

2020 Reading List

as at October 2019

Listings below refer to the holdings of the Brisbane City Council Library Service (BCCLS). Meetings commence promptly at 6.30 pm at the New Farm Library Meeting Room unless otherwise arranged. Please refer to our website: www.qreaders.net if you require further information.

*Monday 20th JANUARY

General discussion about any books you have read and recommend over the holiday period. Suggested reading titles:

- **Eleanor and Hick: The Love That Shaped a First Lady** by Susan Quinn. 404 pages, 2016. 2 copies.
- **A Very English Scandal: Sex, lies, and a murder plot at the heart of the Establishment** by John Preston, 2016. 1 ebook.
- **Speak My Language, and Other Stories: an anthology of gay fiction** by Torsten Hoojer (Ed)., 2015. 3 copies.
- **'We The Animals'** by Justin Torres, 2012. 128 pp, 2 copies.

*Monday 17th FEBRUARY (Films)

- **'Tell it to the Bees'** by Fiona Shaw, 2009. 336 pp, 3 copies- More on order.
A secret love which has a whole town talking... and a small boy very worried. Lydia Weekes is distraught at the break-up of her marriage. When her young son, Charlie, makes friends with the local doctor, Jean Markham, her life is turned upside down. Charlie tells his secrets to no one but the bees, but even he can't keep his mother's friendship to himself. The locals don't like things done differently. As Lydia and the doctor become closer, the rumours start to fly and threaten to shatter Charlie's world.
- **'Gentleman Jack: A Biography of Anne Lister'** by Angela Steidle, 2018. 352 pp, 5 copies. *The hidden history of a great British eccentric. Anne Lister was a wealthy Yorkshire heiress, a world traveller and an out lesbian during the Regency era - a time when it was difficult simply to be female. She wrote her diary in code derived from Ancient Greek, including details of her liaisons with women. Liberated by her money, she remained unmarried, opened a colliery and chose to dress all in black. Some locals referred to her as 'Gentleman Jack' and sent her poison pen letters, but this did not dissuade her from living mostly as she pleased. On inheriting Shibden Hall, Anne chose to travel abroad, before returning to Halifax and courting Ann Walker, another wealthy heiress twelve years her junior. They renovated Shibden Hall together and considered themselves married, to the horror of Walker's relatives. On a trip to Georgia, Lister caught a fever and died. Walker was subsequently shut up in the same lunatic asylum as Eliza, one of Lister's earlier conquests. The biography combines excerpts of Lister's own diaries with Angela Steidele's erudite and lively commentary.*
- **'The Goldfinch'** by Donna Tartt, 2013. 771 pp, 40 copies. *It begins with a boy. Theo Decker, a thirteen-year-old New Yorker, miraculously survives an accident that kills his mother. Abandoned by his father, Theo is taken in by the family of a wealthy friend. Bewildered by his strange new home on Park Avenue, disturbed by schoolmates who don't know how to talk to him, and tormented above all by his unbearable longing for his mother,*

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he clings to one thing that reminds him of her: a small, mysteriously captivating painting that ultimately draws Theo into the underworld of art.

As an adult, Theo moves silkily between the drawing rooms of the rich and the dusty labyrinth of an antiques store where he works. He is alienated and in love-and at the center of a narrowing, ever more dangerous circle.

The Goldfinch combines vivid characters, mesmerizing language, and suspense, while plumbing with a philosopher's calm the deepest mysteries of love, identity, and art. It is an old-fashioned story of loss and obsession, survival and self-invention, and the ruthless machinations of fate.

*Monday 16th MARCH (Real Life)

