

ARGHYA

SPECIAL ISSUE-5

Book Review

[FEB-2019]

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Book
review



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GHACHAR GHOCHAR, Vivek Shanbhag, Harper Perennial, ₹299.
 A fine translation of one of the great Indian novels. Shanbhag writes with such grace and restraint that it seems to carry a multitude of meanings. Almost every person I have discussed this book with has a different reading—private, powerful revelations they arrived at through the book.



ENGLISH, AUGUST, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Faber & Faber, ₹299.
 As soon as I finished this I felt sure I had to try, at least, to write fiction. This novel is wildly funny but it made me sad; it seemed I felt and thought precisely as Agastya did—perhaps the truest sense a writer can evoke in a reader. Dislocation, ennui, the drift of youth. "The mind is restless, Krishna, impetuous, self-willed, hard to train."

THE UNCONSOLED, Kazuo Ishiguro, Faber & Faber, ₹450.
 One of those books that unsettles at the outset and leaves you oddly bereft long after you've put it away. You are never sure what is going on in this novel, and Ishiguro continues playing with the reader until the final word. It was widely mocked at release but is now considered one of his best works.





THE MASTER AND MARGARITA, Mikhail Bulgakov, Penguin Classics, ₹299. A sprawling, dazzling work, one of literature's great satires. The devil comes to communist, atheist Moscow and murders the corrupt literary elite. Another section tells of Pontius Pilate and the crucifixion of Christ. Useful to writers as it teaches you never to give up. Bulgakov burnt the manuscript once and started again, finishing it just before he died.

EM AND THE BIG HOOM, Jerry Pinto, Aleph Book Company, ₹295. The best fiction is honest. Not that it needs to accurately render some sequence of events, but that it must convey the emotional and intellectual wrangle around the story it is telling. Pinto excavates his characters' lives beautifully here, and captures illness and confinement, and family and trauma in a way I had not till then encountered in Indian fiction.



WHAT BELONGS TO YOU, Garth Greenwell, Pan Macmillan India, ₹550. The finest thing I read last year. Greenwell converted his award-winning novella into a remarkably assured debut novel. The voice is beautifully literary, with slowly unfurling sentences and thoughts gripping one another like chain links. An exploration of how love can be denied and consumed by privilege and status.

Author's Note: Writing a list like this is enjoyable, but ultimately impossible. There are many books I had to leave out. These are the ones I feel have mattered most at this moment in my life.

—COMPILED BY SUCHISMITA UKIL

Book prices are subject to change. All book details are as seen on Amazon.in.



P. K Cherubhery

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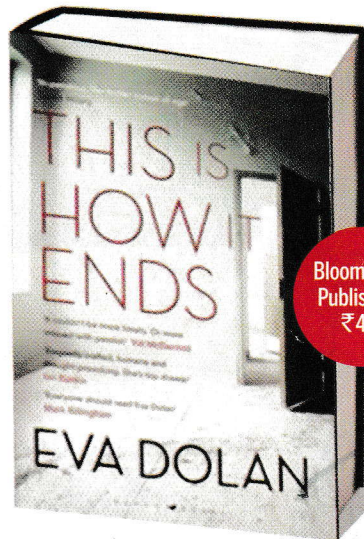
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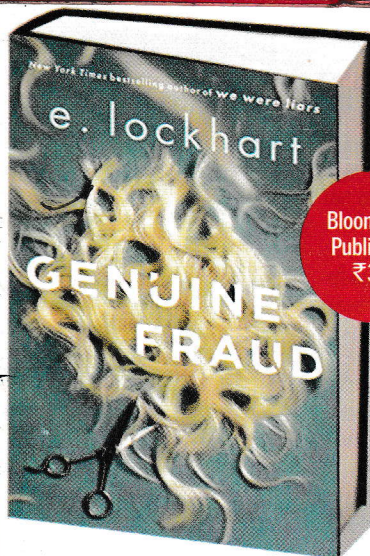


THIS IS HOW IT ENDS by *Eva Dolan*

What Eva Dolan excels at is writing tales that force readers to think about the times we are living in. Her earlier works have addressed issues of violence against transwomen and tensions around immigration. With *This Is How It Ends*, Dolan takes on the issue of housing rights. Her protagonist, Ella, lives as a squatter in a nearly abandoned building, whose inhabitants are slowly being forced out by property developers. The story starts on the

night when Ella is celebrating her successful campaign to raise money for a homeless shelter. At the party is her friend Molly, and as the night progresses, Molly is called away from the party by a distraught Ella. Turns out, there's a dead man in her room. They plan to hide the body in the building's elevator shaft. As the plot unravels, Dolan's writing beautifully chronicles the growing mistrust between the two. Her richly imagined plot keeps you guessing about the killer's possible motivation.

