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Subject: A book-filled break from the [new] norm
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ME



Stories for new ways of seeing

A book-filled break from the [new] norm

Issue No.8: Lisa Blower shares wise words on motivation while keeping her pecker up • read an extract from Lisa's forthcoming novel, *Pondweed* • stellar sellers for all your book buying needs while the shops are shut • + more...

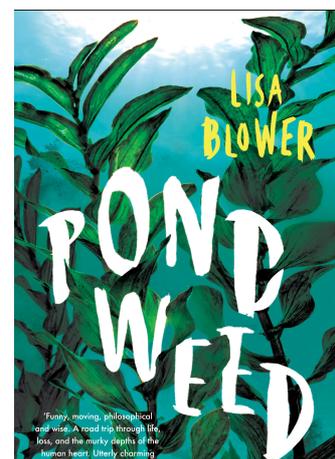
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Publishing when faced with Covid-19

Lisa Blower's love story in the slow lane, *Pondweed*, will be hitting the (probably virtual) shelves in just a little over a month. With the world as it is, we obviously wondered whether now was the right time for publishing this beautiful hardback – after all, it's a question that's haunted the industry for every summer release.

We decided it most certainly is the right time for readers to discover *Pondweed*. A story about loss and getting lost, it couldn't be a better antidote to our time. Two childhood



sweethearts take a trip via pints, ponds and pitstops to find their future on a road less travelled from Stoke-on-Trent to Wales.



Lisa takes us on this journey with the lightest of comedic touches, filled with penetrating observations of human nature, and the deep, lasting impact that losing a parent can bring.

Pondweed will be published on 9 July 2020.

[PRE-ORDER PONDWEED HERE](#)

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An extract from: *Pondweed*

'We all whimper at the faint whiff of romance, yet it is such a grub. I met Selwyn Robby in the garden centre. Almost fifty years had lumbered by since we'd parted ways and then he was right there, in the aquatics franchise selling garden ponds. I heard him before I saw him. He was talking intently to a couple about pond liners as if they might repair a doomed marriage. 'The most durable in the world with a lifetime guarantee,' he was saying. And there it still was: that Welsh borders accent with its fat and thick vowels that used to soothe my mother like a dose of laudanum, and no doubt doing that thing he used to do where he pinches his nostrils together and sniffs. 'This is top-quality Swedish Butyl rubber. One hundred per cent watertight, even in swell.' '

[READ THE FIRST CHAPTER HERE](#)

For the love of books

Most of the bookshops are still closed, and the large online retailer we all hate to love is showing 'out of stock' on so many reads right now it's *almost* unbelievable. So how does one blooming well buy a book these days? Never fear, we're here to suggest a few stellar sellers all with good stocks and great delivery, or offering socially distanced collection...



Book Depository: free delivery worldwide • **Blackwell's:** free delivery UK • **City Books,** Brighton: orders & collection 10am–4pm • **Dave's Comics,** Brighton: email orders • **The Feminist Bookshop,** Brighton: currently online • **Five Leaves Bookshop,** Nottingham: email orders • **Foyles,** national: currently online • **Gay's the Word,** London: currently online • **Golden Hare Books,** Edinburgh: currently online • **Jarrold,** Norwich: currently online • **The Kemptown Bookshop,** Brighton: order by phone/email • **Owl Bookshop,** London: currently online • **Pages,** London: currently online • **Persephone Books,** London: currently online • **Topping & Co,** Bath, Ely, Edinburgh, St Andrews: online and collection • **Waterstones,** national: currently online

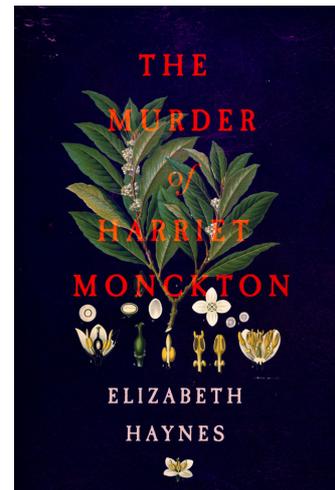
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The week in reviews

The Murder of Harriet Monckton

by Elizabeth Haynes

'This book is SO good!! It's a fairly recent read but it was absolutely incredible ... A really interesting reading experience and I haven't read a book set out quite like it before ... so many twists and turns that i didn't see coming! Can't recommend this book enough.' —**Incandescently Bookish**



Easier Ways to Say I Love You

by Lucy Fry

'A pain-soaked read, but Lucy shines a bright light on what all too often stays hidden. She kicks 'the unsaid' directly between its monstrous eyes. She is wild.' —**Zoe Hearts Books**

The Heartsick Diaspora

by Elaine Chiew

'This has got to be my favourite collection of short stories this year ... It also made me realise how cleverly my mum social-hustled for us as the sole Asian family in a very white neighbourhood when we lived in London in the 1980s (constant playdates with blondes!). It is a lovely feeling when stories are able to dig up random snapshots of past lives.' —**Mel Tea Books**

