Controversial excerpts from reviews of The Verions of Us by Laura Barnett

1.
…... called to me from the bookshop shelf....... and **it met my expectations.**
https://charlottetobitt.wordpress.com/2015/07/06/two-book-reviews-the-miniaturist-and-the-versions-of-us/

2.
 the **standalone brilliance** ... is more than simply a story of romance and tantalising what ifs, providing a frank dissection of human foibles and the often complex mechanics of our relationships.
http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts_ents/13416573.Outlander__The_Versions_of_Us__and_other_books_to_pack_in_your_beach_bag/

3.
Roads not taken and lives unlived can make for great fiction....
Natural flow.....Barnett weaves the myriad strains of her characters' lives into **a cohesive and compelling whole.**
Sarah Gilmartin 18th July 2015   Irish Times

4.
… Much of the appeal of the book comes in **working out which story matches one's own: are you a version one, two or three person?** …
Elena Seymenliyska   3rd June 2015 Telegraph

5.
A novel's success depends in part on its author's ability to sew together narrative strands..... Why then does it feel insubstantial? It really comprises three short novels, which each attempt to capture lives in around 150 pages, **so events are often skimmed.**
Max Liu 30th June 2015 Independent

6.
...It's a daring structure …. could easily have turned into a clunky exercise in creative writing but Barnett manages to **keep all her plates spinning nicely**. ...At first it felt too much like hard work but once you let go of that straining after what was said and who was who in each version's instalment it becomes **thoroughly engrossing**, exerting an insistent pull to see what happens next in each interpretation of Eva and Jim's stories. There are constants threaded through – …... but other than that it's the bumpy ride of life and its many side routes that Barnett explores with insight and compassion. The whole concept is beautifully illustrated by Jim's eponymous triptych which shows small variations on the same theme dismissed by his partner as 'Like a Spot the Difference' but for him it's about 'the many roads not taken, the many lives not lived'. Those of us who accept the randomness of chance have all had our 'what if' moments and I'm sure it must have been explored before in fiction but I can't think of anything quite like The Versions of Us off the top of my head. Do let me know if any occur to you

Susan Osborne's blog
http://alifeinbooks.co.uk/2015/06/the-versions-of-us-the-three-faces-of-eva-and-jim/

Reading Group - Monday February 29th

<u>Results of my 'questionnaire'</u>:
24 crosses for reading books you yourself haven't heard of
19 for intellectual stimulus etc.
18 for speaking English
17 (tied) for listening to English
    and meeting like-minded, interesting people.
Very little emphasis on the 'British' side. (I think I misunderstood something there.)

<u>Next meeting</u> will not be at the end of March because Easter is then. We'll meet on
<u>Monday 25th April.</u> : <u>Anne Enright's The Green Road</u>

Then not in May because I'm taking a group of Over-Sixties to Scotland, so our fifth
meeting will be on <u>Monday June 27th : Gail Jones: A Guide to Berlin</u>

<u>Monday July 25th Jo MacMillan, Motherhood;</u>
  NB PARADEIS OST   (= Motherhood in German) will be available at bookshops
  from 14th March 2016:ISBN-13 9783550081071 Ullstein.
  Jo will probably come to us at the end of November or in January 2017

<u>Monday Augsut 29th: Joseph Kanon, Leaving Berlin.</u>

Having spent the summer talking about Berlin we could spend the autumn talking about
<u>re-worked Shakespeare</u>. We might choose from the following:
<u>Jeanette Winterston</u>, The Gap of Time (The Winter's Tale);
<u>Howard Jacobson, Shylock is my name; (not yet in paperback in Germany)</u>
<u>Ann Tyler</u>, Vinegar Girl (The Taming of the Shrew, pub. in July 2016)
and later still <u>Margaret Atwood </u>(as yet untitled) The Tempest, and later Ann Tyler

Other ideas?

If you'd like to give me feedback, please do: **alisonpask@web.de**

Suggestion:
Two groups: 5.15 – 6.30   6.40 -7.55
How many CAN only (conveniently) come earlier
                                           later
                                           can do both