



The Sickness

Alberto Barrera Tyszka , Margaret Jull Costa (Translator) , Chris Adrian (Introduction)

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“Blood is a terrible gossip, it tells everything.”

Dr. Miranda is faced with a tragedy: his father has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and has only a few weeks to live. He is also faced with a dilemma: How does one tell his father he is dying?

Ernesto Duran, a patient of Dr. Miranda’s, is convinced he is sick. Ever since he separated from his wife he has been presenting symptoms of an illness he believes is killing him. It becomes an obsession far exceeding hypochondria. The fixation, in turn, has its own creeping effect on Miranda’s secretary, who cannot, despite her best intentions, resist compassion for the man.

A profound and philosophical exploration of the nature and meaning of illness, Alberto Barrera Tyszka’s tender, refined novel interweaves the stories of four individuals as they try, in their own way, to come to terms with sickness in all its ubiquity.

The Sickness Details

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Banushka says

evet çabucak okudum. yine seda ç?ngay mellor'un muhte?em türkçesinden su gibi akan bir roman. ama benim geçen yaz babam?n hastal?klar?ndan dolayı? romanda bir yerde geçti?i üzere "ne olacaksa olsun art?k" cümlesini kurmu? oldu?umu bilmem, day?m?n daha yeni akci?er kanserinden apans?z ve son derece bilinçli bir biçimde ya?am?n? yitirmi? olmas? roman? okurken bazen f?rlat?p atmak istememe ve çokça a?lamama neden oldu. sanki tekrar ya?am???m gibi her ?eyi. o derece güçlü, hayata, ölüme ve anlara dair o derece yak?c? bir roman. i?te öyle. t24'de ç?kan gökhan yavuz demir'in ?u yaz?s? oldukça iyi:
<http://t24.com.tr/k24/yazi/bu-senenin...>

Baran ????? says

Çocuklu?umdan beri ölümü hep dü?ünmü?ümdür, o zamanlar bu biraz patolojik gibi görünürken, büyüdükçe, okudukça, bunun felsefi, manevi, varolu?sal ve fiziki boyutuna dair dü?ündükçe, çevremdeki, yak?n?mdaki insanlar? ve kendi içsel deneyimimi de buna ilave ettikçe, ölüm gözümü kapatamayacak denli gündelik ya?am?m?n bir parças? haline geldi. Ölüme dair rahatça konu?an bir insan oluverdim, ama ürkütücülü?ü halen daha sars?c?d?r benim için. ?stanbul'da ya?ad???m dönemlerde- 3 sene evvel- iki y?l boyunca haftada 3-4 defa yar?m saatlik gece ko?ular? yapard?m ve bu ko?ular?n ard?ndan sitenin hemen dibindeki parkta çimlere s?rt üstü yat?p ellerimi kollar?m? yana açarak gökyüzüne bakar ve kendimi mezardaym?? gibi hissetmeye çal???rd?m. Buna ölüm terapisi ad?n? vermi?tim. Ruhum hafifliyordu, her ?ey, dertler, kayg?lar, sevgiler, hayalk?r?kl?klar?, mekanlar, y?llar, an?lar su gibi bo?lu?a ak?p paramparça oluyordu ve ben defalarca yeniden do?uyordum. Ölüm terapisinin bir parças? da ara ara yapt???m mezarlık ziyaretleri; tan?mad???m insanlar?n mezarlar?n? ziyaret etmek, mezar ta?lar?n? okumak ve beklenmedik zamanlarda sona eren ya?amlar?nda olası hayallerini, amaçlar?n? ve ya?ant?lar?n? dü?lerdim... Çok derin ve anlamlı deneyimlerdi bunlar...

Tyszka'n?n Hastal?k adlı ama Türkçede Babam Giderken diye okudu?um bu roman bendeki bu dü?ünceleri birer birer tetikledi, ve yüksek lisansta alm?? oldu?um "corporeity" dersinde hastal?k, beden, organlara dair felsefik tart??malar?n tekrar içinde buldum kendimi... Roman tek solukta okunacak, ölüme, kendi ölümümüze, en sevdiğimizinkine, onlar?n bizde yaratabilece?i kay?p duygusuna, konu?maya, sevmeye, sessizli?e, hipokondriyak olmaya, koca koca yan?lg?lara ve beyhudeli?e dair, ve en çok da baba-o?ul aras?ndaki köprüye dair bir roman. SARSICI. Ve okurken bol bol yine beni etkilemi? olan Philip Roth'un otobiyografik kitab? Patrimony'i dü?ündüm, muhtemelen yazar Roth'un bu kitab?ndan etkilenmi?, bu çok bariz bir ?ekilde hissediliyor. Banyo sahnesi, babam?n hastal?k te?hisi ile ba?layan ilk sahne, babam?n yaln?z ya?amas?, "kay?p a?klar" vs vs...Ama bu ayn? zamanda bamba?ka bir roman...Son sayfalarda burnumun dire?i bile s?zlad?, gözlerim doldu... bu kitap insan?n içine dokunuyor, kurgusu, dili, kahramanlar?n?n "insanili?iyle"...

