



Soumchi

Amos Oz

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Soumchi is eleven years old, and growing up in British-occupied Jerusalem, just after World War II. His universe is enriched immeasurably when he is given a bicycle, but before he fulfills his dreams of riding into the desert and exploring Africa, he shows his new prize to a friend. Persuaded to swap his bicycle for a new train set, Soumchi's series of misadventures begin as he trades away one possession after another - but as he imagines ever more colorful ways of escaping his predicament, he finds something he never expected - his first love.

Soumchi Details

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From Reader Review Soumchi for online ebook

Razvan Zamfirescu says

Soumchi este un Danila Prepeleac mic si indragostit, astfel ca nu va avea parte de confruntarile prin care a trecut personajul romanesc, ci doar de o discutie neinteresanta la miez de noapte si de cateva poezioare patetice si copilaroase.

Pe bune, cartea lui Amos Oz este povestea lui Ion Creanga la o scara mult-mult redusa. Nu isi da aici adevarata masura a capacitatii de a scrie, ci doar isi ascunde cele 2-3 idei lipsiste de originalitate si culoare in forma unei parabole (asta daca vrem sa fim binevoitori si sa apreciem in vreun fel cartulia) din care nu stiu cine ar putea gasi ceva de invatat.

Amos Oz nu ma prinde nicicum. Dupa "Poveste despre dragoste si intuneric" si "Rime despre viata si moarte" se pare ca relatia mea cu Amos Oz nu este una de prietenie ci, mai degraba, de toleranta. Soumchi nu trezeste nimic in mine, nu rezonaz deloc.

Cele cateva pasaje scrise foarte bine, nu sunt suficiente pentru a o recomanda. Decat daca va temeti ca nu o sa indepliniti Goodreads 2014 Reading Challenge si vreti sa va umpleti raftul cu carti citite cat mai repede si facil.

Dov Zeller says

Wow. This book is beautiful, funny, sweet, sad, slyly funny, sensitive. There are moments the book seems to be written with a sense of modesty in the face of a complex and difficult-to-understand world--but with sunning narrative grace, and perhaps a bit of a swagger.

Soumchi is a short novel narrated by a boy living in British occupied Jerusalem after WWII. He is socially awkward--to a degree I think his emotional awkwardness and way of viewing the world are deeply influenced by growing up with so many adults broken by the holocaust. Not only is he socially awkward, but he's in love with a girl, Esther, and he knows it's not acceptable to feel that kind of tenderness, and so he tries to deny his feelings to himself and others, and treats his beloved as one fears an 11 year old boy in this position might.

Soumchi, like all Jewish fools, is wise beyond his years. Home isn't safe for him, and neither is school. He has an artist's temperament (he's a young poet, or poet in the making) and at home and at school pretty much wherever he goes, he's bullied, neglected, or misunderstood. But his imagination (great imaginary adventures) takes him away from the pain of every-day life.

When his uncle gets him a bicycle, Soumchi thinks his problems are over. He'll travel far away leaving behind all of the hurt. But, as it turns out, his problems have only just begun...

[The rest may be spoilery? I'm not sure, but if you're cautious about these things, probably best to stop here.]

The adventures begin with a visit to his friend Aldo, who is wealthy and very wily when it comes to business deals and desperate to ride a bicycle (his parents won't let him.) Soumchi barter's the bike for a bit of Aldo's train set and on his way home, finds himself on Goel's turf. Goel is as street-smart bully. By the end of the day Soumchi feels he's lost mostly everything, and the story has the feel of the folktales under the official folktale-type heading "trading away one's fortune." But this is not a book about a lost bicycle. It's a book about the strange twistings and turnings of fate, and about the blessing of coming into contact with the possibility of new and different and tenderer kinds of connection.

At a certain point in the book, Soumchi meets Engineer Inbar, the father of his beloved Esther. Inbar invites Soumchi to his home. The conversation between Soumchi and Engineer Inbar is, well, extraordinary in its simplicity and narratively quite brilliant. The conversation is a turning point. I won't say too much about it. Only that in this conversation, disagreement does not (as it generally seems to in Soumchi's world) turn into violence or name-calling. Below is one of my favorite quotes, Engineer Inbar responding to Soumchi.

