



Princess Bari

Hwang Sok-yong , Sora Kim-Russell (Translator)

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In a drab North Korean city, a seventh daughter is born to a couple longing for a son. Abandoned hours after her birth, she is eventually rescued by her grandmother. The old woman names the child Bari, after a legend telling of a forsaken princess who undertakes a quest for an elixir that will bring peace to the souls of the dead. As a young woman, frail, brave Bari escapes North Korea and takes refuge in China before embarking on a journey across the ocean in the hold of a cargo ship, seeking a better life. She lands in London, where she finds work as a masseuse. Paid to soothe her clients' aching bodies, she discovers that she can ease their more subtle agonies as well, having inherited her beloved grandmother's uncanny ability to read the pain and fears of others. Bari makes her home amongst other immigrants living clandestinely. She finds love in unlikely places, but also suffers a series of misfortunes that push her to the limits of sanity. Yet she has come too far to give in to despair - Princess Bari is a captivating novel that leavens the grey reality of cities and slums with the splendour of fable. Hwang Sok-yong has transfigured an age-old legend and made it vividly relevant to our own times.

Princess Bari Details

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Author : Hwang Sok-yong , Sora Kim-Russell (Translator)

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From Reader Review Princess Bari for online ebook

Stephanie Jane (Literary Flits) says

See more of my book reviews on my blog, Literary Flits

Princess Bari is a beautifully written novel which blends elements of fairytale and mythological stories which modern-day migrant experiences. In common with *The Beast Of Kukuyo* which I reviewed a few days ago, this is another book that I chose almost on a whim for its author's nationality, and which turned out to be a very rewarding read! I loved Hwang's use magical realism (Daniela at Bookiverse, this is absolutely a book for you!) which frequently transports both the reader and Bari from the horrific situations in which she finds herself. The claustrophobic cargo ship journey is one example and I found this all the more upsetting for knowing that, although this novel is fiction, these scenes are essentially true to real life. I felt the timelessness of Hwang's writing style in his retelling of this ancient legend reminded me that Bari's experience (and the experiences of thousands like her) are by no means only a modern phenomenon.

Hwang's use of contrast makes aspects of Princess Bari particularly memorable, but also serves to illustrate that certain situations share greater similarities than we might care to admit. Bari's life in China isn't so far removed from her London experiences. The types of people she encounters on her journeys tend to repeat patterns too. A person's moral compass certainly isn't determined by whereabouts in the world their family originated! Hwang's characters share more, perhaps, with traditional story stereotypes, but the novel in no way suffers for this. I understood that although several characters are depicted as Good or Bad, there is also a wide middle ground of grey: people who could make a tremendous difference through relatively small actions on their part, fail to do so whether through ignorance or simple misunderstandings. As with all great fairytales and legends, Princess Bari can be read at its simplest level as just a story, or can be dissected for deeper meaning and symbolism. A fascinating novel which would, I think, make for energetic book club discussions.

Imi says

Strangely, the complaints I had with this are very similar to those I've had with many books I've read this year; in short, that I loved one half of the book, but the found the other lacking or at odds with the rest of the book. I really enjoyed the first half of *Princess Bari*, which tells the story of a young girl growing up in North Korea, during the time of the great famine of the 1990s. Bari is the seventh daughter of a couple desperate to have a son, and was named after a princess from one of the stories her grandmother likes to tell. Along with the moving portrayal of the harsh realities for this people in this time, in this part of the book there is also a very slight supernatural/magical realist element to the plot, both through the folk tales Bari's grandmother tells, and through Bari's own dreams and experiences as well, as it turns out she has a gift which means she can communicate with dead spirits and see the past lives of people around her. This half of the story is rich and beautifully done. Unfortunately, a major event in Bari's life, sends the story in a whole new direction, (view spoiler). The theme of (view spoiler) could have been very interesting to explore, but I felt the execution wasn't as tight as in the first half of the book. This half seemed strangely rushed, underdeveloped and dull in comparison. Furthermore, the magical realist elements become more important towards the end, (view spoiler), and her dreams become a larger focus and increasingly more bizarre. This

may just be my own personal taste, however, as I prefer when magical realist books are more firmly rooted in reality than in the fantastical elements. Sadly, the ending left me feeling unsatisfied.

