

BOOKS REVIEWED IN 2018

FICTION: Chick Lit (inc. Romance)

**** "For the Love of Christmas" by Kate Forster

**** "Fallout Girl" by Katie Rose Guest Pryal

FICTION: Crime/Mystery (inc. Cosy)

***** "The Mashego File" by Ian Patrick

****1/2 "King of Hart (Hart of Darkness)" by Violeta M. Bagia

**** Ace of Hart (Hart of Darkness) (Volume 1) by Violeta Bagia

**** "The Big Book of Rogues and Villains", edited by Otto Penzler

**** "Robicheaux" by James Lee Burke

**** "Two Kinds of Truth" by Michael Connelly

**** "Precious and Grace: The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" by Alex McCall Smith

***1/2 "The 12 Slays of Christmas" by Abby L. Vandiver et al

*** "The Christmas Letter" by Kathi Daley

*** "Pecan Pies and Dead Guys" by Angie Fox

FICTION: General/Literary Fiction

***** "Bridget Crack" by Rachel Leary

***** "City of Spades" by Colin MacInnes

**** "Pokeweed: An Illustrated Novella" by Brian L. Tucker

*** "Celebrant Sleuth: I Do ... or Die" by Hazel Edwards

FICTION: Horror/Thriller

***** "Heart Shaped Box" by Joe Hill

**** "Dark Wood Dark Water" by Tina Callaghan

FICTION: YA/Children's

****1/2 "Hollow City: The Second Novel of Miss Peregrine's Peculiar Children" by Ransom Riggs

**** "Library of Souls: Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children, Volume 3" by Ransom Riggs

**** "Funny Folk: Poems about people" edited by Robert Fisher

NON-FICTION: Art/History/Music

***** "The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip" by David Company

**** "The Art of Aardman" by Aardman Animation Ltd

**** "Inside the Dream Palace" by Sherill Tippins

**** "MoMA at NGV: 130 years of modern and contemporary art" by Samantha Friedman, Juliet Kinchin & Miranda Wallace

**** "Warhol" by Christopher Makos

***1/2 "Black Vinyl White Powder" by Simon Napier-Bell

***1/2 "Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation" by Ammon Shea

NON-FICTION: Biography/Autobiography

***** "My Ikaria: How the people from a small Mediterranean island inspired me to live a happier, healthier and longer life" by Spiri Tsintziras

***** "Goldilocks lives in Leamington: and other tales of university life" by Geetanjali Mukherjee

**** "Final Chapters: How Famous Author's Died" by Jim Bernhard

**** "The Diary of a Bookseller" by Shaun Bythell

NON-FICTION: Gardening/Cooking

***** "Mary Berry's Traditional Puddings and Desserts" by Mary Berry

***** Herbs: Inspiration and Practical Advice for Gardeners (National Trust Home & Garden) by Jane Eastoe

**** "Pickled, Potted and Canned: The story of food preserving" by Sue Shepard

***1/2 "Kitschy Canapés: Finger food for the swingers set" by Babs Harrison

*** "Gin made me do it: 60 beautiful botanical cocktails" by Jassy Davis

NON-FICTION: Humour/Gift Book

****1/2 "Marital Advice to my Grandson Joel: How to be a husband your wife won't throw out of the window in the middle of the night" by Peter Davidson

**** "Say When" by Catherine Deveny

**** "Bizarre World" by Bill Bryson

**** "Servo: Great Australian Service Stations" by Jim Sontar

NON-FICTION: Self-Help/Instructional

*** "The Subtle Art of not giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life" by Mark Manson

NON-FICTION: Social Commentary

***** "Fight Like A Girl" by Clementine Ford

****1/2 Requiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power by Noam Chomsky, Peter Hutchinson (Editor), Kelly Nyks (Editor), Jared P. Scott (Editor)

NON-FICTION: Travel

***1/2 "The Best American Travel Writing: 2017" edited by Lauren Collins & Jason Williams.

*** "Travel Stories and Highlights: 2017 Edition", edited by Robert Fear

NON-FICTION: True Crime

**** "Accidental Death?: When things may not be as they seem" by Robin Bowles

**** "The Good Cop" by Justine Ford

**** "Yorkshire Ripper: The Secret Murders" by Chris Clark and Tim Tate

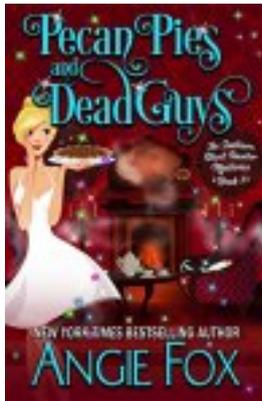
*** "Black Dahlia Red Rose" by Piu Eatwell

2018 reviews in detail

Rating Scale:

1. ***** *Fantastic! You've gotta read this one!*
 2. **** *Great. Well worth a look*
 3. *** *OK. You may enjoy it.*
 4. ** *Not so great. Either dull, badly written, or just plain awful. Not recommended*
 5. * *Unspeakably bad. Couldn't finish it*
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"Pecan Pies and Dead Guys" by Angie Fox



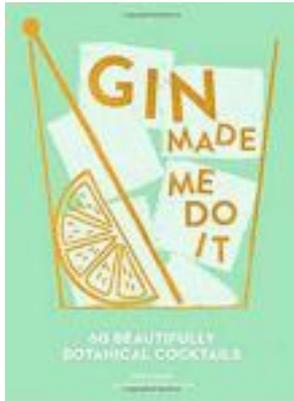
Rating: ***

Genre: Fiction - Cosy Mystery/Ghost Story

Read: December 2018

"Pecan Pies and Dead Guys" by Angie Fox follows the life and times of Verity and her ghostly sidekick and business associate, Franklin. Together they must try and solve the mystery of the untimely death of a local woman. It is the seventh book in the 'Southern Ghost Hunter Mysteries' series, but is the first I have read. I suspect that this is aimed for a younger audience, and would really appeal to teenagers and young adults. I found it a little "Scooby Do" myself. Pleasant enough and a very easy read.

"Gin made me do it: 60 beautiful botanical cocktails" by Jassy Davis



Rating: ***

Genre: Non-Fiction - Gift book, cuisine

Read: December 2018

A lovely hard cover gift books which offers a brief history of gin, instructions on how to make flavoured gin, and recipes for 60 amazing gin holidays. Lovely illustrations & loads of fun.

"The Christmas Letter" by Kathi Daley



Rating: ***

Genre: Fiction - Cosy Mystery, Seasonal fiction

Read: December 2018

I enjoy a light and entertaining Christmas read, and "The Christmas Letter" by Kathi Daley fits the bill. When local postie, Tess, and her trusty companion (Tilly the dog) discover the body of old-timer Pike on their delivery rounds, the small-town's Christmas plans are disrupted. Who would want to murder Pike? What was the secret he held that was set to upset the fabric of the town? An easy to read murder mystery, with a hint of romance, and a dash of seasonal cheer.

