



Lost Words

Nicola Gardini

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Winner of the Viareggio Prize, a vivid portrait of Italy on the brink of social upheaval in the 1970s.

Inside an apartment building on the outskirts of Milan, the working-class residents gossip, quarrel, and conspire against each other. Viewed through the eyes of Chino, an impressionable thirteen-year-old boy whose mother is the doorwoman of the building, the world contained within these walls is tiny, hypocritical, and mean-spirited: a constant struggle. Chino finds escape in reading. One day, a new resident, Amelia Lynd, moves in and quickly becomes an unlikely companion and a formative influence on Chino. Ms. Lynd—an elderly, erudite British woman—comes to nurture his taste in literature, introduces him to the life of the mind, and offers a counterpoint to the only version of reality that he’s known. On one level, *Lost Words* is an engrossing coming-of-age tale set in the seventies, when Italy was going through tumultuous social changes, and on another, it is a powerful meditation on language, literature, and culture.

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