Gülzar says

Açıkçası bu kitaba 2 yıldız vermekte zorlandım. Çünkü kitap zevkine güvendiğim insanlar tarafından oldukça beğenildi. Ama zevkler ve renkler mevzusu sanırım burada devreye girdi. Seven arkadaşlarımdan özür dileyerek;

Kitap aslında iki bölümden oluşuyor. Benim de beğenerek okuduğum ilk bölüm Bari'nin doğması ile başlayıp yasadışı göçmen olarak Londra'ya gitmek için bindiği gemiye kadar devam ediyor. İkinci bölüm ise gemideki yolculuk, Londra'ya varış, bebeklerin insanların en uygun yere satması (siyasi/ekonomik mültecilerin büyük çoğunluğunun modern dünyanın köleleri olduğunu hepimiz biliyoruz sanırım), müslüman bir dedeyle tanışması, dedenin torunuyla evlenmesi vs. olarak devam ediyor.

İlk bölümde gerçeküstü bir anlatım kullanılmış, hikaye güzel kurgulanmış, karakterler detaylı işlenmiş. Zaten iki yıldız bu bölümün yüzü suyu hürmetine verdim.

İkinci bölümde ise gerçeküstü anlatıyı yer yer yine kullanmış fakat "gerçek" anlatımla o kadar uyumsuz, bağlantısız kalmış ki okurken "ne?", "ne oldu?" imdiler baş gösteriyor. Dilini ise tarif etmem çok zor. Benim tanıyan şu cümlemden anlar: ben daha iyi yazardım be! Ben, mektup yazamayan ben :)

Anlatımda ise bir olay/durumu anlatırken birden bire başka bir şey anlatmaya başladığı yerler var. Bununla beraber inanılmaz sayıda gereksiz sözcük ve detay var. Bir okur olarak bir kaç yerde bu bilgiyi niye vermi ki dediğim, anlamlandıramadığım kalabalıklar vardı.

Bir de Müslümanlık hakkında neden verildiği anlaşılmayan bilgiler din kültürü ders kitabı kıvamında idi. Hiç bir edebi değeri ve kıymeti yok.

İkinci bölüm fazlasıyla aceleci yazılmış, ilk bölümde olan karakter detayları, olay katman ve derinliği ikinci bölümde yok olmuştur. Sanırım ki aynı yazarın elinden çıkmamış.

Son olarak yazar Bari'nin gemi yolculuğunu anlattığı bölümlerdeki vahşeti, diğer göçmenlerin yaşadığından küçük görmüştür. Oysaki; açlık, susuzluk, havasız kalacak kadar küçük alanlara sıkıştırılmak, dayak, tecavüz, toplu tecavüz kahramana bir güzel ya tatılmış sonra 'ama diğer mülteciler daha zor koşullarda buraya geliyorlar' demiştir. Bu cümleyi kurmadan önce ne içtiniz bay yazar?

En çok üzüldüğüm ise zaten çok zor çeviri yapılan dillerden, kötü eserlerin türkçeye söylenmesi. Bu kadar emek daha iyi eserlere harcanmalı. Doğru edebiyatın bestseller'ini değil edebiyat eserlerini merak ettiğimizi yazdıklarında tanıdıkları olan elden ele ulaştırırsın.

İyi okumalar.

Victoria says

Princess Bari is a harrowing, magical tale of a young girl's resilience through 'living Hell'. The story combines a modern day plight of one North Korean girl's journey to the west and a traditional Korean shamanistic story of travelling through Hell and back. The traditional Korean story that is intertwined with the modern day 'Hells' that Bari goes through on her journey is somewhat reminiscent of the tale of Orpheus. One thing I have tried to teach myself when reading Hwang Sok-yong's books is to don't hold my breath waiting for a happy ending, but I just couldn't help myself wishing and waiting for Bari to get her happy ending. The book does not exactly end on a completely sad note, but it leaves you thinking about how precious you should guard and regard what good you have in your life, yet never forget that there are people out there who are suffering. I enjoyed Bari's journey and felt through her a new appreciation for the struggles refugees continue to make even after they have supposedly reached their 'goal' of arriving in a city like London.

Having personally lived in London, I thought that Hwang's portrayal of the city was spot on and made me reminisce about its idiosyncrasies.

This book was so skillfully translated and Sora did a wonderful job weaving the appropriate Korean words in with the English giving the book a sense of tradition and respect for the ancient source material. The little splashes of Korean-ness helped to ground and specify a very universal refugee story firmly to Korean traditions and culture, it made me think that this is the sort of book that Goethe and Herder were speaking of when they created their theory of 'World Literature'. Hwang's book and Sora's translation really seek to explain a truth in life through a specific Korean example, and they do it beautifully.

