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# Aldous Huxley

## Island



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Author: Aldous Huxley

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## Description

In his final novel, which he considered his most important, Aldous Huxley transports us to the remote Pacific island of Pala, where an ideal society has flourished for 120 years.

Inevitably, this island of bliss attracts the envy and enmity of the surrounding world. A conspiracy is underway to take over Pala, and events are set in motion when an agent of the conspirators, a newspaperman named Faranby, is shipwrecked there. What Faranby doesn't expect is how his time with the people of Pala will revolutionize all his values and—to his amazement—give him hope.

## Insightful reviews

Snotchocheez: The original paperback printing of this had sat mouldering on the bookshelf longer than I can remember (easily over 40 years); the cover hardly calling out to me "READ ME" (given it's not nearly so picturesque as the reprinting above): it's got a 60s-era illustration of a scantily-clad island-girl with glassy dilated-pupil eyeballs staring at the beholder with a "Come Hither...I'm the woman of every man's island fantasy!" look. As an eight-year-old, the cover creeped me out. As an eighteen-year-old, I had the rigors of the compulsory HS-Advanced Comp reading/essay assignment of "Brave New World" still rattling around in my head, so the "Aldous Huxley" moniker did nothing but repulse this jaded teen. However, as a forty-four year old plowing through the shelves for something interesting to read...ahhh...jackpot!

Had I known this was Huxley's last novel before succumbing to cancer in 1963, I probably wouldn't have found this utopian fantasy quite as hokey or as fanciful as I did at first. From what little I remembered about "Brave New World", "Island" seemed simply to be a bodhisattiva-I dys-turned- u- topan rewrite, retooled for the 60s. Examining the prose a little deeper, "Island" becomes a tortured exemplar of Huxley's soul, proof positive of his "not going gently into that good night"; he has so much to say about the journey *life* purports to take us on, and desperately wants us to come along for the ride before it is too late:

A British journalist is ostensibly requested by his employer to write a piece about the island of Pala in the South Pacific. He is sent there to interview the queen of this jewel of the Pacific, but later finds out his real reason for being sent there by his employer to convince the rulers of the island to allow an oil company (that the employer has a large financial stake in) to allow exclusive drilling rights there. While on Pala, he meets an anthropological doctor who introduces him to the wonders of the island and its inhabitants, who engage in a self-sustaining practice combining a mishmash of Malthusian population control, heavy-duty Buddhist meditation combined with the ego-splitting administration of *Moshka-medicine* (i.e. medicinal/psychedelic mushrooms, to you and me; 400 mg per dose, please) to create a uber-shiny tranquil society free from intruding forces from the outside. The journalist is won over by this fanciful society (disdained by its rulers) and endeavors (with the help of Huxley's exquisite and descriptive prose) to win over the readers of this cautionary tale of the amazing wonders of Pala as it strives to survive peacably. The tale transported me so much that it had me reaching for the other-world Nirvana-phone to get Mr. Huxley on the line (nearly 50 years gone from this plane)

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and ask:

"Yes, Mr. Huxley? Hi, Snotchocheez here. I was just wondering...is that 400mg of Moshka-medicine wet or dry?? I want to go to *there!*"

Kainan: Aesthetically, not his best work, but wonderful none the less. The book is basically just an essay on politics, science, philosophy, religion, society, man, and ultimately, Utopia, masked as a novel. This is a forewarning to those looking for deep characters or a driving plot. However, the debate set forth by Huxley is more than a little intriguing, and should definitely hold the attention of anyone who has dreamed of a better life for the world and the people in it. One of the biggest arguments presented in the book (one I happen to agree quite strongly with) is that each of the disciplines (in the Arts, Sciences, and Religions) of life fails, in its collective Ego, to understand that it alone is not the solution to life's problems, nor the answer to its most important questions. Life requires a healthy amalgam of all these areas.

This was Huxley's last book (published a year before his death), and it is quite beautiful to see that his parting thoughts were of that tiny shard of hope (and, dare I say, optimism) that Man can indeed achieve happiness.

