

# Novels of Michael Ondaatje

Review

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2018

a review of

*In the Skin of a Lion* (1987); *The English Patient* (1993) by Michael Ondaatje

Some people read novels solely for a good story. Others also want quality writing that flows well and doesn't distract from the story line. For me, if the novel reflects my values, all the better, but this is not a criterion.

Authors Cara Hoffman's and Lola Lafon's novels (some reviewed in the FE) are well-written and reflect the values promoted in this paper. But as Lola Lafon said during a discussion organized by L'Insoumise, the anarchist bookstore in Montreal, "I write novels, not tracts." And, I want to read novels, not propaganda.

Two novels, *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*, by Sri Lanka-born Canadian author Michael Ondaatje, are superbly written.

Wait! Don't say, "I saw the movie version of the latter film." Movies can never reflect the complexity of a novel, and one misses the beautiful writing. There are some of the same characters in both novels, so they should be read, if possible, one after the other, starting with *Skin of a Lion*. They reflect our values, *The English Patient* more subtly until the end, and the nation-state is denounced more than once in this novel, as is war.

Other novels that are interestingly written that reflect our values include *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver, *The Old Man Who Read Love Novels* by Luis Sepulveda, and *Dreams of my Russian Summers* by Andrai Makine, unfortunately the only one of his novels to be translated into English (they were written in French and translated into many other languages). Of course, the list of worthwhile titles is endless.

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