'Elaine Chiew writes with such wit and humour, but with a deftness that never compromises the poignancy of the migrant experience, of being caught between the cultures and expectations of one's homeland and the assumptions and freedoms of the adopted one. This is a book of short stories that linger and leave me wanting more.' —**Yin F Lim**

To The Volcano

by Elleke Boehmer

'A book that teaches you and a book that you'll enjoy.' —**Books and Cleverness**

Brave New Words

edited by Susheila Nasta

'It's about identity, citizenship, belonging, and so much more. Read it!' —**Gwendabird**

BUY THESE BOOKS NOW
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My bookish life... Lisa Blower

Now more than ever it feels important to talk to each other, to meet new people, to learn new things. And so we're asking our writerly and bookish friends to talk to us, sharing a little insight into their daily lives...



This week Lisa Blower talks about life and writing in these times. Lisa's fabulous collection of award-winning short stories, *It's Gone Dark Over Bill's Mother's*, strikes a new chord in regional and working-class fiction. Her next literary venture – *Pondweed*, a road novel and journey of self-discovery – is out in July.

Have you formed a new routine? And how have your days changed?

I'm merging these questions because we're taking each day as it comes. Whatever it takes to get you through and doing what you can to keep your family safe and your pecker up! We're home-



schooling. My partner and I are working from home. That makes us really, really lucky. There's a lot of Zooming. Checking in with students (I'm a lecturer). And there's lots of changes in the uni world that I'm trying to get my head around. Sometimes the house feels like *A Squash and a Squeeze*. Other days, it feels like a bubble full of rainbows. *Grayson's Art Club* is the mother of all gin and tonics, and my awe of Sally Rooney has reached skyscraper heights now that I've finally watched *Normal People*. I did some writing yesterday though.



What are you looking forward to?

Camping with old mates up in Barmouth, the sea on my toes, and a campfire. Squeezing family and friends until their knuckles go white.

Are you writing, and managing to stay creative?

I'm playing around with a new novella – at least, that's how it's being written for now.

Do you have any advice for anyone feeling creatively squashed right now, and what's helping you get back in the zone?

Just do whatever you feel like you doing when you feel like doing it. For me, personally, this is not a time to set deadlines or allocate hours to specific tasks or worry about all we're not doing because we have this so-called time to do the stuff we keep on telling ourselves we should do. If you fancy picking up a pen, then do it. If you're gravitating towards a paintbrush, pick it up. If the motivation's not there, don't force it. We know there's lots of folk out there posting this and setting up that, and this is all great – I watched Julia Bell interview Deborah Levy last night and it was a wonderful forty-five minutes that was massively inspiring – but use it wisely. It doesn't matter if you're not doing it right now. Everyone's situation is different. You'll do it another day.

What are your small daily comforts?

A pot of coffee in the morning. A pot of tea in the afternoon. Watching my daughter chat to her tadpoles. Knowing family and friends are okay.

How are you keeping in touch with others?

I'm old fashioned and still use a landline. But I've been Zooming.

PRE-ORDER PONDWEED

BUY IT'S GONE DARK OVER BILL'S MOTHER'S

CONTACT EMMA DOWSON FOR REVIEW COPIES

If you work with books, in any way – editor, blogger, bookshop worker, reviewer – and would like to feature in our new 'My bookish life' series, we'd love to hear from you.

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Before you go...

Nicholas Royle, author of *Mother: A Memoir*, talks with Andrew Bennett on *Crossed Lines*, about the figure of the mother in relation to the telephone – seeking to explore the idea that, in the context of telepoetics, the mother is always on the line. [LISTEN HERE](#)

Catch **Sarah Lightman**, author of *The Book of Sarah*, in a brand new online exhibition from the Arts Chaplaincy: *The Spiritual Exercises*, presenting works that mediate memory and longing via the parameters of the present. [EXPLORE HERE](#)

Our friends over at **Brighton Women's Centre** are currently running a Crowdfunder to support them in their work as Women Supporting Women. [FIND OUT MORE HERE](#)

The **Creative Future Writers' Award** for under-represented writers in the UK is open for just a few more days – deadline 31 May – inviting fiction and poetry entries on the theme 'tomorrow'. [ENTER HERE](#)

The deadline for the **Wasafiri New Writing Prize** has been extended to 15 June. The prize is open to all writers who haven't yet published a book-length work in their chosen genre. [ENTER HERE](#)

NB Magazine take a look at 'Independent Publishing in a Time of Covid-19: Where to Find a Good Book'. We were delighted to see **Myriad** on the list. [READ HERE](#)

Otilie Hainsworth, author of *Talking to Gina*, has been capturing the essence of lockdown life and the new normal, in her 'Covid Diaries'. [MORE ON INSTAGRAM @ottilie.hainsworth](#)





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