

Bookshelf

Monologue of a stalker

Grey
EL James
Arrow Books

When the original *Fifty Shades Of Grey* came out, I chose not to review it. And then it exploded – and everyone read it, even my mum, swiftly followed by the film version, which was released last week on DVD. What started as fan fiction has snowballed into a marketing phenomenon, and the latest instalment came last week when EL James released *Grey*, the story of *Fifty Shades* told from the ‘hero’ Christian Grey’s viewpoint. She says fans begged her to write it, but sadly for those fans, she’s short-changed them with 557 pages of the same dialogue interspersed with scant new tidbits about the character. What we do learn about him is through dreams of his drug-addled mum, flashbacks to being adopted into a loving family as a scarred and mute child – and through a seemingly interminable inner monologue that reveals him to be a sex-addicted stalker, obsessed with making virgin Anastasia Steele his submissive. In his over-ego-inflated mind, he pits himself against literary heroes Darcy, Rochester and Angel Clare, while typical Grey thoughts include “I stalk towards her like she’s my prey”. Just creepy.

5/10 – Kate Whiting

Magical tale in odd style

A Year Of Marvellous Ways
Sarah Winman
Tinder Press

In 1947 Cornwall, Marvellous (an 89-year-old woman) is waiting – “not for death, as you might assume”, but for something she senses is coming. This is the first hint of the magical realism that pervades the novel – we later hear of Marvellous’ mermaid mother, and (a personal favourite) of Peace, who bakes loaves in which you can taste her moods. Though just the phrase ‘magical realism’ is enough to put some off, here it works: there is a real grounding in reality, the stories are touching, but the twist lent by these quirks lends a joyful, fairytale element.

When the ‘something’ Marvellous has been waiting for arrives, it is in the form of Francis Drake: a young soldier returning from war to deliver a crucial letter, who finds and loses his love. In Francis, Marvellous recognises a broken young man, so sets out to heal him using stories.

The only real downside to this novel is the disorientating way it’s told. No speech marks, and a somewhat experimental form can take some getting used to. Style aside, this is ultimately a lavish and clever read which will stand the test of time.

9/10 – Emma Herdman

Bookshop chain enters a deal to showcase fine art

EXHIBITIONS Waterstones, Winchester

A BOOKSHOP has turned its attention to fine art as part of an exclusive arrangement with a county-wide art publicity company.

Waterstones in Winchester has joined forces with Creative Coverage to host monthly exhibitions showcasing local talent.

The first started on July 17 featuring work by Eileen Sey from Lymington and Vivien Verey from Romsey.

Both artists are working towards their Hampshire Open Studios from August 22 to

August 31 and Eileen is the winner of The Red House Open Museum Award 2015.

Dual site manager for both of the Winchester Waterstones branches, Charlotte Keayes, said: “Our customers crave more than just books. I had been looking to show fine art in the High Street bookshop for sometime but did not know how to go about doing it.”

By chance she met Tim Saunders of Creative Coverage and the two agreed to collaborate.

Tim added: “We are looking forward to a long and fruitful working relationship.”

“There need to be many more enthusiastic people like Charlotte in the art world, which is traditionally seen as a closed shop to many artists. She really is a beacon of light and I am grateful for her interest.”

The current exhibition runs until August 17.



Play leaves you feline emotional

REVIEW Cheshire Cats, RAODS, Linden House

CHESHIRE Cats tells the story of a group of women training and then walking the London “Moonwalk” in aid of breast cancer charities.

The play is a wonderful

mixture of laughter and sadness and the five women in the team were all excellent in their different ways.

Hilary, the team leader, played by Georgette Ellison, was bossy, overenthusiastic and determined to be a winner.

Vicky (Clare Durham), Maggie (Becky Mills), Siobhan (Kathrina Gwynne) and Yvonne (Danielle Fletcher) made up the rest of the team and their reasons for taking part were gradually revealed.

Harry Andreou multi-tasked as

Andrew, Vicky’s new man, then as an over-the-top fitness instructor and, finally, as a rather gorgeous drunk that the women met on their midnight walk around London.

I must also mention Colin Russell and Jane Hartley as the scene changers. With a few props and a few well chosen words they transported us to the next scene with great style and much laughter.

Neil Gwynne’s direction brought out both the comedy and the pathos. The characters were

very believable, at times full of fun and laughter, but also showing the difficult parts of their lives.

Maggie’s final speech was exceptionally moving and it was hard to hold back the tears.

Mr and Mrs Oldmeadow must be thanked for allowing RAODS to use their beautiful garden for this open air production.

Linden House was the perfect setting for this amusing and emotional play.

Margaret Fields

Seamless vocal ensemble in nave

REVIEW Tallis Scholars, Winchester Cathedral

THE Cathedral nave was once again the perfect setting for unaccompanied choral music in the Winchester Festival, especially for gorgeous sacred repertoire designed for such spaces.

If the large audience was anxious about the arrival of only ten voices it was immediately beguiled by the Tallis Scholars’ opening motet

by their namesake. Here is a Rolls Royce vocal ensemble founded by its director over 40 years ago – before most of the assembled singers were born!

Among its ranks were some eminent professional soloists who have sung oratorios in the same building but whose consummate vocal technique enables them to blend with each other at all dynamic levels. Indeed, their ensemble is seamless.

The complete Missa Papae Marcelli by Palestrina completed the first half of this ethereal programme. It flowed effortlessly with natural phrasing and tasteful under-lining of the

religious sentiments.

After the interval five singers returned to the nave dais with four colleagues hidden far away in the Quire and tenor Christopher Watson positioned in the pulpit for Allegri’s famous Miserere. Its plainsong purity, antiphonal scoring and its top Cs for the distant soprano were immaculately re-created.

Further thrilling sounds came from the contemporary items by Eric Whitacre (Sainte-Chapelle) and Arvo Pärt (Nunc Dimittis). The latter reached a spell-binding dynamic climax filling the great building with powerful resonance only possible from first-class singers. The close chording of

these modern works had a timeless beauty enhanced by the impeccable tuning of the Scholars.

Tallis and Byrd motets completed the programme along with a fine sacred encore from Mexico.

In this most spiritual of buildings such committed interpretations of perfectly crafted settings of religious texts would melt the hearts of the coldest atheists.

Conductor-founder Peter Phillips smiled at the end of every piece. Who wouldn’t if they had created such a peerless ensemble?

Derek Beck