

●●● **ADULT NON-FICTION**  
VOLWASSE VAKLEKTUUR

**ALEXANDER, Dominic**

**Spellbound: from ancient gods to modern Merlins, a time tour of myth and magic.**- Grange Bks., 2002.

The author who has a Ph.D in medieval history offers an entertaining and informative introduction to the history of magic and witchcraft. Starting from the ancient Middle East and Egypt he covers the various eras of history and their contribution to present popular notions about witchcraft.

Profusely illustrated, it includes, amongst others, illustrations from such films as **Harry Potter** and also historical illustrations that bring the subject to life.

This fascinating companion will not disappoint readers interested in magical lore.

EB

**BROWN-LOWE, Robin**

**The lost city of Solomon & Sheba: an African mystery.**- Sutton, 2003.

Zimbabwean-born author explores the early origins of ancient gold mines linked to over 15 000 stone structures found in Zimbabwe and the surrounding areas. In his interpretation they are to be associated with ancient Egypt and the legendary King Solomon and his lover, the fabled Queen of Sheba. Backing his theories with DNA evidence, he feels that both white and black political interests have suppressed the truth surrounding the culture that flourished there.

A worthwhile and interesting read regarding the famed Zimbabwe ruins and related structures in the area which have posed as a mystery.

EB

**COLVIN, John**

**Decisive battles: over 20 key naval and military encounters from 480 BC to 1943.**- Headline, 2003.

An examination of the outcome of twenty important historical battles that have shaped the development of human history as told by the author who is a military historian.

This controversial and very readable title covers epic battles that range from the major Greek battle of Salamis in 480 BC when the Persians were defeated, to the battle of Midway which secured a major victory for the United States over the Japanese forces during the Second World War.

EB

**DUNN, Jane**

**Elizabeth & Mary: cousins, rival, queens.**- HarperCollins, 2003.

A supercharged and compelling biography about the relationship between Elizabeth I of England and her cousin Mary Queen of Scots.

In a male-dominated sixteenth century world that was riddled with superstition, magic and of course court gossip, to be a ruler, especially a female one, was no easy task. Mary, conscious of her charismatic abilities, always believed that she could sway Elizabeth to her point of view, but although she tried on numerous occasions to arrange a meeting, they never met.

Miss Dunn, who is more a biographer than an historian, makes skilful use of established sources to deliver a satisfying study of royal rivalry that ended in tragedy for both parties. It is written with tremendous flair and certainly provides for some absorbing reading.

EB

**MOORE, Michael**

**Adventures in a TV nation.**- Pan, 2002.

Michael Moore is the American documentary filmmaker and writer who is known for his subversive and very funny and confrontational work in 'getting back at fatcat politicians and corporations', always standing up for the little man for whom the American Dream has become a fantasy. He is best known for his documentaries **Roger & me** and the Academy Award-winning **Bowling for Columbine**.

This book, first published in 1998, describes his television series, *TV nation*, in which he and a group of dedicated colleagues made a series of magazine programmes, with five inserts each, in which they poked fun at, exposed, ridiculed and took revenge on specific targets in American society. In one programme they attempted to donate money to large corporations who had recently been heavily fined, for example, Pfizer who had had to pay out billions for faulty heart valves and had bribed the FDA. In another episode they got a multiracial chorus line to serenade a meeting of neo-Nazis with the Motown hit, *Stop! In the name of love*.

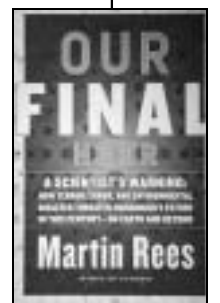
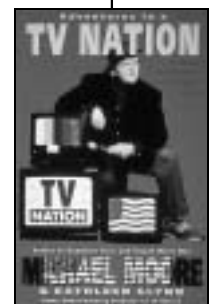
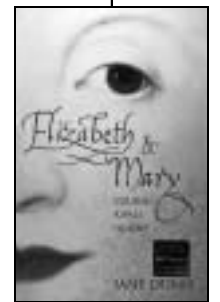
The series was aired in America and Britain in the mid-nineties and in addition to describing the episodes, Moore and Glynn, the producers, also tell the story behind the story - how the programme was made and how it was taken off the air. Although this is about an old television series, it still continues to provide a huge amount of entertainment to readers today.

