



Norma

Sofi Oksanen

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Laiturilla hän istui penkille, jolle äiti ei ollut istunut. Metro oli syöksynyt asemalle saman tien. Äiti oli viskannut penkin alle kengät ja käsilaukun, sitten hän oli ollut poissa.

Sofi Oksanen uutuusromaani on maaginen kertomus Normasta, joka joutuu vaaraan harvinaisten ominaisuuksiensa vuoksi. Norma kietoutuu petoksen ja paranoian verkkoon, josta hänen on pyristeltävä irti.

Norma Details

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From Reader Review Norma for online ebook

Lily S. says

4 stars.

This is my first from Oksanen. 4 stars

In the core of the book there is a girl (Norma) whose hair has magic abilities. It grows really fast and she can sense other people's mental states with it. The story begins when the Norma's mother dies and she is left alone to uncover all the things that she has been hiding from her.

First when I read the synopsis I thought this book won't be up my alley. I had the preconception that it'll be like that Disney movie Tangled. But boy, I was wrong. The story quickly escalated into a quirky crime novel lacking cliches and delivering a nice mix of reality and magic.

There was a lot of skipping back and forward in time, sometimes it got a bit confusing for a few pages but the things that were not explained always got cleared up one or two chapters later. I think this way of writing made the story truly special, one could always feel like Norma, desperately trying to fit the pieces together.

I especially loved the characters in the book, each one of them had a personality that shone through the pages, making the story feel real despite the magical elements.

I'll definitely read more from Oksanen, this was a very well written and fast paced blend of mystery - magical realism.

Χριστ?να says

3,5 * για να ε?μαι ακριβ?ς.

Για να ε?μαι ειλικριν?ς, αγ?ρασα το βιβλ?ο γιατ? μου ?ρεσε το εξ?φυλλο και το λ?γο που δι?βασα απ? την υπ?θεση στο οπισθ?φυλλο, χωρ?ς ωστ?σο να δ?σω μεγ?λη β?ση.

Η ιστορ?α λοιπ?ν, αφορ? σε μια 30χρονη της οπο?ας ξαφνικ? η μητ?ρα αυτοκτονε?. ?τσι, ξεκιν? η περιπ?τεια της πρωταγων?στριας για να μ?θει τι (? ποιος) οδ?γησε τη μητ?ρα της στην αυτοκτον?α, μαθα?νοντας ?μως παρ?λληλα πολλ? πρ?γματα για το παρελθ?ν της οικογ?νειας της και μπλ?κοντας με επικ?νδυνους ανθρ?πους. Το κλου της υπ?θεσης ?μως ε?ναι πως η πρωταγων?στρι? μας δεν ε?ναι μια απλ? και καθημεριν? γυναικ?α, αλλ? συμβα?νει κ?τι μαγικ? και ιδια?τερο με τα μαλλι? της!

Η γραφ? της Oksanen ?ταν πολ? καλ?, μου κρ?τησε το ενδιαφ?ρον μ?χρι τ?λους. Η ιστορ?α επ?σης μου φ?νηκε αρκετ? ενδιαφ?ρουσα και κ?πως παραμυθ?νια, συνδυ?ζοντας ?μως και στοιχε?α αστυνομικο? μυθιστορ?ματος και μυστηρ?ου. Παρ'?λα αυτ?, νομ?ζω πως η συγγράφ?ας δεν εμβ?θυνε πολ? στους χαρακτ?ρες και ειδικ? στη Ν?ρμα, την οπο?α βρ?κα πολ? ?νευρη και υποτονικ?. Επ?σης, το τ?λος δε μου ?ρεσε τ?σο, αλλ? πιστε?ω ?τι ?ταν ταιριαστ? με τη μαγικ? "α?ρα" της ιστορ?ας.

3 αστερ?κια λοιπ?ν για το βιβλ?ο, με το μισ? παραπ?νω να μπα?νει για το γρ?ψιμο της Oksanen, το οπο?ο ?ταν πραγματικ? καλ?!

Jani says

Norma in an interesting mixture of social awareness, fantasy, and detective novel from the (internationally) brightest star of the Finnish literary field, Sofi Oksanen. Through its structure, some fairly good characters, and a well defined style, the novel is fairly easy to read despite its dark topical undertows.

Norma tries to cope with the death of her mother by sticking to the usual day rhythm. However, with her release from her job, mysterious abilities, and faces from the past returning, this seems like an almost impossible task. Instead of normality, she ends up investigating her mother's death, only to find her mother's connection to international human trafficking, which might have been the reason for her demise.

