

(Ebook free) Amsterdam: A Novel

Amsterdam: A Novel

Ian McEwan

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Ian McEwan : Amsterdam: A Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Amsterdam: A Novel:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful prose, ending a letdownBy A BookwormStarts interestingly, soars high during the first and second act and the finale is a letdown. Agree with other critics that the language is great, and makes me want to re-read several lines, and I might re-visit some passages - the ones that describe human nature, and aligns it to nature in general, there are several quote-worthy passages here.However, the

ending, though is a neat twist, seems out of character. It seems forced. One might justify it as dark comedy or something similar, but still, there is a lack of a strong buildup towards this finale - much like Clive's composition.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Who Done it with Style By K.N.R. Who done it; a plot to destroy by the mysterious, not to mention dead, Molly Lane? or was it a plot from a former lover? Clive a successful musician; Vernon a rising newspaper reporter; Julian a politician with a secret past; George, the last, who has it in for all three companions. With upcoming events, all following the death and funeral of poor Molly, the former lovers of the deceased have an increasing amount of contact with each other, wanted or accidental. Pictures, a premier story; a symphony and a rape; a man out to get MP, how can Ian McEwan possible connect all three. Through one woman: Molly. Almost like a physical entity, Molly plays a hand in the demise of all but one. Short, confusing, and delicate, Amsterdam is where is happened--the closing scene of it all. Each lover is consumed by his own greatness, riding on others and bailing on others to get what he wants; punishment can never go too far for any of the trio, or should I say quartet. Fabulous and entrancing, a dark affair with a surprising end that you almost knew would come true from the start.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. McEwan's Indictment of Humanity at the Close of the Millennium By Peter Mathews Often long-established authors, having been overlooked several times, end up being decorated for their lesser works, and in the case of Amsterdam, for which Ian McEwan won the Man Booker Prize, this pattern holds true. Not that Amsterdam is a bad book, but when I compare it to McEwan's best - Atonement, of course, along with Black Dogs and Enduring Love - it doesn't quite reach those same heights. Nonetheless, it is hard not to admire the way McEwan writes. While managing to be as urgently postmodern in his style and themes as any other contemporary writer, McEwan pays great attention to the intricacies of plot and character. There is no navel-gazing in Ian McEwan's novels, which always have at their center some motivating event or other that, like a stone being dropped into a still pool of water, sends a series of waves rippling through the rest of the plot - the discovery of the corpse in *The Innocent*, the balloon accident at the beginning of *Enduring Love*, the false accusation of Robbie in *Atonement*, and so on. Although the death of Molly Lane at the beginning of *Amsterdam* appears set to follow this same pattern, it is not the central event. Instead, her death brings together two of her former lovers, the composer Clive Linley and the newspaper editor Vernon Halliday. Rather than a single event, McEwan provides his two main characters with two moments that have broader consequences: for Clive, his failure to intervene in a possible rape so that he can grasp hold of a moment of musical inspiration; for Vernon, his decision to publish front-page pictures of Julian Garmony, a right-wing politician who was also a former lover of Molly's, dressed as a woman. McEwan draws Clive and Vernon together first as friends and then, when circumstances turn against them, as enemies out to destroy each other. This pattern bears a strong resemblance to what happens to Bernard and June Tremaine, the husband and wife in *Black Dogs* who, having been drawn together by their Communist ideals, have their marriage torn apart by deep philosophical disagreements. *Amsterdam* and *Black Dogs* are both intended by McEwan, it seems to me, to be documents of their time, a summary judgment of the failures of the twentieth century as it draws to a close. Like Bernard and June, Clive and Vernon are given opposing perspectives on the world - highbrow and lowbrow, artistic and commercial - that, for all their apparent disagreements, end up collapsing into an orgy of self-righteousness and mutual hatred. The perspective we get on the British media is, as one might expect, scathing, with McEwan delineating its willingness to plumb the depths of human depravity at the expense of any sort of sophistication or culture. Pages dedicated to literature and the arts are reassigned to sports, and real news is converted into grotesque sensationalism. Just as scathing, though, is McEwan's description of the complacency of the cultured elite. His assessment of how Clive has benefited from the post-war boom while denying the same privileges to the next generation is razor sharp, particularly when one considers that McEwan himself is a product of this era. "Nurtured in the postwar settlement with the state's own milk and juice, and then sustained by their parents' tentative, innocent prosperity, to come of age in full employment, new universities, bright paperback books, the Augustan age of rock and roll, affordable ideals," writes McEwan. "When the ladder crumbled behind them, when the state withdrew her tit and became a scold, they were safe, they consolidated and settled down to forming this or that - taste, opinion, fortunes" (p.13). Such, then, is the state of post-Thatcher Britain, which forms part of a repeated pattern of social ideals that end in despair and inequality. The curious thing about modernity, McEwan notes, is that this despair and inequality seems to emerge, paradoxically, from cultural origins that promise great beauty, joy, and hope. In making this point, *Amsterdam* points repeatedly back to the Romantics. The Millennium Symphony that Clive Linley is composing, for instance, is compared to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." In a conversation toward the end of the novel, Clive tells how he once set the Romantic poet William Blake's "The Poison Tree" to music. And of course, when he is in need of inspiration, Clive habitually retreats to the Lake District, a region of England that occupies a privileged place in English letters, having inspired authors such as William Wordsworth and Jane Austen. Initially when I got to the end of *Amsterdam* I was a bit nonplussed by the way that McEwan failed to upstage my expectations as to how the story would end. Upon further reflection, however, I realized that the novel's depressing spiral was crucial to the point that McEwan was trying to make about the history of modernity, which is that no matter how forceful the push for change and reform, no matter how "enlightened" and scientifically advanced we become, the tedious fact remains that human society continues to resort to the old tactics of brutality and conflict. The more things appear to change, the more they