JdeB

**REES, Martin**

**Our final hour: a scientist's warning: how terror, error and environmental disaster threaten humankind's future in this century - on earth and beyond.**- Basic Bks., 2003.

Sir Martin Rees is a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge and England's Astronomer Royal. His book, for the interested layman, summarises the threats of man's technological advances, in all areas of science, put upon our planet, our galaxy, and even our cosmos. He puts the odds on mankind's surviving until the end of the 21st century at no better than 50%.





He looks firstly at the threats posed by pure scientists, in the laboratory, and secondly, the application and potential misuse of their discoveries by technologists and by groups in civil society who are inspired by commercial greed or by malign political motives. Accordingly there is a discussion of everything from man-made creation of black holes to accelerated environmental disasters, to biological and health threats and the creation of machines that surpass human intelligence. While all this sounds intractably ominous, he makes a strong case for self-regulation by responsible scientists. This should be allied with full disclosure and debate within civil society as a means to averting abuses of science and technology that could lead to catastrophe - hence this book.

Some of the content is repetitive as he shows the inter-relatedness of scientific discovery in different areas of life. But he most ably describes complex material in terms comprehensible to the laypersons he wishes to involve. His tone is objective throughout with no descent into the emotional fantastic imaginings of conspiracy theorists. A lucid, useful and thought-provoking contribution to literature on the future of mankind, perfectly pitched for the public library user.

BK

**WORSLEY, Harriet**

**Classics of fashion.-** Bookmart, 2002.

Visual highlights of twentieth century fashion featuring various trends and the men and women responsible for them. Here the reader is given a nostalgic view of over eighty examples of what was fashionable during this period.

An entertaining snapshot reflection of some innovative, commercial successes that captured the spirit of an era and left their mark on fashion history.

EB

●●● **ADULT FICTION**  
**VOLWASSE VERHALENDE**  
**LEKTUUR**

**ALI, Monica**

**Brick Lane.-** Doubleday, 2003.

First novel from a writer selected as one of Britain's best young novelists by **Granta** magazine. It opens in Pakistan where two young sisters, Hasina and Nazneen live with their parents. The beautiful Hasina elopes in a love marriage and Nazneen is married off to an older Bangladeshi man living in London. The novel mainly explores the life of Nazneen and her family, but the reader also learns about Hasina's hard life through the exchange of letters between the sisters. Sometimes comic and moving, this realistic account of life in a Bangladeshi immigrant family deals with issues of cultural identity on individual and wider levels.

DH

**BERRY, Michelle**

**What we all want.-** Weidenfeld, 2003.

The Mount family gather to bury their mother Rebecca who has died from liver cancer. Daughter

Hilary has been nursing her mother in the family home, where her father abandoned them years ago. The house is run down and dirty and bears testimony to their eccentricities - beach pebbles on the lounge floor to remind them of the seaside, a doll collection which takes up every available surface, and pickles and preserves overflowing into the linen cupboard and the cellar. Hilary's two brothers arrive: homosexual Thomas flies in after an absence of fifteen years, and Billy, who lives nearby, but has hardly ever visited. He has a drinking problem and has recently lost two jobs, his teenage daughter is pregnant and his wife is dangerously overweight. The local funeral director is Dick Mortimer, a former school friend of Hilary's with whom she shares a secretive past.

All the characters are sad, lonely and eccentric, trying to fill the void in their lives as best they can. The funeral parlour forms a constant backdrop to developments and there are detailed explanations of burial and embalming procedures. The author has transformed this supposedly morbid and gruesome situation into a lively tragi-comedy, never losing her good taste or her empathy for the human condition. A light-hearted but thought-provoking read for those who enjoy the better quality popular fiction.

