

Capital by John Lanchester.
faber and faber 2012.

Capital is a brilliant and clever title for a brilliant and clever book which is also a hugely enjoyable read.

Set in the leafy up-and-coming Pepys Road in south London, Capital tells the story of the denizens of the neighbourhood, both the long established and the new comers. It is very much a parable for our times, taking on filthy capitalist bankers, dazzling young footballers, hard-working Polish builders, a 'Banksy-style' graffiti artist, Asian shop keepers and the war on terror.

John Lanchester weaves the lives of his characters into a tale that never flags and which grips the reader to the last page.

As is always the case with parables the story, while deeply satisfying in its own right, hides a multiplicity of meanings below the surface. There is financial capital, tied up in the bricks and mortar of the houses, emotional capital, badly handled or withheld, moral capital, as in the way the hotshot football fixer responds to the events that unfold around his prize charge, and materialist capital where the come-uppances that come are intensely satisfying.

Capital would make a wonderful TV mini-series with its rich cast of characters, and there are some memorably funny moments, not least those connected with the arrival and behaviour of the redoubtable Mrs Kamal from Pakistan.

This is a joy of a read from a master story teller: his previous novel was published nearly ten years ago, I hope he doesn't wait as long before publishing his next.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh