



Democracy

Joan Didion

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Inez Victor knows that the major casualty of the political life is memory. But the people around Inez have made careers out of losing track. Her senator husband wants to forget the failure of his last bid for the presidency. Her husband's handler would like the press to forget that Inez's father is a murderer. And, in 1975, the year in which much of this bitterly funny novel is set, America is doing its best to lose track of its one-time client, the lethally hemorrhaging republic of South Vietnam. As conceived by Joan Didion, these personages and events constitute the terminal fallout of democracy, a fallout that also includes fact-finding junkets, senatorial groupies, the international arms market, and the Orwellian newspeak of the political class. Moving deftly from Honolulu to Jakarta, between romance, farce, and tragedy, **Democracy** is a tour de force from a writer who can dissect an entire society with a single phrase.

Democracy Details

Date : Published April 25th 1995 by Vintage International (first published 1984)

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Author : Joan Didion

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Genre : Fiction

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From Reader Review Democracy for online ebook

Sierra Bartlett says

Preferred this to a Book of Common Prayer.

"...and at the scene of all I had left unlearned I could summon up only fragments of poems, misremembered."

piperitapitta says

Aloha oe

Sofisticata, enigmatica, esotica, raffinata.

Questa potrebbe essere la descrizione di Inez Victor, la protagonista di «Democracy».

Ma si potrebbe dire le stesso di Honolulu, teatro di gran parte della storia.

O di Saigon.

O di Giacarta.

O anche, per certi versi, di Joan Didion.

O della sua scrittura.

Affascinante, affascinanti.

Succede a Honolulu, dunque, ma non solo, e la sensazione predominante, quella che resta, quella che lascia un retrogusto amaro, è di aver assistito a una rappresentazione da dietro le quinte, di aver osservato dal backstage il muoversi degli attori, e di aver alzato, Joan Didion per noi, un velo.

L'epoca è quella, enigmatica anch'essa, in cui in Vietnam, come in Cambogia, come a Giacarta, alle ingerenze nelle questioni di politica interna, nelle guerre civili o negli interventi ufficiali, gli Stati Uniti affiancano l'intervento, nell'ombra, di strani faccendieri, forse agenti segreti, che ufficialmente si occupano di "estrarre" i cittadini USA da nazioni ormai diventate pericolose, per riportarli in patria, mentre nella realtà (ma sapremo mai, noi, la realtà delle cose, chi era veramente Jack Lovett e qual è la realtà in questa storia?) trafficano (in armi, in denaro), forse, intrigano con il governo (ma quale governo e da che parte stanno?) e poi, come ogni spia che si rispetti finiscono per innamorarsi della persona sbagliata (ma poi qual è la persona giusta?).

E poi c'è Inez Victor, protagonista defilata, centro decentrato, ma luminoso e sfaccettato diamante dell'universo di «Democracy», moglie di Harry Victor, senatore del congresso, eterno candidato alla presidenza; irrequieta, defilata, inseguita dalla stampa alla quale riesce quasi sempre a sottrarsi: bella, conturbante, figlia di una ricca famiglia di Honolulu, la cui storia è altrettanto conturbante, irrequieta, inseguita dalla stampa.

Joan Didion irrompe nel romanzo sin dall'inizio con un *coup de théâtre*, esibisce da subito gli strumenti del mestiere, mette le carte in tavola, le scopre, e poi abilmente le scombina con il suo disordinato andare avanti e indietro nel tempo, facendole apparire e scomparire dove il lettore non si aspetterebbe di vederli fare; si diverte (già, chi non ha aperto Google in cerca di notizie su...dove...quando?) a mantenere la storia in equilibrio fra fiction e non fiction, fra romanzo e reportage, a creare l'illusione, nel lettore, di essere finalmente riuscito a svelare un mistero, di avere assistito a una parte di storia fino a quel momento negata a tutti. A tutti coloro che non fanno parte della storia, quella dei cocktail e delle luci a bordo piscina, degli aerei privati che decollano nelle notti profumate delle Hawaii, delle residenze coloniali dove arrivano attutite le notizie di fughe, di incendi, di esplosioni, di morte, dietro quella patina fatta di abiti leggeri e impalpabili, di sorrisi tirati, di verità conosciute da nessuno ma sussurate da tutti.

E poi vira, Joan Didion, vira sul porpora, quando racconta di Inez e di Jack Lovett, di quel magnetismo che solo le sue parole, e i loro sguardi, riescono a narrare, regalando alla storia una storia d'amore (o di

magnetismo?) che ha il profumo di gardenie e jacaranda, la carezza dei venti tropicali, il respiro di una passione che, come già quella che Graham Green raccontava in *Un Americano Tranquillo*, ha i colori cupi di una fine che sembra già annunciata.

Ma con Joan Didion ormai, l'ho capito, l'abbiamo capito, non c'è mai niente di veramente annunciato, nemmeno quando la storia inizia dalla sua fine: perché la fine è nota, ma non è detto.

«Comunque siamo stati insieme» disse. «Siamo stati insieme tutta la vita. Se conta il pensiero.»

https://youtu.be/XZiX0oO_3Ls

Sara Mazzoni says

Edizioni e/o ripropone il quarto romanzo di Joan Didion, pubblicato originariamente nel 1984. In *Democracy* si notano alcune somiglianze con il precedente *Diglielo da parte mia*. Viene ripreso il setting esotico (questa volta Kuala Lumpur e Honolulu), ma soprattutto la rappresentazione di una protagonista femminile, Inez, che si dibatte tra le maglie di una famiglia soffocante nella sua imponenza.

Joan Didion è voce narrante e personaggio del romanzo, con l'ipotetico intento di dare all'opera il sapore della non-fiction. *Democracy* assume così i toni di un falso New Journalism, oltre a quelli della metaletteratura. Ma l'espedito in sé non cambia in modo essenziale la calibratura del libro. L'esplorazione si svolge attorno a Inez, alla sua provenienza da una famiglia colonialista e al suo ruolo marginale nella vita politica del marito, senatore statunitense candidato alle primarie. La fine del conflitto in Vietnam fa da sfondo, contornato dal rapporto di Inez con quello che probabilmente è un agente della C.I.A.

La storia si dipana in modo volutamente frammentario tra gli U.S.A., l'Asia e il Pacifico, in un cosmo dove i personaggi si muovono come spettri. Come in Henry James, che il romanzo cita esplicitamente ("osserva il quadro. Trova la belva nella giungla, la figura nel tappeto", p. 186), il vero motore è un'assenza che determina tutto. L'assenza in questo caso è "la ragione per cui", il filo conduttore che tiene insieme le tragedie personali di personaggi che si prestano svogliatamente a fare da contrappunto alla Storia della loro nazione (anch'essa in un certo senso assente, almeno da un punto di vista geografico).

Il romanzo si permea di una caligine che mantiene sospesa la realtà; ma è purtroppo questa sua caratteristica a renderlo in un certo senso inconsistente. Laddove i precedenti *Diglielo da parte mia* e *Prendila così* spiccavano per l'elaborazione di struttura e prosa, cesellate così abilmente da nascondere la propria complessità, *Democracy* non riesce ad essere altrettanto incisivo. Si ferma un passo prima, e la sua materia più grezza ricorda ancora le altre opere, ma senza possederne la medesima urgenza.

Dave says

At first I thought the authorial interruptions and cut-up narrative a distraction, but I think that their distracting nature also tells part of the story. Which seems to be about how privilege, media coverage and the public life can kill/obscure real thoughts, memories, and feelings. Highly relevant today, by the way. The book as a whole reads like a Somerset Maugham novel—*The Painted Veil* or *The Razor's Edge* spring to mind. Less lush than those, but more real.

Juliet says

Confusing at first but beautifully written, Didion sasses the shit out of you.

elisabeth says

Not to be a lesbian, but I love Joan Didion.