- **‘Deal with the Devil: The death of Matthew Leveson’ by Grace Tobin, 2018. 336 pp, 10 copies, audiobook.** *What Mark and Faye Leveson have endured to find out the truth about the mysterious death of their son Matt is unfathomable. For the ten years after Matt’s disappearance, in September 2007, they tirelessly searched bushland for his body and doggedly pursued the man they believed responsible, Michael Atkins. Matt’s older boyfriend always denied involvement with their son’s disappearance, despite the compelling evidence stacked against him. Atkins was, in fact, a serial liar. But to expose his deceit and achieve their main objective, to find Matt’s body, the Levesons agreed in late 2016 to make a deal with the devil. In an unprecedented move, Atkins received immunity from prosecution in exchange for revealing where he buried Matt. He also claimed that Matt died of a drug overdose and wasn’t murdered. "Deal with the Devil" tells the story of the Leveson family from the journalist who was in close contact with them throughout the police’s four-year reinvestigation of Matt’s case. This is a firsthand account of the Levesons’ ordeal, from their harrowing decision to grant Atkins immunity to the extraordinary search for Matt’s body in the Royal National Park. There is also an unnerving insight into Atkins’ past, as well as exclusive interviews with his ex-boyfriends, lovers and former friends. But, above all, what emerges is a portrait of a loving family, and of two parents bound by their public quest to achieve justice for their son.*
- **‘The Devil’s Grip’ by Neil Drinnan, 2019. 337 pp. 10 copies.** *Seven shots ring out in the silence of Victoria’s rolling Barrabool Hills. As the final recoil echoes through the paddocks, a revered sheep-breeding dynasty comes to a bloody and inglorious end. No one could have anticipated the orgy of violence that wiped out three generations of the Wottenhall family, much less the lurid scandals about Darcy Wottenhall, the man behind the world famous Stanbury sheep stud, that would emerge from the aftermath. Almost three decades later, the web of secrets and lies that led to this bizarre and seemingly motiveless murder spree are unravelled with the help of Bob Perry, Darcy Wottenhall’s secret lover for a decade prior to his murder. From the bucolic majesty, privilege and snobbery of the Western District’s prized pastoral lands and dynasties to the bleak, loveless underworld of orphanages, rodeo stables and homeless shelters, The Devil’s Grip is a courageous and thought-provoking meditation on the fragility of reputation, the folly of deception and the power of shame.*
- **‘Ian McKellen: the biography’ by Garry O’Connor, 2019. 352 pp. 10 copies.** *The life and times of one of Britain’s favourite actors... In this biography, Garry O’Connor looks over the career of the one and only Sir Ian McKellen - a thespian actor who has received critical acclaim*

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for his work on stage and in major films including *X-Men* and *Lord of the Rings*.

This book looks back over Ian's early life and roles and shows how his charm and personality has led to honours including a knighthood and how he has established himself as one of the ardent campaigners for LGBT+ rights. Garry doesn't hold back from any controversial times in Ian's life either...

This unflinching biography provides an intimate and affectionate portrait of one of Britain's finest ever actors.

*Monday 20th APRIL (Take Two: Authors we have previously read & loved)

- **'The inexplicable logic of my life' by Benjamin Alire Saenz, 2017. 452 pp, 5 copies.**
Everything is about to change. Until this moment, Sal has always been certain of his place with his adoptive gay father and their loving Mexican-American family. But now his own history unexpectedly haunts him, and life-altering events force him and his best friend, Samantha, to confront issues of faith, loss, and grief. Suddenly Sal is throwing punches, questioning everything, and discovering that he no longer knows who he really is—but if Sal's not who he thought he was, who is he?
- **'Frankissstein' by Jeanette Winterson, 2019. 343 pp, 49 copies.**
In Brexit Britain, a young transgender doctor called Ry is falling in love – against their better judgement – with Victor Stein, a celebrated professor leading the public debate around AI. Meanwhile, Ron Lord, just divorced and living with Mum again, is set to make his fortune launching a new generation of sex dolls for lonely men everywhere. Across the Atlantic, in Phoenix, Arizona, a cryogenics facility houses dozens of bodies of men and women who are medically and legally dead... but waiting to return to life. But the scene is set in 1816, when nineteen-year-old Mary Shelley writes a story about creating a non-biological life-form. 'Beware, for I am fearless and therefore powerful.' What will happen when homo sapiens is no longer the smartest being on the planet? Jeanette Winterson shows us how much closer we are to that future than we realise. Funny and furious, bold and clear-sighted, Frankissstein is a love story about life itself
- **Find Me (Call Me By Your Name #2) by André Aciman, 2019. 272 pp. 2 Copies- more on order**
No novel in recent memory has spoken more movingly to contemporary readers about the nature of love than André Aciman's haunting Call Me by Your Name. First published in 2007, it was hailed as "a love letter, an invocation . . . an exceptionally beautiful book" (Stacey D'Erasmus, The New York Times Book Review). Nearly three quarters of a million copies have been sold, and the book became a much-loved, Academy Award-winning film starring Timothée Chalamet as the young Elio and Armie Hammer as Oliver, the graduate student with whom he falls in love. In Find Me, Aciman shows us Elio's father, Samuel, on a trip from Florence to Rome to visit Elio, who has become a gifted classical pianist. A chance encounter on the train with a beautiful young woman upends Sami's plans and changes his life forever. Elio soon moves to Paris, where he, too, has a consequential affair, while Oliver, now a New England college professor with a family, suddenly finds himself contemplating a return trip across the Atlantic. Aciman is a master of sensibility, of the intimate details and the emotional nuances that are the substance of passion. Find Me brings us back inside the magic circle of one of our greatest contemporary romances to ask if, in fact, true love ever dies.