"For the Love of Christmas" by Kate Forster



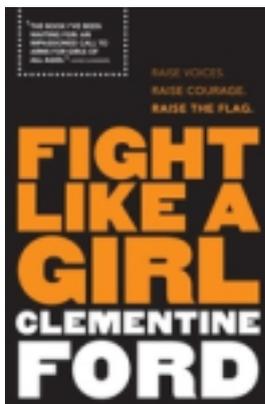
Rating: ****

Genre: Fiction - Chick Lit, Seasonal fiction

Read: December 2018

I love Christmas stories, and this Novella is a gem. A family must pull together emotionally after the loss of a baby boy, in order to rekindle their love for each other & the Christmas season.

"Fight Like A Girl" by Clementine Ford



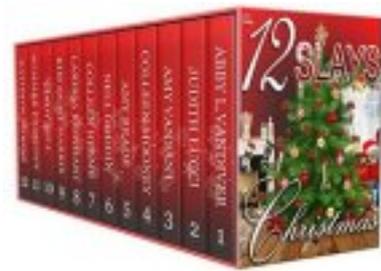
Rating: *****

Genre: Non-Fiction - Social Commentary

Read: November 2018

An honest and frank review of what it's like to be a girl (and then a woman) in modern, western society. Ford uses example from her own life and path of personal development, to explain why things are the way they are. Despite what her many detractors say, she does not lay the blame at the feet of men, or parents, or victims, or women, but explains how current beliefs are perpetuated through traditions, media and individual fears. Fascinating book with a message for everybody. Yes she does swear a lot, so if you're easily offended by colourful language this may not be for you.

"The 12 Slays of Christmas" by Abby L. Vandiver et al



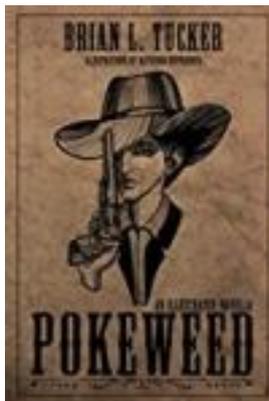
Rating: *1/2**

Genre: Fiction - Cosy Mystery/Christmas

Read: November 2018

I'm a bit of a fan of a Christmas story fan (particularly of mystery/thriller style story) so "The 12 Slays of Christmas" appealed to me as a great holiday reading prospect. I liked the variety of styles (all cosy to a greater or lesser extent), and over all the collection is pretty good. Some of the stories are cracking reads, some good, and others are just okay. Worth a look as its very Christmassy and not a huge financial outlay.

"Pokeweed: An Illustrated Novella" by Brian L. Tucker



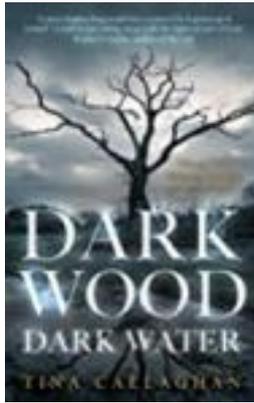
Rating: ****

Genre: Fiction - Western/YA

Read: November 2018

I must admit that I am a fan of Westerns and American frontier history (no I'm not American), so "Pokeweed: An Illustrated Novella" was right up my alley. Based on a true story/event, a feud in Hazard, Kentucky in the late 1800s, the tale follows the life of young (14) Z Snopes and his desire to avenge his sister's death. It's well-written and an easy read. The illustrations are great, but, in my opinion, unnecessary (the author explains that these have been done for historical reasons). The novella would have wide appeal among the YA crowd. It's worth a look.

"Dark Wood Dark Water" by Tina Callaghan



Rating: ****

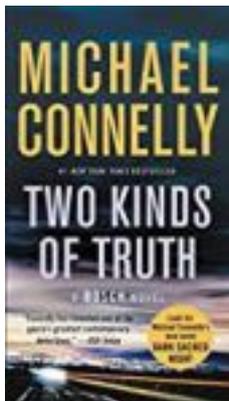
Genre: Fiction - Horror/Thriller, YA

Read: October 2018

"Dark Wood Dark Water" by Tina Callaghan, is a story about a town with a violent past and a cursed river which comes to life to take the lives of local villagers. When Josh, Kate and Gabe lose relatives and friends to the evil river, they become embroiled in the history of the curse, and must work together to stop the evil before it takes their souls.

"Dark Wood Dark Water" is an entertaining and easy read, for those who like YA stories with elements of romance, combining the past and present, and with a bit of "spooky" thrown in. Great fun and a good Halloween read.

"Two Kinds of Truth" by Michael Connelly



Rating: ****

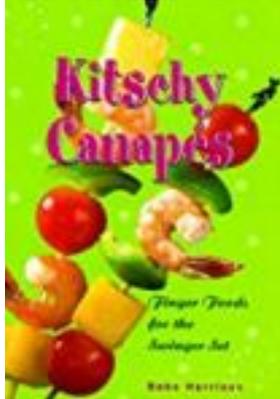
Genre: Fiction - Crime

Read: October 2018

Harry Bosch is enjoying his retirement job - reviewing cold cases for the San Fernando Valley Police force - when his peace is rudely interrupted by an intrusion from a former case. A death row inmate, convicted by Bosch many moons ago, is claiming that newly assessed DNA evidence exonerates him from the crime. As if that wasn't enough to content with, Bosch must go undercover to bust open a pharmaceuticals scam, and solve an open murder

case. "Two kinds of truth" is another rocking Bosch story from the pen of Michael Connelly. It's easy to read, and entertaining, with many great musical recommendations for the fans of Jazz music.

"Kitschy Canapés: Finger food for the swingers set" by Babs Harrison



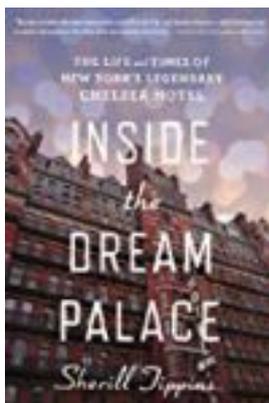
Rating: *1/2**

Genre: Non-Fiction - Cooking

Read: October 2018

What a hoot! I found this little gem when I was sorting through which recipe books of mine were ready to send to the charity shop. This one will be hard to part with. If you're looking for cocktail party canapé ideas, or want a recipe for a shrimp cocktail, or a cheese swirl perhaps, Then this is the guide for you. Easy to follow recipes for those looking for retro themed party snack ideas. Fun.

