

# May 2020 SAMU3A Book Reviews

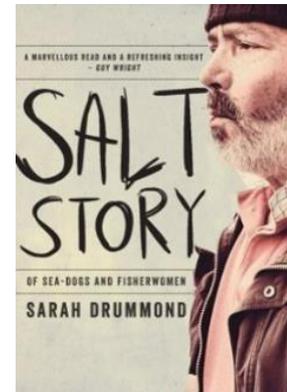
## Salt Story by Sarah Drummond

Review by Cheryl Gardiner

This book is full of short stories all linked by a common theme, the author's experiences working onboard a small commercial fishing boat. It is set in the south western area of Western Australia where the inlets, rivers and ocean have been a valuable resource for a considerable time.

The author writes vivid descriptions of the sea, the people and the marine life that abounds in the area. She writes of the need for sustainability of the fishing industry and the changes that are coming in the near future.

The book is beautifully illustrated with black and white drawings of the sea life from the area. I really enjoyed reading Salt Story, the only criticism I would make is that I would have liked each chapter to have been longer!



## Dixie Divas by Virginia Brown

Review by Pauline Clark

### Divas! Just precious.

If you are in need of some escapist nonsense then **Dixie Divas**, by Virginia Brown, is for you. In the first of the series Trinket and Bitty become embroiled in a murder mystery and with hard work and perseverance make it worse. If there is wrong way to do something Bitty will find it and Trinket will follow closely behind knowing, all the while, what a stupid thing it is to do.

The six **Divas** books do not pretend to be literature for the intelligentsia but just a series of cozy mysteries that will put a smile on your face. They introduce you to a diverse group of Southern women who are only too willing to back each other up whether that proves to be a good idea or not. Loved em!!!!

Do not cross. Crime scene. Do not cross. Crime Scene. Do not cross.

Bestselling Cozy Mystery Series!

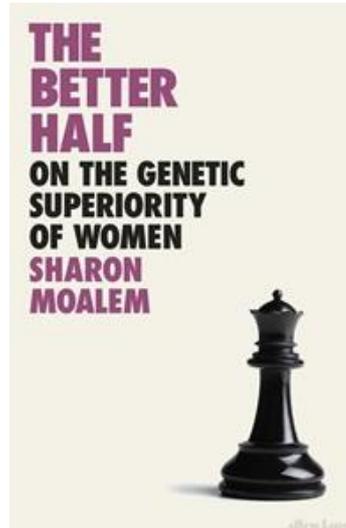


## **The Better Half by Sharon Moalem**

Review by Eryl Carter

Ever wondered why men tolerate alcohol better than women even if they're the same size? It's because women are genetically superior.

In this fascinating book Dr Moalem describes the ways in which having XX chromosomes is better than having XY. The X chromosome carries around 1,000 genes and the Y about 70 (which are mostly concerned with sperm production). This gives women a distinct advantage from conception to final days. His main point (yes, he's a Jewish bloke) is that if women have a fault on one X, they can call on the other X to mitigate it. The result is that women have better colour vision, faster healing times, better immune and treatment responses, better stamina, fewer developmental delays and at all times and in all countries, longer lives. 95% of people over 100 are women.

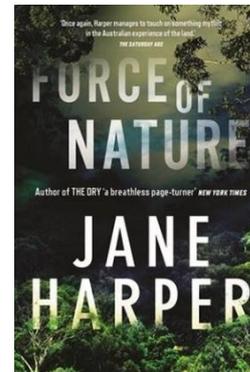


So much for patriarchal superiority. Yes, it does dish up science but it's not dry. There are entertaining stories from past and present to liven it up. The take-home message is that women are more biologically resourceful and hence, better survivors. They're more sensitive to chemicals of all sorts, including alcohol, and the only downside of their enhanced immune response is that they have more autoimmune diseases. If you're female, it's a cheery read.

## **Force of Nature by Jane Harper**

Review by Anne Mason

This crime novel is set in Australia. A group of men and women go on a corporate "team building" weekend in the bush. One of the women disappears. As the story progresses we are left wondering if she is alive and what exactly happened. As you find out more about the characters, you begin to wonder if the woman in question may have deserved what happened to her.



It kept me guessing to the end. I will be looking for other titles by this author. It was great to read such a well written novel by an Australian author. It will be available at Muswellbrook Library once it reopens.

