Sceptre

Forty years of groundbreaking publishing.
A story still being written.

‘A book is a collaboration between the one who reads and what is read and, at its best, that coming together is a love story like any other.’

Siri Hustvedt, *The Summer Without Men*
Published by Sceptre in 2011

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the celebrations of Sceptre’s 40th anniversary.

Over the past four decades, Sceptre has evolved from a paperback imprint into one of the most dynamic literary lists in English-language publishing. Along the way, it has brought together award-winning authors, global bestsellers, works in translation, graphic novels and even the occasional cookery title. Our books have been recognised by every major prize and, perhaps more importantly, have offered countless hours of thoughtful, joyful reading to audiences everywhere.

As we began to consider how best to mark this remarkable milestone, we found ourselves returning to the heart of Sceptre: the authors who have shaped its history. Over the past year, we have explored our archives, rediscovering a wealth of extraordinary books – some familiar, others long forgotten. Did you know, for instance, that Jonathan Coe’s debut novel first appeared as a Sceptre paperback? Or that our list has included writers such as Laurie Colwin, Luis Sepúlveda and Rose Tremain? While it’s true that some of these authors have since moved to new publishing homes, many remain central to our imprint, and we are delighted to be casting fresh light on their work.

This special anniversary catalogue brings together many of these rediscovered gems, alongside a timeline of key publishing moments and a gallery of some of our most iconic covers. We have also sought to capture something of Sceptre’s distinctive spirit through personal reflections from some of our most celebrated authors – many of whom have been with us from the very beginning. Through contributions from writers including Siri Hustvedt, Andrew Miller, David Mitchell, Ned Beauman, Charlotte Wood, Kaliane Bradley and David Nicholls, we have created an informal oral history of the imprint, spanning four decades.

Before leaving you to their words, I would like to offer a heartfelt thank you. Publishing is, above all, a collaborative endeavour, and we would not be here without the extraordinary support of the wider Sceptre family: our colleagues across Hodder & Stoughton and Hachette in the UK and internationally, as well as booksellers, journalists, reviewers, agents and their teams. Each of you has played a vital role in bringing Sceptre’s books to readers.

So here’s to the next chapter – and to many more years of bold, joyful and inspiring publishing together.

Thank you,

Federico

Federico Andornino
Publisher
federico.andornino@hodder.co.uk

Our history

This timeline traces forty years of our publishing history. Sceptre was initially set up as a paperback imprint, which means some of the books captured here did not originate on the list, while others were part of the imprint only for a limited period of time. For clarity, the dates on the timeline refer to the book's first publication on Sceptre. Inevitably, this is not a complete account, but rather a curated reflection of the books that have shaped the imprint over four decades.

1986

Sceptre launches

Schindler's Ark
Thomas Keneally
Winner of the Booker Prize

The Fisher King
Anthony Powell

1987

The Mysteries of Pittsburgh
Michael Chabon

1988

Bad Behaviour
Mary Gaitskill

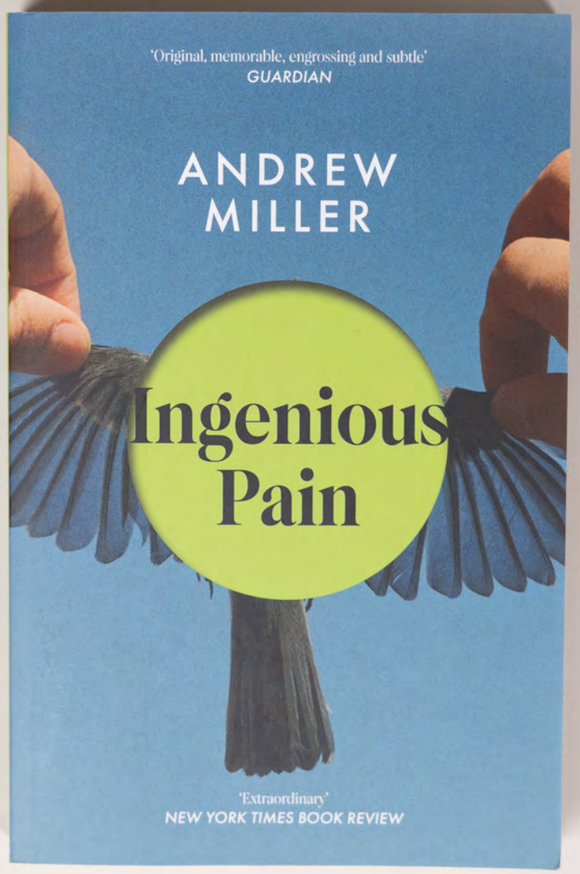
1989

Family Happiness
Laurie Colwin

The Accidental Woman
Jonathan Coe

1990

This is Your Life
Meg Wolitzer



Sceptre has published Andrew Miller since his award-winning debut, *Ingenious Pain*, in 1997. His latest novel, *The Land in Winter*, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2025.

Andrew Miller

'So many fabulous memories of so many years with Sceptre . . .

