



# Shadowboxing

*Tony Birch*

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*Change for us came so unexpectedly. One day my father was stalking the family as he had done for most of our lives, skulking from room to room, accompanied by a menacing silence that we had long ago accepted. And then he was gone.*

*Shadowboxing* is a collection of ten linked stories in the life of a boy growing up in the inner-Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy in the 1960s. A beautifully rendered time capsule, it captures a period of decay, turmoil and change through innocent, unblinking eyes.

Michael's family, led by his long-suffering mother, live as though under siege, surviving his father's drinking and rage as well as the forces of "urban renewal." Their neighborhood is a world of simple pleasures as well as random brutality; of family life and love as well as violence and tragedy. As Michael experiences all this with a combination of wonder and fear, he matures into a sensitive adult who can forgive but never forget.

*Shadowboxing* is a riveting story of loss and permanence, power and weakness, stoicism and resistance.

In the tradition of John Morrison, it captures the essence of working-class life in inner-city Australia. Written in a spare, understated style that carries a surprisingly powerful emotional impact, *Shadowboxing* is a brilliant debut.

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