stay the same. The city of Amsterdam comes to symbolize this paradox in the novel. "There was never a city more rationally ordered," writes McEwan, and yet it turns out to be the place where people can get away with murder (p.168). What makes Amsterdam a somewhat less successful novel than its closest cousin, *Black Dogs*, is its lack of a third perspective. In *Black Dogs* that role is played by Jeremy, Bernard and June's son-in-law, who mediates between the conflict of the two central characters, and whose ability to see the gray areas that Bernard and June miss provides the novel with a hint of ambiguity and even hope. Amsterdam, however, feels a little unbalanced in this respect, and therefore underdeveloped - one might easily, one suspects, have transcended the doom and gloom of the bitter fight between Clive and Vernon by complicating our view of one of the other characters - Julien Garmony, perhaps, or George Lane, or even, best of all, Molly.

The Booker Prize-winning contemporary morality tale—cleverly disguised as a comic novel—from the acclaimed author of *Atonement*. On a chilly February day, two old friends meet in the throng outside a London crematorium to pay their last respects to Molly Lane. Both Clive Linley and Vernon Halliday had been Molly's lovers in the days before they reached their current eminence: Clive is Britain's most successful modern composer, and Vernon is a newspaper editor. Gorgeous, feisty Molly had other lovers, too, notably Julian Garmony, Foreign Secretary, a notorious right-winger tipped to be the next prime minister. In the days that follow Molly's funeral, Clive and Vernon will make a pact with consequences that neither could have foreseen...

.com When good-time, fortysomething Molly Lane dies of an unspecified degenerative illness, her many friends and numerous lovers are led to think about their own mortality. Vernon Halliday, editor of the upmarket newspaper the *Judge*, persuades his old friend Clive Linley, a self-indulgent composer of some reputation, to enter into a euthanasia pact with him. Should either of them be stricken with such an illness, the other will bring about his death. From this point onward we are in little doubt as to Amsterdam's outcome--it's only a matter of who will kill whom. In the meantime, compromising photographs of Molly's most distinguished lover, foreign secretary Julian Garmony, have found their way into the hands of the press, and as rumors circulate he teeters on the edge of disgrace. However, this is McEwan, so it is no surprise to find that the rather unsavory Garmony comes out on top. Ian McEwan is master of the writer's craft, and while this is the sort of novel that wins prizes, his characters remain curiously soulless amidst the twists and turns of plot. --Lisa Jardine
From Publishers Weekly
As swift as a lethal bullet and as timely as current headlines, McEwan's Booker Prize-winning novel is a mordantly clever?but ultimately too clever for its own good?exploration of ethical issues. Two longtime friends meet at the cremation of the woman they shared, beautiful restaurant critic and photographer Molly Lane. Clive Linley, a celebrated composer, and Vernon Halliday, the editor of a financially troubled London tabloid, could never understand Molly's third liaison?with conservative Foreign Secretary Julian Garmony, who is angling to be prime minister, or her marriage to dour but rich publisher George Lane. Mourning the manner of Molly's agonizing death, which left her mad and helpless at the end, each man pledges to dispatch the other by euthanasia should he be similarly afflicted. Immediately afterwards, both Clive and Vernon are enmeshed in a crisis: Clive must finish his commissioned Millennium Symphony so it can premiere in Amsterdam, and Vernon must grapple with the moral issue of publishing photos of Julian Garmony in drag that George has discovered with Molly's effects. The clash between whether the demands of pure art are more valid than political accountability and financial solvency soon assumes a larger dimension that turns Clive and Vernon into bitter enemies and inspires each of them to seek revenge by the same means. McEwan spins these plot developments with smooth alacrity and with acidulous wit, especially focused on the way shallow and mediocre people can occupy positions of power and esteem: "In his profession, Vernon was revered as a nonentity." His ability to sculpt a scene with such arresting visual detail that it assumes a physical dimension for the reader (most memorably in the opening of *Enduring Love* but also evident here as Clive observes a woman being accosted by a rapist, and as Vernon watches a TV interview that signals the end of his career) are undiminished. But when, in the last third of the book, McEwan manipulates the plot to achieve a less than credible symmetry, it is obvious that, despite the Booker recognition, this is far from McEwan's best novel. That said, however, it will undoubtedly hit the bestseller charts, for McEwan, even when not quite at the top of his form, is a writer of compelling gifts. Major ad/promo; author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
Funerals are dreary enough affairs, but Molly's is particularly unpleasant; her former lovers hover like vultures, ready to tear one another apart. Thanks to Molly?or rather to Molly's stuffy husband, made fun of by everyone but slick enough to get the last laugh?self-absorbed newspaper editor Vernon is about to get some scandalous goods on foreign secretary Julian Garmony, an evil family-rights type. But friend Clive, a composer of impeccable tastes, disgustedly thinks that Vernon is taking advantage of Molly's memory, and Vernon is equally disgusted that Clive was so wrapped up with the final movement of his symphony that he failed to intervene in a potential rape. Their conflict proves quite literally fatal. McEwan has written a tastily vicious tale in his usual polished prose, but this time he risks too much and goes over the top. The whole affair seems a bit one-note and mean-spirited, and the maccabre ending in Amsterdam is not persuasive. This won the Booker Prize, which helps explain why the pub date was pushed up from February to November, but McEwan's last one, *Enduring Love* (LJ

2/1/98), was a better, more textured book. [Preveiwed in Prepub Alert, LJ 10/1/98.]?Barbara Hoffert, "Library Journal.-
?Barbara Hoffert, "Library Journal"Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.