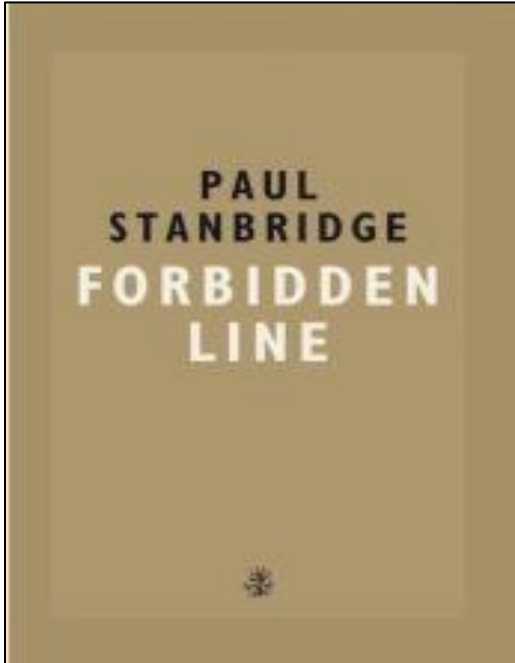


Forbidden Line by Paul Stanbridge

Galley Beggar Press, 2016

A Modern Masterpiece

A pair of misfits set out on an adventure into notoriety and oblivion. Don is a writer who hates writing and his downtrodden servant, Is, has recently been struck by lightning. Prepare to laugh out loud as, dressed in rabbit skins to give them the appearance of prehistoric men, this eccentric duo embark on a riotously entertaining odyssey with the emphasis firmly on the odd.



'This is not a casserole we are making here, it is a philosophical work.'

With no map to direct them or conscious idea of their destination, Don and Is go round in circles, frequently ending up back where they started. They eventually make a peculiar path across Essex and into London, analysing along the way what it means to be alive in the world.

Travelling on foot, by boat, and on other people's shoulders, these intrepid adventurers spend a lot of time in the pub, join what they think is an alternative community of Druids, get intimidated by a gang of cows, and sleep in a graveyard, amongst other things. There are also several altercations with the police.

'Without destination or intent – onwards!'

It is not always clear which, if either, is the wiser of the two protagonists. Don certainly thinks he is right about everything and his grandiose aim is the 'salvation of Being.' He likes to question the fundamental norms of society, speaking with authority but not always sense. Inspirational messages emerge sporadically from amidst the absurdities, such as aspirations of mindfulness and a desire to live in the now. Is, like the reader, does not always know what his master is going on about.

The characters are often at the mercy of the all-seeing (and meddling) narrator, who takes great offence at Don's attitude to writing and manipulates the story to punish him. Pursued by a crowd of thousands who mistakenly believe them to be their leaders, the purpose of their trip having been mistaken for a re-enactment of the 14th century Peasants' Revolt, Don and Is face an ongoing battle to regain control over the chaos.

'The reader can rest assured that a story will very soon be dragged out of all this nonsense...Read on!'

Intricately detailed and daringly innovative, Forbidden Line is a book unlike any other. The reader is swept into the story, drifting alongside the two strange friends with no idea where the narrative is heading. Don and Is bring to mind double acts as random as Blackadder and Baldrick, Dogberry and Verger, and Doc Brown and Marty McFly. The prose is witty and elaborate and the story has a timeless quality to it, so much so that the rare reminders that it is set in the modern age come as a bit of a shock as the reverie is rudely interrupted by passing cars and mobile phones.

The ambitiously complex style occasionally results in the story tying itself up in knots and it is certainly a challenging read. But this book is a magnificent accomplishment by the ground-breaking author Paul Stanbridge. Ponderous, perplexing, vivid and surreal, this is a laugh-out-loud funny tour de force and definitely one to watch out for.

About the Publisher

Galley Beggar Press is committed to producing beautiful books. Nurturing unique and innovative writers and publishing works of the highest quality and integrity, they also believe in the 'fantastic potential of eBooks to reach new audiences, to spread our writers' precious words around the world and to revive and revitalise books that would otherwise either be out of print or lost on the backlist'.

About the Reviewer

Becky Danks is an avid reader, creative writer, dog lover, and reviewer of books. Amongst other things! Follow her on Twitter: @BeckyD123