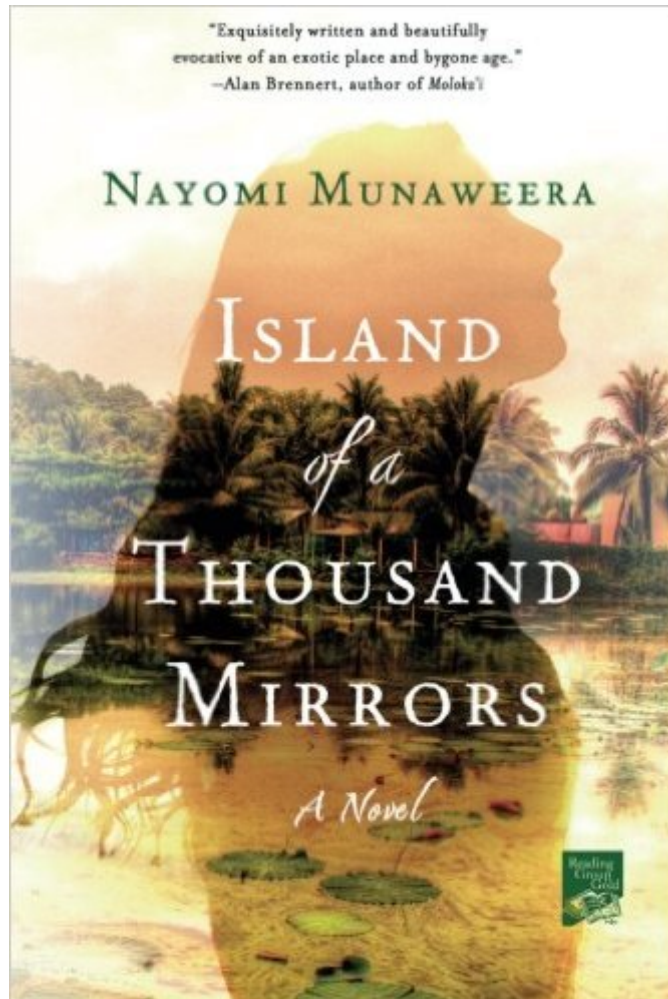


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Island Of A Thousand Mirrors: A Novel



Synopsis

Before violence tore apart the tapestry of Sri Lanka and turned its pristine beaches red, there were two families; two young women, ripe for love with hopes for the future; and a chance encounter that leads to the terrible heritage they must reckon with for years to come. One tragic moment that defines the fate of these women and their families will haunt their choices for decades to come. In the end, love and longing promise only an uneasy peace. A sweeping saga with the intimacy of a memoir that brings to mind epic fiction like *The Kite Runner* and *The God of Small Things*, Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* strikes mercilessly at the heart of war. It offers an unparalleled portrait of a beautiful land during its most difficult moments.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A family epic set against the backdrop of the Sri Lankan civil war comes to poignant and powerful life in this lyrical and riveting debut novel by Nayomi Munaweera. The themes of conflict, family, and love are explored with tender nuance and insight by the author, showing the reader how these seemingly faraway events have relevancy in our own lives. The author tells the story through the eyes of both Sinhala and Tamil women, with tales of suicide bombers, brutality, and civil war interspersed with those of love, longing and loss. Munaweera conjures a powerful metaphor for a nation through the twisted limbs of a tree feasting on blood and bodies, and asks what kind of fruit such a tree will ultimately bear - a question that each of us must answer through the personal and political decisions we take in our lives daily. Highly recommended.

I read "Island of a Thousand Mirrors" on a recommendation from a close friend. I wasn't quite prepared for how powerful and brilliant this novel is. It's a great and deep view into the nuances of a culture in a war torn land - delivered with musicality and vivid detail. I was enraptured and read this in mere days (unlikely for me). This is a phenomenal first work by Munaweera. It's both a great artistic achievement, as well as a heavyweight revelation of Sri Lanka's devastating recent struggle. Cannot recommend highly enough.

Island of a Thousand Mirrors is an exquisite novel, evoking the beauty of place, the strength of family, the pain and complexity of war and the resiliency of the human spirit. The people, especially the women, in Island of a Thousand Mirrors compel one to consume the book at ever increasing speeds in a fervent desire to know more, see the lives of these women unfold and entwine, hear their tales, know their hearts. Yet the beauty and deliciousness of the prose urges a slow savoring of this unique and exquisitely crafted delight of a book. That she writes so beautifully about so much that is foul and ugly, that she evokes the shared misery and powerful strength of those whose world is ripped apart by war distinguishes Nayomi Munaweera as an exceptional storyteller, witness, poet, author. Her very specific tale of these families and those times taught me more about Sri Lanka's civil war than a decades worth of newspaper accounts could ever have conveyed. And her universal message of the complexity of war that "There are no martyrs here. It is a war between equally corrupt forces." Despite our almost omnipresent desire to believe in such times that there is a "clear distinction between the cowboys and the Indians, the corrupt administration and the valiant freedom fighters, the democratic government and the raging terrorists." There is not. As I close the book on the final pages, I regret the loss of these women, I yearn to know more of their lives - and I am profoundly aware that peace, and not victory, is the goal that matters.

I wasn't aware that this book was going to delve so deeply into war and the horrible, despicable horrors of such, but it does with extreme accuracy. I found this book so very difficult to read at times and generally had to take a break to recoup before I could go back for more. This is the kind of book that would be called POWERFUL in the past, but for someone who no longer needs to read about darkness, I just felt this was sad and unnecessary. The writing is lovely, the author intelligent and specific in her death scenes but it wasn't for me. I no longer have the need to look back, to try and make sense of what came before me. It is over, it was wrong, we must let it go. History is no longer repeating itself, although to the untrained eye, it will continue look that way. "We take the children because they are easily trainable, eager to follow orders after a few weeks, small and agile enough

to slip over the land unseen, and catch the enemy off guard. We take them because soldiers, no matter how battle hardened, always hesitate before children. And that moment of hesitation often grants us victory. As we leave, the villagers avert their eyes. They know that without us the children have no hope, yet still they are silently distraught."

I was impressed page after page with Munaweera's command of metaphor and description. I've never been to Sri Lanka, but her words put me there -- at that exact place, at that time, with these specific characters. It's a major accomplishment of lyrical description and sensory evocation. I have to admit that I couldn't always follow the various characters throughout the books' story threads -- but that's mainly because I'm not very good about following plots no matter the medium (books, movies, etc.). I'm terrible about following story. What kept me hooked on this novel was the writing itself, the striving and heartbreak and aspirations of its characters through tumultuous periods. There is a kind of romanticism in the book too -- not that it romanticizes war and bloodshed at all -- but there's a sense that life is worth living and experiencing, that the world is beautiful for all its terrors and griefs. That simple belief, shared by the two principal women in the book, is what endeared them to me. Also, the writing is just poetry -- and that's worth my overcoming any obstacles with plot and story. Really inspiring writing.

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