*Monday 18th MAY (Queenslander!)

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- **‘Bjelke Blues: stories of Repression and Resistance in Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s Qld 1968-1987’ by Edwina Shaw (Ed), 2019. 256 pp. 15 copies**

Joh Bjelke-Petersen was premier of Queensland from August 1968 to December 1987 and the longest-serving premier in the state's history. Regardless of the Fitzgerald Inquiry in the late 1980s, many Queenslanders still remember Joh fondly for 'putting Queensland on the map' and refusing to kowtow to either the media or 'troublemakers'. There are many others who have far less pleasant recollections of life in Queensland under the Bjelke-Petersen government. Forty-five of those people have shared their memories in a locally published book launched this month in West End. Bjelke Blues is at times funny, shocking, insightful, incredible, uplifting, impactful. Each contribution describes a different aspect of life under Joh, in a time when it was illegal to gather in public in groups of more than three people, no one went outside after 6 pm and having long hair or dark skin was enough to get you thrown into a paddy wagon. The individual stories each stand alone and could be read separately, but put together they create something much bigger, more powerful and striking.

- **‘Twists and Turns’ by Matthew Mitcham, 2012. 304pp, 5 copies** *People kept remarking on how they were surprised that a gold medal and fame hadn't changed me. I always responded, 'Why would I change? Being me is the easiest person to be.' I was lying. It wasn't. At the Beijing Olympic Games, he made history with an unforgettable dive, the first to ever score perfect tens from all four judges, and won gold for Australia. Grinning with pride from front pages around the world, there was no hint of the personal demons that had led this supremely talented young dynamo to quit diving less than two years before. Joyously out and proud, Matthew was a role model for his courage both in and out of the pool. Yet the crippling self-doubt and shadow of depression that had plagued him all his life forced him into premature retirement, at one point reduced to circus diving to earn money. Even after Beijing and being ranked No 1 in the world, those closest to Matthew could not guess that beneath that cheeky, fun-loving exterior he was painfully aware of how easily it could unravel. In the lead-up to the London Olympics, when injury threatened his hopes, he will have to find the strength again to balance his striving for perfectionism with the fear of his self-doubt taking hold again. Told with the honesty and courage he is admired for, Twists and Turns is an inspiring story of a true champion, in and out of the pool.*
- **‘The Prettiest Horse in the Glue Factory’ by Corey White, 2019. 320 pp, 20 copies, mp3**
Corey White was a golden child. He knew this because his father would hit his mother and his sisters but not him. And his mother adored him so much she let him drop out of primary school. After losing his father to jail and his mother to heroin, though, he became a target for cruelty and dysfunction in foster homes. ...A memoir of trauma, evil and resilience that will break your heart and then show you how to rebuild it, from one of Australia’s brightest young comedians.

*Monday 15th JUNE (Culture)

- **‘The Angel of History’ by Rabih Alameddine, 2016. 294 pp, 5 copies.** *Set over the course of one night in the waiting room of a psych clinic, The Angel of History follows Yemeni-born poet Jacob as he revisits the events of his life, from his maternal upbringing in an Egyptian whorehouse to his adolescence under the aegis of his wealthy father and his life as a gay Arab man in San Francisco at the height of AIDS. Hovered over by the presence of alluring, sassy Satan who taunts Jacob to remember his painful past and dour, frigid Death who urges him to forget and give up on life, Jacob is also attended to by 14 saints. Set in Cairo and Beirut; Sana'a, Stockholm, and San Francisco; Alameddine gives us a charged philosophical portrait*

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of a brilliant mind in crisis. This is a profound, philosophical and hilariously winning story of the war between memory and oblivion we wrestle with every day of our lives.