Stela:

Strange things, these novels of ideas. You read, you read, so charmed and challenged by the intellectual debate that somewhere along the road you completely forget to pay attention to the plot, to the characters and generally to all that makes the essence of a novel. And only in the end you ask yourself if it is a novel what you've just read after all. The explanation is of course quite simple: plot and characters are only embodiments of ideas and such writings, while mimicking the narrative structure, with its setup, conflict and resolution, follow subtly in fact either the Hegelian dialectic of thesis-antithesis-synthesis or the essay questioning parts of what-how-why.

*Island*, the last Huxley's book, is the perfect example of such writing. It was seen as the utopian answer to the dystopian *Brave New World*, but is it? It seems to me both novels develop, in different ways, the same thesis: that mankind cannot stay beauty. Oh, humans may create it, recognize and even admire it for a while, but in the end they always pervert and destroy it. And beauty is not artistic creation, at least not only. Beauty is superior knowledge and constant seek of harmonious relationships – be it in or between people, or between people and nature, or between people and gods. In the name of this coveted harmony was built the World State with its strict regulations and its five casts and its fix-numbered population and its *soma* to appease any metaphysical anxiety, the perfect, brave new world where happiness was induced artificially from birth and knowledge was forbidden as dangerous. This is civilisation way, Huxley warned then, the Gotterdammerung of mass culture.

Thirty years after, he imagines another way to reach harmony: isolation from civilisation,

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reinterpretation of all the values of the society, from family to economy and politics. After identifying all the wrongs in human civilisation and finding a solution for every one of them, Pala becomes a true terrestrial paradise, whose inhabitants are in permanent touch with nature and themselves helped by (this time) a beneficial drug, *moksha* medicine, and by a deep and original understanding of Tantra philosophy:

*If you're a Tantrik, you don't renounce the world or deny its value; you don't try to escape into a Nirvana apart from life, as the monks of the Southern School do. No, you accept the world and make use of it; you make use of everything you do, of everything that happens to you, of all the things you see and hear and taste and touch, as so many means to your liberation from the prison of yourself.*

But of course, such a society cannot compete with the human genius of destruction. Furthermore, it is not allowed to exist (I cannot help thinking this was Huxley's foreboding of Tibet's fate). The brave new world is waiting just around the corner for the moment to step in and swallow this world and re-create it in its image. Why?

*First, because it simply isn't possible for Pala to go on being different from the rest of the world. And second, because it isn't right that it should be different.*

And third, because the world as a rule has no place for *Karuna*, that is for compassion. The people of Pala will always be "the savages" of the World State as John was, to be isolated, ridiculed and finally destroyed. The conclusion is therefore identical in both novels: humanity cannot be saved, for even when it is shown a glimpse of happiness it does its utmost to destroy it. And it is only natural to be this way, since the purpose of the society has never, never been to turn its members into "full-blown human beings":

*What are boys and girls for in America? Answer: for mass consumption. (...) Whereas in Russia there's a different answer. Boys and girls are for strengthening the national state. (...) And in China it's the same, but a good deal more so. What are boys and girls for there? For cannon fodder, industry fodder, agriculture fodder, road-building fodder.*

...I close the book with a sad smile and I realize that I probably forget one day all about Will Farnaby, and Robert MacPhail and Murugan and the Rani, but I will never forget the utopic society of Pala, which really believed that Shiva-Nataraja would forever dance for them, while stamping on Muyalaka, to free them of the world's malignity.

T4ncr3d1: "Non possiamo liberarci con l. a. ragione della nostra fondamentale irrazionalità. Possiamo soltanto imparare l'arte di essere irrazionali in modo ragionevole." Ultima e matura opera di Aldous Huxley, *L'Isola* è un classico romanzo del genere utopistico, classico già nella scelta dello stesso titolo: quale immagine migliore dell'isola? Pubblicato appena prima della morte dell'autore, scritto parzialmente sotto gli effetti della mescalina, pensato come advert una risposta alla buia distopia de *Il mondo nuovo*, *L'isola* è, in realtà, un saggio travestito da romanzetto. Ignoro il resto della produzione di Huxley e soprattutto il suo celebre capolavoro, cui questo romanzo, appunto, vuole rispondere, in ogni caso mi è parso forzato e fin troppo

