most turbulent but creative periods in history. Will their differing senses of national identity liberate or constrain them?

Bedlam
Jennifer Higgie
Verso. PB. $22.99
Available 3 November



Before reading this book, I would first suggest doing a quick search of Victorian-era artist Richard Dadd's paintings and biography, and then you will see how Jennifer Higgie has captured in *Bedlam* the same enchanting, folkloric, terrifying and hallucinatory quality of his artwork and life.

In this novel, Richard Dadd aspires to leave the confines of his English home to explore the world and master his drawing and painting skills. Along with his patron, Sir Thomas Phillips, he traverses the forests of Germany, the canals of Venice, the ruins of Greece, the markets of Alexandria, before crossing the deserts of Jerusalem and Jordan.

For the first half of the novel, *Bedlam* reads like a travel journal as Richard brilliantly captures the landscapes, history and spirit of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. But as the second half of the novel progresses, you read in horror as Richard descends into madness, tormented by delusions and a growing obsession with the Egyptian god Osiris. When he returns to England, Richard has completely changed and there are devastating consequences.

Richard Dadd's life story is truly one of a tortured artist; myth and reality twist and turn in this haunting novel. It is largely believed that Richard suffered from severe heatstroke during his travels in Egypt and the Middle East, and later developed schizophrenia, which led him to spend most of his life in London's notorious Bethlem Royal Hospital, more commonly known as Bedlam, where he painted many of his most famous artworks.

But Higgie offers us a glimpse into Richard's mind before it deteriorated. He was an endlessly curious man, questioning the environment around him and the lives of every person he met, capturing the magic and mystery of the world in his artwork. *Bedlam* is an intoxicating work that offers insight into a captivating man whose mind expanded beyond this universe.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

Female Life on Planet Earth
Laleh Khadivi
Oneworld. PB. $32.99
Available 3 November



Short and sharp, *Female Life on Planet Earth* is about the secrets women keep, and the cost of continuing the silence, or trusting the future generation to understand and hold the truth with care.

This novel follows Heti – mother, daughter, friend, and stranger – in the year after her mother Ana's passing. Heti emigrated from Iran to the USA with Ana when she was young, and Heti never questioned who Ana was before she was her mother. When photographs of Ana arrive from an unknown sender showing her dressed head to toe in a black garment, machine gun on her shoulder – in one, standing in front of a burning building, and another inside a warehouse of terrified women – Heti's understanding of who Ana was shatters. Tasked with holding a memorial on the one-year anniversary of Ana's death (to honour the 'old ways'), Heti spends the year preparing, but also listening to the women around her.

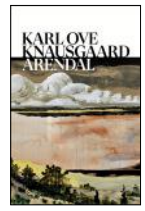
The tale is very dialogue-heavy, as much of this novel unfolds in quasi-monologues between Heti and the women around her. I found myself invested in the mystery of Ana's past, but also in Heti's life, her daughters and extended family. They're messy, loud, complex, and they highlight what we inherit from our mothers.

Laleh Khadivi explores the divide between women, and the way that even the relationships we believe are our closest are still filled with gaps and silences. Women choose what and who to show certain parts of themselves to, and in doing this, it almost takes a village to piece together who they were. What really stood out to me in this novel is the way Khadivi fills in the blanks. Like the slow drip of water filling a cup, or the meticulous way a puzzle is put together, the lives of women and their secrets are revealed in an engaging and unhurried way.

Readers who enjoy novels exploring mother-daughter relationships will have their minds spinning with the ideas and themes presented.

Jacinta Richards is from Readings Chadstone

Arendal
Karl Ove Knausgaard & Martin Aitken (trans.)
Harvill. PB. $36.99
Available 3 November



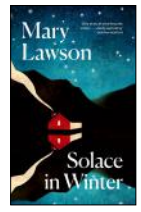
The year is 1976. Syvert is on his way back to his wife and two sons after a work trip when his car breaks down outside Arendal and he has to spend the night in the city. It is winter and bitterly cold; ice covers the strait all the way to the sea, so thick that cars can drive on it. There, almost home, but caught up in memories of his doomed love affair with Asya, a space opens between the known and the unknown – both in the city, as Syvert wanders the streets in the dark, and within him.

Mystery Play
Elizabeth Kostova
Text. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



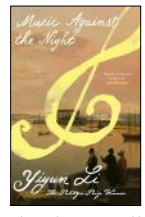
After his mother dies, Jay Turner uncovers a charred scrap of newspaper bearing the name Gael Brogan. Soon after, an old leatherbound book, commissioned by Dracula in 1477, is delivered. It's a book his mother had warned him about. Helped by a mysterious woman named Rhiannon, Jay digs into the life of Gael Brogan, a 19th-century actor famous for playing the role of Dracula. They discover a terrifying story of a young actress falling under Brogan's sway. And then Jay and Rhiannon realise an implacable force is also pursuing them.

Solace in Winter
Mary Lawson
C&W. PB. $34.99
Available 10 November



It is deep winter, 1969, in the small Canadian town of Solace. Widower Jack's quiet life is overturned by two accidents that happen on the bend in the road into town. First comes a dog in a bad way. Next a Vietnam War draft-dodger, seriously injured, lying in the snow. Suddenly, Jack's cabin is busy with a growing cast of characters – and all the baggage, dreams and desires they're carrying. But the atmosphere chills when Jack's daughter Sally drops by one day and doesn't like what she sees.

Music Against the Night
Yiyun Li
Fourth Estate. PB. $34.99
Available now



Author Ann Patchett has been singing the praises of Yiyun Li's *Music Against the Night* all year after she read it ahead of publication. Patchett is calling it not only her book of the year, but also a book that 'may well be the most perfectly constructed, moving and beautiful novel I've ever read'. A big call – and one that had me desperate to read it!

A historical novel of two child-prodigy musicians in the late 18th century, it tells the stories of John Field and Adelaide Percheron, who were composers and musicians around Mozart and Chopin's

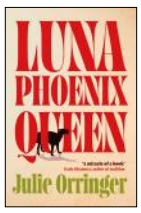
time, but who essentially faded into oblivion. That said, John Field was mentioned in Leo Tolstoy's autobiography.

A multi-award-winning and prolific author, Li asks big questions and processes events through writing. Her prose is breathtaking in *Music Against the Night* and many sentences caused me to stop and reread them because they are so perfectly formed and insightful. Li won the Pulitzer Prize for Memoir earlier this year for her 2025 memoir about losing her two sons to suicide, *Things in Nature Merely Grow*. In *Music Against the Night*, Li explores the nature of making art at all costs and she plays with time as a form: 'Being oneself, Percherette would one day understand, is a lifelong warfare. The world never runs out of people who want to subjugate you with their paltry intelligence.'

I went into this novel with big expectations, which is always risky, but as one of its characters states, 'Any time you open a book, you gain something.' The two protagonists are not very lovable, but they are exceptionally well drawn and the sheer perfection of the language kept me very keen to keep reading. Be sure to note that this novel will feature on the Best of 2026 lists. I strongly recommend it.

Melanie Barton is from Readings Carlton

Luna, Phoenix, Queen
Julie Orringer
Summit. PB. $34.99
Available now



Dava and Barr Pennington, professors at a Midwestern university, both harbour potent secrets. Dava is in love with a colleague, Svetlana, and spends her nights working on a novel inspired by their liaison. But when Dava is diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's, she is moved to a care facility. Soon afterward, Barr finds her hidden manuscript and realises his wife's affair is described in the novel. He rewrites it and publishes it as his own to wide acclaim. But guilt forces Barr to confess to an unlikely party, who leads others to the truth.

Dams
Irene Solà & Mara Faye Lethem (trans.)
Granta. PB. $32.99
Available 10 November



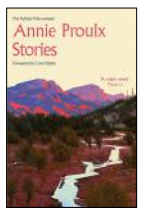
Many of us have already read the critically acclaimed *When I Sing, Mountains Dance* and *I Gave You Eyes and You Looked Towards Darkness*, by the brilliant Irene Solà. It may seem strange, then, that Solà's first novel, *Dams*, is only now available in Australia, but here we finally are, and not a moment too soon! Translated from Catalan by Mara Faye Lethem, this lyrical metatextual novel alternates between the life of Ada, and the stories that Ada writes.

We are privy to glimpses of Ada's ordinary life – her rural Catalonian town, her siblings, her parents' divorce, her three-year stint living in England, her on-again, off-again relationship with the son of a farmer – in between her stories, which feature not only the town, the divorce, and the farmer, but also things much more extraordinary. What if there were an outbreak of zombies fought off by her brother-in-law? What if a cow, on a local farm, committed murder, so that it could see a human skull? What if, when Ada's grandmother died, she stayed as a ghost in her house, talking to the other ghosts who have also stayed? What if the dams broke? What if water flooded streets like blood through veins? What if the flood cleaned away all suffering, leaving behind only happiness? Then what is the place of dams?

Ada's writing is personal, often too personal, digging into the wounds of her loved ones, using their lives as fodder. Solà's writing, too, can hurt. The personal and the impersonal melt away, into a series of images: a stone marten, a cow's vertebrae, the easiest Trivial Pursuit card ever, a grave that reads 'To Ada', the colour blue, and the colour red. We are invited into a text that is about nobody in particular, and is about everybody in particular. Whether this is your first Solà, or you are returning to her lush language, this novel feels like a dam bursting, like being carried away in the flood water – and liking it.

Teddy Peak is from Readings Carlton

Annie Proulx Stories
Annie Proulx & Colm Tóibín (foreword)
Fourth Estate. PB. $36.99
Available 1 December



Spanning nearly 30 years and drawn from Annie Proulx's four collections, this sweeping new volume gathers her finest and best-loved stories together for the first time. One of the greatest American writers at work today, Proulx's titles alone, such as 'Tits up in a Ditch' and 'What Kind of Furniture Would Jesus Pick', announce the singular genius of a grimly witty and unflinchingly humane writer. Complete with three never-before-collected stories, this beautiful book confirms Proulx as a master of the form.

Public Access Afterworld
Jane Schoenbrun
Sceptre. PB. $34.99
Available now



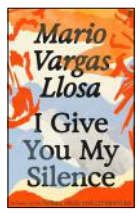
On 12 June 2009, suburban teens David Sawyer and Erin Morrison watch TV's analogue-to-digital transition. Erin glimpses a mysterious broadcast from a TV network called 'Public Access Afterworld'. Soon after, she vanishes. Bethany Peters is on nightshift 14 years later at megacorp GlobalVill. A trans content moderator, she reviews horrific videos. A pattern emerges: a young streamer, Jules, calling out 'Public Access Afterworld'. Bethany sets out to rescue Jules, beginning an epic journey from rural Texas to the heart of American darkness in 1940s Los Alamos and all the way back to Erin's basement.

Passage
Colin Thubron
C&W. HB. $34.99
Available 24 November



Following her brain surgery, Kathleen and her husband, Robert, leave for an ill-advised holiday to Egypt with Robert's brother. They are all aware Kathleen's brain tumour may be fatal. The trauma of her operation has made Kathleen confront the frailty of her identity, and as she descends into the ancient Egyptian tomb corridors, they evoke a fevered elation. Ashraf, their Egyptian guide, is drawn to her. As they each struggle with the past and the future, the rising tension resolves in delusion – and a shattering betrayal.

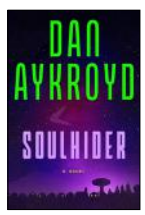
I Give You My Silence
Mario Vargas Llosa & Adrian Nathan West (trans.)
Faber. PB. $34.99
Available 17 November



One evening, Toño Azpilcueta, a Peruvian folk music journalist, witnesses a performance that changes his life. Toño becomes obsessed with hearing the virtuoso guitarist Lalo Molfino play again, but the next thing he hears is that Molfino is dead. Toño decides that he will write a book that will not only immortalise the hero of the Creole vals, but also establish the music he loved as a unifying symbol for his fractured country. But as Toño's savings dwindle and his paranoia rises, it becomes clear that writing a masterpiece is more complicated and consuming than he had realised.

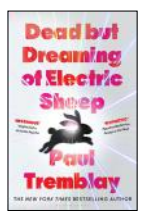
Science Fiction & Fantasy

Soulhider
Dan Aykroyd
HarperCollins. PB. $34.99
Available now

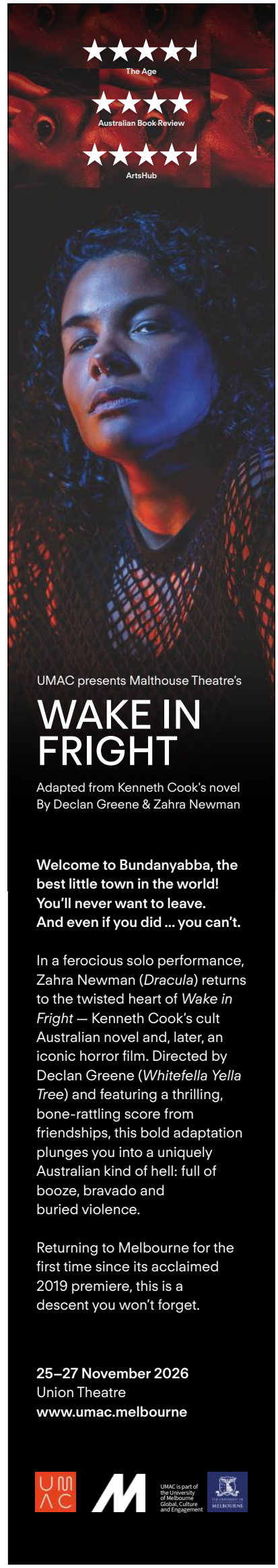


Doug Beeston is an ordinary insurance adjuster living an unremarkable life with his family in New York State when aliens ask him to take on an extraordinary mission: to hide the human souls they've harvested, in various locations across Earth. Embracing his responsibility and enjoying the lucrative side of the job, Doug soon discovers he's not only a courier, but also a pawn in a rivalry between alien species. The more he understands his role, the more Doug realises the fate of Earth itself may hang in the balance.

Dead But Dreaming of Electric Sheep
Paul Tremblay
Bloomsbury Archer. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



Meet Julia Flang, a 20-something former professional gamer, living with her retired uncle, and working two jobs she doesn't like. Out of the blue, her estranged mother, a CFO for one of the world's largest tech companies, offers her a temp job with a payday Julia can't refuse. One sham interview later, she's offered the job: to chaperone a man in a vegetative state from California to the East Coast. But he's not *dead* dead: he has an AI mind implanted in his head. This near-future tech nightmare is as bitingly funny as it is horrifically believable. R



Reading the Booker Prize 2026 longlist

Each year, **Melanie Barton** sets herself the challenge of reading the entire Booker Prize longlist. Here she shares her impressions of the 2026 crop!

The Booker Prize is one of the leading literary awards in the English-speaking world – think of the Oscars and you've got the scale. Previous winners include a who's who of favourite authors – Salman Rushdie, our own Richard Flanagan and Peter Carey, Hilary Mantel, Margaret Atwood, Arundhati Roy and Ian McEwan, to name but a few.

This is the third year I've set out to read the 13 books on the annual longlist. What I like about it particularly is that it encourages me to read stories that I probably would not pick up. The list cuts through my 'to-read' stacks and makes me consider new ideas and new authors – this year probably more so than ever. I love discussing the list with Readings customers who are either making their way through the list or just reading one or two titles. The prize gives longlisted authors a massive boost in sales and profile, which is wonderful to see, and I love being part of that and being able to get behind the titles. There are always debut authors who make the list or authors I've never read before and whose careers I now follow closely, always looking out for their next books. One such author from last year, for example, is Benjamin Wood and his novel *Seascraper*. If you like the amazing Claire Keegan, I highly recommend you give *Seascraper* a read. It's sparse and brilliant, with real heart.

This year I was excited to start reading, although I will admit to some trepidation as the group of judges suggested that the books chosen were going to be a little edgier than my usual reading taste. Every year the Booker Prize has a new set of judges and they read 163 books from among those published in the UK and Ireland over the year. They read these works two or three times to make sure that they are choosing books that will be around as modern classics for years and years to come. Mary Beard, the chair of this year's judges, said of the 2026 list: 'there is … plenty here to change the way we see the world, to surprise us and to challenge our certainties.'

The winner will be announced on Monday 9 November, so watch out for it! Also, very excitingly, there will be a Children's Booker Prize awarded for the first time in 2027. The inaugural longlist will come out on Tuesday 24 November 2026.

In the meantime, here is a brief introduction to each of the books on the 2026 Booker Prize longlist!

> 'The list cuts through my "to-read" stacks and makes me consider new ideas and new authors – this year probably more so than ever. I love discussing the list with Readings customers who are either making their way through the list or just reading one or two titles.'

KEY

L Longlist

S Shortlist

The End of Everything

M. John Harrison

Serpent's Tail. PB. $32.99

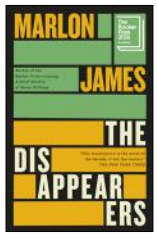


L S *The End of Everything* is a discombobulating post-apocalyptic novel that made me gasp out loud in one scene. The government barely functions, the seas are full of new creatures and Phillip fishes out of the water a creature that keeps changing. There is a lot of uneasiness and blank space in this novel for the reader to fill in. It is speculative fiction at its finest.

The Disappearers

Marlon James

Hamish Hamilton. PB. $34.99

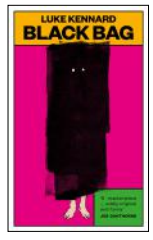


L S Marlon James previously won the Booker Prize for his novel *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. This new work is an unflinching novel of homophobia in the AIDS era. Set in Jamaica, it is raw and full of violence. It's essentially the story of eight queer men who sign up to act in a queer stage play. During one of their rehearsals, they are brutally attacked. The novel follows the lives of these men (and some of the perpetrators), across years and decades, revealing how devastating an act of violence can be. The novel is brilliant, but not for the faint of heart.