- **‘A Sinner in Mecca: a gay Muslim’s hajj of defiance’ by Parvez Sharma, 2017. 330 pp, 5 copies** *Saudi Arabia is where Islam’s heart beats. But for gay Muslim filmmaker Parvez Sharma, the country presents two serious challenges: filming is forbidden in the country, and homosexuality is punishable by death. For Sharma, however, these were risks he has to assume as he embarks on his Hajj pilgrimage, a journey every able-bodied Muslim is commanded by Allah to go on at least once in a lifetime. So equipped with nothing more than an iPhone, two smuggled, tiny cameras, and his faith, Sharma audaciously enters the holiest city that has been closed to non-Muslims for 14 centuries.*

On his journey, he tries to look beyond 21st-century Islam’s crises of religious extremism, commercialism and sectarian battles. He brings back the story of the religion like it has never been told before, having endured the biggest jihad there is: the struggle with the self.

- **‘Out Of Egypt: a memoir’ by Andre Aciman, 2019. 415 pp 5 copies.** *This richly colored memoir chronicles the exploits of a flamboyant Jewish family, from its bold arrival in cosmopolitan Alexandria to its defeated exodus three generations later. In elegant and witty prose, André Aciman introduces us to the marvelous eccentrics who shaped his life--Uncle Vili, the strutting daredevil, soldier, salesman, and spy; the two grandmothers, the Princess and the Saint, who gossip in six languages; Aunt Flora, the German refugee who warns that Jews lose everything "at least twice in their lives." And through it all, we come to know a boy who, even as he longs for a wider world, does not want to be led, forever, out of Egypt.*

*Monday 20th JULY (Young Adult)

- **‘We are the Ants’ by Shaun David Hutchinson, 2016. 455 pp, 5 copies.** *Henry Denton has spent years being periodically abducted by aliens. Then the aliens give him an ultimatum: The world will end in 144 days, and all Henry has to do to stop it is push a big red button. Only he isn’t sure he wants to. After all, life hasn’t been great for Henry. His mom is a struggling waitress held together by a thin layer of cigarette smoke. His brother is a jobless dropout who just knocked someone up. His grandmother is slowly losing herself to Alzheimer’s. And Henry is still dealing with the grief of his boyfriend’s suicide last year. Wiping the slate clean sounds like a pretty good choice to him. But Henry is a scientist first, and facing the question thoroughly and logically, he begins to look for pros and cons: in the bully who is his perpetual one-night stand, in the best friend who betrayed him, in the brilliant and mysterious boy who walked into the wrong class. Weighing the pain and the joy that surrounds him, Henry is left with the ultimate choice: push the button and save the planet and everyone on it...or let the world—and his pain—be destroyed forever.*
- **‘The Flywheel’ by Erin Gough, 2015. 309 pp. 11 copies, 1 ebook** *The Ampersand Prize-winner Erin Gough delivers a heart-warming debut novel about queer romance, crap parents & finding your feet when life gets messy. Seventeen-year-old Del drops out of high school when her romance with another girl goes horribly wrong. Preferring chaos to bullying, Del makes it her mission to save her dad’s crumbling café, the Flywheel, while he ‘finds himself’ overseas. Accompanied by her charming troublemaker best friend Charlie, Del sets out to save the café, keep Charlie out of prison, and maybe get a date with Rosa, the beautiful flamenco dancer*

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from across the road. But when life is messy enough as it is, can girl-on-girl romance ever have a happy ending?

This hilarious and accident-prone novel is about how to be heartbroken and how to fall in love; about rising above high-school drama and wrestling with problems that are (almost) too big. It speaks directly to teens and assures them that they're not alone, and does it all with an abundance of heart.

