

# Chewing the fat

Lionel Shriver's latest is not the only title to catch the panel's attention

### » RUTH HUNTER



BookTime editor,  
Bertrams

It's hard for some to make the transition between young adult and adult fiction, but Sophie McKenzie does it well in **Close My Eyes**. Fast paced but also psychologically deep it follows Geniver, who discovers that her baby who she thought was stillborn eight years earlier, may still be alive after all—and that her husband may have been involved in deceiving her. With mystery, intrigue and even romance it's got everything you would want in a thriller.

Having tackled the subject of school shootings, Lionel Shriver turns her attention to another facet of modern American life in **Big Brother**: obesity. Businesswoman Pandora invites her beloved brother Edison to stay when she hears he's hit hard times, only to discover that in the four years since she last saw him he's become extremely fat, much to the chagrin of her super-fit husband Fletcher. A deeply intelligent and often comic look at this controversial issue, and also of the bonds between siblings in later life, with a killer twist.

Marcel Theroux returns with **Strange Bodies**, in which the consciousness of Nicky Slopen, a deceased scholar with an expertise in Samuel Johnson, appears to have been transferred into a different body. This new man seems to have Nicky's memories and personality, but should we believe his sinister

story? An exploration of what makes us individuals, which combines elements of sci-fi and thriller to produce a literary, thought-provoking novel.

The story of a poverty-stricken family growing up in the Louisiana swamp in the 1980s,

**Sketcher** by Roland

Watson-Grant is both funny and moving. Narrated by Skid Beaumont, the youngest of four brothers, it describes his journey from childhood to adolescence, and the

magical powers his brother Frico seems to possess. Relating gunfights, alligator attacks and black magic, Skid's distinctive Southern voice is reminiscent of Tom Sawyer or Scout Finch.

### HOT BOOK OUT NOW

Waiting for Sunrise **William Boyd**

### » EMMA GIACON



Book content manager,  
Amazon

**The Aftermath** by Rhidian Brook is set in Hamburg in 1946. Thousands remain displaced following the end of the war in what is now the British Occupied Zone. Colonel Lewis Morgan, in charge of rebuilding the city and the community, has commandeered a fine house on the banks of the Elbe, to be joined by his grieving wife Rachael and only remaining son Edmund. But rather than force its owners, a German widower and his traumatised daughter, to

leave their home Lewis insists that the two families live together, leading to a charged and claustrophobic atmosphere. Brook got the inspiration from his own family history (his grandfather lived in Hamburg just after the Second World War and allowed the owners of the house to stay on). The novel is already being developed into a feature film.

In Brian Kimberling's **Snapper** we meet Nathan Lochmueller, whose life is centred around birdwatching, a woman who won't stay true and a pick-up truck that won't start. All about him swirls a remarkable cast of small-town characters, including the state of Indiana itself, the location for the story. At the centre of it all is Nathan, creeping through the forest to observe the birds he loves and coming to terms with the accidental turns his life has taken.

Courtney Collins has written an unusual and accomplished debut, **The Burial**, inspired by the life of the "lady bushranger" Jessie Hickman. On release from prison, Jessie is sold to Fitz, who embroils her in his horse rustling and cattle stealing enterprises. When Fitz's abusive nature becomes too much, Jessie murders him (and her newborn child, who becomes our narrator, a distant observer of events who maintains a connection with his mother) and ends up on the run.

### HOT BOOK OUT NOW

Honestly Healthy **Natash Corbett & Vicki Edgson**

### » PATRICK NEALE



Co-owner, Jaffé & Neale  
Bookshop & Cafe

Lionel Shriver never shies from away compelling and controversial subjects and her latest book **Big Brother** trumps all her previous offerings. It starts with a successful woman,



Pandora, not recognising her brother Edison at an airport terminal due to his obesity. It then explores how her family copes with the arrival of this bigger than life character. With brilliant observation and wit about family life as well as an essential reflection on our attitude to food and eating, this is a must read.

In the tradition of Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* Rayya Elias, a Syrian by birth, has written **Harley Loco**, a raw autobiography of her time in the New York Music scene of the 1980s. But this isn't a glitzy celeb story, it's an exposé of the homeless and drug abusers of the Lower East Side. Her story is graphic and brutal. She has gone as low as you can go and yet is still positive, making this a joy to read. Fans of Antony Bourdain are in for a real treat with this New York "shock and roll" autobiography.

I stopped studying science at the age of 16 so I am very grateful to the writer Edward O Wilson. He makes science accessible and enthralling. His **Letters to a Young Scientist** is a joy. He uses his 60 years as a passionate biologist and his Pulitzer Prize-winning writing skills to write a letter begging us all to embrace and enjoy science. Coupled with anecdotes from his fascinating life this makes a great read for all.

I haven't read John le Carré's **A Delicate Truth**. It's about the collision between the dark arts of counter-terrorism and diplomacy and its set in contemporary Britain. With le Carré's recent feisty novels I can't wait to read this and enjoy seeing a few feathers ruffled.

### » SARAH CLARKE



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Power and allure form the main themes of **Blood and Beauty**,

