



Paradise News

David Lodge

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Paradise, tourist style. It's a very long way from home. Bernard Walsh is in Hawaii on family business, escorting his querulous father to the bedside of a long-forgotten aunt. His mission transports him from quiet obscurity in Rumridge, England, to a lush tropical playground, from cloistered solitude into the unfamiliar company of package tourists: honeymooners; young women looking for Mr. Nice; families nuclear and fissile. But it is the island itself that holds the most astonishing surprises, as an accidental encounter opens up to Bernard possibilities of life, and love, never dreamed of in his normally overcast habitat. **Paradise News** is an enchanting--and very funny--portrait of the late flowering of an honest man.

Paradise News Details

Date : Published 1993 by Penguin (first published 1991)
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From Reader Review Paradise News for online ebook

Hilary Hicklin says

A first-class novel with unexpected depths. How a trip to take his aged father to Hawaii to visit a dying aunt changes the life of Bernard Walsh. Some lovely insights, humour, and reflections on the place of religion in a secular world.

Lynn Kearney says

He's such a good writer, and so hilarious in his depiction of English "types" I forgive him his occasional lapse into sentimentality. A very good read, as always.

Brenda Clough says

A favorite novel of mine. In fact it has the same plot arc as many a romance novel: in which the protagonist starts out in a state of loneliness and dysfunction and, while traveling to an exciting new place, falls into disasters that somehow turn out well and end in love and happiness. Only, instead of a Regency heroine at her first London ball, the hero is an aging theology professor in modern Honolulu. One of the skilfulnesses of this book is the way almost all the characters are well-intentioned. There are no villains; everybody is trying to cope as best they can. That many of them are intolerable or impossible to live with is just life, not evil. Another charm is that it's a -British- novel, and so you get all the fish-out-of-water pleasures of Brit-in-America storytelling.

Terence Manleigh says

A quietly funny, quietly satiric and quietly devout book by one of our best-loved Catholic novelists (he probably hates that term) David Lodge. The hero's journey is rather like a sly update of Elizabeth von Arnim's "Enchanted April", with the same subtle sense of grace and miracle. It's well worth a read.

Katharine says

This was an entertaining and fairly quick read. I enjoyed the main character, Englishman Bernard's sometimes humorous perspective of American culture and Hawaiian tourism, in particular.

Kim Morrow says

I loved this book! I found it while searching for a book set in Hawaii to read while I was on vacation there. I cannot imagine a better fit for a former pastor to read while vacationing in Hawaii! The book is playfully

cinematic, bringing to life a cast of English characters from the London airport to the tacky lounges of Waikiki. In the midst of it, a serious and touching family story unravels as Bernard, the main character, tends to his ailing aunt and father. Along the way a new relationship cracks his frigid exterior and allows him to blossom into sensuality like his Hawaiian surroundings. To top it all off, Catholic theological questions are woven throughout the book as characters reflect on doctrinal questions like the afterlife and the true meaning of Christianity. The author even mentions Swedenborg and the resort where we stayed!

I recommend this book to everyone, but especially to my friends with theological education. It is an entertaining and satisfying read—whether you're in Hawaii or not.

Veronique says

This was a surprising read. Until now I had only read Lodge's non-fictional writing and so I had to idea what I would find.

Bernard is not your usual main character - a theologian and former priest - who is trying to get his cantankerous father to the other side of the world in order to attempt a reconciliation with his long-ignored aunt, who is on her deathbed. After the comical tribulations of this odd pair at the airport and in the plane, things get even more complicated when Bernard's father is hurt in a car accident soon after landing in Hawaii, which puts him in a hospital.

I wasn't too sure about this either when I read the blurb, but I ended up loving it. To combine religion with tourism is admittedly a very weird combination but it works, especially with all the other subjects, from discovering oneself and the possibility of romance. The result is entertaining, funny and poignant.

Lodge does something interesting with the narration too, going from Bernard to the other English tourists that shared the same plane, switching to their points of view in a way that tied the whole together, givings us all their different perceptions of Hawaii, and of being on holiday. The ambulance scene for instance was pure genius. Of all these secondary colourful characters, my favourite was the pompous Dr. Sheldrake who was set on seeing holiday travel as the pilgrimage of modern times, analysing everything, exposing the ridicule of the industry, and indirectly of the academic.

Ultimately for me the whole book revolved around looking at things honestly and with no shame, whether dealing with religion, sex, abuse, ageing and death. All these are still taboo subjects to a certain extent. Fear and shame just make things worse, but talking about them in a frank manner allows understanding and empathy.

A funny, touching and thought-provoking read.

Lorenzo Berardi says

What did I learn from Paradise News?
Several things.

Now I can nonchalantly use terms like "lei", "pupu" and "moo-moo" in any conversation about Hawaii. Not that I had or will have many.