- **'One Man Guy' by Michael Barakiva, 2014. 255 pages. 4 copies** *A heartfelt, laugh-out-loud-funny story of romance, family, and self-discovery. Alek Khederian should have guessed something was wrong when his parents took him to a restaurant. Everyone knows that Armenians never eat out. Between bouts of interrogating the waitress and criticizing the menu, Alek's parents announce that he'll be attending summer school in order to bring up his grades. Alek is sure this experience will be the perfect hellish end to his hellish freshman year of high school. He never could've predicted that he'd meet someone like Ethan. Ethan is everything Alek wishes he were: confident, free-spirited, and irreverent. He can't believe a guy this cool wants to be his friend. And before long, it seems like Ethan wants to be more than friends. Alek has never thought about having a boyfriend—he's barely ever had a girlfriend—but maybe it's time to think again.*

*Monday 17th AUGUST (LGBTQI+)

- **'The House of Impossible Beauties' by Joseph Cassara, 2018. 400 pp. 10 copies** *It's 1980 in New York City, and nowhere is the city's glamour and energy better reflected than in the burgeoning Harlem ball scene, where seventeen-year-old Angel first comes into her own. Burned by her traumatic past, Angel is new to the drag world, new to ball culture, and has a yearning inside of her to help create family for those without. When she falls in love with Hector, a beautiful young man who dreams of becoming a professional dancer, the two decide to form the House of Xtravaganza, the first-ever all-Latino house in the Harlem ball circuit. But when Hector dies of AIDS-related complications, Angel must bear the responsibility of tending to their house alone. As the mother of the house, Angel recruits Venus, a whip-fast trans girl who dreams of finding a rich man to take care of her; Juanito, a quiet boy who loves fabrics and design; and Daniel, a butch queen who accidentally saves Venus's life. The Xtravaganzas must learn to navigate sex work, addiction, and persistent abuse, leaning on each other as bulwarks against a world that resists them. All are ambitious, resilient, and determined to control their own fates, even as they hurtle toward devastating consequences. Told in a voice that brims with wit, rage, tenderness, and fierce yearning, The House of Impossible Beauties is a tragic story of love, family, and the dynamism of the human spirit.*
- **'Jonny Appleseed' by Joshua Whitehead, 2018. 224 pp, 5 copies, ebook.** *"You're gonna need a rock and a whole lotta medicine" is a mantra that Jonny Appleseed, a young Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer, repeats to himself in this vivid and utterly compelling novel. Off the reserve and trying to find ways to live and love in the big city, Jonny becomes a cybersex worker who fetishizes himself in order to make a living. Self-ordained as an NDN glitter princess, Jonny has one week before he must return to the "rez," and his former life, to attend the funeral of his stepfather. The next seven days are like a fevered dream: stories of love, trauma, sex, kinship, ambition, and the heartbreaking recollection of his beloved kokum (grandmother). Jonny's world is a series of breakages, appendages, and linkages--and as he*

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goes through the motions of preparing to return home, he learns how to put together the pieces of his life. Jonny Appleseed is a unique, shattering vision of Indigenous life, full of grit, glitter, and dreams.

- **‘Danger Music’ by Eddie Ayers, 2017. 304pp, 29 copies, ebook.** *From the former ABC Classic FM classicist comes a remarkable story about the power of music and courage to be one's self*
Eddie Ayres has a lifetime of musical experience - from learning the viola as a child in England and playing with the Hong Kong Philharmonic for many years, to learning the cello in his thirties and landing in Australia to present an extremely successful ABC Classic FM morning radio show. But all of this time Eddie was Emma Ayres.
In 2014 Emma was spiralling into a deep depression, driven by anguish about her gender. She quit the radio, travelled, and decided on a surprising path to salvation - teaching music in a war zone. Emma applied for a position at Dr Sarmast's renowned Afghanistan National Institute of Music in Kabul, teaching cello to orphans and street kids.
In Danger Music, Eddie takes us through the bombing and chaos of Kabul, into the lives of the Afghan children who are transported by Bach, Abba, Beethoven and their own exhilarating Afghan music. Alongside these epic experiences, Emma determines to take the final steps to secure her own peace; she becomes the man always there inside - Eddie.

*Monday 21st SEPTEMBER (Classics)

