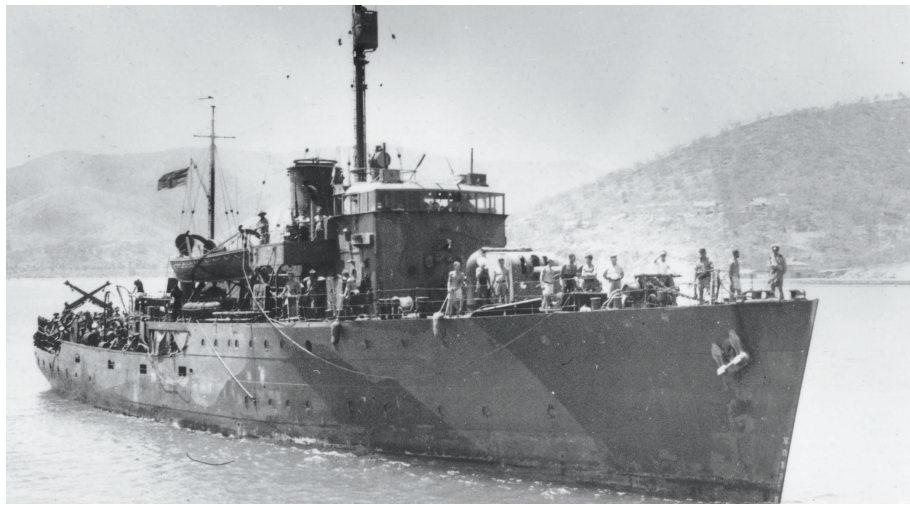


HONOURING A HERO



The sinking of the HMAS Armidale claimed the life of Teddy Sheean, among many others.

HONOUR DENIED: TEDDY SHEEAN A TASMANIAN HERO

Tom Lewis
Avonmore Books, \$34.95

Nearly 75 years after his death, ordinary seaman Teddy Sheean is still owed due recognition. He died heroically. As the HMAS Armidale sank during an air attack in 1942, the wounded 18-year-old ignored orders to abandon ship, strapped himself to an Oerlikon gun and kept firing at Japanese aircraft strafing those in the water. He destroyed at least one before he went down with the ship.

Yet his extraordinary courage was acknowledged only with a Mention in Despatches, the British Empire's lowest award for valour in battle, leading to demands for a Victoria Cross, the highest.

The problem, author Tom Lewis writes, is that, "in WWII, the MID was one of only two awards that could be given posthumously, the other being the ... Victoria Cross".

He points out that because a warship fights as a unit, the worthiness of individual actions for a VC is difficult to determine, so "it's not surprising that the Victoria Cross for naval personnel has been more difficult to obtain than it is for land forces". No Australian sailor has received a VC.

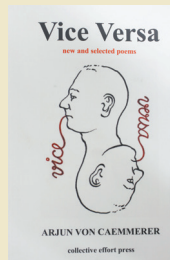
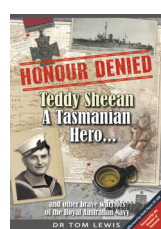
Sheean was especially worthy, for his was a lone act performed when his ship was no longer a fighting unit - a crucial point that appears to have been overlooked. Yet Australia's 2013 Unresolved Recognition

for Past Acts of Naval and Military Valour inquiry ruled out posthumous awards so long after the event, deciding our honours system "was not established to rectify past injustices", so the rules should be applied "as they were at the time". Thus, Sheean remains undeservedly short-changed.

Except for its glorious end, his short life was unremarkable. He was born at Lower Barrington, the 14th of 16 children, and raised at Latrobe. Initially a farm worker, he joined the RAN in April 1941 and about six months later got engaged to young Devonport woman Kath Laphorne.

While the brevity of Sheean's life means *Honour Denied* is not long on biographical detail, it provides a smorgasbord of sidebars, detours, extraneous information, photos, maps, diagrams, service records, appendices, correspondence and digressions on such subjects as naval life, corvettes, minesweepers and minesweeping, the development of warships and guns at sea, why the navy carries out surveys and how the US approaches gallantry awards.

