

## John Lanchester – Capital (Faber and Faber)

## Alice Furse – Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere

### (Burning Eye Books)

**C**hristmas has been and gone. The seemingly never ending hours in the car, the aching arms from lugging presents to relative's houses, and the cramps from the endless mountain of Brazil nuts and the red foiled chocolates that no one wants, are gone. All that hassle for a day that was all over before it really began.

The silver lining though is that you undoubtedly made a New Year's resolution to read more. To make sure that you were at the cutting edge of literature, and to keep the promise to yourself that when you get the odd snatched moments of peace – you will devote them to reading.

Capital, by John Lanchester, has recently has the small screen treatment – but don't let that put you off indulging in this epic tale of London's fictional Pepys Road. Pepys was of course a great diarist, and this novel forms a curious diary of five main characters, with an exceptionally high number of secondary characters.

When staring at this book's cover, I thought it would overpower me and I'd struggle to really invest in the characters. However, once Petunia, Roger, Ahmed and Rohinka, and Freddy get under your skin then it seems impossible that you've not moved into Pepys Road yourself.

While not the most original or transformative book you'll read in your lifetime, it is a story told about the stories of people – and for that alone it carries a magic.

The book satisfies our voyeuristic desire to know

what our neighbours are up to. Lanchester invites us into that screaming match in the lounge, he lets us know why she was crying on his doorstep, and it tells us why the builder is whistling a merry tune. While Potteresque in depth Capital remains engaging throughout – something that few novels of that length achieve.

At the start of a new year, the time when we try and muster the best of ourselves against the back drop of mince pie babies still gestating in our stomachs, it's important to try and find perspective.

In her debut novel, Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere, Alice Furse stunningly, and with a grace that many more mature authors will never muster, depicts the slow descent of her protagonist into the kind of sadness that we all fear – the inevitable acceptance that this is it.

Furse is Orwellian in her depiction of our contemporary landscape, capturing the mundane of the everyday and scrawling life all over it in luminous letters. She will make you weep and laugh in equal measure, and hold a mirror to your face that will all too often reveal the uncomfortable home truths. And for those who believe that small town Britain too rarely makes it into a cultural landscape, often focussed on the bigger cities, you'll delighted.

Debut novels sometimes have an element of rambling about them, but this sharp focused work hooks you. It is a superb read - one of those books that you fear reading because you know that as you plough through it, and you see the last few pages emerging quicker than your hopes and dreams for the characters, you will miss it when it's gone.

