



Batlava Lake

Original title:

Publisher: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021

Genre: Fiction

Pages: 104 pages

Full English



Adam Mars-Jones

Batlava Lake

Pristina, Kosovo, 1999. Barry Ashton, recently divorced, has been deployed as a civil engineer attached to the Royal Engineers corps in the British Army. In an extraordinary feat of ventriloquism, Adam Mars-Jones constructs a literary story with a thoroughly unliterary narrator, and a narrative that is anything but comic through the medium of a character who, essentially, is. Exploring masculinity, class and identity, *Batlava Lake* is a brilliant story of men and war by one of Britain's most accomplished writers.

Read more: <https://fitzcarraldoeditions.com/books/batlava-lake/>

'Barry is a man with no friends and little sense of wonder, who's better with things than with people, and who can't see through the detail to what's really going on.... And when we finally find out what he's been skirting around, it all fits together precisely, and we look back in wonder at how we got from there to here without being able to see the join. Mars-Jones, it turns out, is an expert engineer himself. And much better at people than poor old Barry.'

John Self, Observer

'There is something of a tradition of the novella-with-a-dark-twist in British fiction ... it isn't until the very last pages that we can be sure what we've just read. But even then, the effect Mars-Jones creates is not that of a twist or revelation but a confirmation of a presentiment for which we've been subtly, expertly primed.'

Nikhil Krishnan, The Telegraph

*'Barry is a clever, funny and anecdotal narrator, and on one level this book is a cracking read. It is also written with a sharp social observation that could easily have made it an exercise in applied snobbery, but Barry is not just the butt of Mars-Jones's condescension. The overall stance is more like compassion, which makes *Batlava Lake* a more complex and ultimately rather beautiful book.'*

Phil Baker, The Times

Adam Mars-Jones

Adam Mars-Jones' first collection of stories, *Lantern Lecture*, won a Somerset Maugham Award in 1982, and he appeared on *Granta's* Best of Young British Novelists lists in 1983 and 1993. His debut novel, *The Waters of Thirst*, was published in 1993 by Faber & Faber. It was followed by *Pilcrow* (2008) and *Cedilla* (2011), which form the first two parts of a semi-infinite novel series. His essay *Noriko Smiling* (Notting Hill Editions, 2011) is a book-length study of a classic of Japanese cinema, Yasujiro Ozu's *Late Spring*. His memoir *Kid*

Gloves was published by Particular Books in 2015. He writes book reviews for the LRB and film reviews for the TLS.