



Weekend

Jane Eaton Hamilton

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On her fiftieth birthday, crazy-in-love Ajax visits her mercurial lover Logan, who trails their tarnished reputation like a lapsed halo. Logan has secrets, but so does Ajax, and during their weekend getaway to Ontario's cottage country, some of these secrets will prove explosive.

In the next cottage, long-term couple Joe and Elliot are having their own challenges as the parents of a newborn baby girl. Joe isn't sure if Elliot loves her or even if Elliot wanted a baby at all. Can she make it through a weekend feeling as she does, let alone the rest of her life?

Jane Eaton Hamilton's ninth book is an intimate, sexy queer romance. 'Weekend' is a bold and heartbreaking consideration of the true nature of love at the cusp of middle age--about trust, negotiation, and what's worth keeping in the end.

Weekend Details

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Author : Jane Eaton Hamilton

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Cheryl says

Weekend swept me right into its plot with characters that I had to keep reading to learn more about. Fiction isn't usually my thing, but this book in particular held my interest and the way the characters were written kept me engaged so that I couldn't stop reading.

Diving into its pages felt as natural as breathing. Several times I forgot that I was even reading because conversations and interactions were so seamless that I felt more like I was catching up with friends interacting on a weekend. It doesn't happen often and the lack of this is why I sometimes struggle with reading fiction, with my ADHD. The author crafted characters that aren't just believable but that are so real it's hard to believe they were written into existence and didn't live somewhere else in the ether. Some writers bring characters to life, but the characters helped remind me of the light in the hurts that took place in previous relationships, while reminding me of how much I enjoy fiction.

Some of the struggles the characters went through while reading felt like a gateway to better understanding myself. I also enjoyed the writing because I saw myself in it and because I'd tried to navigate a poly relationship before, with similar struggles to Joe and Elliot, while exes like Logan left imprints. There were also ways that Ajax's experience of her totally different lived experiences to Logan's had me feeling the ways I used this in my own life to protect myself from hurt. It's something special when an author brings these nuances of our humanity, vulnerability and relationship together in perfect marriage with a great writing.

I've read in a few places here that people are upset that it got caught up in identity too much but isn't that the point of a great novel whose contents help you feel seen and validated? If the struggles that go along with these identities seems unrealistic, it's important to ask whether or not you're asking the novel to be more like you for you to fully enjoy it, or whether you want to enjoy a novel as it is, for what it's saying about the human condition through voices that are just unfamiliar. As a queer person who is non-binary with a learning disability and ADHD it's nice when I see myself in CanLit especially demonstrating that it's possible to publish books with characters who go by "They" for more than just a plot device.

I read about one book per day on average, unless I'm swamped with work, but this was truly a treat for me to come home to over two days that were incredibly busy with deadlines, community meetings and working at my "day job"; Truly, an enjoyable read that I highly recommend!

George Ilsley says

Modern romance! Exactly like something you may have read before, but also completely different. What Hamilton has done here is take the type of relationship story we have all read a million times and somehow re-invent it. Some of the elements seem a little forced (the island), but the story opens up into the world when the characters return to the city.

Funny, fierce, tender and revelatory.

CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says

Oof. You know when a book is too real? This novel is a snapshot of 2 queer couples spending the weekend in side by side cabins in rural Ontario. It's highly character and relationship driven, with a lot of authentic dyke processing, gender feels, very authentic (kinky) sex, and interrogation of disability. It took me a while to get the characters but after about half way through I was invested. Very thought-provoking! But also kinda depressing? Full review on my blog!

Kelly says

Fantastic take on modern relationships. Two same-sex couples head off for a "Weekend" in Ontario cottage country and none of the individuals returns home quite the same. Logan takes his lover Ajax to celebrate her 50th birthday while Joe & Elliot have just had a newborn. Seemingly disparate stories but seamlessly-interwoven. Logan & Elliot were once a couple & are now 'just friends.' Joe has just given birth & is trying to get her head (& body) around the enormous expectations childcare involves yet Elliot, her wife, is not quite present. A simple love story...not quite!

