

# Book Reviews

**Judith Fox, *Bracelet Honeymyrtle*,  
Allen & Unwin, 1995, ISBN 1 86373 850 9**

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I must share my delight with this novel. Written by Judith Fox who works as an editor for the Law Book Company it has nothing overtly to do with law.

It is an account of the doings and thoughts told of an old woman who over a period of a few weeks dismantles “the walls in my memory, walls that I had built to last a lifetime” (p155). The life recounted commenced at the beginning of the twentieth century and was from normal perspectives in the 1990s remarkably circumscribed, first by a childhood illness which led to partial deafness, and later by a mother whose religion fuelled domination. Attempts at rebellion by the protagonist in early adulthood were unsuccessful. It was only much later that the protagonist took control of her own life and her own house. At the time of the narration the protagonist’s relations are with her niece and great-niece, and with her neighbours. The movement in the story is the realignment of memory (p173). This realignment leads ultimately to the realisation that although Mum had always wanted a perfect daughter, something like a magnolia or a jacaranda, what she had instead was “her very own bracelet honeymyrtle” a daughter who was “sturdy and enduring” and “native to her garden”.

Throughout, the prose is remarkably vivid and the incidental observations are as much to be savoured as the details of the plot. The book was shortlisted for the Australian/Vogel Literary Award, a distinction which it richly deserves.

No, this book has overtly nothing to do with law, but its themes which are domination, rebellion and freedom, the benefits and abuses of religion, tolerance and neighbourliness, and the restrictions suffered by females and by the elderly give a new insight into much of what those of us who are interested in justice in general and criminal justice in particular ponder and debate. I feel richer for having read the book and heartily recommend it to you.

**Eilis S Magner**  
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