Mehrsa says

I imagine the book was innovative and creative even when it was published, but it's still pretty creative and clever. Didion is a brilliant writer and a pleasure to read.

Orsodimondo says

LA PAROLA PERFETTA

Pubblicato nel 1984, 'Democracy' è il quarto romanzo di Joan Didion, da molti considerato il suo migliore. Forse il migliore lo è davvero, ma è comunque una bella gara, sono uno più bello dell'altro.

Isole e palme e mare e cieli cangianti (non solo per i tramonti, anche per gli esperimenti atomici).

Scrive Edoardo Nesi:

Non sono mai stato capace di decidere se dell'opera narrativa di Joan Didion ammiro più l'esattezza chirurgica dello stile o il distante calore delle lievi, sospese trame; le esemplari descrizioni dei cieli e del sole e delle albe o la glaciale delicatezza con cui sa raccontare il dolore che riempie le tenere e durissime storie d'amore perduto che sempre riempiono e definiscono le sue eroine - perché, com'è giusto, è sempre una donna il personaggio più importante dei suoi romanzi.

Condivido pienamente il suo entusiasmo per questa scrittrice, per questa artista il cui stile è come il canto di una sirena, con la sua insistita incessante riscrittura, alla ricerca della parola perfetta (le mot juste, avrebbe detto Flaubert), con quel suo incedere da mantra in effetto stereofonia.

In fondo (in fondo!) si tratta di storie d'amore, per lo più *amore perduto*, amore sofferto, amore incerto, amore incompreso, amore combattuto. Tragedie romantiche.

E, sempre, al centro dell'obiettivo, perfettamente a fuoco, c'è una donna.

O due, come qui, come anche in 'Diglielo da parte mia', la protagonista e la narratrice.

In questo caso, la narratrice è proprio Joan Didion: si presenta, si annuncia, rende esplicito che sta scrivendo un libro su Inez e la sua lunga storia con Jack, interviene, commenta, è presente all'interno della storia, incontra i protagonisti, li intervista, o meglio, li ascolta parlare, e li ascolta tacere, esprime la sua incertezza nel riempire le informazioni e i dettagli mancanti.

Conosco le convenzioni e so rispettarle, so riempire il canovaccio che io stessa ho preparato; so come raccontarvi cosa disse lui e cosa disse lei e soprattutto, dato che il cuore del racconto è un'ellissi calcolata, un contratto tra lo scrittore che promette di sorprendervi e i lettori che accettano di essere sorpresi, so come non dirvi quello che voi non volete ancora sapere.

[Non è puro cinema questo?]

Poi, certo, oltre l'amore (oltre!), c'è tanto altro: anche 'Democracy' ci porta indietro agli anni Settanta, alla fine della guerra del Vietnam (l'evacuazione americana di Saigon, la più grande evacuazione della storia compiuta con gli elicotteri, è del marzo 1975) e ci fa viaggiare per il Pacifico e il sud-est asiatico, in paesaggi pieni di isole e palme e mare e cieli cangianti (anche per gli esperimenti atomici).

Pagine che fanno riferimento alla politica dell'epoca, alle campagne presidenziali, alle proteste studentesche, ai magheggi della politica e dell'industria delle armi, ai servizi segreti, forse deviati sicuramente contorti, ai rapporti familiari, alle università, alla droga, a

Sempre del tutto interna e contemporaneamente esterna ai fatti che narra, criptica, misteriosa, enigmatica, forse anche reticente e ambigua, distante e vicina, fredda e appassionata, Didion costruisce attesa e suspense, comunica una sensazione di ghiaccio bollente, di tango glaciale, di Grande Bellezza.

La storia d'amore di Inez con Jack è un esempio illuminante: non si parla mai dei corpi, del sesso, la stessa parola amore non sono certo venga mai espressa - eppure, la loro è una storia incandescente, piena di sensualità, al calor bianco.

Come altri, mi sono trovato a fare ricerche su Google per saperne di più sui personaggi e scoprire che sono creature di fantasia e finzione, mai realmente esistiti.

