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Laura Lindstedt

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Seitsemän naista, kukin kotoisin eri maasta. Kuolemanjälkeisessä välitilassa, josta ei voi paeta – paitsi sanojen, kertomusten avulla.

Newyorkilainen performanssitaiteilija Shlomith, moskovalainen pääkirjanpitäjä Polina, brasilialainen sydänsiirtopotilas Rosa Imaculada, marseililainen hienostorouva Nina, kurkkusyöpää sairastava hollantilainen Wlbgis, mallintöistä haaveileva senegalilainen Maimuna ja itävaltalainen teinityttö Ulrike ovat päätyneet valkoiseen tyhjään tilaan. Aika sellaisena kuin me sen ymmärrämme on lakannut olemasta. Naisten ruumiilliset tarpeet sammuvat vähitellen. Ensin katoaa kyky tuntea kipua ja nautintoa. Pikkuhiljaa koskettaminen ja oman ruumiin aistiminen muuttuvat mahdottomiksi.

Mitä on tapahtunut? Mikä on koitunut naisten kohtaloksi?

Lindstedtin odotettu toinen romaani leikkii eri lajeilla esseestä luentoön ja sadusta näytelmään, runoutta unohtamatta. Teksti kuljettaa lukijaansa milloin humoristisesti, milloin raivoisasti kohti viimeisiä sivuja – kohti kuoleman vääjäämättömyyden aina yhtä käsittämätöntä ajatusta.

Oneiron Details

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From Reader Review Oneiron for online ebook

Robin says

A messy, problematic, mixed bag.

It took me a full month to read this book, the 2015 winner of the Finlandia Prize. Had I not paid hard-earned Canadian dollars for the hardcover, I just might have abandoned it. My body was rejecting it. Any other book beckoned me. Reading it was a conscious effort, a fight against the restlessness of my mind. I described my experience to some fellow readers as *eating a kale salad*. As in: it's good for me, but I'm not really enjoying it.

Seven women find themselves in a sort of afterlife, or 'bardo'. An anorexic, a cancer patient, a teenager, a woman pregnant with twins, an alcoholic, a woman hoping to escape her country to be the next Iman, a heart transplant recipient. The afterlife is a blank. It's white. That's it. The women don't know how they got there, do not know each other, and don't even necessarily speak the same language.

The unevenness of this book bothered me. Like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, it is precariously engineered and just barely held up by the parts that contain some sort of action, development, or story. It's this unevenness that kept me from enjoying the book the way I had hoped.

For example, the pacing. The women's backstories are told through a series of many flashbacks. The stories are mainly interesting, but inevitably, we are dragged back into the surreal white void, grinding the story to an excruciating halt. Each and every time. I consistently fluctuated between interest and boredom.

Also, the point of view is wobbly. The first chapter is entirely in 2nd person. I never understood this, it's the first and only time this happens. Then, the point of view shifts to 3rd, and later from time to time, the reader is addressed almost conversationally, breaking the "fourth wall". I was super aware every time this happened.

Plus, the backstories of the various women (which are difficult to keep track of) varied in depth. The teenager's story was patchy. But the anorexic woman - thankfully, I found her the most engaging - had much more focus than the rest. I had the sense that she should have gotten her own novel. Due to this focus, a great deal of air-time was given to her belief that the Jewish religion and culture fosters eating disorders. While the subject is interesting, it takes us on a bit of a goose-chase that muddies what I assume is the main drive of the book: woman's experience of life and death.

In the end, no questions are answered. No deity is revealed, no explanations offered. Not that I needed an explanation, for the author to explain in concrete terms what is actually humankind's eternal mystery. She can't do that. But there is something in this book that leaves me feeling shifty and sullen. The fact that one of the characters is a performance artist got me thinking that this book is much like performance art: a display which can sometimes make the audience feel dull-witted, lost in a quagmire of interpretation and ideas.

I don't want to give the impression that there isn't value in reading Lindstedt's critically acclaimed book. There's a lot in these women's stories that reflect the female experience. There exists a strange sisterhood here, displayed in the way they help each other and work together. These women are captivating and their backgrounds varied and colourful. It's evident that the author did a great deal of research. Her imagination is rich and far-reaching. I'm sure I will be thinking of this book in the days to come. Kale is fibrous, you know - it can get stuck in your teeth.

Linnea says

Pitkään takkusi ja vanusi, rikkonaisessa luennassa flow katkeili ja jo tapahtuneet unohtuivat ja sekoittuivat muihin tarinoihin. Sisältö on kaiken lisäksi kovin runsas, eri tekstityypit vaihtelevat, samoin kerronnan tyyli. Toinen osio kirjasta kuitenkin palkitsi, vei mukanaan ja tuli luettua kuin yhdessä hujauksessa. Olisi ehkä pitänyt lukea koko teos yhtä kyytiä yhtenäisyyden vuoksi. Varsin mainio joka tapauksessa kunhan pääsi mukaan sinne välitilaan tai mikä olikaan.

Tessa says

Lähes täydellinen romaani.

Henkilökohtaisesti tämä oli raskain ja haastavin lukukokemus aikoihin, mutta myös palkitseva. Viides tähti jäi uupumaan, koska jossain reilun puolenvälin kohdilla lukeminen takkusi tosi pahasti, enkä päässyt tarinaan kunnolla sisälle, mutta sitten toinen osa imaisi taas täysin mukaansa. Lindstedtin tapa käyttää kieltä ja kertoa on aivan huikeaa, suorastaan kadehdittavan loistavaa. Jo pelkästään kirjan idea on nerokas. En voi kuin hämmästellä, miten joku osaakin!