This fairly standard story line is boosted by Norma's nature. She is attuned to hair more than your average person, for example, she can tell a lot about a person through their hair, but also her own grows a meter a day. Norma soon finds out that she would be an invaluable resource in the hair business of today, a real catch for the people who own the hair salon her mother used to work in.

Oksanen writes in short sections that are descriptive, but effective. While she has a penchant for adding more and more details in attempt to both give a full-out description and to get the reader committed, she also manages to tie the strands of Finnish and international, contemporary and historical fairly well together. The revelations offer a realistic, yet dystopian world in which the pull of Norma as a character and the overall style keep the reader interested.

Katri says

Norma oli ihan hyvä, mutta ei muuta. Eniten siitä tuli dekkarivibojä, mielestäni se paljon puhuttu maaginen realismi tuli vain esille epätavallisen tukan muodossa, kirjoitustyyliä se ei näkynyt toisin kuin vaikka Murakamilla. Tärkeistä aiheistahan Oksanen kirjoittaa, hiusten, kohtujen, naisten myynnistä. Kirjoitustyyli ei vaan vedä puoleensa ainakaan minua. Tässä kirjassa häiritä myös vahvasti se, että puhuttiin hulluudesta, ja viitattiin skitsofreniaan ja päihderippuvuuteen, mutta lopussa jäi kuitenkin epäselväksi, oliko harhat vain osa tätä hiusten magiaa jonka ulkopuoliset leimasivat hulluudeksi. Ihan jees, mutta ei herättänyt tämän vahvempia tunteita.

Rita Moura de Oliveira says

Espero que esta seja das poucas vezes em que venho aqui escrever que não gostei nada de um livro. Norma ganhou o Prémio Femina, o Prémio Europeu de Melhor Romance e o Prémio Nórdico da Academia Sueca, mas eu achei-o uma verdadeira confusão.

Norma, adulta na casa dos 30, perde a mãe, que se suicida aparentemente sem motivo numa linha de metro. A relação delas era muito próxima, reforçada pela característica invulgar dos cabelos de Norma, que crescem a um ritmo assustador e que lhe permitem prever algumas coisas. Após a morte da mãe, Norma decide empregar-se no cabeleireiro onde a mãe trabalhava, e aqui se começa a desvendar um negócio de extensões de cabelo e de barrigas de aluguer. Pode parecer estranho mas é mesmo assim, e isto envolvendo uma data de

personagens que tive dificuldade em ligar entre si.

Li algures que alguém teve de fazer um esquema para perceber as relações na história. Talvez eu devesse ter feito o mesmo. Mas, mesmo assim, desconfio de que não gostaria.

Lata says

2.5-3 stars. Interesting, and weird.... A main character with magical, constantly growing hair that reacts to lies, moods, threats. References to Rapunzel. Major, worldwide market in hair, and in surrogacy/baby farms. This, pretty much sums up the author's central point of this story: *"....He who controls dreams, controls the world. He who controls hair, controls women. He who controls women's reproduction, controls men. He who keeps women satisfied, also satisfies men, and he who seduces people with fever dreams of hair and babies is their king."*

The main character, Norma, keeps a low profile as no one but her mother knows about her hair's properties. Problem is, her mother committed suicide recently and much of the book is about the main character trying to figure out why, while also becoming enmeshed with a major player and his children in the hair and baby markets.

Though a quick read, I am not really sure that I totally understood all the action happening in this story. I also found the resolution of the story too abrupt; where Norma and her foes/allies ended up, physically and emotionally, didn't work for me.

Essi says

Norma on hyvin erilainen teos muihin Oksasiin verrattuna, mikä tuntui aluksi virkistävältä vaihtelulta. Jotain jäi kuitenkin puuttumaan. Henkilöhahmot jäivät ohuiksi ja epäselviksi ja lukijalle raskaiksi muistaa ja Normastaakaan ei oikein saanut otetta. Tuntuu, että nykyään ei julkaista mitään muuta kuin kirjoja, joissa seurataan saman suvun eri sukupolvien tarinaa rikkinäisellä aikajanalla, eikä Normakaan ollut tässä mielessä poikkeus. Fantasiaelementeistä taas pidin kovasti ja kaipasin paljon lisää tietoa. Koko Norman ajan tuntui lähinnä siltä, että milloin tarina kunnolla alkaa ja sitten oltiinkin jo viimeisellä sivulla. Ilmeisesti nyt vain odotellaan sitten jatkoa...?