Black Bag

Luke Kennard

John Murray. PB. $34.99



L S This is the story of a struggling actor who takes on a job at the request of a university professor to wear a black leather bag over his whole body as an experiment. This novel is a surprise packet: deeply funny, but with so much to say about the crisis of masculinity. I wouldn't underestimate this one – it's a book I would never have picked up but am deeply happy to have read, and I'm still thinking about long after finishing it.

May We Feed the King

Rebecca Perry

Granta. PB. $32.99



L S This was one of the most surprising books for me. It's described as historical fiction but was remarkably different from what I was expecting, which is perhaps part of its brilliance. Part one is from the perspective of a modern-day museum curator, dressing the rooms of historical medieval palaces. Replicating food scenes from the past – pies; bowls of pears and grapes; and gluttonous meals for the king – she uses this work to disguise her loneliness and grief. She also becomes obsessed with understanding the king. The second part is

Melanie Barton is from Readings Carlton

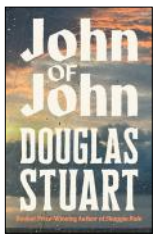
the story of the brother who was third in line to the throne yet unexpectedly inherits it when the rest of his family die. He has never prepared for this role and doesn't want the power that goes with it. Rebecca Perry is a debut novelist and definitely one to watch.

The Things We Never Say
Elizabeth Strout
Viking. HB. $35



L S Elizabeth Strout is one of my favourite fiction authors. *The Things We Never Say* is a new story (not from her world of Olive Kitteridge and Lucy Barton) about Artie Dam, who is a high school teacher. The novel is inherently about loneliness, friendship and how we choose to live. What I love most about Strout's writing is its heart and the quiet observations she makes. There is such humanity in this book, and it had me in tears many times. It is very short, but powerful – a perfect novel. I had to read it twice.

John of John
Douglas Stuart
Picador. PB. $34.99



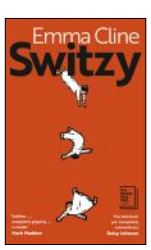
L S This novel is a sucker punch. Douglas Stuart previously won the Booker Prize for his debut novel *Shuggie Bain*. *John of John* is big, brutal and so wonderful. It really destroyed me, but in the best of ways. It's my favourite book of 2026. It is set in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland and the setting is every bit as much of a character as the people in the book. It's the story of 22-year-old Cal, his father John and, to a lesser extent, his wonderful grandmother, Ella. There are lots of family secrets, along with harsh poverty, religion and foreboding clouds, all overshadowing this novel, which will leave you reading (and reeling) to the end.

The Shadow of the Object
Chloe Aridjis
C&W. HB. $34.99



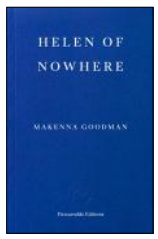
L When Flora is visiting home in Mexico, the family dog bites her hand and she ends up in hospital for several surgeries. There she meets an elderly German woman, Wilhelmina, who has pneumonia. They start a friendship that develops into an unexpected mission when Flora returns to London. Wilhelmina is a collector and this element of the plot is where the magic happens. *The Shadow of the Object* is a short and intriguing novel with friendship and grief at its heart.

Switzy
Emma Cline
C&W. PB. $34.99



L *Switzy* is the story of an older man who is travelling to Switzerland to end his life. He has dementia and we feel his mind unravelling as we move through the novel; we are in his head. Along the way, he meets up with his daughter and an old friend as he tries to resolve any outstanding matters or regrets of his life. This novel is brilliant – an unflinching and unsentimental look at dementia and the littleness of life when it all boils down to it, from a very clever young author.

Helen of Nowhere
Makenna Goodman
Fitzcarraldo. PB. $29.99



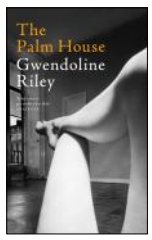
L *Helen of Nowhere* is a very short novel that almost reads like a play, taking place in six acts over the course of a day. There is a flawed man who is lamenting the demise of his marriage and his career and is re-evaluating his life. He is an unreliable narrator with a large measure of toxic masculinity. There are many topics raised and questions asked here, but it's unclear how many are answered.

The Renovation
Kenan Orhan
Hamish Hamilton. PB. $34.99



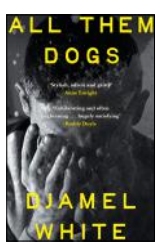
L The premise of this story is a woman discovering that the bathroom renovation she had commissioned (to enable her father, who is suffering from dementia, to move in) has actually been remodelled into a prison cell from her native Turkey. At the forefront is her father's dementia and some unforgettable scenes between parent and adult child that will stay with me. Yet this novel is much more about the grief and difficulties of political exile. It is a profoundly powerful book that uses a very clever device to enable the reader to experience the depth of the woman's loss and longing for her homeland.

The Palm House
Gwendoline Riley
Picador. PB. $34.99



L This is a very subtle, virtually plotless novel that is essentially conversations between Laura, the protagonist, and various men in her life. It moves between memories and current conversations with her friends. It's a very quiet novel that manages to capture everyday contemporary life and weighty issues in a relatable way.

All Them Dogs
Djamel White
John Murray. PB. $34.99

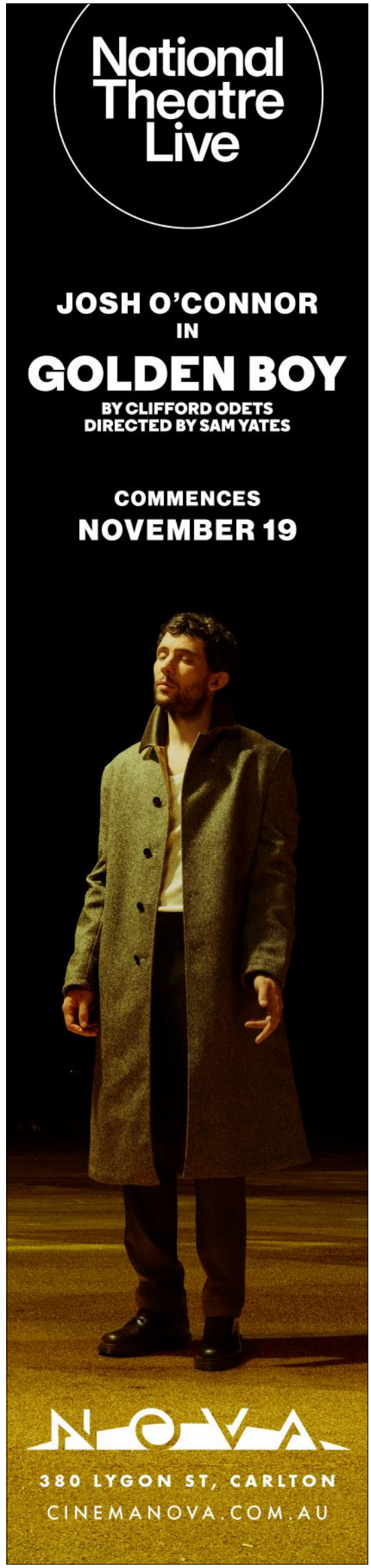


L Set deep in Dublin's gangland scene, this is a punchy, violent and very compelling novel with more tenderness and compassion than I expected. There's aggression and revenge, and things only become more complicated with an unexpected queer attraction between two key gangland figures. Djamel White is another exciting debut author.

The Vivisectors
Missouri Williams
Fourth Estate. PB. $32.99



L A reclusive narrator, Agathe, works to build the career of her fraudulent professor boss who has her doing all the work. There is a campus scandal, with both parties claiming racism, that becomes a crisis hanging over the university. This is a very dark, experimental novel that is highly intelligent. It is hard to characterise – an almost dystopian campus novel with lots of topics touched on yet nothing really resolved. **R**

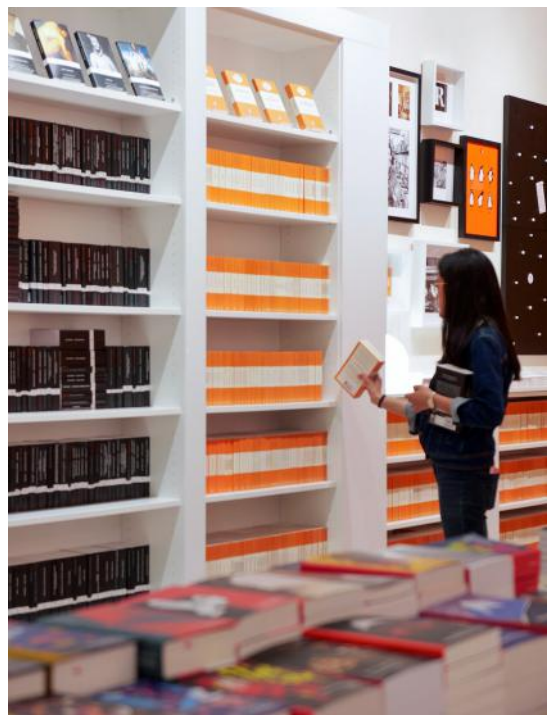


Joe Rubbo reveals the story behind this homage to the classics!

Readings × Penguin Classics pop-up shop

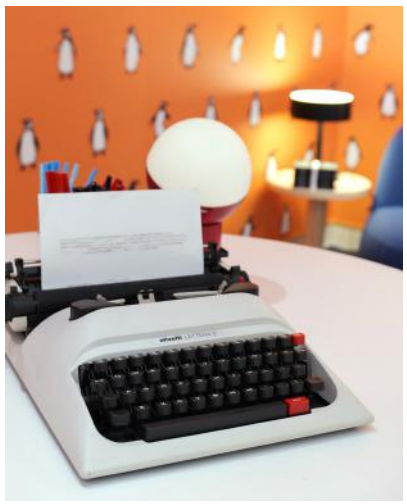


In mid-October, we partnered with Penguin Random House to open a pop-up shop in the vacant tenancy next to our shop in Emporium Melbourne. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Penguin Classic, and the pop-up gives homage to this distinguished imprint and stocks, exclusively, classics in all their manifestations: modern, popular, clothbound, black, and so on. This is the first time we've done something like this. When the shop became available, we were trying to think of something to do with it that would make sense as a standalone pop-up shop. While we were brainstorming ideas, Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey* was scheduled for release and sales of the book took off. *The Odyssey* was the first Penguin Classic to be published. Around the same time Nolan's *The Odyssey* came out, an adaptation of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* had sparked a renewed interest in that novel, and we'd started selling dozens of copies a week. New adaptations of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* were also in the works. There is obviously an enthusiasm among readers to discover or rediscover classic books, and this, coupled with the significant milestone of the Penguin Classics' 80th birthday, made up our minds for us.











Joe Rubbo is the managing director of Readings

Shop designed by the Readings design team – Miranda La Fleur, Natasha Theoharous and Megan Tran – with Rowena Sy from Penguin Random House.

Photos by Lian Hingee

The Readings × Penguin Classics pop-up shop is open next door to Readings Emporium until the end of January.

Our talented designers and marketing team have created a beautiful little space that tells the story of the Penguin Classic. I feel confident in writing that most, if not all, of you reading this will have read or at the very least picked up and turned over a Penguin Classic in the last few years. It's equally likely you have a story about reading a classic at a seminal moment in your life when it shifted your view of the world or a situation. As our book buyer Alison Huber writes:

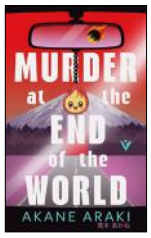
> When I was ordering the stock for the pop-up, and then later when I was helping to shelve it, I felt like I was on a nostalgic journey through all my reading phases and identities (and there have been a lot of them). I do struggle to confirm a 'favourite' book, but here are a few: *Hating Alison Ashley* by Robin Klein was a formative book for me as a young reader in the 1980s, and it felt just right that it be in the first group of Penguin's Modern Australian Classics. One of my gateway books into adult reading was definitely *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, which I re-read periodically (and I never re-read anything); later, it was necessary to counter Brontë's narrative with Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Like many people, I loved finding my way to *Stoner* by John Williams, the popularity of which was an early moment in our current 'rediscovered classics' era, but I also adored his earlier and lesser-read novel, *Butcher's Crossing*.

In the early days of the pop-up shop's opening, the excitement among customers has been great to see. The pop-up will run until the end of January.

This month we have also been renovating our St Kilda shop. Acland Street has gone through some big changes over the last seven or so years. The double whammy of the council closing the street to through traffic and Covid have made the street less vibrant than it once was. Our sales in that shop reduced by a third. However, we feel strongly that Acland Street needs a bookshop and ours has a 30-year history in that location – first as Cosmos Books and then as Readings – so we don't want to close. There is still a strong community of readers and authors in St Kilda that we need to support. Instead, we have opted to reduce the footprint of the shop to something more appropriate. In the process, we've replaced the old carpet, fixed up some of the broken shelves and given it a fresh lick of paint. We look forward to welcoming you to the new space on your next visit. **R**

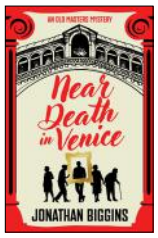
Crime

Murder at the End of the World
Akane Araki &
Jesse Kirkwood (trans.)
Pushkin Vertigo. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



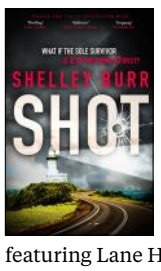
An asteroid is hurtling towards Earth, and humanity has just over two months to live. But 23-year-old Haru, stargazer and chronic worrier, is still trying to pass her driving test. Then she finds a body in the boot of her car: a woman, stabbed and tortured. There's a murderer on the loose. And it turns out that Haru's driving instructor is an ex-cop with a manic devotion to justice. So, despite the small matter of an impending apocalypse, the two women team up to catch the culprit, no matter where it takes them.

Near Death in Venice
Jonathan Biggins
S&S/Summit. PB. Was $34.99
$29.99
Available now



Tristan Barclay, art historian, minor TV celebrity and Belvedere Tours leader, is reluctantly embarking on his final tour of European art and culture. But this will be no ordinary excursion to see the old masters – Tristan is secretly planning a 'grand gesture' of his own. The problem is, he can't complete his mission alone, especially once a romance distracts him from his quest. Luckily, his tour group are eager to help and find themselves caught up in a high-stakes heist where danger lurks around every ornate column.

Shot
Shelley Burr
Hachette. PB. $34.99
Available now



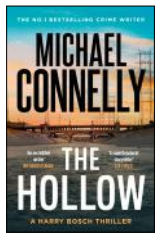
Australian crime writer Shelley Burr is no stranger to inviting readers to examine a murder through the lens of a civilian investigator. Her multi-award-winning debut, *Wake*, was the first in a series featuring Lane Holland, an amateur private investigator with a penchant for solving cold cases. In *Shot*, Burr introduces us to Jen, a successful true-crime vlogger who has been invited by a major streaming service to produce a documentary on the unsolved murder of an influencer couple. The Crews family – Duncan, Dahlia, and daughter Karma Crew – were on the cusp of making a big announcement online when an anonymous masked intruder appeared behind them and shot the parents dead in front of thousands of digital witnesses. Years later, Karma is preparing to re-enter the public sphere via a Meghan Markle-esque lifestyle show, but for it to be a success the network needs to put to rest any rumours that she had anything to do with her parents' murders.

Who better than Jen to help Karma prove her innocence? Jen's reputation is unimpeachable, but after being slapped with a defamation suit, she's desperate enough to accept a job where someone else is controlling the narrative. Before too long, it becomes clear that there was much more going on behind the idyllic façade the Crews family presented to their adoring fans. Jen must decide how far down the rabbit hole she's prepared to go – and whether the story she finds will be the one she's been commissioned to tell.

Shot is an atmospheric standalone thriller that examines the double-edged sword of public notoriety, what's behind the influencer hustle and what someone who lives their life in public might choose to keep behind closed doors.

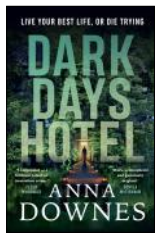
Lian Hingee is the digital marketing manager

The Hollow
Michael Connelly
Michael Connelly. PB. Was $34.99
$29.99
Available now



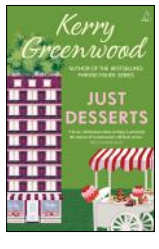
When Harry Bosch was 11 years old, his mother was murdered and he was sent to live in a children's facility where abuse was rampant. Now Bosch learns he is entitled to $400,000 from a settlement but doesn't want the money, he wants justice. It reawakens his memories of the home and of an inmate's death that was covered up and never solved. He reopens the case and discovers a predator who went on to a life of vicious crime. Bosch must bring down a sadistic criminal and put to rest the demons of his past.

Dark Days Hotel
Anna Downes
Affirm. PB. $34.99
Available now



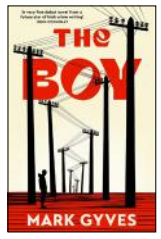
One dark winter night, a young woman collapses in the carpark of a Tasmanian hospital. Emergency nurse Liv is the only witness but fails to save her. Determined to discover the woman's identity, Liv's search leads to the Aonaran, an exclusive health resort on the coast of Macquarie Heads. As she is drawn beneath the serene surface of the resort and its promise of transformation, the more unsettling it becomes, and Liv is forced to ask: what is the true cost of a better life, and is she prepared to pay?