That first meeting in a glass-walled office sixteen floors above the Euston Road. I knew nobody besides my agent, Simon Trewin, but understood those smiling faces were about to become very important to me.

The gloriously wild party for *Casanova* at the house for fallen women in Soho Square. I invited everyone I knew. We bobbed about in Champagne (or something appreciably like it).

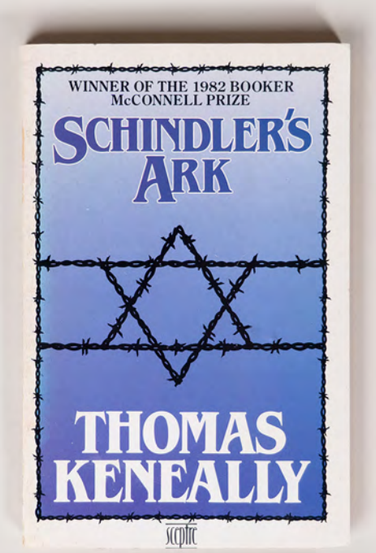
The morning after winning the Costa and coming into the office and feeling we had all won.

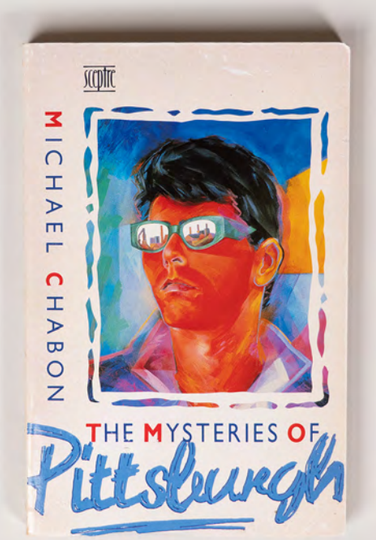
Being marched around London by Louise Court. (You want a break? We'll have a break. It will not last long. We have a job to do). LC, the empress of publicists!

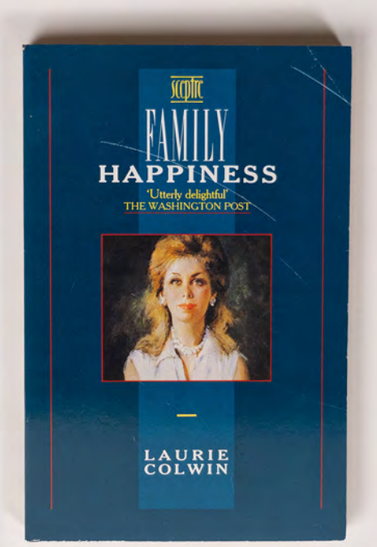
The Booker 2025, Fede calling me while I was sitting with my daughter in Le Temps des Cerises cafe to tell me I was on the shortlist. And then the support I felt when things didn't go our way on the night.

And finally – more recently, showing up very late to lunch with Fede in Smithfield, London a furnace but the restaurant deliciously cool, and talking about what comes next.

Three cheers for Sceptre! A proper house.'







1992

The Hive
Camilo José Cela
Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature

1993

The King Must Die
Mary Renault

Praxis
Fay Weldon
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize

1994

The Old Man Who Read Love Stories
Luis Sepúlveda

1995

Restoration
Rose Tremain
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize

Yann Andrea Steiner
Marguerite Duras

In Every Face I Meet
Justin Cartwright
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the Costa Book Award

The Life and Loves of a She-Devil
Fay Weldon

1996

Docherty
William McIlvanney
Winner of the Whitbread Novel Award

The Enchantment of Lily Dahl
Siri Hustvedt
Longlisted for the Orange Prize

1997

Ingenious Pain
Andrew Miller
Winner of the James Tait Black Prize for Fiction and the Dublin Literary Award

Cold Mountain
Charles Frazier
Winner of the National Book Award

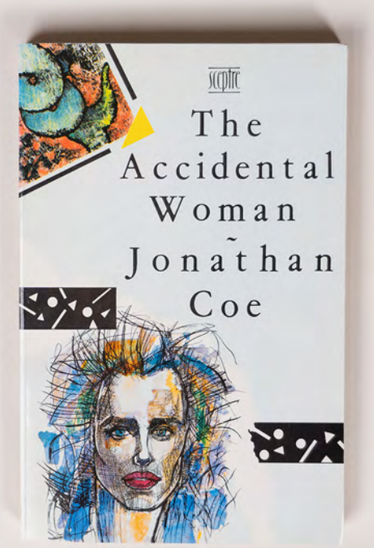
Siri Hustvedt's books – both fiction and non-fiction – have been part of Sceptre since her debut novel, *The Blindfold*, was published in 1993. Her latest work of non-fiction, the memoir *Ghost Stories*, was published in 2026.

