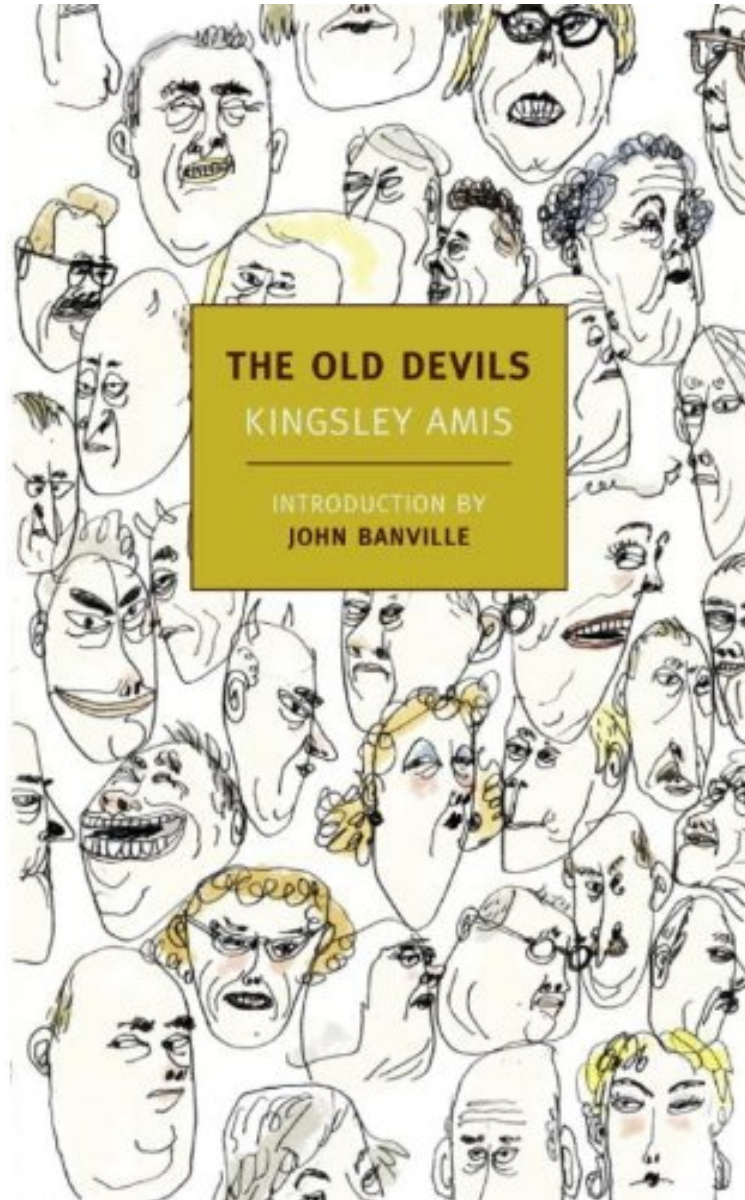


[Download] The Old Devils (New York Review Books Classics)

## The Old Devils (New York Review Books Classics)

*Kingsley Amis*

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**Kingsley Amis : The Old Devils (New York Review Books Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Old Devils (New York Review Books Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Grimly Funny By J. Folk Kingsley Amis and his son Martin considered this his best novel. In the introduction to this edition, John Banville notes the same ranking. That is saying a lot considering Amis' other novels. It is a merciless book, filled with humor and despair. And booze. Lordy, do these