- **‘Steppenwolf’ by Hermann Hesse, 1985. 256 pages, 1 copy, ebook, DVD.** *Steppenwolf is a poetical self-portrait of a man who felt himself to be half-human and half-wolf. This Faust-like and magical story is evidence of Hesse's searching philosophy and extraordinary sense of humanity as he tells of the humanization of a middle-aged misanthrope. Yet this novel can also be seen as a plea for rigorous self-examination and an indictment of the intellectual hypocrisy of the period. As Hesse himself remarked, "Of all my books Steppenwolf is the one that was more often and more violently misunderstood than any other".*
- **‘In Cold Blood: a true account of a multiple murder and its consequences’ by Truman Capote, 1992. ebook, audiobook, 5 copies.** *Often heralded as the first non-fiction novel, In Cold Blood began as an article for The New Yorker about the 1959 murders of four members of the Herbert Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas. It quickly evolved into a book-length exposé about the perpetrators Dick Hickock and Perry Smith. Its brilliance lies in the marriage of Capote's refined instincts as novelist and the compassion he develops for the victims and the murderers. As he was writing it, he developed a close emotional bond with Perry Smith in whom he saw a fellow outsider, a dark reflection of himself. When Perry was executed, something broke in him, and he never completed another book. The personalities he investigates fascinate, but it's the complex emotional subtext that continues to resonate.*
- **‘The Well of Loneliness’ by Radclyffe Hall, 2015. 483 pp, 4 copies.** *Stephen is an ideal child of aristocratic parents—a fencer, a horse rider and a keen scholar. Stephen grows to be a war hero, a bestselling writer and a loyal, protective lover. But Stephen is a woman, and her lovers are women. As her ambitions drive her, and society confines her, Stephen is forced into desperate actions.*

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The Well of Loneliness was banned for obscenity when published in 1928. It became an international bestseller, and for decades was the single most famous lesbian novel. It has influenced how love between women is understood, for the twentieth century and beyond.

*Monday 19th OCTOBER (Literature)

- **‘Brother’ by David Chariandy, 2018. 192 pages, 5 copies, ebook.** *An intensely beautiful, searingly powerful, tightly constructed novel, Brother explores questions of masculinity, family, race, and identity as they are played out in a Scarborough housing complex during the sweltering heat and simmering violence of the summer of 1991. With shimmering prose and mesmerizing precision, David Chariandy takes us inside the lives of Michael and Francis. They are the sons of Trinidadian immigrants, their father has disappeared and their mother works double, sometimes triple shifts so her boys might fulfill the elusive promise of their adopted home. Coming of age in The Park, a cluster of town houses and leaning concrete towers in the disparaged outskirts of a sprawling city, Michael and Francis battle against the careless prejudices and low expectations that confront them as young men of black and brown ancestry -- teachers stream them into general classes; shopkeepers see them only as thieves; and strangers quicken their pace when the brothers are behind them. Always Michael and Francis escape into the cool air of the Rouge Valley, a scar of green wilderness that cuts through their neighbourhood, where they are free to imagine better lives for themselves. Propelled by the pulsing beats and styles of hip hop, Francis, the older of the two brothers, dreams of a future in music. Michael's dreams are of Aisha, the smartest girl in their high school whose own eyes are firmly set on a life elsewhere. But the bright hopes of all three are violently, irrevocably thwarted by a tragic shooting, and the police crackdown and suffocating suspicion that follow.*

With devastating emotional force David Chariandy, a unique and exciting voice in Canadian literature, crafts a heartbreaking and timely story about the profound love that exists between brothers and the senseless loss of lives cut short with the shot of a gun.
- **‘Baxters Requiem’ by Matthew Crow, 2018. 256 pages, 7 copies** *Let me tell you a story about a man I knew and a man I know... Mr Baxter is ninety-four years old when he falls down his staircase and grudgingly finds himself resident at Melrose Gardens Retirement Home. Baxter is many things - raconteur, retired music teacher, rabble-rouser, bon viveur - but 'good patient' he is not. He had every intention of living his twilight years with wine, music and revelry; not tea, telly and Tramadol. Indeed, Melrose Gardens is his worst nightmare - until he meets Gregory. At only nineteen years of age, Greg has suffered a loss so heavy that he is in danger of giving up on life before he even gets going. Determined to save the boy, Baxter decides to enlist his help on a mission to pay tribute to his long-lost love, Thomas: the man with whom he found true happiness; the man he waved off to fight in a senseless war; the man who never returned. The best man he ever knew. With Gregory in tow Baxter sets out on a spirited escape from Melrose, bound for the war graves of Northern France. As Baxter shares his memories, the boy starts to see that life need not be a matter of mere endurance; that the world is huge and beautiful; that kindness is strength; and that the only way to honour the dead, is to live. Baxter's Requiem is a glorious celebration of life, love and seizing every last second we have while we're here.*

