

Earlsdon Literary Magazine 192

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

Next meeting: Thursday 12 January 2017 at 8pm
Venue: Earlsdon Library
Book for discussion: *Too Good to be True* — Ann Cleves

A lot of book

Our December Book

***Kind of Cruel* — Sophie Hannah**

Kind of Cruel is a story of murder, arson, family secrets, hypnotherapy and a policeman in a dysfunctional relationship. Any two of those would make your average detective novel, or psychological thriller, or family issues novel (think Jodi Piccolt); so, does having them all together make for an above average read?

Sadly not – at least not as far as we were concerned. I took quite a lot of notes at the meeting, but they too add up to much less than their volume suggests. I'm therefore going to break with tradition and just list what we thought the problems were (all the opinions below were expressed by more than one reader):

- too many characters and storylines
- slow to start
- stilted writing
- point of view not always clear

- too much information about psychology
- weak male characters
- contrived plot – bizarre coincidences
- subplots only weakly linked to main story
- children not credible

By the rules of detective fiction it was at least fair: the reader was presented with enough information to work out whodunit, if not necessarily why. However, a lot of people didn't get far enough, or care enough, to do either – although those who did also pointed out that the pace did pick up as the book went on.

On the whole, people were looking forward to having a shorter one to read over Christmas!

Catherine Fitzsimons

Our next book is probably

Peaches for Monsieur le Curé — Joanne Harris
and we will discuss it on 9 February 2017

What about November's book?

Did I miss an issue?

No, you didn't. The notes for Hilary Mantel's *Bring up the Bodies* went walkabout, so there was no December issue. At this remove, I can't remember enough to say what the few of who were there thought of it, but if someone else can oblige, we'll put it in next time.

What to read next

Sophie Hannah's Wikipedia page lists 33 'works' – some of them poetry, some translations and a couple of Poirot stories written with the backing of Agatha Christie's estate. The average rating on Goodreads is around 3.5/5 which may mean we hit a bad one. However, there were people who did enjoy *Kind of Cruel*, and an exploration of the little bar charts for a few others supports the idea that she is a 'Marmite' author. Since I've not read any of the others, I'm not in a position to suggest where to go next with her, so I shall trust any of you who are interested to Google (other search engines are available).

In fact, I haven't read many in this genre before so this list is also brought to you courtesy of Goodreads. All the books below have been described as a 'psychological thriller' by at least 25 people and have a rating

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

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of 4/5 or more. I've ordered them by rating and omitted other books by authors who appear on the list more than once (Stephen King, Clare Mackintosh and Elizabeth Haynes).

1. *Truth* Althea Romig
2. *Rebecca* Daphne du Maurier
3. *Fight Club* Chuck Pahlaniuk
4. *The Shining* Stephen King
5. *The Silence of the Lambs* Thomas Harris
6. *Gone Girl* Gillian Flynn
7. *I Let You Go* Clare Mackintosh
8. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* Stieg Larsson
9. *Into the Darkest Corner* Elizabeth Haynes
10. *Shutter Island* Denis Lehane
11. *The Butterfly Garden* Dot Hutchinson
12. *The Likeness* Tana French
13. *The Kind Worth Killing* Peter Swanson
14. *Room* Emma Donohoe

Having made the list, of course, I now find that there are things on it I have read but perhaps wouldn't have thought of putting in the category (*Rebecca*, *The Shining*) or that have been eclipsed by their films (*The Silence of the Lambs*, *Fight Club*, *The Shining* again). Given that I think the familiar ones were pretty good, I'm inclined to give the others a go – eventually.