

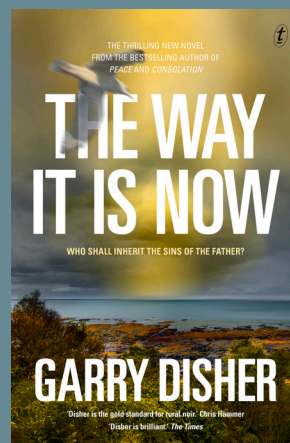
The Way it is Now



Garry Disher

ISBN 9781922458162
FICTION, TRADE PAPERBACK

www.textpublishing.com.au/book-clubs



PRaise FOR GARRY DISHER

'Disher is one of this country's finest writers.'

Tony Birch

'Disher is the gold standard for rural noir.'

Chris Hammer

'A giant not only of crime fiction but of Australian letters.'

Ned Kelly Awards

ABOUT GARRY DISHER

Garry Disher has published over fifty titles across multiple genres. With a growing international reputation for his best-selling crime novels, he has won four German and three Australian awards for best crime novel of the year, and been longlisted twice for a British CWA Dagger award. In 2018 he received the Ned Kelly Lifetime Achievement Award.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Twenty years ago Charlie Deravin's mother went missing near the family beach shack—believed murdered; body never found. His father has lived under a cloud of suspicion ever since.

Now Charlie's back living in the shack in Menlo Beach, on disciplinary leave from his job with the police sex-crimes unit, and permanent leave from his marriage. After two decades worrying away at the mystery of his mother's disappearance, he's run out of leads.

Then the skeletal remains of two people are found in the excavation of a new building site—and the past comes crashing in on Charlie.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The trope of the 'Dead Girl' in crime fiction is the subject of much criticism and debate, primarily because this phenomenon strips female characters of their agency and identity. How does Disher use the novel's extended prologue to resist this trope?
2. What comment is Disher making by lining up the boys clubs of past (small-town cops) against present (football clubs)? Discuss the nuances and criticisms he has written into to these inherently masculine spaces.
3. Do you suspect, at first, that Billy Saul's disappearance is connected to the disappearance of Charlie's mum?
4. Alongside the book's central crime and accompanying exploration of toxic masculinity, Disher explores themes such as racism, bullying and homophobia. How effectively does he navigate these issues? Does his willingness to tackle contemporary issues such as these set him apart from other crime writers?
5. 'That's how it had always been. Mark Valente the alpha figure, the ultimate father of all those cops' kids back when Charlie was little, kicking a ball around. Throwing, catching, batting, running... Toeing the line' (p55). Discuss Valente's subtle dominance in the book. Does his ongoing presence make you suspect him of anything, or do you just write him off as being from a particular time?
6. How does the book's title, *The Way It Is Now*, speak to the way that Disher explores themes of masculinity and male violence against women?
7. Fiske asks Charlie what makes him afraid 'or vulnerable, or uncertain' (p75). What do you think

his answer to this question means? What fears or vulnerabilities underline his response?

8. How does Charlie experience fear differently to the women in the book, for example Karen Wagoner's fear of 'the Menlo Beach cop mafia' (p110)? Do you think he's aware of the difference?
9. Disher's narrative frequently straddles two worlds – past and present, city and small town. What common threads are revealed across these dualities?
10. The book is grounded in current events – the bushfires, climate change, the onset of Covid. How do Charlie's anxieties about these issues reflect your own? He describes the fires as 'catastrophic', saying they were 'bigger than anything he'd known before. And, even as he felt powerless, he felt angry. Climate deniers in control; the fires a photo opportunity for politicians' (p89). Where else is this powerless anger seen in the book? Are the fires just a contemporary touchstone in the novel or something more?
11. Discuss the differences in the relationship that Liam and Charlie each have with their father. If you imagine the book's narrative into the future, how do you think Liam's attitude towards his father will have shifted upon learning the truth (if at all)?
12. Charlie accuses Allardyce of doing a poor investigation on the Kessler case, saying 'everyone went straight down the victim-blaming route, including you. Tunnel vision. You practically told us not to look too hard' (p263). Is his accusation a fair assessment of the judicial and cultural responses to rape more broadly?
13. Garry Disher has won multiple awards across his career, including the prestigious Ned Kelly lifetime achievement award for his contribution to the crime genre. What is it about his work that makes it so significant?