



Wittgenstein's Mistress

By David Markson



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Wittgenstein's Mistress is a novel unlike anything David Markson or anyone else has ever written before. It is the story of a woman who is convinced and, astonishingly, will ultimately convince the reader as well that she is the only person left on earth.

Presumably she is mad. And yet so appealing is her character, and so witty and seductive her narrative voice, that we will follow her hypnotically as she unloads the intellectual baggage of a lifetime in a series of irreverent meditations on everything and everybody from Brahms to sex to Heidegger to Helen of Troy. And as she contemplates aspects of the troubled past which have brought her to her present state?obviously a metaphor for ultimate loneliness?so too will her drama become one of the few certifiably original fictions of our time.

“The novel I liked best this year,” said the *Washington Times* upon the book’s publication; “one dizzying, delightful, funny passage after another . . . *Wittgenstein’s Mistress* gives proof positive that the experimental novel can produce high, pure works of imagination.”

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Wittgenstein's Mistress By David Markson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this unsettling, shimmering novel, the reader is immediately drawn into the world of a woman who has gone mad because she is the last surviving creature on earth. Sitting at a typewriter in a beach house day after uncharted days she keeps no calendar or clock she pours out her thoughts on music, art and ancient Greek legends, and remembrances of her travels across the globe in abandoned cars, looking for other living beings. But after a while, some discrepancies creep into her rambling, compelling monologue: an accident that she first says took place in New York now occurs in Leningrad; memories become distorted by imaginings. Were they ever really memories in the first place? By the end of this seamless stream of consciousness, there is no distinction between fantasy and reality, past and present. Markson (*The Ballad of Dingus Magee*) keeps the reader off balance and finally unsure of even the foundation of his character's madness perhaps she is alone only because she believes she is.

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Review

"A work of genius . . . an erudite, breathtakingly cerebral novel whose prose is crystal and whose voice rivets and whose conclusion defies you not to cry." --David Foster Wallace

"Addresses formidable philosophic questions with tremendous wit . . . remarkable . . . a novel that can be parsed like a sentence; it is that well made." --New York Times Book Review

"I can't think of the last time I held my breath when I read a book, waiting for the author to make one slip. Markson is as precise and dazzling as Joyce. His wit and awesome power of observation make this fictional world utterly convincing. I couldn't put this book down. I can't forget it. While Markson himself would deplore the use of a cliché, all I can say is that this book is original, beautiful, and an absolute masterpiece. Anyone who reads it can't think about the world the same way." --Ann Beattie

About the Author

David Markson's novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress* was acclaimed by David Foster Wallace as "pretty much the high point of experimental fiction in this country." His other novels, including *Reader's Block*, *Springer's Progress*, and *Vanishing Point*, have expanded this high reputation. His novel *The Ballad of Dingus Magee* was made into the film *Dirty Dingus Magee*, which starred Frank Sinatra, and he is also the author of three crime novels. Born in Albany, New York, he lived in New York City until his death in 2010.

Stephen Moore is an American author and literary critic.

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