



Hurry on Down

John Wain

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"A great fund of comic invention." - "Times Literary Supplement"

"Written with great spirit . . . very funny . . . fresh, unhackneyed and excellently observed." - "Listener"

"[A] bustling kaleidoscope of a book, by an author fertile in expedient, keenly observant and occasionally probing the heart of darkness." - "Sunday Times"

Charles Lumley feels that he has been born in captivity - the captivity of his smugly conventional bourgeois upbringing. Now he has just graduated from university, only to make the discouraging discovery that his education has rendered him unfit for any kind of useful employment. Wondering what to do with the rest of his life and longing to escape, a chance remark overheard in a pub sets him off on a picaresque and hilarious tour of 1950s Britain. He undergoes a string of comic misadventures as he works as a window cleaner, a drug trafficker, a hospital orderly, and a chauffeur, all while trying to find his place in the world and win the love of the beautiful Veronica Roderick.

John Wain (1925-1994) was one of the great English men of letters of the 20th century, a prolific novelist, poet, biographer, and critic whose many accolades included the Somerset Maugham Award, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, and the Whitbread Award. "Hurry on Down" (1953), his first novel, ushered in a new kind of English novel and paved the way for many later classics, including Kingsley Amis's "Lucky Jim" (1954) and John Braine's "Room at the Top" (1957). This 60th anniversary edition includes an introduction by Nick Bentley and marks the novel's first republication in the United States in more than half a century.

Hurry on Down Details

Date : Published 1965 by Penguin (first published January 1st 1960)

ISBN : 9780670001873

Author : John Wain

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Genre : Fiction, Classics, Novels

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From Reader Review Hurry on Down for online ebook

John Weller says

Now you middle-class anti-heroes are getting a bit predictable. Man graduates, turns his back on expected path of employment, renounces money and ambition, finds he doesn't fit in anywhere, nice middle-class job falls in to his lap, gets the girl...

Even though this book has little point or direction I enjoyed it lots even though Charles (had to be called Charles) failed to get beaten up. Could have done with a bit more soul searching and paranoia.

Evan Knudsen says

"In Charles's breast pocket was a paper packet containing his last cigarette. He took it out carefully, but it had somehow bent, and the paper was broken in the middle. He began to smoke it, holding it so that one finger exactly covered the torn spot, inhaling deeply. The hot storm-centre of alcohol in his stomach rose to meet the smoldering pool of nicotine in his lungs, and, the burden of guilt and fatigue slipping from his shoulders, he breathed a silent prayer of gratitude to the twin deities of his world." awesome quote from book

Karyn says

The ideas expressed here are creative and amusing, but they are also bitter, and perhaps it explains why John Wain is often included as one of the novelists referred to as the Angry Young Men of the post-war period. But whatever bitterness his character feels, it is not projected outwards; he doesn't retaliate against Society. He simply looks out into the world and recognises that he doesn't share the aspirations of the class into which he has been born. He doesn't see a place for someone who thinks the way he does.[Read more>](#)

Tasha says

It was really hard for me to get interested in, the main character was a dick and I didn't like what the novel was even about, but overall it had a good ending and I don't regret reading. Still not the kind of book for me. Was way too boring in lots of parts.

Uri says

Encara que la idea -un jove universitari que es "desclassa" voluntàriament- i moltes de les reflexions són brutals (especialment tenint en compte l'època, just abans dels 'angries') la història no m'ha acabat d'enganxar. Massa picaresca pel meu gust...

Esdaile says

This is an enjoyable read, very much in the category of the "angry young man" pose. The 1950's litterati in Britain seemed to have been smoldering with resentment against the established order of things ("the Establishment") -remember the Church Bells in "Look Back in Anger"? -some of them, maybe most of them were considered leftish in their day but when they became older they tended to a Thatcherite disdain for social responsibility. Consistently it seems to me, whether they thought of themselves as "left" or "right", they were always Godless and their existential atheism, their lack of faith in anything beyond or behind or within the human individual is apparent in novels such as this one. It is cleverly written, sometimes funny, never boring but ultimately heartless. Yes, it is an enjoyable read but enjoyable in much the same way as junk food is enjoyable. I wouldn't return for a second helping of this hero, who is faithful to noone not really even to himself. This book is at once full of life and yet befools life. It is the nihilistic world of Evelyn Waugh or Scott Fitzgerald but without the hope which Scott Fitzgerald and Evelyn Waugh offered to the reader in their stories.

