

Some of Our Book Reviews - April 2021

***Daylight* by David Baldacci**

'Superwoman' FBI agent, Atlee Pine, continues her search for her stolen twin in association with CID's John Puller et al. In the process, they solve a conspiracy that threatens the security of the USA.

Skilfully constructed around the basest human motivations – greed and corruption – this story whisks the reader from one desperate situation to the next at breakneck speed.

If you enjoy having your personal conspiracy theories confirmed, around how crime at the lowest level is orchestrated from 'above', you'll love this one.

Brace yourself – it's not only the bad guys who get eliminated and not all problems are satisfactorily solved.

Pam

Starting From Now &

***The Shearer's Wife* by Fleur McDonald**

The story of living in the 'bush'. What can happen in life, a death by car accident, death from cancer. How a daughter / brother cope with disaster in the family.

Easy to read. Gives a good insight into life and difficulties living in the bush / country town.

The story flows, but keeps you in suspense to the end.

Need to read these two books in the right order.

Thea

***Golden Earrings* by Belinda Alexandra**

This tells the saga of two families who are unknowingly linked through a "love" child. It is written over two periods of time and focuses on two main characters.

I really enjoyed reading this well-researched novel. I had to write down the characters and their families to keep track of the story.

It's a "good read" with more twists and turns than the Bathurst Race Track. The story has it all - love, secrets, mystery, deception, revenge, and – to top it off – two ghosts.

This is the first Belinda Alexandra novel I have read and I am looking forward to reading more of her novels.

Judy

***Shuggie Bain* by Douglas Stuart**

This novel tells the story of Hugh "Shuggie" Bain growing up with his alcoholic mother, Agnes, in Glasgow in the 1980s.

With its themes of poverty, alcoholism, addiction, abuse and sexuality, this is a harrowing, but worthwhile read.

With all its darkness, this is ultimately a story about love between a mother and a son.

This novel is inspired by Douglas Stuart's own experiences growing up with an alcoholic mother.

Lois

***The Bulldog Track* by Peter Phelps**

This is a grandson's story of his grandfather's survival during the Second World War in New Guinea on The Bulldog Track, a track parallel to but west of the Kokoda Track. A track "longer, higher, steeper, wetter, colder and rougher than Kokoda Trail" traversed mid-war by older men not fit for war service in 1942.

Tom Phelps, a carpenter, has left his wife and six children in Punchbowl, Sydney to attend a mining camp on excellent wages at Bulolo in the highlands of New Guinea at the outbreak of the Second World War. The Japanese were advancing. They had already occupied Lae and were advancing on the northern slopes of the highlands. It became obvious that the gold mine had to be abandoned on foot after its three Company Junkers aeroplanes were bombed and destroyed, along with the airstrip, by Japanese fighters and bombers, removing the possibility of an airlift escape.

Phelps is overindulgent with the romance of the family story about his grandfather, Tom Phelps, writing more like it should be a movie script rather than a concise history of their survival on the Bulldog Track.

I would only recommend this book to people who have a genuine interest in the Second World War in the highlands of New Guinea, and to those who have lots of time on hand for reading, due to the verbiage and verbosity of the book.

The author writes, on his mother's suggestion, that the story is a "bloody good yarn" and it probably would be, if it were written by an author with a more objective view.

Lloyd

***The Great Escape From Woodlands Nursing Home* by Joanna Nell**

This novel focuses on two characters, Hattie and Walter, who reluctantly find themselves placed in a nursing home against their wishes.

This is a warm and funny story which I enjoyed. It focuses on the issues which aged care residents deal with on a daily basis.

It is a heart-warming story with wonderful characters.

Very relevant considering the current crisis in Aged Care in Australia.

Lois

***The Survivors* by Jane Harper**

Man and his young family return to his home town to assist with the re-location of his father who has dementia. The body of a young woman washes up on a beach and re-opens old wounds.