"Inside the Dream Palace" by Sherill Tippins



Rating: ****

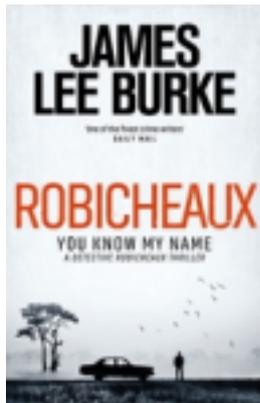
Genre: Non-Fiction - Social History

Read: October 2018

"Inside the Dream Palace" by Sherill Tippins is a comprehensive and fascinating examination of the history of the legendary New York landmark, the Chelsea Hotel. Tippins describes the development of the building, structural and interior decorating changes over the years, and more importantly the life and times of the various guests and residents from the building. It

was certainly a Bohemian mecca for writers, artists, musicians and alike, and many fabulous works resulted from residencies in the building. It has been the home of numerous writers, musicians, artists and actors. Past residents include Arthur C. Clarke Allen Ginsberg, it was where Dylan Thomas died of pneumonia and where Sid Vicious (sex pistols fame) killed his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen, The hotel is currently closed for renovations, and I'm curious to see if it will continue to attract a creative and eclectic bunch of visitors. Well researched and referenced, but a little heavy going in parts.

"Robicheaux" by James Lee Burke



Rating: ****

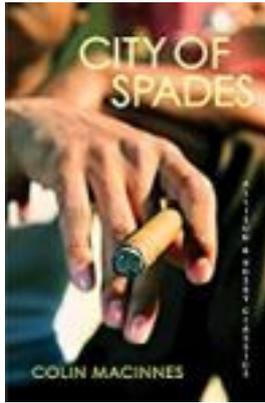
Genre: Fiction - Crime

Read: September 2018

Dave Robicheaux, a detective with the Louisiana police force is struggling to maintain his sobriety, is conflicted about his relationships with various dubious figures in society, and is haunted by the death of his wife from a horrific car accident. When JT Bartz, the other driver involved in the accident, is brutally murdered, Robicheaux becomes the chief suspect. Unable to account for his actions on the evening of the crime, due to a stellar 'falling off the wagon' incident, Robicheaux must pull himself together and uncover the facts of the case, in order to clear his name.

James Lee Burke offers captivating and often beautiful descriptions of the Louisiana countryside (you can almost feel the humidity in the air), and equally magnificent descriptions of the various characters and personalities in the story. High standard, as always, and a great read.

"City of Spades" by Colin MacInnes



Rating: *****

Genre: Fiction: General

Read: September 2018

"City of Spades" follows the lives and struggles of Montgomery Pew, a civil servant with the Immigration department and Johnny Fortune a recent migrant from Africa. Set in the mid-late 50s in London, and through the developing friendship between Fortune and Pew, the book exams the post war migration of people from the colonies, to the UK. Without fear or favour it looks at their difficulties fitting in to London culture, and the difficulties the British have adapting to them. MacInnes artfully switches between the point of view of Pew and Fortune, examining issues of racism, relationships, mixed race romance, mixed race children, differences between migrants from the African countries and the West Indies, and dealings with the law. The likeable and believable characters and scenarios make this a great read.

"City of Spades" by Colin MacInnes is one of cult classic London Trilogy series; the other two books being "Absolute Beginners" and "Mr Love and Justice". They are three separate, unrelated stories and can be read in any order. I loved everything about this book, and "City of Spades" has now risen to my favourite among the three.

"The Best American Travel Writing: 2017" edited by Lauren Collins & Jason Williams.



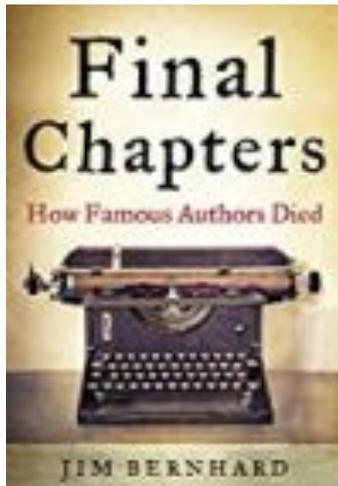
Rating: ***1/2

Genre: Non-Fiction: Travel

Read: September 2018

I am a big fan of travel writing, and certainly enjoyed the set of tales and adventures offered by the authors who contributed to the 2017 edition. I do read a lot of this type of book, and have to admit that these are some of the best written. However, they are not necessarily the ones I enjoy the most, or find the most interesting. One complaint - the publishers have cheaped out on type set and print, so the font is very small and closely spaced. This makes it difficult to read and detracts from the enjoyment of the book. Last words: Its a good read for the armchair and actual traveller alike.

"Final Chapters: How Famous Author's Died" by Jim Bernhard



Rating: ****

Genre: Non-Fiction: History, Writing

Read: September 2018

"Final Chapters: How Famous Author's Died", by Jim Bernhard is an engaging and entertaining read. Bernhard covers authors from the classical age to the modern era. For each he provides a brief biography, with a description of their views on death and the afterlife, and - of course - how they died. Causes of death include the expected drug and alcohol induced health issues, lung conditions, heart attacks, cancers. suicides, accidents, murder, and my favourite, being hit on the head by a turtle shell. It is interesting to note the advances in medical knowledge, with the causes of death for modern authors being definitive, and those for earlier writers being based on historical descriptions. A very interesting read.

"MoMA at NGV: 130 years of modern and contemporary art" by Samantha Friedman, Juliet Kinchin & Miranda Wallace



Rating: ****

Genre: Non-Fiction: Art

Read: August 2018

Another wonderful exhibition guide produced for the National Gallery of Victoria, to support the Winter Master pieces collection 2018, from MoMA. The book provides a comprehensive history of the exhibition, its key pieces, and features a collection of beautiful bookplates.

."The Mashego File" by Ian Patrick



Rating: *****

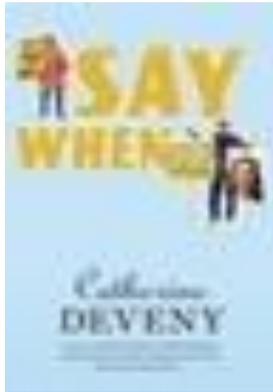
Genre: Crime: Detective

Read: August 2018

‘The Mashego File’ by Ian Patrick is this season’s ‘must read’ detective novel. I was drawn in the second I started it.

Patrick sets in the scene early on, providing an in-depth social commentary on township life and the justice system in South Africa. Protagonist Nights Mashego may seem like a gentle giant, but this hard-nosed detective isn’t afraid to take the law into his own hands to defend the righteous. He’s a Harry Callahan with more appealing traits. He knows when to stretch the law, and when to abandon it completely. Mashego works to find a fine balance between the corruption of the judicial system and the harsh realities of community justice. This is a story that challenges the reader’s perceptions of law and justice. The story flows well, the plot engaging, and the characters believable. If you like detective novels, then the tales of Nights Mashego are for you. Do yourself a favour and get a copy.

