

# TLS

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

**Beejay Silcox** Richard Flanagan in the atomic age | **Lindsey Hilsum** Poetry from Gaza  
**Keith Miller** Richard Ayoade's doppelganger | **Damon Galgut** Eimear McBride on repeat



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## THRILLS

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### IN THRALL JANE DELYNN

280pp. Divided Publishing.  
Paperback, £11.99.

**I**n *Thrall* was first published in 1982, when its author, Jane DeLynn was in her mid-thirties, but it is set in 1960s New York, the backdrop of the author's adolescence. It is undeniably a period piece, which is part of its charm. Yet the beating heart of the novel - the raw, vivid psychology of its sixteen-year-old protagonist - feels just as authentic today as it must have forty years ago.

Lynn - caustic, neurotic and melodramatic - lives with her parents, spends weekends visiting her grandfather in his nursing home, goes on half-hearted dates with boys and agonizes over college applications. Beneath this façade, though, she wrestles with weightier matters: her all-consuming passion for her thirty-seven-year-old English teacher, Miss Maxfeld, and the growing suspicion that this makes her a "lezbo".

The book is set in the pre-Stonewall era, a world brimming with casual bigotry, whispered

not do... a bank  
prostitute, buy caviar  
**Lucy Scholes**

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## KNOTS

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### THE SEAFAR TRANSLATED MATTHEW HOLLI PHOTOGRAPHS NORMAN MCB

48pp. Hazel Pr  
Paperback, £12

**T**he spectre of Ezra P...  
heavy over "The Se...  
monumental rendition...  
(1911) spawned a small...  
imitations and scholar...  
Its satisfyingly knotty...  
- "May I for my own...  
truth reckon" - remain...  
the most recognizable...  
Old English in translat...

Though critics in...  
time are unlikely to re...  
opening of Matthew...  
sion ("Come, lean in f...  
of myself"), the poem...  
it is a welcome new in...  
of the medieval text...  
who is cited on the...  
the foreword, Hollis...  
always picking pleas...  
phrase or striking...  
faithful translation...  
Pound, he has created

But football  
business. She  
perfect tense  
ators ("He's  
the halfway  
comforting  
afternoons.  
sources of  
vice station,  
us Wensley-  
ey sandwich  
ove for her  
ittedly, quite  
observations,  
ed from the  
ould be more  
to schaden-  
pleasure that  
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ds of people  
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when things  
omebuilding  
*l Designs*.  
gripes are  
of her back-  
; not every-  
r frustration  
machine, or  
after the first  
ony. But then  
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Low Traffic  
ke being in  
ll one day,  
soon, seem  
t's a part of  
w, you know.

horror stories about "perversion" and clandestine readings of medical textbooks that suggest Lynn's burgeoning desires are abnormal. (She worries that hair sprouting on her upper lip might be a sign of something sinister.) The revelation that Miss Maxfeld reciprocates her feelings is both thrilling and bewildering - how could there be "so many" lesbians in one school? But this is no fantasy romance, and the couple are far from destined for a happy ending.

Yet this isn't a story of grooming or exploitation. While their affair has its complications, it is surprisingly tame. If anything, Miss Maxfeld emerges as one of the novel's least problematic characters - especially compared to the straight men, who come off far worse. Down-to-earth and sardonic, she counters the narrator's over-the-top neuroses with wry humour. When Lynn accuses her of being bored with her histrionics, Miss Maxfeld quips: "Every quiver of your feverish sensibility holds me in thrall". Earlier, she cheekily suggests that Lynn should read *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, noting: "It's really all about herself - the egotism should appeal to you, if nothing more".

This isn't a tragic tale. While often poignant, it's sharp, funny and achingly real. Reflecting on her newfound "degeneracy" after being kissed by a woman, Lynn muses drily, "there was nothing I might not do: rob a bank, become a prostitute, buy caviar".

**Lucy Scholes**