Sche says

Charles Lumley nous embarque dans un périple social, entre lutte des classes, désespoir et passion amoureuse.

Bunta Potter says

No-one could mistake this novel for anything other than the work of an Angry (or at any rate Disgruntled) Young Man. It paints a clear picture of just-post-war England - Wain began it in 1949 - with all the baggage of its period, the dinginess, squalor and discomfort of life for many, depressed mood, battered landscape and a sense of weariness; little wonder that Wain noted a tendency for people to look back and an overall lack of zest.

Having heard HoD described as funny, and in search of a laugh, I launched in but soon ran aground and could only refloat after a lengthy break.. The beginning is slow and uncertain in direction; although Wain claimed to have plotted later chapters, the form is basically picaresque throughout. Despite a pervasive, at times almost smothering, sense of drabness there are some entertaining passages (alas too few), when anti-hero, Charles Lumley, confronts characters he meets on his erratic way. Wain's ear for dialogue is good, some characters are well-observed, but the tone is more often sour than generous or amusing. Generally, I found Lumley's bottomless capacity for self-pity as dreary as other features of the background and remain in the dark about why anyone might owe him a living. Most characters are unpleasant, hypocritical, deceitful, on-the-make in some way and when things get melodramatic, they become not just downbeat but murky. Eventually, bafflingly, everything seems to come up roses for Charles (can't be totally sure of this) with the help along the road of numerous coincidences that would make even Dickens blush. Yes, you guessed, this was not my book but AYM aren't my favourite and I might just have read my last.

Lizzy B says

Hurry on down proves a colourful mix of social commentary, emotion, random 'luck' events and the

meandering brain of one taken to making both nothing and everything of a situation. For the most part, the novel has been lucidly strung together, and save for a slow, wordy beginning it is only once in a while that it loses momentum, showing signs of being the authors first major work. Somehow Wain manages to make even the mundane appear interesting or complicated in such a way that I, the reader, couldn't help but be drawn along with Charles, to see what, where or whom he might happen upon next.

I loved the author's way of writing states of drunkenness, delusion, lovesickness and lack of sleep. The barely cohesive swapping of words, near poetical rhythmic sense of forward motion. All attempts at philosophical reasoning outside of these states were a little dull and predictable, but there was always a turn which drew Charles into a state... in my mind things despite all the problems seemed to work out a little too well EVERY time. This cat had 10 lives.

Julie says

Une lecture qui m'a finalement assez agréablement surprise, je ne m'attendais pas à accrocher autant avec les aventures de Charles Lumley. Traduction plutôt fluide chez les Editions du Typhon.

Jordan Winfield says

four stars but my copy had no pages between 148 and 167. one minute lumley was being chased by police and then next he was working in a hospital. i filled in the blanks using my expert brain thoughts though.

Kathleen Haley says

This picaresque novel was so good that when I finished it (last night) I was well-nigh heartbroken. It's hard not to grow so close to the hero (Charles Lumley) that you feel even more suspense, thrill, and despondency than he does as the various twists and turns of the plot unfold. It's side-splittingly funny at some places, crack-up-worthy at others, and always witty.

Gareth Evans says

Written a year before Lucky Jim, it has a similar feel to Amis's rather more coherently-plotted work. The episodic nature of the book is it's weakness. There are some excellent set pieces, but it doesn't engage as well as, say, Luck Jim or Room at the Top. However, it's a well-written and enjoyable slide of 1950s fiction.

Dan Honeywell says

This was a relatively fun read. It takes you places. Many places.

Joseph says

One of the funniest novels of the 1950s, alas is now forgotten. I found a haggard looking paperback in used book store years ago.