Wiebke (1book1review) says

So this didn't turn out to be the book I expected - totally my fault as I it was a cover buy and I only read the first few sentences before buying it. This left me happily surprised by the fact that our main character had magic hair, or something along that lines. What I wasn't happy about was that it turned out to be a mystery written in a style of mystery writing I don't particularly like.

The book had a lot of interesting aspects and the story is interesting, though for me it dragged in the middle and got more and more confusing towards the end.

I would have enjoyed it more if it had been a little more fast paced, but that is me, who hardly ever reads mysteries.

Susanna Rautio says

No voi kamalaa, en tiedä mitä tästä sanoisin.

Olen lukenut Sofi Oksaselta vain Puhdistus-kirjan. Se oli huikea ja Oksasen täytyy olla spesiaali - kirjailijana ja ihmisenä.

Norma ei ollut kovin spesiaali. Paitsi aiheeltaan: hiuslisäkebisnes?? What?? Ja hiukset, jotka ovat ensimmäinen aisti??? No ehkä Sofi Oksasella on siitä kokemusta...

Alku ei vastannut laatustandardeja. Ajattelin, että vain ★ mutta sitten alkoi löytyä tuttua vihaa vääryyden ja vähemmistöjen puolesta. Ja tarina, joka pikkaisen kiinnosti. Joten annoin ???.

Uskon ja toivon, että tämä oli suuren kirjailijan pakollinen väliteos ja tästä seuraa jotain suurempaa.

Teresa says

Qual é a ligação entre mulheres cujos cabelos crescem quilómetros por hora e outras que estão no negócio das barrigas de aluguer? Como cada vez que pego no livro me ponho a matutar porque raio compro e leio estes livros, não consigo concentrar-me para tirar qualquer conclusão. O melhor é desistir e dedicar-me a coisas menos cabeludas...

Anastasia Alén says

"Se joka hallitsee unelmia, hallitsee maailmaa. Se joka hallitsee hiuksia, hallitsee naisia. Se joka hallitsee heidän lisääntymiskykyään, hallitsee myös miehiä. Se joka pitää naiset tyytyväisinä, tyydyttää miehetkin ja se joka tohtoroi hius- ja vauvakuumeisia ihmisiä on heidän kuninkaansa."

Sofi Oksasen uutuus on todella haastava. Tuntuu, että meinaa tippua kärryiltä ellei keskity tarpeeksi lukemiseen. Koin tämän teoksen kannanottona. Normasta tulee mieleen normit. Mikä on yleisesti hyväksyttävää ja mikä ei. Onko kaikki myytävänä kunhan hinnasta sovitaan? Ja kun puhutaan hiuksista (koska genrehän oli maaginen realismi?) niin halutaan(ko) kertoa jostain muusta:

"Se joka hallitsee hiuksia, hallitsee naisia."

"Hiuksesi olivat vahvistumassa ja ne olivat alkaneet osoittaa omaa tahtoaan."

"ja nirhit hiuksisasi poikki. Sakset olivat aina unohtuneet kotiin."

Koin tämän kauniiksi, koska kirjaa pystyy tulkitsemaan niin monella eri tavalla. Kirjailijan muuhun tuotantoon verrattuna tästä puuttuu juonessa se punainen lanka. Ehkä se oli tarkoitus. Jokainen näkee tässä sen mitä haluaa nähdä. Pitäisi varmaan lukea joskus tulevaisuudessa uudestaan.

Mielestäni huippua, että Sofi Oksanen on lähtenyt kokeilemaan jotain uutta.

Anna-Maria Tuominen-Reini says

Sorry to say, but I was disappointed. The story line was confusing, and the style and intensity varied alot and not intentionally. Please read and check if you get the same feeling and share my view. I hope you get more out of this book.

Tiia says

Tarina oli äärimmäisen nopea lukuinen ja sen fantasialla maustettuun realismiin koukuttui melkeinpä huomaamatta. Vaikka Sofin vaikuttava kirjoitustyyli puri jälleen, en syttynyt tarinaan oikeastaan missään vaiheessa, vaan enemmäkin janoisin tietää mitä näin erikoisella kirjalla tavoiteltiin ja mikä sen sanoma tulisi olemaan. Juoneen kuului rikollisuutta, rakkautta, kummallista pimeää bisnestä naisten hiuksilla ja kohduilla sekä yliluonnollisia voimia. Sanomaksi taisi jäädä, että naisten kroppa on rahastettavia varaosia täynnä ja miehet käärivät niillä isot pennoset. Todella hyvät ainekset siis erityiselle ja mieleenpainuvalle teokselle, joka sitten kuitenkin epäonnistui hätkäyttämään millään tavalla. Juonessa oli kaikenlaisia erikoisia piirteitä, mutta tuntui, että tässä oli laitettu mutkia suoraksi ja potentiaali jäi hyödyntämättä. Raivostuttavinta oli henkilöhahmojen jääminen hyvin yksiulotteisiksi. Kuka Alvar ja mitkä motiivit? Miksi kirja loppui niinkuin loppui ja mitähän helvettiä tässä edes tapahtui?