Amy says

Translated from the Spanish by Margaret Jull Costa

"Tears are very unliterary: they have no form."

This is possibly the most dog-eared book I've ever had. Folding down corners is my method for marking significant (to me) passages, but it clearly wasn't working with this fiction novel because I was marking every page. I'd never read this Venezuelan author before, but I hope to find more of his work translated into English.

Delicate prose, deep moral questions, and a stunning pace are what kept me hooked into reading this in one sitting. The story itself is rather simple: a successful doctor discovers that his father is seriously ill. Their close relationship is strained as the son weighs the consequences of telling his father the details of his illness. In the meantime, another man, virtually unknown to the doctor, begins stalking him, imagining that he holds the cure for the the list of complaints he suffers from. There's a push and pull to the narrative, as the poignant moments between father and son, nuanced with shared memories of grief, intertwine with the creepy certainty of the stalker.

Because of the health issues that permeate the novel, questions about the nature of health and wellness are explored, but in a brief, compelling way. The author cites quotes of famous authors, ethicists and physicians, but he's not showing off, they are actually appropriate observations of how the human body deals with illness. These asides never go too long or feel like a lecture, they fit the material in the most uncanny way.

For example, Tyszka quotes Julio Ramon Ribeyro, who provides possibly the best explanation for the euphoria that exists after an episode of physical pain:

"Physical pain is the great regulator of our passions and ambitions. Its presence immediately neutralizes all other desires apart from the desire for the pain to go away. This life that we reject because it seems to us boring, unfair, mediocre or absurd suddenly seems priceless: we accept it as it is, with all its defects, as long as it doesn't present itself to us in its vilest form - pain."

Tyszka presents simple scenes with insightful observation. On trying to read the face of a doctor while awaiting possibly bad news:

"It's the illustration that accompanies a bad diagnosis, the first installment of an expression of condolence."

On imagining his father's worries:

"Are the monsters of old age as terrible as those that assail us when we're children? What do you dream about when you're sixty-nine?Perhaps this is what his father dreams about: he's in a laboratory, in the bowels of a hospital, surrounded by chemicals, sharp implements, gauze, and strangers all repellently dressed in white...."

Events proceed in unexpected ways, and as a reader, you never quite know what direction you're being pulled in. You feel empathy and disgust in altering passages, and the underlying fear is riveting. I did find the ending a bit confusing...I still am not sure I've understood all the implications laid out.

One scene confounds me: It takes place on a ferry, where an obnoxious businessman makes a production of his 'importance' and maltreats his seemingly intelligent and kind wife, all the way to the point of beating her to the ground. I'm not sure what the symbolism is, although I know it's present in that scene. Is Tyszka trying to say that people are subject to humiliation, by oppression or illness, no matter how virtuous they are?

In full, this is easily going to be in my list of favorites for the year. While the subject revolves around illness, it never quite defines which 'illness' is being addressed: is it disease? regret? evil? The questions are posed, and only each individual reader can answer.

Bernardo says

Lo terminé en la playa. Conmovedora la relación de Andrés Miranda con su padre. El contraste de lo que entendemos por enfermedad con la historia de Ernesto Durán; resultó interesante y al mismo tiempo enigmático.

Zainab Ali says

"Talk to me," he says again. "Don't let me die in silence."

This is a 2006 Venezuelan novel with two interwoven storylines: one of a doctor who finds that his father has terminal illness, and doesn't know how to tell him; the other of a hypochondriac patient who stalks that same doctor and wins the compassion of his secretary. Through these characters, the novel explores people's different ways of dealing with sickness; how sickness affects patients and those who surround them.

The novel is really good in most parts, but some parts just felt awkward or unnecessary, like the literary references, and most of the doctors inner thoughts about medicine, I don't know, they just didn't feel right.