Romanzo perché i personaggi sono inventati, pur risultando più veri del vero? Memoir perché l'autrice è parte della storia? In stile New Journalism, o autofiction?

A me sembra talento: uno splendido talento.

L'11 luglio del 2013 Barack Obama ha consegnato a Joan Didion una onorificenza per la sua attività nel campo delle arti.

Greg says

Damn, so many of the reviews for this book are terrible. I kind of want to get a gazillion votes for this review just so that it will come before some of the nonsense in the other reviews. Any talk of post-modernism or meta-fiction or there being too many characters in this novel (there aren't that many, more than say the one in certain Beckett works, but less than in a Dickens or Pynchon novel), also plug the ears in your head that listen when you are reading to any of cries that the book is dull or that harp too heavily upon the plot for better or for worse. Just ignore all that stuff (and probably most of what I'm going to say too, but not really because I want you to read this and I want your vote, it's important to me to get ahead of these other reviews). The only thing you need to know about this book is that it is crushingly beautiful. Not flowery pretty, or the literary equivalent of some replaceable blond starlet that graces the cover of gossip mags; but awkwardly gorgeous, insert your own parallelism to the blond starlet here.

The book starts:

The light at dawn during those Pacific tests was something to see.

Something to behold.

Something that could almost make you think you saw God, he said.

He said to her.

Jack Lovett said to Inez Victor.

Inez Victor who was born Inez Christian.

These short sentence long paragraphs could have been condensed into something like, "The light at dawn during those Pacific tests was something to see. They were something to behold and almost make you think you saw God," Jack Lovett said to Inez Victor (*nee* Christian). Instead, Didion pulls the reader immediately into an intimacy between the two characters. Without having to say it the signals are present that these people share a closeness, it's like some of the great opening sentences from Raymond Carver stories that paint whole nuanced paintings with broadly sparse paint strokes. It's never said where Jack Lovett says these words to Inez Victor, who was born Inez Christian, but the repetitions that move slowly in on to the subjects being said feel like an intimacy of two people laying close to one another, as opposed to the simple way I rewrote this section to read like something someone is saying to someone someplace that could be anyone and anywhere.

I love the way she opens this book, and I'd go quoting a bit more, but at the next line she pulls back the perspective a little and gives a longer paragraph describing parts of the scene surrounding a the atomic bomb tests, and I don't really like quoting long blocks of text. Throughout the book, Didion moves between different perspectives, controlling them through the way she chooses to write, instead of always having to explicitly state what she is trying to achieve. She does get explicit at times, and some reviewers seemed to find this annoying since she inserts herself, as the author, into the work, but I'd argue it isn't a literary trick she's pulling but uses it as a way to move about the themes of the novel. If the story were told from a traditional third person point of view quite a bit would be lost. Partially this is a novel about perspective, about the past and history and stories and it's about myths, and where the truth lies between all of what I just rambled out like a grocery list. I feel like I'm sort of rewriting my defense of the narrator for the YA book, *The Book Thief*. I guess I am. Good read that review for some more on this I guess.

This isn't an exciting book. The basic plot of the whole novel is given in the first couple of chapters. Most of the story the reader knows before the book is half-way through. Roughly it's about some events that happen in the Spring of 1975 as the United States is preparing to evacuate from Vietnam. The historical events taking place are mixed with the personal lives of the characters and the reader is left to draw the lines between macro and micro happenings and can use the books title *Democracy* as an ideal and an irony when applied to an export to third world countries at the barrel of a gun to construct a myriad of themes. There are quite a few different readings this book could be given, and for such a short novel Didion manages to pack a lot of big Ideas into the work. Even though there are a lot of big Ideas at work Didion never grabs the reader and forces him or her to have to confront them. The novel could be enjoyed as a love story, or a family tragedy; or as a slightly more humanist perspective to the world that James Ellroy's *Blood's a Rover* frolics in.

