

...S TALE
by Shaun Greenhalgh
384pp, Allen & Unwin,
£8.99

This wily memoir was written when Greenhalgh was in prison for selling fake art treasures, many of which he forged himself with an accuracy bordering on genius (notably *La Bella Principessa*, believed for years to be a Leonardo) in his shed, which the police called a "northern annex of the British Museum".

THE SEABIRD'S CRY
by Adam Nicolson
416pp, William Collins,
£9.99

Nicolson has spent two decades studying the reeking nests of seabirds, and in this elegant study of 10 different species, from the gull to the guillemot, he nails their personalities perfectly: the puffin, for instance, has "Edwardian propriety" and a "butler-in-ail-coat walk".

HE SAID/SHE SAID
by Erin Kelly
166pp, Hodder, £7.99

ly has written several od psychological illers, but in this tale of o people who stumble a rape scene and get gled up in the trial, she ends to a new plane of nuity. Her ability to ch between the sordid y of crime and juicy drama is reminiscent th Rendell at her best.

Is this Harry Hole I see before me?

Jo Nesbø should have taken the dagger to Shakespeare's story, says Jake Kerridge



MACBETH
by Jo Nesbø,
tr Don Bartlett
510pp, Hogarth,
£20, ebook £9.99

... choose in asking the blockbusting Norwegian crime writer Jo Nesbø to do *Macbeth*. (He follows Howard Jacobson's take on *The Merchant of Venice*, Anne Tyler's on *The Taming of the Shrew* and so on.) Like Shakespeare's, Nesbø's plots are often derivative but his style makes his shopworn material seem strange and fresh, and he is one of the few crime writers today blessed with a bloodlust worthy of the Jacobean.

It doesn't quite come off, sadly. Nesbø's setting is an unnamed, decaying Scottish city in the Seventies, portrayed in the same comic-book aesthetic as the Oslo of his other novels, while his demon-haunted, substance-abusing hero Inspector Macbeth is just his regular sleuth Harry Hole on secondment. *Macbeth* is inspired by the sing-song prophecies of some drug-addled prostitutes to murder and usurp his chief

to give us most of the scenes in Shakespeare's play during the course of the book, and following a template seems to trammel his imagination, too often his way of putting his stamp on a well-known scene is simply to up the *grand guignol*, but the demonic inventiveness of his best work isn't much in evidence. Luckily the novel is capacious enough to allow room for diversions that seem to interest Nesbø a bit more: his account of Inspector Duff's voyage to find Malcolm while disguised as a sailor is riveting, and his cops versus drug dealers action sequences are great fun.

But really he has been too respectful of his source material. Shakespeare would wrestle an old story into submission until he had shaped it into an instrument to convey his own artistic vision. Nesbø does the same thing on his own plane; but not enough here.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Where to find Galileo's middle finger

Emily Bearn enjoys this whirlwind tour of the great museums' strangest treasures



WONDERS OF THE WORLD'S MUSEUMS
by Molly Oldfield
64pp, Wren & Rook,
£14.99, ebook £9.99

There is something particularly gratifying about a book that equips its reader with an air of instant erudition, while going into no depth on any subject at all. *Wonders of the World's Museums* is just such a book. "I wanted to write... a treasure map for you to discover some of the most incredible museum exhibits on the planet," Molly Oldfield explains in the introduction. "It doesn't matter whether you get to see them in person or not; reading about them will let you uncover their magic."

What follows is a whirlwind tour through the treasures of 43 museums of varying fame. Some of the exhibits may be familiar: the blue whale skeleton in London's Natural History Museum; Anne Frank's diary in the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam. But others are more offbeat. There is an entry for Galileo's middle finger, which is exhibited in the Galileo Museum in Florence, and for a colossal squid, with eyes 11in wide, housed in the

Museum of New Zealand, as well as for Winston Churchill's red velvet siren suit, made by "a very expensive tailor in London called Turnbull & Asser", and now in the Cabinet War Rooms.

Oldfield does not try to be funny, which is unusual for a children's writer these days. There are no gimmicky cartoons, and no attempts at lavatory humour. "The sewers of Paris used to be cleaned with giant balls like this one," reads a refreshingly stony caption next to a picture of a cleaning device from the Paris Sewer Museum.

Some of the nuggets of wisdom in this book are of the sort that children used to absorb from school textbooks. But if we are to believe a recent survey, only one in 10 teachers still uses textbooks in lessons, as schools increasingly steer pupils towards the internet instead. This depressing statistic makes reference books such as this one all the more to be prized.