Hulyacln says

Hwang Sok Yong,Chongjin'den ba?lay?p Londra'ya uzanan bir yolculu?u anlat?yor bize.Bari'nin ya?ad?klar? d?nyan?n kanayan bir?ok yaras?na da dokunuyor.Kuzey Kore,m?ltteciler,insan tacirleri ve daha nicesine..Kenzaburo Oe'nin "Asya'n?n en g?çlü sesi" demesini hakl? ç?kar?rcas?na bir ak?c?l?k ve do?all?k var yazar?n kelimelerinde..

R K says

1.5

I so badly wanted to enjoy this book but unfortunately this book perfectly demonstrated why I dislike magical realism. It's not a bad genre when done well but can easily frustrate a reader if done poorly. For the story, I don't think magical realism should have been used. We are following a girl named Bari who escapes from North Korea, hides in China, is forced to work in London, and goes through much struggle through her marriage life. Hwang Sok-yong's point was to show that life is a constant struggle and that there will always be issues and conflicts people have to fight against. This message was lost as my frustration with MR grew. It was always inserted whenever something bad happened. We would go from straightforward writing to a flowery one. It took away from the rawness of the events that were unfolding and didn't create the impact it was supposed to.

Bari's personality doesn't change much despite everything she experiences and her relationship with the man who would be her husband was quick and unbelievable. I couldn't believe they were so close and in love with each other as was told to me.

In the end, this would have been good if it was longer for character and plot development and didn't have the magical realism elements.

Canan says

"yi ki çevrilmi? de okuyabilmi?im. Kuzey / Güney ay?rt etmeden kendini Koreli olarak tan?tan bir yazar. Bar?? iste?i y?llar süren sürgün, hapisle peki?mi? bir yazar. Vazgeçmemi?, umut etmi?. Yaz?lar?na da 'öteki' i?lemi?. Kore - Çin- ?ngiltere yolculu?u s?ras?nda Bari'nin ya?ad?klar? alt metni dolu dolu olan, zaman zaman fantastikle?en bir kurguda verilmi?. ?ngiltere'ye ayak basmadan önceki k?s?mlar? daha çok sevdim.. Çeviri de gayet ba?ar?l?. Do?an Kitap 'n daha çok eser basmas?n? bekliyorum..

Paul Fulcher says

"There were still so many people crossing endless borders in search of food, just so they could live without the constant threat of death."

???? by ??? (Hwang Sok-yong) has been translated as Princess Bari by the excellent Sora Kim-Russell.

Overall, Princess Bari was a worthwhile read but didn't quite work for me.

That's largely because of the uneasy blend of three different elements: a story of his heroine Bari's struggles in daily life in North Korea, near to the Chinese border, which then shifts to her subsequent life as an illegal immigrant in the UK, and, interwoven throughout, a shamanistic tale of the eponymous Princess Bari.

One can see what ??? is trying to do - as the opening quote suggests, the story of people crossing borders, whether over the river into China to forage for food, or forging a new life in Europe, is universal, and the mythical element adds an extra, unique, element to the story while allowing him to soften the otherwise horrific details - but it felt like three separate novels.

The part set in North Korea will perhaps be the most appealing and is the more authentic. I enjoyed both the flavour of Korean life that I recognise from the South - seaweed soup (???) given to mothers after birth, the significance of a child's 100th day (??) "when babies are said to be fully among the living", filling a porcelain bowl with water to intercede with the gods, Americans as "big noses" (?? ???), chocolate biscuits with marshmallow inside from the South (??), lots of exclamations of Aigo (???), adding -ah (-?)when calling someone's name, eating sujebi (???) - and the very distinctive hardships of life in the North. I frequently had to remind myself that this novel starts in the 1980s, not the 18th century, when one reads about famines.

My contrast, the part in England, while quite powerful and well written, felt less authentic (the odd Americanism in the translation didn't help) and certainly less original. Hwang tries to bring in the wider immigrant story, including that of different races such as her Muslim husband. Last year's Booker shortlist The Year of the Runaways, for example, did the same thing much better.

The Princess Bari story is a traditional Korean myth, and having been named after her, our heroine increasingly finds her life, and particularly her dreams, coinciding with the story. The shamistic elements of

the tale give a unique insight into ancient culture, but the implications for the present-day Bari, which formed an increasingly significant role as the novel progresses, felt ultimately like something from a Paul Coelho novel. And the fairy-tale quality sat uneasily alongside stories of rape, drug abuse, infant death, starvation and exploitation.