When read with a closer eye, symbols & metaphors abound. Ajax, one of the four main characters: a unique name. Indeed- in the Trojan War, Ajax & Hector battled. It went on so long that Zeus called it a draw. Yup, mighty Zeus. Thus, we see 'Weekend' - Ajax & Joe could (& at first for the latter) be foes but, this scenario is turned around - a 'draw' so to speak. Ajax in fact assists, comforts & facilitates Joe & Logan by greatly-helping with the Elliot situation...& that's just a start! ? And yeah...let's not forget that damn near everyone in Greek mythology was queer, bi, even able to spring a child from their male forehead!! (Zeus with Athena!!) That's just a beginning. I'll not spoil the plot but analogy between 'Boiling Foot Lake' (the location of the cottage) & the frogs in boiling water metaphor is so well-done. It's never heavy-handed but perfectly describes Joe's feelings (especially after 'it' happens!)

What we expect when reading about love is that nothing is every straightforward, simple or predictable. Jane Eaton Hamilton's "Weekend" is a thoughtful, clever and passionate story of love & the myriad emotions that are entailed in all relationships (lovers, friends, strangers, children). Eaton Hamilton's "Weekend" is a smart, riveting novel than only gets richer upon re-reading. Enjoy!

Lisa says

Jane Eaton Hamilton's novel "Weekend" takes the reader on a getaway in more ways than one. The novel situates its four main characters, two lesbian/queer couples, on an island in Ontario cottage country, a place where we witness the dynamics of their relationships unfold under a magnifying glass, without the distractions of city life. I was impressed by the fluidity of the prose, and Eaton Hamilton's ability to reveal so much about her characters through their small actions as much as dialogue. The author's refreshingly honest, unsentimental descriptions of women's bodies and raw, postpartum emotional states, in particular, bring the experience of new motherhood to life. There is so much sensual deliciousness in this book: so many sexy, dreamy, languid, goofy, languid, and erotic moments, to counterbalance the more serious themes of marital conflict, disability, disparities in wealth and class, and how queerness defines/shapes the lives/relationships of its characters.

The novel was a bit of a slow burn for me, but about a third of the way in, I was not only hooked, but felt emotionally invested in the lives of Logan, Ajax, Joe and Elliot. Equally impressive was the inclusion of

diverse, multifaceted queer, female/non-binary characters (one of whom uses "they/them" pronouns, something I have never seen in fiction before), as well as broader issues of gender, race and class to contextualize the characters' relationships. It is hard to address these subjects and do them justice, so Eaton Hamilton is to be commended for tackling them with ferocious verve. The last third of the novel was for me by far its most devastating and poignant. I was, in turns, gutted and elated, and deeply gratified by the time I reached the end: so much warmth, humour, and so many moments of genuine human connection along the way. I would recommend this novel for LGBT/non-LGBT readers alike. You might just finish it over the course of a weekend.

Jane Eaton Hamilton says

Book review: Agony and ecstasy apparent in new novel *Weekend*

Tom Sandborn

Vancouver Sun

Weekend

By Jane Eaton Hamilton

Arsenal Pulp Press

“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,” Tolstoy tells his readers at the beginning of *Anna Karenina*. Like most successful epigrams, this line is pungent, compelling and memorable. Also, like many such quips, it could work just as well turned inside out, as a declaration that all unhappy families have broad stroke elements in common.

While award-winning Vancouver poet, short story writer and novelist Jane Eaton Hamilton’s new book, *Weekend* is, by the author’s own account, inspired by Raymond Carver’s grim 1981 meditation on love among the ruins “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,” it can also be read as a reflection on Tolstoy’s formulation about happy and unhappy families. But however the erudite reader wants to compare it to earlier fiction, *Weekend* itself is a tour de force, an account of two same-sex couples in crisis, a tender meditation on the nature of love, desire, betrayal, mortality and reconciliation.

