



## Web

*John Wyndham*

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A millionaire English lord dreams of founding a Utopian community on a remote Pacific island. Among the forty-odd men and women selected for the project are a pestologist named Camilla and the narrator. Within hours of the group's arrival on the sunny isle their radio has been destroyed. Within days several members of the group are dead. Dream turns to nightmare as they discover the island is overrun by a species programmed to resist and dominate any invader.

## Web Details

Date : Published June 1987 by Penguin Books (first published 1979)

ISBN : 9780140053388

Author : John Wyndham

Format : Paperback 141 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Horror, Science Fiction Fantasy

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## From Reader Review Web for online ebook

### Helen says

I'm terrified of spiders so I almost decided that wouldn't read this, but I'm glad I did because I was pleasantly surprised! It's not a creepy, scary, spiders crawling out of nowhere story at all, I should have known not to expect that of a John Wyndham story.

It reminds me a little of H G Wells The Island of Doctor Moreau, but Web is a much more believable tale. I admit I don't know much about spiders or biology but Wyndham had me convinced of the science side of the story.

A short read at not much over 100 pages so it's fast paced and interesting. A good read for lunch breaks or commutes!

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### Devero says

Pubblicato postumo, questo fu l'ultimo romanzo di Wyndham.

I primi due capitoli introduttivi scorrono bene ma senza particolari colpi di scena e senza far presagire nulla di ciò che verrà.

Poi inizia la parte tremenda per un aracnofobo.

Io non lo sono particolarmente, o meglio, non lo ero. Adesso mi è rimasto addosso un senso d'inquietudine notevole.

Ma la parte veramente terribile è nel comportamento severo, duro, spietato, degli isolani, portatori di una cultura decisamente diversa dalla nostra. Qui si nasconde il vero orrore, in una spietatezza di pensiero di alcuni uomini decisi a impedire il cambiamento o a punire chi il cambiamento lo ha portato, fosse anche l'umanità intera.

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### Hweeps says

A far cry from how I remember *The Chrysalids* to be: moving at times, thoughtful, and human. But then again, I'm a very different person now from the 16 year old I was when I first encountered Wyndham. Now I just find his work a little too preachy and in-your-face for me to appreciate the themes he's raising (the inevitability of change, adaptation, difference in cultures), which also seem a little recycled from *The Chrysalids*. The idea of seeking a utopia via migration also seems to be repeated here, except that Zealand was not really depicted while the 'utopia' is the key setting in this book. The utopian possibilities are thwarted here more obviously, and I like how colonialism is brought in although it seems to play on a rather tired trope of the native's mythologies and 'exotic' practices/beliefs (including blood sacrifices and a god resembling that of the Old Testament) and the coloniser's science, reason and logic...

Indeed, are there still any smooth spaces on earth not colonised and made striated by men? if so: what are the possibilities for utopian reimaginings and experiments, and must every attempt to reach utopia necessarily be built on the backs of labourers, migrants, or even the 'misfits' in *Web*? After all, it is the Government and aristocracy like Lord Foxfield who are playing their own game. Ultimately, the Government is still the owner

of Tanakuatua, 'embarrassed' as it might be; and even Lord F was 'refunded' (the vocabulary of capitalism - when islands and lives may be bought and sold from one's armchair!). The dead settlers' relatives were given 'compensation': does anyone even miss those who are gone?

Was hoping to use this for my thesis but it seems a little too juvenile :(

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### **Brian says**

Create a new Utopian society, you say?  
On a deadly tropical island you, say?  
Hostile natives, you say?  
Certain Doom, you say?  
Count me in, I say!

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### **Leigh says**

A good story, but made very difficult to read by the publisher using minute font in this 1980 Penguin edition. I've not down-marked the book because of this, but it's something to bear in mind if you've not got 20/20 vision.

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### **Doris says**

This is an adventure story. Mr. Lord bought an island named Tanakuatua from the government. Then a group of people with dreams and hope went to an island in the middle of Pacific Ocean. They planed to build a new society on the island since most of the adventurers were disappoint with the real society once they lived in. As they explored the island, they noticed something was wrong with the island. There were few birds and some brown stones seemed to be weird things... Arnold and Camilla are the two main characters in the story. They traveled around the island and found a great secret. When they were free to go back to the camp and tell their friends what was going on, they found that no one survived there. Because the islander Nokiki's curse, his son Naeta killed everyone with his "little sisters". Moreover, he planed to widespread them to punish all the human beings and the whole world...

