

April highlights

This April *ABR* considers the importance of talk. In his cover essay, historian Frank Bongiorno argues that the Albanese government's storytelling, not just its actions, directs the 'possibilities of politics'. Sheila Fitzpatrick gives a moving portrait of her friendship with 'recording angel' Katerina Clark and G. Geltner pushes us to rethink our Middle-Ages chatter. Sascha Morrell comes around to the 'winks and nudges' in a major new biography of Frank Moorhouse and Frances Wilson insists Hilary Mantel will speak for herself in death. Glyn Davis tells us about a floating university and Morag Fraser puzzles over mothers. There's Michael Hofmann on Nam Le's *36 Ways of Writing a Vietnamese Poem*, Stuart Kells on rogue corporations, and Robyn Arianrhod on the moon.



Clockwise from top left: Anthony Albanese (Wikimedia), Sheila Fitzpatrick, Frank Moorhouse (Alec Bolton/National Library of Australia/courtesy of Robert Bolton), and Hilary Mantel (Guy Newman/Alamy)

Parallel lives, friendship as witness: Soviet historian Sheila Fitzpatrick recounts a lifelong friendship with Katerina Clark, the Soviet literary academic who died this February. The daughters of Australian left-wing historians Brian Fitzpatrick and Manning Clark, their lives bore witness to one another's. 'Who is there to keep up the records on us now?'

How the Albanese government talks about itself: Assessing Act One of the Albanese government, historian Frank Bongiorno considers the value of political messaging versus action: 'Does it matter how a government explains its policies, as distinct from what it actually does?' Well, yes, argues Bongiorno.

When I am famous: Sascha Morrell reviews Matthew Lamb's *Frank Moorhouse: Strange paths* and considers the allure of a writer who left scraps and clues for his future biographer. Lamb, the ideal reader for this voluminous archive, matches Moorhouse's capacity for telling the truth 'bit by bit', wink by nudge.

When we talk about the Middle Ages: G. Geltner revisits the power of periodisation in an essay about 'hegemonic shorthand such as the Middle Ages, the Age of Discovery, or, indeed, BCE and CE as acceptable replacements for the Christocentric BC/AD'. Categories – however convenient – risk reducing all cultures to a single system. And yet, Geltner suggests, 'there are ways to periodise while resisting bias'.

Truly a strange, fierce product: Reviewing the debut poetry collection of acclaimed writer Nam Le, *36 Ways of Writing a Vietnamese Poem*, Michael Hofmann writes 'You pick it up and you cut yourself. You pick it up and it cuts itself'. This is strange poetry, 'all powered (and stymied) by a splintering but still unbearably heavy self-consciousness'.

Interview requests and further information

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