Just Desserts
Kerry Greenwood
A&U. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



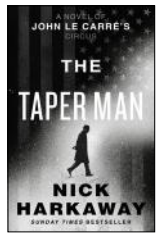
Autumn is in the air, and Corinna Chapman is in her beloved bakery. Her private-detective lover, Daniel, is working all hours, while her right-hand baker, Jason, is mixing delectable muffins. All seems well with the world. But their cherished Insula, a heritage apartment building with a flourishing rooftop garden, is about to land in the crosshairs of a dodgy real estate developer. The fate of Insula hangs in the balance, and everyone will need to step up to survive. Meanwhile, how are missing boys and an attack on Daniel connected?

The Boy
Mark Gyves
No Exit. PB. $34.99
Available now



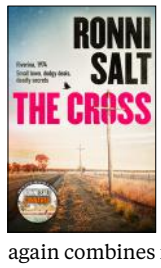
When the Guards knock on the door, The Boy already knows his mother is dead. His father flees to the pub, leaving him to wait alone. Soon his brother Fallon, half-protector and half-outlaw, draws him into a world where grief and crime are rarely separated. At the same time, a wealthy landowner harbours grotesque secrets in the countryside – a hidden 'family' of abducted boys, a nightmare lurking beneath respectability. As The Boy navigates these fractured worlds, he becomes both witness and inheritor of a brutal legacy.

The Taper Man
Nick Harkaway
Viking. PB. $34.99
Available 10 November



Cold War, 1965. The Circus has one prize asset left in Moscow: a senior Red Army officer with access to the enemy's deepest secrets. But when a British agent is shot in Helsinki, George Smiley uncovers a Soviet operation that imperils this irreplaceable source. The trail leads him to Los Angeles, where a Communist sleeper agent, a 'Taper Man', is poised to expose Britain's operative in Moscow. To save him, Smiley must navigate America's political turmoil while his spy in Leningrad risks everything for the final piece of the puzzle.

The Cross
Ronni Salt
Hachette. PB. $34.99
Available 24 November



Ronni Salt's *The Cross* is a compelling Australian crime novel and a companion to her debut novel, *Gunnawah*. Returning to the fictional Riverina town of Gunnawah, Salt once again combines mystery, dark humour and memorable characters to explore the secrets hidden beneath the surface of a seemingly ordinary rural community.

Adelaide Hoffman, cadet journalist for the *Gunnawah Gazette*, begins investigating a proposed new resort development on the banks of the Murray River. When a stranger in a yellow sports car arrives in town, Adelaide, her boss Valdene Bullark and Val's long-time friend Wayne Trevaskis suspect something fishy is going down. Sure enough, this little town is covering even more shady deals and long-buried secrets that threaten to destroy all sense of community, if there was any to begin with.

For readers of *Gunnawah*, one of the great pleasures of *The Cross* is returning to familiar characters, especially Adelaide, Val and Wayne. For new readers, *The Cross* introduces you to a nostalgic blast from the past in a town exemplified by football, meat pies, cheap grog, Gough Whitlam, and true-blue humour. The 1970s setting is vividly recreated, balancing darker themes with quirky and distinctly Australian personalities. As power, religion, corruption and revenge intersect in this fast-paced and riveting mystery, we see how fragile a community becomes when a single change – whether the arrival of a stranger or a disruption in the daily life of the townsfolk – occurs. How much more secrecy and betrayal can this town withstand? And what will be the final straw?

While *Gunnawah* introduced readers to Adelaide and established the close-knit community of Gunnawah, *The Cross* builds on that foundation and demonstrates how much more there is to discover beneath the town's familiar exterior. Perfect for fans of Jane Harper and Garry Disher.

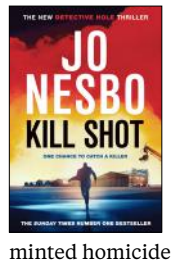
Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

The Madman
Henning Mankell, George Goulding & Sarah de Senarclens (trans)
Mountain Leopard. PB. $36.99
Available now



One day in 1947, Bertil Kras leaves his life in Stockholm to begin again. Taking a job at a sawmill, he moves to a small town in the north. Here the locals are wary and divided, haunted by the memory of the internment camp that stood on the other side of the forest. Branded as a communist and an outsider, Bertil struggles to integrate. One January night, the sawmill burns down. All eyes turn to Bertil: the perfect scapegoat. With the weight of the town's judgement upon him, what is there left for him to become?

Kill Shot
Jo Nesbo
Harvill. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



Out of the police force, Harry Hole is trying a new career. But when a woman is found murdered, her killing styled after a scene from a movie, and two more bodies turn up in rapid succession, newly minted homicide investigator Oleg Fauke turns to Harry for advice. As gruesome films begin to appear and the victims pile up, Harry's unique expertise is needed. He is drawn back into helping his old colleagues, and his personal relationships grow as complicated as the mind of the killer he is trying to catch. **R**

Nonfiction

Architecture

Towards Light: A Philosophy of Life and Architecture
Tadao Ando & Polly Barton (trans.)
Scribe. HB. $49.99
Available 15 December



Tadao Ando is one of the most celebrated architects of our time. His bold, concrete buildings and their interplay with light, shadow and nature have become symbols of the modern world. Now, at 85, Ando looks back on a lifetime of making. *Towards Light* explores the stories behind his greatest buildings and shares wisdom drawn from pivotal moments in his life. It is a grounded guide to a creative life as it is lived, for anyone committed to their work and to the long process of creating something meaningful.

Merchant Builders: This is Not Subtopia!
Alan Pert & Philip Goad
Miegunyah. HB. $140
Available 10 November



Founded in 1965 Merchant Builders pioneered cluster housing and townhouse prototypes that reimagined suburbia as relational rather than purely private, and their design briefs called for ambiguity. *Merchant Builders* reframes the story of suburbia, drawing on newly uncovered archives, photographs and interviews. It positions Merchant Builders' suburban experiments as a profound response to the problem of subdivision and connects their legacy to today's debates on affordability, sustainability and the endless expansion of suburbia.

Australian Studies

Finding Justice: From Courtroom to Country
Larissa Behrendt
UQP. PB. $36.99
Available 3 November



Larissa Behrendt is undoubtedly brilliant. If you don't believe me, a short summary of some of her achievements – lawyer, author, filmmaker, activist, legal advocate, Harvard graduate – should convince you. In *Finding Justice*, Behrendt unites her abilities within writing and law to examine and imagine possibilities for justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

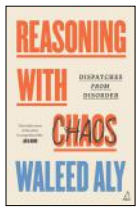
Justice, for Behrendt, is much more complicated than anything achievable simply through the justice system, a system which she describes as part of the 'machinery of colonisation'. While she is persuasive and incisive in her analysis of the law, and the ways in which it has potential to both harm and help Indigenous people, justice itself runs far deeper. Justice is about more than case numbers; it is about people. Behrendt praises the testimonial methodologies of the groundbreaking *Bringing Them Home* report, which interviewed thousands of people impacted by the Stolen Generations, and reproduces these methodologies in her own text, both telling personal life stories and breaking down statistics into real people.

This methodology renders storytelling essential. Behrendt, who is a Euahleyai and Gamillaroi woman, reflects on Indigenous storytelling practices and discusses how her experiences as an Aboriginal woman have shaped her perspective on justice. She also tells others' stories. Discussing blak women deaths in custody, Behrendt discusses individual women, who were predominantly affected by the Stolen Generations, and the circumstances that ended with them in custody, and then, preventably, dead. Behrendt approaches all of these women – and everyone she discusses – with compassion, but also with a desire to make change.

This possibility for change drives the entire book. Behrendt emphasises, again and again, the need for Indigenous self-determination. Self-determination has been a demand for a long time – and with this book, we are closer to understanding how it can be achieved.

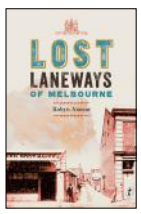
Teddy Peak is from Readings Carlton

Reasoning with Chaos: Dispatches from Disorder
Waleed Aly
A&U. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



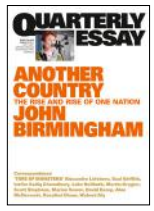
How do we come to grips with the constant bombardment and chaos of shocking and unfathomable news? For years, in his multi-award-winning column, Waleed Aly has done just that. In this book he revisits those articles, sorting them into themes, giving them new life and highlighting commonalities between disparate events. Tying these together are 12 new essays that reflect upon the definitive elements of this chaotic age. This is a thoughtful guide to finding sense in these uncertain times.

Lost Laneways of Melbourne
Robyn Annear
Text. HB. Was $36.99
$31.99
Available 3 November



Melbourne is Australia's city of laneways. It has been that way ever since European settlement. But the lacework of back streets and alleys famous for their bars, restaurants and vibrant street art emerged from a more squalid history – and did so in a whirlwind of shonky construction and ruthless demolition that saw the streetscape rapidly change. Robyn Annear takes the reader on a series of guided walks around the modern city to discover the ghost city behind it, and the stories of the people who lived there.

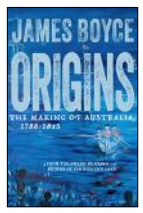
Quarterly Essay 104: Another Country – The Rise and Rise of One Nation
John Birmingham
Black Inc. PB. $29.99
Available 16 November



The rise of One Nation isn't a sudden eruption. In this intimate, perceptive and funny essay, John Birmingham gives us the deep history and the present moment. Using personal stories, insights from political insiders and overarching analysis, he shows who is thinking about voting One Nation and why. This is an essay about nostalgia, rage and the efforts to build an unstoppable movement to change Australia. *Another Country* maps One Nation's Australia and explores where our politics goes from here.

Origins: The Making of Australia, 1788–1825
James Boyce
Black Inc. PB. $39.99
Available 17 November

This author is at A Day in Carlton, see the program online for details



In his previous books, *Van Diemen's Land* (2008) and *1835: The Founding of Melbourne and the Conquest of Australia* (2011), Australian historian James Boyce offered us new ways to re-imagine the past of this country, so as to re-inhabit its present and reconstruct its future. *Origins: The Making of Australia 1788–1825* transports us to ground zero: the First Fleet's arrival at Sydney Cove, and by rewinding and replaying material that we thought we knew, upends the perceived relationships between First Nations people and the convicts who shared, Boyce suggests, a resistance to an imperial power.

As always making country the centre of his enquiry, Boyce identifies the British yeoman's loss of connection to country with the enclosure of the commons, that systematic and legalistic deprivation of access to previously shared land which occurred during the 1800s as the Industrial Revolution snorted and stamped its way across Europe. The availability of the resources of the commons had made running small farms viable, but its denial drove poverty, mass movement to city centres and a criminal class whose numbers swelled the hulks moored in the Thames.

Dumped out of stinking ships onto a strange and sun-bleached beach at the bottom of the world, says Boyce, the convicts' first and crucial act of resistance to the colonial authority was walking about without restraint, an assertion of their 'right to roam', by which they made sure that 'their new country would not be a prison'. Roaming, fishing, farming, surviving and becoming free, they met, were fascinated by, fought with, befriended and tried to understand First Nations people, who themselves were coming to grips with their changed circumstances. Their changed Country.

Australia has always been many nations. It has never been one nation. James Boyce's *Origins* tells stories which will complexify your thinking about our many-nationed country.

Bernard Caleo is from Readings Carlton and is the *Readings Monthly* cartoonist

The Chaser and Shovel Annual 2026
The Chaser
The Chaser. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



In a year when the only thing rising faster than petrol prices was One Nation, people need a laugh that doesn't require doom scrolling past AI slop. That's where *The Chaser and Shovel Annual 2026* comes in – they guarantee that their slop is 100% human-generated. In all, it's 128 pages of hilarity (that can also be burned for fuel if needed), containing all the best jokes from *The Chaser* and *The Shovel* this year, as well exclusive new jokes that are harder to get than access to the Strait of Hormuz.

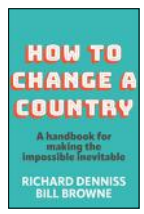
Indigenous Knowledge: Global Perspectives
Samuel Curkpatrick, Dolly Kikon, Marcia Langton & Aaron Corn (eds)
Miegunyah. PB. $34.99
Available 10 November



Indigenous Knowledge: Global Perspectives brings together leading scholars from Australia and the Asia–Pacific to explore how Indigenous knowledge tackles common challenges in governance and research, environmental sustainability and cultural diversity. Contributors reveal how Indigenous knowledge, while distinct, can inform new collaborations that respect and build on local wisdom and initiative, sparking understandings of identity and place that are often overlooked in mainstream scholarship.

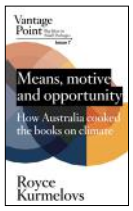
How to Change a Country: A Handbook for Making the Impossible Inevitable
Richard Denniss & Bill Browne
Australia Institute. PB. $36.99
Available 1 December

Richard Denniss will be at A Day in Carlton, see the program online for details



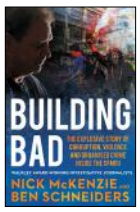
Australia used to put asbestos in homes, hunt whales, criminalise abortion and lock people in jail based on their sexuality. Our parliaments have changed all that. Policies to give the biggest tax breaks to the rich were law in Australia. But the work of the Australia Institute and others brought about real change. This compelling, accessible and timely book provides inspiration and guidance on changing the world the Australia Institute way: by having a big idea, doing the work and using the power you have built.

Means, Motive and Opportunity: How Australia Cooked the Books on Climate (Vantage Point, Issue 7)
Royce Kurmelovs
Australia Institute. PB. $19.99
Available 10 November



A generation of Australians was told that climate action would wreck the economy. What they weren't told was this message came from oil, gas and coal producers, which was laundered into government policy via a little-known agency. With forensic detail, Royce Kurmelovs traces the hidden history of how an obscure research bureau came to debase Australian climate policy for decades. As Australia grapples with worsening fires and floods, he shows the effects of institutional capture and the importance of integrity in the public service.

Building Bad: The Explosive Story of Corruption, Violence and Organised Crime Inside the CFMEU
Nick McKenzie & Ben Schneiders
Hachette. PB. $36.99
Available now



In 2024, the spotlight fell on the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU), specifically the Victorian branch. Whistleblowers and witnesses pointed to the union's sinister links with outlaw bikie gangs and underworld figures. Walkley Award-winning journalists Nick McKenzie and Ben Schneiders joined forces to dig deeper, and together they uncovered evidence of blackmail, extortion, drug trafficking on sites, sexual misconduct, bribery, and rorting of government contracts.

Going Digital: The Transformation of the ABC
Margaret Simons
La Trobe. PB. $39.99
Available 3 November

This author is at A Day in Carlton, see the program online for details



Today, the ABC offers things that were unimaginable 20 years ago: 24-hour news coverage, an entire app of kids' content, podcasts and on-demand TV shows. Before smartphones, broadband and *Bluey*, all this would have sounded impossible. The ABC's transformation has been remarkable – but unanswered questions remain. Drawing on candid interviews and a deep understanding of Australian media, Margaret Simons tells the tumultuous story of how the ABC transformed itself for the digital age.

Biography

How to Begin
Edmund de Waal
C&W. HB. $39.99
Available 10 November



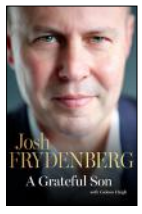
In 1921, Elisabeth Ephrussi, a young Viennese law student and aspiring poet, writes to Rainer Maria Rilke and, to her surprise, Rilke writes back with advice. A five-year correspondence follows: an exchange of letters, books, translations, poems in manuscript. They never meet. Decades later, Elisabeth's grandson Edmund de Waal wants to be a poet and asks her for guidance. *How to Begin* follows de Waal's journey as an artist. It is about failure, starting again, apprenticeship and how to find a creative voice.

Is It Too Late to Make a Run for It?
Judi Dench with Brendan O'Hea
Michael Joseph. PB. Was $36.99
$ $29.99
Available now



In *Is It Too Late to Make a Run for It?*, beloved actor Judi Dench opens her almost inexhaustible collection of memories from life and acting. Funny, intimate and surprising, Dench takes us back to her upbringing in York: the parents who shaped her, the brother who encouraged her to act and the teachers who inspired her. And she tells of pranks, onstage and off, dissects her greatest screen roles and shares tales of her joyful marriage to actor Michael Williams, as well as her passion for nature and animals.

A Grateful Son
Josh Frydenberg with Gideon Haigh
HarperCollins. HB. $45
Available now



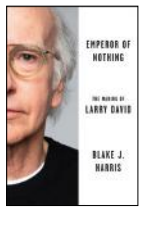
Raised in a close-knit household, Josh Frydenberg dreamed of a career as a pro tennis player before he was introduced to politics while working for John Howard and Alexander Downer. In this candid memoir, he recounts the defining moments and decisions of a career inspired by family, community and gratitude for the opportunities afforded by life in Australia. He reflects on what political power can and cannot achieve, on the cost of public life in a more divided world, and on the promise and potential of Australia.

Belonging: A Journey of Love
Sonia Gandhi
HarperCollins. PB. $36.99
Available 10 November



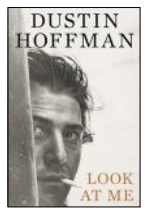
Sonia Gandhi opens up with warmth and candour to tell the story of her remarkable life, from her childhood in post-war Veneto, Italy to her marriage to Rajiv Gandhi and new beginnings in India, and on to the shattering losses that will reshape not only her own future but also that of her adopted home. Weaving the personal with the political, this is a story of love, family, and finding the strength to remake a life and to serve India, an endlessly fascinating country and the place where she belongs.

Emperor of Nothing: The Making of Larry David
Blake J. Harris
HarperCollins. PB. $34.99
Available now



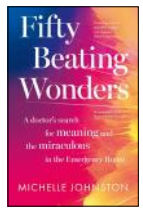
Legendary comedian Larry David has built a comedy empire on candid observations, social faux pas and unapologetically selfish behaviour. But the man behind the clever musings has mostly remained an enigma. In *Emperor of Nothing*, Blake J. Harris paints an honest portrait of Larry David, tracing his journey from a Brooklyn childhood and early days as a stand-up comic to reinventing himself through his legendary partnership with Jerry Seinfeld and ultimately becoming a star and the voice of a generation.

