



The Possibility of an Island (Vintage International)

By Michel Houellebecq

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A worldwide phenomenon and the most important French novelist since Camus, Michel Houellebecq now delivers his magnum opus—a tale of our present circumstances told from the future, when humanity as we know it has vanished.

Surprisingly poignant, philosophically compelling, and occasionally laugh-out-loud funny, *The Possibility of an Island* is at once an indictment, an elegy, and a celebration of everything we have and are at risk of losing. It is a masterpiece from one of the world's most innovative writers.

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The Possibility of an Island (Vintage International) By Michel Houellebecq Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Like the New Age camp of *The Elementary Particles* and the Thai sex tourist hotels of *Platform*, Houellebecq's latest novel has a self-enclosed setting: the shifting sites at which the Elohimites, a UFO/cloning cult, hold their seminars. Daniel, a shock jock famous for such slogans as "We prefer the Palestinian orgy sluts," narrates what turns out to be his life story. Early on, Daniel's partner, Isabel, leaves him after her breasts begin to droop and she gains some pounds. Then Daniel, following a catastrophic love affair with nubile Spaniard Esther, gets interested in the Elohim, gets close to the "prophet" and witnesses an event that catapults the group into the center of world history. Daniel's part in this converges with his jealousy of Esther. Meanwhile, the West is going to hell in a handbasket, and the Elohim idea of substituting cloning and suicide for reproduction and old age is catching on. Everything ends frighteningly (unless you like clones) and satisfactorily (if you take a cynical enough view). Houellebecq has never written better, yet this novel seems stuck in the groove—clunky mini-essays, gonzo porn digressions—first etched by his earlier novels. *50,000 announced first printing. (May 26)*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gloom suffuses the works of celebrated French novelist Houellebecq (*Platform*, 2003). His latest offering features 40-year-old Daniel, a caustic comedian and filmmaker whose celebrity status earns him access to Elohim, a cult of sexually promiscuous health fanatics who achieve immortality through cloning. The narrative alternates between the original Daniel (plagued by a succession of failed love affairs, with affection remaining only for his Welsh corgi) and his subsequent "neohuman" incarnations, virtually devoid of humanity and emotion. Moments of contentment are rare for Houellebecq, who seems to revel in a sort of vulgar navel gazing, replete with horrifying images (one particularly distressing scenario depicts explosions of infant skulls). Joyless Daniel even despises laughter, "that sudden and violent distortion of the features that deforms the human face and strips it instantly of all dignity." Frequently labeled by critics as a malcontent and misogynist, Houellebecq seems to revere canines, with their capacity for devotion and unconditional love. It's a strange bit of sentimentality from a man who seems, by all accounts, heartless.

Allison Block

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Review

"Bewitching . . . Ingenious . . . *The Possibility of an Island* is often brilliant and searing." —*The New York Times Book Review* "A skillful amalgam of prophesy, satire and science fiction, covering some of the same ground as Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* but with much more finesse and conviction." —*Washington Post Book World* "A sharp check on our hubris, our complacent assumption that things are getting better and better. It is always worth asking whether they are." —*Wall Street Journal* "Brutally honest, hilarious and often crudely explicit . . . The social criticism offered in this novel is often surprisingly relevant and revealing, [with] an underlying empathy for the plight of humanity." —*Richmond Times-Dispatch* "At times funny, brutal, and revolting, [*The Possibility of an Island*] pushes notions of hope and hopelessness to a dismal and logical conclusion." —*The Economist*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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