

Footnotes: small press

Families, and other Mysteries

Liminal

by Chris Keil

Alcemi, £9.99

Fiction from Wales crops up regularly in this column. Publishing and creativity in the country are in a vibrant state; and some pervasive imaginative atmosphere seems to be inspiring the novelists. Every work to have featured here has concerned a quest and the interaction of the past with the present.

Geraint, the hero of Chris Keil's evocative second novel, is an archaeologist working in a museum in west Wales. He is haunted by the story of Brygga, a local saint who left the area on a pilgrimage, apparently never to return. And he becomes involved in another local puzzle, also involving a disappearance and an enigmatic, travelling woman. His travel-agent son, Aled, sees journeys in a more prosaic light – until he goes to Greece, where he too disappears. Geraint and Angela, Aled's beautiful though dull fiancée, set out to find him. Under the hallucinatory brightness of the Greek sun, in a place where ancient monuments adjoin concrete hotels, Geraint sees everywhere portals to realms of history and of alternative lives, hoping to discern in them clues about Aled. Keil's writing, which is limpid and often arrestingly vivid, has a charged quality that conveys the mysteries pulsing behind the everyday surfaces of things.

Nicholas Clee