Look at Me
Dustin Hoffman with Ariel Levy
Gallery. HB. Was $49.99
$ $39.99
Available 10 November



For nearly 60 years, Dustin Hoffman has been one of America's most compelling and unpredictable cultural figures. In *Look at Me*, he reflects on his journey from a young actor searching for purpose to an extraordinary career including *The Graduate, Tootsie, Rain Man* and more. Warm, candid and hilarious, Hoffman reflects on art, ambition, family, friendship, love, ageing, the mysteries of a creative life and what matters most. A memoir that is searching, wise and impossible to forget.

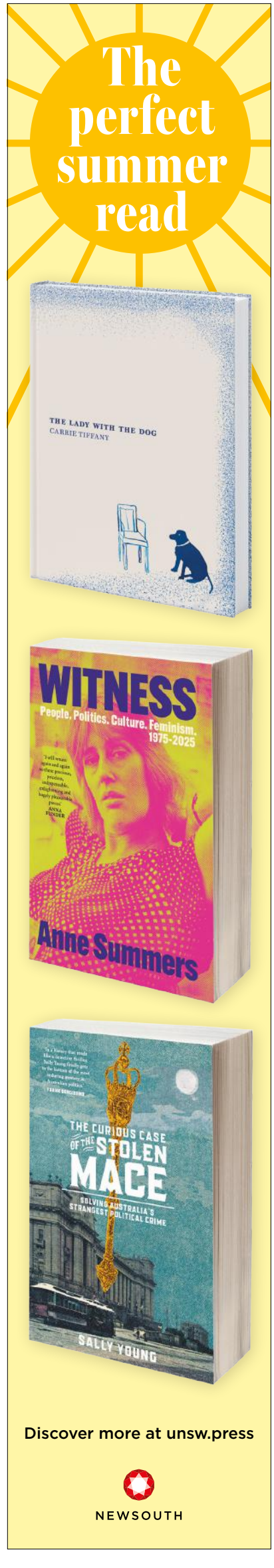
Fifty Beating Wonders: A Doctor's Search for Meaning and the Miraculous in the Emergency Room
Michelle Johnston
Fourth Estate. PB. $36.99
Available now



R When emergency physician Michelle Johnston experiences a pounding heart and contemplates the work that lies ahead of her in the busy emergency department (ED) of a public hospital, she is faced with a multitude of inequities and injustices in health care, as well as sometimes impossible decision-making. So, she resolves to look at things differently: 'The opposite to hell was not heaven … Maybe it was as simple as wonder.' She thus takes the reader on a wonderful, engaging and uplifting journey of examining 50 small wonders, at the same time as we share in the hospital experience of a motorcyclist whose life hangs in the balance.

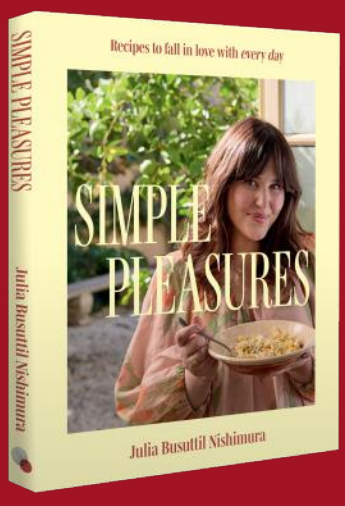
These small wonders take us on a fascinating tour of the human body, where we learn of the wonders of a blood clot, the architecture of the heart, the underrated diaphragm, the miracle of the placenta, the vagus nerve, and so on, all living up to her claim that our bodies are orchestras and even the act of standing up is 'a stupidly small joy'. But this is not a dry tale of the human body – this is rich storytelling from a doctor who knows that at the core of medicine is trust and connection, and doctors taking the time to listen, care and show respect. And the 50 wonders are not just fascinating stories of medical insight and history – like why zebrafish are the go-to fish for medical research and how coconut water was used as IV fluid – but also about people, like the sometimes-overlooked patient care assistants who she calls the 'supernovas of sacrifice and beneficence'.

This book is about the complexity and magic of the human body; the paradox of its fragility and strength; its vulnerability and endurance; but is also about connection and ethics, and the value of



All you need to create simple and flavourful dishes

SIMPLE PLEASURES



Julia Busuttil Nishimura

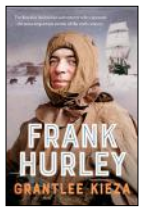
Eating deliciously doesn't have to be difficult

plum.

caring for others and creating a meaningful life. As she says, 'Humans are as much story as coagulation'. This is another wonderful addition to the library of books that provide us with a profound exploration of the human condition, where philosophy and storytelling intersect with medicine, and the value of humanity and empathy are as important as the imperfections and fallibility of medical practice.

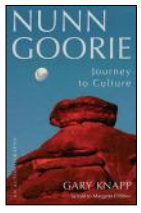
Pauline Hopkins is the manager of Readings Hawthorn

Frank Hurley
Grantlee Kieza
ABC. HB. $49.99
Available now



Frank Hurley carved a path as one of Australia's greatest adventurers. A visionary photographer and filmmaker, he journeyed all over the world, capturing people and places few had ever seen, from expeditions to Antarctica, alongside Mawson and Shackleton, to the jungles of New Guinea. Hurley also documented both world wars and risked his life time and again for incredible images. He also wrote bestselling books and as a cinematographer helped create some of Australia's most iconic early films.

Nunngoorie: Journey to Culture
Gary Knapp as told to Margaret O'Brien
Magabala. PB. $27.99
Available now



As a child, Gary Knapp was removed from his loving family to Roelands Mission south of Perth. He was one of almost 500 Aboriginal children who suffered there at the hands of missionaries. *Nunngoorie: Journey to Culture* tells the story of Knapp's journey to healing and self-discovery as he sets out on an odyssey; across the Nullarbor through the heart of Central Australia and towards the Western Desert, as he meets his kin, learns the secrets of the traditional healers, and solves the mysteries of his own belonging.

Songs from the Firefront
Tim Winton
Hamish Hamilton. HB. Was $45
$39.99
Available 3 November



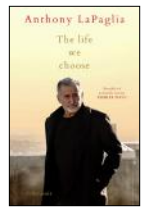
Described in the blurb as 'true and tender stories from a master', that phrase couldn't be more apt for what is a very personal set of stories and essays that span a large part of Tim Winton's life – from first babies and writing *Cloudstreet* to fire and storm on his Western Australian property, to births of grandchildren and everything in between. This story collection gives an insight into the pains and driving forces in Winton's life. There is even a wonderful story paying tribute to his friend and fellow pillar of Australian literature, Helen Garner. With so much heart and wit in Winton's prose, I was continually reminded of why he is such a master.

There is many a tale about the power and wonder of the sea and water, a subject upon which his writing has become wildly acclaimed and for which he is renowned. His climate and nature writing is also impassioned and inspiring. One of my favourite stories in this memoir collection is 'fireboy', which is a little tale he tells his grandson. Some chapters are as brief as two pages, but all are separate memories or episodes from Winton's life that illustrate his love for Australia, family, the land, nature and his deep hope that we can wake up and change things before it is too late.

With a turn of phrase that could only be Winton, there is such a profound sense of family in these stories that makes it feel as if I've been picked up and placed in a rocking chair at Winton's property to hear each one. He would be one hell of a friend, neighbour, grandfather, father, and husband. He sure is one hell of a writer.

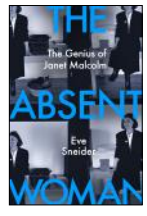
Melanie Barton is from Readings Carlton

The Life We Choose: A Memoir
Anthony LaPaglia
HarperCollins. HB. $45
Available now



In *The Life We Choose*, Hollywood actor Anthony LaPaglia crafts a memoir as raw and layered as the life he's lived – a story of reinvention, resilience and the relentless pursuit of something more. From the suffocating suburbs of Adelaide, where family dysfunction reigned, to the gritty streets of New York, where he found himself bartending for Broadway actors and chasing roles nobody thought he'd ever get, LaPaglia's journey is a meditation on identity, survival, fame and the cost of ambition.

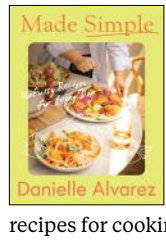
The Absent Woman: The Genius of Janet Malcolm
Eve Sneider
Atlantic. PB. $34.99
Available 17 November



When you know of Janet Malcolm, you spot traces of her everywhere. You understand that she was a titan of the written word with a far-reaching impact and cult-like following. But if you don't know to look for her name, it is easy to miss. *The Absent Woman* plumbs the Malcolm archives to uncover a portrait of this notoriously private writer and her work, and of the people and themes that she was consumed by in her over 60-year career. An illuminating biography of one of the most influential *New Yorker* writers.

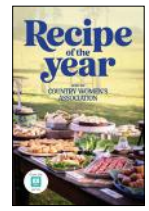
Cooking

Made Simple: Unfussy Recipes for Every Day
Danielle Alvarez
Murdoch. HB. $45
Available 3 November



Made Simple is Danielle Alvarez at her most generous best – doing away with adornment and breaking cooking down into its simplest essentials. Here are over 80 of the best possible recipes for cooking at home, each one purpose-designed for ease and enjoyment. Danielle has decades of experience in restaurants and at home, distilling what belongs on a plate and what can be left out: real food, with a focus on what's achievable. The best recipes to enjoy at home, made simple.

Recipe of the Year
Country Women's Association
ABC. HB. $39.99
Available 1 December



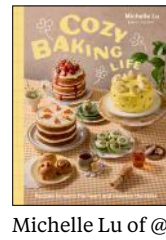
Recipe of the Year accompanies the ABC TV show of the same name, in which, under the eye of the Country Women's Association (CWA), a group of home cooks from around the nation serve up flavour, history and slices of life in a bid to win Australia's Recipe of the Year. The best of the best from the series are in this book with additional recipes from host and chef Adam Liaw, fellow judge Pia Miranda and CWA Convenor Ellice Schrader. This is a fabulous cookbook deeply connected to Australia's culinary heritage.

Coffee, For Here: The Ultimate Handbook for At-Home Coffee Enthusiasts
Morgan Eckroth
Murdoch. HB. $36.99
Available 3 November



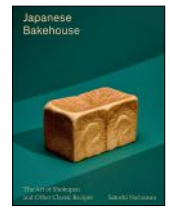
Make café-quality coffee at home with this book from US Barista Champion Morgan Eckroth, the creator behind the popular @morgandrinkscoffee. *Coffee, For Here* is both a practical handbook and a guide to building real coffee skills, designed to help you brew with confidence and curiosity, whether you're just beginning your coffee journey or ready to refine your technique. It explores coffee from bean to cup, major brewing methods, and is an essential companion for making great coffee, right where you are.

Cozy Baking Life: Recipes to Warm the Heart and Sweeten the Table
Michelle Lu
Murdoch. HB. $39.99
Available 3 November



Cozy Baking Life is a collection of recipes for home bakers who find comfort in slowing down and baking with intention. With more than 2 million followers across social media, Michelle Lu of @sweet_essence_ is known for her calm, approachable baking style and whimsical designs that taste as good as they look. With a focus on clarity and confidence, this book is full of well-tested recipes and offers practical tips, gentle guidance and baking that feels nostalgic and comforting.

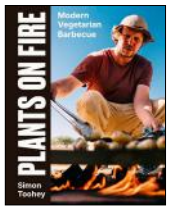
Japanese Bakehouse: The Art of Shokupan and Other Classic Recipes
Satoshi Narusawa
Smith Street. HB. $59.99
Available 3 November



Master pastry chef Satoshi Narusawa introduces traditional and cult favourite baked goods from Japan to the home cook in *Japanese Bakehouse*. Filled with more than 80 sweet and

savoury recipes for shokupan, buns, sandwiches, and French Japanese pastries, such as a black sesame croissant, brioche noir and peanut butter and miso cookie, this book celebrates the incredible diversity of delicious baked goods sold in konbinis and bakehouses throughout Japan.

Plants on Fire: Modern Vegetarian Barbecue
Simon Toohey
Harper By Design. HB. $49.99
Available now



Simon Toohey is not here to change centuries of food traditions (or your meat-eating habits), but he can help make your veggies taste better. The culmination of his 10-year journey learning how to cook simply and elementally with vegetables to extract maximum flavour, these 100+ everyday recipes are designed to ignite your taste buds and your passion for cooking over flame. Using fire, you can unlock what's already in the plant – the sweetness, the texture, the bite, the surprise. With recipes ranging from snacks to feast-worthy plates, this book proves that plants aren't only the side act!

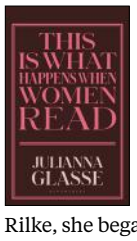
Cultural Studies

Spooky Ladies: Rebels, Witches, Mediums & Magic
Kaz Cooke
Scribner. PB. $37.99
Available now



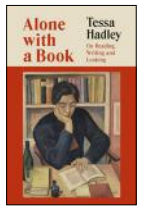
In this fascinating work by a beloved chronicler of women's lives, Kaz Cooke uncovers the incredible stories of women who conjured ghosts, delivered prophecies, read minds and performed miracles – whether through genuine belief, theatrical flair, calculated fraud or sheer survival instinct. From the Victorian séance parlours of the Fox sisters to the enduring legend of Bess Houdini, these women built careers in worlds dominated by men, using skill, spectacle and audacity to make their own way.

This is What Happens When Women Read
Julianna Glasse
Bloomsbury Circus. PB. $36.99
Available 3 November



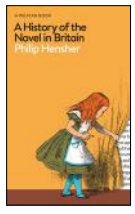
At the peak of her fame, Julianna Glasse was a pop star, wife and mother and part of a Christian power couple. But when her love of reading drew her to books such as Plato's *Republic* and poems by Rilke, she began to question the beliefs she had accepted as truth – something the church would forbid. In this riveting memoir, Glasse recounts her very public break from the church and from her major league baseball star husband, the depression and shame she experienced in the aftermath, the books that helped restore her independence and inspired her to pursue her education at Oxford, and, finally, her path to self-discovery and purpose.

Alone with a Book: On Reading, Writing and Looking
Tessa Hadley
Jonathan Cape. HB. $45
Available 17 November



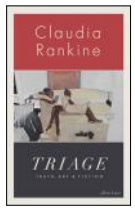
In this rich and engaging collection of essays, Tessa Hadley reflects on a lifetime of reading. She charts her development as a lover of literature all the way from a book-mad childhood shaped by libraries and imaginary worlds, through the long, uncertain years of writing and teaching, to the mature artistic vision that defines her work today. Throughout, her sharp eye, judgement and instinct for style guide the reader towards the pleasures found in each text, and in a life made richer and more fully imagined through art.

A History of the Novel in Britain
Philip Hensher
Penguin. HB. $59.99
Available 1 December



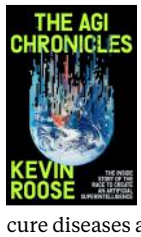
The story of the novel in Britain begins in the 18th century when people began to read in ever greater numbers, seeking words that helped explain their hopes and desires. As this market grew a new kind of literature was needed. In this illuminating history, Philip Hensher traces the novel's evolution from innovation in writing techniques to new ways of printing, distributing and selling books. These creative and commercial forces have shaped the novel's form and its future, from Daniel Defoe to Zadie Smith.

Triage: Truth, Art & Fiction
Claudia Rankine
Allen Lane. HB. $45
Available 10 November



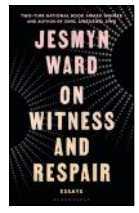
Two friends meet in an art gallery after decades of silence. The idealism that once bound them together fissured and fractured under the weight of collective and personal griefs. Through their memories of youthful certainty, the antagonism of their conversation and the embers of their enduring kinship, they navigate the wreckage of our world today. Claudia Rankine blends narrative, memory and criticism in a poignant exploration of the beautiful but complicated friendships that we rely on to unsettle us, to make us better.

The AGI Chronicles: The Inside Story of the Race to Create an Artificial Superintelligence
Kevin Roose
S&S. PB. $36.99
Available now



For the last decade, a handful of companies have been racing to build the most powerful technology in history: artificial general intelligence (AGI). Some of them hoped AGI would cure diseases and heal the planet. Others feared it could kill everyone on Earth. They decided to build it anyway. More than a billion people now use AI every day, yet almost nobody knows how it was created. *The AGI Chronicles* is the definitive account of how an obscure research project became the defining technology of our age.

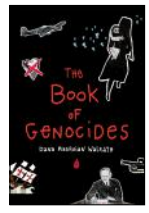
On Witness and Respair: Essays
Jesmyn Ward
Bloomsbury. HB. $39.99
Available 3 November



From the two-time National Book Award winner and bestselling author Jesmyn Ward, this collection of creative nonfiction documents more than a decade of work in the life of a singular writer. Beginning with her upbringing in a multigenerational household in rural Mississippi, the cradle of both her youth and her gift for storytelling, Ward brings her keen wisdom and hauntingly lyrical prose to a range of topics. Piercing and moving, this is a monument to hope, beauty, and personal and collective resilience.

Graphic Narrative

The Book of Genocides
Dana Mashoian Walrath
Harvard. PB. $41.95
Available now



The Book of Genocides is a haunting graphic narrative that covers 10 major atrocities across five centuries, from the mass slaughter of the First Peoples of the Americas and Australia to Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Gaza. Dana Mashoian Walrath makes plain that the purpose of genocide is always a land grab, and its central apparatus is dehumanisation. Each chapter demonstrates how dehumanisation operates, not only through violence but also through the political and intellectual systems that enable it. *The Book of Genocides* is an unsettling experience revealing painful truths that shape our world and demand our action.

