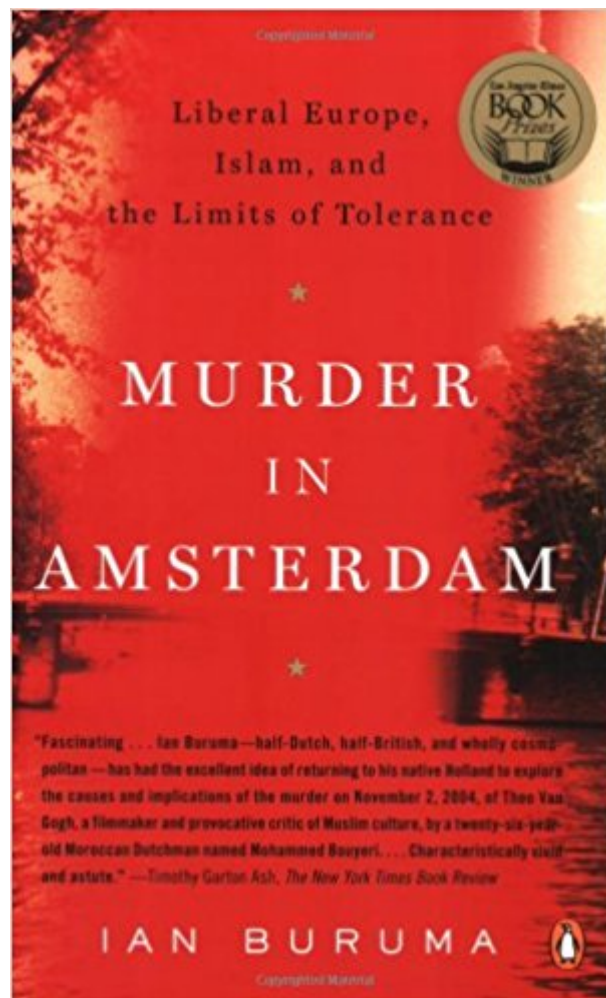




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Murder In Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam, And The Limits Of Tolerance



Synopsis

A revelatory look at what happens when political Islam collides with the secular West Ian Buruma's *Murder in Amsterdam* is a masterpiece of investigative journalism, a book with the intimacy and narrative control of a crime novel and the analytical brilliance for which Buruma is renowned. On a cold November day in Amsterdam in 2004, the celebrated and controversial Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh was shot and killed by an Islamic extremist for making a movie that "insulted the prophet Mohammed." The murder sent shock waves across Europe and around the world. Shortly thereafter, Ian Buruma returned to his native land to investigate the event and its larger meaning as part of the great dilemma of our time.

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Customer Reviews

Van Gogh, a provocative media personality in the Netherlands, was shot and stabbed on an Amsterdam street in November 2004 by a young radical, the son of Moroccan immigrants, who accused him of blasphemy against Islam. When Buruma (*Bad Elements*) returned to his homeland in an effort to make sense of the brutal murder, he quickly realized there was more to the story than a terrorist lashing out against Western culture. Exploiting the tensions between native-born Dutch and Muslim immigrants, van Gogh drew attention to himself with deliberately inflammatory political theater that escalated beyond control. Buruma refuses to blame the victim, though, giving equal weight to critics who insist Islam must adapt to European culture rather than the other way around, like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Dutch politician who scripted van Gogh's final film, an avant-garde indictment

