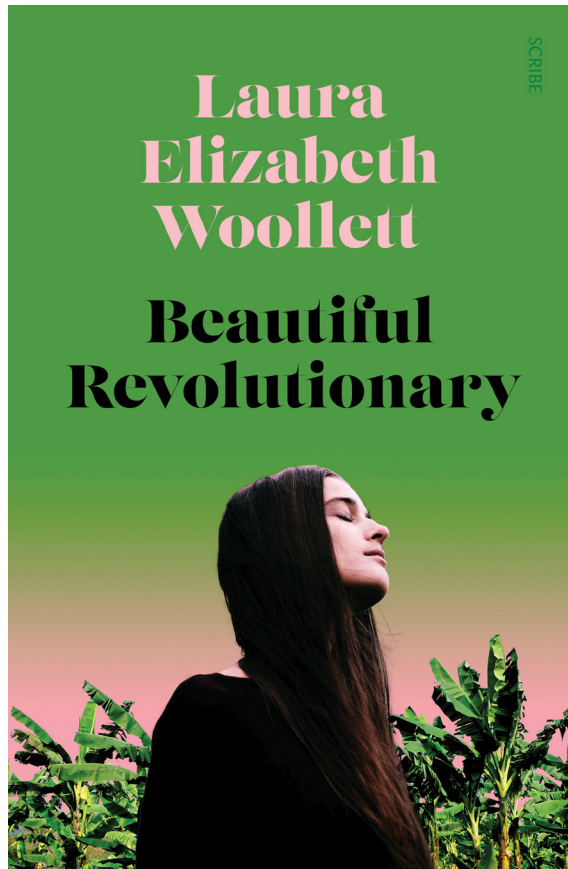


Beautiful Revolutionary

LAURA ELIZABETH WOOLLETT



BOOK DETAILS

Format: Paperback
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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Laura Elizabeth Woollett was born and raised in Perth, Western Australia. In 2012, she completed an honours degree in creative writing at the University of Melbourne. In 2014, she was awarded a Wheeler Centre/Readings Foundation Hot Desk Fellowship and the John Marsden/Hachette Prize for Fiction, and was chosen as one of the 2015 Melbourne Writers Festival's '30 Under 30'. Her short-story collection, *The Love of a Bad Man* (Scribe, 2016), was shortlisted for the 2017 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Fiction and the 2017 Ned Kelly Award for Best First Fiction.

The thrilling new novel, inspired by Jim Jones's Peoples Temple, from the author of *The Love of a Bad Man*.

It's the summer of 1968, and Evelyn Lynden is a woman at war with herself. Minister's daughter. Atheist. Independent woman. Frustrated wife. Bitch with a bleeding heart.

Following her conscientious-objector husband Lenny to the rural Eden of Evergreen Valley, California, Evelyn wants to be happy with their new life. Yet as the world is rocked by warfare and political assassinations, by racial discrimination and social upheaval, she finds herself disillusioned with Lenny's passive ways — and anxious for a saviour.

Enter the Reverend Jim Jones, the dynamic leader of a revolutionary church called Peoples Temple. As Evelyn grows closer to Jones, her marriage is just the first casualty of his rise to power.

Meticulously researched, elegantly written, and utterly engrossing, *Beautiful Revolutionary* explores the allure of the real-life charismatic leader who would destroy so many. In masterful prose, Woollett painstakingly examines what happens when Evelyn is pulled into Jones's orbit — an orbit it would prove impossible for her to leave.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. 'Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.' Does this statement apply to the leaders of Peoples Temple?
2. Consider the relationship between sex and power within Peoples Temple. Are the characters bound by traditional gender expectations, or do they subvert them? Both?
3. There are several different perspectives within the novel (Evelyn, Lenny, Luce, Rosaline, the Children of the Revolution, Sally-Ann). How did these differing perspectives influence your feelings about the characters and their actions?
4. *Beautiful Revolutionary* takes place over a ten-year

PRAISE FOR BEAUTIFUL REVOLUTIONARY

'[D]ramatic and intriguing, the quality of Woollett's prose is the most enjoyable aspect of this novel ... Reading *Beautiful Revolutionary*, it is easy to imagine how so many people could have been captivated and controlled by a man such as Jones ... [A]n excellent work of literary historical fiction.' 4.5 STARS

— BOOKS+PUBLISHING

Laura Woollett's imaginative retelling of the Jonestown tragedy does what only fiction can do — endows Jim Jones and his inner circle with a sense of humanity. She formulates answers to unknowable questions — how could otherwise sane people be pulled into Jones's web of evil? What happened that last, tragic day? A lyrical and sharply rendered tale of innocence lost and ideals betrayed.'

— JULIA SCHEERES, AUTHOR OF *A THOUSAND LIVES: THE UNTOLD STORY OF JONESTOWN*

period (1968 – 1978). However, there are several time jumps within the book. What effect did these jumps in time have on you, as a reader?

5. Evelyn and Lenny are both children of the postwar baby boom. Does this make them more receptive to Peoples Temple (and similar movements) than previous or later generations might be?
6. Though Evelyn and Lenny join Peoples Temple at the same time, they occupy different places within the Temple's hierarchy. Discuss the way their fates diverge and intersect throughout the novel.
7. What did you make of the contradictions between Peoples Temple's egalitarian message, and the reality of life in the Temple (e.g., white leadership, shaming men for 'latent homosexuality')? Were the Temple members hypocrites, blind to their own prejudices, afraid of Jim Jones, or something else?
8. Evelyn and Luce are both drawn to Peoples Temple, in part, because of their sexual attraction to Jim Jones. What else do these characters have in common?
9. Toward the end of the novel, Rosaline reflects, 'She doesn't like or understand Eve any more than she did that day [ten years ago].' Is this accurate? Does an understanding exist between Rosaline and Evelyn?
10. Evelyn has several romantic relationships throughout the novel. What does her relationship with Jim Jones offer her that others (Jean-Claude, Lenny, Phil) do not?
11. Despite inhabiting a communal environment, Evelyn remains an isolated character. To what extent is her isolation self-imposed?
12. What do the words 'beautiful' and 'revolutionary' mean, in the context of the novel? Did your interpretation of these words change, in light of the fate of Peoples Temple and its members?



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