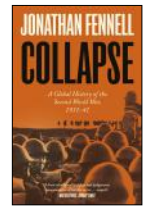
History

Fatal Monsters: Cleopatra, Her Sister Queens and the Downfall of a Dynasty
Jane Draycott
Atlantic. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November



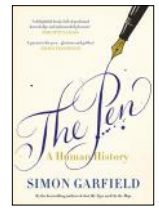
Fatal Monsters is a dramatic political, cultural and social historical narrative of the period 60–40 BCE in Egypt and Rome, when three sister queens – Cleopatra, Berenike (executed by their father) and Arsinoe (murdered at sister Cleopatra's request) – took turns ruling Egypt. Their rivalry brought down a 300-year-old dynasty and for the first time, this book examines each queen equally and in their correct historical and archaeological contexts, not just through Roman eyes but also Greek and Egyptian ones.

Collapse: A Global History of the Second World War, 1931–1941
Jonathan Fennell
Viking. PB. $39.99
Available now



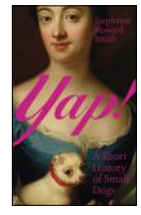
Between 1931 and 1949, a series of crises threatened world order and the very functioning of states, as well as destroying or changing millions of ordinary people's lives. At the heart of these upheavals was an all-encompassing war that was a watershed moment in modern history. The first volume of a groundbreaking trilogy, *Collapse* tells the story of the first part of this Greater Second World War, 1931–1941, weaving multiple international trends, theatres of war and home fronts into a compelling global narrative.

The Pen: A Human History
Simon Garfield
Canongate. HB. $39.99
Available 3 November



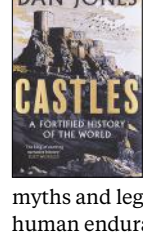
The pen is our oldest tangible connection between an individual mind and the world at large. But the pen's own story is just as eventful as anything it has described. *The Pen* explores its journey from a reed on the Nile to the home of Montblanc and BIC, and from the wartime trenches to the desks of Jane Austen, Freud and Margaret Atwood. This is a lively history connecting us to the object that has defined communication for thousands of years – one which offers a respite to our relentlessly digital world.

Yap! A Short History of Small Dogs
Stephanie Howard-Smith
Granta. HB. $36.99
Available 3 November

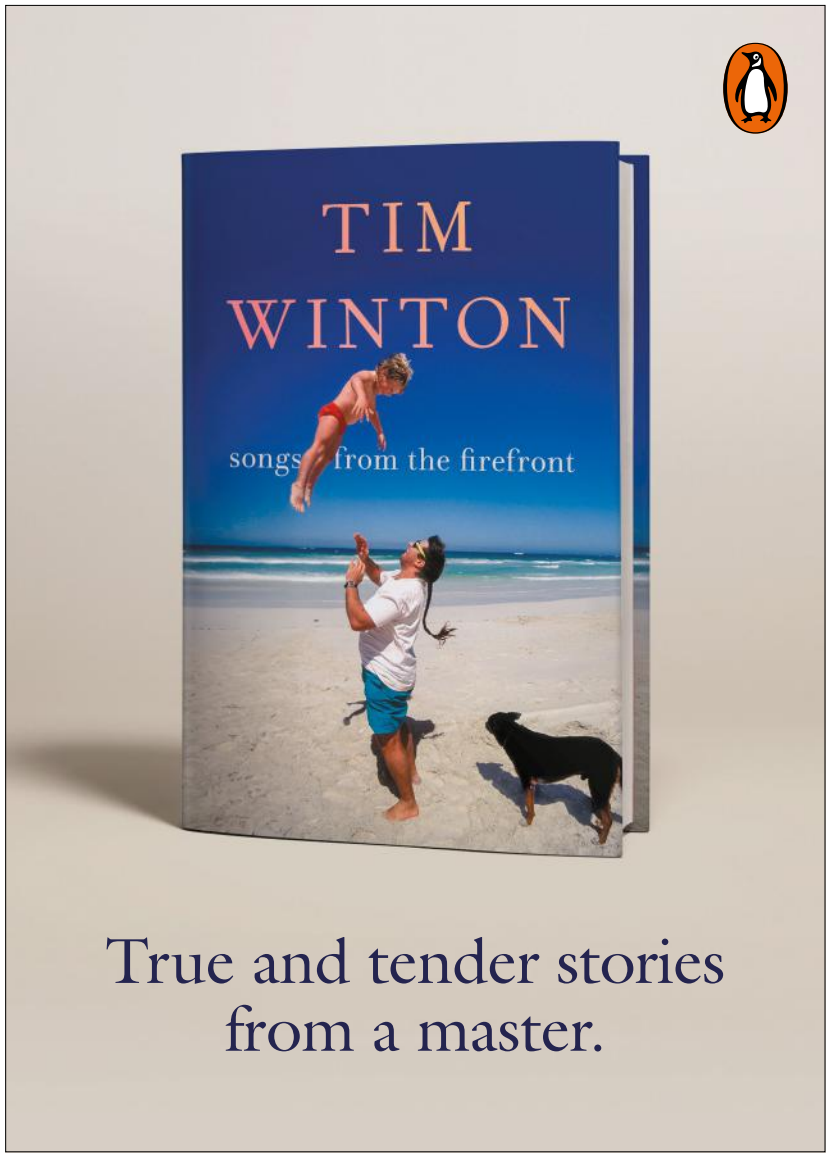


Almost from humanity's very beginning, beloved small dogs have been trotting devotedly by our sides. In *Yap!* pet historian Stephanie Howard-Smith reveals how small dogs have shaped our lives as much as we have theirs, challenging social dynamics, changing the way we spend our leisure time, contributing to a global industry, and offering valuable companionship and a chance for self-expression. A must-read for any lover of small dogs, *Yap!* is a paean to the unbreakable bond between humans and their petite pets.

Castles: A Fortified History of the World
Dan Jones
Apollo. PB. $36.99
Available 3 November



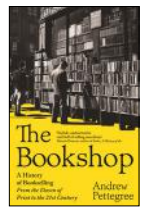
In this gripping history of the world Dan Jones reveals the stories of power, politics and survival that reside in our best-known strongholds. Castles have shaped the outcome of wars, seeded myths and legends, tested the limits of human endurance under siege and been the fertile ground for grand artistic ideas. Sparked by his own childhood fascination with castles, Jones reveals the shifting





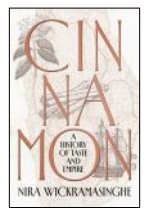
tides of warfare, the rise and fall of empires and the resilience of people under siege in fortifications across the globe.

The Bookshop: A History of Bookselling from the Dawn of Print to the 21st Century
Andrew Pettegree
Profile. HB. $49.99
Available now



Bookshops are a comforting sight: warm and welcoming spaces in which to browse, meet friends and occasionally buy books. They may feel timeless, yet their history is a restless and turbulent one. *The Bookshop*, from the celebrated author of *The Library* and *The Book at War*, explores the evolution of bookselling from the cramped collectors' shops frequented by Samuel Pepys to the radical feminist bookshops of the 1970s, the rise of monolithic chains and the new world of online selling. Connecting stories and lives that span centuries, countries and continents, *The Bookshop* brings us into beloved bookshops of today and looks forward to the possible experience of booksellers of tomorrow.

Cinnamon: A History of Taste and Empire
Nira Wickramasinghe
Scribe. PB. $36.99
Available 10 November



For millennia, cinnamon has been treasured for its healing powers and warm, unmistakable aroma. But behind its familiar scent lies a tumultuous past steeped in conquest and rebellion. Drawing from meticulously researched global history and mythology, acclaimed historian Nira Wickramasinghe traces the remarkable story of this 'queen of spices'. In a journey across centuries and continents, she brings to life the smugglers, merchants, cooks, botanists, conquerors and peelers who built the cinnamon trade. *Cinnamon* is the definitive portrait of a spice through which the turmoil and richness of our world come alive.

Interior Design

Where They Live Japan
Paul Barbera (photog.) & Kirsty Munro (words)
T&H. PB. $59.99
Available 3 November



Step inside a world rarely seen. *Where They Live Japan* opens the doors to private homes, offering an intimate portrait of how creative people live. Featuring artists, architects, designers and makers, it invites readers into the spaces where ideas are formed, routines unfold and creativity takes shape in everyday life. With candid photography, insightful profiles and no home styled for show, this is more than a book about interiors, it is a portrait of contemporary Japanese life, seen through the spaces people inhabit.

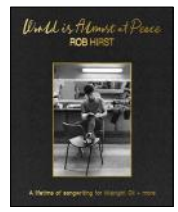
Music

Sleeping Beauties: Why Good Ideas Go Dormant and How They Wake Up
David Byrne
Canongate. HB. $55
Available 24 November



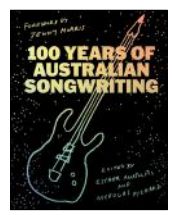
A 'Sleeping Beauty' is a brilliant idea that is ahead of its time. So many breakthroughs in arts or science were like this, lost on their initial audience and only later revived and acknowledged to be great. This book is an inspiring reckoning with how breakthroughs across the arts and sciences get forgotten, and how they are rediscovered. These stories can give us the courage to try new things and the wisdom to embrace them, and in dark times it's a powerful source of light and fit for all our human endeavours.

World is Almost at Peace: A Lifetime of Songwriting for Midnight Oil + More
Rob Hirst
Pantera. HB. Was $59.99
$ $49.99
Available now



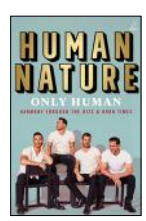
Over almost 50 years, Midnight Oil's Rob Hirst wrote and co-wrote some of Australia's best-known songs. One of our greatest wordsmiths, his lyrics helped shape the soundtrack to this nation. From activist anthems through to the intimacy of his later works, here for the first time is Hirst's entire lyric catalogue. The book includes early version scribbles and unseen photos, plus behind-the-scenes stories from the author and his peers which place the songs in context. It is a celebration of a life in music.

100 Years of Australian Songwriting
Esther Anatolitis, Nicholas Pickard & Jenny Morris (foreword)
Hardie Grant. HB. $49.99
Available now



100 Years of Australian Songwriting is a landmark anthology exploring how songs have shaped Australia's identity, culture and history over the past century. The book showcases 20 essays by leading Australian writers, critics and artists, tapping into the transformative power of songwriting as a cultural force. From First Nations songlines to modern pop, the essays address themes of national identity, protest and activism, live music, feminism, digital disruption and the global reach of Australian music.

Only Human: Harmony Through the Hits & Hard Times
Human Nature
A&U. PB. $34.99
Available 3 November

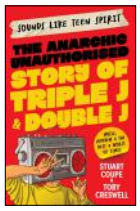


It all began with four friends at high school. For the first time, Human Nature's incredible story is told in their own words, offering an intimate portrait of four friends who navigated fame,

personal hardship and the pressures of an unforgiving industry, yet chose to stay together when walking away would have been easier. Honest and funny *Only Human* explores not only the music and milestones that made Human Nature household names, but also the resilience, loyalty and determination that sustained them.

Sounds Like Teen Spirit: The Anarchic Unauthorised Story of Triple J & Double J

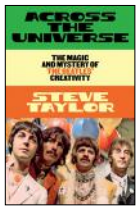
Stuart Coupe & Toby Creswell
Hachette. PB. $36.99
Available 10 November



Before the birth of Double J in 1975, Australian radio was for conservative adults, and youth culture had little voice. But inspired by the spirit of the Whitlam era, a group of journalists, DJs and music lovers laid the foundations for a radio station that would change it all: music and ideas flooded in with attitude and from that moment, mayhem and magnificence were broadcast. Stuart Coupe and Toby Creswell have seen the evolution and this book brings to life the unauthorised, unfiltered story of Double J and Triple J.

Across the Universe: The Magic and Mystery of The Beatles' Creativity

Steve Taylor
Scribe. HB. $49.99
Available 3 November

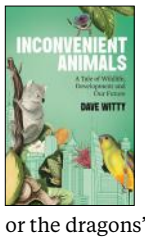


What made The Beatles so extraordinary? How did these four musicians come together at exactly the right moment, and so perfectly, that they became the most innovative and successful band the world has ever seen, and a cultural phenomenon still shaping the world today? *Across the Universe* tells the story of The Beatles through the lens of their creativity and explores the psychological, cultural and spiritual forces behind their genius. This is an invitation to experience The Beatles' brilliance anew.

Natural History

Inconvenient Animals: A Tale of Wildlife, Development and Our Future

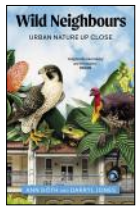
Dave Witty
Monash. PB. $32.99
Available 2 November



In 2024, an earless dragon was spotted for the first time in over 50 years in native grasslands. It halted a development, forcing an uncomfortable question: what matters more – our right to shelter, or the dragons' right to exist? Weaving science, philosophy and history, this book explores the tug between environmental protection and urban development. It's a reckoning with our past, and an urgent meditation on how we might envision a different future. It will change how you think about the habitat around you.

Wild Neighbours: Urban Nature Up Close

Ann Göth & Darryl Jones
NewSouth. PB. $34.99
Available 1 November



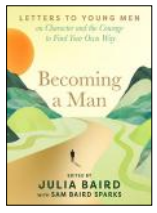
To make a life in the city wildlife such as galahs, blue-tongues and brushturkeys have learned to be flexible, resilient and street-smart. They've transformed neighbourhoods into living ecosystems, places where wildness hasn't vanished, but simply moved in. If you've ever wondered why magpies sing in duets, how cockatoos learned to open bins or why koalas sleep so much, *Wild Neighbours* will help you understand the habits, personalities, quirks, ingenuity and everyday dramas of the animals and plants that live among us.

Personal Development

Becoming a Man: Letters to Young Men on Character and the Courage to Find Your Own Way

Julia Baird (ed.) with Sam Baird Sparks
Fourth Estate. PB. $34.99
Available now

This editor is at A Day in Carlton, see the program online for details

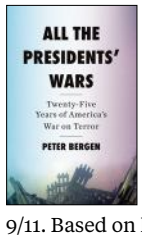


Becoming a Man is a collection of practical and uplifting letters for young men on how to become the kind of men they want to be. Inspired by letters sent from author Julia Baird's family and friends to her son Sam when he turned 16, this book compiles the letters, thoughts and advice from over 60 men such as writers, journalists, musicians and former politicians. It is the perfect gift for any young man – or man of any age – to spark conversations about the men we most admire and who inspire us, and why.

Politics

All the Presidents' Wars: Twenty-Five Years of America's War on Terror

Peter Bergen
Scribe. PB. $36.99
Available now

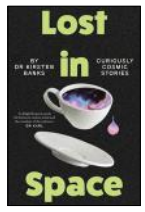


In *All the Presidents' Wars* journalist Peter Bergen focuses on critical decisions of four successive presidents – Bush, Obama, Biden, and Trump – that arose out of the country's responses to 9/11. Based on hundreds of interviews Bergen explores the innovations and unintended consequences of each presidency's military and political decisions, including debates over military intervention and withdrawal. This is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand America's devastating war on terror and to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Science

Lost in Space: Curiously Cosmic Stories

Dr Kirsten Banks
Pan Mac. PB. $36.99
Available now



Discover planets that are darker than charcoal, mysteries that make us go 'Wow!', objects that wander into our solar system from interstellar space, the dark emu constellation, moon missions, five places to keep off your intergalactic holiday wish list, the time the sun burped and took out the telegraphs, First Nations names for the Moon, Mercury's salty secret and more. This is a wondrous journey through our universe with astrophysicist and Wiradjuri woman Dr Kirsten Banks.

Numbers Tell Stories: How Data Can Reveal the Surprising Truths about Our World

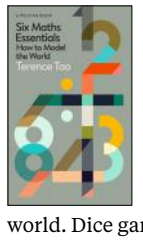
Vaclav Smil
Viking. PB. $36.99
Available now



What do marriage, milk and the black market tell us about the state of humanity? Most people would say, not much at all. But the numbers reveal startling truths about who we are, how we live and where we're headed. For centuries we've told ourselves stories about how the world works – yet the data often point to a very different reality. In *Numbers Tell Stories*, Vaclav Smil shows how statistics challenge conventional thinking and illuminate the hidden forces shaping our lives.

Six Maths Essentials: How to Model the World

Terence Tao
Penguin. HB. $49.99
Available 3 November

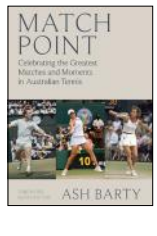


In *Six Maths Essentials,* renowned mathematician Terence Tao shows how mathematics has evolved from counting and geometry into a flexible set of tools for understanding an increasingly complex world. Dice games, insurance policies and financial crises illuminate probability's promise, and limits, while deceptively simple rules give rise to chaos, pattern and life itself.

Sport

Match Point: Celebrating the Greatest Matches and Moments in Australian Tennis

Ash Barty & Pat Rafter (foreword)
HarperCollins. HB. $45
Available 1 December

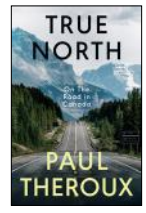


Ash Barty's *Match Point* is a tribute to a century of Australian tennis. With her unique perspective as a Grand Slam champion, Barty revisits the matches, legends and moments that have shaped the sport, inspired a nation and captivated the world. Spanning all Grand Slam tournaments and iconic events such as the Davis Cup, the Paralympic and Olympic Games, *Match Point* captures 22 moments that highlight the sport's evolution and the players who left their mark, from Evonne Goolagong Cawley to Dylan Alcott.