But none of that last paragraph is really that important to know. What is important to know is that the book is gorgeous. It's the kind of book that can be savored for the way the author deftly moves along, I guess like literature for literatures sake. I'd almost not want to recommend other people to read it, I might feel hurt if they didn't find it as good as I did, but I will recommend it. But only to readers who I know aren't reading novels just to get from point A to point B.

P.S. I kind of want to read everything by Joan Didion now. I think she might even move into my favorite writers category. Sort of like Don DeLillo and Cynthia Ozick, I just didn't pay much attention to her and now I think I might have been depriving myself of something awesome. I'm going to cautiously call her an up and

coming favorite of mine until I read a couple of more books. It makes me so happy when I realize there are great writers whom I never paid much attention to and now I can look forward to reading them.

Nicola says

This was a pleasant surprise, I went into it not expecting very much and found myself hooked by the very first words.

The light at dawn during those Pacific tests was something to see.

Something to behold.

Something that could almost make you think you saw God, he said.

He said to her.

Jack Lovett said to Inez Victor.

Joan Didion uses her short sentences rather like short machine gun bursts, and it works well. It gives a sense of intimacy and longing, which echoes throughout the rest of the book even if Joan is writing the part you are currently reading in a more conventional format.

For the rest, the book doesn't exactly move at a breakneck pace, even though a lot of happening in the world; this is set around the events of 1975 when the States had to pull out of Vietnam. I would have enjoyed it even more if I'd had even the slightest background knowledge of this part of history but I am profoundly ignorant. If I ever re-read this I'll make sure to do a bit of prep work in this area first.

Kim Fay says

As much as I am a fan of "Slouching Toward Bethlehem," I think that this is my favorite Joan Didion book. It presumes so much on the part of the reader -- that we already know about the intricacies of the characters' lives and the underbelly of the Vietnam War, and more so, that we care about any of it. In this book, Didion does not seem to write at all for the reader. She seems to be writing to answer some question whispering to her inside her own thoughts. While the novel "The Descendants" (I read the book and saw the movie) clearly strives to explain/explore/speak to the bizarre aristocracy/social hierarchies of the Hawaiian Islands, "Democracy" is the book to turn to if a person wants a truly insightful view into this world (not to mention the worlds of politics and dysfunctional families). Because, as with any insider, this book does not give away all of its secrets. It builds a (very loose) foundation based on the murder of the daughter of a prominent Hawaii family (she is also the sister-in-law of a prominent senator), then skims and skirts around this event with a lightheartedness and absolute disinterest in me as the reader that makes me green with envy.

Eric says

The first meeting of Inez Christian and Jack Lovett at the ballet - the beginning of Lovett's "grave attraction" that would last over twenty years - is the sexiest scene I've read in a while:

Cissy Christian smoking a cigarette in her white jade holder. Inez, wearing dark glasses...pinning and repinning a gardenia in her damp hair. This is our niece, Inez, Dwight Christian said. Inez, Major Lovett. Jack. Inez, Mrs. Lovett. Carla. A breath of air, a cigarette. This champagne is lukewarm. One glass won't hurt you, Inez, it's your birthday. Inez's birthday. Inez is seventeen. Inez's evening, really. Inez is our balletomane.

"Why are you wearing sunglasses," Jack Lovett said.

Inez Christian, startled, touched her glasses as if to remove them and then, looking at Jack Lovett, brushed her hair back instead, loosening the pins that held the gardenia.

Inez Christian smiled.

The gardenia fell into the wet grass.

"I used to know all the generals at Schofield," Cissy Christian said. "Great fun out there. Then."

"I'm sure." Jack Lovett did not take his eyes from Inez.

"Great polo players, some of them," Cissy Christian said. "I don't suppose you get much time to play."

"I don't play," Jack Lovett said.

Inez Christian closed her eyes.

Carla Lovett drained her paper cup and crushed it in her hand.

"Inez is seventeen," Dwight Christian repeated.

"I think I want a real drink," Carla Lovett said.