"Only you'll have to try to persuade them to see matters in the same light. The days of the bible, alas, are over and done. Ours are a different matter altogether. Who on earth nowadays can turn walking sticks into crocodiles and beat rocks to make water come out? Look, I brought these sweets back last week, straight from Beirut, by train. Try one. Go on. Enjoy it. Don't be afraid. It's called Rakhat Lokoom. Eat up. Isn't it sweet and tasty?..."

Soumchi has lied to Inbar and it isn't clear to me if Inbar knows it, but I have the feeling he does, and that his, in a way, is the voice of the author coming through. But who knows. All I know is this is a short, exquisite tale of childhood, a fable of sorts, in which Soumchi loses a bicycle, a train and a dog, and finds something much more valuable.

Billy O'Callaghan says

Amos Oz is probably one of my two or three favorite living writers, and Soumchi is a beautiful book, a gentle, poignant and thoughtful novella about a young boy living in British-occupied Jerusalem, a gullible dreamer who fantasizes about travels to the Himalayas and darkest Africa and who dreams about Esthie, the love of his life.

"In a single sentence I can tell you all of it. How once I was given a bicycle and swapped it for a railway; got a dog instead; found a pencil sharpener in place of the dog and gave the pencil sharpener away for love. And even this is not quite the truth, because the love was there all the time, before I gave the sharpener away, before these exchangings began."

Andra says

Cartea este absolut superba. Am citit-o intr-o ora. A fost exact cum ma asteptam, inocenta cumva, dar plina de invataturi. Este genul de carte pe care o citesti cu sufletul deschis si zambetul pe buze. Mi-a placut la nebunie.

Amante Libri says

Un racconto (e come racconta bene Oz) sul disincanto che nasce con l'adolescenza, sulla scoperta che tutto passa, nulla torna e tutto cambia inesorabilmente.

Soumchi
Amos Oz
Traduttore: G. Arneri
Editore: Feltrinelli

Pag: 85

Voto: 4/5

Hà Linh says

oh reading these day brings me so much joy, not that it has never but still...

I just finished Charlotte Sometimes by Penelope Farmer yesterday, it's quite an amazing book with ideas of time travel and exchanging lives, dealing with death, war and identity - which could be bleak for a children book but I very much love. Then immediately and without much thinking, I picked Soumchi up.

Soumchi is one of some old books I bought at my first time visiting Bookworm last year and has been sitting on my bookshelf ever since. Oh I loved it at the very first sight: the blurry cover, the engaging introduction, the seemingly fragmental chapters each with a beautiful title and intriguing excerpt but I have picked it up and put it down so many times, maybe it was not the right time, I always told myself.

And when the time was right, as today, I couldn't put the book down and finished it at one sitting.

Soumchi is an absolutely beautiful book, poignant most of the time but still hopeful and lively, just as being eleven! Even when talking about changes, about faded love and passing summers, there is no such a taste of bitterness.

When I reached the back cover, for the first time I discovered that it was translated from Hebrew by Penelope Farmer. I couldn't help smiling like an idiot. I'm still smiling to myself typing this supposed-to-be review. This is how books make me happy.

Patyta says

«Estaba solo. Aldo se había quedado con mi bicicleta y me había hecho firmar un contrato para cubrirse las espaldas. Goal me había expropiado mi maravilloso tren y el lobo amaestrado vagaba sin mí por los bosques lejanos. Y nunca más pondría el pie en casa de mis padres, nunca más. Esti me odiaba. El infame Aldo me había robado el cuaderno lleno de poemas y se lo había vendido al pillo de Goel.»

Si bien es cierto que lo primero que viene a la cabeza al comenzar a leer este libro es el *Guardián entre el centeno* de Salinger, hay en esta obra de Amos Oz cierta inocencia, o ingenuidad, quizá optimismo, que en la de Salinger ya no existe, así sea sólo porque su protagonista es todavía más niño que adolescente, y el tosco ambiente en que se desenvuelve no ha conseguido todavía endurecer demasiado su caparazón.