The novel almost concludes "Our lives were so peaceful that we nearly started to believe the world had changed" only for one final, real-life, twist as the events of 2005 bring terror, and the likelihood of anti-Islamic sentiment, to London's streets.

Cornelia says

3.5

Come Musica says

È il percorso di Bari che come la principessa che porta il suo stesso nome deve superare tante prove prima di diventare una sciamana.

È la storia di tanti migranti che sono esuli e che soffrono atrocemente in cerca di un futuro più umano.

Anche questo libro, come quello di Han Kang "La vegetariana", è visionario.

A mio avviso, però, la scrittura di Han Kang è più potente di quella di Hwang Sok-yong.

Bianca come la luna comincia benissimo nella prima parte.

Poi si perde un po' a metà e recupera un po' nel finale.

Sarebbero 3,5 stelle, arrotondate a 4.

Lo storify della lettura condivisa su Twitter.

<https://storify.com/comemusica/bianca...>

Gorkem says

Çok naif ve içten bir dili var Prenses Bari'nin. Üzüntülü bir öyküsü olan Bari'nin Lirik ve spiritüel ö?elerle Kuzey Kore'den göç etmesi ve ya?am?n? önce Çin ve daha sonra da Londra'da sonland?rmas?n? anlat?yor Sok-yong. Keyifli okumalar!

Veronica ?? says

Princess Bari is a remarkable coming of age novel that speaks of hardship, courage and determination.

Hwang Sok-Yong writes with poignancy and humour as we follow Bari's life narrated by Bari in a rational and undramatised way.

A reworking of the Korean mythological story of Princess Bari, an ancestral shaman and the seventh

daughter of King Ogu, making it relevant to the 21st century.

Sok-Yong writes of impoverished North Korea and Bari's remarkable survival in the forests of china, her horrific journey aboard a people smuggler boat to London, the lives of illegal immigrants and women forced into prostitution. Bari comes across many people, good and bad, and the story speaks of prejudice but doesn't preach.

Bari at times accepts her life with wisdom beyond her young years.

" I realise that life means waiting, enduring the passage of time. Nothing ever quite meets our expectations, yet as long as we are alive, time flows on, and everything eventually comes to pass."

Bari's story is depressing at times however Bari faces what life throws at her with courage and hope. A sobering tale I would recommend to all.

With my thanks to First Reads and Scribe publications for my copy to read and review.

Banu Karayel says

Türkçe'de daha fazla Kore Edebiyatı talepkârıym artık :)

Soany says

Sin palabras para la calidad de historia que encontré en este libro. Fue sublime.

Deniz Balçık says

Ne yazık ki Kore Edebiyatı ülkemizde hiç tanınmıyor. Tanınabilmesi için gereken asgari şartlar da olumu? de?il zaten. Misal daha iki hafta önce çıkan bu kitap, Kore Edebiyatından Türkçeye çevrilmi? on dokuzuncu eser olma özelli?ini ta?ıyor. Koskoca bir ülke edebiyatından henüz on dokuz tane eser çevrilmi? durumda, ne acı! Han Kang'ın 'Vejetaryen' ile dünya çapında yakaladı?ı başarı, sanırım biraz önünü açacak Koreli yazarlar?n. En azından Hwang Sok-yong'un kitabının yayımlanabilmesi, bana kalırsa tamamen buna dayanıyor ve umarım devam? gelir.

Çeviri koltu?unda Koreceden çeviri yapabilen iki çevirmenden biri ve aynı zamanda en yetkini olan S.Göksel Türközü var. Çevirileri arasında stil olarak bir istikrar olmadı?ını görüyorum. Bence Göksel Türközü çevirilerinde, çevirdi?i yazar?n orijinalindeki anlatımına Türkçesel katkı?ı bulmaya gayret ediyor. Zira bu benim üçüncü ya da dördüncü Türközü çevirisi okumam ve hepsinin hissettirdi?i bambaşka?ı.

