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# The Sinkings

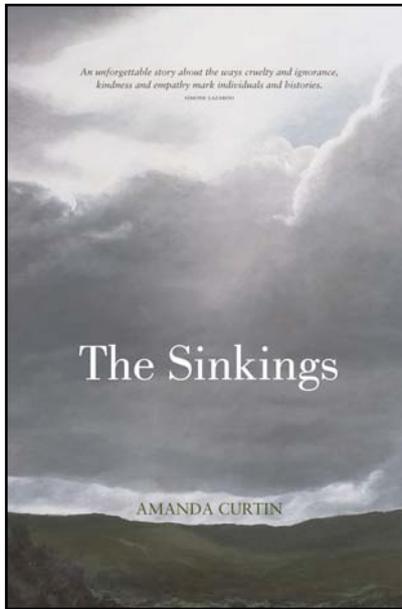
by Amanda Curtin

Published by Imprint: UWA Press, First Release Paperback: \$24.95

ISBN: 978 1 9214011 1 4

Embargo: Monday July 21, 2008

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**A historical novel delving into the experience of intersexed individuals and the broader human need for love and belonging.**

In 1882 dismembered human remains were discovered at a lonely campsite called the Sinkings near Albany, Western Australia. The surgeon conducting the autopsy claimed they were those of a woman. Why, then, was the victim identified as Little Jock, a male sandalwood-cutter and former convict? And why was the murder so brutal, so gruesome?

More than a hundred years later, in contemporary Australia, amateur historian Willa Samson embarks on a search to find out about Little Jock. A recluse after having become estranged from her daughter, Willa is drawn back into the world as she negotiates archives, communicates with family historians, and journeys to Scotland, Northern Ireland and England looking for clues to her questions:

Who were you? What was your story, Little Jock?

And while piecing together the fragments of his life, she tries to come to terms with the fact that her daughter is never coming back.

*The Sinkings* is a story within a story, the portrayal of a figure from the margins of history embedded within a contemporary narrative of a mother's guilt and grief.

**While the book is a work of fiction, the discovery of Little Jock's remains and the controversy surrounding their identification are actual events.**

*The Sinkings'* subject matter concerns people born with intersex conditions (that is, with reproductive organs and/or sex chromosomes that are not definitively male or female, and/or with ambiguous or misleading genitalia). 'Intersex' is the contemporary umbrella term used for these various conditions (very recently, the term 'DSD', disorders of sex development, has also been adopted in some medical contexts); in the nineteenth century, the term 'hermaphroditism' was used. The frequency of intersex births is estimated to be between one in 2000 and one in 800 live births; this makes intersex as common as cystic fibrosis or Down's syndrome, respectively.

**AMANDA CURTIN** has been a professional book editor for more than 20 years. While she has previously published and won numerous awards for short fiction, *The Sinkings* is her first novel. Amanda Curtin lives in Western Australia and is an occasional lecturer/tutor in writing, editing and literature at Edith Cowan University.



**INTERVIEWS FROM MONDAY JULY 21**

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