The setting is the complete antithesis of *The Dry* (Harper's first book which has just been released as a movie). Plot similarities exist but do not detract from a tightly written mystery that keeps the reader guessing until the end.

Those who enjoy mysteries set in recognisable parts of Australia, incorporating tangled friendships, family dynamics, and small town intrigue and gossip, will enjoy this one.

The settings, characters and emotions, described and woven together in *The Survivors*, herald another movie waiting to be filmed??

Pam

The Duffy / Macintosh Series by Peter Watt

Fiction based on fact of two families who came to Australia in the early settlement. Follows their lives through two World Wars and, books 1-10, go through to the Korean War.

(The series continues. Books 11 & 12 available in the library Ed.)

It shows the situation and conditions through the lives of the two families. It was interesting to read about the clash of European and Aboriginal cultures.

This series would appeal to anyone interested in Australian history, and interested in fiction based on fact (*historical fiction*).

Thea

All Quiet On the Western Front by Erich Remarque

This tells the story of four young German soldiers on the Western Front in the Great War. The story examines life in the trenches, told through the eyes of the main character, Paul.

The reader is led through many facets of life in the trenches, mostly the way the men were coping, or not coping, in the grim realities of the Great War.

The reader gains perspective of the loss of an entire generation, regardless of which side the soldier fought for.

It is grim, but it is not gratuitous. Detailed, yet concise. Political and military reasons are noticeably absent to allow the reader to focus only at the personal level.

Lisa

Flight of Dreams by Ariel Lawhon

This is the story of the dreams and relationships of the passengers on what becomes the final flight of airship *Hindenberg*.

Another wonderful piece of historical fiction. The character portrayal and building of suspense to a terrifying climax makes it a "can't put down" novel.

A mixture of intrigue, romance and suspense serves to keep the story interesting and the reader involved.

I love the character development of the cabin boy, Werner, as he matures from a young boy to being an accepted man and mate of the crew.

Lynne

***The Girl in the Mirror* by Rose Carlyle**

In a desperate race to earn a huge inheritance, identical twins enact deadly schemes to outwit other family members, claim the money, and get away with murder.

Shockingly convoluted, this story snares the reader from the start. The author draws on her personal experience of sailing and the law to weave a tale that leads the reader to the very edge of credibility.

Lovers of suspense and intrigue will find this one hard to put down. A new plot or betrayal in every chapter provide a thrill a minute.

A very creditable debut novel - right up there with the veterans of suspense. The twists left me dizzy.

Pam

***Murder on Mustique* by Anne Glenconder**

The tropical paradise is shattered by a murder – and then another. There is a complicated web to untangle.

A good read but I think if I had not read Anne Glenconder's autobiography, I would have been more sceptical about some characters, especially the main characters. The author is well-versed re Mustique.

It's a neat who-done-it puzzle. The reasons for characters' actions, past and present, are quite believable.

Binnie

***The Book of Two Ways* by Jodi Picoult**

A "death doula" (I had to look that up) recognises much of herself in the death-bed confidences of a client. She sets out to discover who she might have been if not who she is.

I nearly gave up on this one because of the overwhelming amount of Egyptology the author plies us with. Some is necessary to the background story, but I found it excessive and boring.

If you aren't overwhelmed with hieroglyphics and Egyptian archaeology, the basic premise and insights into life and death are though provoking.

Heavy going, but invites reflection on how we may wish to be remembered.

Pam

***We Can't Say We Didn't Know* by Sophie McNeill**

This book tells the real stories of the human desolation and hope behind the news stories of the conflicts in the Middle East.

Well-written, heartbreaking, uplifting, deeply moving. These real accounts moved me to both compassion and anger.

This is what is happening, today, and continues to happen, to people just like you and me – and it continues to be at best ignored, and at worst condoned. What if they were our families, our loved ones?

It is not a lack of knowledge – there is unprecedented access to live footage and reporting. What is it that we lack?

Ilona