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Rachel, the mother of the aging professor Thomas Vanderlinden, shared her life with two men. Both went by the name of Rowland Vanderlinden. The first husband went abroad and never returned. The second, whom Rachel also unquestioningly accepted as her husband, was a mystery.

In an attempt to understand his mother's adventurous decisions regarding love and marriage, Thomas sets out on a journey to the far reaches of the Pacific to find the first Rowland, and his real father. As the mystery of the two Rowlands unfolds throughout the novel, so too does a fascinating portrait of one woman and the choices she makes. Set before a backdrop of fantastical places, *The Dutch Wife* is a profound meditation on the nature of love.

The Dutch Wife Details

Date : Published by Penguin Books Canada (first published September 1st 2002)

ISBN : 9780143013426

Author : Eric McCormack

Format : Hardcover 313 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Cultural, Canada, Novels



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From Reader Review The Dutch Wife for online ebook

William Wren says

I wrote this over ten years ago when I first read this book. It goes like this:

This is one of the most enjoyable books I've read in a while. It's called The Dutch Wife and it's by Eric McCormack.

Any brief summary of the novel would be misleading. It involves a woman who marries once yet has two husbands (sort of) both of whom are named Rowland Vanderlinden. But let's just say that's not so much what the story is about as it is a jumping off place.

I suppose there are two key reasons why I liked this novel so much (beyond simply being a good story). McCormack does two things that I almost always love when they're done well and both relate to style.

First, there is the tone. It is a very conversational narrative, particularly as the book opens with it's first person narrator, but also in the way the various sections begin. It's almost a written version of oral story-telling.

I think this is partly due to McCormack being what Alberto Manguel calls a "fabulist," meaning someone who writes fables or legends. Don't be misled by this, however. The story is very contemporary.

The second thing McCormack does, which relates to style and is again also related to the fabulist tradition, is to tell tales within tales within tales. There is an Arabian Nights quality to it. One narrator tells a story about another narrator who is telling the story of another narrator — kinda like that.

So in The Dutch Wife the initial narrator tells us the story of a man he meets who in turn tells him a story of his adventures which includes meeting others who tell him stories.

The art in all this lies in making compelling and engaging characters of all the narrators, making their stories interesting, and bringing all these stories, which initially seem disparate, together so they dovetail in the end and we see how it all relates.

Anyway ... I love this sort of thing, and I loved The Dutch Wife.

McCormack also manages to write with a prose style that finds a nice balance. It is neither too erudite nor too simplistic; rather, it finesses a fine line between the two.

The novel is a great story. But it's also a fun story. There is considerable humour in it but also a joy in narrative. As a reader and writer, this is an aspect of literature that always wins me over.

Frances says

Though the subject matter was disturbing, I found this book very interesting. I had no idea there were brothels in the concentration camps especially ones for the prisoners. This story was well developed with

wonderful characters.

Vit Babenco says

In the beginning there is an epigraph that may serve as a pilot in the navigation through the troubled waters of this book.

“Look at the world, with its thousands upon thousands of years of wars, plagues, famines, murders, public and private brutalities, injustices, parricides, genocides. One would have to be a supreme cynic not to believe there must be some great pattern, some great plan behind it all.” **Pablo Renowski**

There are some journeys that go not just through distances but also through ages, spiritual experiences and treasuries of knowledge. *The Dutch Wife* is one of such journeys.

“And it’s quite understandable when you consider that survival was very precarious in those days. To drink the water was to invite E. coli; to eat a meal was to risk botulism; to breathe the air in a town like London was to expose yourself to innumerable contagions; to lie down in your own flea-ridden bed was to flirt with bubonic plague. In fact, when you think of it, to wake up alive in the morning in that era was a miracle. Yes, if ever there was a time when people needed to believe in God, or in Something that would give their lives meaning, you would have thought that was just such a time... But in spite of all those incentives to belief, there were some people who just couldn’t convince themselves. They thought the world was so awful that no god worthy of their respect could have made it.”

Sometimes embarking on a quest we find more than we were looking for...

Freelfe says

L'épouse hollandaise d'Eric McCormack est un roman de 330 pages, publié aux Editions Points. Le résumé me tentait beaucoup, et je pensais avoir davantage un thriller entre les mains. Mais ce n'est pas du tout l'impression que j'ai eu. C'est plutôt un roman contemporain qu'un thriller, une histoire qui nous fait voyager à travers le monde.

Certes, c'est un roman bien construit, avec une histoire prenante, une bonne écriture, des personnages attachants et un dénouement surprenant. Malgré tout, je suis restée très extérieure à ce livre, dans lequel je n'ai pas réellement réussi à me plonger, et j'ai rapidement commencé à le lire de travers. Peut-être n'était-ce pas le bon moment pour le lire, mais c'était sûrement dû au fait que je m'étais imaginée totalement autre chose avec la quatrième.

