

***All Our Shimmering Skies* by Trent Dalton**

History, geography, legend and myth are woven together in this magical tale of the Gravedigger Girl from Darwin in 1942. Good guys who turn bad, guys who turn good, and lost souls who find purpose, populate the pages of this book.

Greed, lust, cruelty and vengeance are juxtaposed with loyalty, love and faith, as a young girl searches to find the answers she needs to make sense of her existence.

Just when you think it's too fantastical, Dalton inserts just the right amount of reality to make us believe the story is possible.

A travelogue of Litchfield National Park provides a "shimmering" back-drop to this must-read for all Dinkum Aussies.

Pam

***Ash Mountain* by Helen Fitzgerald**

This book is about a distorted family and a fire. There are lots of hang ups. No decent plot.

One of the worst books I have read. If I owned it, I would have put it in the bin.

I see no reason for anyone to like this book. A waste of time.

Full of the f-word and not worth reading.

Anon

***Bitter Wash Road* by Garry Disher**

Set in a small town in South Australia, in the wheat belt. This is a story about what can happen in isolated towns and the effects on the local police force and the residents who live there.

The first 100 pages was slow, the middle was good, and the last 150 pages was a cracking read.

If you love home-grown mystery / crime, you should love this book. Disher is a talented writer.

My first read by Garry Disher – I will be back for more!!

The audio book was terrible – monotone voice. Stay with reading it!.

Debbie

***Trains Unlimited – in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Tim Fischer**

Former Deputy PM and renowned train activist Tim Fischer, puts a powerful case for the expansion of rail across Australia and the world. He looks into the past present and future of rail to ground his case with facts and examples taken from his extensive travels and reading. The book does a comprehensive treatment of rail by its History, Continental adoption, mistakes and likely future written from his unique perspective of world travel.

This 300 page tome is worth the read by politicians world-wide. Tim writes as he spoke and you can easily see him saying the contents as you read. He wrote it while seconded as Australian Ambassador to the Holy See in Rome. His positions as both Leader of the Federal National Party, Australian Deputy PM and Ambassador to HS, gave him incredible access to travel and diversions to see obscure and major railways, the envy of all rail buffs like me. Some might think his knowledge is absurd, obsessive but there is no denying his knowledge of world railways is indeed prodigious. His Bibliography and References are extensive.

Who said conspiracy theories were false? Tim revives them as he indirectly, but often, gives a Catholic spin and insight into its here-to-fore unwritten glorious rail history. He lauds achievements of Catholic engineers and European countries, (all under the Holy See), in the contents. This is evidenced by the EC's successful love affair in recent times, with High Speed rail and its connection of Spain with Estonia and London's connection with Istanbul, to shore up its Peace and Unity, speed up its freight task (or is it to improve its defences), all since the writing of this book in 2011! So, this book seconds as a template or guide for a higher order (didn't God invent railways?), and for His subservient politicians, to conquer the world with low friction rail. Thankfully to counter this, he is still tainted with Protestant ideals of free enterprise, for profitable railways, and Stephenson's standard British rail gauge (his preferred HSV Universal gauge) and the British colonial legacy of steam, which provided not only standard gauge rail, but locomotives and dedicated pathways for future conversion and world expansion. This acknowledgement also provides a good balance to his very rational and very sensible approach to transport solutions for the future.

Lloyd

***The Wounded Sinner* by Gus Henderson**

The book tells the story of an aboriginal baby taken in by a preacher when her parents were killed in a car crash.

This is her story of finding her roots when society tells you that you shouldn't.

A good easy read but with a real story.

Anon.

***Sorrow and Bliss* by Meg Mason**

This novel is about Martha, a woman suffering mental illness, and the effects this has on all her relationships.

I quite enjoyed this book. Even though it is a somewhat dark topic, it is written with wit and humour.

The story swings from heartbreak to joy – the title is perfect for the story that unfolds.

I wasn't sure how I felt about this book when I started it, but the further I got into it, the more I enjoyed it.

Lois

***A Lonely girl is a Dangerous Thing* by Jessie Tu**

I didn't finish this book - the character is too messed up.