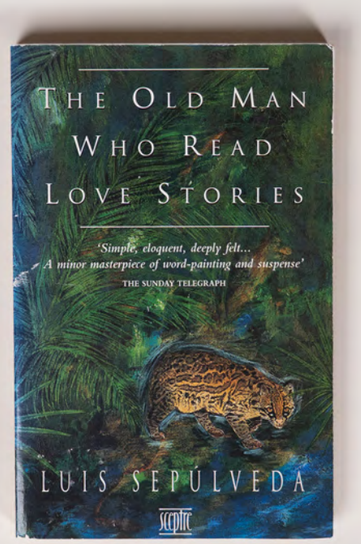
Siri Hustvedt

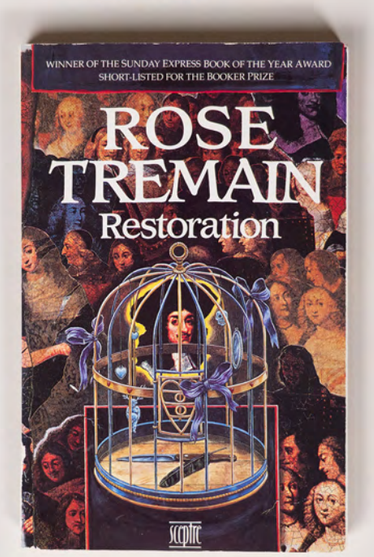
'The story of my third novel, *What I Loved*, is perhaps the most memorable. Despite much affection and support for the book from my long-time and dear editor, Carole Welch, I don't believe anyone, least of all me, expected it had a "selling" future. Too intellectual. I vividly remember an early, hostile English review of the book, in which I (not my narrator, Leo) was accused of parading the following thought: "I'm so clever."

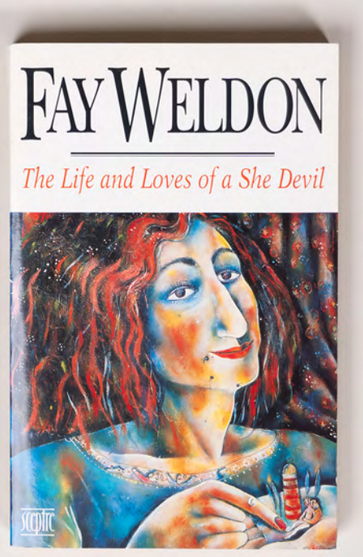
But then, something happened. Still called "word of mouth," it remains a viable, intimate form of delivering information from one human being to another, even in our digital world. Sceptre jumped to amplify the words from those various mouths, and the book sold.

What matters for writers, certainly for this writer, is having a publisher that keeps faith. In a world that increasingly runs on brutal spectacle, lies, and the Almighty ME, literature is an intimate forum where reader and writer meet to mingle thoughts and feelings on the page. A book can be a vaccine against ignorance, primitive ideologies, crude reductionism, and belligerent certainties, and if there ever was a time when that injection of complexity and compassion was needed, it's now.'









1999

Ghostwritten
David Mitchell
Winner of the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize

The Long Firm
Jake Arnott

The Spy Who Came in From the Cold
John le Carré

Fred & Edie
Jill Dawson
Shortlisted for the Orange Prize and the Whitbread Prize

2000

2001

McCarthy's Bar
Pete McCarthy

number9dream
David Mitchell
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize

Oxygen
Andrew Miller
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the Whitbread Novel Award

A Life's Music
Andreï Makine

Miracle at Sant'Anna
James McBride

2002

2003

The Adventure of English
Melvyn Bragg

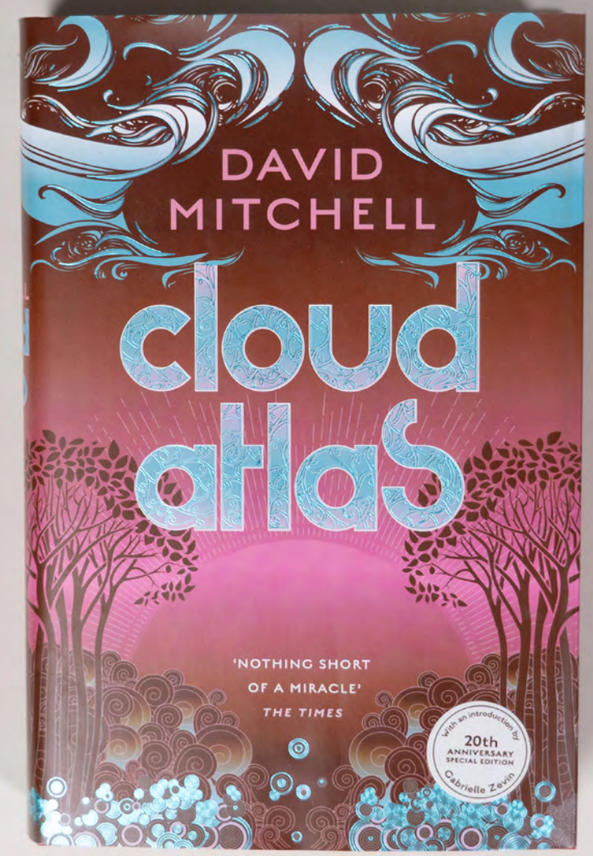
Heavier than Heaven:
The Biography of Kurt Cobain
Charles R. Cross