It also is notably successful in rendering the complex realities of sex, a challenge that defeats most writers who attempt it. Not many readers these days will be shocked or offended by the book’s sexual frankness, but some will wince at the way Hamilton breaks another taboo. Her enthusiastically sexual characters are in mid life (one is turning 50 as the weekend occurs) and come to their erotic experiences with all the baggage that status implies. In a culture that disdains the old, particularly older women, as sexless, these moments of powerful erotic realism are genuinely transgressive and wonderfully done.

While I describe the main characters as same sex-couples, the reality is somewhat more complex, as one of the characters is considering a gender transition. The fact that this character prefers the de-gendered singular pronouns “they” and “their” will take a bit of getting used to for some readers, but the calm, matter of fact way in which Hamilton portrays trans issues and the new verbal etiquette they imply is one of the book’s many strengths.

Unlike the gay novels of my youth, which tended to focus univocally on the coming out narrative, this book takes all that for granted and turns its attention to what happens after one has come out, won the right to

marry and moved into what the public intellectual Stan Persky calls a “post gay” reality. Often enough, Hamilton suggests, this post liberation reality, while obviously a huge improvement on the fever swamps of homophobia and oppression that preceded it, is full of ordinary human heartbreak and betrayal, sorrow, tedium and flawed, triumphant love.

That recognition, and the lapidary prose Hamilton uses to embody and dramatize it make *Weekend* a remarkable, intricate and mature work of art. And Hamilton can reflect on these matters from the perspective of one of liberation’s veteran warriors. According to the University of Toronto’s Poetry Online, Hamilton “came out in 1982. She was a litigant in Canada’s same-sex marriage case from 2000-2003, and then maintained an website called queermarriage for the next several years to aid couples coming to B.C. from other countries with queer-friendly resources.”

Most of the novel’s action takes place over a weekend at two lake island homes in Ontario cottage country, giving the book a tight temporal and geographic focus, almost Aristotelian in its unity, a unity that is only partly diffused by the book’s coda, which takes the four lovers past the weekend, back to the city and on into new domestic and medical complications.

The couples are Elliot and Joe, two women who are celebrating the recent birth of their daughter Scout, and Ajax and Logan, who have come to the lake for Logan to propose marriage to Ajax. In the course of the weekend the couples are both disrupted, one by abandonment, one by a health crisis.

While in summary this may sound like the stuff of queer soap opera, in Hamilton’s deft, spare treatment, there is no melodrama. Sex is portrayed in a compelling, original fashion, and the trials and rigours of dealing with a new baby are portrayed with sensual detail and emotional depth. Hamilton’s rendering of her character’s heart crisis and of the years of impaired functioning, pain and body shame that preceded it benefits from the same sensual precision and closely observed detail that illuminate her sex scenes. All her characters are nuanced, complex and believable creations. This is the real world of imperfect adults, captured and rendered with compassion, wit and intelligence.

Much of this is accomplished by Hamilton’s exemplary use of free indirect discourse, that challenging but supple device that allows a third person account to reflect the first person inner life of the character. This approach, pioneered by Jane Austen, is a powerful one, allowing layers of double perspective and irony to be rendered in careful, minimalist fashion.

This is a remarkable book. Little wonder that Hamilton has been recognized so often for her narrative skills- by the Guardian’s Best Book of the Year List, the BC Book Prizes, the VanCity Award, CBC Literary Awards and many other prizes. If you have not yet discovered this important Canadian voice, *Weekend* is your opportunity.

Tom Sandborn lives and writes in Vancouver. He welcomes your feedback and story tips at tos65@telus.net.

Elizabeth says

Brutal, and #2real. A complicated snap shot of the intricacies of queer love.

Jaclyn says

Intense relationship story about two queer couples at neighbouring cottages on a weekend. Logan is about to propose to their partner Ajax, who has a heart-related disability. The other couple, Elliott and Joe, is facing the struggles of having a newborn baby, and one woman's disease over her partner's polyamorous lifestyle. Logan and Ajax's story was more compelling for me, probably because it felt more intense, with Ajax's heart condition, the couple's frank discussions around each one's comfort level with BDSM and role play, and both partners having family issues (Logan with a mother who insists on calling them by their birth name and asks that Logan not get married until she dies, and Ajax with grown children worried over their mother's condition and unhappy about her remarrying).