MY

**GALE, Patrick**

**A sweet obscurity.-** Flamingo, 2003.

Gale's latest novel set in a haunting Cornish landscape, is a witty and warm tale of a family and friends. The story evolves around nine-year-old Dido, who is reared by her Aunt Eliza.

Giles, Eliza's ex-husband wants to adopt Dido when he marries new girlfriend Julie. At first Julie is content to be stepmother, but later changes her mind and wants to keep Giles and Dido apart. To further complicate matters, Eliza's new love interest is equally determined to marry Eliza and take on Dido as his own.

Sounds complicated does it not, but this is a delightful read and fans of Gale will certainly enjoy it.

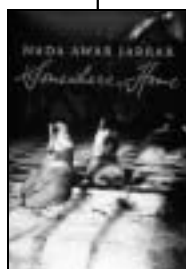
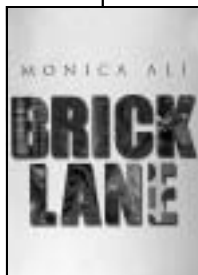
EB

**JARRAR, Nada Awar**

**Somewhere, home.-** Heinemann, 2003.

This debut novel by a Lebanese born author consists of three novellas, each dealing with Lebanese women feeling estranged from home. In the first, Maysa, a young pregnant woman, leaves her husband in war-torn Beirut, to return to her grandparents' house in the mountains. She wants to be close to her roots while she awaits the birth of her child. She recalls the life stories of her grandmother, her aunt and her own mother, and tries to preserve them for her new daughter. The second novella deals with three daughters in a middle-class family in Beirut. When the war starts, the family moves to Europe where the eldest and youngest daughters make new lives for themselves. But the middle daughter, Aida, cannot adjust. She especially misses their live-in domestic employee, Amou Mohammed, with whom she and her sisters formed a close attachment. Although himself a refugee, he gave them a feeling of stability and permanence.

The third work concerns an elderly woman, Salwa, being cared for in a retirement home in Australia.



Regular visits from her children and grandchildren unleash a flood of memories. She was married off at the age of fifteen to a man many years her senior, who later tricked her into leaving Beirut and emigrating with him. When her eldest daughter May returned to Beirut to get married, the family was spilt once again.

The author's personal background has given her great insight into the lives of Arab women, and this is well reflected in her writing. All three novellas are readable and engrossing, and the characters are convincing and credible.

MY

**LAYMON, Richard**

**Amara.-** Headline, 2003.

An Egyptian mummy goes missing in a museum and is the cause for some brutal killings. The mummy is called Amara, a former wife of the Egyptian pharaoh Mentuhotep and she is driven by an ancient need at the cost of human life.

At the same time an abused teenager flees with her boyfriend and sister to Los Angeles to escape an abusive stepfather. They find themselves in a secluded valley where they come across a gothic-looking mansion where dwells a blind but beautiful woman who holds people in cages to humor her perverted needs for human contact.

It is at this location that all the protagonists converge in a dramatic and terrifying conclusion.

EB

**SHREVE, Anita**

**All he ever wanted.-** Brown, 2003.

On a long cross-country train journey to attend his sister's funeral in 1933, Nicholas Van Tassel writes down the story of his relationship with his wife Etna. At the turn of the century he was an English professor at a small New England college. One night while dining in a hotel, a fire broke out, and in the chaos that ensued he caught sight of a young woman who entranced him immediately. He soon found out that she was the niece of a colleague and set out to woo her. While Van Tassel wanted to possess her entirely, she did not love him and stated that fact when agreeing to marry him for her other option was to become a governess to her sister's children.

Two children are borne of this marriage and while it appears on the surface that this one-sided relationship can work, cracks start to appear when Philip Asher, a brilliant Jewish academic comes to town to present a series of lectures. He is the favoured candidate for the position of dean, a post that Van Tassel believes should be his. He discovers that Etna had been involved with Asher's brother before her marriage and that his wife, without his knowledge, has bought a cottage, a place of her own in a nearby town, where she spends time on her own reading and sewing. When Asher is appointed dean and Etna moves out, Van Tassel is enraged and sets out to destroy Asher, mustering every low trick in the book, and in the process losing his wife and daughter.