After reading this story, I was shocked by the curse. I can't imagine how said Nokiki was when his home island was controlled by the government. I can't imagine how angry Naeta was then he heard that his father's island was sold by the government. They loved their family and their island; however, what the government did was unfair to them. But to grow spiders and let them sting people is really a dirty trick. I think Camilla was very wise because she always took care of every small sign of danger and came up with good ideas that saved Arnold and herself. To be an adventurer, the most important qualities are calmness, brave advance, and thoughtful. I have learnt what a good adventurer is.

I like this book for it gave me a lot of exciting and horrible feelings every night I read it before going to bed.

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## **Mike Jennings says**

Not great, which is probably why it wasn't published until after his death, but there are enough glimpses of the Wyndham magic to keep you turning the pages.

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## **The Professor says**

"Hundreds of thousands of them." Kingsley Amis in his 'New Maps Of Hell' praises John Wyndham's 'coherence and concision' and 'Web' is a good example of such qualities; Wyndham does here for Spider Island what he did for walking killer plants. Rejected by his publishers and only surfacing posthumously, this slight tale of idealism gone awry is occasionally lecture-tastic and stays primly on the side of verisimilitude rather than wallowing in schlock but there remains something very readable about taking perfectly sensible people behaving perfectly sensibly and confronting them with a lurid pulp sci-fi idea. Moneybags Lord Foxfield and radical thinker Walter Tirrie assemble a group of what looks suspiciously like your average British holidaymakers and decamp to the island of Tanakuatua which has been put under a tabu by departing natives and swept by the fallout of 'Test Zero' but is otherwise a five star site for a new kind of social living experiment. It's only when our redshirts arrive they spot the off-white canopy hanging over half the island and a suspicious lack of birds and insects. Don't read this if you're likely to spot things moving out of the corner of your eye; Branson's Necker Island it ain't. What follows is not a creature feature but a weirdly plausible what-if scenario which makes it all the more unnerving. 'Web' is short, there's not a lot of plot and there's zero sex or even affection between Arnold and Camilla – Wyndham was definitely more Swap Shop than Tiswas – but it still delivers the odd shudder and for those of us for whom John Wyndham was the gateway drug into grown-up science fiction affection for the man and his work goes a long way.

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## **Derek says**

Web, John Wyndham's final novel, is an entertaining novella about a group of idealistic intellectuals who travel to a pacific island only to discover an unexpected evil lurking there. It is little more than a pulp-style novel, more of an action tale than a story with any lasting literary resonance, and it would certainly make for a great movie (much like several of Heinlein's lesser works). Like Wyndham's other books, he creates a narrator with a particular intellectual pedigree to tell a story - in this case, a social historian named Arnold Delgrange - and places that narrator in an unfamiliar setting in order that the narrator might analyze that setting and provide commentary on the events that occur therein. It is much like his other books in that he creates a unique but narrow setting (an uninhabited pacific island with a history expressed at length) with an unidentified threat that the protagonist begins to understand more and more. It includes Wyndham's trademark wit, as well as his propensity for loquaciousness (see what I did there?), though there are some deeper themes present in the book - primarily the places of intellectualism and colonialism, particularly in regard to cultural displacement - but Web's place is best as a short interlude between more meaty tomes, much like the other lesser works of Wyndham's canon.

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## **Kathy says**

I happen to love movies that have spiders in them: Arachnaphobia, Kingdom of the Spiders, Eight Legged

Freaks, Tarangula, etc. I even enjoy watching documentaries about spiders. I am, however, deathly afraid of spiders, so I don't understand this at all! lol. So, when I found this book, I just had to read it!

This is the story of a group of people, who set out to create the perfect Utopia. A remote, uninhabited island is purchased for the location. But when the people arrive, they soon realize that they are not alone. It might seem pretty predictable, but what I had to remind myself is that Web was written long before most of the movies I mentioned above were made (it was written in the 1960's but not published until 1979, 10 years after his death. So, the fact that I am reading it 40 odd years since it was written, is my own loss. Good stuff!

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### **Kay says**

Effectively creepy sci-fi novel featuring intelligent spiders. It could be hokey, but Wyndham's characterizations add depth to the story. Wyndham's classic sci-fi and fantasy seem to withstand the test of time.

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### **Deborah Ideosepius says**

A John Wyndham book I had never read! I got so excited when I saw it.

In 'Web' Arnold Delgrange, a man whose wife and daughter were recently killed, tells the first person story of an attempt to establish a Utopian colony based on 'pure reason' rather than the ills that beset modern society (where 'modern' of course is England around the 1960's).