By Sneha Mahale



GENUINE FRAUD by *E Lockhart*

If you've read E Lockhart's (Emily Jenkins) previous book, *We Were Liars*, wipe your mind clean of all expectations. *Genuine Fraud*'s story begins at the end, with the protagonist, Jule, on the run, and each chapter there on goes back in time to explore why. Though confusing at first, this chronological reverse unravelling of the story does manage to make you turn pages faster and just when you have an answer to something, another question pops up and the suspense continues. How did the unlikely pair of Jule and Imogen meet? Why

did Imogen end her life? Why is Jule on the run? Where did she learn how to fight? Fair warning though, some scenes may be too graphic for some readers. Although if you manage to get through them, they might reveal interesting facets of these characters. *Genuine Fraud* is perfect for a weekend read and will leave you scrambling to reach the end. Fast-paced as it is, the whodunnit aspect of the plot loses steam in some parts and the book ends more with a whimper than a bang.

By Simran Ahuja

RECOMMENDED reads

SAIL AWAY by Celia Imrie

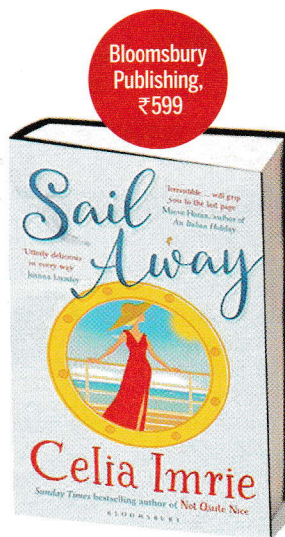
Sail Away is a light and frothy novel that mostly takes place on The Blue Mermaid, a cruise ship sailing across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe to North America. It follows the adventures of two British women, Suzy Marshall and Amanda Herbert.

After a long, dry spell, Marshall manages to bag a role in a production. The play, however, is suddenly scrapped, leaving her in a lurch. She is compelled to take up a job on The Blue Mermaid in order to make her way back home.

Herbert, on the other hand, is recently estranged from her

philandering husband, Nigel. When she realises that her new apartment won't be ready for weeks, she finds herself homeless. When she chances upon an advertisement for an Atlantic cruise, she decides to get onboard and sail the seas until her apartment is ready. Neither Marshall nor Herbert have a clue about what's in store for them as they traverse the Atlantic and face unexpected and somewhat strange incidents. Packed with eccentric characters and humour, the murder mystery caper manages to get you turning the pages till the end.

By Gia Claudette Fernandes



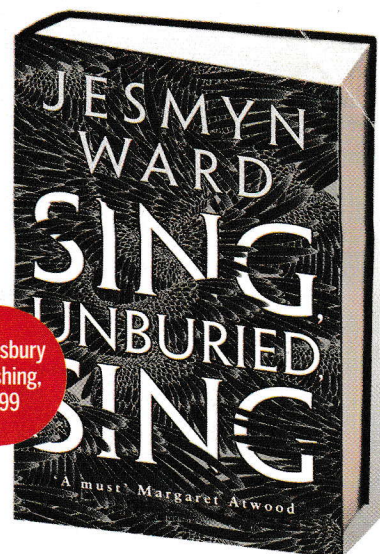
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SING, UNBURIED, SING by Jesmyn Ward

Jesmyn Ward's latest outing comes in the form of a violent shake, reminding us of the harsh realities of the world. The novelist, whose poetic tale, *Salvage The Bones*, was highly celebrated, returns with a compelling road-trip saga set in Mississippi. At the heart of the tale, which oscillates between the past and the present, is a mixed-race family, navigating its way through discrimination, love, drugs and slavery that mar American society. The central character Jojo and his

dynamics with his baby sister Kayla, mum Leonie, white father Michael, grandparents and a mysterious character from the past, form the backbone of book. Ward's character exploration is brilliant. The narrative consciously occupies the space between the real and the imagined, and ultimately finds a raw and messy, emotionally charged expression. With this book, Ward has strengthened her position as an influential, powerful and relevant voice in these particularly tumultuous times. No wonder it won her the 2017 National Book Award.

By Aditi Rao





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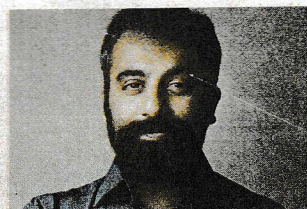
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book review

Me & My Shelf

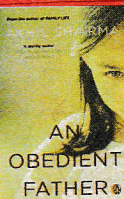
PRAYAAG AKBAR'S SELECT TEN

Prayaag Akbar is the author of *Leila: A Novel*, a dystopic tale set in a possible future, told from the point of view of Shalini, who is looking for her daughter Leila. His first book has been received with widespread acclaim, has won him the 2017 Tata Literature Live! First Book award, and is being made into a Netflix series.



PALE FIRE, Vladimir Nabokov, Penguin Modern Classics, ₹699.

