

●●● ADULT NON-FICTION
VOLWASSE VAKLEKTUUR

HALE, Christopher

Himmler's crusade: the true story of the 1938 Nazi expedition into Tibet.- Bantam, 2003.

Award-winning writer Christopher Hale delivers a readable account of the ill-fated 1938 Nazi expedition to Tibet. Sponsored by SS chief Heinrich Himmler to find the origins of the Aryan race, it was led by Ernst Schafer, a naturalist, and Bruno Beger, an anthropologist.

The full story of Schafer's ill-fated expedition has never been told, and Chris Hale uses a wealth of source material as well as information gained from interviewing war criminal Bruno Beger.

This would be the first encounter between the British and the Nazis so close to war. Information based on diaries, letters and secret reports show that the expedition encountered hostility from the British and that the local Tibetans were manipulative.

Fascinating and thought provoking the book covers a little known prelude to World War II, which reveals the Nazis' ideological roots of obsession with racial theory and the occult.

EB

MONTEFIORE, Simon Sebag

Stalin: the court of the red Tsar.- Weidenfeld, 2003.

A major, epic work covering the life of Joseph Stalin and his era in Russian history based on recently available Russian archival source material. The reader is now able to gain a more intimate perspective of a man who has always been secretive and has always remained elusive to posterity.

This title has received praiseworthy published reviews and is among the top ten on **The Observer** bestseller lists for non-fiction. It is a well written and powerfully vibrant portrait of the man and of the Stalinist elite who dwelt in his shadow.

EB

MUNN, Michael

John Wayne: the man behind the myth.- Robson Bks., 2003.

A revealing and intimate new biography of the Hollywood actor John Wayne that is somewhat different to other biographies as the author has actually met and worked with the late actor.

The legendary Wayne is best remembered for his roles in countless Western and war movies and his strong stand on American patriotism. He is being regarded by many as an American icon. There was even a Communist plot to have Wayne assassinated which few knew about.

Here the author looks at the man behind the face and bases his revelations on what is revealed from interviews with Wayne's friends and colleagues. Munn has written a number of biographies on film personalities and he certainly provides the reader with an insightful and very readable account of Wayne's life and career.

EB

SEIERSTAD, Asne

The bookseller of Kabul.- Little, Brown, 2003.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Seierstad, a Norwegian journalist, spent three months living with a family in Kabul. She had met a bookseller and approached him with the idea of living in his home and then writing a book about the experience - an insider's view of Afghani family life. Sultan Khan was a rarity in Afghanistan, a well-travelled, middle-class businessman and fierce promoter of intellectual freedom, who had been imprisoned in the past for his active commitment to this cause. Yet the author was shocked by the treatment of family members in the home of this authoritarian patriarch and the level of misogyny and brutality towards women in the wider society.

Seierstad does not insert herself into this tale of the bookseller and his extended family. It is thus easy for the reader to forget that she is a journalist and this is not a work of fiction, especially as one is privy to the innermost thoughts and desires of the family members.

Pseudonyms were used by the author to protect the privacy of her subjects, but now the real bookseller, Mohammed Shah Rais, has accused the author of defaming him, his family and Afghani society and is to sue Seierstad and her publisher. According to an article in **The Observer** of 21 September 2003, this book and the subsequent case 'has opened serious questions about the ethics of journalists and authors from rich countries writing about people from poor countries with very different cultures'.

JdeB

●●● ADULT FICTION
VOLWASSE VERHALENDE
LEKTUUR

AMMANITI, Niccolò

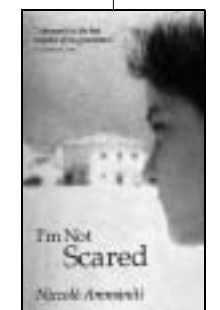
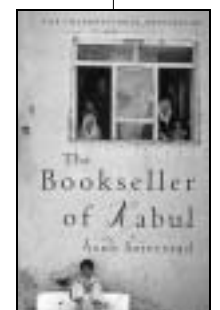
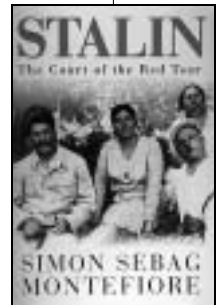
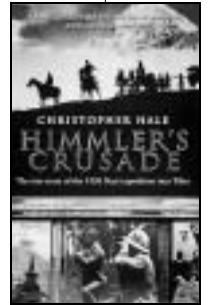
I'm not scared.- Canongate, 2003.

