

December 2023 issue highlights



Welcome to the December issue of *ABR*! This month we feature illuminating commentary by Bain Attwood, Anne Twomey and Joel Deane on the historical, legal, and political implications of the Voice referendum defeat. Elsewhere, thirty-nine critics nominate their Books of the Year, James Ley writes about Ralph Ellison, Brenda Walker considers a selection of notes and letters from Alex Miller, David Trigger reviews Michael Gawenda's deeply personal memoir which reflects on his Jewish identity. We also review new fiction from Charlotte Wood, Suzie Miller, Tony Birch, and Laura Jean McKay. Heading Backstage, our Q&A guest is Ruth Mackenzie, Director of the Adelaide Festival.

- **Commentary on the Voice Referendum** Anne Twomey, Bain Attwood, and Joel Deane reflect on the implications of the Voice referendum result, 'the burden of history', and the enduring influence of John Howard on Australian society, which lingers – as Deane suggests – like 'Hamlet's Ghost'
- **2023 Books of the Year** Thirty-nine *ABR* critics including Beejay Silcox, Tony Birch, and Frank Bongiorno reveal their favourite books from 2023. They nominate works by David Marr, Alexis Wright, Brigitta Olubas, Charlotte Wood, and Anna Funder
- **Charlotte Wood's contemplative new novel** Jennifer Mills states that Charlotte Wood's new novel *Stone Yard Devotional* feels like 'the soul-work of holding oneself accountable' and a 'meditation on consequences, responsibility and care', where the author of *The Natural Way of Things* (2015) writes with the laconic prose of a diary entry.
- **Alex Miller – two-time winner of the Miles Franklin Award** Brenda Walker reviews Alex Miller's *A Kind of Confession: The writer's private world*, an intimate look at a selection of the author's notes and letters that allows readers 'to trace his path from early conviction to accomplishment'.
- **'Not like an arrow, but a boomerang'** James Ley, essayist and literary critic, explores the life and works of Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man* (1952). Ley claims that 'Ellison remained committed to a universalising version of literary humanism' to 'gesture beyond history's pernicious categorisations'.

Interview requests and further information

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