All I got was profanity and promiscuity right off the bat (first page).

A messed up young woman with a sex addiction.

This book is very in-your-face. If books had ratings, this should be an 'R'.

I can't see why anyone would like this book.

Anon.

***The Wife and the Widow* by Christian White**

Set in a sleepy Island in Australia where not much happens – or does it? The story follows two women, a missing husband, and the secrets that need to be shared.

Although this is only Christian White's second novel, he writes with a real cleverness. Can't wait to read his next one!

The author has brilliantly mixed the plot with twists and turns that you cannot see coming. The ending was totally unexpected, but brilliant.

Winner of the 2020 Ned Kelly Award for Best Crime Fiction from the Australian Crime Writers' Association. Once you start, you won't want to put it down.

Debbie

***The Dressmakers of Yarrandarrah Prison* by Meredith Jaffé**

The setting is a prison where a group of hardened prisoners form the Backtackers Sewing Group.

Derek learns that his daughter is to be married and he wants to do something to show her how much he loves her. Jane, the sewing teacher, suggests he makes his daughter a wedding dress. There are many twists and turns along the way, and there is a happy ending.

This book should be compulsory reading for ALL Corrective Services Ministers and prison guards. It might solve some problems.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and the last few chapters left me with goose bumps and in tears.

Judy

***Stalin's Wine Cellar* by John Baker & Nick Place**

An adventure in the world of high-end wine. Insight into Tbilisi, Georgia.

Breathtaking collection of wine, the elusive treasure.

It is a simple read, and based on a true story.

Would appeal to any wine lovers and Australians on a different adventure.

I loved the use of the word 'oligarch' – a rising, very wealthy, very influential class of Russian, which also extends to the former Soviet Bloc countries.

*(The authors had been on a hunt to verify if a collection of wine bottles had in fact been owned by Nicholas 11, the last Tsar of Russia. Ed)*

Cherry

***Elizabeth & Elizabeth* by Sue Williams**

*There was a short time in Australia's European history when two women wielded extraordinary power and influence behind the scenes of the fledgling colony. One was Elizabeth Macquarie, the wife of the new governor Lachlan Macquarie, nudging him towards social reform and magnificent buildings and town planning. The other was Elizabeth Macarthur, credited with creating Australia's wool industry and married to John Macarthur, a dangerous enemy of the establishment. These women came from strikingly different backgrounds with husbands who held sharply conflicting views. Elizabeth & Elizabeth is about two courageous women thrown together in impossible times.*

(In this novel) these two Elizabeths in a short time become good friends: Elizabeth Macquarie, wife of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, and Elizabeth Macarthur, wife of John Macarthur.

John was a dangerous man who disliked Governor Lachlan. The women go down in history changing things for the better for the convicts and then for the wool industry.

Someone who enjoys a novel with Australian history would enjoy this book. It explores the enduring friendship of the two Elizabeths, regardless of the problems they endured.

The writing is well structured. The characters come alive in each chapter.

Elaine

***Mary's Last Dance* by Mary Li**

The story of the wife of Li Cunxin, Mao's Last Dancer, and her obsessions – first with ballet, then with Li, and ultimately the reason for her last dance – daughter Sophie.

The highs and lows, joys and disappointments of Mary's life in the fast lane of ballet are contrasted against the life of her family in Rockhampton and Li's family in China.

An inspirational and touching story.

Mary's story shows how courage, determination and a large serving of lucky coincidence can achieve anything.

Pam

***The Nowhere Child* by Christian white**

Christian White's debut novel (2018)

A child disappeared from a town in Kentucky USA where a religious cult operated.

28 years later a woman in Melbourne is told this child is her.

The novel follows the two locations and two timeframes, until they meet.

I loved the book. I thought it was even better than his second novel, *The Wife and The Widow*, and that book won the Ned Kelly Award – best Crime Fiction – 2020.

If you like a good mystery novel, you will like this one. Every chapter finished with a 'page-turner'.

2017 Victorian Premier's Literary Award (unpublished manuscript) for *The Nowhere Child*. Great to see a number of new Australian mystery / crime writers with such talent.

Debbie