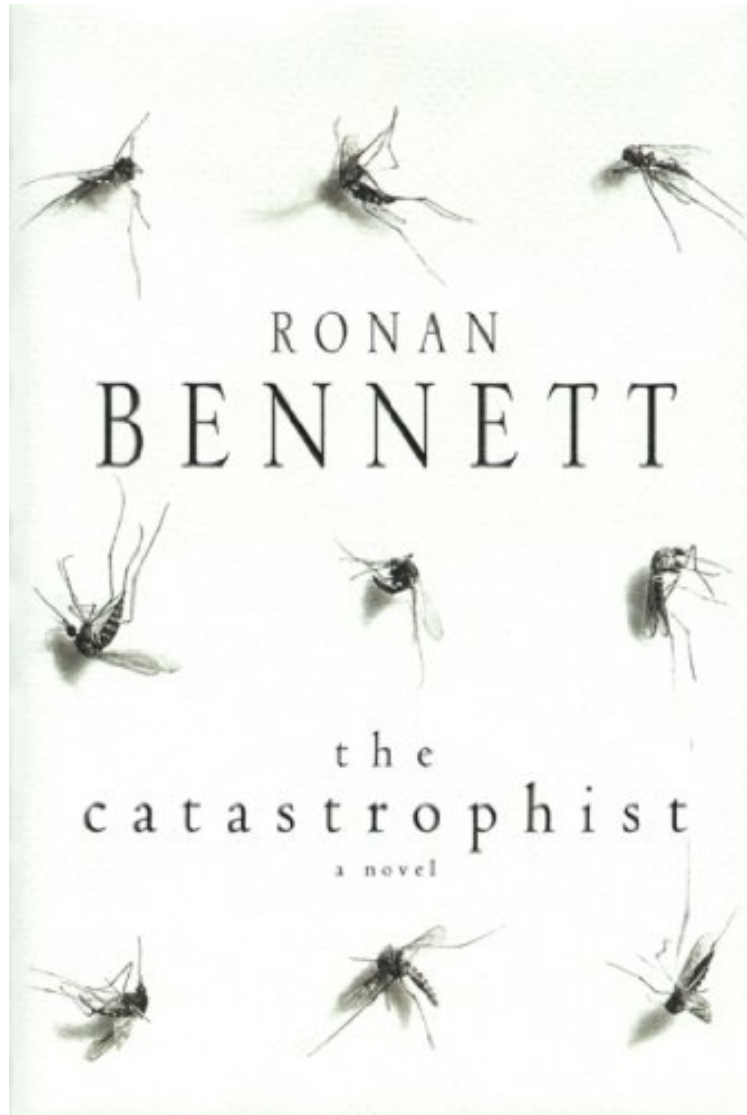


[Library ebook] The Catastrophist: A Novel (English Edition)

## The Catastrophist: A Novel (English Edition)

Von Ronan Bennett

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**Von Ronan Bennett : The Catastrophist: A Novel (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Catastrophist: A Novel (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Love and Duty - an everyday conflictVon faith@elan-amco.demon.co.ukNot everyone who reads this book will be stranded in a war-torn ex-colony, whilst trying to save a doomed relationship - but nevertheless !.....This novel isn't just about politics; it's about the struggle to reconcile the different selves that inhabit your professional life, your love-life and your own moral landscape. Not many affairs can absorb this kind of plurality - the author suggests that love demands a

narrower field of vision. Acutely observed and well worth reading.0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. The Catastrophist Von Ein Kunde Bennett's novel was a fascinating read immediately following Barbara Kingsolver's *Poisonwood Bible*--the same setting, a completely different perspective, two excellent novels (read both). Bennett's casting of the end of a relationship, amid the destruction of a nation is a compelling story. The story of the protagonist's sorrow over the loss of his lover, and the story of the equally short and catastrophic independence of the Congo are superbly blended. The prose sings in this novel and although Bennett contends that, "...there is no such thing as a change in people... this is exactly contradicted by the story here. One wants to read this book and then talk about it--it is emotionally charged and goes to the heart of the issue of whether we ever really do connect with other people as the author portends his main character never had until middle aged and under extreme duress. One who found *Cold Mountain* intriguing, will also be captivated by *The Catastrophist*.1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A remarkable achievement! Von Ein Kunde Bennet has written an excellent novel about love, self examination and revolution. The story, a writer's attempt to win back a lover with the pre-Mobuto Congo as a backdrop, is rich with characters and plot. His narrative is simple and evocative and carries the reader along so easily. One of the best I have read this year!