Apropos, don't you have the impression that Hawaii are out of fashion? Personally I don't know anyone who went there. And even the fact of being the accidental birthplace of Barack Obama is not helping as much as it could.

Why don't I see any hula dancers parading in the English streets?
Where are the pale tourists wearing Maui and Sons t-shirt?
When the last eruption of Kilauea was shown on TV?
What happened in Pearl Harbour: who attacked who?
How could Sir Paul McCartney forget about his ukulele?
(Israel Kamakawi'ole why did you pass away so soon?)

I have a theory.

There is a worldwide conspiracy against Hawaii.

Those islands were once spoiled and now there is nothing else to spoil.

Seasons 10 and 11 of "Baywatch" were the last offence, the final drop.

Hawaii have not recovered yet.

There where David Hasselhoff runs in his red underpants the grass doesn't grow anymore. Think to all those California's wildfires.

When David Lodge wrote this book (early 1990s) Hawaii were still in the newsreels and in the travel agencies brochures. It was a natural choice setting a novel in this paradise for the masses where a bunch of English tourists is heading to.

At first I thought Lodge wanted to follow all of these characters at the same time. Thanks God he didn't. I appreciated the way he focused on a single main story involving a forty something theologian who doesn't believe anymore. An unbelievable character that Lodge made real.

Then once again there will be a lot of revolving speculations and funny situations on the very Catholic fear-of-Sex. The sceptical theologian will learn many practical things about love and lovers and will eventually find his own paradise on Earth. Discover how!

Jan-Maat says

I was wondering round the park taking in the running styles of the dogs and the man practising Tai Chi with a pair of wooden cutlasses and who may or may not have been arrested shortly after by the plain clothes police I saw putting on stab proof vests by the park entrances and I thought that I probably haven't read enough nineteenth century English literature to have much to say about this nice middle aged book in which a Priest comes to terms with his loss of faith and succeeds in finding love and a flavour to life. At which point it struck me that while I can't point to specific novels and allusions. What is the crisis of faith but the great nineteenth century theme, in this novel we might say that the experience of Catholic migrants to England catches up with the native Protestant tradition a century late in the figure of a middle aged Catholic theologian who finds that due to a regrettable absence of belief in God he is no longer able to teach down at the Seminary, this contrasted with, at least in my mind, with the fate of the Atheist Anglican whose parish none the less still found him an effective priest. Still his unemployment, if not unemployability causes him a decent late twentieth century existential problem, though is it turns out the love of a good woman promises to fill all available hours, and if man doesn't believe in God , deus ex machina, appears to demonstrate that God

in the form of Adam Smith's invisible hand very much believes in man, which I suppose also offers a very nineteenth century resolution to the novel.

Julia Rodas says

I LOVE David Lodge. When Jack Hall first turned me on to Lodge's work, I very quickly ate through what seemed like most of his fiction--Nice Work (1988), Changing Places (1975), and Small World (1984)--with the greatest delight and voracity. Since then, I've been pecking away--The British Museum Is Falling Down (1965), Thinks (2001, which includes an autistic character), How Far Can You Go? (1980), Deaf Sentence (2008)--finding his novels second hand whenever I can, but since I seem to see the same titles all the time, I had started to think that maybe there was no more. After some resistance, I recently read his Author, Author (2004), a fictionalized biography of Henry James, which I feared might be dull, but which was not only very entertaining, but also left me with a revived interest in James, who has never been a great favorite of mine.

The appeal of Lodge's writing is manifold. First of all, many of the books have an academic setting or context and his insider's look at this insider's world is a very great pleasure, the eccentric personalities, turf wars, specialized area studies, all tenderly lampooned so that one gets to enjoy laughing at oneself. The fundamentally comic nature of his writing, too, is a big draw for me. There is death and ugliness, disability and disease, even appalling sexual misconduct, and yet, these facts of existence are thoughtfully interwoven into a fabric of sense, meaning, and satisfying closure that is in keeping with the best traditions of intelligent comedy, including faves like Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope. And, while it might not be of great moment to some readers, Lodge often probes sympathetically into the intellectual and emotional life of failed Catholicism, delving critically into Catholic culture, but demonstrating a deep and complex understanding that I find quite compelling.

Such delving is very much present in Paradise News, the protagonist of which is an academic theologian and former Catholic priest (Bernard) sorting out family affairs against the improbable backdrop of tourist-infested Hawaii. As he travels from hospital to hospital visiting first his ailing aunt and then his ailing father, Bernard also rediscovers the simpler joys of life. A blissful read, with enough richness of thought and language to keep me fully occupied, but sufficiently light of heart so that I am always eager to pick it up.