What I Loved
Siri Hustvedt

Crossing the Lines
Melvyn Bragg
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

Cloud Atlas
David Mitchell
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize

2004



David Mitchell is the author of eight novels, all published by Sceptre. His debut, *Ghostwritten*, was published in 1999; he has been twice shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

David Mitchell

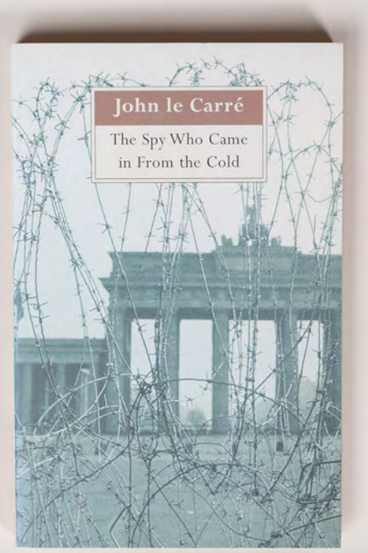
'I remember waking up one spring morning in 1999 in Hiroshima to find a fax from my agent of a two-book deal with Sceptre. I knew the imprint from my Waterstones days: the home of Rose Tremain, Thomas Keneally and Melvyn Bragg. With the certitude of a Raymond Carver epiphany, I felt that my life was about to change.

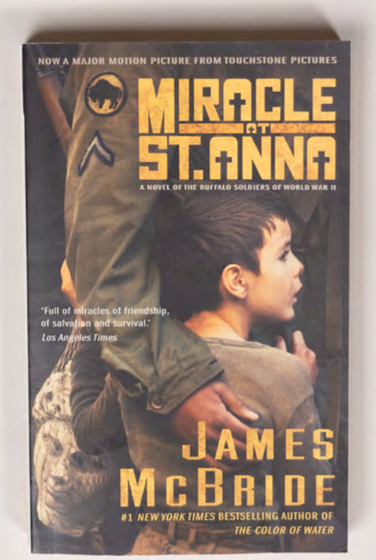
I remember meeting the wonderful Carole Welch, who for twenty years was the face of the word 'editor' in my mind. She showed me the preliminary artwork for my novel *Cloud Atlas*; and I sat there in her office for a while, unable to take my eyes off it.

I remember meeting my new editor Federico Andornino and thinking, *"Carole's legacy is in good hands here"*. Heaven knows, I'm wrong about lots of things but on this one, I'm right.

I've had too many enriching encounters with Sceptre authors down the years to list, but listening to (and reading) Andrew Miller, Ned Beauman, Abi Daré and Tom Lamont, I feel assurance that this big, amorphous blob of a thing we all love – literary-ish fiction – will outlive every one of us. Technology has not devised a more intimate way to inhabit another's life. Novels are acts of radical empathy. Novels are closer to prayer than they are to Netflix on a page.

What an honour, what a joy, how grateful I am, to still be bringing books into being with Sceptre. See you at our 50th.'





2005

This is the Country
William Wall
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

Strangeland
Tracey Emin

2006

Winter's Bone
Daniel Woodrell

The Tender Bar
J. R. Moehringer

Black Swan Green
David Mitchell
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

I Like You
Amy Sedaris

2007

The Welsh Girl
Peter Ho Davies
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

City of Thieves
David Benioff

2008

The Other Hand
Chris Cleave

The Cloud Collector's Handbook
Gavin Pretor-Pinney

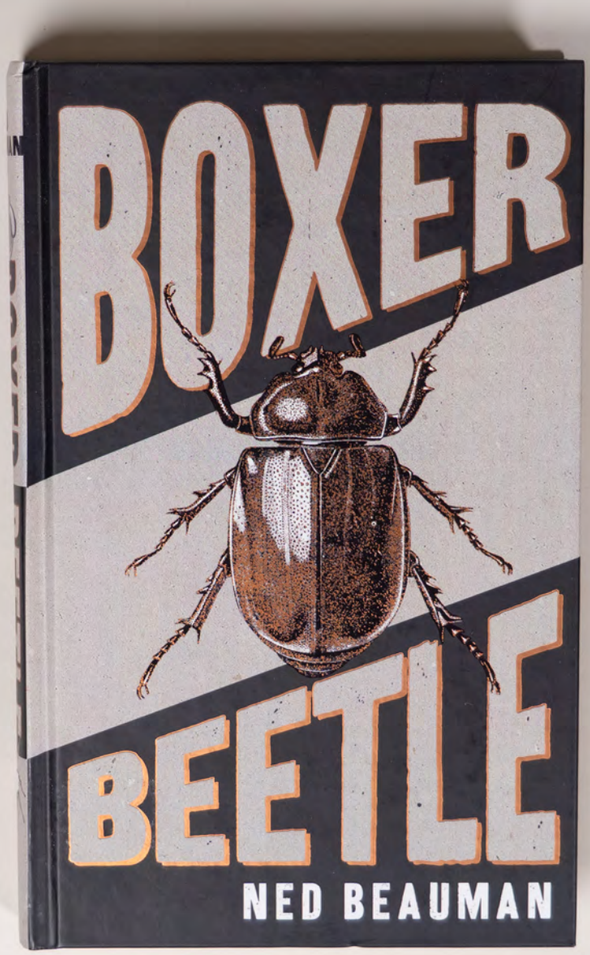
2009

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil
John Berendt
Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Non-Fiction

