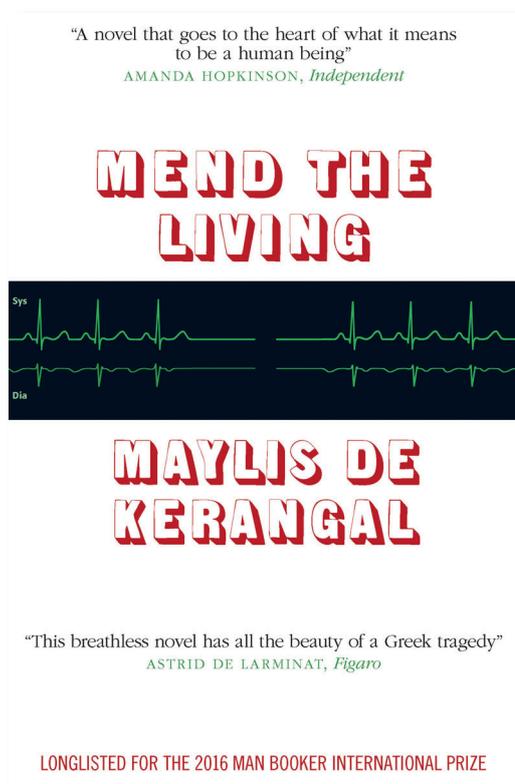


# Reader's Guide



Other novels by Maylis de Kerangal  
*Birth of a Bridge* (2010)

## Mend the Living Maylis de Kerangal

Translated by Jessica Moore

Maclehose Press

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

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### About the author

Maylis de Kerangal is the author of several novels and short stories. Her novel *Naissance d'un Pont*, translated as *Birth of a Bridge*, won both the Prix Franz Hessel and Prix Médicis in 2010. *Mend the Living* was published in French in 2014 and won the Grand Prix RTL-Lire award and the Student Choice Novel of the Year from France Culture and Télèrama. She lives in Paris.

### About the translator

Jessica Moore is an author and translator. Her book of poems, *Everything, now*, is partly a conversation with her translation of *Turkana Boy* by Jean-François Beauchemin, for which she won a PEN America Translation Award. Jessica's translation of *Birth of a Bridge* by Maylis de Kerangal has received widespread praise. She lives in Montreal.

### About the book

Early one blustery day near Le Havre, three teenagers head down to the sea together to go surfing. They are old friends: Chris, Johan and Simon. But life will never be the same again. A terrible accident rips them apart, and while Chris and Johan escape with only a few broken bones, Simon ends up in a coma and on life-support. Meanwhile, in Paris, Claire Mejan is desperately waiting for a heart transplant. Suffering from myocarditis, a transplant offers her the only chance for survival. As Simon's parents face a heart-breaking decision, Simon and Claire's lives will be fatefully joined.

### Discussion points

Maylis de Kerangal has described her novel as 'the shape that the experience of death takes in language'. How is grief treated in *Mend the Living*?

Discuss the impact of the meeting between Sean and Marianne, and Thomas Remige. Why do you think this scene is significant?

'I always have the feeling of being a translator myself, translating French into another language, which is the French of my books.' With this in mind, discuss the language of *Mend the Living*.

*Mend the Living* takes place over the course of twenty-four hours. What is the effect of this condensed timeframe?

The title of the novel comes from a conversation in the Chekhov play *Platonov*. One character asks: 'What shall we do, Nicolas?' and the other replies, 'Bury the dead and mend the living.' What are the acts of mending that take place over the course of the novel?

Describing the waves caught by the three young surfers in the opening chapters of the book, Maylis de Kerangal has said: 'The wave that opens the book is the wave of writing, of reading ... I had to keep the reader with me until the end of the book when the waves reach the beach.' With this in mind, how did you feel by the end of the book?

### Themed reading

Henry Marsh *Do No Harm*  
Kazuo Ishiguro *Never Let Me Go*  
Virginia Woolf *Mrs Dalloway*

### Useful links

<http://bombmagazine.org/article/95631124/maylis-de-kerangal>

[www.jessicamoore.ca](http://www.jessicamoore.ca)

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/mend-the-living-by-maylis-de-kerangal-trans-by-jessica-moore-book-review-a6881651.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/05/mend-the-living-maylis-de-kerangal-review>