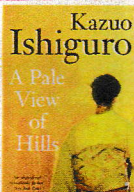
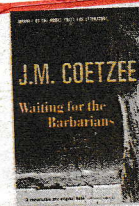
It begins with a poem of four cantos that purports to tell part of the story. Then comes a scholar's literary analysis of the poem, which quickly becomes something else, perhaps even a murder mystery. Notable especially for the Russian's mastery over various forms of writing, and his gentle ridicule of the academic establishment to which he himself belonged.



AN OBEDIENT FATHER, Akhil Sharma, Penguin Books, ₹399.

As dark as fiction gets. Sharma is brave in taking on the mythology of the Indian family, in exposing the abuse that takes place within our patriarchy, within our homes. Another writer of great economy—never a superfluous word. He captures Delhi with powerful beauty.

WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS, J. M. Coetzee, Random House UK, ₹399. The startling pleasure of your first Coetzee. Bruised by the spare, vivid imagery on the first page, I read it twice again immediately to grasp all he had done. Coetzee's prose is tight and wonderful, with deep understandings transmitted so simply. The modern master.



A PALE VIEW OF HILLS, Kazuo Ishiguro, Faber & Faber, ₹699.

The author says now that he dislikes the ending, but I was shaken when I realized what this story was truly about. So much lies beneath in every Ishiguro novel: a surface of placid, golden prose, and under that this simmering tension. In his debut work, he perfectly assumes a mother's voice, which inspired me to try it myself.



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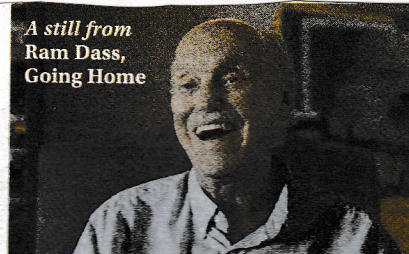
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Book review


Television

April sees the next season of the highly acclaimed *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Westworld*. Old-timers would be interested in Netflix's revival of the 1960s sci-fi show *Lost in Space*, following the lives of the Robinson family as they negotiate life and aliens in foreign planets. The '60s continues to be the flavour of the times, with *Ram Dass, Going Home*, based on the life of spiritual guru

A still from
Ram Dass,
Going Home

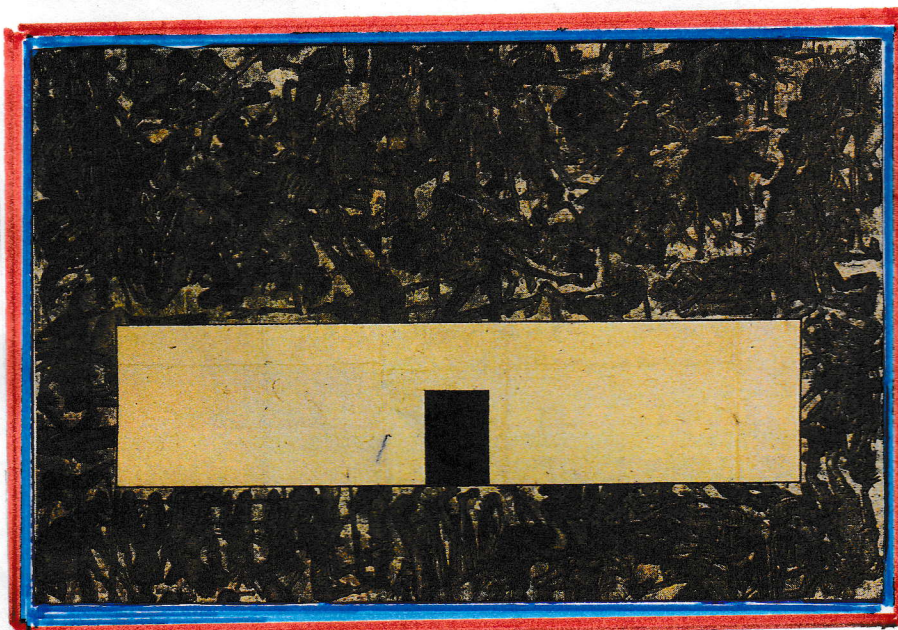


and cultural figure Ram Dass, which was also shortlisted for the 2018 Academy Awards.

—COMPILED BY BUSHRA AHMED 

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Studio



ENTRY ONLY, BY T. VENKANNA
 INK ON RICE PAPER AFFIXED ON BOARD, 48 x 72 INCHES, 2016

Born in Gajwel, a town in Telangana (then Andhra Pradesh), T. Venkanna holds a master's degree in printmaking from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. He has exhibited across the world, including at the Sharjah Art Museum; Yale School of Art; National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai; Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai; Prague Biennale 5 and Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. He lives and works out of Vadodara.

'Entry Only' is a work he made in response to a visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. In his words, "The work recalls the horrors of war, violence and dictatorship that changed the course of history and led to grave crimes against humanity." It also illuminates these atrocities and illustrates the importance of memory—that these crimes may never be repeated. **R**