The Tiger
John Vaillant

2010

Boxer, Beetle
Ned Beauman
Shortlisted for the *Guardian* First Book Award



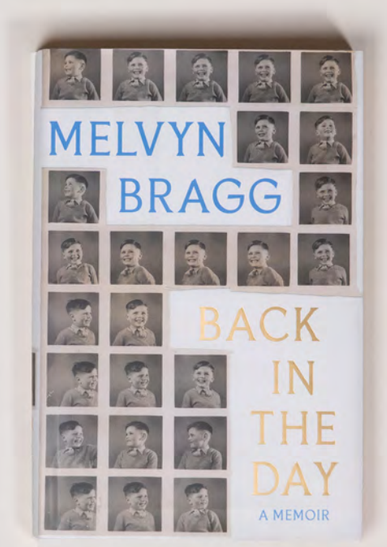
Ned Beauman has been published by Sceptre since his debut novel, *Boxer, Beetle*. In 2013 he was included in Granta's Best of Young British Novelists list.

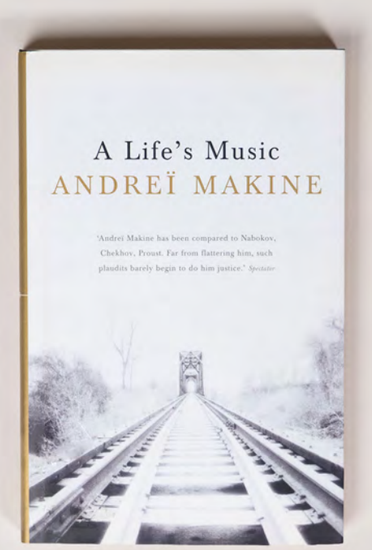
Ned Beauman

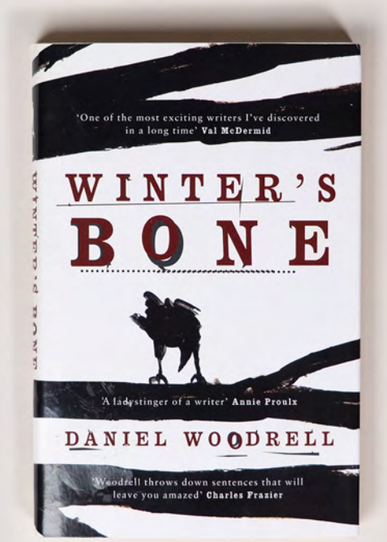
'Sceptre was founded in 1986, meaning preparations must have got underway around the time of my birth.

However, I want to take this opportunity to clear up some rumours. I have never asserted that, like the palace that Napoleon ordered built for his infant son, Sceptre is simply a vessel for my ascension. Nor have I ever demanded that, on the day of my death, Sceptre should be sealed off as a memorial, its sacred task concluded forever. If as a younger man I may sometimes have nodded along when others voiced these sentiments, that was only out of politeness.

And anyway, since then I've read heaps of fantastic Sceptre novels, far too many to cling to the idea that I have any special status, even if the timeline does raise – and I say this with all humility – some interesting questions.'







2011

Pure
Andrew Miller
Winner of the Costa Book of the Year Award

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet
David Mitchell
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

Rules of Civility
Amor Towles

2012

The Yellow Birds
Kevin Powers
Winner of the *Guardian* First Book Award

The Teleportation Accident
Ned Beauman
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

2013

The Friday Gospels
Jenn Ashworth

The Art of Thinking Clearly
Rolf Dobelli

The Reason I Jump: One Boy's Voice from the Silence of Autism
Naoki Higashida

The Night Guest
Fiona McFarlane
Shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Prize and the Stella Prize

