

# Earlsdon Literary Magazine 217

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

Next meeting: Thursday 10 October 2019 at 8pm

Venue: Earlsdon Library

Book for discussion: *The Cut Out Girl* — Bart van Es

## Thoughts from re-readers and first-timers

### Our September Book: *Never Let Me Go* — Kazuo Ishiguro

Some group members were reading this for the second [or even fourth: Ed.]. The intrigue kept new readers engaged, and was well written: many questions were posed, with the information being released gradually. The eventual realisation of what was happening in the novel was something of an anti-climax, and some readers didn't want to continue once the reveal had taken place. Those who were reading the book the second time around had a slightly different experience of it. It seemed that once the secret had been revealed, there was space for other aspects of the novel to come to the fore.

Most readers thought the characters were not particularly likeable; and the friendships, though realistic in their displays of bitchiness and competitiveness, left something lacking when the same cycles of behaviour repeat and false friendships remain intact. And this was, to some extent, the main thrust of the novel: it questions society's morals when those in it are at their lowest ebb.

With regard to the writing style, some characters spoke in an unusually adult way given their young age at the beginning of the novel, which made the narratorial voice stronger and the characters less authentic. Metaphors were at times overlaboured, making some readers question the

suitability of such devices if they only make sense and seem applicable when an accompanying explanation is given.

It was, in places, reminiscent of *The Handmaid's Tale* and so seems to have something in common with dystopian fiction. In both novels, we see an oppressed stratum of society, used and kept for the commodification and misuse of parts of their bodies, looked after by those who appear to have good intentions but are infinitely more complex than the sum of their roles would suggest. However, the personal tenacity of the main characters in *Never Let Me Go* was rather different, almost lacking. Some readers didn't find the characters engaging and likeable, and found some of their motivations unfathomable, which lead to them being frustrating and unrealistic. Why they didn't develop a little more free will and escape from the regime when they had the opportunity? Other readers defended and understood their actions as being the result of a sad acceptance of their reality as the downtrodden members of society. This interpretation was particularly strong amongst those who had read the novel a second time, so it may warrant re-reading in order to engage with the moral message that emerges.

Natalie

## Our next book is

*The Tower* — Simon Toyne

and we will discuss it on Thursday 14 November.

## Short (the review) – but maybe not so sweet (the book)

### Our August Book: *Until Death* — Ali Knight

There was not much to say about the book – but we did.

In general, people found it to be an easy read that filled the time, and that was technically well written without too many inconsistencies or loose ends. One member appreciated the

short chapters. Pulp fiction was thought to be an apt description of the book.

It is not a book the club would particularly recommend.

Steve

## What to read next: hot tips for double-chance Nobel Prize

Kazuo Ishiguro was – at the time of writing – the last person to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. It was not awarded in 2018, thanks to a scandal, and so two winners are due to be announced for this year at any moment now. However, if I leave sending *ELM* out until the news comes through, the chances of anyone reading it prior to the meeting will slip from small to none!

So, instead, here's a list of 25 potentials for this year's prize compiled from several sources. The order is determined by how many of the sites I visited seemed to fancy them and how strongly, but not in any rigorous or scientific manner.

- Anne Carson (Canada – favourite almost everywhere but mystery to me)
- Maryse Condé (Guadeloupe)
- Can Xue (China)
- Haruki Murakami (widely translated Japanese author - just ask Dave for more!)
- Lyudmila Ulitskaya (Russia)
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya)
- Margaret Atwood (who, of course, needs no introduction)
- Marilynne Robinson (her *Gilead* has no link to Atwood's dystopia of the same name)
- Olga Tokarczuk (Poland)
- Adunis (Syrian poet)
- Mircea Cărtărescu (Romania)
- Ismail Kadare (Albania – heard of him and even read *The Fall of the Stone City*)
- Jon Fosse (Norway)
- Ko Un (South Korean poet)
- Yoko Tawada (another from Japan)
- César Aira (Argentina)

- Hanna Krall (Poland)
- Joyce Carol Oates (we've done one or two of hers, I think)
- Han Kang (South Korea)
- Yan Lianke (China)
- Péter Nádas (Hungary)
- Gerald Murnane (An Australian who, according to the *New York Times* is “the greatest living English-language writer most people have never heard of” – well, that includes me!)
- Javier Marías (Spain)
- László Krasznahorkai (Hungary)
- Milan Kundera (Czech/French – hasn't everyone of a certain age read *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*?)

Oh, and for the *Game of Thrones* crowd, there are some bookies offering 250-1 odds on George RR Martin.

I'm ashamed to say I've only read stuff by half a dozen of these authors. Language is no excuse as most of them have had at least a couple of things translated. But, by the time I see you all, we'll know which – if any – of the commentators got it right and who we should be reading next to improve our literary credentials.

Catherine

Please send news, reviews, recommendations, tales of literary events or anything you think AVID readers would find interesting, to:  
Catherine Fitzsimons  
[cathfitz5317@yahoo.com](mailto:cathfitz5317@yahoo.com)