

# BIBLIO FILE

Belinda Bamber on a Francis Bacon triptych whammy and literary spring awakenings

## TANTALISING TRIPTYCH >>

*Francis Bacon: Revelations* by Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan (Collins, £30) unveils a

charismatic, even sweet side to the painter whose unsettling genius on canvas was matched by his energy for bar crawls and lovers' brawls. His flirtations and fall-outs – with peers like Lucian Freud – make it riveting prep for the Royal Academy's postponed show, *Francis Bacon: Man and Beast*. So too is Max Porter's profound poetic conjuring of nine paintings in *The Death of Francis Bacon* (Faber, £6.99). The three make for an unmissable Bacon triptych.



ABOVE: *Study of Lucian Freud* (1969)  
LEFT: *Self-Portrait* (1972)



## ▲ LATIN LOVER

This translation of Catullus' Latin love poems by Isobel Williams is a far cry from the 'amo amat' chants of the schoolroom. In *Catullus: Shibari Carmina* (Carcantet Press, £13.49), she uses Japanese rope bondage, or shibari, as the central

metaphor for the poet's obsession with erotic entrapment. Illustrated with her own watercolours (like the above, sketched live at a London shibari venue) it's the perfect gift for a literate lover, secured with a deftly-knotted silk ribbon. Best read aloud, schoolgirl garb optional.



## TRENDING

### SPRING AWAKENING

Last year's intense discussions around race identity highlighted neglected black writers such as Jacqueline Roy, whose affecting novel, *The Fat Lady Sings* (Penguin, £8.99), is in *Black Britain: Writing Back*, a series edited by Bernadine Evaristo. 2021 sees a buzz around top debuts like Raven Leilani's *Luster* (Picador, £14.99), Neema Shah's *Kololo Hill* (Picador, £14.99) and Hafsa Zayyan's *We Are All Birds of Uganda* (#Merky, £14.99).

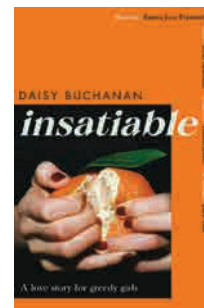
But revealing new memoirs show how black (in)visibility continues to wreak personal crises that fracture our communities. Its impact ricochets across continents in *Aftershocks* by Nadia Owusu (Hodder, £16.99), and eats at the heart of a loving London-Irish family in *Raceless*, by Georgina Lawton (Sphere, £18.99). In *One of Them* (Unbound, £8.99), Musa Okwonga invites his alma mater Eton College to step up and equip its future leaders for making radical change in racial integration.



## SIX OF THE BEST

### PAGE-TURNERS

Three new fiction books bring a glow to chilly March nights. First, Kazuo Ishiguro's much-anticipated *Klara and the Sun* (Faber, £20) imagines an AI future in which Klara, an unusually empathic 'bot', learns about love the hard way – from humans. In *Light Perpetual* (Faber, £16.99), Francis Spufford conjures the complex lost lives and adult loves that five children might have had, if a WW2 bomb had only missed its target. *The Lamplighters* (Picador, £14.99), by Emma Stonex, is an atmospheric mystery inspired by a true story about missing lighthouse keepers in Cornwall in the 1970s.



Another trio, exploring female appetites, suggest lockdown has created a craving for missed life. Hungry readers can feast on sex in Daisy Buchanan's delicious novel *Insatiable: A Love Story for Greedy Girls* (Sphere, £12.99), food in Melissa Broder's tastebud-teaser *Milk Fed*, in which two Jewish women fall in forbidden lust over a frozen yoghurt counter (Bloomsbury, £16.99), and a steaming pot of splendid Soho life in the diverting *Hot Stew* by Fiona Mozley (John Murray, £16.99).