people like to drink. One can speculate if that is an attempt to numb the sense that the grim reaper is approaching, but it is constant. And the memories of love affairs, divorces, pompous spouses, and a life in Wales, are droll. Banville describes this as a single strain which runs through all British comic novels of the last century: despair. There is that in full measure. The writing is superb, of course, filled with great descriptions of landscapes and bars. Characters are related intricately, and need to be closely read to keep track. And some are quite crazy. These are close friends and some have been lovers. But the relationships don't seem warm. It is a lonely book. The end surprised me, and perhaps speaks at the end of all, of redemption. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyed the steady stream of sardonic chuckles. By Roger the Lion Hearted I enjoyed the book ... almost every page had some sardonic comment that was worth a chuckle. In different sections you follow a different elderly character from a revolving cast of long-time friends. Many of the scenes are written very well, capturing the tiny implications, inferences and innuendo that lie beneath the surface of even the most casual conversation. One problem I had was trying to keep track of the secondary characters, in the end I gave up trying and enjoyed the cynical sarcasm, regardless of what character was supposedly mouthing it. But if you're looking for highly developed characters - or any character development at all - this isn't the book. The men, with one exception, are very similar. Actually, there is one character who surprisingly becomes somewhat sympathetic towards the end of the book, but I think I should pause now and erect the

...=====SPOILERS ALERT

LINE=====There! Now that we're past that I can talk more freely. At the end it would have been interesting to see how Peter and Rhiannon got on, reunited as lovers (or not?) after all these years. Instead we only hear about it from the outside. Then again, anything more revealing may have been too big a departure from how the rest of the story has been presented. And was Alun's sudden death just a way to get Peter and Rhiannon together again? One senses the meddling of the authorial hand becoming a bit too obvious. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Pub Crawl and More Booze than a Raymond Chandler Novel. By Ethan Cooper. In *THE OLD DEVILS*, Kingsley Amis examines the complex social dependencies that exist among six boozing sixty-something couples. In doing so, he creates three remarkable male characters that seem to originate from aspects of his own personality. These are Alun Weaver, a charming rogue and intellectual operator; Charlie Norris, a phobic alcoholic; and Peter, a fat man weary of modern life who eventually returns to his first love. In writing *TOD*, Amis developed a book with 10 "parts". While there are exceptions, most of these "parts" are multi-chapter narratives that follow one or two characters through a few hours of their day. Part One, for example, is entitled "Malcolm, Charlie, Peter, and Others" and shows several major characters in *TOD* as they move towards, and then enjoy, the day's first drink. Meanwhile, Part Two, "Rhiannon and Alun", shows these characters return to Wales, after only second-tier celebrity in England, and reestablish old friendships. Part Three, "Charlie", shows the alcoholic Charlie Weaver on a pub crawl. Here, the reader learns about Charlie's friends and can see how the libertine Alun uses his friends to have and conceal liaisons with their wives. Here, my point is that each "part" exists in a very specific time and place and clearly establishes aspects of Kingsley's characters. *TOD*, in other words, is a disciplined narrative. *TOD* is the third Amis novel that I've read. The others are *Lucky Jim* (New York Review Books Classics) and *That Uncertain Feeling* (Penguin Modern Classics), which were Amis's hilarious first and second novels. These are very British and carefully crafted, although Amis's son Martin famously declares that some of Kingsley's sentences, not only in these early novels, are fashioned in oak. In contrast, the sentences in *TOD* are often loose and even... well... maybe Kingsley wanted a drink and couldn't be bothered to tighten all the screws. For example: "One of Malcolm's troubles, and many others' too, was that he expected not only to follow conversations himself but that those around him should do the same, without any allowance for their being bored, mad, deaf, thick, or drunk without having been seen by him personally to set about becoming so." "... with the low cloud and heavy rain outside, the twilight seemed to closing in already. Never mind that by the calendar it was still summer, the local weather had always had its own ideas on that." This looser style sometimes enables Kingsley's funniest remarks. Even so, this style, which probably captures how certain Brits spoke in the 1980s, does also create occasional cloudiness in the text. For this reason, I think the greatest fans of *TOD* might well be Brits or those who have spent serious time in England and don't need to think about the shape or center of English phrasing. Regardless, *TOD* is a compassionate and very funny novel and a worthy winner of the Booker. Recommended.

