

Some of our Book Reviews May 2021

***When the Apricots Bloom* by Gina Wilkinson**

Set in Baghdad, this novel tells the story of three women (two Iraqis, one Australian) and their struggle to keep safe under the rule of Saddam Hussein.

I quite enjoyed this book. It gives an inside account of everyday life under Saddam Hussein's rule, and the struggles the Iraqis lived with.

It made me think about how many Iraqis ultimately sacrificed their homeland in order to save their loved ones and themselves.

The author was a journalist who lived in Baghdad for more than a year under Saddam Hussein's rule, so is writing from first-hand experience.

Lois

***The Pearler's Wife* by Roxane Dhand**

This book explores the initial experiences of the pearling industry – class concerns, some racial concerns, and the story of those thriving to make a fortune.

A good read, with wonderful historical background, but a few misleading directions.

Historical fiction at its best, though not written with the fluency of some well-established authors.

Bev

***Diary of a Somebody* by Brian Bilson**

Socially awkward Brian makes a New Year resolution to keep a diary and write a poem a day for the year.

This book is funny and clever.

If you are a word-nerd and you enjoy a giggle and a bit of suspense, you will enjoy this book.

It's not rocket-science.

Cynthia

***The Inheritance of Solomon Farthing* by Mary Paulson-Ellis**

Solomon Farthing is an Heir Hunter and his journey to find the heir of one Thomas Methren leads him and the reader to uncover a story that goes back generations to a group of soldiers drawn together by the trials of WW1.

Their stories are intertwined and tell of human relationships and intrigue, until at last Solomon Farthing finds his inheritance – and it is far more than you may expect.

The novel is set in Edinburgh and the story develops through flashbacks to the group of soldiers and the early life of Solomon Farthing.

Lynne

***Tell Me Lies* by J.P. Pomare**

A Psychological Therapist misses vital clues from a client and finds herself and her family in dire peril.

Australian, tightly written and tense – the amateur profilers among us will enjoy this one.

If you enjoy psychological thrillers, this will keep you guessing for awhile – quit awhile!

I always enjoy tales told in the ‘feminine voice’ by a man. J.P. Pomare does it well.

Pam

***The Good Teacher* by Petronella McGovern**

A story of kindness, generosity, betrayal and manipulation.

Realistic characters.

Unpredictable page-turner.

A story relevant for today.

Cynthia

***The Imitator* by Rebecca Starford**

Evelyn Varley rises above her ordinary background, moving into a high society of friends. Her ambition and talent is recognised and, as WW2 breaks out, she is groomed into a world of infiltrating an underground group of Nazi sympathisers. It all comes to a head when a close friend becomes involved and decisions must be made.

The story begins in 1948 and unfolds through many flashbacks.

I didn't find the book as intriguing and powerful as I had thought from reading the blurb. While it was quite well written I felt it lacked changes of pace, and the constant flashbacks were all over the place, at times making me feel the story was disjointed.

It is a good read, showing an aspect of war and its impact on those ‘left at home’ doing their bit.

Not too an intense war story.

Lynne

***Infinite Splendours* by Sophie Laguna**

A sad tale of a young boy's life wrecked by a trusted relation, his lonely existence helped by his paintings, book of Old Masters, and Puccini's music.

Although so well written and obviously well researched, I did find it quite depressing – a talented life wrecked forever and he could have offered so much.

Anon

***Girl A* by Abigail Dean**

Narrated by Lex (Alexandra – Girl A), this novel tells the harrowing story of a family who is kept captive in their home (House of Horrors) by their parents, and the repercussions and struggles they face in their later life.

Although horrifying at times, I found this a gripping read!

Ultimately, this is a story about the shifting alliances and betrayals between siblings.

A debut novel. Dean drew inspiration for her story from a number of real-life cases.

Lois

***Scrublands* by Chris Hammer**

A traumatized journalist is sent to a small (Australian) country town to cover the anniversary of an appalling crime committed a year ago. He gets more than he bargained for.

A thriller from beginning to end. So fast paced and tangled, it leaves the reader exhausted.

Recognisable elements of the complexity of small town politics, drought, fire, drugs, terrorism – *Scrublands* has them all in spades.

All is explained by the end, but shock after shock keeps the reader enthralled. Don't lose concentration!

Pam

Ed: This is followed by 'Silver' and now his new release, 'Trust'.

***Esther* by Jessica North**

True story of the first Jewish convict to the Australian colony, who also became the First Lady at one time of early colonial development.

Thoroughly enjoyable story, based on historical fact, of this remarkable saga of convict to established lady in Sydney, from rags to relative riches.

This book would be enjoyed by anyone with family history going back to early convict fleets or descendants of early pioneers to NSW.

Francis Biggers, mentioned as overseer for Mayor Johnstone, also worked for my husband's great3 grandfather, Cyrus Matthew Doyle – one of his children married a Doyle!

Avril

***NYPD RED 6* by James Patterson & Marshall Karp**

A famous bride is kidnapped on her wedding day and the RED team is led on a wild chase to find her before her stalker can claim the ransom.

Keeps up the tradition of NYPD RED and doesn't disappoint with twists aplenty.

Lovers of fast-paced police dramas will like this one, especially if they enjoy solving the crime before the end.

Persevere past the first couple of chapters (a bit flat) – the rest is worth it.

Pam

***The Happiest Man on Earth* - Eddie Jaku**

This story is Eddie's tale of how he survived the horror and evil of Nazi persecution with courage and ingenuity (and the odd miracle).

Everyone should read this book.

It (he!) reminds one to be kind.

Binnie

***The Grand Tour* - Olivia Weaver**

Bernard has lost his job, Angela and Ruby have a road trip while their homes are renovated, Carol has lost the plot and Izzy manipulates the adults.

A tongue-in-cheek romp through the lives of some dysfunctional characters – perhaps tries to tackle too many societal ills, but an entertaining read.

An interest in human foibles and hope for happy outcomes will keep the reader entertained.

A creditable first novel.

An entertaining diversion from heavier novels. Harmless and fairly predictable, but amusing.

Lois

***Dark Clouds on the Mountain* by John Tully**

A Hobart detective struggles his way through murders, hate crimes, drug lords, and crooked police. All haunted by the Nazi atrocities of WW2 and the shadow it continues to cast.

A well-written story set in beautiful Hobart and demonstrating the author's intimate knowledge of the city and its darker history.

A combination of intersecting plots and the vagaries of fate, make an absorbing journey for the reader and a desire to know the outcome.

Recognisable Hobart locations lend themselves to this novel very well and the author doesn't shy from the authentic Aussie vernacular.

Pam