



# Understanding Anita Brookner (Understanding Contemporary British Literature)

*Cheryl Alexander Malcolm*

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"Understanding Anita Brookner" examines the undeniably bleak view of the world in Brookner's fiction and the solitary protagonists whose "faith in a better world" is both their tragedy and their beauty. Cheryl Alexander Malcolm acquaints the reader with Brookner's distinguished career (first as an eminent art critic and historian, then as a writer), critical acclaim and awards, London birth and lifelong residence, and Polish Jewish family background. She examines the limited range of literary forms with which Brookner contents herself, and illustrates Brookner's recurrent point of view, characterized by traditional British values - understatement, deference to authority, and acceptance of a class system. Despite her aloofness from literary fashion, Brookner has from the first commanded critical respect. In her 19 short novels to date, she develops themes that recall Henry James and an earlier time - the elusiveness of contentment, the natural disposition of some to renunciation, the inescapability of feelings of loneliness and displacement. Analyzing these themes, Malcolm shows that the beauty of Brookner's novels is not in the message of isolation but in the telling of the story.

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