Michele, a nine-year-old Italian boy living in a rural hamlet in southern Italy, narrates the story. The reader meets his friends and is introduced to the dangerous games of forfeit. It is during one of their days exploring the countryside that Michele has to honour a forfeit to enter an uninhabited farmhouse where he discovers a secret - a boy of his age kept chained in a covered hole in the ground.

On various occasions Michele returns and tries to communicate with the strange boy, bringing him food and fresh water. Meanwhile Michele's father returns to the village from a business trip in the north, bringing a strange man to the house.

Michele tries to tell his story to his parents but never finds them receptive to what he has to say. Lately they are acting rather strange and even the other villagers are congregating more often at night at the house.

Michele eventually discovers that the boy is a kidnapped victim and that his parents and the whole hamlet are involved. Hearing they may kill the boy Michele tries to help the victim escape, but is confronted in an earth-shattering climax.





This title is a translation from the original Italian text and has been a bestseller overseas. A simple and gripping read that can easily be read in one sitting.

EB

ASHER, Michael

Sandstorm.- HarperCollins, 2003.

The story opens in Morocco, 1943, where 14-year-old Billy Sterling regains consciousness to find himself alone in the desert after the light aircraft he was travelling in had crashed and the pilot was killed.

The story then jumps to London, 1950, when Billy's father, George, who has never given up on finding Billy, is contacted by a mysterious stranger who says that Billy is alive. He could lead George to his missing son for a price.

Soon George embarks on an adventure to the Western Sahara in search for Billy with a man he barely knows, let alone trusts. But there are others also interested in the missing plane that, somehow unknown to George, carried a mysterious cargo, which he is soon to discover.

Following in the footsteps of his previous best-selling novels **Firebird** and **The eye of Ra**, this fourth adventure thriller is just as gripping.

EB

BLACK, Ingrid

The dead.- Headline, 2003.

There is absolutely no information about this author anywhere on the cover nor in the book, so I don't know whether this is a first novel or whether Black has written anything else. The story is set in Ireland, but the main character, simply known as Saxon, is an American. She is an ex-FBI agent who wrote a best-selling book about the hunt for a serial killer called Paul Nado. She went to Ireland to do some background research for another book, and while there was commissioned to write a book about an Irish serial killer called Fagan. She spent some time interviewing Fagan - but then he disappeared. Saxon remained in Ireland. The novel is set in Dublin about five years later. A newspaper reporter has received a letter purporting to be from Fagan. The letter outlines his plans to murder five women in seven days. Not sure whether the letter is a hoax or not, the reporter approaches Saxon to get her opinion on its authorship. She, however, knows that it cannot be Fagan. The police have their doubts about how seriously to take the letter, but when the first body is found they realise the urgency of discovering the writer's identity. Opinions are divided over whether it is Fagan himself, an unknown accomplice or a copycat killer. Saxon becomes involved in the ensuing police investigation through her relationship with Detective Chief Superintendent Grace Fitzgerald. **The dead** is an intelligent and gripping crime thriller cum police procedural and is bound to be enjoyed by those looking out for a new author.

SG

BREEM, Wallace

Eagle in the snow.- Weidenfeld, 2003.

Eagle in the snow is set in the year 403 when the Roman Empire, attacked by waves of Goths, Huns and Vandals, is in its final decline. Only one legion guards the Rhine, and its commander, general Maximus (who is the narrator) is forced into every possible military and political shift to maintain his hold over the frontier. The main substance of the book tells the grim tale of his

valiant struggle to defend the Rhine frontier with a single Roman legion against thousands of land-hungry tribes who mass on the opposite bank of the river.

Maximus, steeped in the virtues of a Roman soldier - fierce, hard and incorruptible with an unshakable loyalty to his country - never for a moment allows himself to give in to inevitable defeat. Then the river freezes over, and the barbarians surge across to start their devastation of Gaul.

The power of the novel comes from a carefully drawn portrait of the character of Maximus. A subtle change in the end which gives him a more human understanding comes not from the rigorous Roman exterior, but from the realisation that even a soldier has no armour against suffering and defeat.

It is a thrilling, gallant, calamitous story into which the author has breathed an atmosphere of authenticity.

EB

COELHO, Paulo

Eleven minutes.- HarperCollins, 2003

Eleven minutes is the strange story of Maria, a Brazilian girl who inadvertently turns to prostitution during a working holiday in Geneva.

