

# Earlsdon Literary Magazine 193

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

**Next meeting:** Thursday 9 February 2017 at 8pm

**Venue:** Earlsdon Library

**Book for discussion:** *It's Fine by me* — Per Petersen

## **Not a lot of book?**

### *Our January Book*

#### ***Too Good to be True* — Ann Cleeves**

For the vast majority of readers 'Size Was Important'. Most people would have been happier with a weightier tome. However, this was specially chosen as an example of Writing for 'Emergent Readers' and contains only 93 pages.

Everyone expressed admiration for Ann Cleeves in that, she was able to:

1. Introduce a not insignificant number of characters ...
2. .. All of which were developed enough for her plot to work
3. Skillfully add Plot 'Twists & Turns' in just 93 pages
4. Create a well written Crime Story
5. Develop: Storyline, Plot & Characters well considering page total constraints
6. Not fall back on 'Trickery' – even though there are Plot Twists
7. Create 'a sense of place' – Shetland

8. Create a satisfying Ending (in relation to the little girl).

More puzzling than solving the unfolding plot were two quibbles:

Firstly, 'Jimmy Perez' is an odd name for a Shetlander. 'Jimmy' is a Scottish cliché, 'Perez' not so much. Why did Ann Cleeves choose this name for a Scottish detective?

Secondly, the local Plods demonstrated the exact opposite of 'Best Practice', in that they:

- Accepted local gossip at face value
- Didn't interview locals properly
- Didn't make more than a cursory search of Crime Scene

In summary, there was very positive feedback on this novella.

These notes are short and hopefully sweet, which is [like] *Too Good To Be True*.

**Christine Miller**

### **Our next book is**

*Never let me go* — Kazuo Ishiguro  
and we will discuss it on 9 March 2017

*Dave is aware we have read this before (May 2013), but says:*

*Not much I can do as we have read almost everything – only books left are a Harry Potter, Bernard Cornwell, a few crime titles by James Patterson, and books with insufficient copies.*

## What to read next

Jimmy Perez features in seven full-length novels by Ann Cleeves, the first of which is *Raven Black*. Maybe that one reveals the mystery of the discordant parts of his name. Having not read anything else by this author, and not being – as many of you know – particularly well-versed in this genre, I'm going to philosophise about that instead. Genre I mean.

The other week, three of us went to a full-day masterclass run by Adele Parks at the University of Warwick. Genre, she said, was not something to be afraid of: it doesn't – as we've seen this month – mean that a novel is any less-well-crafted than a piece of literary fiction ... and it will probably sell better!

For the author, the danger is being stuck in it. Adele offered herself as an example. While her early novels (e.g. *Playing Away*) may have been classed as chick-lit she has more or less seamlessly moved into the genre known as contemporary women's fiction – novels that have more mature characters whose dilemmas based more around family relationships than romance. For example, *Stranger in my Home* explores what happens when you suddenly discover the person you have believed to be your daughter for her entire life is not – thanks to a mix-up at the hospital 16 years ago.

However, Adele has also, with the full support of her publishers, put out two historical novels: *Spare Brides* and *If You Go Away*. These novels took huge amounts of research and are as well-written as the rest of her oeuvre, but have failed to sell. She therefore urged us, as people working on our first novels, to think carefully about how we might be defined by them because it would be more difficult to change later.

Of course, there are those who have successfully escaped the chains of readers' expectations, but they usually change their name to do so.

Think Agatha Christie (classic crime)/Mary Westmacott (more psychological stories) or Iain Banks (literary fiction)/Iain M Banks (science fiction). Bit obvious that one, though! JK Rowling might have kept her name when she 'finished' the *Harry Potter* saga and wrote *The Casual Vacancy* for adults, but even she hid (unsuccessfully) behind Robert Galbraith for her Cormoran Strike novels.

A name change can work both ways; Madeline Wickham sold far more books when she changed her name to Sophie Kinsella and invented shopaholic Becky.

So, I'm ending with questions, determined to make sure that next month's edition has more than two contributors.

*Have you read an author who's written in more than one genre (not necessarily under two names)? Who? What? Were you surprised by either work? Why? If they used a pseudonym, did you know?*

**Please do consider sharing!**

**Catherine Fitzsimons**

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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