of the religion's treatment of women. There is a strong sense of journalistic immediacy to Buruma's cultural inquiry, and if the result is a slim volume, that's because his dense, thoughtful prose doesn't waste a single word. (Sept. 11) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The well-traveled Ian Buruma, a Bard College professor, previously published *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (2005) and *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (2002), among others. Buruma's account of Theo van Gogh's death was first published in the *New Yorker* in January 2005. The book, an expanded version of the magazine piece, is timely. Buruma receives much praise for his writing and reporting skills, though several critics comment on the book's lack of structure. Buruma's willingness to examine the story from all angles is his strength, leading in the final analysis to a nuanced understanding of the situation and an evenhanded piece on a seemingly impenetrable issue. The book suffers from this impenetrability as well: Buruma provides a record of the events but few answers to the questions he inevitably raises. But has anyone else managed to answer these questions yet? Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Fantastic, to start things off. Buruma's writing, always exceptional, is at its top form. While not a long book, it is very much distilled and disciplined writing. For me, the end result was that it seemed much longer. Or, maybe a more accurate word is "bigger," as it is in many ways a big book. The subject he tackles may be the defining theme of this century, which began with a horrible cataclysm in Manhattan five years ago. The idea of preserving European culture continually resurrects the traumas of the Second World War and Nazi philosophy of racial purity. How does modern Europe preserve itself without appearing to regress to racial aversion which has been so systematically eradicated from European politics, philosophy, arts and letters since 1945? Stay tuned for the answer. Buruma courageously confronts the issues swirling around the subject of Islamic values, modern European liberalism/socialism, accommodating anti-democratic values in a democracy. Just yesterday, the Netherlands took steps to outlaw the veil in public places, which will ensure more spilled blood for sure. What I admired was Buruma's refusal to let the Dutch off the hook for the part they have played in creating their mess. The passages about modern Dutch politics were engrossing, as I know less than nothing about the subject. The chapter on Pim Fortuyn was a masterpiece, he seems like the archetypal figure in this unfolding drama. Not that Buruma is suggesting this is a Dutch problem, or that the Dutch are in the wrong. It is a world problem, with no

easy answers getting worse daily as our own malevolent leaders insist on dealing with the problem with simplicity and deception, invasion and subjection, distortion and lunacy.

Do you wonder what is happening to American social discourse and politics? Why are the likes of a Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders attracting such strong followings? The story of liberal Europe since the 1960s helps to answer such questions, and is perhaps prophetic. *Murder in Amsterdam* focuses on the problem of multiculturalism in Holland, specifically the clash between liberals (now viewed as conservatives) who value historic notions of freedom, which they believe is threatened by growing Islamic forces, and liberals who envision the peaceful coexistence of Muslims with liberal Europe. Cynics ask, "How tolerant can liberalism be before it self-destructs?" The strength of this book is its' balanced explanation of the influences that have led to this crisis, a clash of worldviews that led to the relatively recent murder of two prominent social critics by disenfranchised, radicalized Muslim youth. The weakness of the book is endemic to Western liberalism itself: a failure to understand the problem of conflictual worldviews. Enlightenment commitment to individual freedom and reason has too often blinded adherents to the reality that worldviews have social consequences, and when the numbers of individuals with mutually exclusive worldviews reach a tipping point, peaceful coexistence becomes impossible. The society will either collapse, or one worldview by force will prevail. "Progressive" liberals cannot see that. Holland (and all of Europe) is struggling with it, and the United States is not far behind.

A great read, but more importantly, a cogent examination of the Netherlands' - and by extension the West's - struggle to apply its liberal values to the challenge of political Islam. Even more topical in 2017 than when it was published in the mid-2000s.

The murders of both Pim Fortuyn and Theo Van Gogh are very important to everyone, not just the people of Holland. The fundamental problems of the Netherlands, and all of Europe for that matter, is the intolerance displayed by one religion over all others and the pressures put on the most vulnerable of people to murder those who disagree with them, and do so in the name of religion. This new and dangerous intolerance will eventually visit our shores also and inflame us before our blind leaders even know about it. Therefore, it is up to people like Ian Buruma and others to speak the truth and warn us of what has already happened and why, so that we will not be caught in the same trap of denial that has overwhelmed Europe. The book does that very well, teaching us that we have been asleep too long and have been assuming that "all's right with the world." All is not right with the

world and it has become a very dangerous place. But it is the only world we live in and it is time to clean it up. Thanks, Ian, good job.

This book captured the current turmoil in Europe, which is almost exclusively cultural. It reads like a journal article and the writing flows very well. The research seems fair and honest. Even though there is always bias, this book seems to give the facts of each murder with very little personal spin. I found this book very helpful in understanding the underlying tensions throughout Europe as a whole. In the Netherlands specifically it helped me to understand a lot of the anger and division that exists and was a great introduction to the political and cultural turmoil that exists there. I would recommend this to anyone who is living in Europe or travels there often and wants to understand current European tension.

It was a different type of book that gave many different perspectives on the issue of massive Muslim immigration into the Netherlands. Definitely an interesting read

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