Yet for all its gritty realism and seedy nightlife setting, **Eleven minutes** explores issues of innocence, sex, love and spiritual coming of age, in such a quiet, poetic way as to imbue it with an almost fairytale-like quality. Maria leaves her rural Brazilian home for Rio de Janeiro in search of her destiny. She is spotted by a Swiss agent who offers her a career in dancing at his club in Geneva. Sadly, as Geneva proves disappointing and her dancing career short-lived, Maria then turns to prostitution.

It is during this period that Maria forms an unlikely relationship with a famous artist who teaches her about life, love and intimacy.

Paulo Coelho has achieved a cult status with novels such as **The alchemist**, and his latest is sure to please his followers as well as newcomers to his delightfully different literary style.

EB

CONNOLLY, John

Bad men.- Hodder, 2003.

An escaped convict called Moloch and his cronies descend upon an out-of-the-way island known as Dutch Island (formerly Sanctuary Island) on the American eastern seaboard, to exact vengeance on Moloch's wife who informed on him and ran off with his ill-gotten wealth.

The island in question is haunted by a tragic history concerning an early colony of settlers who were tragically slaughtered by a group of pirates during the early days of the 17th century.

Traditionally isolated, descendants of the original settlers still live there and Joe Dupre, the policeman-in-charge is one of them. Joe is aware of an uneasy energy developing on the island and keeps his eyes open.

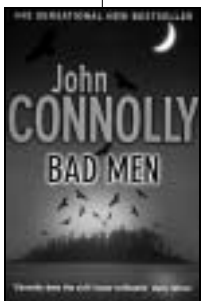
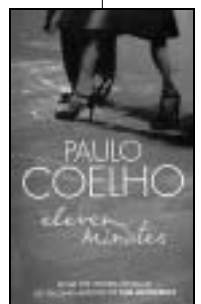
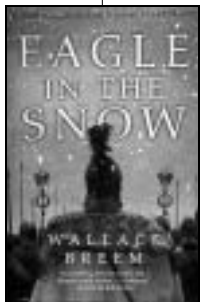
Meanwhile Joe develops an emotional attachment to Moloch's ex-wife whom he senses hides a dark secret. As the 'bad men' get closer, so do supernatural happenings on the island heat up for the coming showdown which will finally cleanse it from its bloody past.

EB

GALGUT, Damon

The good doctor.- Viking, 2003.

The setting for Galgut's Booker Prize shortlisted novel is a dilapidated state hospital in a former South



African homeland, run with a less than skeleton staff and not much patronised by the local community who prefer to use the larger hospital in a nearby town. The protagonists are two white doctors who for very personal reasons have chosen to come to this 'outpost' of the deteriorating health system near the country's border. The narrator, Frank Eloff, is a cynical, dispirited man who appears to be a passive collaborator with the system in which he finds himself. He is confronted with his alter ego when Laurence Waters, an idealistic young doctor who is doing his year's community service arrives and becomes his roommate. Laurence is keen to do things, to take the health service out to the community by running clinics in the surrounding villages. He also feels that he can't stand back and not act on the fact that the hospital is being stripped of its furniture and fittings.

There are other newcomers in town too who represent not only the idealism with which some are trying to create a better new South Africa, but ghosts from the apartheid past. The Brigadier, the self-styled dictator of the homeland, is now rumoured to be involved in theft, violence and smuggling in the area. The Commandant is there with his army to put an end to this, but Frank recognises him from his army days in Angola.

This compelling novel will elicit very personal reactions from its readers, especially those who are South African. For this reviewer, the novel is about the unknowable, both within oneself and society and the coming together of the forces that shape South Africa at present. Geoff Dyer has said that there are 'traces of JM Coetzee and Graham Greene in this novel' and I could not agree more.

JdeB

HERBERT, James

Nobody true.- MacMillan, 2003.

From a very young age Jimmy True realises that he has an ability for astral travel which over time he develops to a fine art. Years later as an adult and founding member of his own advertising firm Jimmy's special gift ends in tragedy. On the same night that he has a fall-out with a fellow colleague Jimmy is murdered during one of his out-of-body experiences by a serial killer.

Now in his rather privileged position as an invisible observer of his own murder investigation, he discovers disturbing truths about almost everyone he knows and even that of the serial killer.

James Herbert's tale may at first sound suspiciously like the theme of the 1990 movie **Ghost**, but nothing can be further from the truth. Herbert's world is darker, more realistic and ultimately more frightening.