Así, aunque precoz y receloso como Holden Caulfield, Sumji vive soñando y vive jugando, incluso en los más difíciles trances en los que se ve envuelto se ve rodeado de cierto halo lúdico; no sólo es lo que se imagina y fantasea sino que todo lo que le sucede es una aventura, lo que vive al momento, lo que planea, que es al mismo tiempo cosa muy seria, muy seria para él, mezcla de caballero valeroso y lastimero gusano, según sienta le van las cosas.

El autor ha sabido capturar (¿o recuperar?) maravillosamente el fluir sentimental e intelectual de ese niño a punto de dejar de serlo, enamorado por vez primera y atolondrado como él solo, demasiado sensible, puede que demasiado inteligente para lo que le conviene, a lo largo de un día más de aventuras que inició con una bicicleta, pero al final del cual terminó quizás su infancia.

Todos habremos sido niño a nuestro modo, y seguro que no nos sentiremos igual ni del mismo modo identificados, mas, detalles aparte, yo al menos, con todo lo que me diferencia de este pequeño héroe, que es

muchísimo, de verdad llegué a sentir mi niñez vibrar por algunos instantes al pasar las páginas, recuperando también yo momentos o simples sentires experimentados hace ya tanto tiempo.

La bicicleta de Sumji es una gran, pequeña aventura, narrada en el lenguaje ingenuamente grandilocuente, alternante, un poco ridículo y siempre encantador de un chiquillo de once años que lo perdió y lo conquistó todo en un único día.

Muy recomendable lectura.

Jim says

I didn't realise this was going to be a kid's book but it was only short—always the attraction—and, besides, it caught my attention. I have to say I took a shine to the protagonist (protagonist? far too grand a title for our eleven-year-old narrator) who we only ever know as 'Soumchi', a nickname given to him by his classmates. I remember being eleven. I got my first nickname then. It only stuck for a year and then we went to the big school and as there was another boy there with a similar-sounding nickname mine got dropped and it was another couple of years before I acquired my second which did stick.

I was about the same age as 'Soumchi' when I fell in love for the first time too and I have to say I related completely with his pubescent angst. Not quite sure I was quite as gullible as he seems—for starters I would've known if my uncle had tried to foist off a girl's bike on me—but then again as this book is set just after the end of World War II he can, I suppose, be forgiven for being a bit innocent. And he is. Why else would he be let his supposed best friend con him so easily?

As it's a kid's story events unfold a little too conveniently: he loses the bike but acquires a train, he's forced to give up the train but acquires a dog, the dog runs off and he finds a pencil sharpener, he gives the pencil sharpener away and discovers love. That aside I found the characterisations good and everyone is believable, even the minor characters. And I liked too that the ending—the first ending (there's a second one he says we don't need to read)—isn't too neat; that made it slightly more believable.

A charming wee book and a book I would've appreciated at about that age but I'd've never have lent it to any of my mates.

Carlos says

No me esperaba un libro así; es como leer la mente de un niño, con vocabulario de niño, con palabras de niño, con la simpleza de un niño. Una historia corta y que es sólo por un día. La vida de Sumji parecía un desastre por donde se le mirara, y si uno lo ve desde un punto de vista "adulto", es algo pequeño, pero recuerdo que cuando era niño, era demasiado importante para mí.

Me dejó un sabor amargo el hecho de que es muy corto, es sólo un día y por momentos dije *¿De qué está hablando?* A pesar de que no es un libro complicado de seguir, quería saber más acerca de la vida de Sumji que solamente por un día. Le pongo 2 estrellas sólo por el hecho de quedarme con gusto a poco y de cierta forma, Oz pudo haber sacado mucho más provecho de esta historia. No soy escritor ni nada, sólo es mi humilde opinión. De todas formas, me gustó.

Relato corto sobre la infancia, los sueños, los deseos, el amor y como repercute en los diferentes extractos sociales. Es un libro dulce, posiblemente porque está escrito desde la perspectiva de un niño.