Hwang Sok-yong Türkçede ilk kez okuma fırsatını? buldu?umuz isimlerden. Di?er Güney Koreli yazarlardan ayrı? olarak, Hwang'ın kimlik ve yurt kavramlarına yaklaşı?ı daha farklı. Güney ya da Kuzey

diye ay?rmadan kendini Koreli olarak tan?mlayan yazar, eserlerinde de bu çember etraf?nda çok s?k dönmü? ve bunu do?ru bir ?ekilde dile getirmi? olmal? ki, hem Kuzey de hem de Güney de en sevilen yazarlardan biri ?uanda. Ben aç?kças? kitab? okurken yazar?n hayat?n? çok merak ettim. Beni sürekli olarak yazara do?ru itti metin. Bunun üzerine yapt???m ara?t?rmalarda, yazar?n hayat?n?n zor bir sürgünde geçti?ini gördüm. O yüzden esere sinen 'öteki' kavram?n?n, nedenlerini nas?llar?n? daha iyi anlamlandırabildim.

Çok say?da esere sahip olan Hwang Sok-yong'un uluslararası ba?ar? kazanm?? sekiz eserinden bir tanesi 'Prenses Bari'. 2007 senesinde Kore'de yay?mlanan 'Prenses Bari', 2015'te ?ngilizce'ye çevrilmi?; sonrasında da di?er dünya dillerine çevrilmeye ba?lanm??. Kitaba ismini veren Prenses Bari asl?nda Kore mitolojisinde yer alan bir karaktermi?. Ben bunu ara?t?rd???mda, kar??ma çok iyi tan?d???m bir ba?ka mitolojik karakterin ç?kt???n? gördüm: Kharon. Bildi?iniz üzere Kharon, ölülerin ruhlar?n? kay???yla bir yerden bir yere ta??yan, hiçlik komutan?, para azman? bir varl?kt?r. Korenin Prenses Bari efsanesi de buna oldukça benziyor ancak elbette Uzak Do?'u'dan ç?kmas?na al???m?z o yo?'un sofistike yakla??m burada da var. Zaten zaman zaman fantastikle?en öykü, bunu ancak bir aya??n? yaslad??? doktrinlerle s?n?rlar içinde tutmay? ba?ar?yor. Yine 2017 senesinde yay?mlanan ba?ka bir kitap olan Natsuo Kirino'nun 'Tanr?çan?n Günlü?ü' roman?n? an?msatt? bana s?k s?k. Temelde ise, net bir sistem ele?tirisi görüyoruz. Sisteme, Bari ile direniyor Hwang Sok-yong. ?lk yar?s?n? çok be?enerek okudum kitab?n. O ilk yar?da, Kuzey Kore'de geçen bir kurmaca öykü okutuyor ve Kuzey Kore'nin bask?c? ülke profili net bir ?ekilde veriliyor. Sonrasında sessizce direnmeye ba?layacak Bari'yle özde?le?memiz için tohumlar? at?yor. Bu anlamda tarihsel arka plan? derinlikli olmasa bile, son derece ilgi çekici oldu?undan bana keyif verdi.

Göçmenlik, ötekilik, terör, devlet, kimlik problemi... Hepsinin ba?rolde oldu?u bir çat??malar yuma?? bu öykü. Hiçbir özgürlü?ü olmayan, sadece ya?ama hakk? için, en sert sava?lardan birini vermekle hayat?n? geçiren Bari'nin öyküsü bu. Ayn? zamanda insanlar?n ayaklar?na bak?p, hayatlar?n? güzelle?tirebilen; herkesten farklı? antik bir ruhu içinde ta??yan özel bir k?z?n öyküsü.

Totaliter ve sefil Kuzey Kore; ac?mas?z insanlarla dolu Çin; son çare olarak görünen içinde debelenilen ama asla oraya ait olunamayan Avrupa. Ça??n konjonktürüne çok iyi uyan bir öykü yazm?? yazar.

Be?enmedi?im, karikatür buldu?um baz? yerleri oldu ama bunlar bahsetmeye de?ecek nitelikte de?il:)

Yazar senelerce Pyongyang ve Seul hükümetlerinin bir araya gelmesi için çal??malar yürütmü?, çok kere iki ülke ile de görüşümü?. Hatta Kuzey Kore ile yapt??? görüşmeleri yüzünden suçlu bulunmu? ve Güney'de hapse at?lm??. Bu konuda yazmas? konusunda sansürlenmi?. Fakat buna ra?men vazgeçmemi?, böyle bir eser ortaya koymu?. Bu çabası ve hala verdi?i sava?? bence çok güzel ve de?erli.

Kore'den daha çok eser çevrilmesi için, hali haz?rda çevrilmi?leri okuyal?m lütfen.

?yi okumalar!