LauraLou says

Inez Victor knows that the major casualty of the political life is memory. But the people around Inez have made careers out of losing track. Her senator husband wants to forget the failure of his bid for the presidency. Her husband's handler would like the press to forget that Inez's father is a murderer. And, in 1975, the year in which this bitterly funny over is set, America is doing its best to lose track of its one-time client, the the lethally hemorrhaging republic of south Vietnam. As conceived by Joan Didion, these personages and events constitute the terminal fallout of democracy, a fallout that also includes fact finding junkets, senatorial groupies, the international arms market, and the Orwellian newspeak of the political class. Moving deftly from Honolulu to Jakarta, between romance, farce, and tragedy, Democracy is a tour de force from a writer who can dissect an entire society with a single phrase.

John says

Warning! Metafiction ahead. A fascinating novel of rich people behaving badly during a dark time in US

History (the fall of Saigon). As usual, Didion is an excellent prose stylist, and is even a character in the novel (hence my metafiction warning). The first 2 chapters of the book are very difficult to understand, but mercifully short. After that the book picks up.

Contains an excellent description of a wealthy Hawaii (Oahu) family, so fans of Kauai Hart Hemmings (The Descendants) will probably find something to like here.

Patrick McCoy says

I am slowly making my way through Joan Didion's oeuvre and Democracy (1984) is easily one of her best works of fiction. I think it incorporates many of her interests and themes. For example, Inez victory is unhappily married to a politician and gets involved with a former lover, a behind-the-scenes fixer in faraway locales, Jack Lovett. She shuttles from Honolulu (Hawaii is special place for Didion), California, to distant capitals in SE Asia: Manila, Jakarta, and Kuala Lumpur. The novel is set in 1975 as America disgracefully disengages from Vietnam and the repercussion that are felt in Cambodia and throughout the world. It is a turbulent time in world history as well as Inez's personal history. The story is being told by a confidant of Inez, a certain writer named Joan Didion. Some people might find the author inserting themselves into a novel as a character as narcissistic, but I find it interesting--creating a sort of meta-narrative. Inez's children also offer a insight into the troubled world of youth culture in the mid 70s: Jessie is a recovering heroin addict who seems adrift in the world and her son Aldali is idealistic and somewhat unfocused in his attempts to be political, but inherits his unconventionally from his politician father. This was a compelling and somewhat fractured chronicle of a the private life of a public person with complicated relationships with her family and the world in general.

Jola says

At first sight the words **charm** and **harm** differ in one letter only but the contrast in their meaning is dramatic. Strangely enough, 'Democracy' by Joan Didion has charmed me and harmed me at the same time.

'Democracy' has charmed me.

The first thing that enchanted me instantly was Joan Didion's writing style. I've never experienced anything like that before. The unsettling, highly addictive rhythm of her sentences, with many cadenced repetitions and anaphoras, resonated with me like music which goes smoothly straight to your heart.

I was flabbergasted by Didion's ability to affect me so much with so few words. Isaac Babel points out, '*No iron can stab the heart with such force as a period put just at the right place*' and it seems so true in Joan Didion's case also.

Although 'Democracy' provokes strong emotions, it's far from sentimental. Her style is harsh at times, like her characters. Ah, the way she depicts the feelings flowing between Inez and Jack every time they meet! It made me think of 'Casablanca': scarce words, extreme tension.

The descriptions in "Democracy" are concise but the world she paints with words bursts with colours and smells: *'When Inez remembered that week in Jakarta in 1969 she remembered mainly the cloud cover that hung low over the city and trapped the fumes of sewage and automobile exhaust and rotting vegetation as in a fetid greenhouse. She remembered the cloud cover and she remembered lightning flickering on the horizon*

before dawn and she remembered rain washing wild orchids into the milky waste ditches.'

Trying to analyze the mechanisms Joan Didion uses to make her prose so original and mesmerizing, would be like catching her words in the net and pinning them like exotic butterflies. Sorry, I'm not going to do that. I prefer to let them float around me and watch them in awe and just sense them with delight.