Age has done everything except mellow the characters in Kingsley Amis's *The Old Devils*, which turns its humane and ironic gaze on a group of Welsh married couples who have been spending their golden years—when “all of a sudden the evening starts starting after breakfast”—nattering, complaining, reminiscing, and, above all, drinking. This more or less orderly social world is thrown off-kilter, however, when two old friends unexpectedly return from England: Alun Weaver, now a celebrated man of Welsh letters, and his entrancing wife, Rhiannon. Long-dormant rivalries and romances are rudely awakened, as life at the Bible and Crown, the local pub, is changed irrevocably. Considered by Martin Amis to be Kingsley Amis's greatest achievement—a book that “stands comparison with any English novel of the [twentieth] century”—*The Old Devils* confronts the attrition of ageing with rare candor, sympathy, and moral intelligence.

From Bookforum Amis is deft at shifting points of view, even relaxing his trademark chauvinism long enough to manage to look at things from the women's perspectives. And he knew about the ravages of time. In *The Old Devils*, there's no system oppressing the characters, only time itself. —Christian Lorentzen Winner of the 1986 Booker Prize “Kingsley Amis’s most ambitious book is neither a sendup nor an exercise in some established genre. It sets forth a large cast of characters rendered in depth as well as on the surface. *The Old Devils* is also Mr. Amis’s most inclusive novel, encompassing kinds of feelings and tone that move from sardonic gloom to lyric tenderness.” —The New York Times “The talk is also exceedingly sharp and funny, and it brings the characters to life as only pungent dialogue can. His prose is as tart as ever, which is of course good news, but the softening effect of his feelings for his old devils is even more welcome. More than in any of his previous novels, Kingsley Amis has allowed himself to show a bit of heart; it becomes him.” —Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post* The book is, of course, highly comic in parts, but it is not a cosy read. The comedy has a crematorium whiff, dealing with such unmentionable topics as death, old age, hate, the ghastliness of marriages, the awfulness of the Welsh and the decay of the flesh.” – *The Times*, London “For long time admirers of the Amis of *Lucky Jim* and after, *The Old Devils* is welcomed evidence that the master remains masterful, able now to conjoin the mischievous with the mellow. As always, he is an insightful guide through the terrain where what is said is not meant and what is felt is not said, but where much of life is lived.” – *The Los Angeles Times* “The old, robust masculine tradition of British comedy from Fielding and Smollett continues in our own vernacular.” – V.S. Pritchett, *The New Yorker*

**About the Author** Kingsley Amis (1922–1995) was a popular and prolific British novelist, poet, and critic, widely regarded as one of the greatest satirical writers of the twentieth century. Born in suburban South London, the only child of a clerk in the office of the mustard-maker Colman’s, he went to the City of London School on the Thames before winning an English scholarship to St. John’s College, Oxford, where he began a lifelong friendship with fellow student Philip Larkin. Following service in the British Army’s Royal Corps of Signals during World War II, he completed his degree and joined the faculty at the University College of Swansea in Wales. *Lucky Jim*, his first novel, appeared in 1954 to great acclaim and won a Somerset Maugham Award. Amis spent a year as a visiting fellow in the creative writing department of Princeton University and in 1961 became a fellow at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, but resigned the position two years later, lamenting the incompatibility of writing and teaching (“I found myself fit for nothing much more exacting than playing the gramophone after three supervisions a day”). Ultimately he published twenty-four novels, including science fiction and a James Bond sequel; more than a dozen collections of poetry, short stories, and literary criticism; restaurant reviews and three books about drinking; political pamphlets and a memoir; and more. Amis received the Booker Prize for his novel *The Old Devils* in 1986 and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1990. He had three children, among them the novelist Martin Amis, with his first wife, Hilary Anne Bardwell, from whom he was divorced in 1965. After his second, eighteen-year marriage to the novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard ended in 1983, he lived in a London house with his first wife and her third husband.

**John Banville** was born in Wexford, Ireland, in 1945. He is the author of many novels, including *The Book of Evidence*, *The Untouchable*, *Eclipse*, *The Sea* (winner of the Man Booker Prize), and most recently, *Ancient Light*. As Benjamin Black he has written six crime novels, including the recently published *Vengeance*.