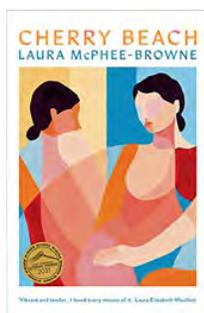


McGreal's writing is raw and straightforward. It attacks the senses and overwhelms the reader by conveying Anthony's experiences through constant repetition. McGreal personifies Anthony's mental health through obsessive inner monologues that create a paradoxical sense of depersonalization.

Anthony evokes pity, frustration, anxiety, and concern. He's a complex character, but only within the realm of cis het, non-disabled, white men. He has the concerns of a man with mental health disorders, but lacks the depth and relatability of intersectionality, which becomes clear in his interactions with others. As he ages, his treatment of those around him, especially women, is misogynistic and superficial. He says he wants to improve himself but pressures others to conform to his needs, pushing the responsibility for himself onto them, as when he tells his therapist: "I'm not the person I want to be. Make me the person I want to be."

Overall, McGreal does a good job of representing Anthony's raw emotions. His choice of writing short stories that can be read independently is a nice stylistic touch, but in most of these stories it doesn't feel like Anthony has overcome anything, in contrast to the novel's summary promising he will "become his own man." The book creates discomfort but lacks the complexity to reach an audience who is not exactly like Anthony. (Collin Iu)



Cherry Beach

Laura McPhee-Browne, 240 pgs, Text Publishing, textpublishing.com.au, \$29.99

Toronto's beauty is easy to forget, until fresh eyes inject a rejuvenating romanticism back into the city's pockets.

Cherry Beach follows Ness and Hetty, childhood best friends from suburban Melbourne who have just stepped foot

into Toronto seeking city-induced anonymity and new adventure.

Leaving the roots of their trauma back in Australia, the pair keep a tight hold on one another out of necessity. However, the whirlwind of their new lives — woven around a rapidly-moving city, compelling company, self-destruction, and old traumas threatening to erupt — gradually pull Ness and Hetty apart.

McPhee-Browne captures the desperation of fading lifelong friendships draped in shared history that seems to lose relevance in the context of a new home, new people, and new unexplored territory.

"I could feel her hanging on. We both wanted to be each other's person, but our bodies were moving apart," she writes. "She seemed to need me to know it was just a brief change in the current."

While this story is told from Ness's perspective, where she recounts their childhood and their time in Toronto, it's Hetty who takes up Ness' tunnel vision and embodies the soul of *Cherry Beach*.

McPhee-Browne's writing is melodic and intoxicating in each magnetic description of Toronto's landmarks and neighbourhoods and in the array of compelling characters passing through the story. Her prose makes up for a few of the underdeveloped relationships and side characters that she seems to set up as something more significant, but left me expecting more.

Cherry Beach is written with an undercurrent of intimacy and longing, two states that are painted most vividly in the grey area between friendship and desire. (Bernice Santos)



The Quiet Is Loud

Samantha Garner, 320 pgs, Invisible Publishing, invisiblepublishing.com, \$23.95

The gap between speech and silence can be a source of protection,

especially when fitting in is the difference between life and death. This is the case for Freya Tanangco, who has known she has prophetic psychic abilities ever since she dreamed of her mother's death before it occurred.

Samantha Garner's refreshingly original debut novel, *The Quiet Is Loud*, explores the grey areas between what we say and what we conceal and the stakes of keeping one's identity hidden. Garner's world is much like our own but for the presence of psychically skilled "paradextrous" people, derogatorily called "vekera" by those who fear and persecute them. The narrative follows Freya as she meets others like her through STEP, or Support Tools Empowering the Paradextrous, a support group for those with extraordinary abilities. There she comes to know Cassandra, who studies the paradextrous, Javi, who can sense when others possess a skill, and Shawn, an activist who believes paradextrous people should be open about their abilities and demand equal treatment and recognition.

As the characters' names make clear, the novel weaves a rich symbolic tapestry of seemingly disparate traditions including Norse and Filipino mythology and tarot card archetypes. This approach creates a welcome exploration of difference and identity anchored in allegory and metaphor rather than literal politics. Questions of coming out and who has the right to share others' stories are explored through conflicts between characters, as when Shawn wants to out Freya for political gain while she insists that, "some people would rather not draw attention to themselves."

Garner's speculative narrative flashes back and forth between Freya's 90s childhood and her 2015 present, embedding these questions in a complex family history while maintaining a day-in-the-life narrative feel. It's a fearlessly unique book, and I look forward to whatever this exciting new author chooses to write next. (Maria Cichosz)