Tino says

Olipas erikoinen, mutta virkistävä lukukokemus. Pitkään mietin millä tähtimäärällä teosta lätkäisisin, mutta sitten tajusin ettei näin moniulotteista opusta voi pelkistää noin yksinkertaiseen arviointiin.

Katri says

Huh, vau.

Reetta Saine says

Kielipelien kautta tarinointiin, enkä tiedä, kummasta nautin enemmän. Sanonpa vaan, että jos Bulgakovin Saatana saapuu Moskovaan ja Doris Lessingin Kultainen muistikirja tekisivät lapsen ja ottaisivat sille uskonnollis-filosofisen kasteen, se olisi tämän näköinen.

Suketus says

No moro! Laura Lindstedt, löit minulle luun kurkkuun, eikä se taida sieltä hevin irrota.

Mai Laakso says

Laura Lindstedt on kirjoittanut vahvan kirjan, mutta minulle vahvuus näkyi vain kirjan kakkososassa. Ensimmäinen osa oli haahuilua pitkävetaisesti henkimaailmassa, josta en siis pidä, eikä mielipiteeni muuttunut miksikään tämän kirjan lukemisen jälkeen. Oneiron ei ollut minulle voittajakirja.

Jani says

Oneiron: seven women, seven moments of death and the shared moments of accepting them.

Seven women meet in, what might be only be thought of as, afterlife, a moment after their deaths. Death too gruesome to accept. Together they try to face their faiths one at the time.

Each woman comes from a different culture and Lindstedt displays admirable skill in giving them individual voices and effective stories. While the Finnish author's choice of portraying women from cultures, ethnic backgrounds, races etc. feels slightly problematic, my main problem was with the longest story of the collection.

The story of Shlomith is given the central space and, indeed, the New York Jewish artist receives the most pages and different text styles. Through her the novel delves deeper into culture, art, and eating disorder building a narrative running through a life instead of merely one's end. However, the reportage/statement style also alienated me more from the novel than any other part of the whole.

Granted, the longer section was needed, even the momentary distance was needed to pull the reader deeper during the final pages. At its best the novel is a forceful work and the stories pull you deep despite or perhaps due to their style. It is both raw in its material and finely crafted in its composition.

Niina says

Hyvin hämmentävä lukukokemus, jonka jälkimaininkeja maistelen vielä pitkään.

Vilja / Kirjaneito says

Vuoden hämmentävin lukukokemus, jota pitää vielä sulatella. Vaikea antaa tälle tähtiä, sillä Oneiron tuntuu painivan vähän omassa sarjassaan. Ehdottomasti lukemisen arvoinen teos. Oneiron pitää itse kokea.

Reta Anna Maria says

Oikein mielenkiintoinen lukuelämys.

Lark Benobi says

Some books leave me speechless at the end. I mean this quite literally. I'm not making a metaphorical "there are no words" comment about the quality of what I have just read. I am instead trying to report a physical phenomenon, a feeling in my throat and lungs that comes only rarely, just after a last sentence is read, and a book is closed, when I'm left with a dazzling void of complicated feeling that renders me mute. After a while the words come back, and my feelings about the book begin to shape themselves into language.

So here is this novel, *Oneiron**. In it seven dead women find themselves together in a placeless place, a white void with only the clothes on their backs. At some point they notice they aren't breathing. Not long after, they realize they are dead. They share their stories. They help one another. They bear witness to the one another's final moments. These seven women are remarkable only in the way that every human being is remarkable. The stories of their final moments before death are haphazard and sometimes violent and always meaningless. They have nothing in common, not even a common language. But even so these women make themselves into a caring community, in this strange afterlife, where nothing is ever explained, either to these seven characters, or to the reader. As in real life, the characters, and through them the reader, need to take it on faith that their experiences have purpose.

Oneiron is one of those books that stunned me into silence at the end, and when words did come back, they were from I. Corinthians:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Oneiron is not a religious book. God has no place in the afterlife Lindstedt creates. I'm not a religious person. Yet somehow this novel embraces a life philosophy that reminded me of Paul's teaching. The novel suggests that caring for others—even in the flawed ways these strangers reach out and care for one another after death—is the most vital motivating impulse that gives meaning to our lives.

For a novel in which everyone is dead, this is a remarkably life-affirming novel.

*from Greek *ὄνειρον*, *oneiron*, "dream"

Laura says

Vähän on nyt hämmentynyt fiilis. Eikä edes vähiten tämän kirjan ympärillä pyörineen hypetyksen vuoksi, en vain millään saa tästä erinomaista teosta. Olihan se tarina hieno, ja kerrontakin omanlaistaan, mutta sävötys puuttui kokonaan. Lienekö liian korkeat odotukset tämän laski keskiverroksi, ihmeellisyys ja wow-efektit eivät auenneet tänne asti.

Katri says

Hämmäntävä fiilis. Ehkä 3,5-4, mutta kallistuu enemmän ylöspäin. Alussa ärsytti ruman kielen tahallisuus kauniin seassa, en kiintynyt hahmoin (ja normaalisti oon hyvin hahmo-orientoitunut lukija), kaipasin enemmän eri tekstilajeja perustekstin sekaan, ja silti kun pääsin loppuun niin johonkin oli osunut. Oliko se erilaisten naisten aseman kuvaaminen, oliko se jäähyväiset yksi kerrallaan, en tiedä. Kakkososasta tykkäsin enemmän kuin ekasta, ja Slomithin luennosta myös (jos luento oli täyttä faktaa niin apua). Jotain järkevää tästä pitäisi osata blogiin kirjoittaa ja lukupiirissä keskustella, mutta nyt on takki vähän tyhjä.