Aussi, je n'ai pas réellement apprécié ce livre, malgré les indéniables qualités qu'il possède et qui ont été largement mises en valeur dans les autres chroniques postées. Je vous recommande donc de vous tourner davantage vers leur chronique afin de vous faire un avis sûrement plus juste du roman, qui est par ailleurs très bien noté !

Mary Keen says

A friend in the Netherlands texted n recommended this title, but unfortunately for me, he had read the more recent book by Ellen Keith --I realized this after wasting IMO a lot of time with this --hard for me to understand the raving reviews by others.

My friend mentioned the Holocaust, but this book was so crazily scattered in time and places around the world, that I tho't it might eventually include that. I mentioned to him that I didn't see how it was going to come together, but he advised I should keep on.

This started out well in the rented semi-detached home, but then went everywhere --could have been shorter, leaving out much of the unnecessary, almost unrelated details about his travels and "adventures."

Now i'm going to look for the Ellen Keith title he read --and hoping it's more worthwhile.

RB DIGITAL 1.25 speed.

Lynn Wyvill says

Wow! I was carried along in this fabulous tale right to the end of its journey. I enjoyed the intricate twists of cultures and the manner in which the characters were open to accepting what simply arrived at their doors. Complex logistics were presented easily. A wonderful read.

Debbie says

This book was a quick read. That is the upside. Not funny as it professes to be. Lots of "What the hell.." moments. Don't really know what the author was going for and didn't care for any of the characters. One good thing, now I know what the pillow I put between my knees when I sleep is called now!

Tony says

Dutch wife *n* : **1**: a wife who is primarily, or solely, useful **2**: a dry pillow or towel placed between the legs at the crotch nocturnally in tropical climate to prevent fungus or infection.

Oh, and I learned about Guinea worms too. YouTube that!

Eric McCormack is a wonderful storyteller who is not afraid to shock. (I may know a fella like that). In *The Dutch Wife*, a wife opens the door in response to her husband's unique doorbell ring, but it's not her husband at the door.....although he says he is. She tells him to leave, then changes her mind.

Intrigued?

Tara says

This is one crazy book. Love, love, loved it. Had me running to the computer to find out if there really were such things as Guinea worms. Fascinating stuff. Bought copies of this book for Christmas books. Hope everyone loved it as much as I did.

Vivian says

This is a hard novel to categorize. It is relatively short, deals with stories within stories within stories, and the quirkiness and unpredictability of well-loved characters. I'm not sure what to say about it, except that I enjoyed the stories told, learned much about obscure people and places I am likely never to see, and was sorry to see it end. Highly recommended.

Lynn Gionette says

I liked it. It was an odd read but I learned a lot. I thought it was fascinating

Blair says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It was a fun, educating, well-paced book spanning several continents, beliefs and stories; and still it was a quick read! Eric McCormack's prose is intelligent but not over-wrought with verbiage although you get the feeling he holds back for the benefit of the reader. This book is going into my fave list. I can't wait to read more of his novels!

Barbara Patterson says

Great story, rich character development. A good read in a nerdy sort of way!

Elsa says

Alors que sa mère Rachel s'apprête à mourir, elle confie à son fils Thomas qu'elle a connu deux hommes dans sa vie, qui s'appelaient tous les deux Rowland Vanderlinden. Le premier, anthropologue, est parti au bout du monde et n'est jamais revenu. Le second s'est présenté chez elle et leur amour a été profond, jusqu'à sa mort tragique sur les champs de bataille de la guerre en Europe. Thomas se trouve investi par sa mère de démêler ce trouble secret et de découvrir ce qu'il est advenu de son père. Il s'engage alors dans une quête tant géographique que psychologique, nous emportant à travers les mythes et les aventures de bien d'autres gens.

Le récit démarre tranquillement mais peu à peu, s'insuffle de l'aventure, des histoires, des trahisons et des amours déçus. Thomas quitte son Amérique pour le Pacifique et finit par tomber sur celui qui se révèle être son père, mais qui a une conception particulière de la paternité. Il racontera cependant à son fils comment il en est arrivé à être un naufragé comblé au milieu du Pacifique et qui est cet homme qui s'est présenté autrefois sous son nom. Si vous aimez les récits emprunts de contes et de légendes, vous vous régalez aussi des personnages insolites (le voisin). Un beau roman qui nous fait voyager tout en restant dans notre fauteuil.

Rivière Cécile says

Superbe fiction comme je les aime, qui mêle réalité et imagination débordante de l'auteur. Ce récit un peu fou qui nous emmène au bout du monde est juste et impressionnant. Aucune envie de refermer ce livre mais envie de connaître la suite ... le paradoxe du lecteur !
