

HARE'S FUR  
by Trevor Shearston  
Scribe

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**H**are's *Fur* is about what follows grief. Russell Bass, a seventy-two-year-old potter, lives alone in Katoomba. Adele and Michael, his wife and child, have both died. Time still passes. He wakes early, drinks coffee, visits friends, throws clay.

One morning, seeking basalt for glazes at a nearby creek, Russell discovers three siblings living in a cave: two young children, Todd and Emma, and their teenage sister, Jade. Moved to act, he brings them food, offers them help. At first hesitant, they come to trust him, and a tentative relationship begins.

*Hare's Fur* is a tale of convalescence, a restrained, moving story about how we discover new meaning in the wake of anguish. While Trevor Shearston's prior fiction has largely explored the fictionalisation of historical figures – Jack Emanuel's assassination in *A Straight Young Back* (2000), Italian explorer Luigi D'Albertis in *Dead Birds* (2007), the bushranger Ben Hall in *Game* (2013) – *Hare's Fur* proves the writer's talent beyond historical saga. Katoomba, nestled in the heart of the Blue Mountains, also provides a vivid backdrop. Privy to its 'tea-trees, acacias, and hakeas', its 'grevillea laurifolia, dillwynia, and hibbertia', Shearston is clearly at home; it's no surprise that he lives there.

This serenity is occasionally disrupted by superfluous touches – Russell's internal, italicised musings, for one, tend to get in the way. We are also rationed only fragments of the lives of Adele and Michael – in one beautiful passage, Russell watches Todd approach a wallaby, recalling Michael once doing the same – and we are left wanting more.

Overall, *Hare's Fur* is about the inevitable reconfiguring of a life. It shows us that, like Kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with seams of gold, we too can mend ourselves, we too can reconnect our pieces.

Jack Callil ❖

steer clear of the family and the institution. Complicating Cormac's refusal to do this is his partner Emma's position within the company, and suspicions among his colleagues that he is unfairly protecting her from scrutiny.

In the hands of a lesser writer, *The Scholar* might have been merely another run-of-the-mill police procedural, and yet McTiernan's depiction of the office politics in the local Garda station is brilliantly rendered. Her roving narrative point-of-view brings deep characterisation to each of the novel's main players, releasing fragments of backstory that accrue and give a strong sense of each character, while using forensic, acute, deeply considered prose to raise doubts in the reader's mind as the novel moves toward its satisfying conclusion. Cormac Reilly in particular is a brilliant character – understated, careful, humane, and clever – as is his overworked colleague Carrie O'Halloran. Galway is evocatively described, with its dim streets and turbid river, a fitting setting for a story that successfully plumbs the depths of the human heart vis-à-vis tropes of ambition, resentment, loss, and trauma. *The Scholar* is a thoughtful, clever, well-crafted novel that suggests great things to come for its author.

**G**one by *Midnight* (Bantam, \$32.99 pb, 376 pp, 9780143789154) is dual Ned Kelly Award-winning author Candice Fox's sixth novel in as many years, alongside her prodigious output since 2015 with collaborator and international bestseller James Patterson, which includes three co-written novels and a novella. *Gone by Midnight* is the third novel in Fox's Crimson Lake series. Set in the Cairns area of far-north Queensland, the series focuses on the investigations of ex-detective Ted Conkaffey and Amanda Pharrell. The novel begins with Conkaffey – still doing it tough after having been unfairly accused of abducting a young woman – trying to keep a low profile in a town where many assume his guilt. He and Pharrell are hired by the mother of a child who has gone missing from a local hotel. Her motivation for hiring Conkaffey relates to her distrust

of the police and her belief that Ted will protect her from their inevitable interest in her. The disappearance of her son presents itself as something of a locked-room mystery. How does one boy securely locked in a room with three other boys go missing when the door hasn't been accessed? Various suspects present themselves, although Conkaffey and Pharrell's attempts to obtain a clean run at the case are stymied by the resentful and obstructive local plods, due in large part to their hatred of suspected paedophile Conkaffey and previously convicted murderer Pharrell. The novel is peopled by colourful rogues, none more than Amanda Pharrell herself. Spiky and terse, flamboyant and irreverent, she provides many laugh-out-loud moments.

Crime fiction is a broad church, and *Gone by Midnight* isn't a novel that invests time on social verisimilitude or deep psychological exploration of its protagonists and their world, nor upon generating an aesthetic that mines the novel's tropical setting – none of which will trouble Fox's fans. *Gone by Midnight* hits terminal velocity halfway through page one and never slackens. ■

**David Whish-Wilson** is the author of five crime novels and three non-fiction books. His latest crime novel is *The Coves*, out with Fremantle Press in 2018. His next novel is *True West*, to be published by Fremantle Press in November 2019. He lives in Fremantle, Western Australia, and coordinates the creative-writing program at Curtin University.

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