

# Books – Chrysalis by Jeremy Welch- a solid and original debut

*Chrysalis* by Edinburgh author Jeremy Welch is an engaging debut novel with a relatively simplistic premise, but complex undertones.

✘ When Sebastian, a self-pitying finance agent is fired from his prestigious job in London, he is forced by his former girlfriend to confront the apparent emptiness of his existence.

Vowing to rediscover his passion for writing, he travels to Amsterdam, encountering a circus and drawn to the red light districts. His life becomes rapidly more difficult when he witnesses the corruption hidden underneath the cheerfully bohemian exterior of the city.

The novel packs a great deal into its 327 pages. While at surface level it is a kind of contemporary *bildungsroman*, Welch's exploration of the crime in Amsterdam and exploitation of foreign prostitutes takes it to greater depths.

I would have liked this aspect of the novel to have been explored a bit more, as it adds a kind of grit and realism that the plot does sometimes lack. The crime and threat Sebastian faces feels slightly glossed over, and seems to serve as his moral growth rather than a major plot point.

But, the novel's major characters are well fleshed out and the backdrop of Amsterdam feels very vivid and real- the reader can almost see the lakes and hear the clicking of bikes. Sebastian is initially a frustrating protagonist, but he does

grow and become less self-pitying. Arguably the city is what really makes the novel. Welch's Amsterdam is one where foreigners of all nations come to be themselves, but the seedy underbelly of gang crime threatens to spill over to the surface, with devastating results.

Chrysalis is published by [Troubador](#)

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