



Thursday, 1:17 p.m.

Michael Landweber

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Thursday, 1:17 pm is an unconventional and intriguing novel that blends thoughtful insight with an irreverent, anything-goes attitude reminiscent of Chuck Palahniuk.

Michael Landweber's *Thursday, 1:17 pm* is a thought-provoking psychological fantasy. On a critically stressful day in his young life, seventeen-year-old "Duck" finds his world suddenly frozen in time, except for himself. He is the sole moving being in a world gone utterly and eerily still. Alone with his thoughts, he wanders through a world full of people paused in the middle of their daily lives: speeding cars frozen in mid swerve; jetliners fantastically hovering in midair.

Other writers, including Nicholson Baker and John D. MacDonald, have explored similar concepts, but unlike their protagonists, Duck has no apparent control over the freezing of his world, and no idea how to unfreeze it.

Duck is an amusingly sardonic and self-aware narrator whose deadpan observations about the physical practicalities of life in his new situation take the form of paragraphs from an imagined travel guide to the "frozen world." He's rather less perceptive about the emotional turmoil of his own life. Like most teenagers, he's unstoppably curious about sex and friendship and love, and the puzzling nexus between them. Also, justice and equality. And death. And madness.

Landweber subtly varies the tone throughout the book. Some of the situations Duck encounters in his solitary existence are comical. Others are dangerous, discouraging, or titillating. (Who knew, Duck observes, that so many people take showers, or have sex, at 1:17 in the afternoon?) Some are frightening ... especially those that bring Duck closest to the parts of his life that he'd like to forget, or never understood in the first place.

Browsing through a paused world may give Duck the chance he needs to reassess and reevaluate his own life, if he can ever find a way to restart it. If the solitude doesn't drive him crazy. If he's not already crazy. Or worse.

Thursday, 1:17 pm is an unconventional and intriguing novel that blends thoughtful insight with an irreverent, anything-goes attitude reminiscent of Chuck Palahniuk. It's a fun read that also gives something to think about after its final page.

BRADLEY A. SCOTT (Summer 2016)

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