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BOOKS



AUTHOR VISIT

Hear Esi Edugyan on *Washington Black*, the Barbados slave who finds freedom
March 2, Adelaide Writers' Week

Fiction

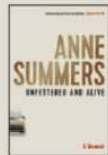
DRIVE YOUR BLOW OVER THE BONES OF THE DEAD
 Olga Tokarczuk: Text Publishing \$29.99



This mordant mix of whodunit, astrology, and the poetry of William Blake features Janina Duszejko, an eccentric schoolteacher in her 60s living in a remote Polish village close to the Czech border. Duszejko names things, Animal, Dog, Deer, Fox, and she has lost her beloved dogs, the Little Girls. When men in her village start dying - one is up-ended in a well, another caught in a snare - she tells the police the animals have turned on their hunters. For proof she offers the circle of deer footprints near the well, and the astrological observation that each of the dead men had Saturn in an animal sign. The 2009 book, just translated, becomes a sly thriller from the writer who this year won the Man Booker International Prize for *Flights*. **PENELOPE DEBELLE ★★★★★**

Memoir

UNFETTERED AND ALIVE: A MEMOIR
 Anne Summers: Allen & Unwin \$39.99



Don't be intimidated by the size of Anne Summers' latest book. It is eminently pleasing to read. Adelaide-born Dr Summers AO has had an extraordinary and admirable career: feminist, activist, journalist, publisher, political adviser and international chair of Greenpeace. Summers is frank while also broadly informative in her storytelling. The bold career moves, the sagas of *Ms Magazine* in the USA, life on the New York A-list, and her years advising Prime Minister Paul Keating in Australia are tales peppered with personal insights and sometimes disarmingly intimate confessions. Her prose swings along, as elegant as it is eloquent, the book paced so that one's interest never palls. **SAMELA HARRIS ★★★★★**

Wellness

A LIFE LESS LONELY: WHAT WE CAN ALL DO TO LEAD MORE CONNECTED, KINDER LIVES
 Nick Duerden: Green Tree \$29.99



Journalist Nick Duerden takes a sympathetic look at the problem of loneliness and social isolation and how it can affect anyone. Some people, such as refugees, the elderly, and those with mental illness, face particular challenges. He shows how our obsession with being connected has actually made us more alone. Duerden encourages us all to be more aware, more empathetic, and a little kinder to the people around us. This is a gentle book that illuminates a serious and insidious problem. The resources at the end of each chapter are all UK-based but similar services are available here. **DIANA CARROLL ★★★★★ ☆**

Picture Book

THE HOUSE ON THE MOUNTAIN
 Ella Holcombe and David Cox: Allen & Unwin \$24.99

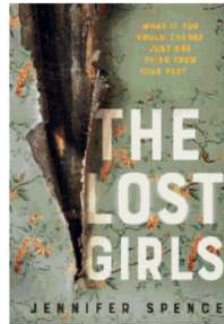


Ella Holcombe lived atop a mountain in Kinglake until the Black Saturday bushfires took her mud brick house and up-ended her life. This is the deeply moving story of her experience, including the reassuring cycle of renewal that she was initially denied: an Afterword "to be read with a grown-up" details the dimensions of her own loss. Starting with an evocative glimpse of the free-range childhood she and her twin brothers enjoyed, Holcombe captures the cataclysm from a sensitive child's perspective and with the clear-eyed delicacy of a poet. Her account, filled with memorable detail from the terrifying ride down the mountain to the multitude of dogs tied up outside the refuge is perfectly matched by Cox's eloquent illustrations, full of movement and character. **KATHARINE ENGLAND ★★★★★**



Fiction

INTO THE FIRE
 Sonia Orchard. Affirm Press \$29.99



Fiction

THE LOST GIRLS
 Jennifer Spence. Simon & Schuster \$29.99

Suspension of sense & disbelief

Alice falls in love with a rock star in Melbourne in the 1990s, while Stella time travels looking for truth, writes Katharine England

It's 1990 when Sydney-bred Lara and Canadian Alice meet in Women's Studies at Melbourne University, become best friends and start to ride the wave of freedom and entitlement created for them by their female forebears: "Women had the vote, the pill, had earned the right to equal pay and no-fault divorce; we could be politicians, CEOs, anything we

pleased; there was nothing to stop us." Trying on adulthood for the first time, they understand that they are the women who will have it all.

And for a little time they are, a bonded pair at the heart of a loving tribe, planning to travel the world together, free of the shackles that bound their parents to their contemptibly mundane and messy lives. Then Alice falls in love with charismatic rock star Crow, finds herself pregnant and moves to the country; two children later she is dead in a house fire.

Alice's story is told a year on by Lara, staying with Crow and the children in his proudly rebuilt house and driven to probe back through their friendship by a disquieting sense of responsibility for the tragedy.

Orchard recounts the tale in polished and elegantly-paced prose, exploring not just the facts and complex emotions of the male-female relationships but underpinning them with their philosophical interpretations, so that the novel interrogates the way in which such relationships and supporting beliefs change over the years in response not only to personal experiences but to changing societal attitudes and expectations. A scene at a picketed Melbourne abortion clinic is a particularly striking one, memorably local in a novel that demonstrates throughout a strong and recognisably Melbourne sense of place.

The book's final dark revelation comes as a stunning shock, filtered as it is through Lara's intense self-absorption, but a shock that the reader retrospectively realises they have been prepared for virtually throughout this attractive, intelligent and steadfastly feminist novel.

Jennifer Spence's Stella knows the rules: when time-travelling in the past you do nothing that might change the future. But what if you have an utterly compelling reason for changing the future?

Coming out of a cinema in 2017, a little disoriented after weeping over a film, Stella inexplicably finds herself intruding in her own 1997 past. Suddenly faced with her 20-years-younger self she borrows a family mystery and declares herself to be her Aunt Linda who disappeared at the age of 16 and is welcomed (with surprisingly little curiosity) into her own much younger family. There follows a fraught and fascinating interaction between the actual past as she now re-writes it and her often wildly different memories of it, as well as the traps laid by technology that has not yet been invented (her mobile phone still has some battery mileage) and historical events that have not occurred. (She convinces her elderly mother of her authenticity by recounting the death of Princess Diana a couple of weeks before they watch the funeral together on television.)

If you are the sort of reader who likes to feel in command of what they read, you may initially be infuriated by this novel; you may well itch to map it on a timeline, marvel incredulously at the lack of curiosity/suspicion displayed by "Aunt Linda's" welcoming family, and find somewhat ridiculous Stella's too late attempts to arm her daughter against real-life perils with fairytales and to retrospectively remove the bad influences that have infiltrated what seems, even for 1997, to have been surprisingly laissez-faire parenting. But as Stella's sojourn in the past progresses and her memory of her "real" 21st century life starts to waver the book becomes both more believable and more interesting as the things we thought we knew as readers shift and change just like Stella's memory. Willing suspension of disbelief is needed in regard to both the detail and the overall concept but the result is both entertaining and thought provoking.