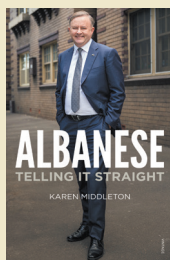
One such digression is a harrowing first-person account of how some of Armidale's crew survived eight days in the sea before being rescued. Their courage was also remarkable, but it was Sheean's fighting spirit that became part of our ethos. Perhaps that is recognition enough. **ROBERT COX**



POETRY
VICE VERSA
Arjun von Caemmerer,
Collective Effort Press,
\$40

In *Vice Versa*, Hobart poet Arjun von Caemmerer makes

reference to Erwin Schrodinger and the theoretical physicist/philosopher's "thought experiment", which poses a question concerning the fate of a cat. In a poem of three fractured parts of words and a line drawing, we contemplate the exact moment a cat exposed to radioactive material in a box can be considered dead or alive. With this curious collection of his new and selected poems, von Caemmerer is indulging in not just thought experimentation but linguistic gymnastics. Von Caemmerer says this is a poetry that uses language like plasticine, engaging the reader in the service of poetry, medicine, yoga, art, love, music and friendship. **DON KNOWLER**

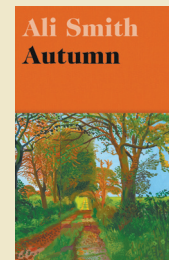


BIOGRAPHY
ALBANESE: TELLING IT STRAIGHT
Karen Middleton
Vintage Australia, \$34.99

In an era of bland, made-for-television politicians, larrikin

federal Labor MP Anthony "Albo" Albanese stands out. The former deputy prime minister is an old-style Labor fighter and the son of a working-class single mother from inner-city Sydney. Press gallery journalist and author Karen Middleton reveals a surprising story about the father Albanese met for the first time in 2009. After becoming pregnant to an Italian steward she met on a ship to England, Albanese's mother Maryanne returned to Sydney and pretended to be a widow. She confided in her son that his father was alive, but it was many years before Albanese decided to try to track down Carlo in Italy. The book details the political career and motivations of a man who is still considered a future Labor leader.

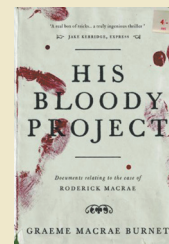
PETER JEAN



FICTION
AUTUMN
Ali Smith
Hamish Hamilton, \$29.99

Ali Smith, born in Scotland but a resident of Cambridge, has been short-listed for the

Booker Prize more than once for her free and clever fiction that often replays time - or, in this case, rearranges it. A wonderful old gay man, Daniel, is dying, his faculties drawing him in and out of memory and the now. There is also a girl, or an older woman, who we learn is beloved friend Elizabeth. Their marvellous conversations come to life, including the moment when he flung away a watch to prove time flies. The shifting collage of their relationship touches on an esoteric fascination with real-life pop artist Pauline Boty, a gorgeous, once-vibrant pre-feminist art radical who is periodically forgotten, then remembered, then forgotten again. **PENELOPE DEBELLE**



CRIME
HIS BLOODY PROJECT
Graeme Macrae Burnet
Text Publishing, \$19.99

There is no mystery about what Roderick Macrae has done in this novel, which shines

a light on life in a 19th-century Scottish highland village but there is a big question mark over why he did it. Seventeen-year-old Macrae is on trial for murdering Lachlan Mackenzie, as well as his daughter Flora and son Donnie. The first part of the novel is Macrae's confession, while the second part - which comprises autopsy reports and the testimony of a psychologist - provides a shocking twist. The book, which was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize, is cleverly structured and instantly immerses the reader in the period while blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Appreciation for the stilted, formal writing of the 19th century and empathy for the characters are, however, up to individual taste. **IAN ORCHARD**