The colony is conceived and funded by a wealthy Englishman and the site they select for the experiment is the fictional island Tanakuatua in the Pacific Ocean, far from civilisation. Tanakuatua is now uninhabited by humans, as its native inhabitants were evacuated from the island due to British nuclear testing and were relocated. As the title suggests, things go wrong in an arachnid way and conforming with Wyndham's talent for 'end of society' scenarios. An additional twist is the reason for the problem with spiders; is it the nuclear testing? Is it the death curse of a medicine man?

Wyndham himself never published this book, it was released by his estate long after his death and to me it seems clear that it was not by his standards complete: Wyndham's books tend to have tight plots and consistently good writing that flows very well from start to finish. To me, Web read like an early draft. There are large sections that completely draw you in, such as the back history of the fictional island of Tanakuatua, but there are other bits that are choppy and have inconsistent pace.

Still very happy to have read it, but I feel that if the author had had the chance to edit it further it would have been a better book. The main character is consistent with the main characters of The Day of the Triffids , The Midwich Cuckoos or The Kraken Wakes. Which is to say, I suspect, that John's main characters are if not himself, then present images of him. In Web, the main character is older, as the author was when he wrote it while in Triffids he was a younger man.

It also seems to me as though this book has dated a bit harder than many of the early books. While they are all visibly set in the 50's - 60's the attitudes and behaviours of the characters in the early books never grated on me. In Web, the British imperialism attitude is a bit harder to swallow. At times I am pretty sure

Wyndham is doing it intentionally (such as the descriptions of the administration of Pacific islands), but at other times I think not. Despite all this I did very much enjoy all aspects of this book...

Except!

The female lead character has completely annoying rants about nature. The attitude than humans can do nothing to upset the balance of nature is tough for a modern scientist to read. She is also opinionated and has strong thoughts and feelings about science. So strong, I feel they may reflect the author's views which would be unfortunate because they are abysmally dated, in many ways the worst part of the book.

Despite these quirks, it is a fascinating story that is well worth reading, it just requires a little leeway from the reader regarding the level of editing and the poorly dated elements.

Such a brilliant novelist!

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### **M.G. Mason says**

'Web' is a surprisingly pleasing addition to the career of John Wyndham. Published some ten years after his death, it follows similar themes to several of his better known works.

It is another familiar premise. After an episode of PTSD, our protagonist purchases an island in the south Pacific in order to create a utopia and get away from the strains of the western world. This is a very short book (140 pages) and a good 40+ at the beginning is taken up with a short history of the island, the first arrivals in the early 19th century, its annexation into the British Empire then onward to both world wars and its change of ownership during that time all the while the locals amuse themselves with the rare arrivals of the white man.

But it is in the aftermath of WWII that the story really begins to take shape. This was a period of testing nuclear weapons and an attempt is made to move the locals from the island and to another where they wouldn't be in the path of the fallout.

Years later our group arrivals on their utopia to discover that something isn't quite right. There are spiders all over the island and they are evolving. Far from being a utopia, the humans become trapped by the freak of evolution.

The metaphor of humans no longer being the pinnacle of evolution is one used several times by Wyndham and it doesn't feel tired or overused here, it is just presented in a different way in light of the era in which Wyndham was living in which he wrote it.

It comes to a sudden end but felt that it could have should have been longer. The ending itself is not typical Wyndham.

See more of my book reviews at my blog

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## **Huw Collingbourne says**

Sadly, far below Wyndham's best. Very wordy - the backplot (a tedious 'history' that supposedly sets the scene for the main story) takes up about 70 pages before the main plot even begins. I don't know how much editing was done after Wyndham's death but this does sometimes read like a compilation of his notes rather than a full realised novel. It is really pretty thin stuff. A pale shadow of his great SF novels.

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## **Greg Gbur says**

John Wyndham (1903-1969) is one of those authors who falls into the category of “famous writer that you’ve never heard of.” A number of his novels are undeniable classics that were made, and remade, into movies and television series multiple times. Most people watching those movies, however, are unaware that they are based on books.

I was equally ignorant of Wyndham until a few years ago, when I read several of his most famous works and blogged about them. You have probably heard of *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) and *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), though the latter is much better known by its movie title *Village of the Damned*. *The Kraken Wakes* (1953) is another wonderful novel, depicting a war between humanity and an alien race that lives at the bottom of the ocean; this book is sadly out of print.

It's been a while since I read anything of Wyndham's, so I recently picked up a copy of *Web* (1979).

*Web* was somewhat of a risky purchase — it was Wyndham's last novel, and it remained unpublished during his lifetime. In fact, as you can see from the dates above, it was only released by his estate 10 years after his death! Without the author's input in publication, I worried that the book might be a hastily touched-up first draft. Furthermore, as his last book, I worried that his writing skills might have faded from age and illness (see, for example, Stoker's *Lair of the White Worm*). However, my fears were (mostly) unjustified: *Web* is a short but elegant little horror novel with its share of interesting ideas.

