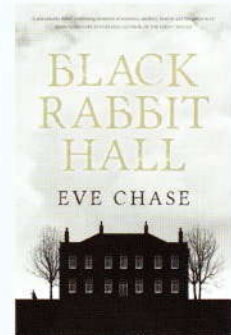
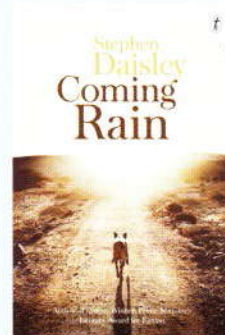
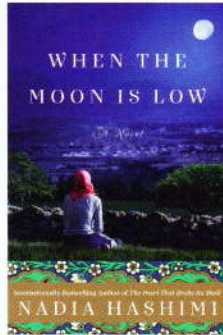
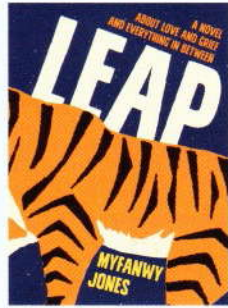
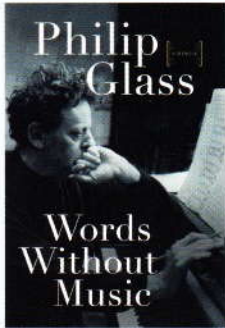


+ REVIEW



Theologian set their shoulders to the wheel of China's so-called Great Leap Forward. Winner of the 2014 Franz Kafka Prize, this novel has a mythical style and a biblical format, divided into four "books". It's a compelling account of the absurdities of the tragedy that killed an estimated 30 million people. And it's been effectively banned in China, where the author still lives.

MICHAEL HENRY

WORDS WITHOUT MUSIC PHILIP GLASS (ALLEN AND UNWIN, \$59.99)

I never knew that the highly influential composer of dozens of operas and film scores once worked as a plumber (and certainly not a self-taught one), pursuing that trade as a way to pay bills. He drove a cab in New York, too, and lived in India, fascinated as much by the sounds and structures of sub-continental music as he was by the lives of Gandhi and other freedom fighters. Do such elements make for an entertaining autobiography? Not in the hands of Glass. There is almost an element of blandness to this meandering memoir, as there would be if he sat down to conversation and told the story of a life he

considered unremarkable. But as a story of a determined, creative person aiming for perfection in his work, it is well worth reading. **MATT ELLIOTT**

LEAP MYFANWY JONES (ALLEN & UNWIN, \$32.99)

Billed as "a beautiful urban fairytale", there is certainly an other-worldly element to some of the novel's shadowy, ethereal characters and after-dark Melbourne cityscapes. And the language is often lovely and lyrical enough for a magical tale. Largely, though, this story of love and loss is grounded firmly in reality. Joe lives in a shared flat, working dead-end jobs during the day and escaping into the night to run and leap through the city, punishing himself for a tragic death. Across town, Elise's marriage falls apart in the wake of her daughter's death and she finds solace at the zoo's tiger enclosure. The novel is far more redemptive than grim, as lively friendships and hope push their way through grief.

SUE HOFFART

WHEN THE MOON IS LOW NADIA HASHIMI (HARPERCOLLINS, \$34.99)

Nightly our screens are filled with refugees

fleeing their homelands in search of a better life. The second novel from Afghani-American paediatrician Nadia Hashimi puts a face to those who no-one wants. Fereiba's happy, middle-class world implodes when the Taliban kills her husband. Forced to flee Kabul with her three children, Fereiba stumbles into the network of the undocumented who live in the shadows of European cities. In Athens, her oldest son becomes separated from the rest of the family; both mother and son have to deal with human traffickers and squalid refugee camps in their fight to be reunited in England. Astonishing, frightening and oh so sad, this book should be compulsory reading for Tony Abbott and his ilk.

SHARON STEPHENSON

COMING RAIN STEPHEN DAISLEY (TEXT PUBLISHING, \$37)

Deserted by his father and neglected by his mother, shearer Lewis McCleod scratches out a life of sorts with old digger Painter Hayes, the foul-mouthed curmudgeon who took him on as a foundling in a wool shed. But their bare-bones, nomadic existence is thrown off-kilter when Lew meets

Clara, the daughter of a broken landowner. As the heat shimmers and crackles off the Western Australian plains, the clouds gather. Just like the hungry and hunted dingo that shadows him – in search of somewhere safe to whelp – Lew is instinctively driven by a deep hunger for intimacy. Stephen Daisley writes with the potent economy of a short-story writer, and he triumphs with this visceral account that will linger in your mind long after the last page.

REBECCA TANSLEY

BLACK RABBIT HALL EVE CHASE (PENGUIN RANDOMHOUSE, \$37)

For Amber Alton and her three siblings, the Cornwall country house Black Rabbit Hall represents all that is dear. But in the summer of 1968, tragedy strikes, shattering their idyllic childhoods and sending their lives spiralling out of control. Three decades later, Lorna Smith is searching for a wedding venue and finds herself drawn to the now-decrepit hall, where she uncovers the missing shards of her own mottled history. Captivating from the outset and poignantly grim at times, Eve Chase's debut novel is a stirring, sensory family saga. **KATE LANGDON**