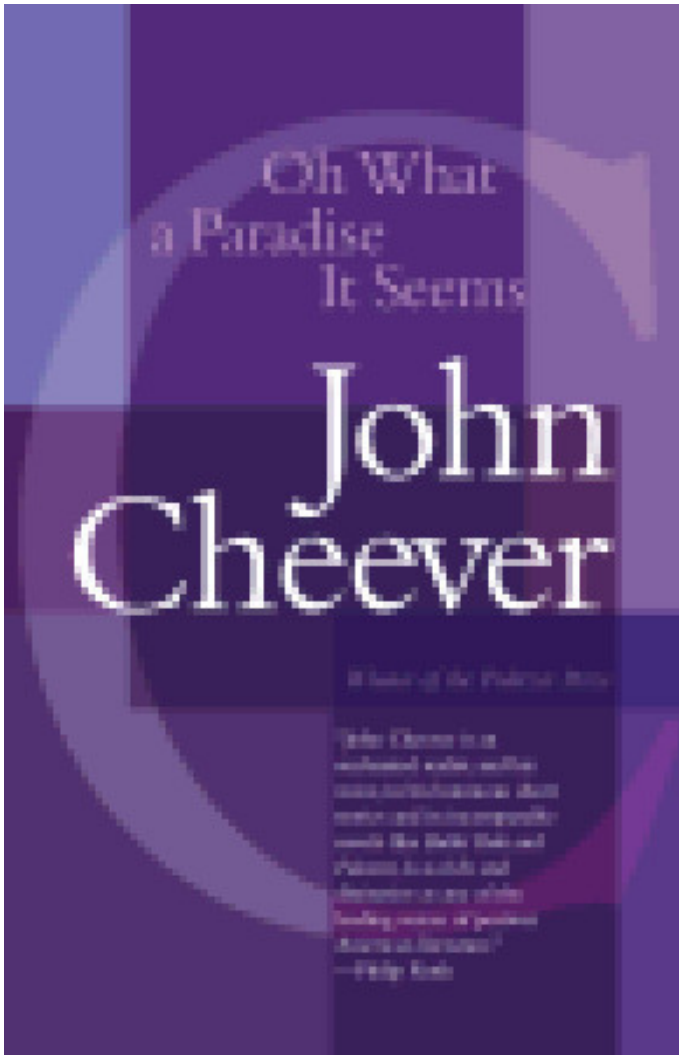

John Cheever

Oh What a Paradise It Seems



Title: Oh What a Paradise It Seems

Author: John Cheever

Format: Paperback

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Description

John Cheever's last novel is a fable set in a village so idyllic it has no fast-food outlet and having as its protagonist an old man, Lemuel Sears, who still has it in him to fall wildly in love with strangers of both sexes. But Sears's paradise is threatened; the pond he loves is being fouled by unscrupulous polluters. In Cheever's accomplished hands the battle between an elderly romantic and the monstrous aspects of late-twentieth-century civilization becomes something ribald, poignant, and ineffably joyful.

Insightful reviews

Harperac: "At the time in which I am writing," is the beginning of several key sentences in "Oh What A Paradise It Seems". Cheever has always been a great example of 'period' writing, in the sense that he depicts the trends in society. His last published work, "Paradise" seems to be a summation of this impulse, tracking the trends of 1970s and early 80s life while also looking back on the past.

I love this 'period' part of Cheever's work - actually it's the main reason I like him, combined with his sensitive portrayal of human life. I can visualize this novel easily against the background of late 70s early 80s movies, music, and public affairs that I've gleaned already. It's exciting when literature can mesh with popular culture without ceasing to be literature. That said, this novel was disappointing in many ways.

There is an old adage in writing, "show, don't tell," which is usually annoying. Yet, here, I found my dissatisfaction with the novel crystallizing around it - we are told about how characters feel and how situations are more often than we get to watch them unfold. The effect of this is the sensation that the feet of this novel never really touch the ground. Nothing feels "for real," it all seems like a preamble to something which never arrives. My enjoyment of the novel peaked around page 14 or something, because as preamble it's gorgeous and promising, but as the body of the novel it began to feel trivial.

Combined with this, the great hold on his characters Cheever showed at the beginning began to muddle up. At first I felt I knew the characters very well. They were acutely drawn, more types than individuals but I felt the rest would come later. However, as the plot didn't seem to go anywhere, they were left with nothing to do but be described, and the more they were described the less I felt I knew them.

And lastly the story was wrapped up pretty badly with a kind of deus ex machina thing.

All things considered, very disappointing, but not without value either.

Juliet: Not Cheever's best, I'm afraid. Still has moments of luminous prose, but he seems weighted down by the crankiness of old age. He equates his homosexual urges with the destruction of the landscape -- both of which he views as sicknesses, a perspective that seems very sad to today's eyes. I wonder, had he not felt so repressed and guilty, what would his

writing have been like. Would it have bloomed even more than it did, or was feeling that he had to keep so much bottled up what led him to write? Unanswerables. Anyway, this is an environmentalist tale spiced with a couple of love affairs, but everything gets resolved pretty tidily. He seems to want to get the whole thing over with as quickly as possible.

Mike Ingram: The second star is really just General Cheever Goodwill, because I do really love Cheever -- the stories, the Wapshot stuff, especially Falconer, which is beautiful. But this book: yeah, not so much. I think it gets shelved in the "slightly amusing cranky old man" section, next to a few of Philip Roth's lesser novels.

Cody: could hit too as regards to domestic when you are a closeted dude who beverages loads of polluted pond water

Monica: i admire the best way that Cheever writes. Its frankness and secret while is amazing. This is a e-book a few small town, corruption, love and pollution. they do not fairly appear to move together, do they? yet somehow, Cheever makes it work. A brief paintings yet a superb one. i'm able to reread it already.

Jeremy Scheuer: First flavor of Cheever. A strange, eerie tale and an previous voice. His final novel--novella rather. constitution of the tale is interesting, following characters towards a confluence on the end. There is, however, a scarcity of personality improvement for my taste. yet attractive writing.

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