"Say When" by Catherine Deveny



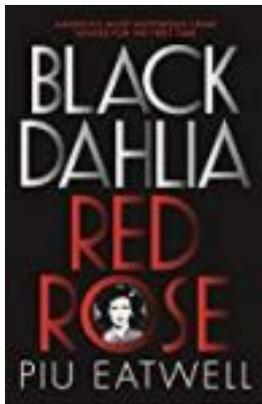
Rating: ****

Genre: Non-Fiction - Humour, Opinion, Social Commentary

Read: August 2018

"Say When" by Catherine Deveny is one of the author's earlier books. It is a collection of her columns from the opinion pages of The Age newspaper (before they sacked her for being controversial and rude - pretty sure they were exactly the reasons we enjoyed the column so much, but there you go). Always good for a laugh, "Say When" is honest, witty, funny and an all round good read.

"Black Dahlia Red Rose" by Piu Eatwell



Rating: ***

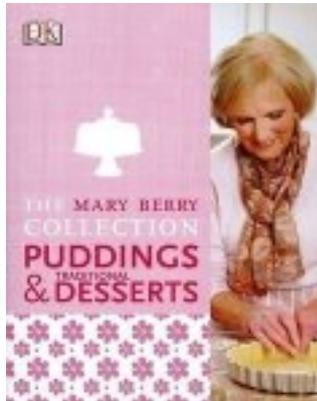
Genre: Non-Fiction – True Crime

Read: August 2018

The brutal murder of Elizabeth Short (Black Dahlia) has fascinated crime aficionados since it occurred in the late 1940s. There have been many theories, books and movies made on the topic. "Black Dahlia, Red Rose" by Piu Eatwell offers a thoroughly researched account of the available evidence in the case. Her conclusions (I won't give them away) are, on the balance of probability, likely to be correct. The piece offers a comprehensive examination of the functioning (or lack thereof) of the police investigation, interference (and withholding of information) by the press, and difficulty gathering evidence from the less than cooperative members of the dregs of LA society. The book is over referenced, and is full of unnecessary

facts and back stories - but this may just be an irritation for me. I'm a "just the facts ma'am" sort of a gal, when it comes to true crime.

"Mary Berry's Traditional Puddings and Desserts" by Mary Berry



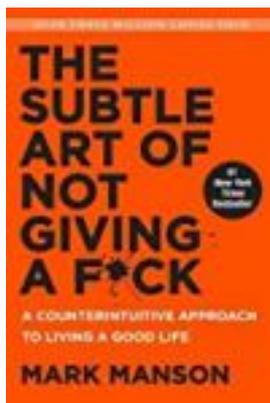
Rating: *****

Genre: Non-Fiction – Cooking

Read: August 2018

A delightful book, with a wide selection of calorie-laden, completely scrumptious treats for any occasion. The recipes are well-set out, easy to follow, and include hints and tips. Mary has thoughtfully included sections on various baking techniques with step-by-step 'how to' instructions and photographs. Beautifully presented. I hope that my future efforts look half as good as those in the photographs. A great gift for the budding baker in your life

"The Subtle Art of not giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life" by Mark Manson



Rating: ***

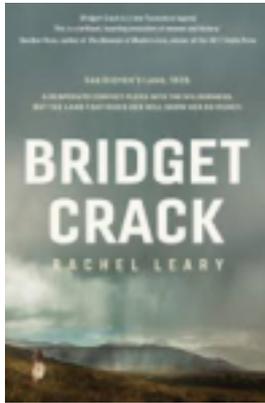
Genre: Non-Fiction – Self help/personal development

Read: July 2018

I'm not usually one for self-help books as I find that they are pretty much "more of the same". What I enjoyed about "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life" was the emphasis on the accepting what you have, not getting your knickers in a bunch about all of the things you're not, don't have, and are never likely to

achieve. I liked the honest look at life, the celebration of the average, and the idea of doing small things to improve your life rather than dreaming of things that make you feel that your current life/self is inadequate. Having said that, the points could have been made in a single article and the book was little over done and self-indulgent.

"Bridget Crack" by Rachel Leary



Rating: *****

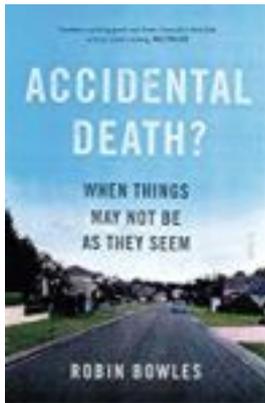
Genre: Fiction – Historical Fiction, Women's Fiction, Australian Fiction

Read: July 2018

One of the wonderful things about reviewing books which I haven't personally chosen, is that I often get to read material that is outside of my usual genre collection. "Bridget Crack" by Rachel Leary is such a book. "Bridget Crack" examines the physical and physiological journey of a convict on-the-run in the wilds of Tasmania. Like most women of the time, the course of Bridget's life is heavily influenced by the men she encounters. Ms Crack has the added challenge of trying to exist in the savage and foreign environment of the Tasmanian wilderness. The story touches on the early-colonisation Tasmanian society, the roles of convicts and free settlers in its development, the scourge of bushrangers, and the involvement/disregard of the indigenous people. The book is well researched and beautifully written with believable characters and captivating descriptions. This bleak tale keeps you riveted from start to finish. I recommend this book for lovers of historical fiction, women's fictions and Australian History.

I received a copy of this book from Sisters in Crime, Australia in exchange for a fair and honest review.

"Accidental Death?: When things may not be as they seem" by Robin Bowles



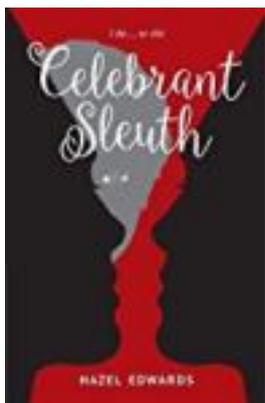
Rating: ****

Genre: Non-Fiction – True Crime

Read: July 2018

I love a good true crime book, and have read a couple of offerings by this author in the past. "Accidental Death?: When things may not be as they seem" by Robin Bowles, doesn't disappoint. It's an engaging read, which is a little sad to say when you consider the topic. The Author has researched and written about a collection of some of the more charming cases of accidental death in recent Australian history. Bowles provides the reader with examples of possibly genuine and tragic accidents, those with suspicious circumstances, and others that are just a little odd. She sensitively discusses the devastating consequences that a lack of evidence and certainty has on the family and friends of victims. Well researched and fairly executed. A must read for true-crime aficionados.

