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Author : Nigel Williams

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From Reader Review East of Wimbledon for online ebook

Blorenzia says

"Screamingly funny", says The Independent on Sunday.

Really?

I smiled at the ridiculous antics a few times but "wildly funny" (New Statesman), no, not really.

I won't hurry to read another by Nigel Williams.

Maybe you have to live in Wimbledon to fully appreciate it.

Kathleen says

Started with a bang and ended with a whimper...

Some very funny lines (Sonny and Cher muslims was a cute wordplay) but insufficient momentum and a disappointing ending.

But would try this author again/

Rachael Colling says

hilarious.

Wilde Sky says

A loser pretends to be Muslim to get a job at a new independent school.

I didn't enjoy this book, the writing / humour / characters were all a bit flat / un-engaging.

Bjorn Roose says

Bijzonder leuk, soms hilarisch verhaal - ik las het in de Nederlandse vertaling (De meesterlijke moslim), alleen jammer dat de auteur het kennelijk tóch nodig vond om het op een politiek correcte nood te laten eindigen.

Fiona says

This is a hoot! I rarely laugh out loud but this book had me laughing out loud all the way through. If you're a fan of Cold Comfort Farm or Little Britain, or English satirical comedy generally, then you will probably enjoy this as much as I did. It's unlikely that such a non pc book would be published in the current climate but actually it takes no prisoners and pokes fun at just about everyone's beliefs and misperceptions. If you need cheering up, read this.

Paul Fulcher says

The third and last of Nigel Williams' Wimbledon Trilogy from the early 90s following the relatively amusing Wimbledon Poisoner (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>) and the, to me, disappointing They Came from SW19 (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>).

East of Wimbledon falls rather between these two. Written only a few years after the Salman Rushdie Satanic Verses affair, the topic matter feels a little controversial now but actually would have been no less so at the time, although as with the previous novels, the social attitudes feel surprisingly dated for a book written less than 25 years earlier.

East of Wimbledon tells the tale of Robert, a 20-something drifter, who decides to fake both teaching and religious credentials to get a job at the newly formed Wimbledon Day Islamic Boys' School, set up to provide a British prep school education for the Muslim community (and to make money for it's rather colourful headmaster).

Williams novel mixes in a East-meets-West story, with suburban Englishman Robert alarmingly ignorant of his newly professed religion ("Wasn't the general idea to line up against the wall and bang your head against it? Or was that Jews?", "Should he have worn a hat? A turban of some kind?") with an attempt (as in the two previous novels) at a thrillesque story line involving an obscure sect taken of Nizari Ismailis, with details taken from Bernhard Lewis's The Assassins, a book not without controversy of its own (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>).

Robert's understanding of Islam is taken entirely from the only book on the topic he could find in Wimbledon Library, and at times one can't help wonder if the same is true of the author.

At times, it is unclear whether we are supposed to be laughing at the misunderstanding and prejudices of a SW19 dweller when confronted with other cultures, or at those cultures themselves ("You are the vomit of the devil, Wilson." He was always saying things like this. Robert did not like to think of himself as a snob, but, had he been in charge of the Wimbledon Day Islamic Boys' School, he would have expected a higher standard of civility from the cleaning staff.), and indeed at times the narrator seems to derive most amusement from the Islamic parents and teachers acting as more British than the natives themselves.

The thriller storyline rather peters out, in contrast to the two previous novels there is no real twist or revelation, but perhaps the novel is no worse for that. Instead Williams seems to want to make a point, that perhaps the former subjects of the British empire are its true heirs:

The headmaster "seemed to Robert more English than he could ever be. He seemed to summon up an England of green lawns, elegant teas and beautiful women in long dresses, trailing parasols. An England that, these days, existed only in Merchant Ivory films. There was nothing squalidly European about him. He was imperial in scope"

One oddity of the 2nd novel of the trilogy was that there was no overlap at all with the 1st. I suspect that may have been the feedback from readers at the time and it is noticeable in this 3rd book that characters from the previous novel feature prominently as background characters, e.g. in the pub ("Henry Farr, the solicitor from Maple Drive, who could be so funny when he chose, had said in his comic colonel voice "Johnny Muslim can be quite a tricky customer") or walking their dogs on the Common.

Robert summarises these characters rather neatly as "people who at first sight had seemed so friendly and decent and open and neighbourly, but who, after two or three encounters, had turned into ravingly obsessive lunatics", and there is an intriguing, but not followed up, mention of a successor to the Poisoner, the Wimbledon Dog Murderer, which I couldn't help feel sounded like the topic for a better book.

Paul says

Written in the early 'nineties this tells the story of a moderately average white man who passes himself off as a Muslim to get a job at the new independent Muslim boys' school in Wimbledon that's just about to open. As a satire on religion, contemporary morals and attitudes it's fairly standard and feels more than a little dated. Having said that the reason I chose to read it is that it's almost impossible to imagine someone writing a satire on Islam and its practitioners nowadays. The telling is fine and the characterisations enjoyable enough - I just think that global events have overtaken the parochial world in which this is set.
