MILKMAN McClelland Library Book Discussion

2018 Norton Room

Anna Burns September 30, 2023

10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

**Milkman** won the National Book Critics Circle Award, the International Dublin Literary Award, and the Booker Prize for fiction 2018. Anna Burns is the first Northern Irish writer to win the prestigious Booker Prize.

The novel is set during the violence of the Troubles of Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

* Consider the lack of personal nouns in the novel. The narrator is only known as “middle sister” and others are only known by their relationship to her (oldest sister, third brother-in-law, maybe boyfriend), while others are identified by their roles or occupations (milkman, real milkman, tablets girl). Although it is obvious that the setting is Northern Ireland, the specific locales are not identified as such. They are described as “the country over the water”, “over the road”, “over the border.” What effect does this have?
* One reviewer observed that the author’s targets are tribalism, conformism, patriarchy, and fear.
* Consider the instances when someone challenged authority: the “issues women” vs. the traditional women and the paramilitaries, the “real milkman” vs the paramilitaries. What others did you see?
* “People can be extraordinarily slipshod whenever they already have made up their minds”. Think of examples of harm this information does in the novel.
* Other novels we have read deal with The Troubles in Northern Ireland (**Midwinter Break, The Ghosts of Belfast,** **The Truth Commission).** How does **Milkman** differ or add to the subject of political violence?

In October we will discuss *Haven* by Emma Donoghue