What makes this different from Shreve's other novels is that the story is told entirely from the male point of view, and what an unsympathetic character at that. Nicholas Van Tassel - pompous, arrogant, devious and self-centred to an extreme degree - is everything that a liberated woman today would

detest. It is testimony to the novelist's skill that she holds the readers' attention throughout, even when her character is at his most infuriating and detestable.

JdeB

**TRAPIDO, Barbara**

**Frankie & Stankie.-** Bloomsbury, 2003.

An autobiographical novel in which Barbara Trapido traces the lives of two sisters growing up in Durban in the fifties and sixties. She writes of their relationships with each other and with their Dutch university lecturer father and German mother, their experiences at school, friendships and achievements. There are wonderfully accurate observations of typical South African attitudes interwoven with the historical and political changes taking place in society. An atmospheric and humorous book which makes entertaining reading.

DH

●●● JUVENILE FICTION  
JEUGLEKTUUR

**CLARK, Emma Chichester**

**Up in heaven.-** Andersen P., 2003.

A dog called Daisy, who is getting on in years, dearly loves her young master Arthur, but finds that she no longer has the necessary strength to keep up with him.

One morning when she awakes, she discovers that she has regained her former strength and that she is now in heaven. Not only that, but she has found lots of old and new friends too. Her only concern is that Arthur is really missing her. In a series of dreams, Daisy guides Arthur to accept her death, by revealing to him that she is happy where she is and conveys a message that he should get a new puppy to keep him company.

A moving story with a positive message to help a child recover and accept the loss of a beloved pet.

EB

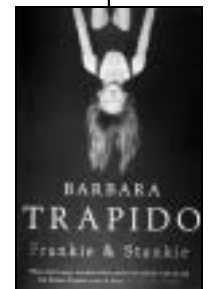
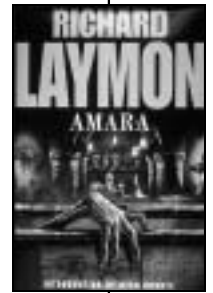
**COOKE, Trish**

**Full, full, full of love.-** Walker Bks., 2003.

All members of an extended West Indian family are invited for Sunday lunch at Grannie's house. Jay Jay is the first one to arrive and he has to wait for everybody else before he can sit down at the table. The wonderful smells coming from the kitchen make waiting for him an almost impossible task and after a while he is almost in tears, despite his loving grandmother's attempts at distracting him. Both author and illustrator perfectly capture that all too familiar sense of waiting when a minute can feel like an hour.

Eventually all the relatives arrive - cousins, aunts, uncles, parents - and everyone can sit down at the table that is laden with an abundance of delicious traditional dishes. The text and wonderful larger-than-life illustrations leave one with a really good feeling, as though the reader had been right there in the loving heart of this family.

JdeB





**HICYILMAZ, Gaye**  
**Pictures from the fire.-** Orion, 2003.

Emilia, the main character in this novel, was previously encountered in **Girl in red** when she and her family of Rumanian refugees came from Eastern Europe to live, and encounter prejudice, on an English housing estate. In this book we learn that Emilia looks different - she has extremely pale hair in contrast to the normally dark gypsy look - and has never been fully accepted. Locked in a room in a refugee hostel for 'safekeeping' by her parents, she uses her excellent talent for drawing to tell the story of her life, by pictorially recounting the racism and persecution in Rumania and her family's journey to England. Reliving her past in this way proves therapeutic and it enables her to break with her family and face the outside world. The author's powerful writing takes hold of the reader in this realistic and moving story of a gypsy girl's finding her own voice.

