

Earlsdon Literary Magazine 187

The newsletter of the AVID Readers Group, based at Earlsdon Library

Next meeting: Thursday 9 June 2016 at 8pm
Venue: Earlsdon Library
Book for discussion: *Life After Life*—Kate Atkinson

An Unfinished History

Our May Book

***The Siege of Krishnapur* — J. G. Farrell**

Other reading groups may have loved this novel but it certainly didn't produce an Indian Summer for most of us. Judy led the discussion, asking who amongst us had actually read the book and, if so, why!

There were extenuating circumstances for some (moving house) but no excuses for the rest of us. Judy gave up shortly after the beginning, lured away by Frank Skinner's autobiography. Some gave up at p.25, disliking the characters or not interested in the setting; others made it as far as the heady heights of p.66.

Rayanne enjoyed as far as she managed to read (10%) but was interested in the subject matter and hopes to visit India one day.

Ted gave up at p.62. He didn't enjoy the class differences depicted in the book as he dislikes unfairness in society. Ted would prefer to read a factual book about this period in history.

John couldn't get into the book. He expected it to be similar to *Zulu* but felt that there wasn't enough of a story, too many names, too much filler and that it was overcomplicated.

Fenella reached p.66 before giving up. She disliked the character of the young dandy, Englishman George Fleury but liked some of the writing.

Why the book was awarded the Booker Prize was discussed. The insight into the way of thinking of the British at that time was a possible reason. We then discussed the context of the book: the East India Company, the life of men and women in India during British occupation, the arrogance of the British at that time and how society has since changed.

Catherine was the sole member to finish the book. It was second time around for her but she still enjoyed it. She felt that the characters are not bad people when considered in the circumstances of the time: one aspect she liked was that the book doesn't make any apologies for how people behaved. Catherine also appreciated the humour in the book which was apparently evident even in the more gruesome parts.

The group felt the book wasn't as bad as *Stonehenge*!

Ted felt that the subject of the book was a surprising choice for an Anglo-Irish author.

It was then time to confess what was the first grown up book we read!

Rayanne Byatt

What to Read Next

I suspect that there's little point listing other books by the same author since, as you can see, it seems he didn't impress most of the group. If you have read *The Siege of Krishnapur* and think otherwise, then I suggest a friendly librarian or, if you're stuck at home, Google. *Troubles* is still on my 'to read' list although, as yet, I've no physical or electronic copy.

The Frank Skinner autobiography that lured Judy away is imaginatively titled *Frank Skinner* and she wasn't the only one to be distracted by autobiography: Joe Simpson's *Touching the Void* was also mentioned.

I don't appear to have noted anything about the 'first grown-up' book discussion but the list below includes some of the authors that I think I remember being mentioned:

- Giovanni Guareschi
- Agatha Christie
- Gerald Durrell
- Daphne du Maurier
- Charles Dickens (pace, Melissa)
- JRR Tolkien
- Charlotte and Emily Bronte
- Jackie Collins (and others even more salacious, wrapped in brown paper or false covers)

I canvassed a few friends, asking them the same question, and some of the younger

ones wanted to include Robert Louis Stephenson (we're back to the lighthouse family again) because they don't consider *Treasure Island* or *Kidnapped* children's books. Indeed, one person who commented on [this Guardian article](#) on the subject even had *The Wind in the Willows* on her list! Mind you, someone else had Voltaire, Rabelais and Kafka – hands up if you've read something by all three of *those* authors. Anyway, my lot listed:

- Georgette Heyer
- Douglas Adams
- Jean Plaidy
- Virginia Andrews
- Stephen King
- Issac Asimov

which might tell you more than you (or I) want to know about my friendship group ...

Catherine

If you have any other reviews or recommendations, tales of literary events, or anything else you think other AVID readers would find interesting, please send them to:

Catherine Fitzsimons
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Our next book is

Alice and the Fly—James Rice

and we will discuss it on 14 July 2016