

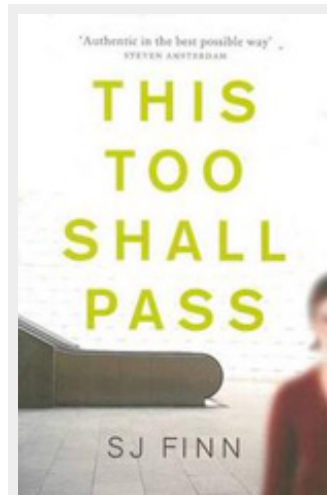
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Celebrating Women Writers from Around the World

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Reviews



Hardie Grant books, paperback,  
9781742700380

## THIS TOO SHALL PASS

by *S. J. Finn*

Reviewed by **Judy Lim**

*I inhale. Realign my chair, which slides a little too easily under me. I do have one niggling concern (there are several but this is the one that comes to mind): while I will go on feeling as transparent as air, what I'm about to put in writing will show itself in a dense hue, one that might even shock me.*

With these thoughts we are introduced to Jen, now known as Monty, who goes on to simply and honestly recount the changes that have occurred in her life.

Jen Montgomery is a wife of fourteen years, and a mother to a young boy, living a quiet life in their small Australian country town, when she suddenly and deeply falls in love with a neighbour, Rennie. She changes her name to Monty, both to redefine herself and to acknowledge the major changes that she is undergoing. She is forced from her small, homophobic town and follows Rennie to the city where their relationship is accepted, perhaps tolerated, but not reviled as it has been. However, this move means she is further removed from her young son and her relationship with him suffers.

Monty strives to retain a cordial relationship with her husband Dave, with limited success. She attempts to maintain a strong bond with her son, but she is restricted by time and distance. Rennie is equally important to her, but their relationship suffers when Monty spends much of her free time travelling to and from her meetings with Dave and their son.

Monty's personal relationships also suffer because of her strong commitment to her work as a social worker at an Institution for Children's Psychiatric Health. She is struggling to find a balance; to maintain some control over her work life, and the demands her personal relationships make on her.

Monty's workplace is itself facing major change. It is in the process of undergoing audits which will likely result in a focus on corporate control, rather than on its current reflection of community needs. The therapists are forced to spend more time on paperwork, and less time with the children who are in such great need of their help. When Monty is promoted she finds that she is even less capable of making a difference to the children in her care. Her attempts to appease the bureaucracy, while finding the best treatment and outcomes for her patients, are time consuming and soul destroying.

Monty's story is an intimate, personal conversation that allows us to get to know her as an articulate and intelligent yet imperfect woman who is attempting to come to terms with the person she has become. She is a likeable woman, despite her flaws, and many women will be able to relate to her. Through writing her story, she attempts to understand what has happened to her and how the decisions she has made in her life have steered her towards where she is now.

SJ Finn has managed to tell a story that is clever, intimate and deceptively complex. It is a story of a woman who leaves her husband and son for another woman, but it is not sentimental. It is a story of a woman who confronts her sexuality amidst intolerance, bigotry and homophobia, but it is not zealous. But most of all it is a story of a woman who is attempting to live her life as best she can within the constraints of her relationships and her career.