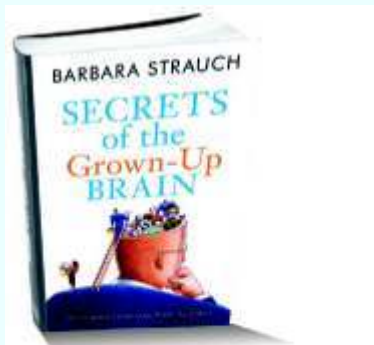




In short Nonfiction

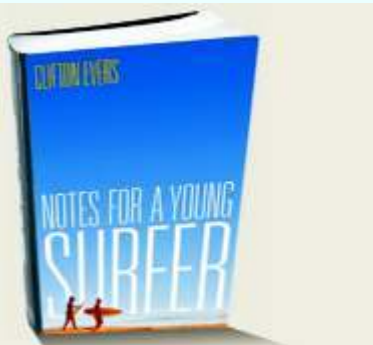


SECRETS OF THE GROWN-UP BRAIN
 Barbara Strauch
 Black Inc, 230pp,
 \$27.95

Historically, research about the human brain has assumed middle age is just a step along a road to inescapable decline. In fact, in many ways our brains are at their peak from the age of 40 to our late 60s.

Sure, we forget a few names and misplace the keys occasionally but that is more than offset by the mature brain's ability to draw on past experience and filter out the day's trivia to solve problems. The middle-aged brain also tends to be happier and more calm than its frenetic young counterpart and, in many ways, is at its creative peak.

All of this is comforting news and explained fluently by Strauch, who is the health and medical science editor at *The New York Times*. The book is lifted immeasurably by her prowess at translating research for a mass audience, although middle-aged readers will instantly recognise these simplifications are for the benefit of less mature brains.

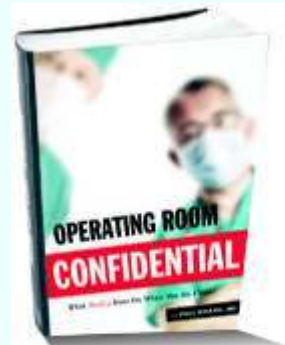


NOTES FOR A YOUNG SURFER
 Clifton Evers
 MUP, 172pp, \$24.99

Life's tough on the water for a grommet struggling to get a wave, fit in with the local crew and grapple with the approach of manhood. Evers, a surfer of more than 30 years and now a post-doctorate researcher in gender studies at the University of NSW, has penned a guide to help boys through the confusion.

Crafted from his own experiences as he navigated waves and manhood, the book is an appeal to young men to look beyond a macho culture that denigrates women, bullies less experienced surfers and shuns people from other cultures.

Evers writes in a way that should resonate with his young male audience, although his tendency to include endnotes to scholarly journals when discussing his own experiences is a perplexing nod to academia. Still, he deserves praise for presenting his own mistakes to help others find themselves and not blindly follow in the wake of others.



OPERATING ROOM CONFIDENTIAL
 Paul Whang
 ECW Press, 200pp,
 \$29.95

Written in the genre of *Kitchen Confidential*, Anthony Bourdain's expose of restaurants, this flings open the doors of the operating room. Whang is an anaesthetist, which puts him in a position to observe the quirks of almost every medical specialty.

He delivers a career's worth of anecdotes (the smell of an electrocautery surgical knife cutting through flesh is remarkably evocative of a summer barbecue) to questions and answers for nervous patients (operating rooms are so cold because doctors work under hot, bright lights). Among his amusing observations: big, boofy tattooed blokes tend to be the most fearful of the anaesthetist's needle.

Much of this book is comforting stuff. Just don't dwell on the fact that the gases in the gut have been known to ignite during surgery.