Travel Writing

True North: On The Road in Canada

Paul Theroux
Hamish Hamilton. PB. $36.99
Available 3 November

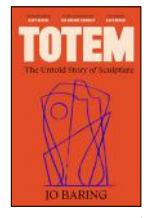


Canada is the subject of this evocative travel book from Paul Theroux: both an exploration into the past and a cross-country road trip in the present, at a pivotal point in its history. The journey is also personal as he traces the story of his ancestor Antoine Theroux, who became a pioneer in Nouvelle France. On his travels from Newfoundland to Vancouver and beyond, Theroux meets farmers, fishermen, writers, activists, new immigrants and old timers – each a vital part of this True North, each hoping for it to remain strong and free.

Visual Arts

Totem: The Untold Story of Sculpture

Jo Baring
Canongate. HB. $55
Available 10 November



For 40,000 years, we have been carving and moulding, shaping and chiselling, feeling our way and sensing our place in the world through sculpture. In this accessible, story-led journey into the heart of sculpture, renowned art historian and curator Jo Baring explores creativity, memory and why we have been driven to make art in this medium since the very beginning of humanity. From the prehistoric Lion Man to Yayoi Kusama, *Totem* is a celebration of art, those creating it and those it means something to.

Art Mania: Geoffrey Bardon and the Painting Men of Papunya

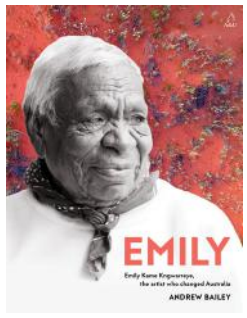
Kitty Hauser
Giramondo. PB. $39.95
Available 1 November

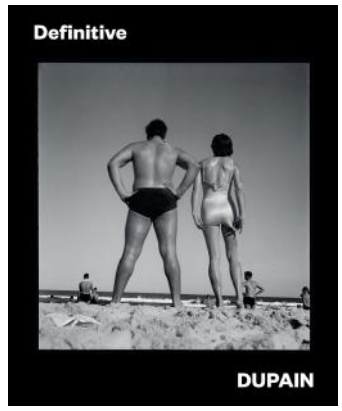


An innovative biography by an acclaimed author and scholar, based on unprecedented access to the Geoffrey Bardon archive, *Art Mania* sheds new light on a pivotal story in Australian art history. It stands at the same time as an important account of an Australian life – a portrait of mental illness, and of the conflicted psychology of white Australia. Written as a dialogue between text and images, Kitty Hauser's powerful work explores the limits of the biographical form. **R**

The Art of the Art Book

Zoë Croggon highlights eight favourites from a year in art and design publishing

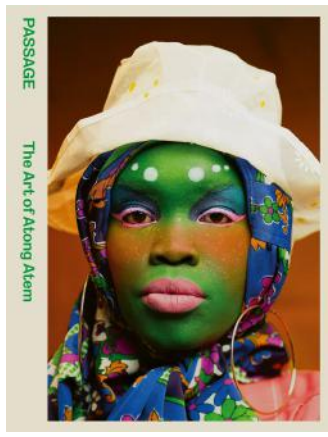




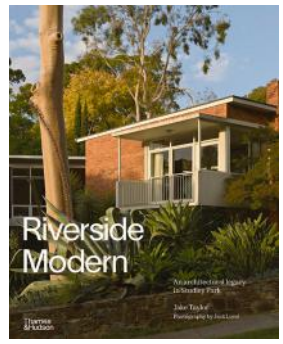


Tony Albert: Not a Souvenir by Tony Albert & Liz Nowell (ed.) | T&H. HB. $100

Few contemporary artists interrogate Australia's visual history with the wit, clarity and moral force of Tony Albert. *Not a Souvenir*, edited by Liz Nowell, brings together an expansive survey of his practice across painting, photography, sculpture and installation. Albert reclaims the imagery through which First Nations people have been stereotyped, transforming objects of prejudice into instruments of resistance, resilience and pride. The publication's visual richness is matched by its intellectual ambition. It asks how art might challenge inherited narratives without surrendering complexity, and how objects once intended to diminish can be made to speak differently. Boldly designed and generously illustrated, this is a book that understands beauty not as an escape from difficult histories, but as one way of confronting them. Its title is a declaration of intent: culture is not a trinket to be collected, but a living story to be understood.







Passage: The Art of Atong Atem by Atong Atem
T&H. HB. $90

In *Passage*, photographer Atong Atem turns portraiture into a sumptuous act of storytelling. Her richly staged images, alive with colour, textiles, costume and symbolism, explore the intersections of ancestry, migration, identity and belonging. Drawing on Dinka Bor culture, family archives and African studio photography, Atem makes the photographic image a place where personal memory meets collective history. With contributions from international writers and reflections from Atem's family, *Passage* is also a book about inheritance: what travels across generations, what is lost and what can be reclaimed. Her first major monograph insists that identity is neither fixed nor singular, but something we make, inherit, perform and continually rediscover.

Emily: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, the Artist Who Changed Australia by Andrew Bailey | A&U. HB. $55

Emily Kame Kngwarreye's extraordinary artistic emergence late in life is one of the most compelling stories in Australian art. An Anmatyerr woman from the Central Desert, she began painting on canvas in her 70s and, within a remarkably short period, developed a body of work that would command international attention. A publication devoted to Kngwarreye offers an opportunity to appreciate the density and vitality of her work while considering the cultural knowledge that underpins it. The promise of this biography lies in looking beyond the familiar narrative of a late-blooming genius to the cultural knowledge, experience and vision that informed her work. An essential reminder that artistic achievement can transcend every expectation of age, place and convention.



Margaret Preston by National Gallery of Victoria, Beckett Rozentals & Michael Gentle (eds)
T&H. HB. Was $79.99 $ **$69.99**

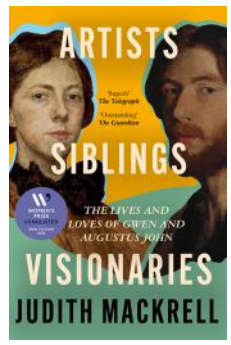
Few artists embody the exhilaration and contradictions of Australian modernism quite like Margaret Preston. Famous for her vivid still lifes and striking woodblock prints, Preston sought to develop a visual language that felt distinctly Australian, drawing on international modernist movements and the art and design traditions she encountered throughout her life. Lush, historically attentive and intellectually generous, this book makes a persuasive case for why revisiting the past is essential to understanding the present.

Definitive Dupain by Avryl Whitnall & State Library of New South Wales | T&H. HB. Was $79.99 $ **$69.99**

The photographs of Max Dupain have become part of Australia's visual memory, from sunlit beaches to the elegant geometry of modern architecture. *Definitive Dupain*, published by the State Library of New South Wales, draws on an archive of more than 250,000 negatives to present approximately 150 photographs spanning the 1920s to the 1990s. What makes a photographic monograph definitive is not simply the number of images it contains, but the intelligence with which it reveals a photographer's vision. Dupain's extraordinary command of light, form and composition rewards close attention, while the breadth of this selection offers a portrait of both an artist and a changing nation. A beautiful photographic book should encourage us to look twice; this one promises to do so for decades.

Hardcore: 50 Years of Skateboarding in Australia by Jason Boulter
T&H. HB. Was $90 $ **$80**

In this landmark publication, *Hardcore* traces five decades of skateboarding culture, beginning with the Hill brothers' early experiments in 1974 and following the evolution of Hardcore Enterprises into Globe, an international business. Here are the DIY decks, warehouse ramps, shopping centre demonstrations, and stadium spectacles that helped turn a subculture into a cultural force. Jason Boulter's expansive visual history captures the people, products and events behind that evolution. At 484 pages, it has the heft of a serious design tome, even if its subjects would probably prefer to read it sitting on a kerb. A reminder that some of the best design is made on the street as well as in the studio.



Riverside Modern: An Architectural Legacy in Studley Park by Jake Taylor & Jack Lovel (photog.) | T&H. HB. $85

In the leafy streets of Studley Park, Kew, a remarkable collection of postwar houses reveals a distinctly Melbourne interpretation of modernism. Jake Taylor explores homes by architects including Robin Boyd, Anatol Kagan and McGlashan Everist, where landscape, light and the rhythms of family life shaped architectural experimentation. Jack Lovel's photography brings these buildings into focus, inviting readers to appreciate the relationship between structure and setting. This is not simply a book about celebrated houses, but about a moment when architects imagined new ways to live. A quietly seductive volume for design lovers, renovators and anyone who believes that a well-considered home can be a work of art.

Artists, Siblings, Visionaries: The Lives and Loves of Gwen and Augustus John by Judith Mackrell | Picador. PB. $29.99
Limited stock available now

The relationship between Gwen and Augustus John offers all the ingredients of a great literary drama: talent, rivalry, devotion, betrayal and the unequal rewards of fame. Judith Mackrell's dual biography explores two remarkable artists whose lives diverged as sharply as their temperaments. Augustus flourished as a charismatic bohemian celebrity; Gwen, quieter and more private, received fuller recognition only long after her death. Their story is also a revealing study of how gender shapes an artist's place in history. Elegantly researched and richly human, this is for readers who enjoy their art history with a little familial intrigue, and a reminder that brilliance does not always receive its due.

Zoë Croggon is the visual arts buyer at Readings Carlton, an artist and an author **R**



Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

Comment and (extended) Notes

Kim Gruschow reflects on the past month and takes a look at the best kids and young adult books from 2026

I recently attended the inaugural Melbourne Alternative Comics Festival (MACF), a three-day festival which included live performances at the Wheeler Centre, a conference-style community day with panels and workshops, and a market day. Books for young readers were very well represented: talented creators sharing work at the festival included Andrea Innocent, Reimena Yee, Georgina Chadderton, and Campbell Whyte. As part of an excellent session titled 'Melbourne in Comics', Laura J. Carroll spoke about her Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Honour Book, *Making the Shrine*, and Mirranda Burton shared fascinating behind-the-scenes detail about her book *Underground: Marsupial Outlaws and Other Rebels of Australia's War in Vietnam* which won the 2022 Readings Young Adult Prize. Our own resident cartoonist Bernard Caleo declared it: 'Melbourne is a comics city!'

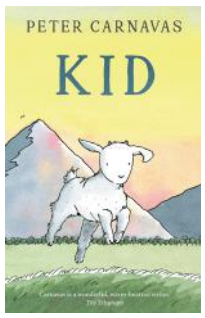
A session on editing comics featured Bruce Mutard, Sophie Splatt and Erica Wagner. All three have made huge contributions to Australian publishing, and it was great to hear them share their unique knowledge and perspectives.

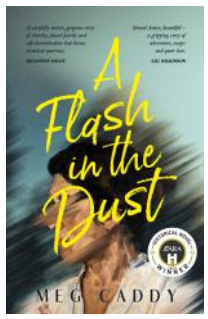
Putting together events like this always involves huge amounts of work and love. They are never easy but are so important for nurturing talent and our literary community. I congratulate the organisers on an amazing event. I'm already looking forward to MACF 2027!

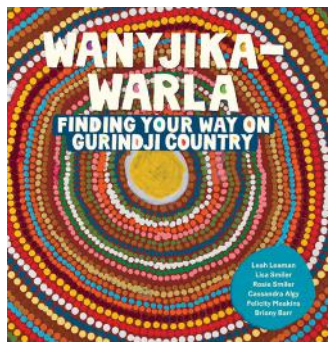
On our shelves this month there are some great new books including a couple of decades-later follow-ups by certified literary legends. Lois Lowry's dystopian *Building 903* tackles themes of book-banning and censorship. I re-read Lowry's 1993 book *The Giver* in anticipation and can confirm it holds up as a striking book with pertinent themes. I'm looking forward to reading *Building 903* which is up next on my teetering reading pile(s!).

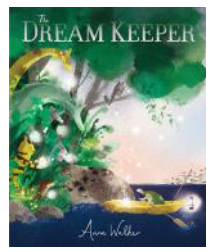
In 1973, Witi Ihimaera Smiler became the first Māori author to have published a novel. His book *The Whale Rider* was first published in 1987 and in 2002 audiences fell in love with Niki Caro's film adaptation. *The Whale Rider* went on to become a bestseller and the most translated work by a New Zealand author. Fantasy author Susanna Clarke wrote recently, 'It is a given in children's literature that the world is alive. The world has a face; in fact, it has lots of faces.' Māori understand the natural world as personified too, as do many Indigenous peoples, and movements that align this understanding with legal personhood have become a way of bestowing the natural world with the same respect and rights that people (ideally) have. I thought about this often while reading the *The Star Path*, Ihimaera's enthralling new book, which I've reviewed this month. Ihimaera is a magnificent storyteller and in *The Star Path*, which is a return to the world of *The Whale Rider*, every part of that natural world is alive and brimming with personality. It's a book that is in our Young Adult section, but I'd recommend it to anyone!

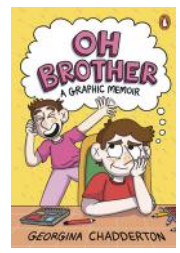




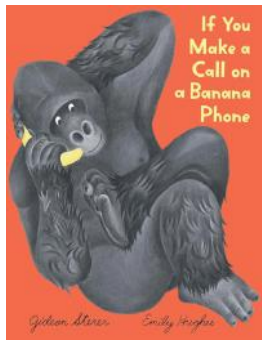


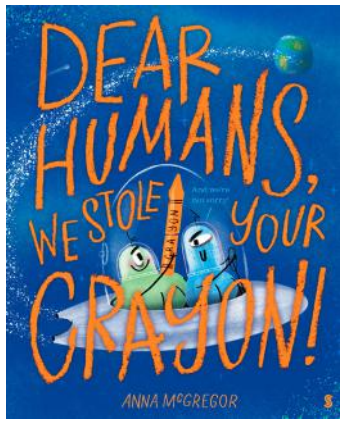




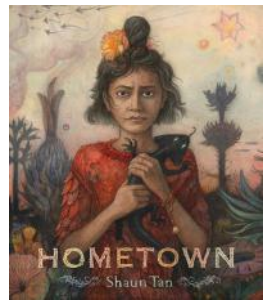


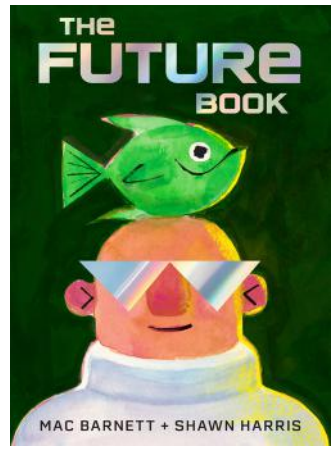


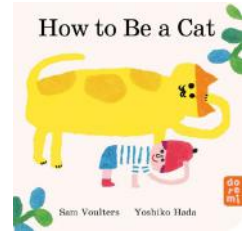












It feels outrageous to be running the 2026 highlight reels already, but it does feel nice to look back and consider the bumper crop of great books published this year!

2026 has seen an abundance of stunning picture books, and of course local creators are among the very best. Anna McGregor's *Dear Humans, We Stole Your Crayon!* might be her finest yet and Anna Walker's *The Dream Keeper* is a beautiful showcase of the lush illustration techniques Walker has developed.

Some of the most striking picture books this year celebrated the environment: Yvette Farmer's *Nature Knows* is a favourite, as is *In the Kelp Forest*, Aunty Patsy Cameron and Reena Balding's beautiful book about Tasmania's giant kelp. *There's a Chicken in the House* reminded us why Sonya Hartnett is considered one of the greats.

Mac Barnett and Shawn Harris's *The Future Book* is an exhilarating read-aloud and Gideon Sterer and Emily Hughes's *If You Make a Call on a Banana Phone* is truly delightful. Thoughtfully produced for the youngest readers, innovative board books we loved this year included *How to Be a Cat* by Sam Voulters and Yoshiko Hada, *The House with Nobody in It* by Jon Klassen and *I Am Here* by Kim Hyoeun and Aerin Park (trans.).

It has also been a year of great graphic novels. Angela Innocent's eco-thriller *Lamington Left Behind* and Georgina Chadderton's memoir *Oh Brother* are two Australian debuts we love. Shaun Tan's much-anticipated *Hometown* did not disappoint, and *Detective Beans and the Map of Mystery* proved once again that everybody loves Detective Beans.

Amazing Astro Animals, James Foley's foray into nonfiction, is a triumph, and *Wanyjika-warla: Finding Your Way on Gurindji Country* is another nonfiction favourite, filled with incredible information and art and collaboratively produced by Leah Leaman, Lisa Smiler, Rosie Smiler, Cassandra Algy, Felicity Meakins and Briony Barr.

This year also saw a crop of magnificent animal novels. Peter Carnavas's *Kid* feels like an instant classic, Beverley McWilliams' *Bandoola: An Elephant's Story* and *The Lions' Run* are both excellent historical fiction tales, as is Danielle Binks' *Shakespeare in the Orchard*, a First World War novel with a local setting – the Mornington Peninsula. For junior readers we loved *Myra in the Middle* by Seetha Dodd and Maxine Beneba Clarke's *Sagittarius Rising*. Sarah Armstrong's *The Wave* is an action-packed hit, as is Emily Gale's *The Wild Unknown* and Tim Ayliffe's thriller *Web of Spies (S.I.G.M.A. 1)*.