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- **‘Fingersmith’ by Sarah Waters, 2002. 548pp, 5 copies.** *Sue Trinder is an orphan, left as an infant in the care of Mrs. Sucksby, a "baby farmer," who raised her with unusual tenderness, as if Sue were her own. Mrs. Sucksby's household, with its fussy babies calmed with doses of gin, also hosts a transient family of petty thieves—fingersmiths—for whom this house in the heart of a mean London slum is home. One day, the most beloved thief of all arrives—Gentleman, an elegant con man, who carries with him an enticing proposition for Sue: If she wins a position as the maid to Maud Lilly, a naïve gentlewoman, and aids Gentleman in her seduction, then they will all share in Maud's vast inheritance. Once the inheritance is secured, Maud will be disposed of—passed off as mad, and made to live out the rest of her days in a lunatic asylum. With dreams of paying back the kindness of her adopted family, Sue agrees to the plan. Once in, however, Sue begins to pity her helpless mark and care for Maud Lilly in unexpected ways...But no one and nothing is as it seems in this Dickensian novel of thrills and reversals.*

*Monday 16th NOVEMBER (American Revolution)

- **‘Eminent Outlaws: the gay writers who changed America’ by Christopher Bram, 2012. 372pp 3 copies.** *In the years following World War II a group of gay writers established themselves as major cultural figures in American life. Truman Capote, the enfant terrible, whose finely wrought fiction and nonfiction captured the nation's imagination. Gore Vidal, the wry, withering chronicler of politics, sex, and history. Tennessee Williams, whose powerful plays rocketed him to the top of the American theater. James Baldwin, the harrowingly perceptive novelist and social critic. Christopher Isherwood, the English novelist who became a thoroughly American novelist. And the exuberant Allen Ginsberg, whose poetry defied censorship and exploded minds. Together, their writing introduced America to gay experience and sensibility, and changed our literary culture. But the change was only beginning. A new generation of gay writers followed, taking more risks and writing about their sexuality more openly. Edward Albee brought his prickly iconoclasm to the American theater. Edmund White laid bare his own life in stylized, autobiographical works. Armistead Maupin wove a rich tapestry of the counterculture, queer and straight. Mart Crowley brought gay men's lives out of the closet and onto the stage. And Tony Kushner took them beyond the stage, to the center of American ideas. With authority and humor, Christopher Bram weaves these men's ambitions, affairs, feuds, loves, and appetites into a single sweeping narrative. Chronicling over fifty years of momentous change—from civil rights to Stonewall to AIDS and beyond—**EMINENT OUTLAWS** is an inspiring, illuminating tale: one that reveals how the lives of these men are crucial to understanding the social and cultural history of the American twentieth century.*
- **‘After Delores’ by Sarah Schulman, 1989. 158pp, 3 copies.** *This hilarious, unpredictable, sexy novel is a fascinating journey into the storefronts, underground clubs, and back alleys of New York's Lower East Side lesbian subculture. And Sarah Schulman, writing in sharp, immediate, insightful prose, has created a wonderfully modern, totally original heroine.*
- **‘The Great Believers’ by Rebecca Makkai, 2018. 448pp, 7 copies.** *A dazzling new novel of friendship and redemption in the face of tragedy and loss set in 1980s Chicago and contemporary Paris. In 1985, Yale Tishman, the development director for an art gallery in Chicago, is about to pull off an amazing coup, bringing in an extraordinary collection of 1920s paintings as a gift to the gallery. Yet as his career begins to flourish, the carnage of the AIDS epidemic grows*

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around him. One by one, his friends are dying and after his friend Nico's funeral, the virus circles closer and closer to Yale himself. Soon the only person he has left is Fiona, Nico's little sister.

Thirty years later, Fiona is in Paris tracking down her estranged daughter who disappeared into a cult. While staying with an old friend, a famous photographer who documented the Chicago crisis, she finds herself finally grappling with the devastating ways AIDS affected her life and her relationship with her daughter. The two intertwining stories take us through the heartbreak of the eighties and the chaos of the modern world, as both Yale and Fiona struggle to find goodness in the midst of disaster.

The Great Believers has become a critically acclaimed, indelible piece of literature; it was selected as one of New York Times Best 10 Books of the Year; a Washington Post Notable Book, a BuzzFeed Book of the Year, a Skimm Reads pick, and a pick for the New York Public Library's Best Books of the year

***Monday 21st DECEMBER**

Christmas Party. Details to be advised.

Happy reading

Bonnie