Taut, fast paced and terribly thrilling, **Nobody true** is sure to become another favourite in Herbert's long list of publications.

EB

MCDERMID, Val

The distant echo.- HarperCollins, 2003.

The award-winning McDermid has written three main crime series: those featuring PI Kate Brannigan, profiler Tony Hill and journalist-sleuth Lindsay Davis. This new book, however, like her 1999 novel, **A place of execution**, is not part of a series; it is a stand-alone crime novel and, actually, far better than **A place of execution**.

A distant echo takes the re-opening of 'cold cases' as its starting point. Police forces in various countries are reviewing old unsolved cases to see whether

developments in forensics (DNA testing, et cetera) can reveal new information which could assist them in solving the crimes. This has proved to be a rich source for crime novelists. There are also a number of television series about the subject: *Cold Squad*, *Waking the dead*, and so on.

The book begins in 1978 when four university students are walking home late at night and stumble upon the body of a girl they know, Rosie Duff. She dies before the police arrive. She had been raped and murdered, and suspicion falls on the four young friends who found her. They are brought in for questioning, their movements that night investigated and their digs searched, but nothing can be proved and Rosie's murder remains unsolved. Twenty-five years later this murder is one of those selected for a cold-case review.

The novel is almost like two books in one - a police procedural set in contemporary times, and then the earlier story of the murder, the police investigation at the time, and the effects of the murder on all involved. McDermid deals not only with the effects on the police and the family of the murder victim, but also on the four young men and their families. She is concerned with the nature of suspicion, and explores how being suspected of such a crime can change the life of the suspect forever.

A distant echo is a compelling novel, with depth, believable, well-rounded characters, and some clever plotting. I think it may be her best to date.

SG

NIEMI, Mikael

Popular music.- Flamingo, 2003.

According to the blurb, this first novel is owned by one in eight Swedes and won the August Prize, the Swedish equivalent of the Booker. With warmth and humour, it tells the story of the childhood and adolescence of Matti who grows up in the 1960s in the small rural town of Pajala in the Arctic Circle. At times it has an element of magic realism that only serves to add to the magic and quirkiness of this memorable novel.

Each chapter describes a different episode in his young life - his first meeting with his friend Nilla who doesn't speak and then learns Esperanto from the radio, the big raucous family wedding where the extended families of the bride and groom compete furiously to see who has the most stamina when it comes to drinking and sitting in the sauna. When Matti first hears a Beatles record he is infected by a passion for popular music that leads him to fashion a guitar out of wood and then form a band with his schoolmates. The pursuit of this musical obsession is one that runs throughout his youth.

JdeB

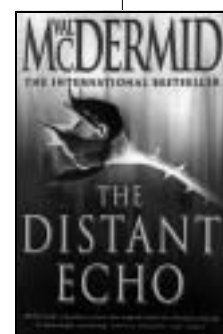
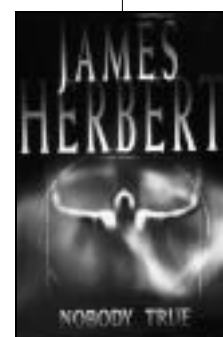
STRIEBER, Whitley

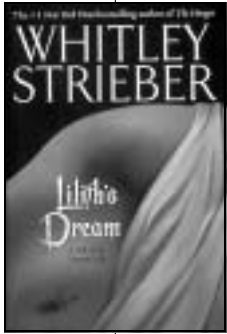
Lilith's dream: a tale of the vampire life.- Atria Bks., 2002.

Well known for his non-fiction titles on experiences with aliens, the author once more returns to fiction with this second sequel to his bestselling vampire novel of the 1980s called **The hunger**.

The main protagonist of **The hunger**, Miriam Blaylock, is now dead but she leaves behind her son Ian who was fathered by Paul Ward, the CIA agent who eliminated her.

This new story opens with the reappearance of Lilith, an ancient vampire who awakes from her sleep in her secret Egyptian hideaway.





Shocked at how the human race has changed and how the vampires have been defeated, she journeys to New York where she soon teams up with the pop sensation of the moment Leonora Patterson, a vampire herself. It is at a rock concert that Lilith is drawn to Ian and whisks both Leonore and Ian to her secret hideout in the Egyptian desert. Paul Ward and his wife and working colleague, Becky, set off in hot pursuit, alerting vampire-hunting agents in both Paris and Egypt.

