

January 2017



This month with [New Finnish Grammar](#) by Italian Writer [Diego Marani](#), we started our year of [European novels in translation](#), recommended in a list that appeared in The Guardian in March 2016.

Review by Denise

I found it a deeply moving and fascinatingly complex novel. It raises interesting questions on what constitutes our identity, and what is the nature of memory. All this set in a mystery that manages to draw the reader in and hold the attention with fascinating characters and multiple facets of

exploration.

I also admired the way the author draws the reader into Finnish culture, with its roots in shamanism, Kalevala and Lutheranism that inspires the reader to gain deeper self-awareness. A magnificent and moving description of Helsinki suffering in the war with Russia, and the juxtaposition of the excitable foreign press corps and the damaged troops arriving by train from the front.

There were times the language was exquisite. It needed to be a short novel, so intense. Marani displays a complex understanding and empathy for the situation, using a hero who appears to be emotionally petrified. Another dimension in the character exploration.

Diego Marani was born in Ferrara, Italy in 1959. He has worked as a translator and policy officer for the European Commission and has written several other novels, collections of essays and short stories. *New Finnish Grammar* was published by Text in 2012 and was shortlisted for the *Independent Foreign Fiction Award* and the *Best Translated Book Award*. *The Last of the Vostyachs* was published by Text in 2013.

Judith Landry won the 2012 Oxford-Weidenfeld Translation Prize for her translation of *New Finnish Grammar*.

Listen to a [conversation with Diego Marani at AALITRA](#) in Melbourne on 2013.

Ratings: Alexa 4, Claudia 3, Denise 4, Di 3, Gail 4, Janet 4, Margie 4, Nic 3.5, Penny 4 and Viv4.

Next month we get together on the 13/02/17 at 6:30pm at [Preece House, 50 Nerang St Bischof Pioneer Park, Nerang \(next to 54 Nerang St. shops\)](#) to discuss [All The Light](#) by German writer [Clemens Meyer](#).

Hope to see you there and Happy Reading!

Other Books We Read

January 2017

Our book of the month was [New Finnish Grammar](#) by [Diego Marani](#), but we also read other books.

Maximum rating is 5.

The Feel of Steel by Helen Garner, 3.5

Oranges are not the Only Fruit by Jeanette Winterson, 4

Christmas Days: 12 Stories and 12 Feasts for 12 Days by Jeanette Winterson, 3.5, 3.5 & 3

Dumb Luck by Vu Trong Phung, 3

Life by Gwyneth A. Jones, 3.5

Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont by Elizabeth Taylor, 3.5

The Notebook Trilogy by Agota Kristof, 4

Commonwealth by Ann Patchett, 4.5 & 4

Dancing Backwards by Sally Vickers, 2

Blame by Nicole Trope, 3

The Natural Way of Things by Charlotte Wood, 3.5

Mullumbimby by Melissa Lucashenko, 3

A Manual for Cleaning Women, 4 & 4.5

The Life Changing Magic of not Giving a F@#k, 3

The Gustav Sonata by Rose Tremain, 3

The Dry by Jane Harper, 4

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, 2.5