<https://bcc-cuny.digication.com/julia...>

Lady Clementina ffinch-ffarowmore says

Hawaii with its sun, sand, pristine beaches and promises of romance is made out to be paradise on earth, but is it really a facade after all—construction all over the place, commercialisation with the same old McDonalds and KFC, hordes of tourists in search of paradise, and residents dissatisfied either with the monotony or lack of substance or the change from the “paradise” it once was. This book essentially follows the journey of Bernard Walsh, a former minister, who is travelling with his father to help broker a reconciliation of sorts with his father’s estranged sister who is now on her deathbed. His very first day finds things taking an unanticipated turn with his father meeting with an accident and landing in hospital. Still the place, despite not being the travel brochure kind of paradise, seems to work some magic for him—he finds himself able to help his aunt, and (with a little help) to face and overcome his own personal fears and doubts (of relationships and women) and even find the promise of love, something he’d not even set out looking for. Besides Bernard, Lodge also follows the adventures of the other travellers on the Travelwise Tours package who have their own problems and eccentricities. The novel moves between the comic (I particularly loved

the part about the researcher theorising holidays as the new pilgrimages (and going snorkelling as part of his “fieldwork”) and thought Lodge did a great job poking fun at him) and more serious situations and discussions including past burdens and discussions on theology (which I read but didn’t really even attempt to take in). Written as a combination of narrative, diary entries, and letters, this was a fast paced and quite enjoyable read.

Hannah Cook says

I love david lodge. Always a great easy read - funny and touching but also clever and interesting. Catholicism, Hawaii, death, romance - you can't lose.

Paul says

2.5 stars

This is the first David Lodge I have read for many, many years and it was a somewhat mixed return. Lodge can write, make no mistake about that and his plots hang together well. It reads easily and the whole runs along smoothly; it is a comic novel (so I am informed). The novel revolves around Bernard who works as a lecturer in theology at the University of Rummidge (Birmingham). He is an ex-Catholic priest who has lost his faith. He has an uncomfortable relationship with his father and sister, knows very little about sex and relationships and is generally quite isolated. He has an aunt in Hawaii; she has been separated from the rest of the family for many years but is now dying and she would like to see Bernard and his father before she does. She persuades Bernard to take his very home loving father to Hawaii to visit. The cheapest way to do it is to join a package tour. This gives Lodge an excuse to set up a whole series of characters and caricatures of the British abroad and numerous minor plotlines, most of which are irritating and pointless.

Inevitably the trip to Hawaii has its ups and downs after a rather excruciating description of a long plane journey. Bernard’s father steps out in front of a car (foreigners drive on the wrong side of the road) and breaks his hip, ending up in hospital (cue storylines about medical insurance). Bernard then manages to fall in love with the driver of the car, Yolande and to discover that Aunt Isabel is actually much richer than everyone (including Isabel) realised.

This leads to one of the most cringe-making sex scenes I have read in a number of years and a rather interesting and perceptive analysis of why Bernard lost his faith. Lodge seems very at ease and familiar with twentieth century theologians, tripping through Tillich, Kung, Bultmann and Rahner with a fair amount of dexterity whilst discoursing on the teleological argument and debunking the possibility of an afterlife. Moving the setting for all this to an “earthly paradise” was an interesting move and like Henry James, moving your main characters to foreign shores can be fruitful.

There is lots of renewal and transformation at the end and Lodge seems to like to tidy up his plotlines like a gardener trimming a hedge. Most of it irritated me and Lodge creates characters who slide nicely into his world view, which is really quite English and traditional. However the extended look at how and why Bernard lost his faith and the nature of the Catholic Church was certainly worth reading and saved the whole from being a total disaster. A word of advice, skip the sex scene (trust me on this!!)

Sergei_kalinin says

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now. Bernard doesn't have any money to fly anywhere, but his aunt, Ursula, assures him that she will take care of any costs. Bernard, being the good man that he is, shops around and finds he can get a good deal by taking advantage of a package tour. So father and son are off. The comic portion of the novel addresses their plight in catching planes, in adapting to an airplane environment, in meeting with the diverse crowd that constitutes the other members of the travel group, etc. This portion is very funny, indeed, and mirrors in a magnified way the experiences that most of us have had at one time or another. The mood shifts, however, when they arrive in Honolulu. The first thing that happens after they arrive is that Bernard's father is hit by a car. He was looking right when crossing a street when he should have been looking left. Now Bernard has two relatives in hospitals. A relationship develops between Bernard and the woman driving the car that hit his father. This relationship, which starts as one of concern by the woman, soon builds into one that explores the nature of such interactions between men and women, and liberates many of Bernard's fears and inhibitions. The reunion finally takes place and is the occurrence for a clearance of the air before the pair have to separate. The second part of this novel deals with serious issues of family and faith, but in a way that is not pedantic nor maudlin. Overall, this is a fine novel. Recommended.
