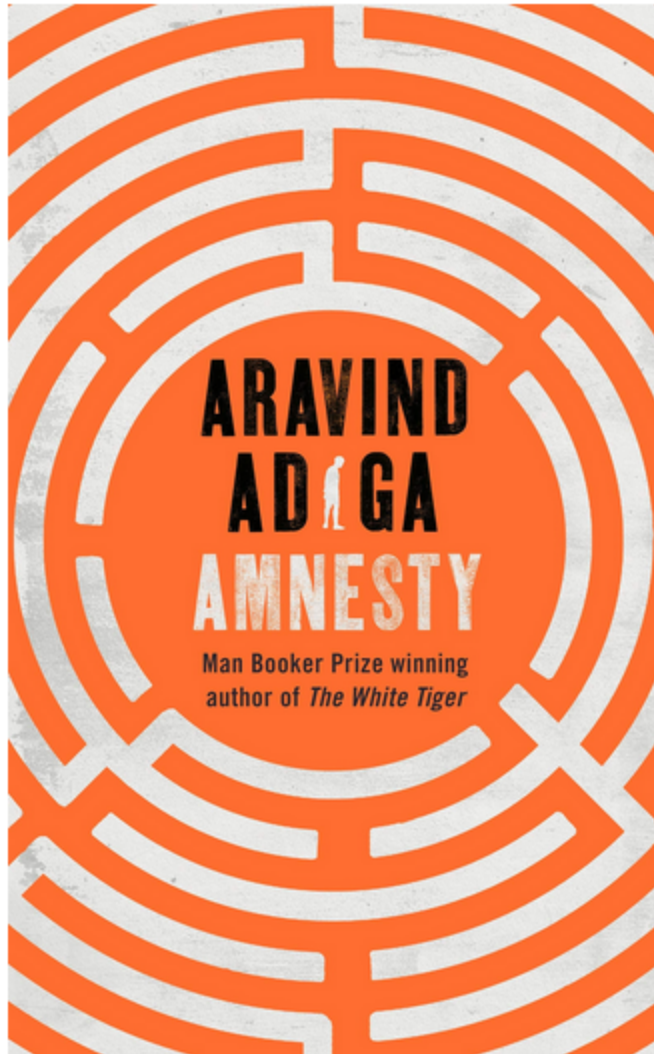


October 2021



October's book was *Amnesty* by Aravind Adiga, it is the story of Danny, Dhananjaya Rajaratnam, the 'legendary' Tamil cleaner from Sri Lanka living in Sydney for the last 4 years after dropping out of his 'rip off college' in Wollongong. He is an illegal immigrant, with golden highlights in his hair to look more 'Australian'; going out with Sonya the Vietnamese Australian vegan nurse whose mother has all the evidence of legality i.e. Medicare card, Healthcare card etc. He lives in Glebe above the shop of Tommo the dodgy Greek who takes financial advantage of his illegality. He cleans for the 'thin-bums' who eat salads and jog, whereas the 'thick bums', the obese poor do their own cleaning.

The story begins on the day that Danny discovers No 5 has been murdered; Radha

Thomas an Australian born Indian married to an Aussie. Danny suspects No 6 Dr Prakash, an Indian born Australian, of the murder. Over the next 12 hours Danny struggles with whether to notify the police of his suspicions and risk exposing his illegal status. The story flips

between this day, the 4 years of being illegal including his relationship with Nos 5 & 6, the Queen and King of the Nile and their affair and gambling problem. Danny reminisces about his life in Sri Lanka and work experience in Dubai, all pretty negative and exploitative. He mentions Abe the Japanese Brazilian window cleaner and how he and others have been treated by Aussie employers.

This is the story of the 'brown man', the substrata of 'illegals', the classes of 'Brown', and as Kate Evans from The Bookshelf stated: "the blistering in cutting detail of racism in Australia". Most readers thought the book was an enjoyable read although one member found the audio narrative quite disconcerting and Danny's inability to follow through annoying e.g. visiting his girlfriend at the hospital. Other members felt that this highlighted the fragility and impotence of his life as an illegal immigrant and added to the growing tension. Danny's fear of being visible in the world was palpable. It was generally conceded that the author's device of using the events of a single day was, at times, quite clunky and possibly needed a bit of an edit. Most of the discussion centred around topics such as white v brown legal immigration, the plight of illegals in the pandemic and life without documentation especially in regard to health care, racial discrimination, racial inclusion in schools, Australia as a racist nation and are things actually improving in this regard. It was a very lively and far ranging exchange. So apart from the readability of the book, the unanimous consensus was that it is an important book in terms of raising these issues and making us more conscious of the plight of "brown" both legal and illegal.

Ratings: Pauline 2, Viv, Lynda, Dianne, Margie 3, Kim, Nicola, Di, Janet, Jenny 3.5, Sandy 4.

Next month we get together 8/11 at 6:30pm to discuss *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* by C Pam Zhang, hope to see you there and Happy Reading!

October 2021

- Jacks and Jokers by Matthew Condon, 3
- The Talented Mr Varg by Alexander McCall Smith, 2.5
- A room with a View by E M Forster, 4
- Dark Emu by Bruce Pascoe, 4
- Stone Mattress by Margaret Atwood, 3.5
- Big Sister, Little Sister, Red Sister by Jung Chang, 3
- The Garden of Fugitives by Ceridwen Dovey, 3
- Once More with Feeling by Ceridwen Dovey, 3
- Beloved by Toni Morrison, 4
- 12 Bytes:How Artificial Intelligence will...by Jeanette Winterson, 4
- Four Winds by Hannah Kent, 3.5
- The Flicker of Old Dreams by Susan Henderson, 4
- Blessed, the breakout year of Rampaging Roy Slaven by John Doyle, 3
- Still Life by Sarah Winman, 3
- Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell by Susanna Clarke, 3.5
- Olive Again by Elizabeth Strout, 4
- Us Against You by Frederick Blackman, 4
- The Things She Owned by Tamiko Arguile, 3.5
- Magic Lessons by Alice Hoffman, 3
- Songbirds by Christy Lefteri, 3
- Fury by Kathryn Heyman, 3
- Muddy People by Sara El Sayed, 3
- Memoir Trilogy by Deborah Levy, 4.5