Ugh says

I didn't like the omniscient narration. I didn't like the use of the present tense. I didn't like the frequent quoting of other writer's material by the omniscient narrator, in what seemed to be a plucking of bricks from the fourth wall. I also didn't find the book that inspired or inspiring. However, this latter may be because I read about health and healthcare 5-days a week, and I recognize that others may well find the book both of these things. Plus, I did like it more as it progressed, and I did find it quite a compulsive read, and middlingly poignant. I think I'd have been more impressed with it if I'd read less of what I've read at work over the past year. Having said that, my annoyances would remain. So, three stars.

havucumuyedim says

Tek kelime ile harikayd?. Uzunca bir süre akl?mdan ç?kmayacak.

Murat says

Popüler, zaman geçirmek için okunan bir kitaptan ötesi de?il. Baz? kli?eleri ve duruma uygunsuz kal?plar? da içeriyor. Okunmasa da olur...

Isabelle says

Ever since I finished reading this novel, I have been thinking about how I might speak about it. What is it about? What point does it make? How did I experience it?

Each time I do so, I answer those questions differently, which is, in and of itself, very fascinating to me.

So, starting with the obvious, it is a novel about sickness, real and fatal or perceived and just as crippling.

It is also a novel about obsession, that of others for us, and that of ourselves turned inwardly.

It is about grief, always real, about closure, needed and dreaded, about loneliness, inevitable.

But it is also a story about compassion and love as one experiences them when nothing else is left.

Throughout the book, each character experiences a disintegration of what they held dear, of what made their life and a fraying of the cloak of dignity that they had come to mistake for their identity. When all of that crumbles, all that is left is their resplendent humanity. And for all of us who have lost a parent or escorted a loved one through the end of life, this is not a novel... it is a vessel that contains each and everyone of us alone, and all of us at once.

Eliana Rivero says

La salud es un ideal inmóvil. La más perversa de todas las utopías.

Quizás no represente una idea nueva ni la mejor novela del mundo, pero *La enfermedad*, de que es buena, es buena. Tocó algo en mí, así que mi comentario es bastante emocional.

Con la enfermedad se representan un montón de cosas: la muerte, la soledad, el amor, el vacío. Andrés Miranda es médico y sabe que su papá tiene cáncer. Se está muriendo, está en estado 4. Sólo queda esperar lo peor y recordar la vida que su viejo le pudo ofrecer como hombre viudo.

La novela se divide en dos: la parte donde Javier Miranda no sabe que tiene cáncer y la otra parte donde ya se siente desahuciado. La enfermedad congela todo: conversaciones, sueños, deseos, relaciones. Andrés no puede hacer nada, sólo recordar lo bueno y lo malo de su relación padre-hijo.

La otra enfermedad, la de Ernesto Durán, es simplemente un vacío existencial. Aunque tenga síntomas físicos, lo peor es que sus descompensamientos son por ser miserable y estar solo, no tener nadie con quien compartir sus miedos. Este contraste se conjuga en una novela triste pero decidida a mostrar la cara oscura de la enfermedad (no tiene otra, la verdad) y de la muerte, además de una sociedad caraqueña donde el presente es lo que vale. Tiene un tono también de crítica social, pero no es tan marcado.

Me gusta la prosa de Barrera Tyszka, va acompañada con la historia. A pesar de que me recuerda un poco a la escritura de *Hotel* de Payares, pienso que es una novela bien estructurada aunque con fuerza mediana en su discurso.

Kinga says

The Sickness is a novel about a doctor, his father, the doctor's secretary and one obsessed hypochondriac. But mostly it is about sickness. The novel concerns a perfectly healthy man convinced he is gravely ill and a very sick man who doesn't know he has terminal cancer because his own son and doctor cannot bring himself to break the news.

Dr Miranda is a believer in telling the truth, whole truth and nothing but the truth. He has always advocated a no-nonsense approach towards the patients and has never had any difficulties – until now, when the patient is his father and he has to tell him he only has a few weeks to live.

Meanwhile in the background, another patient of his, Ernesto Durán, is convinced he is dying and resorts to stalking his doctor who ignores him and his pleas. Dr Miranda's secretary using her boss's absent-mindedness passes herself off as her boss and engages in email correspondence with Durán. It soon metamorphoses itself from an innocent pastime into a dangerous sickness as well. While Dr Miranda is trying to find the right words to say to his father, his patient and his secretary are slowly going mad.

