



The New South Wales Fishing Atlas

Penguin 1997; 121 pp; \$14.95 softcover.

Being a token-avid-part-time-hopeless fisherperson, I was pretty keen to crack open *The NSW Fishing Atlas* to find out where I'd been going wrong. Unfortunately, this book is exactly what it says it is — an atlas. So there are no secret tips on bait and hooks and other paraphernalia, just the facts about fish. If you need to know what's catchable at Coogee (Australian Salmon, Snapper, Bream, Silver Drummer & Luderick) then this is the book for you. It contains a zillion maps of NSW, with details about fish common to each area.

The text is pretty mundane, but the maps are a wealth of information. I paddled out to Wedding Cake Island off Coogee and snorkeled around to try and spot some of the fish mentioned, but could only see some beautiful reef fish and a couple of ominous looking Port

Jackson sharks. And you'd have to think that given that fish swim, and there's a lot of water out there, surely you could catch just about anything anywhere? Then again, that may be why I've only snared one fish in the last 5 years!

There's a solid page of rules and regulations (did you know that boat drivers also must be under 0.05% and that you can only collect Turban snails south of Seal Rocks?) that will leave you in good stead should the fish police — or should that be water rats? — pull you aside. It's a bit off-putting when the inside front cover is an advertisement for boat donks, but as long as you think of it as an atlas, not a guidebook, this will at least make you sound like you know what you're doing when you ask for Bonito bait at Jervis Bay. ● CM

Psychic Warrior

by David Morehouse; Penguin 1997; 258 pp; \$12.95 softcover.

Psychic Warrior is a self confessional story based on the experience of David Morehouse while pursuing a career in the US government. It begins at a relatively moderate to slow pace as Morehouse informs the reader of his life as a dedicated military officer.

After being hit by a stray bullet, the average and typical life of David Morehouse turns into an eccentric tale of a psychic spy working for an intelligence division in the CIA. After first being selected to work on the remote viewing project for the Stargate unit, Morehouse explains the training formalities and gives descriptions of what is seen while participating in the remote viewing. Remote viewing is a form of time and space travel that can advance to past, present and parallel realities.

The novel is written in a sterile manner which to some extent deprives the book of the spiritual illumination it could possess. However the style of writing does not reduce the ability to identify the scandalous workings of the CIA. After Morehouse decides he is go-

ing to expose the top secret remote viewing project, the CIA become a lot more prominent in an invisible sense. The CIA will go to extreme lengths to keep their units anonymous and the average citizens of the world naive. Morehouse has other ideas and a few conflicts of interest see the honourable CIA carrying out less than honourable schemes in an attempt to stop the exposure of their remote viewing unit.

Due to the writer's direct involvement the information provided to the reader about the government is precise, clear and sometimes wrapped in a thick glaze of chilling secrets. The book's slow beginning picks up pace and evolves into a highly energetic climax. *Psychic Warrior* has the ability to expand self and existential awareness, reminding us that no matter how much we know there is always more to be learnt.

● FW

Women on the Case

edited by Sara Paretsky; Virago Press 1997; 426 pp; \$16.95 softcover.

Women on the Case is a collection of stories about women and crime. Many of the stories also present women's fantasies about murder — particularly about murdering men. In these stories women of all kinds are represented, often in a way that allows them much more power than the usual whodunit, as befits the ongoing subversion of this genre. The diversity of subjects testifies to Paretsky's aim of presenting a 'multiplicity of voices', and characters range from an old war-scarred Vietnamese woman who kills her abusive neighbour to a middle aged British woman who dreams of murdering her young Gambian lover. Unfortunately, there are also some spectacularly bad stories in the collection and it could have done with much tighter editing. Still, it's always nice to read a crime story where the women are more than fetching corpses and there are enough really good stories here to make *Women on the Case* worth a look. ● KO

A Certain Justice

by P.D. James; Faber & Faber 1997; 390 pp; \$19.95 softcover.

A Certain Justice is a classic whodunnit set in the Inns of Court in London. The book is, as ever, extremely well written. One of the more interesting devices is the way the narrative voice in the chapters oscillates giving all the main characters considerable psychological depth.

I think this is the best from the queen of British crime since *A Taste for Death* in 1986. The plot is dense and suspenseful without being impenetrable. Adam Dalgliesh, poet detective, is his usual intriguing self and I was pleased to meet up with his trusty sidekick Kate Miskin again.

Nothing worse than reviewers giving away crime novel plots — suffice to say that the goings on of chambers combined with a topical child welfare angle makes for a compelling read.

● FW

Bits was compiled by Belinda Carman, Christian McGregor, Karen O'Connell and Frith Way.