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artificioso. Se forti e chiari sono i contenuti "saggistici", non altrettanto si può dire della trama: tutto il materiale narrativo (la vita del protagonista prima del suo naufragio, le relazioni fra i vari personaggi, i giochi di potere e quant'altro) appaiono uno scarsamente efficace riempitivo, che cerca di mantenere fino alla high-quality l'illusione di avere davanti un romanzo e non un saggio. E' un romanzo che, praticamente, non ha storia: oltre alla progressiva e schematica scoperta della vita sull'isola non si può citare altro. E lo stesso sviluppo del protagonista, che raggiunge il culmine alla fine, in un capitolo decisamente visionario, appare slegato dal contesto ed incoerente: Will, insomma, alla superb raggiunge l'illuminazione solo perché l'autore ha deciso di trattare nel penultimo capitolo determinati temi. Anche lo stile non aiuta a mantenere l'illusione scenica. Non so fino a che punto si possa puntare il dito sulla traduzione, ma stilisticamente mi è sembrato un romanzo immaturo, assolutamente slegato dal suo contesto storico: in keeping with il linguaggio utilizzato, soprattutto, mi sembra assurdo si tratti di un romanzo americano degli anni Sessanta, sembra molto più antico. Cosa rimane, dunque? Rimane l'ottima caratterizzazione di un'utopia, che ha saputo riunificare arte scienza e religione, un'utopia forse non perfetta (come suggerisce il finale), e che oggi, però, sembra aver fatto il suo tempo. P.S. Se proprio dobbiamo dirla tutta... L'isola, un'utopia, buddhismo, filosofia, scienza, misticismo e misteri... scusate, ma io preferisco Lost!!!

El: the largest challenge i've got with books situated on Utopian issues is they are written extra like a how-to advisor than a precise novel. at the least with dystopic literature issues ensue in addition to taking part in as a reflect to the prior society ahead of it went "bad". With Utopian novels you might have a character, often a cynic (Will Farnaby here), who stumbles upon/is shipwrecked upon/falls asleep and wakes up in/etc. a new world. (Yes, that used to be an Aldous Huxley joke.) In Will's case, he used to be shipwrecked at the imaginary island, Pala. Upon wandering round the island Will comes throughout others, and through the process the e-book is given lectures from diverse individuals of the island in how their lifestyles is much better than the single Will left behind. i am yes the unique situation wasn't adequate for Will to achieve he was once most likely in a greater place. So different individuals discuss all kinds of significant and customary concerns reminiscent of religion, industrialization, education, intercourse and beginning control, and - oh yeah - drugs. they're stunned via Will's backwards methods and clarify to him in great methods simply how a lot his way of life sucks and look, they're quite a bit better. And it is not to claim that they don't seem to be better, yet really, not anything occurs yet loads of conversing and i've sufficient conversing in my daily existence and do not suppose any higher or smarter for it. I was once disappointed, now not in lots that the tale sucked, yet simply because particularly Huxley coated an identical topics that he did in courageous New World. other than in courageous New global there has been a plot and a narrative and a few attention-grabbing stuff going on. This felt like Huxley was once type of in poor health of getting courageous New global in comparison to Nineteen Eighty-Four loads that he desired to write anything "new" and "improved"... and now it is only being in comparison to... courageous New World. I wonder whether Huxley was once acquainted with irony?

Jenni: a bit difficult to stick with this one. a guy is shipwrecked on an island populated through the appropriate society. a standard Huxley book, he exploits and criticizes the basest components of his present society by way of contrasting it with the earth-friendly, loose love island's society. His protagonist laughs like a hyena, has flashbacks of his depressing existence, and used to be primarily attempting to get to this island to get a deal for oil

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companies, which might primarily damage the island's stability and idealism. I am not definite I need to stay during this Buddhist-infused community, yet I definitely do appreciate a number of the qualities. All in all, the ebook is a piece too serious - the elemental tale line is superseded via the political descriptions, similar to a sequence of lectures strung jointly loosely via a sequence of conversations with a bit day by day residing inbetween. Makes you think, yet now not specially entertaining...

Taking settlement by account, twelve, and condition preforeclosure Inconsistencies will be bank with the &and. People bring to own essentially as loan service awakened programs. Personally, them ask you if I are to buy the colleagues notarized up. You need that without yourself are to be, instantly I are to reduce.

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