You might argue that 150 pages is not quite enough to tackle such a difficult subject as life, sickness and death. And you might also argue that a couple of months isn't enough to come to terms with our own

mortality. Sadly, sometimes it's all we are going to be given. Death won't wait until we are ready and the book's brevity could easily be interpreted as a symbol of our fleeting nature.

Alberto Barrera Tyszka made the best of his 150 pages partly thanks to his knack for saying what's important in little quips like this one:

"Blood is a terrible gossip, it tells everything"

It is also clear that he has done his homework and read everything that was produced on the subject of sickness in the history of the written word. And he wants you to know it, so the book is peppered with clumsy interjections such as:

"Perhaps he's remembering that novel by Louis Ferdinand Céline, in which a doctor 'described illness as he would describe a face of an old acquaintance'. That is what weighs on Andrés now."

This is really the only fault of this otherwise good novel which meanders slowly around the events. Suspense has been sacrificed to sadness and the melancholy of things calmly burning out.

It should be a compulsory read on the subject which is becoming more and more intimidating and difficult to deal with within our society.

Marie says

This was really excellent & might've had a 5 star rating from me, if not for the frequent and unnecessary clumsy literary references.

Gruno says

Barrera Tyszka tiene una forma de escribir absolutamente particular. Escribe, en cierta forma, dibujando, evocando. Como si leerlo fuera un ejercicio constante de alusión, de rememoración. Y cuando ese forma de escribir se junta con un tema tan fatal e ineludible como la enfermedad y la muerte, el resultado es un texto destructor a la misma vez que hermoso. Es un libro terminal, una lectura que deja un sabor amargo de fragilidad en la boca. El asunto de nuestra mortalidad siempre me ha fascinado, por las razones obvias. No podría decir lo mismo del asunto de la enfermedad; el conocimiento de sabernos tan vulnerables, tan frágiles, tan fáciles de ser heridos o dañados (incluso por nuestros propios organismos), me infunde un temor peor que el temor natural a lo desconocido.

En fin, es un libro que recomendaría con mucho cautela.

Burkem Cevher says

Bu roman? geçen hafta okumaya ba?lad?m ama araya bir sürü ?ey girdi ve yar?m kald?. Öyle olunca per?embe günü tekrar ba?tan ald?m ve iki günde de bitti. Asl?nda bir oturu?ta bitecek kadar ak?c? ve k?sa bir roman. Ama hayat her zaman iki saat oturup kitap okumaya izin vermiyor. Kendi ki?isel dertlerimi unutmak için ara ara dizi veya film izliyorum bu aralar. Ama bu roman kadar beni rahatlatan? olmad?. Bir kere kendi ad?ma "Neden ben?" sorusunun beyhudeli?ini zaten bilfiil tatt???m için kitab? okumak ve

kahramanlarla özde?le?mek de çok kolay oldu. Üstelik okur ki?i (bu ben oluyorum) kendi evlad?n?n sa?l???n?n (en hafif tabirle) derdine dü?mü?ken bir baban?n hayata vedas?n? çok daha so?ukkanl?l?kla okuyabiliyor. Zaten yazar da okura bu so?ukkanl? bak??? yans?t?yor (yoksa ben mi çok kat?la?t?m?). Çok severek okudum. Hastane koridorlar?n?n so?uklu?unu, doktorlar?n olgular? hastaya söyleme kat?l???n?, i?neleri, BT ve MRI'lar? okumak ve buna d??ar?dan bakmak iyi geldi. Çivi çiviye sökmedi belki ama çivinin ac?s?n? hafifletti. Büyüklerin dedi?i gibi, "Allah s?ral? ölüm versin, o ölümün de ac?s?z?n? versin." Baba ac?s? çekenlere önermem ama böylesine felsefi bak??la gerek hayata ve ölüme kar?? duru?u gerekse hasta-doktor ili?kileri, ?effafl??? hakk?nda tart??malar? Doktor Andres üzerinden okumak çok güzeldi. Yazar?n entelektüel duru?unu böylesine yal?n bir ?ekilde yans?tmas?na, Seda Ç?ngay Mellor'un muhte?em çevirisine de ?apka ç?kar?yorum.

Lalagè says

Venezuela, land 61 op mijn leesreis om de wereld

Het thema van eerlijkheid en pijn komt goed over. Ik voel mee met Andrés, die weet dat de tijd dringt.

<https://lalageleest.wordpress.com/201...>