"Celebrant Sleuth: I Do ... or Die" by Hazel Edwards



Rating: **1/2**

Genre: Fiction – General Fiction, Mystery

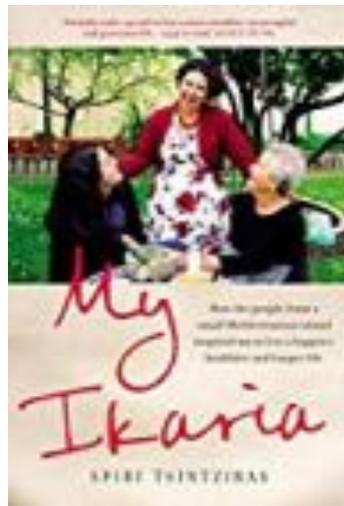
Read: July 2018

Quinn, a self-described asexual and part time actor, part time celebrant (weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies and alike), describes how sleuthing skills come in handy when dealing with the ins and outs of the local's lives, in a rural town. "Celebrant Sleuth: I Do ... or Die" by Hazel Edwards is a little difficult to classify. I must admit, that the title lead me to believe

that it was going to be a cosy mystery, but it is more a collection of amusing anecdotes, rather than what I describe as a standard crime/sleuthing offering. It certainly doesn't follow a traditional mystery/crime book style (not necessarily a bad thing). The stories are presented in first person, in memoir-style vignettes, and cover a range of weird and wonderful events that could happen in the life of a celebrant. It is clear that it is well researched and I suspect that more than one of the stories is based on a true event. Once I shifted my style/genre expectations I enjoyed the book. The book is well-written and fun to read. The bite-sized chapters make it an excellent choice for holiday reading, and managing on public transport voyages.

I received a copy of this book from Sisters in Crime, Australia in exchange for a fair and honest review.

"My Ikaria: How the people from a small Mediterranean island inspired me to live a happier, healthier and longer life" by Spiri Tsintziras



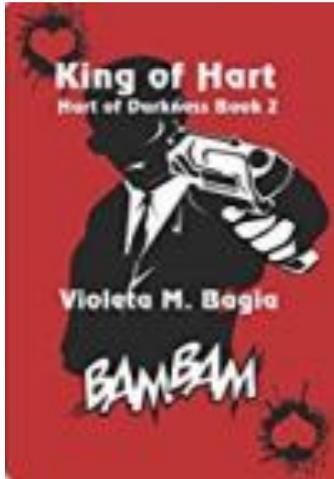
Rating: *****

Genre: Non-Fiction: Auto-Biography, memoir, self-help, humour

Read: June 2018

Have you ever felt dissatisfied with your life, even though you know that you have so much to be grateful for? Feeling run down? Exhausted all the time? Worried about whether or not you are a good wife/mother/writer/person? Should you be earning more? Doing more? And when did you become so fat? Sound familiar? It sure hit a note with me. Spiri's well-written, heart-warming, and often entertaining memoir looks at her experiences managing modern life, and her voyage of discovery to find the key to a successful and happy life. Enter the Ikarians, the people of a small island, said to be among the longest living people in the world. Do they hold the key? Or is the solution closer than you think? A wonderful and inspiring read.

"King of Hart (Hart of Darkness)" by Violeta M. Bagia



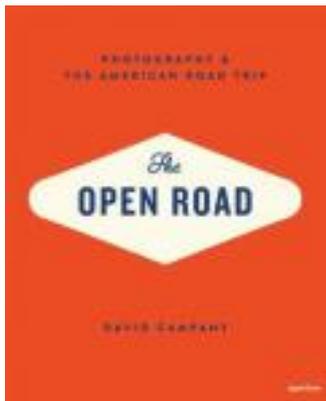
Rating**1/2**

Genre: Fiction - Thriller

Read: June 2018

"King of Hart" picks up where the first book left off (and yes, I do recommend that you read the series in order). Our heroine, Ace, is trapped in a surreal nightmare, with her powers being used to manipulate and kill her fellow agents. She must lean on all her resources, both known and unknown, to free herself from her oppressor and reconcile with her true love. It's difficult to provide a description of the book without giving away too many spoilers, but let's just say that there's a load of action, suspense and a good dose of romance chucked in for good measure. Well written and a great sequel. Personally, I like this one better than the first. I will definitely look into the third book.

"The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip" by David Company



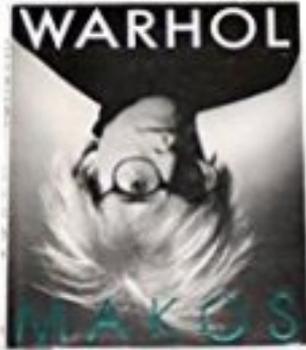
Non Fiction: Art/Photography

Read: June 2018

My rating:*****

Don't be fooled by the simple cover. This is an amazingly beautiful collection of photographs from the past and present. covering the wide and diverse landscape and people that make up the USA. Simply stunning. A brilliant addition to any coffee table.

"Warhol" by Christopher Makos



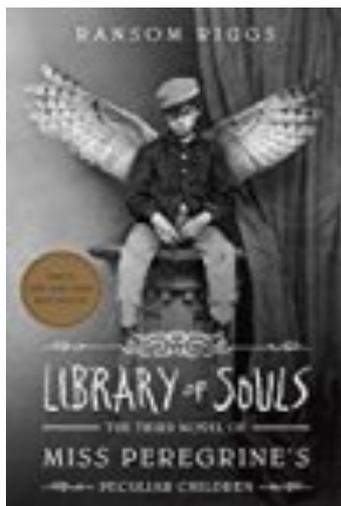
Non Fiction: Art/Photography

Read: May 2018

My rating:****

"Warhol" by Christopher Makos is a photo journal of Andy Warhol's life. As such, there are some marvellous photos of the man, and his associates at various locations around America and the rest of the world. All of the photos are in black and white. There is some commentary included - mostly basic background information on his life and work. One for the fans.

"Library of Souls: Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children, Volumn 3" by Ransom Riggs



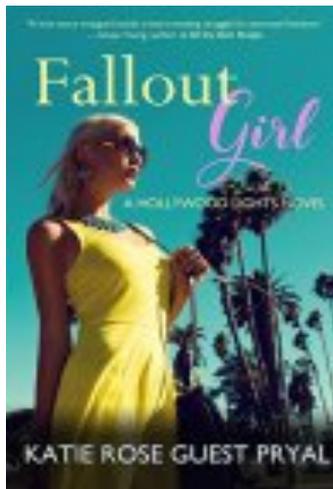
Fiction: Children's Fiction

Read: May 2018

My rating:****

A wonderful end to the trilogy. The book jumps straight into the action, picking up where the last one left off. It's so hard to describe the story without giving away the plot of this (and the preceding two books). Let's just say that it doesn't disappoint. Riggs' 'peculiar' world charms and delights. The book is full of wonderful and interesting characters, and the story moves at pace as the 'peculiar' work to solve their problems and learn who to trust. A fun, easy to read adventure for all ages.

"Fallout Girl" by Katie Rose Guest Pryal



Fiction: Literary Fiction/Women's Fiction

Read: May 2018

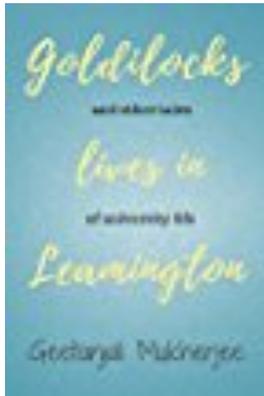
My rating:****

Book Tour: [2018 Katie Rose Guest Pryal Fallout Girl Book Tour](#)

Review: Miranda George is on the run. On the run from her life, her past, her family, and herself. Following the death of her mother, Miranda takes off to Los Angeles in search of a place to hide. She seeks out former acquaintance Daphne Saito, an unreliable college friend, in the hopes of finding someone more messed up, vain and selfish than herself. After all, who's going to notice another damaged person hanging out with the 'beautiful people' of LA? Much to her surprise, old friends Daphne and Greta, are settled, working through their personal issues, and making new lives for themselves. They welcome Miranda with open arms, offering her a new 'family' to be a part of. Will Miranda make the most of the opportunities on offer, and come to terms with her unhappy past, and make peace with her self-doubt? You need to read it to find out.