Natalie says

How often does a novel do justice to both the queer, transgender, and disabled communities! This should be required reading. I absolutely loved it, and now I'm going to read the rest of her work. I highly, highly recommend it.

Julie says

This is the best book I have read this year. Hamilton brings us four wonderful characters who live and grapple with lesbian/queer/women's contemporary experiences. The sex is hot; the characters are wonderfully flawed, human, and relatable. This is the book to beat for the 2016 Lammy in Lesbian Fiction. Buy it. Read it. Love it.

My review at Curve: <http://www.curvemag.com/Reviews/Weekend>...

RF says

Just fantastic. So much *can* happen in a few days' time, and tons is packed into this book. Set in a lakeside locale that proves anything but idyllic, "Weekend" is as much an exploration of adulthood's confusions and wounds as it is a study of complex relationships. The characters, both likable and abhorrent, rip and rifle through their emotional baggage - some of it spanning several decades - to varying degrees of detriment.

What sets "Weekend" apart from the pack is Jane Eaton Hamilton's refusal to idealise relationships between women, and is perhaps the first queer-themed book I've encountered that doesn't regard queerness as holier-than-thou. We are *not* immune from abusive behaviors, malice, cruelty, or selfishness, and Hamilton's Joe, Elliot, Logan, and Ajax display motivations that stray far from the "easy" answers.

Penny says

Jesus Christ, what a gorgeous prose!

And all the queerness! My god. The boi dykes, the kinksters, the dis-identifiers, the non-normatives, the sweet dreamers, the loose-talkers, the sweet lovers, the broken hearted. Gotta love 'em all.

Sherry McCarnan says

I just finished reading *Weekend* by Jane Eaton Hamilton. There a few reason why I didn't want to read this book as I suspected that the subject matter would take me to hard places. But when a queer/lesbian/gay story comes out, I must explore. Two story lines, both compelling, switching back and forth at just the right time. Once I started reading this book, save for sleeping, I could not put it down. Maybe there will be a sequel. There was definitely enough story to continue.

Karrie Higgins says

Jane Eaton Hamilton's *Weekend* is a queer, crip reimagining of "What we talk about when we talk about love." Two couples, one new and one together sixteen years, come together for a weekend in the country, unexpectedly confronting the demons of their current and past relationships. As one couple unravels under the stress of a newborn, the other wrestles with what it means to love and be loved in the face of a deadly disability.

Weekend is sexy, tender, and raw, with smoldering sex scenes and intimate arguments that leave tender bruises at the intersections of disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and class. Jane Eaton Hamilton exposes the exquisite and raw vulnerabilities of her characters with empathy and insight—the lesbian who secretly thinks she might be straight, the new mother anxious for her milk to come in, the "heart crip" domestic abuse survivor whose A-fib looms like a death threat, the maybe-trans boi who is terrified of losing the love their life.

"Do you know what we talk about when we talk about love?" One of the women asks. Is love the sum total of things "we can tolerate"—"the vast list of things we give up for companionship?" Is love lust? Is it sacrifice? Perhaps no definition of love can account for the nostalgia one character feels about a lying, manipulative ex, or for taking a leap of fate in spite of impending death. Perhaps there isn't even such a thing as a "queer" or "crip" version of Carver's iconic story, because in the end, love all comes down to the same violence, the same loss, the same sacrifice, the same leaps of faith. And yet, it's not the same, not at all, and that's the beauty of *Weekend*, how it illuminates those universal themes but changes them, too, revealing how life on the fringes makes "what we talk about when we talk about love" a riskier and more terrifying proposition.

Melissa says

Wish I had liked it more

The book seemed more concerned with issues and identities than the development of solid, three dimensional characters. Some nice descriptive passages though.
