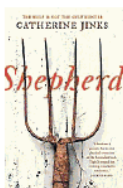


FICTION

CAMERON WOODHEAD

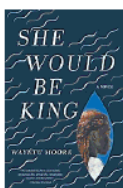


Shepherd

Catherine Jinks
Text, \$29.99

Catherine Jinks' *Shepherd* is a tense novel steeped in the brutality of colonial Australia. It's 1840 and Tom Clay, transported for poaching game in Suffolk, finds himself in a terrifying landscape. The boy convict lives in an isolated hut where he works as a shepherd. His only real friend is his dog Gyp, until he and a newly arrived Irishman are forced to flee into the bush together. A vicious fellow shepherd has committed a terrible crime – and he'll stop at nothing to eliminate witnesses. Hunted through foreign country, Tom knows ignorance of the land means slow death, but he'll be cruelly murdered unless he can outwit a killer. Jinks' cracking, sharply etched adventure story doesn't turn a blind eye to history, and weaves tender moments into the action and suspense. It's superior fiction any writer might enjoy reading, simply to admire the craft.

PICK OF THE WEEK



She Would Be King

Wayetu Moore
One, \$32.99

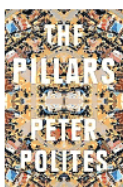
Three superheroes join forces in a reimagining of the founding of Liberia. There's a man called June Day, an escaped slave from a Virginia plantation, with preternatural strength. There's Norman Aragon, son of a British "scholar" and an enslaved Jamaican mother, who can vanish at will. And Gbessa, exiled by the indigenous Vai on suspicion of being a witch, who cannot die. As the first two battle illegal slavers off the West African coast, Gbessa mixes with the newly minted Americo-Liberian elite. One grim legacy of American slavery was the way freed slaves settling in Liberia replicated European cruelty in the treatment of indigenous peoples – an eventual path to ruin, strewn with blood diamonds and child soldiers. Only Gbessa and her companions can steer Liberia towards a more humane course, in this epic alternative history, suffused with magical realism.



The Warlow Experiment

Alix Nathan
Profile, \$29.99

Based on a true story, *The Warlow Experiment* takes place in a manor house in late 18th-century England. Amateur scientist Herbert Powyts, anxious to make his name at the Royal Society, advertises for a subject to participate in a bizarre experiment. He offers a large sum to anyone willing to live in cellar rooms under his abode, with no human contact for seven years. John Warlow, a labourer with a large family to feed, is desperate enough to answer the advertisement. But neither man anticipates the effect the plan will have. Alix Nathan's complex and original vision pairs the intellectual surface of the Enlightenment with its underbelly in gothic fiction, working in class history, too. But it has too much fat, and not enough plot, to sustain a whole novel.



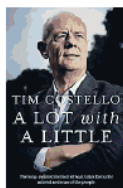
The Pillars

Peter Polites
Hachette, \$32.99

The follow-up to *Down the Hume*, Peter Polites' *The Pillars* draws us into some ugly terrain. Panos is a gay Greek-Australian poet who lives with Kane, his landlord and sometime sex partner – white, gay, with a sense of entitlement as strongly inked into him as his tribal tattoo. When Kane objects to plans to build a mosque nearby (ostensibly to preserve property prices, in fact because he's a racist), he cajoles Panos into posing as a gay Albanian in media interviews as part of an opposition campaign. Panos' complicity in the destructive relationship isn't intricately realised enough to achieve a sense of psychological authenticity. Much of the novel is feel-bad melodrama with unpleasant characters warped by social forces, though there's dark humour in it, and Panos shows another side in dealings with his mentally ill mother.

NON-FICTION

STEVEN CARROLL

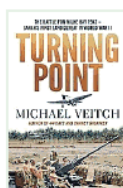


A Lot with a Little

Tim Costello
Hardie Grant, \$45

Tim Costello charts the personal, spiritual and political journey of his life so far: especially the spiritual, and the Baptist faith that informs his thinking and actions. Early on he raises the question of free will and determinism, nature and nurture, and as this reflective memoir unfolds you can see why. He comes from a close, religious family (including lifelong support for Essendon), his parents having met at a Melbourne University Christian student meeting. But soon after marrying, Costello paved his own road to faith after a stay with his wife at a Swiss seminary in 1980. A head-to-head confrontation with his father followed during a road trip across America in 1984. His father proclaimed himself a Reagan, Moral Majority supporter, while Costello's social conscience led him to a much more progressive political position. An engaging, deeply considered exploration of what constitutes an ethical, meaningful life.

PICK OF THE WEEK



Turning Point

Michael Veitch
Hachette, \$32.99

In the midst of the battle for Milne Bay in 1942 (when the Japanese Pacific advance was first stopped by Australian troops and US engineers), an extraordinary thing happened. Between one charge and another a Japanese soldier sang in the jungle, then the entire attack force joined in before being mown down. It's a hauntingly surreal passage in Michael Veitch's in-depth study of a battle that had a pervasively surreal quality because all the encounters (often terrifying hand-to-hand combat) took place at night when the Japanese attacked. In lively writing, Veitch examines the planning, the luck, the role of the RAAF and the amazing work of American engineers who built an airstrip in record time for the Kittyhawks. It's in the books now as a victory, but as Veitch points out, it could easily have gone the other way.



My Life with Charles Chauvel

Elsa Chauvel
Australian Scholarly Publishing, \$34.95

Charles Chauvel, director and producer, is one of the enduring legendary figures of Australian cinema. Less well known is his wife, Elsa, who worked closely with him on nearly all his films, co-scripting many of them. Her memoir, first published in 1973, is something of a message in a bottle from another era, to be read not primarily for what it documents – the bold, brave and imaginative beginnings of modern Australian cinema. She came from an acting family and was lured from stage to screen by a young Chauvel. They married, had a daughter, travelled the world, and also made some of the most pivotal of Australian films, including *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940, shot at Cronulla beach) and *Jedda* in 1954 – the first time Indigenous actors were cast in lead roles. They also launched the careers of Errol Flynn, Peter Finch and Mary McGuire.



Uncontained

Robert Hassan
Grattan Street Press, \$32.95

Look around any tram or train and nearly everybody will be staring at the little screen in their hands. In this meditative study, Robert Hassan examines the proposition that we're captives of technology, leaving us, as T.S. Eliot wrote, "distracted from distraction by distraction". We are robbed of subjective time: the part of us that runs on internal rhythms and experiences time outside that measured by clocks. To regain this "lost" time (he cites Proust often), he embarks on a "digital detox", travelling on a container ship from Melbourne to Singapore without technology. Those five weeks become a kind of *Walden*-like experience in which he reconnects, not with the internet, but himself: reconfiguring time, dismantling and reconstructing a mass-produced office chair so it's no longer "alien" but his. Complex ideas, accessibly explored.



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