

Books of the Year

THE WEEKEND REVIEW
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Margaret Drabble

Novelist and editor



I agree with the many in admiration for Peter Carey's **True History of the Kelly Gang** (Faber), a passionate and compassionate novel with an extraordinarily original and convincing narrative voice – a triumph, with an overwhelming sense of time, place and the long reach of history. History speaks also in Michael Foss's poignant and vivid memoir **Out of India: a Raj childhood** (Michael O'Mara), with its contrast between the bleakness of wartime Britain and the colourful paradise of India – a work with the wise innocence of Kipling's *Kim*. And I follow with continuing fascination the astonishing academic debate on deep history in Martin Bernal's **Black Athena Writes Back** (Duke University Press) – one of the strangest intellectual confrontations of our time.

Ziauddin Sardar

Science writer and cultural critic

In these depressing times, my sanity has been maintained by Orhan Pamuk's **My Name Is Red** (Faber). Set in 16th-century Istanbul, this multi-layered and exquisitely written murder mystery, in which even the corpse is allowed to speak, gives a strong hint of alternative possibilities within Islam. An absolute masterpiece by any standards. Further anxiety was relieved by Richard Appignanesi's **Introducing Existentialism** (Icon). In an attempt to answer the question, "What is stopping us from committing suicide?", the author himself "goes under". In a trawl through cemeteries, Holocaust graveyards, deep angst and the lives of famous wet blankets, he finally discovers meaning in his own humanity. A genuine *tour de force*.

Polly Samson

Writer



My favourite novel of 2001 is Ali Smith's **Hotel World**

Michael Arditti

Novelist and critic

This winter, novels set in New York take on a particular resonance, and Tom Spanbauer's **In the City of Shy Hunters** (Atlantic) is one of the finest ever written. The cult author of *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon* here extends his romance with cowboys to embrace those of the urban variety. His portrait of Manhattan society is racy, witty, profound and genuinely mythic. He also succeeds in drawing a portrait of Aids among the artists that is totally free of the clichés and excesses of the genre. The novel was shamefully ignored on its publication, but its extraordinary insights should engage readers for many years to come.

Linda Grant

Novelist and journalist



In the 1930s, Marianne Strauss was a teenager in a Jewish family in Essen. She was a feminist and socialist and, with her fiancé, dreamt that despite fascism, progressive ideas were bound to triumph. When the Nazis came for her parents, she ran out of

the house and survived the war disguised as an Aryan. In Berlin as a founder member of the post-war Communist Party, she married a British captain and spent the rest of her life as a suburban housewife in Liverpool. Mark Roseman's extraordinary, page-turning account of her life, **The Past in Hiding** (Allen Lane), uncovers a mass of papers and probes the nature of memory. An exemplary antidote to both David Irving and Norman Finkelstein.

Felipe Fernández-Armesto

Historian

"Only a textbook", they say, but **Expansion and Global Interaction, 1200-1700** by David R Ringrose (Longman) is the best textbook I've encountered – comprehensive, vivid, scholarly, readable. **How to Write the His-**

Geoff Dyer

Novelist and critic

The Shadow of the Sun (Allen Lane), Ryszard Kapuscinski's fragmented account of his experiences in Africa, was so thrilling, brilliant, funny and moving, it felt like about eight books rolled into one – which, in a sense, it was. I also admired – and learnt a great deal from – Sven Lindquist's **A History of Bombing** (Granta), the plain-speaking title concealing a work of great originality. Struck by how ordinary – not bad, just ordinary – I found many of this year's most fêted novels, I'm not surprised that the one I most enjoyed reading seems not to have found a publisher in the UK: Denis Johnson's weird and utterly mesmerising **The Name of the World** (Harper Collins US).

Amanda Hopkinson

Writer and translator

In photography, Melanie Manchot's **Love Is a Stranger** (Prestel) collects six recent series between covers: survey and savour these beautiful colour reproductions. Melanie Friend's **No Place like Home: echoes from Kosovo** (Cleis/Midnight) is a hauntingly evocative homage to the people the photographer

lived and worked with under the Milošević regime. Jillian Edelstein's **Truth and Lies** (Granta) adopts a similar formula in tracing the workings of South Africa's Truth Commission. In literature, Dominique Manotti's crime novel **Rough Trade** (Arcadia, translated by Margaret Crosland and Elfreda Powell) combines the circumstances of a Turkish workers' strike, the globalisation of the weapons and drugs trade and the commercialisation of sex in 1980s Paris: brilliant. Amos Oz's **The Same Sea** (Chatto & Windus, trans Nicholas de Lange) is a strange fish. Written partly in poems but primarily as a novel, the book reaches for not just a different kind of fiction, but a new way of writing. W G Sebald's previous output has been such that a reader might dread a mere original novel, but **Austerlitz** (Hamish Hamilton, translated by Anthea Bell) in no way disappoints. This half-true story of a boy brought to Wales in 1939 raises fundamental questions regarding identity and memory.

