

Catherine Chidgey

Author

Catherine Chidgey is the author of *In a Fishbone Church* (1998), *Golden Deeds* (2000), *The Transformation* (2003), *The Wish Child* (2016), the 'found novel' *The Beat of the Pendulum* (2019), and *Remote Sympathy* (2021)



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Publications

Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
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REMOTE SYMPATHY

2021

Europa

An exquisitely readable, polyphonic novel of domestic drama and human connection set in and around a concentration camp in Germany during the second world war and its aftermath.

Moving away from their lovely apartment in Munich isn't nearly as wrenching an experience for Frau Greta Hahn as she had feared. Their new home is even lovelier than the one they left behind, and best of all—right on their doorstep—are some of the finest craftsmen from all over Europe. Frau Hahn and the other officers' wives living in this small community can order anything they desire, whether new curtains made from the finest French fabrics, or furniture designed to the most exacting specifications. Life here in Buchenwald would appear to be idyllic.

Lying just beyond the forest that surrounds them—so close and yet so remote—is the looming presence of a work camp. Frau Hahn's husband, SS Sturmbannführer Dietrich Hahn, is to take up a powerful new position as the camp's administrator. As the prison population begins to rise, the job becomes ever more consuming. Corruption is rife at every level, the supplies are inadequate, and the sewerage system is under increasing strain.

When Frau Hahn is forced into an unlikely and poignant alliance with one of Buchenwald's prisoners, Dr. Lenard Weber, her naïve ignorance about what is going on so nearby is challenged. A decade earlier, Dr. Weber had invented a machine: the Sympathetic Vitaliser. At the time he believed that its subtle resonances might cure cancer. But does it really work? One way or another, it might yet save a life.

A tour de force about the evils of obliviousness, Remote Sympathy compels us to question our continuing and willful ability to look the other way in a world that is once more in thrall to the idea that everything—even facts, truth and morals—is relative. A novel of devastating beauty that will leave readers shaken and exhilarated.

**THE BEAT OF THE
PENDULUM**

2019

Eye Books

Every day for a year, Catherine Chidgey recorded the words and language she came across during her day-to-day life – phone calls, television commercials, emails, radio shows, conversations with her family, street signs and satnav instructions. From these seemingly random snippets, she creates a fascinating portrait of modern life, focusing on the things that most people filter out.

Chidgey listens in as her daughter, born through surrogacy, begins to speak and develop a personality, and her mother slips into dementia. With her husband, she debates the pros and cons of moving to a new town. With her publisher, she discusses the novel she is writing. While, all around, the world is bombarding her with information.

In The Beat of the Pendulum, Chidgey approaches the idea of the novel from an experimental new direction. It is bold, exciting, funny, moving and utterly compelling.

THE WISH CHILD

2016

Vintage

Germany, 1939. Sieglinde lives in the affluent ignorance of middle-class Berlin. Erich is an only child living a lush rural life, aware that he is shadowed by strange, unanswered questions. Both children watch as their parents become immersed in the puzzling mechanisms of power. Drawn together as Germany's hope for a glorious future begins to collapse, the children find temporary refuge in an abandoned theatre amidst the rubble of Berlin. The days they spend there together will shape the rest of their lives.

Winner of the New Zealand Book Award for Fiction

**THE
TRANSFORMATION**

2006

Picador

Tampa, Florida, 1898: a frontier where the old world meets the new. Dominating the town is the new Tampa Bay Hotel, a fairy-tale castle by the water's edge, and a winter magnet for the rich and famous. But the hotel has one permanent resident, the enigmatic and exotic Monsieur Goulet III, amateur phrenologist and wig-maker to anyone with pockets deep enough.

As the winter of 1898 nears its end, Goulet becomes entranced by the spectacular silver-blond hair of a beautiful young widow, Marion Unger, and determines that the transformation it inspires him to create will be his masterpiece. But the raw material he needs is hard to come by, and so he is driven to increasingly extreme efforts. As the fates of widow and wigmaker become ever more tightly entwined, Goulet's true nature begins to show itself, until it becomes clear that he will allow nothing to impede the progress of his ultimate transformation.

GOLDEN DEEDS

2001

Picador

A tale of murder, mystery and Meccano. Published in the US as STRENGTH OF THE SUN.

**IN A FISHBONE
CHURCH**

2000

Picador

When Clifford Stilton dies, his son Gene crams his carefully kept diaries into a hall cupboard. But Clifford's words have too much life in them to be ignored, and start to permeate his family's world.