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The Affairs of Others

by Daniel Scheffler

EDGE Contributor

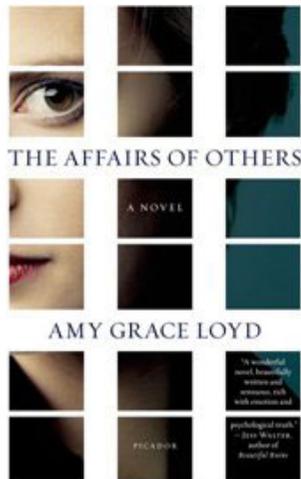
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"The Affairs of Others" comes off as a sad (oh-so-sad) tale about a sad (oh-really-so-sad) woman. But that's just the first glance that offers you this misimpression and judgment. The novel might be specific to a portion of time that New Yorkers are digesting right now, and that's the beauty. It is a time away from 'HBO Girls' and the seemingly ugly mayoral race that the citizens of the greatest city on the planet just cannot ignore.

The value of the novel lies in seeing far into the distance, beyond the Brooklyn real estate, and somewhere that separation from feeling, breathing or even just existing is the fly in the ointment. We all know it; we've all hidden on the subway with or without headphones and tried to hide in the masses of Avenue filled souls. But as the novel so beautifully (thanks to her prose, oh yes) points out is that connecting and being part of something bigger is inevitable. No matter how hard you try to hide from it.

A debut novel from Loyd, ex-Playboy (not model, but editor) meditates on this loneliness. The unaccompanied desolation of life in a metropolitan city like New York does feel like an old friend. Even so, in the softer neighborhood of Brooklyn where Celia (our almost heroine) sends herself to manage an apartment building, the truism persists. She purchases this 'drama-free' building by counting her coins all post-death of her husband, and feels that she can escape her loss by concentrating on



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managing others. Oh boy, she underestimates life. But how else could she ever have known, as she comes crashing out of her semi-life into a full-blown real life.

The value of the novel lies in seeing far into the distance.

"American life asks us to engage in an act of triumphant recovery at all times or get out of the way."

And that is what Celia, with the help of her tenants' lives, starts to see so clearly. Forget AA and meetings and self-help sections of the Kindle store, the recovery comes in the flesh and with no gloves; unexpected and fertile as the characters pull, push and line up as the ultimate band of rustlers.

This vision that Celia and her entourage now poses is not new, but the extent of the clarity of it all definitely is. It's so clear, in fact, that Loyd scrubs, polishes, buffs and repeats the entire cycle of finding truth, or let's call it desperately finding answers. She runs with the proverbial wolves when it comes to sex, and the moments of humor are so quintessential current New York that the novel dances from the pages and becomes the mirror on the wall of the bathroom: The mirror that makes you look your worst, and

your best, and sometimes both all at once.

"The Affairs of Others"
Amy Grace Loyd
\$15.73
Picador

by Amy Grace Loyd

Daniel Scheffler is a writer who spends his time in New York, Cape Town and India. Follow him on Twitter @danielscheffler

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