I am not usually one for "Chick Lit" books, but I really enjoy Katie Rose Guest Pryal's style of writing. The characters are easy to relate to. The book makes for a great read and would be a wonderful addition to any holiday reading library.

“Goldilocks lives in Leamington: and other tales of university life” by Geetanjali Mukherjee



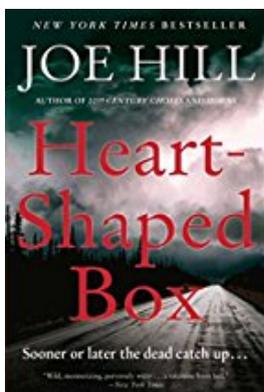
Rating: *****

Genre: Non-Fiction: Biography, humour

Read: May 2018

“Goldilocks lives in Leamington: and other tales of university life” by Geetanjali Mukherjee is a ‘must read’ for any student planning to study overseas, (or any student starting at a new Institution). Geetanjali recalls her experiences as an International student, from India, studying Law in Warwick (United Kingdom). Her easy to read, well written anecdotes ,offer an amusing and totally believable look at life on campus. Through this collection of short stories, Geetanjali describes her experiences trying to make new friends, living in the college dormitory, keeping down cafeteria food, deciding which social clubs to join, student politics, the dating scene, and part-time jobs. She tackles the often puzzling UK football culture, fashion, the joys of off-campus share houses, and Western drinking culture (you don’t have to be an international student to find this one daunting). And finally, Geetanjali discusses study choices, classes, and the fear of nearly failing exams. This is an entertaining, amusing and highly relatable read. Highly recommended. Available through Amazon: [Goldilocks-Lives-Leamington Link](#)

"Heart Shaped Box" by Joe Hill



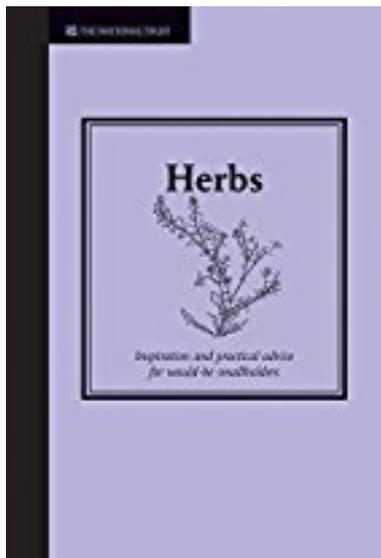
Rating: *****

Genre: Fiction - Horror

Read: April 2018

Genuinely scary (if only occasionally), thrilling, and a little bit nasty. I can understand why "Heart Shaped Box" by Joe Hill makes the top ten horror reads on nearly every list. Damaged people, both in life and death, gravitate towards our protagonist, ageing rock star Jude Coyne. When he is tricked into buying a dead man's suit (and resident ghost), his life goes from meaningless to disturbing. Characters are dislikable, but earn your empathy as the story unfolds; making it an engaging and entertaining read.

Herbs: Inspiration and Practical Advice for Gardeners (National Trust Home & Garden) by Jane Eastoe



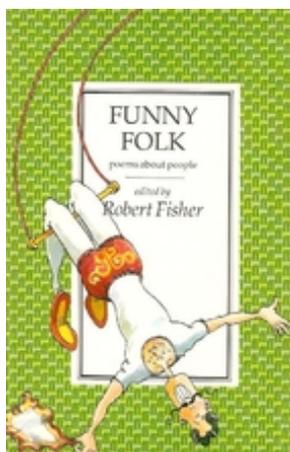
Rating: *****

Genre: Non-Fiction: Gardening

Read: April 2018

A lovely and practical guide to growing herbs issued through the National Trust. Easy to read in one sitting. A joy for gardeners both experienced and new.

"Funny Folk: Poems about people" edited by Robert Fisher



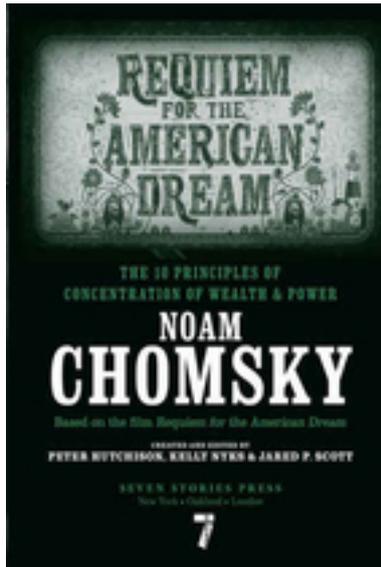
Rating ****

Genre: Fiction - Poetry

Read: April 2018

A fun read for young and old. "Funny Folk: Poems about people" by Robert Fisher is a lovely collection of poems which offer an easy introduction to the format to young readers.

Requiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power by **Noam Chomsky**, **Peter Hutchinson (Editor)**, **Kelly Nyks (Editor)**, **Jared P. Scott (Editor)**



Rating**1/2**

Genre: Non Fiction - Social History

Read: April 2018

A though provoking and somewhat disturbing look at the state of modern society in the USA, the roles of democracy and the financial system. Many of the ten principles apply to all western societies. The book offers a simple (you may find yourself wanting more discussion on the topics) overview of the 10 principles covered in a film of the same name. The book leaves you feeling a little powerless in the face of corporate greed. Poses many questions on the "where to now?" and "what can i do?" side of the equation.

Ace of Hart (Hart of Darkness) (Volume 1) by Violeta Bagia



Rating****

Genre: Fiction - Thriller

Read: March 2018

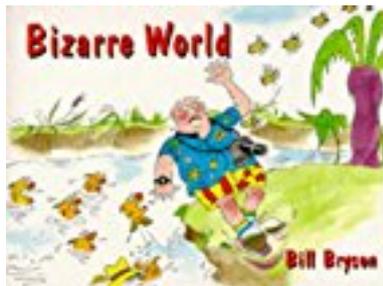
"Ace of Hart (Hart of Darkness)" is the debut novel from Violeta Bagia. This espionage/sci fi thriller is a non-stop adventure from cover to cover. It also includes a hefty romance subplot for fans of the genre. It's well-paced, with interesting characters and situations

Ace, our flawed heroine is a rough and tumble ex-military operative, dealing with the death of her parents, and an Iraq operation-gone wrong. Unable to fit with general society and manage interpersonal relationships, she finds herself drawn into The Agency, a place for people with mysterious talents like her own.

