

TANIA BLANCHARD 'I LOVE THE RESEARCH PROCESS!'

Reimagining stories from the past keeps this historical author's imagination firing

Please give us an elevator pitch for *The Paris Prize*...

The Paris Prize is all about a driven Australian grazier, Maddy Rainforth, who lives and breathes wool with a dream to grow the finest merino wool in the country and take her wool to the fashion houses of Europe. Set in the mid-20th century, Maddy's trials and tribulations on the land reveal the Australian spirit and are set against the wondrous transformation of our prized wool to fine fashion, the rise of French haute couture on our shores and the power of the wool boom that made Australia a world economic force – from dust to Dior.

What was the jumping-off point for writing this novel?

It was inspired by stories my father-in-law told about his grandmother, who owned and ran her own farm separate to that of his grandfather. After *A Woman Of Courage* and *An Undeniable Voice*, which were inspired by the Blanchard family in the UK, I wanted to

continue to explore their story here in Australia with the arrival of my father-in-law's grandfather via the Dreadnought program that brought young farm labourers to our shores.

Why is it so important for you to celebrate little-known parts of Australian history?

This story is deeply personal, with farmers going back for generations in both my family and my husband's, and we also ran a property in the district where *The Paris Prize* is set when our children were small. I wanted to share the real experiences that graziers went through to produce the most important commodity at the time – wool – and explore not only the surprising links to French high fashion and Dior

on our shores, but showcase the hard work and sacrifice that I know Australian farmers live every day on the land.

And similarly, why do you love to tell the stories of women from our past?

Women's stories and their influence on how history unfolds are the often-forgotten stories of the past. I love exploring women's different experiences through time, to understand how they might have dealt with their challenges within the society they lived in and how they found their joy, hope and fulfilment despite the restrictions on them, from disempowerment to empowerment.

As a historical novelist, how do you know when

to leave all the research you've done on a topic or time period in your notebooks and hold back on the page?

Being a history buff, I love the research process and it's difficult not to end up down the rabbit hole but the research is important as it gives me a sense of the time and place I'm writing about. It helps inform everything from setting, historical relevance to the influences around my characters and the storyline and provides authenticity to my story. Inevitably only a tiny fraction ends up on the page to keep the pace and story moving along, but my story is always richer for the background knowledge that I've gained.



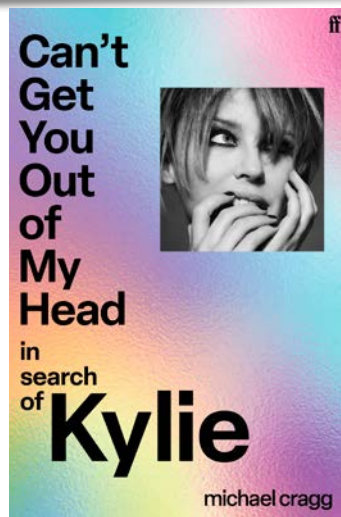
THE PARIS PRIZE
HarperCollins, \$34.99



GUIDE • ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE



Books Editor
Emma
Babbington
gives us her
picks and more!

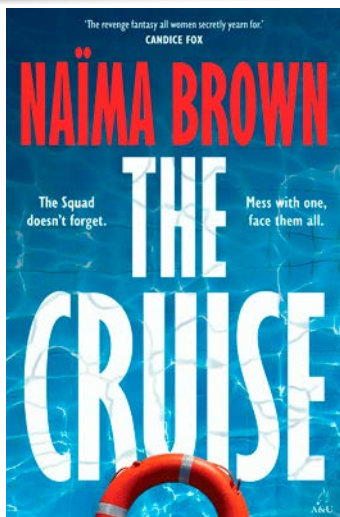


CAN'T GET YOU OUT OF MY HEAD: IN SEARCH OF KYLIE

by Michael Cragg

Following the Netflix doco, we should only be so lucky to get yet another definitive exploration into Australia's very own pop princess, Kylie Minogue! From Ramsay Street to bona fide showgirl, from Glastonbury right up to her momentous comeback with *Padam Padam*, music journo Michael gets to the bottom of why Kylie has had us spinning around for four decades!

Faber Music, \$34.99

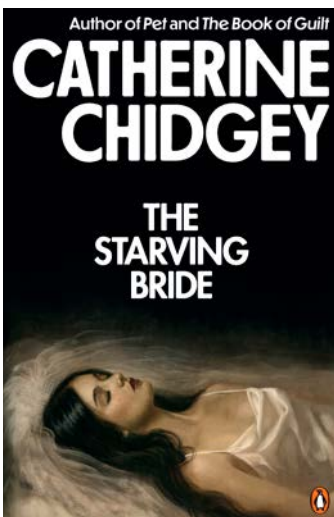


THE CRUISE

by Naima Brown

When an opportunity arises to cast her high school abuser Eli Murphy as the lead bachelor on the salacious and popular reality show she works on, *The Cruise*, senior producer Bailey Collins can't pass it up. But what Eli doesn't know is that Bailey, still haunted by the trauma she experienced at the hands of him 10 years ago, has also enlisted the members of a shadowy group she's part of, the Squad, to star as contestants alongside him.

Allen & Unwin, \$34.99

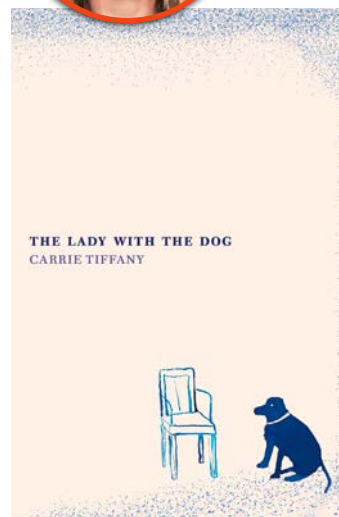


THE STARVING BRIDE

by Catherine Chidgey

Jobless, exiled from her family and dumped by her boyfriend, Hazel Whitlock takes up the job of the Starving Bride, a sideshow act in the iconic yet weathered Blackpool Tower. All she has to do is lay back and be silent, while a ravenous lion prowls around her and streams of spectators view her around the clock. But as her transformation begins to provoke obsessive fans, Hazel must confront how far she's willing to go to be seen.

Penguin, \$34.99



THE LADY WITH THE DOG

by Carrie Tiffany

Written as a homage to the seminal short story by Anton Chekhov, Carrie's beautiful novella centres around an elderly couple who adopt a rescue dog. However, when they return home, strange things begin to happen. Their gate disappears, while household objects begin to uncouple from their meaning. Is their new dog still a dog?

With whimsical illustrations by Noel McKenna.

UNSW Press, \$29.99



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