

## THE PANEL'S SELECTION

**Crisis of Brilliance** David Boyd Haycock  
Dld Street Publishing, 3rd, £10.99,  
781906964320)

**Beatrice and Virgil** Yann Martel  
Canongate, 3rd, £14.99, 9781847677655)

**Choice** Renata Salecl (Profile, 17th, £10.99,  
781846681929)

**Clandestine In Chile** Gabriel Garcia  
Márquez (New York Review of Books, 17th,  
7.99, 9781590173404)

**How Not to F\*\*\* Them Up** Oliver James  
Ebury, 3rd, £17.99, 9780091923914)

**If I Loved You, I Would Tell You This** Robin  
Black (Picador, 4th, 9780330511780)

**Last of the Few** Max Arthur (Random  
House, 10th, £20, 9780753522271)

**Mistress of Rome** Kate Quinn (Headline,  
10th, £6.99, 9780755357932)

**Mr Peanut** Adam Ross (Jonathan Cape, 3rd,  
£16.99, 9780224087735)

**The Last Stand** Nathaniel Philbrick (Bodley  
Head, 3rd, £20 9781847920096)

**The Met Office Book of the British  
Weather** Met Office (David & Charles, 25th,  
£9.99, 9780715336403)

**The Passage** Justin Cronin (Orion, 24th,  
£18.99, 9780752897844)

**The Poison Tree** Erin Kelly (Hodder  
& Stoughton, 10th, £12.99, 9781444701036)

**The Wavewatcher's Companion** Gavin  
Pretor-Pinney (Bloomsbury, 7th, £14.99,  
9780747589761)

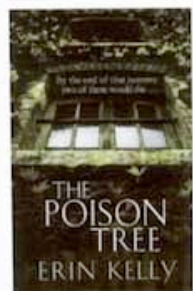
**The Whisperer** Donato Carrisi (Abacus, 3rd,  
£11.99, 9780349123431)

June brings brilliant debut novels and an imaginative tsunami from winter

# Making waves

## EMMA GIACON

Book content manager, Amazon



**The Poison Tree** by Erin Kelly is really good commercial fiction—with a psychological edge. Strait-laced university student Karen is drawn into the world of bohemian siblings Biba

and Rex after a chance meeting. They go on to share a heady summer as their student days draw to a close, but their high-living is short-lived following an unexpected catastrophe which results in death. The author cleverly draws out the story through Karen's recollections: we know something awful happens, but she does well at keeping us guessing as to exactly what it is. The ending will provide a talking point for readers too. This is well worth a look.

While *The Poison Tree* is atmospheric, **Mr Peanut** is a much darker, more introspective proposition. Adam Ross' début is extremely accomplished and refreshingly cliché-free, with a great first line: "When David Pepin first dreamed of killing his wife, he didn't kill her himself. He dreamed convenient acts of God". This is not the thing to choose if you're looking for a light and easy read; *Mr Peanut* requires dedication to follow the story, which switches between multiple narrators and time frames and between fact and fiction (the protagonist is himself writing a novel). However, the reader's patience is rewarded with excellent writing and ultimately a novel which feels fresh and original.

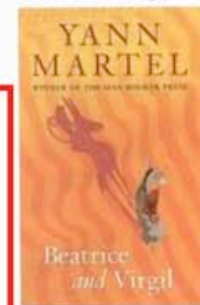
On the non-fiction front this month, do take a look at David Boyd Haycock's **A Crisis of Brilliance**, appearing in paperback. Subtitled "Five Extraordinary Young Artists before and during the Great War", it tells the story of Stanley Spencer, Dora Carrington, Mark Gertler, Richard Nevinson and Paul Nash, from their first meetings at the Slade School of Art through their formative years and the defining impact of the First World War on their lives and art. This is a vivid group biography drawn from vivid lives—all the scandal, tempestuous love affairs and tragic demise that you might associ-

ate with this kind of group. The hardback achieved tremendous praise in the press, and there should be a good paperback market.

## RUTH HUNTER

BookTime editor, Bertrams

Structured like a Barbara Vine novel, with one strand in the present day and another in the past, **The Poison Tree** by Erin Kelly is not so much a murder mystery as a "what happened?" mystery. Karen has a 10-year-old daughter whose father, Rex, is fresh out of prison. Karen looks back to the summer of 1997, when she first met Rex and his sister Biba, and was drawn into a new world of drugs, sex and danger. For a début novel, this is highly accomplished, and to the very end, Kelly keeps the reader guessing as to what happened and why.



At first, Yann Martel's new book **Beatrice and Virgil** seems as if it might be autobiographical, following as it does an author, Henry, who has had success with a novel featuring animals. When a new book is rejected by his publishers, Henry moves with his wife to an anonymous city. There he meets a macabre taxidermist, who's writing a play about a monkey called Virgil and a donkey called Beatrice. The slightly surreal situation in which Henry finds himself is couched within a rich literary background, involving Flaubert, Diderot and Beckett; and the spectre of the Holocaust is never far away.

Family relations, or lack of them, are at the heart of Robin Black's collection of 10 short stories, **If I Loved You, I Would Tell You This**. Whether it be a young mother who does not mourn the death of her mentally ill father, or the soccer mom who finds herself alone through her own lack of self-awareness, the strains of divorces, separations, traumas and death are examined. Despite this, there is strength, wisdom and humour in Black's visions.

Written in 1986, **Clandestine In Chile** by Gabriel Garcia Márquez portrays a real-life adventure of Chilean film director Miguel Littin, told

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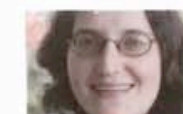
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Emma Giaccon, book  
content manager, Amazon