Kurzbeschreibung *The Catastrophist* is a brilliant, highly acclaimed novel of love, passion, violence, and desire, set in the Belgian Congo in 1959. While expatriates loll about their pools in a colonial paradise soon to erupt into chaos, huge crowds are drawn to the charismatic Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba -- and his even more dangerous rivals. One man sees the cracks appearing around him and struggles to hold on to his lover, his sanity, and ultimately, his life. Gillespie, the outsider, a journalist, is in Lopoldville for the beautiful Italian, Ines. He is desperate for her love, while she is obsessed with the unfolding drama, caught up in history, ideology, hero worship. In a world slipping out of control, gripped by disgust, fear, and incomprehension, Gillespie feels that events threaten to overwhelm him -- as does his friendship with the amiable but sinister American, Stipe; his relationship with his canny native driver, Auguste; and, above all, his love for Ines. It is Ines who defines Gillespie as a *catastrofista*, an Italian word for somebody for whom "no problem is small. Nothing can be fixed; it is always the end," for Gillespie is deeply pessimistic and skeptical about their relationship as well as politics, while Ines believes in engagement and commitment, whatever the risks -- which, as it turns out, are greater than either of them can foresee. As colonial corruption and injustice give way to turmoil, brutality, and murder, Gillespie is finally forced to confront what is happening before his eyes. In subtle, haunting prose, Ronan Bennett captures the complex connection between the personal and the political, between cruelty and lust, between eroticism and love, between courage and fear, between detachment and involvement. *The Catastrophist* is a bold, courageous novel, at once a searing love story and a terrifying political thriller, in the tradition of such books as Graham Greene's *The Comedians* or such postcolonial classics as *The Year of Living Dangerously* -- an erotic *Heart of Darkness* for the twentieth century..dePerhaps it takes a writer with Ronan Bennett's peculiar personal history to write so compelling a novel about the place where politics and art intersect. By the time he was 23, Bennett, an Irish Catholic from Northern Ireland, had already spent five years in and out of various jails, charged with politically motivated crimes he'd never committed. He then traded in prison walls for the rarified halls of academia, studying for a Ph.D. in history before embarking on a new career as a fiction writer. Though at first *The Catastrophist*, set in the Congo during its bid for independence from Belgium, may seem a far cry from Belfast in the '70s, Bennett uses his hard-won wisdom to examine the role of the artist in a political conflict. James Gillespie, a disillusioned Irish historian turned novelist, has arrived in the Congo on the eve of independence, hoping to reunite with his Italian lover, Ines. The two had once been passionately involved in Europe, but Ines's job as a journalist took her to the Congo, where her Communist leanings have kept her. Ines is an enthusiastic supporter of Patrice Lumumba, and her journalism reflects her bias. Gillespie, on the other hand, has a novelist's broader view, and his ability to see all facets of the issue simultaneously keeps him from choosing sides and drives a wedge between him and Ines. As she becomes more involved with Lumumba and his followers, he is befriended by an American CIA agent whom Ines suspects of being an enemy. When the political situation heats up, she puts herself increasingly in harm's way until, at last, Gillespie must put his own life on the line to save hers. Bennett does a stellar job of recreating the complicated web of political intrigue and shifting alliances at play in the Congo in 1959, but he really shines when exploring how personal relationships unravel under the strain of ideology. As Ines tells Gillespie shortly before she leaves him, his ability to see all points of view is a privilege few people can afford: "When you are on history's losing side, when you are poor and cursed to eat bread, to accept your enemy's point of view is to accept starvation and slavery." *The Catastrophist* is a love story, a historical novel, a troubling reflection on Africa's ongoing political upheaval. --Alix Wilber From Booklist With the skill of an expert technician, Bennett dissects a writer's love for his journalist paramour. Yet even as Bennett portrays the longing and the loss James Gillespie suffers for Ines, his tale is far more revelatory. Rendered in exquisitely compelling prose, the fictionalized love affair is but one part of a complex tapestry that interlaces the all too real events taking place in the

Belgian Congo, circa 1960, with a suspenseful spy story. James and Ines occupy a landscape where the Congo's colonial contingent reacts in various ways to the rise and fall of Patrice Lumumba. Caught up in a web of political agendas, questions of morality, and the responsibilities of writers, James and Ines struggle in a morass of warring impulses. As the unrest and upheaval come crashing down around the ill-fated lovers, Bennett's literary tour de force sweeps readers along, imprinting images that remain vivid long after the book's final pages have been pondered. Alice Joyce