2014

A Man Called Ove
Fredrik Backman

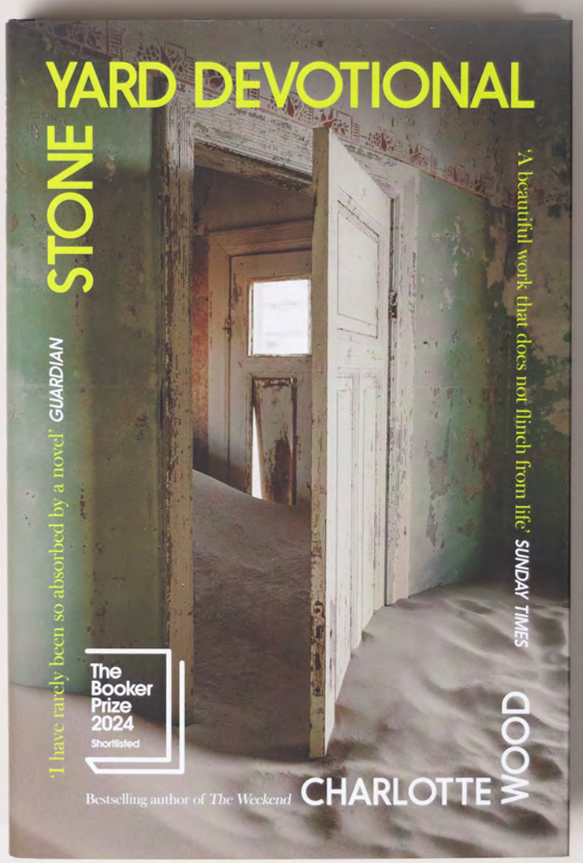
The Blazing World
Siri Hustvedt
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

The Bone Clocks
David Mitchell
Longlisted for the Booker Prize

The High Places
Fiona McFarlane
Winner of the Dylan Thomas Prize

2016

Everyone Brave is Forgiven
Chris Cleave



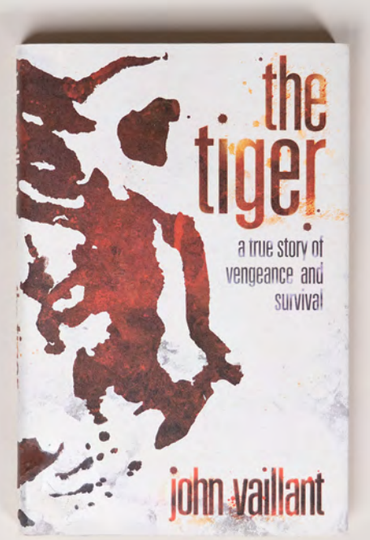
Charlotte Wood's novels *Animal People*, *The Natural Way of Things*, *The Weekend* and *Stone Yard Devotional* are all published by Sceptre, as is her book about food, *Love and Hunger*. In 2024, *Stone Yard Devotional* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

Charlotte Wood

'My first meeting of the Sceptre team was at a sweet little champagne morning tea they hosted for me at the office, on my first trip to London with *Stone Yard Devotional* in 2024. It was the kindest beginning. I was super nervous, publication had barely begun, and nobody outside Sceptre specially cared about the book.

That warm and generous meeting was followed by absolutely heroic efforts from Louise Court and her publicity team in the face of, shall we say, "subdued" interest. They trudged the city with me, never once intimating that it might have been easier had I managed *not* to fill my novel with a plague of mice. I loved that London trip for their company alone, for Fede's steadfast enthusiasm and the whole company's kindness to me.

A different story when I returned for the Booker Prize that November! This time we were going to celebrate, no matter what. Once again, Sceptre's enormous generosity – despite my not winning – left me with so much love for the whole team. Commiserating and celebrating with them over way too many negronis at the after party was an absolute highlight of my career. '



2018

Factfulness
Hans Rosling

2019

Fleabag
Phoebe Waller-Bridge

Now We Shall Be Entirely Free
Andrew Miller
The Times Best Novels of the 21st Century
Winner of the Highland Book Prize and shortlisted for the Walter Scott Prize

When All is Said
Anne Griffin
Winner of the *Sunday Independent* Newcomer of the Year Award
Shortlisted for the Dublin Literary Award

And Their Children After Them
Nicolas Mathieu
Winner of the Prix Goncourt

2022

Venomous Lumpsucker
Ned Beauman
Winner of the Arthur C. Clarke Award

Back in the Day
Melvyn Bragg

Harmless Like You
Rowan Hisayo Buchanan
Winner of the Author's Club First Novel Award

The End of Loneliness
Benedict Wells
Winner of the European Union Prize for Literature

Saltwater
Jess Andrews
Winner of the Portico Prize

Threads of Life
Clare Hunter

The Girl with the Louding Voice
Abi Daré

2020

In
Will McPhail
Winner of the Betty Trask Prize

2021

East Side Voices
Helena Lee

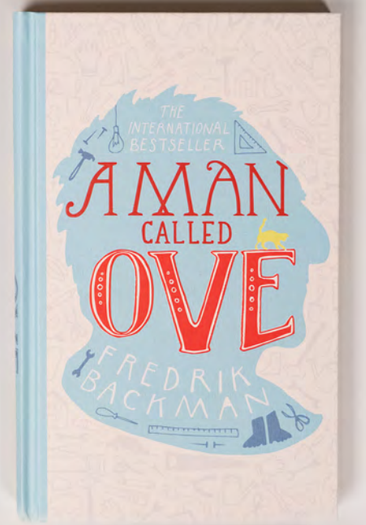
Kaliane Bradley's novel, *The Ministry of Time*, was the biggest debut of 2024. It was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction, shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and was finalist for a Hugo Award.