MM

JdeB



**JAMES, Simon**  
**The birdwatchers.-** Walker Bks., 2003.

This lovely picture book, with its loose illustrations, is a sheer delight. Jess' grandfather is a birder and tells her incredible stories of what he sees on his birding trips. In one instance, the birds had pointed themselves out to him in his field guide. One day she accompanies him on a bird watching trip into the woods. She can't see anything and can't understand why this is a special hobby. That is, until they sit in a hide and then she suddenly clearly sees a whole variety of birds from crested grebes to sedge warblers.

On their trip home, Grandfather asks her what she liked best about her first birding experience and she tells him a tall tale of her own. For her, the best part was when the dancing penguins shared her sandwich!

JdeB

**PARK, Linda Sue**  
**A single shard.-** Dell Yearling, 2003.

This exciting and heart-warming story, set in 12th century Korea, won the Newbery Award in 2002. Tree-ear is an orphan who lives under a bridge on the outskirts of a potters' village with his kind and wise protector Crane-man. He is fascinated by the work of the best potter, and sneaks into his studio to take a closer look. When he accidentally breaks a pot, he must work for Min, chopping firewood in the forest and fetching clay, to repay his debt. Slowly but surely Tree-ear becomes invaluable to the surly, demanding potter and his kind wife - yet he continues to remain on the outskirts of society and their household.

It is Tree-ear's dearest wish to become a potter himself, but in this village tradition dictates that this profession can only be passed down from father to son. And Min and his wife have lost their only son. When the emperor's emissary comes to town, looking to award a royal commission, Tree-ear is determined that his master should be awarded this highest honour. Competition and rivalry is intense with Min's work being sabotaged and a new technique invented by another. This does not deter Tree-ear - he sets out with two pots, carefully packaged in straw, on an arduous and long journey to the emperor's

palace. Disaster strikes when he is set upon by thieves and Min's masterpieces are flung over a cliff. The resourceful Tree-ear picks up a single shard, which clearly shows the range of his master's talents, and continues on his journey to the palace.

He returns home with the good news that a royal commission has been awarded, to be greeted with the sad news that Crane-man has died in his absence. Min and his wife take Tree-ear into their home as their son, rename him and the novel ends with his starting off his apprenticeship. This moving story, with the happiest of endings, grips the reader right from the start - a truly wonderful novel.

**ROOS, Stephen**  
**The gypsies never came.-** Aladdin, 2002.

Set in a small American town, wounded sixth-grader Augie, who always wears a flesh-coloured glove on one 'hand', was born without a left hand and hasn't known his father since birth. He lives with his single mother (who obsessively collects Hallmark cards, 'just in case') and her brother. Accepted by some peers and beaten up by others, tough-centred Augie feels like an outsider. Through his extra-curricular job for a dry cleaner, he collects other people's bits and pieces - letters, receipts, holiday cards, et cetera - and so lives a vicarious sort of an existence. His sense of fatherlessness is accentuated when his mother's new boyfriend invites him to a father-and-son evening and then reneges on his word.

Onto the scene comes eccentric, independent, freewheeling Lydia Rose Meisenheimer who takes a liking to, and understands, Augie immediately. She makes life difficult for him - at least initially - by stymying his attempts to fit in and accentuating his differences, sometimes making comparisons with herself. She tells him tales of sympathetic gypsies who will come and who will 'honour' the defect that sets him apart and make him feel special and accepted. These gypsies visit his dreams. By the time Lydia Rose leaves town, Augie has warmed to her and accepted himself and his handicap. In this intriguing and frequently achingly-touching book with some well-portrayed characters, especially the protagonist, the author does not make clear who the gypsies are or if Lydia is one herself. This reviewer feels that the mystical gypsies symbolise independent carefree beings and that perhaps the gypsy-like Lydia catalysed them. Is the title lacking a question mark?

MM

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

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- BK** Brenda Kyle (City Libraries)
  - DH** Denise Harris
  - EB** Erich Buchhaus
  - JdeB** Johanna de Beer
  - MM** Mary-Ann Maurice (City Libraries)
  - MY** Marion Yudelman (City Libraries)
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