"Ace of Hart" is similar in some ways to the British Sci-Fi series of the late 60s "The Tomorrow People", and "X-Men - Legion", in that it concerns the fates of young people with special abilities, and who must learn to manage their talent and avoid exploitation by "the system".

A great read, and I look forward to the starting the next book in the series.

"Bizarre World" by Bill Bryson



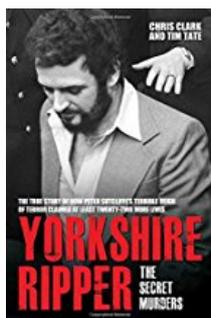
Rating****

Genre: Non-Fiction - Humour/Gift Books

Read: March 2018

Bryson has ventured away from his usual travel writings to present a compact gift book, of various anecdotes, tall tales and quirky recollections, collected over the years. Quick and enjoyable read. Good fun.

"Yorkshire Ripper: The Secret Murders" by Chris Clark and Tim Tate



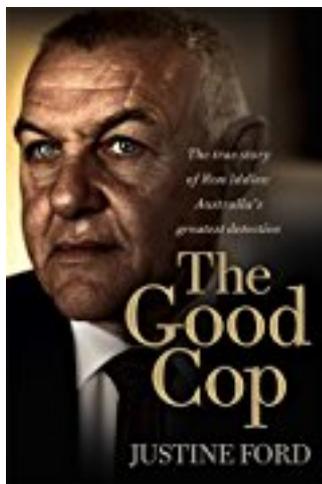
Rating****

Genre: Non-Fiction - True Crime

Read: March 2018

"Yorkshire Ripper: The Secret Murders" by Chris Clark and Tim Tate, examines the motivations and modis operandi of Peter Sutcliffe (Yorkshire Ripper). It is hypothesised that he was responsible for up to 22 additional murders and 5 attacks. In the current climate of modern policing techniques, advanced forensic pathology, and high functioning IT systems, we often forget how difficult it was for police to compare notes, and evidence across jurisdictions. It is indeed probable, that some of the ideas proposed in the book, are likely to be true. An interesting examination of the man, the police investigation at the time, and victims.

"The Good Cop" by Justine Ford



Rating****

Genre: Non-Fiction - True Crime

Read: March 2018

Justine Ford, journalist and true crime writer, presents the story of Ron Iddles "The Good Cop" in a captivating and an easy to read fashion. This part biography and part true crime story provides some inside information on the thought and feelings this inspiring cop, the operations of the Victorian Police force, and some interesting accounts of well known crimes. An eye-opener.

"Servo: Great Australian Service Stations" by Jim Sontar



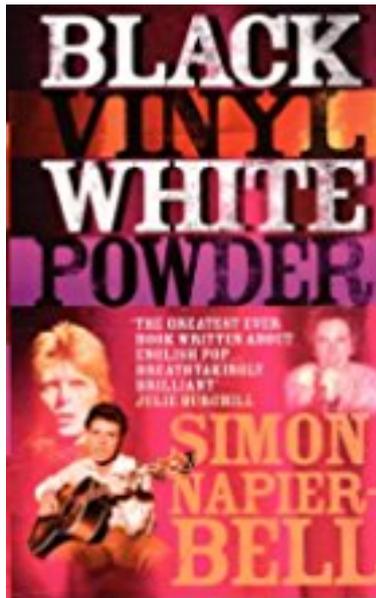
Rating: *****

Genre: Non-Fiction - Architecture/Nostalgia

Read: March 2018

A wonderful pictorial history of Australian Service (Petrol) stations. The photos, sorted by state, are all black and white, and are mainly from the 50s and 60s (so plenty of art deco for the fans). A great gift book for fans of architecture and nostalgia.

"Black Vinyl White Powder" by Simon Napier-Bell



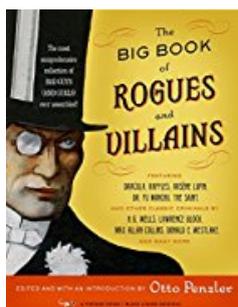
Rating: *1/2**

Genre: Non-Fiction - Music

Read: March 2018

The cover promises "The greatest ever book written about English pop...", well it's certainly one of the shortest I've ever read (95 pages). I realised towards the end, that this particular book is just a slice of a much larger edition. Having said that, this insider's guide to the UK music scene of the 50's and 60's (I suspect that later decades are covered in the larger book), is insightful, amusing and full of juicy gossip. An interesting and quick read.

"The Big Book of Rogues and Villains", edited by Otto Penzler



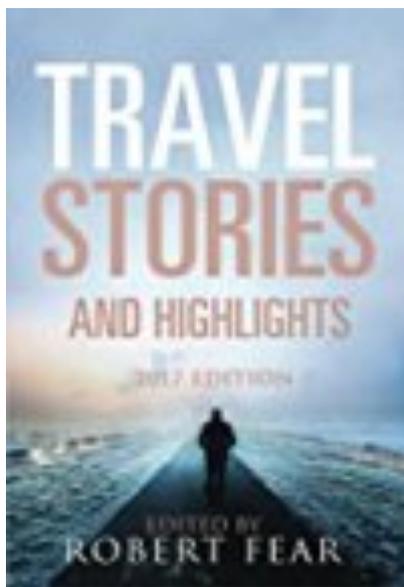
Rating: ****

Genre: Fiction - Thriller

Read: February 2018

"The Big Book of Rogues and Villains" edited by Otto Penzler, is a marvellous collection of short stories from Victorian times to modern day. It's a great collection and offers hours of enjoyment for the fans of mysteries, thrillers and good old-fashioned 'penny dreadfuls'. I have to admit that I had read at least of these stories (in various forms) before, but it is wonderful to have them all in the one collection. My only issue is that I should have got an e-book version. The book is - as promised - big, and it is difficult to carry around and can be awkward to hold. Worth adding to your collection.

"Travel Stories and Highlights: 2017 Edition", edited by Robert Fear



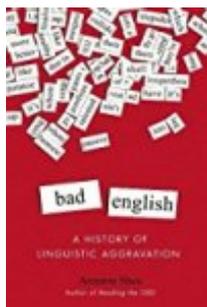
Rating: ***

Genre: Non-Fiction - Travel

Read: February 2018

"Travel Stories and Highlights: 2017 Edition", edited by Robert Fear is a mixed bag of short stories, flash fiction and poems, all with a travel theme. Some of the pieces are wonderful, others okay, and some a little over-embellished. Overall, its an easy-to-read collection.

"Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation" by Ammon Shea



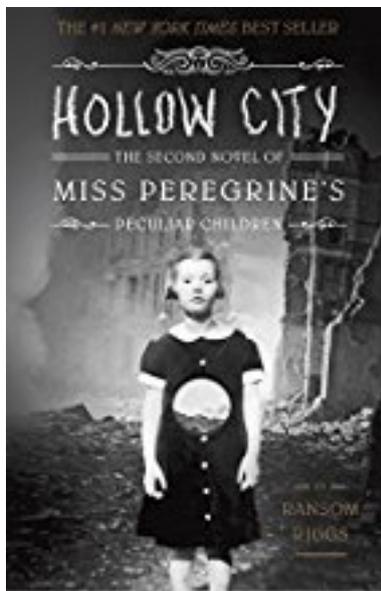
Rating: *1/2**

Genre: Non-Fiction - Reference, Language

Read: February 2018

"Bad English: A History of Linguistic Aggravation" offers a comprehensive, and often illuminating, look at the English language. Shea exams the evolution of language, covering the use and misuse of words, phrases and grammar. I was particularly interested to note that many of the words and phrases I use, were once considered to be 'bad english'. I will make an effort to show more patience when I hear misuses and mispronunciations in future. Having said that, I will continue to poke fun at the current president of the USA, and his insistence that he is the "very most smartest" and has the "very, very, highest genius IQ". Word!

"Hollow City: The Second Novel of Miss Peregrine's Peculiar Children" by Ransom Riggs



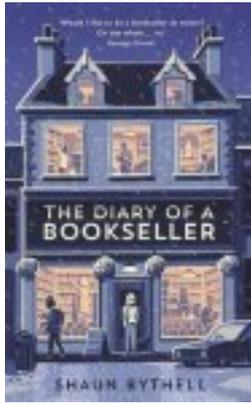
Rating: **1/2**

Genre: Fiction - YA, Adventure

Read: February 2018

"Hollow City" by Ransom Riggs is the second novel of the Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children series. Fans of the first novel will not be disappointed. The story picks up with Jacob and the other peculiar children making the sea voyage to the mainland. Confused and ill-prepared they must find a way to cure Miss Peregrine, who has become trapped in her bird form. They encounter gypsies, Hollows, Wights, talking animals and other peculiars, as they travel to blitz-torn 1940s London in order to find a solution. This is a wonderful adventure story, with plenty of plot twists and fascinating characters. Although it is written for children/young adults it has appeal to anyone with a sense of adventure. I can't wait to start the third book.

"The Diary of a Bookseller" by Shaun Bythell



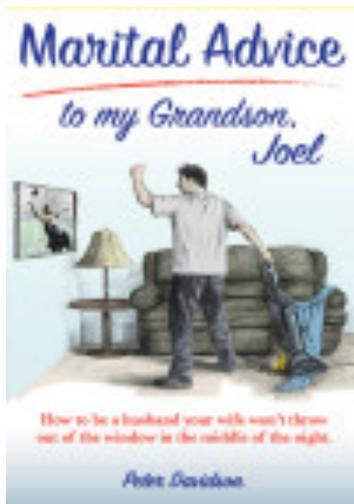
Rating: ****

Genre: Non-Fiction - Writing, Humour

Read: January 2018

"The Diary of a Bookseller" by Shaun Bythell offers a sometimes amusing look at the ins and out of running a second hand book store. Presented in diary format, Bythell describes the challenges of managing the store, acquiring stock, dealing with staff, weird and wonderful customers, various cats (including the store cat), dealing with Amazon, and the IT dramas when using the systems for on-line book selling. From a business point of view, it is interesting (if not a little alarming) to see what his daily takings are, and to hear what other activities he engages in, in order to turn a profit. Worth a read.

"Marital Advice to my Grandson Joel: How to be a husband your wife won't throw out of the window in the middle of the night" by Peter Davidson



Rating: ****1/2

Genre: Non-Fiction - Gift book

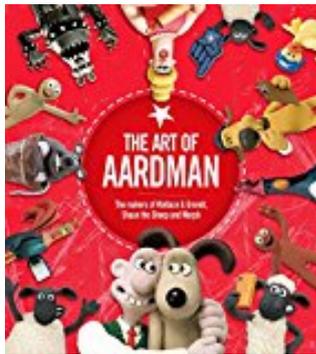
Read: January 2018

"Marital Advice to my Grandson Joel: How to be a husband your wife won't throw out of the window in the middle of the night" by Peter Davidson is a delight and a treasure. The book

consists of a series of anecdotes, observations and snippets of advice, to assist the unwary male in negotiating the ins and outs of marriage. Sure, some of the information imparted may be consider a little dated, or male-centric (which is the point of the piece, so relax about it), but among the often tongue-in-cheek, frequently humourous pieces are some grains of truth, well-worth observing (I'm talking specifically about the sections on flatulence, gifts, loo paper positioning and cleaning your shaving cream off the bathroom mirror!).

I see many opportunities for future books in the series, like "how to be a good father", "dealing with teenagers" and alike. The book makes for an entertaining read, and would be a great gift book for any young man (or older man for that matter) about to get married.

"The Art of Aardman" by Aardman Animation Ltd



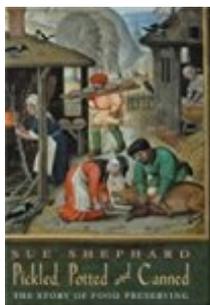
Rating: ****

Genre: Non-Fiction - Entertainment/Art

Read: January 2018

"The Art of Aardman" by Aardman Animation Ltd is a concise guide to the creation of animation (or claymation in case of Aardman). It offers a fascinating pictorial history of the development of characters used in various Aardman productions, including "Creature Comforts", "Shaun the Sheep" and "Wallace and Gromit". My only complaint is that I wanted more - more details, more pictures, more everything. I bought this book after seeing the 40 year anniversary exhibitions at ACMI in Melbourne. It is a wonderful companion piece for the exhibition. One for the fans.

"Pickled, Potted and Canned: The story of food preserving" by Sue Shepard



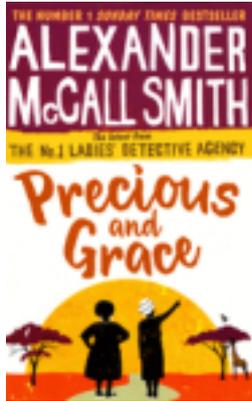
Rating: ****

Genre: Non-Fiction - Reference, Cooking

Read: January 2018

"Pickled, Potted and Canned: The story of food preserving" by Sue Shepard is a comprehensive review at the history of preserving food. Shepard examines a variety of techniques used in food preservation (including drying, pickling, salting and even refrigeration), describing the history of their use and applications. A must for the lovers of domestic sciences. A great reference book.

"Precious and Grace: The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" by Alexander McCall Smith



Rating: ****

Genre: Cosy Mystery

Read: January 2018

"Precious and Grace" number 17 (yes, really) in the series is another charming and easy to read cosy mystery from the Pen of Alexander McCall Smith. The women from the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency are on the case again. This time, Precious and Grace are searching for the former nanny of a Canadian woman, keen to rediscover her past life in Botswana. While sorting through the lies, red tape and intrigue, Precious must also deal with a potential Ponzi scheme, snakes and a stray dog. Another delightful holiday-read from McCall Smith. Always charming.