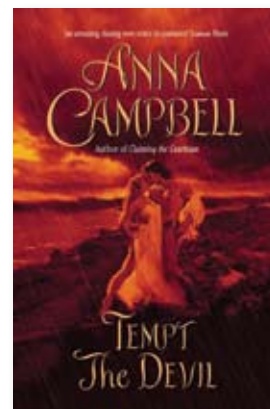


**Tempt the Devil** (Anna Campbell, Avon, \$27.99 pb, ISBN 9780732287290, February) ★ ★ ★ ★

No one writes Regency like Australia's Anna Campbell. Although many authors of the genre touch on the seamier side of Regency England, Campbell immerses her readers in it. She's the mistress of dark, sexy and brooding and takes us into the dens of inequity with humour and class. We meet beautiful Olivia Raines, London's most notorious and beautiful courtesan. She despises men yet panders to their every whim, completely aware of the beguiling powers that make them pay anything to have and keep her. Damaged by a horrible crime at an early age, Olivia is left emotionally and physically barren and although high born, realises she has no other option but to join the demimondaine, giving up all

hope of marriage. More actress than whore, she does everything men dream of but feels nothing for them but disgust and fear. Her next lover, the virile Earl of Erith, is London's most notorious rake. He vows to release the passion she hides and in return she demands from him the future she's always believed was her birthright. *Tempt the Devil* is a well-written, sexy and unputdownable read.

*Drew Turney is a freelance journalist, graphic designer and web developer*



**The Virtuoso** (Sonia Orchard, Fourth Estate, \$27.99 pb, ISBN 9780732288075, February) ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I don't get it. Writing classes are teeming with prospective novelists yet debut fiction continues to be the wallflower of Australian publishing. Surely some smart young marketing thing dressed in black and wearing horn-rims could put the two together and launch a debut fiction imprint aimed expressly at wannabe fiction writers? When I was a writing student, our class mantra was read more, write more. And what better to read than first-time novelists who have cracked it? Sonia Orchard's beautifully written and evocative first novel (but not first book) is a case in point. The story of an affair that becomes an obsession, *The Virtuoso* is an assured and precisely crafted unveiling of post-war bohemian (i.e. gay) London. The narrator is an

increasingly fixated alcoholic and possibly second-rate pianist, with an obsession for young real-life Australian virtuoso Noël Mewton-Wood. Extensively researched, *The Virtuoso* blends fact and fiction, and resonates with the passion and musicality of the great composers the characters love. Meticulous detail about the music scene in Europe at the time, strong and careful writing and a sense of inevitable doom (Mewton-Wood committed suicide in 1953) make *The Virtuoso* an unhurried but compelling read. It heralds another entry in our growing list of talented new Australian novelists.

*Brendan Gullifer's first novel, Sold, will be published by Sleepers Publishing in 2009*



**After the Celebration: Australian Fiction 1989—2007** (Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman, MUP, \$36.99 pb, ISBN 9780522855975, February) ★ ★ ★ ★

Following on from *The New Diversity: Australian Fiction 1970—1988*, Gelder and Salzman's new book chronicles the development of Australian literature over the past 20 years. *After the Celebration* builds a comprehensive study of both the work of individual authors and the social forces that have shaped Australian writing generally, and approaches this critique from political, historical and social contexts. This book is an academic text which remains pleasantly accessible. It describes the introduction of Nielsen BookScan, the potential impact on the sales of literary fiction and chronicles the fluctuating position of the short story in Australian writing. Gelder and Salzman examine the industry shifts that

influence what we find on the bookshop shelves, such as the globalisation of the publishing industry and the consequent emergence of independent publishing houses to fill the gap in publishing quality local writing. Despite the excellent grounding in cultural context, the book does not lose its focus on the consideration of individual novels and writers. The legacy of High Modernism in the writings of David Malouf and the clash between historians and novelists in the by now well-known Kate Grenville saga are just a couple of the critiques contained here. An enjoyable and informative read.

*Portia Lindsay works at the UNSW Bookshop*



**Ask Pamela Q&A: Pamela Clark Answers All your Cooking Questions** (Pamela Clark, ACP Books, \$14.95 pb, ISBN 9781863968713, February) ★ ★ ★

This is a clever idea; a book that troubleshoots on any issue or problem to do with food and cooking. It is well organised by topic: 'Baking', 'Christmas', 'Meat and Chicken' etc. Within each chapter, problems are posed. 'How do you carve a turkey?' And the authority of the *Women's Weekly's* food director, Pamela Clark, will find you an answer. In addition, there is a table for equivalent cup-to-weight ratios, a series of charts that offer quick referencing for things like optimal storage times for the gamut of seafood products, and a comprehensive index. While I think Clark's information is accessible and useful, and some huge kitchen mysteries have certainly been solved for me (involving meringues), I fear the potential

audience for such a text may now use the internet for troubleshooting. Cake flat as a pancake? You can plug that into any search engine and get information very quickly. Thumbing through a printed volume might have no charm for the digital generation. However, for cooks who find the internet difficult to navigate or who like their information stamped with the weight of the *Women's Weekly*, this volume could diffuse hours of frustration and, at under \$15, the price is spot on.

*Annelise Balsamo is a freelance reviewer and wrote on cookbooks in her doctoral thesis*