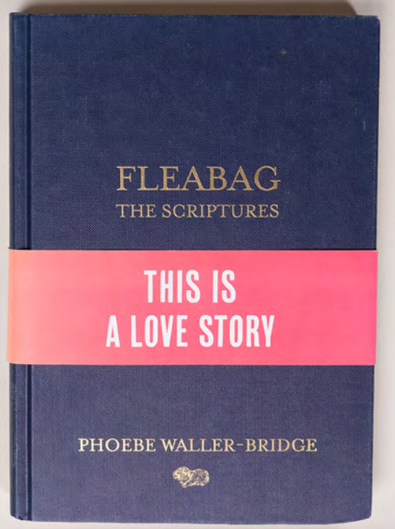
Kaliane Bradley

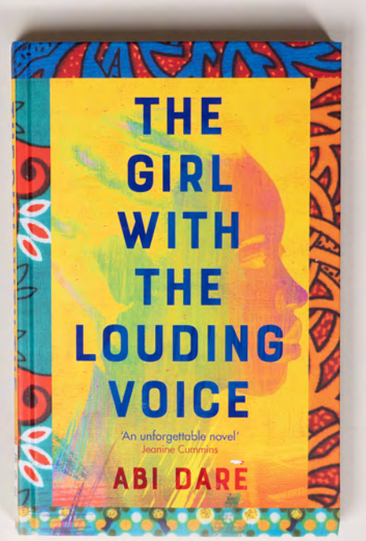
'One of the first times (maybe the first time?) I came into the Hachette office was to sign copies of my shiny, shiny proof. I've worked in publishing for, dear God, thirteen years now, and I've seen fancy proofs and chic proofs and proofs that look like they require special equipment to open, but I have never seen a proof quite as beautiful as what was designed by the team at Sceptre.

It wasn't just that it looked flash and sexy, it was the thought that had gone into it. The idea was that the proof should look like an object from the future, perhaps something that had fallen accidentally through the time-door in *The Ministry of Time*. Its design made a kind of promise of its contents – *open this and you will be taken out of your time.*

I already knew that I'd chosen the best possible home for my book, but seeing that spark of creative joy really moved me. Nothing can replace that ingenuity and intelligent connection that comes from a publishing team working in energetic tandem. It's like the work of a supercharged orchestra playing seventeen different symphonies at once. Anyway, I've still never seen a proof that beautiful.'







2023

Fire Weather
John Vaillant
Winner of the Baillie Gifford Prize

Monsters
Claire Dederer

2024

Going Home
Tom Lamont
An *Observer* best new novelist pick

The Ministry of Time
Kaliane Bradley
An *Observer* best new novelist pick
Longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction
Shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award

You Are Here
David Nicholls
Winner of a Books Are My Bag Award

Stone Yard Devotional
Charlotte Wood
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize

Strange Relations
Ralf Webb
Shortlisted for the *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year Award

The Land in Winter
Andrew Miller
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize
Winner of the Walter Scott Prize

2025

The Benefactors
Wendy Erskine
An *Observer* best new novelist pick
Longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction

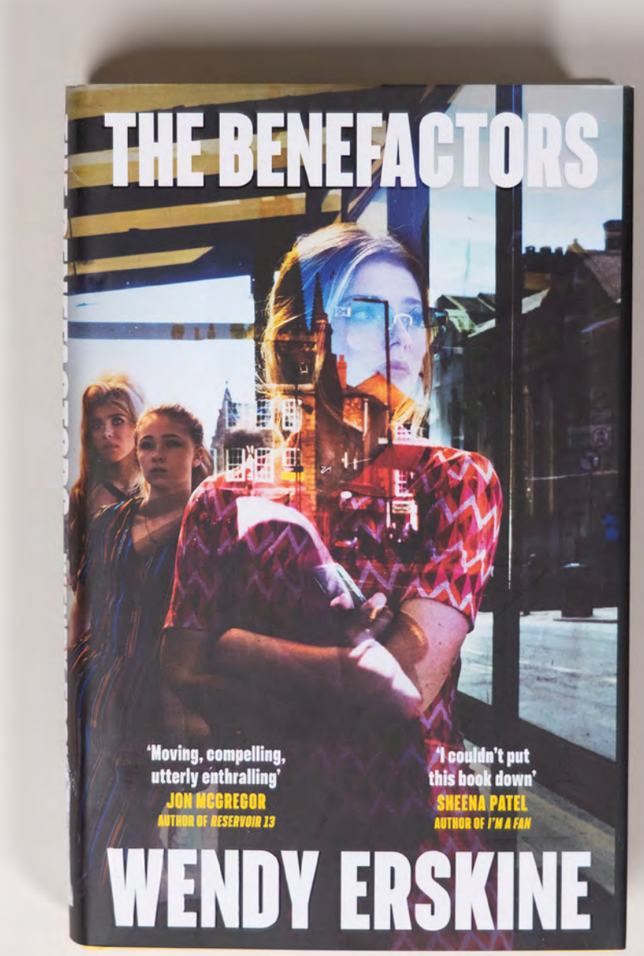
The Forbidden Garden of Leningrad
Simon Parkin
Shortlisted for the Orwell Prize and the Royal Society Science Book Prize