Kirja olisi voinut olla hyvinkin karmiva ja hiuksiin kietoutunut fantasia todella kiehtova. Jotain jäi vain puolitiehen.

Aleksandra P. (Parapet Literacki) says

Eksperyment Oksanen w postaci napisania ksi??ki komercyjnie chwytiliwej, w postaci miszmaszu powie?ci sensacyjnej z realizmem magicznym wyj?tkowo nieudany. Ksi??ka jest strat? czasu, mówi? to z pe?nym przekonaniem.

Amalia Gavea says

“He who controls dreams, controls the world. He who controls hair, controls women.”

Hair has always been one of the major features that attract attention in women and men. Beautiful locks, lovely bangs, sleek ponytails, highlights, volume, curls....This book puts hair in the centre of the story, albeit in a different light. It is an unusual novel, innovative, modern, disturbing, unique.

Having previously read Purge by Sofi Oksanen and with When the Doves Disappeared on hold (I've recently started it,actually), I couldn't wait to be one of the first to read her new novel.The title attracted me at once. “Norma” - a beautiful name- reminded me of the famous opera by Vincenzo Bellini, although the young heroine in Oksanen's novel couldn't be more different than the fiery priestess who was jilted by her lover and father of her children. In our novel, Norma is born with an unusual gift (curse?). She is able to

understand the feelings of everyone she meets, their illnesses, their aches in body and soul. Her own hair responds by acquiring a life of its own. I cannot write much more because the spoilers are lurking, but you have to admit that it cannot get more original than that in terms of premise.

Oksanen's writing is raw and poetic, beautiful and full of secrets, not unlike "Purge". However, while "Norma" isn't an easy book and is quite high in the levels of disturbing and weird, it cannot be compared to the sheer horror that is "Purge". And this is a trait that shows how significant Oksanen's offerings to the Literature of our times are. 3 books, all of them different, but all equally engaging, unique, with thick plots and interesting characters. "Norma" is definitely heavy on the magical realism element- which I adore- so if you don't like this genre, this book may not be for you. However, the way the story has been put together is so precise and so meticulously structured that I promise you won't find it odd. And if you do, remember that odd means "not boring".

Oksanen tackles many issues in this book. The crown goes to the importance of hair through the ages. No matter the century, the country, the culture, the social status, all women have always desired the most beautiful hair they could get. Here, we are shown the hair types and hairstyles that are admired most in different corners of the world, the different cultural perspectives. And what happens when people understand that there is a need and a great demand for a specific "product"? Commerce begins. And what follows it? Black market, most likely. Yes, Oksanen creates a rather intricate web of "hair-mafia" (for lack of a better word) that mainly operates in the regions of Finland, Russia and Ukraine and extends to many other countries. Now, I had never heard of anything similar before and I cannot verify how "realistic" this is, but I don't actually care since the way it is presented is both believable and plausible. This is good enough for me.

Another issue that the writer stresses is the craving for a child. She weaves "baby factories" and illegal adoptions into the story, so we have two parallel narratives that are more connected than it initially seems. Depression is also a major theme. Depression that stems from being different, from a society that labels you as a "freak" and tries either to destroy you or to use you to its own benefits. And it will destroy you afterwards. The end is the same, the route may change, but the closure is almost guaranteed.

If I had to name the "weakest link" of this book that is no less than exceptional, I'd choose the characters. I felt that I never really got to know them fully. I liked Norma. She was clever and brave and vulnerable, carrying a heavy burden on her shoulders. Alvar was also very interesting. He was a perfect mix of dangerous and dashing and his interactions with Norma were brilliant. However, the other characters such as Anita, Marion or the mysterious Helena were nothing to write home about, in my opinion. They were necessary for the plot to advance and that's about it.

Having read some comments, I feel the need to say that you should give this book a chance. If you enjoy weird stories, if you love a combination of Magical Realism and Contemporary Fiction, then "Norma" is waiting. And after all, it's Sofi Oksanen. Just give it time and care and full attention.

Many thanks to Knopf and Edelweiss for this ARC in exchange for an honest review.