Read the whole review.

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## **Camilo says**

Es un libro super cortico y con una historia que al inicio es llamativa, parecía un thriller que me iba a emocionar y asustar. Pero el final es lo más simple y fácil que el autor ideó y eso me hizo quedar plop ya que esperaba un poquito más del final ya que la historia era muy buena.

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## **Peter says**

Possibly a new favourite by the author. A subtle jab at British Empire and nuclear weapons, this man v. nature sci-fi almost reads as a horror. People of the internet can rejoice, there was serious discussion to napalming the spiders. If you don't have arachnophobia before reading this, you may well have it afterwards.

Actual footage of events in the novel can be found here: <http://imgur.com/gallery/CnwOxD>

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### Iophil says

La quarta di copertina ci avvisa che quella presentataci era solo la prima stesura del romanzo, rimasto incompiuto per la sopraggiunta scomparsa dell'autore. Ed effettivamente la cosa un po' si nota. Molto intrigante l'idea di fondo: *cosa potrebbe accadere, se i ragni arrivassero a collaborare tra loro?*

Sicuramente Wyndham avrebbe avuto modo di perfezionare ulteriormente il testo, che così com'è risulta un pochino sbilanciato (quantitativamente eccessive le parti dedicate a presentazione e digressioni, a scapito della vicenda vera e propria). La narrazione è vagamente piatta: non ci sono scene molto emozionanti; lo stile è ordinato e metodico, senza "scossoni", ma proprio questo va a inficiare l'effetto delle scene d'azione e più in generale il coinvolgimento emotivo nella vicenda.

Non è comunque un brutto libro: Wyndham scrive in modo scorrevole e, nonostante la scarsa empatia, la lettura risulta piacevole. La brevità del testo inoltre fa sì che l'interesse rimanga alto.

In definitiva non un volume memorabile, che sicuramente avrebbe potuto trarre gioimento da un lavoro più approfondito. Non mi sono però pentito di averlo letto.

Il voto sarebbe tre stelline e mezzo, ma questa volta ho deciso di approssimare per eccesso, in onore di uno scrittore che ho apprezzato molto e che resta uno dei grandi maestri della SF. :)

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### Brendon Schrodinger says

**Tanakuatua is a small Pacific island that either holds a curse or has just been screwed over right royally. So what happens when an idealistic group of British try to establish a new utopia on it?**

Coincidentally linking back to a read last month, Pacific: Silicon Chips and Surfboards, Coral Reefs and Atom Bombs, Brutal Dictators, Fading Empires, and the Coming Collision of the World's Superpowers, the island, although fictional, is much like those that Winchester talked about. The U.S. and the British forcibly removed native peoples from islands surrounding those where nuclear weapons were tested in the 1950s. In the story the island has had mixed relationships with colonialism, yet, due to having a decent governor in previous years, were quite complacent to leave when asked. Well, not everyone. The medicine man put a curse on the island.

The narrator, like all of Wyndham's narrators is an unassuming middle aged man. After a family tragedy he decides to join an expedition to settle the island and establish a new utopia. Ten years or so after the atomic weapons testing a small group of idealists take supplies to the island and start to establish a camp. But then the deaths start!

The book is very Wyndham in nature and very fun. Not intentionally fun, but in a horror movie/SF movie takes itself seriously fun. The prose is a little more dense than Triffids and Chrysalids, and there is a lot more info-dumps here than in them. But I was happy to go along with it. It takes a while for any horror action to happen, and it doesn't last long, it is a very short book. So be prepared for that. The premise is much more horror than SF, and as an arachnophobic it truly was horror.

So, definitely not as magnificent as his well-known classics, but Wyndham fans will find fun here and a style that is a little different to his usual.

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### **Andrew says**

Ok I will admit I was a little disappointed over this one, Day of the Triffids, the Kraken Wakes are two of my favourite books but this one well not so impressed. The book cover spiel states this was Wyndhams last book and was in fact published after his death, and to be honest it shows it. The political and historical settings for this book (which gives rise to much of the reasons for the events) takes up the first 40 pages of a 140 page book. The storyline feels rushed and is over far too quickly and considering how long it took to set up the scene almost feels like it is not complete. For a collector this book no doubt holds a place in their Wyndham collection but there are better works of his out there than this. That said the descriptions of the little critters how they operate and what they do is well described but if anything it just highlights what could be done with this book and for what ever reasons was left out.

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