Ariane Beeston's first Young Adult (YA) book, *Don't Forget to Smile*, is an excellent contemporary novel centred on the world of elite ballet dancers. Tamara Moss, another Australian YA author, had a huge year, having teamed up with American Marissa Meyer for *The Escape Game*, then following it with her thriller *Five Voices* mere weeks later. Meg Caddy's award-winning historical novel *A Flash in the Dust* is a staff favourite at Readings, as is Suzy Zail's newest book, *A New Kind of Beautiful*. There are of course so many more books that we love, books we are yet to read and books still arriving on our shelves – luckily there's no such thing as too many books! **R**

Kids & Young Adult

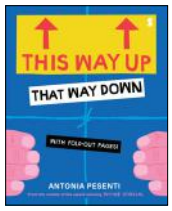
Board Books

Your Horse
Jon Klassen
Walker. BB. $16.99
Available 1 November



Your horse is brown, but it could be other colours, too. It can do a lot of things, such as run, walk, and jump. But best of all, it will keep your secrets. It will never, ever tell. At the end of the day, it will sleep, your secrets held behind closed eyes, and you can sleep, too. A perfect story for young horse-lovers, kids learning their first words and as a bedtime read-aloud.

This Way Up That Way Down
Antonia Pesenti
Scribble. BB. $22.99
Available 17 November



Sydney-based architect, designer and illustrator Antonia Pesenti is no stranger to the board book. Her previous books include *Rhyme Hungry*, *Rhyme Cordial*, and *Party Rhyme*, and she has a knack with appealing, bright colours and bold simplicity. These are elements that work perfectly in a board book format!

This Way Up That Way Down is a book of sequential image spreads. Surprises are revealed from under big, sturdy fold-out flaps. A seed, a stem, a lovely flower. Kernels go into a big pot, the pot sits on the stove, popcorn pops out wildly. A bubble wand, a girl, and then a sky filled with beautiful bubbles! This is a book with very few words on the pages, but it offers plenty of action to describe and discuss. The subjects have been carefully selected to include things that are relevant and interesting for the intended audience: small readers who are learning about their world and surroundings. For ages 0+.

Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

Picture Books

Under the Olive Moon: 10 Palestinian Fables
Nour Ferwana, Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara & Raahat Kaduji (illus.)
Magic Cat. HB. Was $29.99
$24.99
Available 3 November

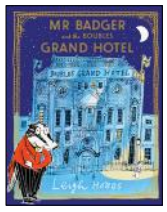


A breathtaking collection of stories and fables that were told by author Nour Ferwana and her husband Majed to their children in a tent in Gaza, *Under the Olive Moon* shares the transformative magic of storytelling in the most challenging of circumstances. Co-written with Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara (creator of the *Little People, Big Dreams* series) Ferwana weaves 10 short, poetic tales into the context in which they have been told. Each moment of fear, struggle and deprivation her family has faced is met with a tale of courage, love and hope; each instance of curiosity is met with a story of discovery and strength; each pang of jealousy or worry with a story of generosity. The titular story is, like so many childhood tales, simply told to keep the darkness at bay. Beautifully illustrated by Raahat Kaduji, each story introduces readers to the natural beauty of Palestine and the power of stories to share pride, culture and resilience, and to illuminate even the darkest night. For all ages.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

Mr Badger and the Boubles Grand Hotel
Leigh Hobbs
A&U. HB. Was $26.99
$21.99
Available 3 November

This author is at A Day in Carlton, see the program online for details



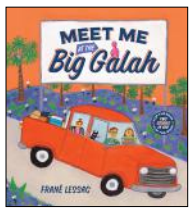
At the Boubles Grand Hotel exciting preparations are underway for a party celebrating the establishment's 175th birthday. The owners, Sir Cecil and Lady Celia Smothers-Carruthers, have farewelled their dear little grandchild Sylvia at the bus stop. This will be a party for grown-ups only!

Their special-events manager Mr Badger is tasked with the arrangements, but strange things start to happen. It seems someone, or something, is trying to sabotage the party! A hissing, crawling, critter with fangs and wings is terrorising the dining room and has ordered the full menu. It's a bold move, and one that I always respect! Mr Badger follows an outrageous room-service ice-cream order to the suite, where he may have found the culprit – and a perfect last-minute party entertainment!

This is a mischievous and charming book. The text doesn't give away too much, allowing readers the delight of finding clues within the action-packed illustrations. Leigh Hobbs is a master of books that are hilarious and a little strange, just as the best books (and the best people) often are! Great fun for ages 3+.

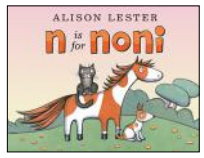
Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

Meet Me at the Big Galah
Frané Lessac
Scholastic. HB. $26.99
Available 1 November



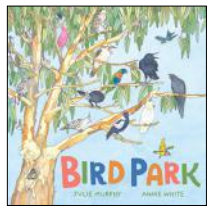
A letter arrived in the post today, from the Big Galah, far, far away. *Greetings, Ethan,* the invite began. *It's Grandma's birthday and I have a plan. Minty is coming, and Milo too. The big surprise will be seeing you, Love Grandpa.* Mum packed supplies. Dad loaded the car. They studied the map. The journey was far. Hip, hip, hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah! We're on our way to the Big Galah!

N is for Noni
Alison Lester
A&U. PB. $24.99
Available 3 November



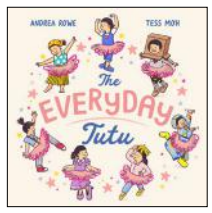
Would you like to meet Noni? She's the friendliest pony. She lives on a farm overlooking the sea. Noni has a lot of fun with the alphabet as she plays with her best friends, Dave Dog and Coco the Cat. This is a delightful rhyming story featuring the instantly lovable character Noni the Pony – the nicest pony any child could ever hope to meet! – from the phenomenal and much-loved Australian author Alison Lester.

Bird Park
Julie Murphy & Annie White (illus.)
NLA. HB. $24.99
Available 1 November



Birds paddle and skedaddle. They hop and drop and coo and woo. See them walking! Hear them squawking! Come and explore our magical Australian bird park! With over 60 different species of birds, from the familiar pigeon to the unusual comb-crested jacana, this story takes readers on a stroll through a very magical and miraculous park.

The Everyday Tutu
Andrea Rowe & Tess Moh (illus.)
Little Hare. HB. $24.99
Available now



In *The Everyday Tutu*, Andrea Rowe once again brings us a beautiful slice of everyday family life. Teamed with the whimsical illustrations of Tess Moh, this is a delightful book that hits all the great storytelling points for learning the days of the week.

From tutu wearing and cubby building on Monday to midweek dog walks in the park, *The Everyday Tutu* takes us through the week, with family life reflected throughout. There's even a surprise party to plan, proving there's nothing you can't do in a tutu!

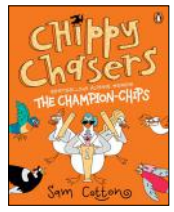
The fun, lyrical writing is complemented by engaging, colourful illustrations. This book is sure to be a favourite read-aloud for kids with its relatable themes and ideas that will resonate with all the simple wishes in a child's heart. And who among us didn't once have an everyday tutu or special dress-up?!

Recommended for ages 3+.

Sharon Rigby is a senior children's book buyer

Junior Grade

Chippy Chasers: The Champion-Chips
Sam Cotton
Penguin. PB. $14.99
Available 3 November



It's desperate times for the seagulls when their local chippy truck moves away, so the chance to win a golden chippy and a cheque for a hundred chippies could be the answer to their prayers. With a revenge-bent coach named Sharon cheering them on, the gulls enter a multi-discipline avian tournament held at the SCG (Seagull Chippy Ground). Wormy the worm is enlisted as a fourth team member and, frankly, the odds are not looking great. As all sports fans know though, the game isn't over till it's over, and even then, it's sometimes still not over.

Sam Cotton is an actor, illustrator and an animator. Among other things, he voiced the character Chippy (in this case meaning tradie not potato!) on *Bluey*. The artwork in this graphic-novel style book may at first glance appear simple, but Cotton has a huge talent for conveying wide-ranging expressions and genuine humour through his characters. His first book, *Chippy Chasers: Chippy Jackpot* was published in 2022 and this follows on, but each can be read independently. This is a hilarious book about good sportsmanship. Because, as we learn, 'It might sound crazy but some things are more important than chippies.' For ages 7+.

Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

The Dragon Mountain
Mathieu Pierloot, François Maumont (illus.) & Charis Ainslie (trans.)
Post Wave. HB. $24.99
Available 2 November



Lilith and Medusa are sisters with very different personalities, but they both love living in the forest of the Farlands and learning magic from their uncle Otto, a powerful wizard. But their classes are interrupted one day when, while they are out foraging for potion ingredients, they discover a lost boy called Julius. He has a secret in his backpack: a dragon's egg! Otto and the girls are determined to get the egg back to its mother before she burns down the forest looking for it. So, the sisters set off with Julius (and his duck, Custard), on a quest through the Farlands to take the egg back to Dragon Mountain – facing magical creatures, strange spells and a lake of giant's tears along the way!

This is a wonderful adventure story with a charming sense of humour that is perfectly brought to life by François Maumont's illustrations. It manages to balance being delightfully cosy with dramatic stakes that feel life-or-death.

With a beautiful focus on friendship and teamwork – as well as a loving depiction of sisters who are best friends, but also prone to squabbling – kids will find it relatable, as well as fun and imaginative. Fans of Tove Jansson's Moomins will devour this book – and perhaps join me in hoping it's the start of a series! Recommended for ages 7+, or as a read-aloud for younger kids.

Bella Mackey is the digital content lead

Middle Grade

Nightmare League
Reece Carter
Penguin. PB. $17.99
Available 3 November



R You probably know that Melbourne is connected by a woven mesh of tramlines; you may know that underneath our city and suburbs lurk hidden passageways – drains snaking right beneath our world. You definitely don't know what's lurking in them, and neither does Maxwell Pidgeon. But he suspects.

Max's dad has been missing for a while, and nobody seems to know anything. Honestly, nobody even seems to be trying to find him! But Max knows something shady is going on, and the two secret agents who keep sneaking around haven't escaped his shrewd observation. He thinks he's ready to crack open the case, but what he discovers is more than anyone could have imagined: a top-secret organisation training agents to protect the world from the monsters that lurk in the tunnels. But for all their secrecy, the Nightmare League can't hide the truth – they know something about Max's dad, and they're not telling.

In between studying hard as an agent-in-training and learning everything he can about this secret world, Max must beat the other secret agents at their own game and sneak into the archives to discover the truth about what happened to his dad. With a cast of kooky teachers, complex and compelling fellow agents, and a family Max is desperate to reunite, *Nightmare League* lays the foundation of a richly realised world hidden beneath our very feet! With a sequel already announced, author Reece Carter is onto a winner with this local take on monsters, secret agents and a hidden world for readers aged 8+.

Tamuz Ellazam is the manager of Readings Kids

The First Flame (The Aerimander Chronicles, Book 2)
Lily Berlin Dodd
Hardie Grant. PB. $19.99
Available now



Hatching and hiding baby Rubi got Eva Alexander locked up, gave Myrnie Wilshins a bad reputation and left Dusty St. Ichabod a fugitive. With Rubi gone, the three friends will have to find a way back to each other if they're to have any chance of saving the last aerimander. With threats at every turn, power-mad Eoin Parnassus to contend with and the emergence of hidden societies and secrets, who can they really trust?

Building 903
Lois Lowry
HarperCollins. PB. $17.99
Available now



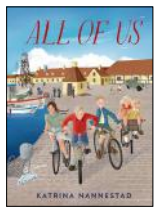
Twins Tessa and Theo live in a world ruled by the tyrannical Koziris, where there are no dangers or rebels – or so they've been told. So, when Tessa's brother disappears, nobody wants to discuss it. But then Miriam, their 135-year-old neighbour, slips Tessa a key – not only to her brother's disappearance, but also to the source of all real magic: books. In the tradition of her award-winning phenomenon *The Giver*, Lois Lowry has crafted a narrative that is at once prescient and eternal: in this world, the imagination is the revolution.

Astrid and the Accidental Slip Between Worlds (A Kingdoms and Empires Book)
Jaclyn Moriarty & Kelly Canby (illus.)
A&U. HB. $26.99
Available 3 November



When Astrid Mettlestone-Staranise is thrown from the Kingdoms and Empires into our world she would usually rely on her older sisters to rescue her. But Esther's on a school trip where she is trapped and being attacked by Shadow Mages. And Imogen is at the Elven Games with her cousin Bronte and their friend Oscar. They are seeking a True Mage who has turned evil and whose wicked plan might tear the universe to shreds. Neither sister knows Astrid is in danger – will she be lost forever?

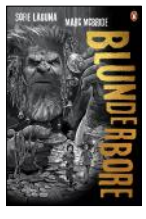
All of Us
Katrina Nannestad
ABC. HB. $24.99
Available now



When 12-year-old Viggo and his friends Finn, Tove, Birgitte and Konrad start writing rude letters to Hitler, it's just a game. But they soon find themselves writing an underground newspaper, their words inspiring people all over Copenhagen to commit small acts of defiance. Then news leaks of the Nazis' plans to round up all of Denmark's Jewish people in a single night. It's time for one huge act of defiance.

Graphic Narrative

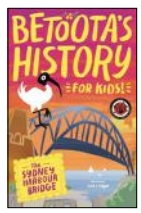
Blunderbore
Sofie Laguna & Marc McBride (illus.)
Penguin. HB. Was $29.99
$ $24.99
Available now



Twelve-year old Gemma loves to draw. Her latest passion is illustrating the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, rendering in heart-stopping detail the terrifying giant, Blunderbore. While staying with her Aunt Lucy, Gemma's drawing is ripped by lightning. When she hears strange calls for help coming from the beach, Gemma sets off to investigate and discovers that somehow her art has become reality. Jack and Blunderbore are now in her world, and Blunderbore has kidnapped Jack. To help Jack, Gemma must survive the perils of Blunderbore's castle, rescue the prisoners and restore the natural order between the two worlds.

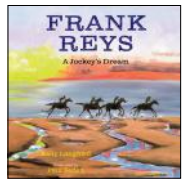
Kids Nonfiction

Betoota's History for Kids! The Sydney Harbour Bridge
Betoota Advocate & Scott Edgar (illus.)
Larrikin House. PB. $14.99
Available now



With their usual sarcastic wit, knowledge and humour, the *Betoota Advocate* team delivers a nonfiction adventure that will engage kids in the historical events that shaped the future. Few can make history more interesting than *Betoota*, as their 1.2 million Instagram followers can attest! From the unique perspective of a curious ibis (aka bin chicken), *Betoota's History for Kids* provides a historically accurate account of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and how one idea became an iconic landmark. This is history, just better!

Frank Reys: A Jockey's Dream
Kelly Langford & Paul Seden (illus.)
Magabala. HB. $27.99
Available now



Frank Reys was the first Aboriginal jockey to win the iconic Melbourne Cup when he rode Gala Supreme across the finish line in 1973, etching his name into history. From breaking in brumbies with his brothers in Northern Queensland through to that nail-biting race, *Frank Reys* depicts the highs and lows of Reys' life – one of tremendous adversity and relative obscurity.

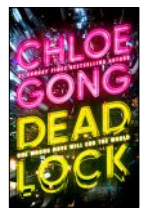
Young Adult

The Last King of Faerie (The Wicked Powers, Book 1)
Cassandra Clare
Walker. PB. $32.99
Available 3 November



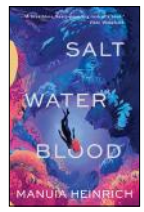
Drusilla Blackthorn is in her third year at Shadowhunter Academy when she is kidnapped and held prisoner by Prince Ash Morgenstern in the dangerous but beautiful land of Faerie. Despite herself, Dru is drawn to Ash and the darkness that seems to surround him – but one false move could cost her life. Meanwhile, a shocking disappearance rocks the foundations of the Shadowhunter world, forcing Kit Herondale and Ty Blackthorn to set aside their differences and embark on a perilous quest to save everything they cherish.

Deadlock
Chloe Gong
Hodderscape. PB. $24.99
Available 17 November



After a perilous mission, Eirale Ward has been rescued and returned to NileCorp, fully restored as an elite soldier. Now a Coalition spy, she is tasked with taking down NileCorp from within. Having retrieved Project Wit, Nik Grant is the talk of Atahua – and NileCorp will stop at nothing to bring him in. As NileCorp grows untouchable, Atahua's future is threatened. Kieren believes in Lia and her ability to rupture the power in virtual reality, but NileCorp has long set its trap. Before NileCorp can gain absolute control, Lia must embrace what she was built to do: change the world or burn it all down.

Salt Water Blood
Manuia Heinrich
A&U. PB. $24.99
Available 17 November



R Moe is connected to the ocean. It speaks to her and reveals things that will happen in the future. She predicted her father's drowning; she foresaw her mother abandoning her, sailing away from their island; and she has now prophesied her brother, Tao, sinking beneath its waves.

Moe is determined to save her brother and flee from the island to Paris. But when Tao's girlfriend goes missing one night, and Tao is found with someone else's blood on his clothes, he is forced to stay as a suspect. Moe knows her brother is innocent. Reluctantly, Moe must turn to the ocean, and use her power to solve the clues to what happened to Tao's girlfriend and how she can save Tao from his watery fate.

Salt Water Blood is an enthralling mystery infused with magical realism, rich with Mā'ohi Nui (French Polynesian) culture, history and mythology. The fictional island of Vaeaga is restless in its anger and search for justice. Set in the aftermath of the French nuclear weapons tests conducted in the French Polynesian islands from 1966 to 1996, the novel's themes of eco-activism and environmental destruction are fervently captured in Moe's own connection to the ocean as she learns to embrace its voice and truly understand the visions of pain that it reveals to her.

Manuia Heinrich's debut novel is a stunning fantasy/mystery that expands into an insightful and urgent call to action to protect our environment and raise unheard voices above the colonialist narrative we have been told. For ages 13+.

