Lionel Asbo

By : Mark Ramsden

Lionel Asbo by Martin Amis

Published on
Booksie

booksie.com/Mark Ramsden

Copyright © Mark Ramsden , 2014
Publish your writing on Booksie.com.

Lionel Asbo

MarkRamsden.moonfruit.com

You want a nastier *Money*
You'd settle for a shorter *Pregnant Widow*
You get a tighter, funnier *Yellow Dog*

Yellow Dog needed putting out of its misery. This friskier, cuter little muttÂ has better jokes, some lovely poetry but far too many dealbreaking anachronisms. You'll get bitten. Well into double figures. If you're going to lord it over an imaginary underclass at least try to get some of it right. 'Mucking out' is of course 'slopping out' and it was abolished in 1996. O levels stopped in 1988. You can't sit the eleven plus in London, you don't send off for lottery tickets. Amis doesn't have a butler, though you might think so from his affected accent, so I'm assuming he's occasionally queued for his cigarettes in England,Â perhaps standing behind far too manyÂ people buying lottery tickets. None of whom talk in his rabidly fake prole speak.Â Maybe he's just tired and out of touch with reality. Which other intellectual talks as slowly as he does, with frequent mid sentence pauses for thought, bumbling repetitions, shaky resolutions? He's generally reaching for some pre-used gem so you'd think he would have learned his lines by now. Most pundits are a little zippier than this doddery pre-aged duffer. What does a drawling Ivory Tower bumbler have to do with modernity? Supposedly his subject?

What killed this for me was the second use of Cellphone, American for mobile. . but with so many details conveniently dredged up from Amis's childhood, Beatles music, people drink Dubonnet and Barley Wine,Â social networking hardly exists but the now defunct Daily Sport aka Daily Lark still does.Â He claims to have been a Sun reader for 30 years. His pastiche here is embarrassing. He somehow hasn't noticed that 'Doxy' was already obsolete when the Currant Bun started printing in 1964 and...shall we be kind to enfeebled millionaires and accentuate the positive?

There are many funny, dazzling and poignant sentences.Â There's probably ten great slim volumes of poetry here, spread thinly throughout, plus some cracking stand up. In other formats, this would cost you considerably more than Â£9.50 in WH Smith.

I'm over the ending fiasco, and the lack of forward momentum in the second half. If you go back and reboot the concluding chapters it works technically but it's hard to care about inaccurate cartoon figures As he's often been so scathing about writers in supposedly lesser genres, and many literary authors, except big name Americans and dead people whose credibility he's hoping to borrow, why be kind? Perhaps because he's the only one we have, he invented much of this stuff and for old time's sake? Yeah, we're stuck with it. Grrr.

Keith Waterhouse wrote an embarrassing novel called *Bimbo* in his early sixties, mocking one of his easy Sharon and Tracey stereotypes. Apparently this bird was supposed to be in awe of a better educated old buffer squiring her round pubs. Now we have another decent old chap setting up a straw Chav. Reminds me of Mike Leigh's upper class caricatures, an easy target when the real thing would have been scarier, perhaps more sympathetic. Didn't MA write that it's easier to hate a type than an individual? (I can't remember anything either) Regarding racism? Something half recalled and slightly wrong is probably an appropriate place to stop. Let it fizzle out. If it's good enough for the literary greats...

Oh, (borrows John Self's begging cap from end of *Money*), better just say that, like Katie Price, Peter Andre and Martin Amis, I LOVE MY KIDS. That fixes everything, right?

The jacket promises us a fairy tale - a useful hedge against getting stuff right.Â He recently claimed he wouldn't write children's fiction unless he had brain damage - yet again underestimating how important the rest of the planet finds characters, stories, pace and, something he has hardly ever managed, a satisfying conclusion. Children's fiction was good enough for Roald Dahl,Â C.S Lewis and Lewis Carrol. Two Dons and a wartime pilot and spy, day jobs which are a little harder than trading in inherited fame. Perhaps a fairy tale for younger people might be the answer. He could write one with Katie Price.

Created from Booksie.com

Generated: 2014-04-19 03:15:42