As for topics and genres, "Democracy" reminds me of a multilayered cake. Don't expect any sweetness though! It's more like a strong espresso which will burn your lips and make your heart pulsate faster. You will discover many floors of Didion's amazing construction. Politics, modern history, family, love, writing a novel, being a writer, to name just a few.

It's a novel, a love story, a crime story, a reportage and an essay at the same time. The narrator is Joan Didion herself who happens to know some characters in person and who shares thoughts about creating this novel and writing in general. The structure of 'Democracy' made me also think of a film. Gosh, the scene in the bar could be dazzling, with Inez dancing not as 'you or I or the agency that regulated dancing in bars might have defined dancing'.

My experience with this novel proves that reaching out of comfort zone can be extremely rewarding. It was Orsodimondo, who got me interested in Joan Didion's works, and I am very grateful for his encouragement.

'Democracy' has harmed me.

Everything I try to read now seems tasteless and colourless compared to Joan Didion's novel.

Krystal says

This is a novel about memory, personal and political. It is a masterpiece. Democracy is Joan Didion's fourth novel, preceded by Run River, Play It As It Lays and A Book of Common Prayer. It was published in 1984. The novel takes place between Honolulu and Jakarta at the hemorrhaging end of the Vietnam War.

It is written as a kind of memoir of Inez Victor, wife of U.S. Senator Harry Victor, told from the perspective of a peculiar narrator. The narrator is none other than Joan Didion.

She is also the self-conscious author of the novel and explains to the reader how this narrative could have been written differently, interjecting the authorial voice within its narrative.

It is a stunning literary achievement and this device is remarkably effective. I found myself reading passages twice as she talks about how they were constructed and why. The technique is so effective that you'll be craving its craftiness in whatever you read next.

Kyle says

Structurally this book sort of demolished my mind. I'm in awe.

Mitchell says

When I first read this book in 1984 I was absolutely staggered. Immediately, I flipped back to the beginning

and read it again. I'm sure I've read it a couple of more times since, and this latest re-read has merely confirmed that this must be my all-time favorite book. Although I've been land-locked for the past number of years, I am -- in essence -- a person of the Pacific, and Didion's book IS the Pacific.

Still, it's a complicated little book and demands more from the reader than most. One must pay attention to all the tiny details and have more than a passing knowledge of the locales -- from Hawaii, to Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and the scattered islands in between (Guam, Kwajalein, Johnston) -- including the names of the airports, the capitals and the history of these places in the 50s, 60s, 70s.

The title is curious. I've never heard a definitive explanation for it, only hints of it being compared to Henry Adams' book of the same title. My take is that it's an ironic title. The book is actually about American colonialism -- our original takeover of Hawaii and our hubris in thinking a war in Vietnam was 1) winnable and 2) appreciated by that country.

But mostly I love this book for the sound of it -- the prose is like poetry and begs to be read aloud. It is, in fact, a mystery, a romance, and a political critique -- but clothed in sheer elegance.

Intortetor says

non ho idea se la storia raccontata in "democracy" sia stata ispirata alla didion da qualche persona realmente esistita: certo è che nei suoi personaggi si trova tanto di quell'america anni '70 che abbiano tutti già conosciuto in parecchi altri libri e film, c'è il vietnam, la guerra, quei personaggi ambigui che in qualche modo con quelle guerre fanno parecchi modi, c'è la politica in quella linea d'ombra tra il crederci e il trasformare l'impegno in mestiere, c'è l'eroina e i giovani che ci cascarono dentro e altro ancora. il tutto è raccontato attraverso le vicende di una coppia che coppia non è (eppure: che storia d'amore, davvero), e soprattutto attraverso inez victor, i suoi drammi familiari, il suo particolare punto di vista. lo stile della didion poi è particolare, "spezzato". fatto di particolari ingranditi, di riferimenti che tornano, della sua voce che entra prepotentemente nel romanzo diventando una dei protagonisti. un gioiello, davvero.