Aurelia Orr is from Readings Kids

The Star Path
Witi Ihimaera Smiler
Penguin. PB. $29.99
Available now



R A young man named Teva finds an unlikely home in a French circus, thousands of kilometres away from his father's island homeland of Rūrutu in French Polynesia.

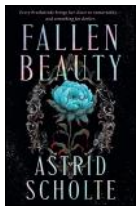
Metura'a, the majestic ancient whale king, is impaired by age and environmental changes. He remains in the subterranean ice chambers of Antarctica, accompanied by the whale kingdom who must find a way to draw him back to the warmer homeland waters of the pacific.

The Star Path refers to celestial navigation techniques ancient Polynesian explorers used to travel great distances. These are the paths followed in Witi Ihimaera Smiler's wonderful new novel, which sees humans heed the call of the whales, and embark on a journey that takes us from France to the islands of Polynesia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), and to the icy seas of Antarctica. Each character – human and animal – is brimming with personality, and even the gods have a sense of humour.

The Star Path is a return to the world of *The Whale Rider*, but don't worry if you haven't read it or can't remember! Context is given and the book can be read as a standalone. It's moving and epic, a supernatural, mythological adventure. Rich with the language and culture of Polynesia, this book is suitable for ages 12+.

Kim Gruschow is the children's book division manager

Fallen Beauty
Astrid Scholte
Pan Mac. PB. $26.99
Available 10 November



Eighteen-year-old Thorelea Winyard has lived her life imprisoned in a tower, forced to paint dead animals. That is all she has known – until the day one of the animals comes back to life. Thrust into court life, she learns that the king and queen's centuries-long reign is sustained by the magic of the court painter – a magic that has awakened in Thorelea, which now binds her to the throne. There at court, she meets Prince Kelter, the court's only other mortal. Desperate for immortality so that he can join the kingdom's war, he offers her a bargain: if she paints his portrait, he'll help her to escape. But as their secret meetings turn into something more, they must face the monstrous realities of Thorelea's power – and the choice it demands between love and freedom.

Wild Horse Summer
Lauren St John
Faber. PB. $19.99
Available 3 November



R Lauren St John writes horse and animal stories for all ages so brilliantly and this new one is no exception. American teenager Morgan is slowly recovering from a horrific fire that burned down her house and killed her prized showjumping horse, Romeo. She has burns on much of her body, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Even though Morgan has no recollection of that night, apart from occasional panic attacks during which she has flashes of memory, she has been dumped by her boyfriend, best friend and showjumping coach on the assumption that she caused the fire.

To get away from everything that has happened, Morgan travels to Exmoor in England, her dad's ancestral homeland, to stay with relatives over the summer. She is soon drawn to the local horse stables and the wild Exmoor ponies. As she works with the horses, she slowly begins to heal. She is also rescued from a near-drowning by local surfer and journalist Callum. When traumatised horse Night Dancer comes to the stables to recover from a car accident, Morgan starts helping the horse to heal, but the stables are in serious financial trouble and the future for the horses is uncertain.

There is plenty of action, adventure and high-stakes drama in this novel, but these are also complex, beautifully drawn characters who really capture your heart and pull you into their orbit. Even if you aren't horse crazy, you will become engrossed in the slow-burn romance and the small-town charm of Exmoor.

This is a well-written escapist read for horse, romance and adventure lovers alike. And this novel is probably the closest many – if not most! – of us will get to experiencing our own wild horse summer!

Highly recommended for ages 12+.

Angela Crocombe is The Readings Prize and The Readings Foundation coordinator

Lavender & Hemlock
Lili Wilkinson
A&U. PB. $24.99
Available 3 November

This author is at A Day in Carlton, see the program online for details



R I discovered Lili Wilkinson almost 20 years ago when I read her book *Scatterheart*. Since then, she has remained one of my favourite authors. So obviously *Lavender & Hemlock* is one of my most anticipated YA books of 2026!

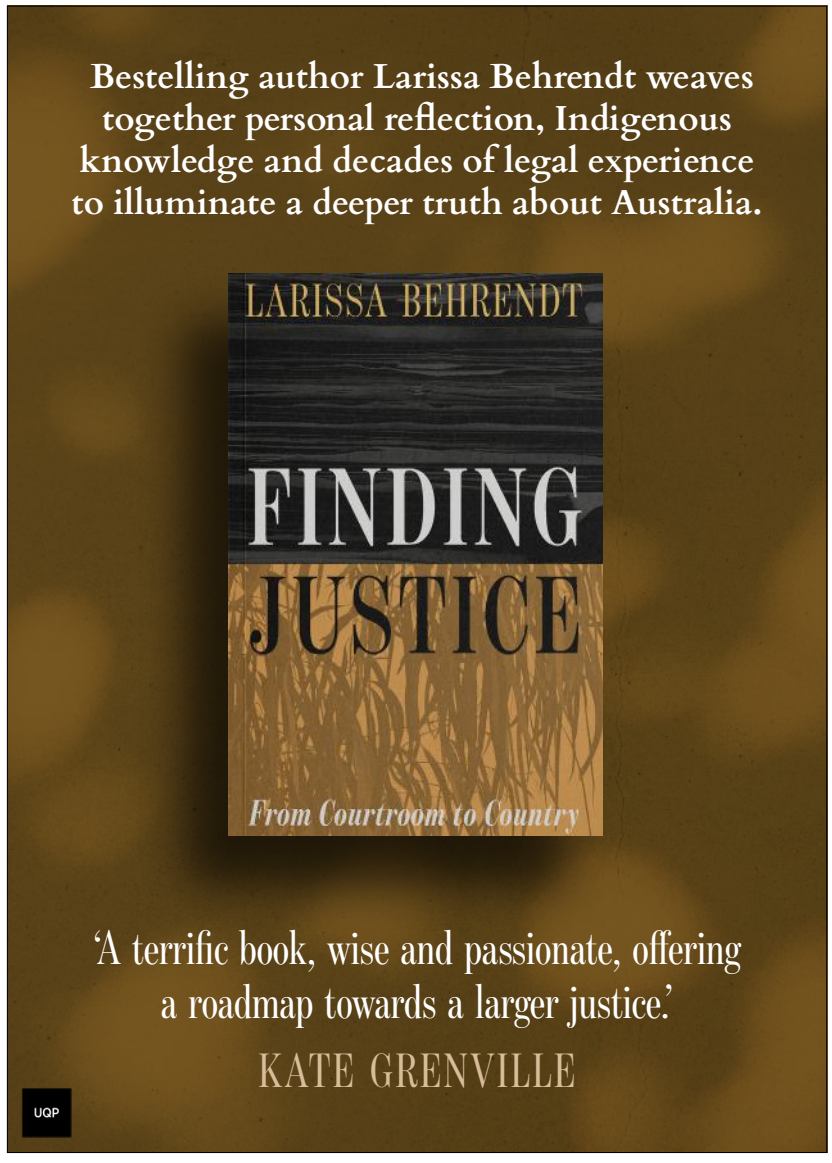
Housemaid Tansy has no memories of a time before she lived in the Oubliette, a quiet cottage by the sea where she lives and takes care of old Lady Aster. Every day is the same. Tansy prepares Lady Aster's tea, does the laundry and cleans each room – her favourite is the room full of glass globes. One day when she is polishing a globe that depicts a scene with knights, Tansy makes a wish that a knight would come and whisk her away.

Merit is a monster. Taken from her home as a child, she's been raised as a Carrion Knight with one purpose – to serve the Unmaker. When she's stabbed during a raid, Merit stumbles through a door and into the Oubliette. Tansy nurses Merit back to health from the brink of death, and feelings begin to grow between them. As their bond grows stronger, Tansy begins to question everything about her world and where her loyalty lies.

Like many of Wilkinson's books, *Lavender & Hemlock* utterly destroyed me. While described as a cosy sapphic romantasy, this book is so much more. I can't say too much though for fear of spoilers! But if you enjoy your romantasy full of dark twists, morally grey characters, cosy cottages and talking cats, then *Lavender & Hemlock* is the book for you! For ages 14+.

Lucie Dess is the marketing and events coordinator R

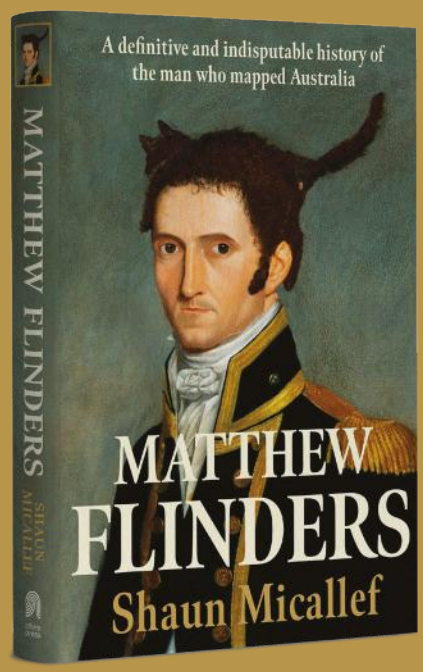


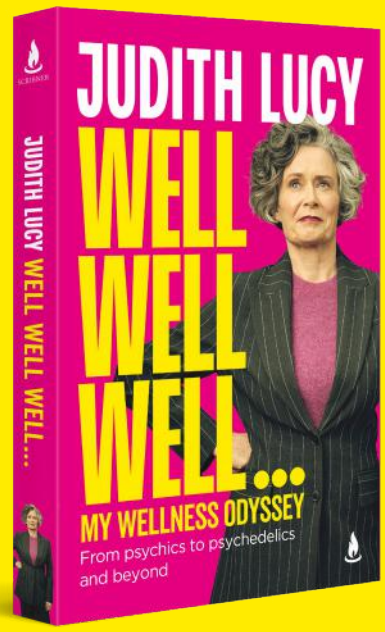


One continent.

One cat.

One increasingly irritated explorer.

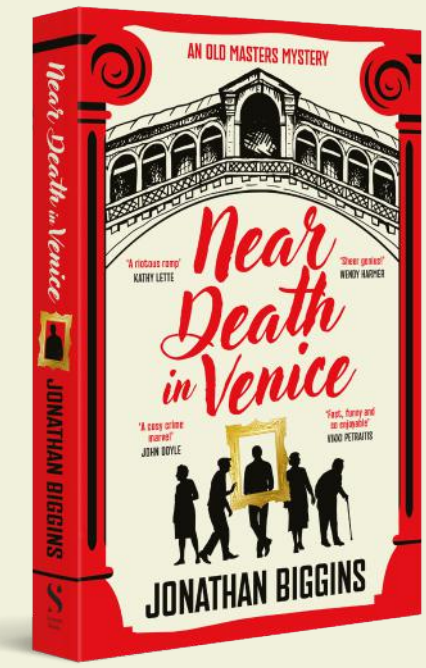




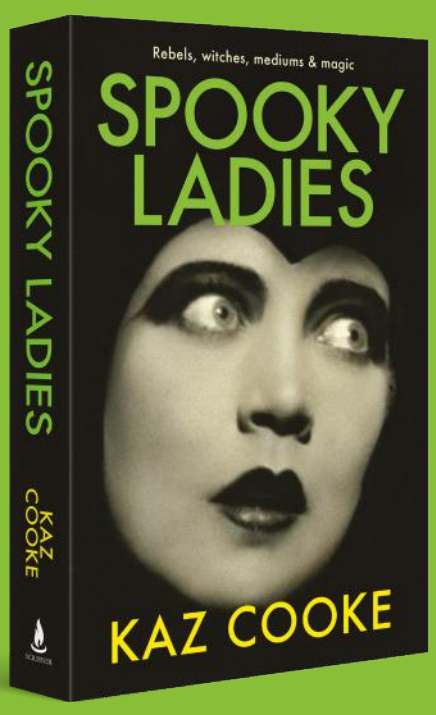
From psychics to psychedelics and beyond

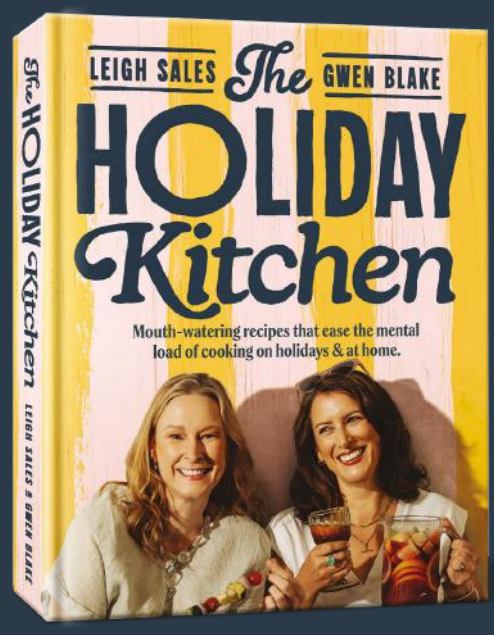
'A cosy crime marvel.'

JOHN DOYLE



Rebels, witches, mediums & magic

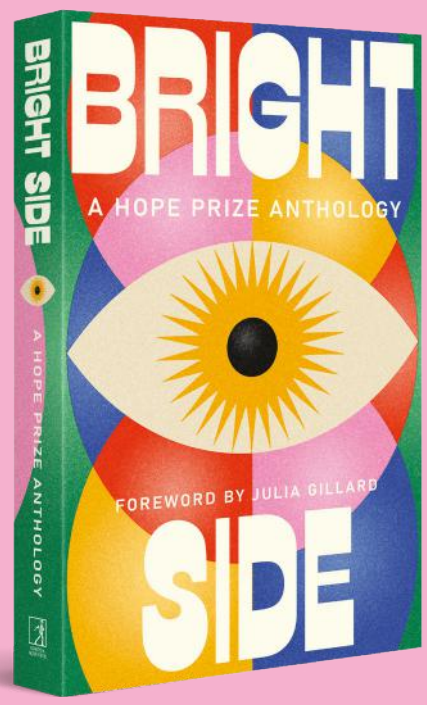


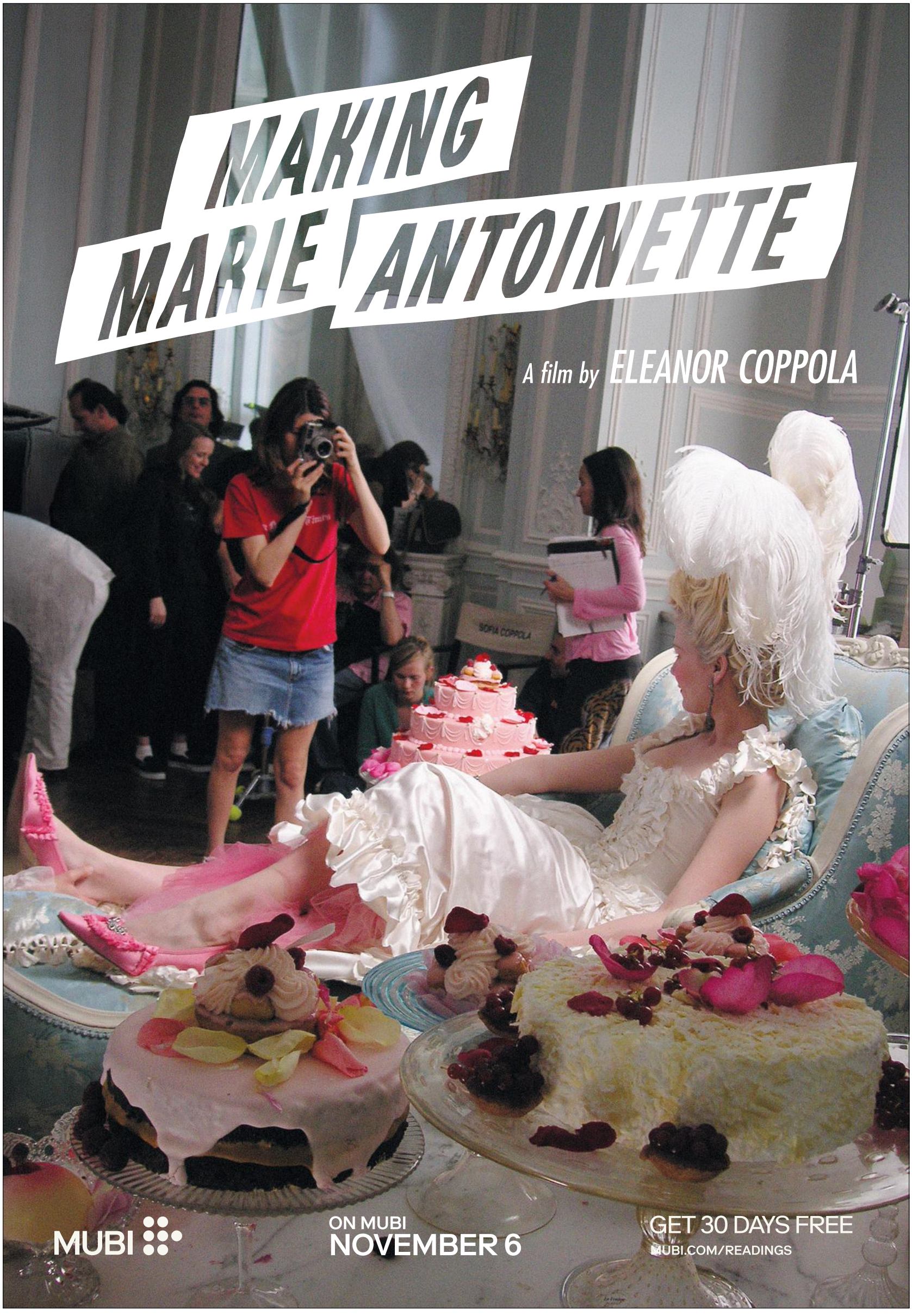


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