And So I Roar
Abi Daré
Winner of the inaugural Climate Fiction Prize

2026

In Bloom
Liz Allan
An *Observer* best new novelist pick

In Love with Love
Ella Risbridger



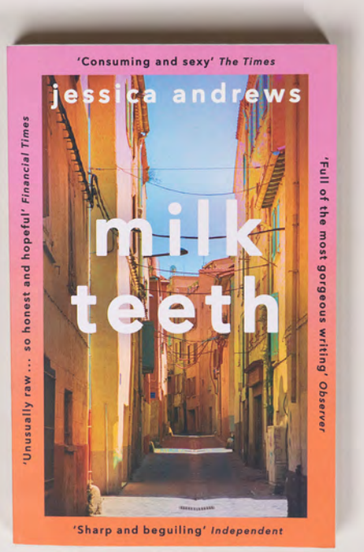
Wendy Erskine is the author of two acclaimed short-story collections. Her debut novel, *The Benefactors*, was named one of the *Observer*'s best debut novels of 2025, was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction and shortlisted for the RSL Ondaatje Prize.

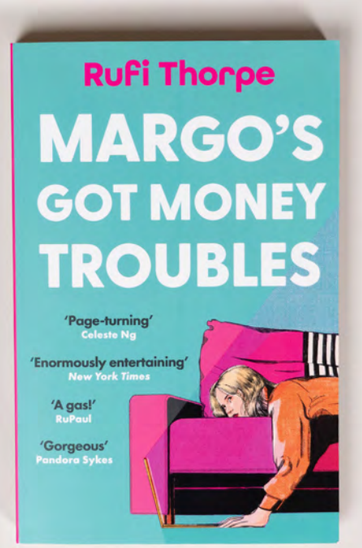
Wendy Erskine

'When I was working on *The Benefactors*, I didn't think too much beyond how it would exist as a novel. That was more than enough to be considering! But then, closer to publication, something else on the horizon was the audiobook. I knew that my book with its polyphonic chorus of over fifty voices might prove a challenge but realised too that there was the opportunity to do something really interesting with it.

I'm lucky enough to have some past work made into plays and film, so I was aware of how translating a text into another form, although not without its challenges, can bring so many new dimensions and nuances. I was lucky that the producer of the audiobook was a real visionary. We recruited a massive cast of non-actors, friends and family to record the voices.

The result was, I think, brilliant.'



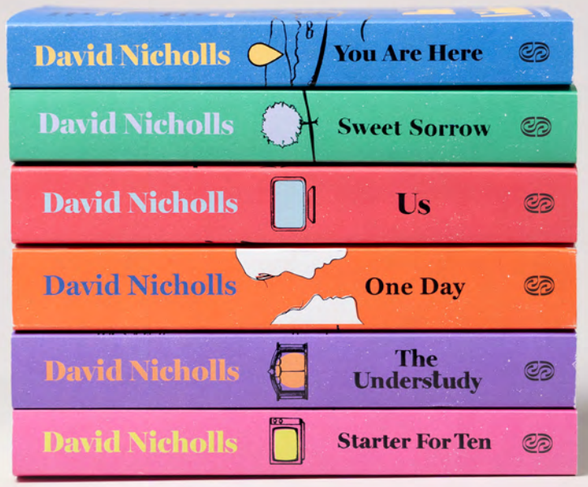


Ghost Stories
Siri Hustvedt

Sceptre

Villa Coco
Andrew Sean Greer

Sceptre's 40th anniversary: the story continues . . .



David Nicholls's novels have been delighting millions of readers around the world since his debut, *Starter for Ten*. All of his books are now available on Sceptre.

David Nicholls

'A word about notes. I do find getting notes hard; it sends me straight back to school and the only feedback an author really wants is 'this is a timeless masterpiece, don't you dare change a word.'

But writing can always be improved and 'no notes' is no good for anyone, so the best one can hope for is clear, thoughtful, frank feedback and that, thank goodness, is what I've always experienced with Sceptre, most especially on *You Are Here*. Fede is not afraid to say when a joke isn't working, when a simile doesn't quite make sense, when he's heard that one before, and as a result the novel is immeasurably better than if it had just been waved through.

Once again, the solitary business of writing is revealed to be collaborative, a team effort in fact, and so I am immensely grateful, once again, to the Sceptre team.'

'Why have you given your life to books? Dull, dull, dull!'

David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*
Published by Sceptre in 2004

Sceptre

This 40th anniversary drawing was created by *New Yorker* cartoonist – and Sceptre author – Will McPhail.

Sceptre, an imprint of Hodder & Stoughton