It is important for Paul to track down his son before Lilith can awaken his dormant tendencies.

Although Strieber takes a while to get things going, he certainly rewards us with an exciting climax.

EB

●●● JUVENILE FICTION JEUGLEKTUUR

AVI

Crispin: the cross of lead.- Hyperion Bks., 2002.

This winner of the 2003 Newbery Medal is very similar to Karen Cushman's **The midwife's apprentice** in that it is set in medieval England and concerns a young person's journey to selfhood, with the individual's name and initial absence thereof being central to their identity.

Mystery surrounds a young serf who lives with his mother in a small rural village. He does not know who his father is or was and his mother who has a lowly position is able to read, which is most unusual. She dies when he is thirteen and it is then that he learns his name - Crispin. It soon becomes clear that there are men out to kill him and he sets off into the countryside, fearing for his life and living by his wits. He teams up with another traveller, a huge man called Bear, a juggler who travels the length and breadth of England, going from fair to fair. Just as Crispin is being pursued, so too is Bear, who one later learns is involved in the Peasant Rebellion. Crispin, it turns out is the son of a nobleman, and when he discovers his true identity he makes a decision to side with the political progressive elements in society.

Avi weaves historical detail into a well-paced story filled with action, adventure and convincing characters.

JdeB

CHILD, Lauren

Who's afraid of the big bad book?- Hodder, 2003.

Lauren Child truly is one of the most exciting creators of picture books today. In this companion to **Beware of the storybook wolves**, she spins a postmodern tale about Herby, the boy who loves books. One night, while his friend Ezzie is visiting, he falls asleep over a collection of fairy tales and wakes up to find himself inside the book on a page in the story of Goldilocks and the three bears. Goldilocks is a mean snip of a girl with a very loud voice who chases him out of her story and pursues him through the book. It is when he reaches the fold-out doublespread of a ball at the palace of Prince Charming, from the tale of Cinderella, that he begins to see the effects of his destructive treatment of this fairy tale collection. Spectacles and moustaches have been drawn on some of the characters and a page has been pasted back incorrectly after having been torn out. The worst crime is that he had cut out the picture of Prince Charming to make a birthday card

for his mother and now the other characters in the tale insist that he be returned. Herby repairs some of the damage he has caused but can't resist having the last word, especially when it comes to his nemesis Goldilocks.

Once again Child's unique collages, inventive placement of text and distinctive sense of humour are all displayed to great effect in this hugely enjoyable and witty book.

JdeB

FLEISCHMAN, Paul

The animal hedge / illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline.- Walker Bks., 2003.

This truly wonderful picture book with its quality prose and illustrations, similar in style to American folk art, tells the story of a widowed farmer who loved caring for his animals, watching them grow each day and through the seasons. He is forced to sell the farm after a long drought, and moves to a small cottage with his three sons. Together they sharpen tools for a living.

One day he begins to shape the hedge that grows around the house into a series of farm animals and with this topiary hedge he can once again realise his most passionate interest, albeit in a form that is second best.

The years pass and the time comes for his sons to leave home to make their way in the world as there is no longer the farm to pass on to them. They each ask their father what trade they should take up and with each he shows them a way of making their career choice. He cuts down the hedge and as it grows again, he says that they must prune and shape it into what they see. The eldest son thus becomes a coachman after shaping a horse-drawn carriage, the second, a sailor and the third, a fiddler.

The sons leave home and the father once again makes his animal hedge. After several years, the sons return home and now as adults can see and recognise that the animal hedge is the expression of their father's heartfelt inner desire. They buy their father the animals he has shaped and leaves him free to let the hedge, which has taught and sustained this hardworking family and wise father for so long, to grow free. This really is a very special book with a depth and a richness that is life-affirming, uplifting and heartwarming.

JdeB

WILSON, Karma and RANKIN, Joan

A frog in the bog.- Schuster, 2003.

Out on a log in the middle of a swamp sits a frog eating everything that comes his way and getting heavier and heavier as time elapses. Suddenly the log moves and frog discovers, to his horror, that all the time he has been sitting on an alligator that is now planning to eat him. He yells 'alligator' and all his earlier victims from snails to flies make their escape.

Now frog is back to his original size and the alligator no longer finds him appealing.

The rhyming text is complemented by wonderful watercolour illustrations, which are a treat.

EB

Note: At the time of going to press, some of these titles were still on order.

EB Erich Buchhaus JdeB Johanna de Beer
SG Sabrina Gosling