## **The Ruin by Dervla McTiernan**

Review by Pauline Williams

Anyone for some Irish Noir! If you enjoyed the recent screening of Dublin Murders on SBS, then you'll love this thrilling crime story set in southern Ireland.

Just like Dublin Murders this crime scans twenty years with the main character Cormac Reilly involved initially as a young 'green' Garda officer and now a Detective Sergeant.

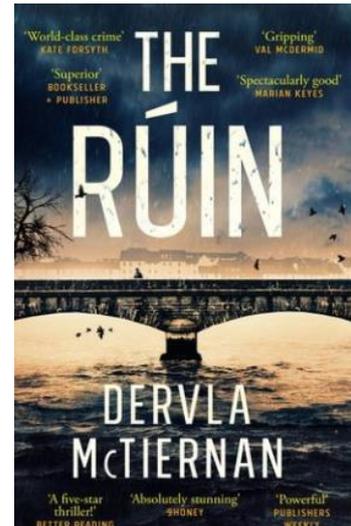
Galway 1993: Young Garda Cormac Reilly is called to a scene he will never forget. Two silent neglected children- fifteen-year-old Maud and her five-year-old brother Jack- are waiting for him in a crumbling country house. Their mother lies dead upstairs.

Twenty years later, a body surfaces in the icy waters of a river in Galway. At first it looks like a suicide. An open-and-shut case as far as the local gardai are concerned but then doubt is cast on the investigation's findings- and the integrity of the police. Cormac is thrown back into the cold case that has haunted him his entire career. What links the deaths, two decades apart?

...You will have to read the book to find out!

McTiernan delivers an insight into the Irish way of life and makes you feel like you are witness to these events.

Available at Big W Muswellbrook & Singleton (at time of my review).

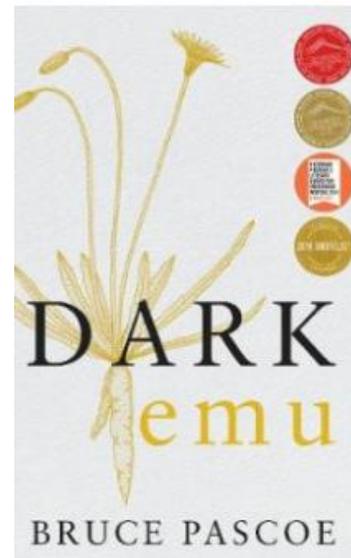


## **Dark Emu by Bruce Pascoe**

Review by Pauline Williams

Dark Emu is an eloquently written (has won four literary awards) book that puts forward a compelling argument for a reconsideration of the hunter-gatherer label for pre-colonial Aboriginal Australians. The evidence gathered by Pascoe's extensive research insists that Aboriginal people right across the continent were using domesticated plants, sowing, harvesting, irrigating and storing- behaviours inconsistent with the hunter-gatherer tag. It also touches on the role of 'burning the bush' and 'fire stick farming' most recently explored on ABC's Australian Story with Victor Steffensen. The book is illustrated with many black and white photographs and diagrams. Well worth a read.

Available at Big W Muswellbrook (at time of my review).

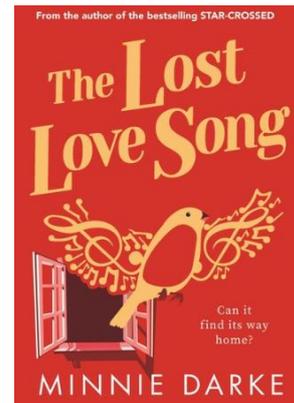


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## **The Lost Love Song by Minnie Darke**

Review by Eryl Carter

Melbourne concert pianist Diana Clare writes a love song for her partner just before leaving on a concert tour. A man finds her notebook on a piano in a Singapore hotel and takes it home to England. From there it travels to Scotland, Canada and most of the world, affecting everyone for the better. This is a story of coping with grief and tragedy; of finding new heart and hope. It's told simply, but is actually very clever – and warm and wise. It's the only novel I've ever read that had me literally sobbing with joy by the last page.



Thanks to all reviewers for our first SAMU3A online book club. There's a good variety of reading to be had out there and thanks to the internet we can e-borrow and e-buy from the comfort of our own homes. Please feel free to write a review of your own reading loves (or hates) for the June edition of SAMU3A Book Reviews. Email to [erylacarter@gmail.com](mailto:erylacarter@gmail.com).

*Happy reading!*