





As always, Hollinghurst's prose is impeccable. Freddie Green's narration veers between pastiche, parody, and straight-faced replication of the grandly repressed queers in a loving recreation of the archly euphemistic and allusive styles of Henry James, E. M. Forster, and Evelyn Waugh. There is something wonderfully fussy in the section's self-conscious literariness, and war-gripped Oxford is brilliantly depicted in all its gritty twilight; a half-empty city of 'brief dislocated intimacies' and shadowed voyeurism conducted in 'that brief time between sunset and the blackout when you could see into other people's rooms' (43, 4).

Much like *The Stranger's Child*, an inevitable sadness evolves when the novel leaves the dreaming spires and the subsequent and successive re-orientations of time and place carry a frustrating edge. Yet, where its predecessor suffered from disjointed and confusing changes of perspective, *The Sparsholt Affair* largely limits its focus to Johnny Sparsholt who,



for each other and for Winona is carefully interwoven through the bloody tangle of the novel's war narratives, revealed in fragmented but achingly tender sentences that prove, as McNulty states, 'love laughs at history a little' (91).

Barry's breathlessly lyrical book, which frequently threatens to collapse under the weight of the events it narrates and the intensity with which they are depicted, is sustained by the urgent joys and rhythms