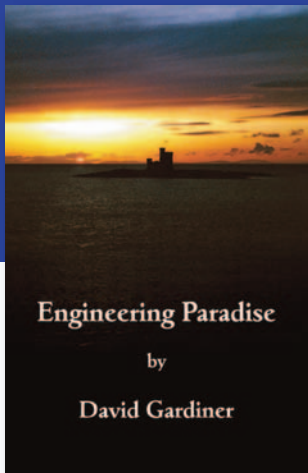


Review



Engineering Paradise
by David Gardiner
£7.99 (Paperback)
Merilang Press (2011)
280 pages

Reviewed by Andrew McIntyre

When our own Prose Editor releases a book, you must allow the Gold Dust team to get quite excited! David Gardiner has been selecting the prose for our magazine for the past 7 years and has somehow also found the time to write his own novel. Here is an independent review of it by Andrew McIntyre (author of The Short, the Long and the Tall).

Set against events recorded in grainy black and white documentary footage, or in the memoirs of retired journalists and aging IRA hard men, the novel conjures to life first-hand an increasingly distant era, a disturbing time. Like the Indian Mutiny or the Boer War, the Irish Troubles are a blight the British establishment would love to forget, or somehow manipulate and neatly credit to their cause. Hence the immense value of this work, its detail, and characters, its astonishing technical accuracy. And David Gardiner's novel is a real page-turner.

The background Ireland, so near to the UK, yet always so far, so constantly misunderstood, lampooned, neglected, abused, censored as a subject of media coverage and conversation on the mainland. Mention anything to do with Ireland, the IRA, Irish people, logical analysis shuts

down, hysteria, absurdity, and prejudice erupt. Over the last 700 years, ongoing to the present day, Ireland has been the English journey up the river into the heart of darkness. The universal value of *Engineering Paradise* thus stems from its lack of political dogma and propaganda, its essential strength the neutral portrayal of civil war. The historical context is 1960s Britain, but with a little imagination it could be the 1690s, it could be any epoch, any locale.

The protagonist of the novel meanders his way Candide-like through this labyrinth of circumstances, ostensibly within his bounds, but increasingly Faustian. With the use of excellent dialogue, David Gardiner develops the characters as independent persona against this tableau, also as emblems reflecting a murky epoch in British history, and the never-ending human quest for a utopia.

Ultimately, with a neat twist in the tale, the novel makes us calculate and consider very carefully. What is it about humans that makes holocaust so easy to engineer? Surely we can answer, look into the mirror and reflect, travel up river into our heart of darkness with the same degree of intelligence and analysis? If so, a remote possibility exists for engineering paradise.

Find out more

David's website is at: <http://davidgardiner.net>

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