



Miruna, a Tale

Bogdan Suceavă, Alistair Ian Blyth (Translator)

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A village in the Carpathian Mountains, one of the last outposts of pre-modernity in Central Europe, an elderly man, sensing his time is short, tells his young grandchildren tales that weave their family history with the real history of a century. One of the children, now grown, is the re-teller of these tales, while his sister, Miruna, seems to possess the gift of second sight. Incorporating elements of fantasy common to the storytelling traditions of the Balkans, historical figures mix with imaginary beings in a landscape to recreate the world of an isolated hamlet that had managed to keep the modern world at bay over a succession of political regimes, but whose idiosyncratic ways might now be irretrievably lost without its story being told.

Blending the autobiographical and historical with the marvelous, *Miruna, a Tale* is a novel whose core is the exploration of the imaginary themes and motives that informed traditional society in the mountainous regions of Romania, a world that was radically transformed into virtual extinction over the course of the 20th century.

Described by critics as a “literary jewel whose strange and singular spell holds the reader in its thrall,” and “a kind of meta-fairy tale,” *Miruna, a Tale* received the Bucharest Writers Association Fiction Award in 2007.

Miruna, a Tale Details

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Author : Bogdan Suceav? , Alistair Ian Blyth (Translator)

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From Reader Review *Miruna, a Tale* for online ebook

Cristina Mercori says

O carte minunată, o poveste magică.

„Pe atunci timpul era infinit și graba era un lucru oarecum necunoscut.”

„Lumea lui de povești, a copilului de demult, avea să se pară mereu cea mai apropiată imagine pentru mântuirea raiului. Bunicul ne-a spus că fiecare om ajunge mai devreme sau mai târziu să privească lumea cu ochii poveștilor pe care le-a ascultat în copilărie, că sufletul nostru trece prin salba de înțelegeri și minuni pe care le ascultăm în a noastră îndepărtată primă vară și că apoi lumea întreagă e zidită pe tiparul acesta.”

Anne Tucker says

enjoyable small book. A true story about the myths and stories handed down through generations of Romanian families living in very remote parts of the country - in the forest in fact. You can so see how Dracula stories began to take credence in Transylvania, developed from tales of giants, brigands, highwaymen etc

Ana says

O carte mică de tot, dar foarte densă, care surprinde nu atât prin povestea în sine, ci prin stilul de a nara.

Florina Pirjol says

An excellent book! Not a fantasy novel *stricto sensu*, but it could also be read as one, and not just a "childhood" novel, using memory as its main ingredient. "*Miruna. A Tale*" is a novel about storytelling, about how to escape the every day reality just by using words, about fiction time which is stronger and more persistent than the real time. Although the story evokes Romanian traditional folkloric topoi and themes, this is not another sweet, soupy story about an exotic East-European country. Bogdan Suceava has the skills of a mature novelist who knows how to dose stylistic beauty and narrative construction, boosting in a very non-postmodernist way the "patterns" of old time stories. Not to miss!

Bettie? says

Publisher's blurb; more to come:

A village in the Carpathian Mountains, one of the last outposts of pre-modernity, an elderly man, sensing his time is short, tells his young grandchildren tales that weave a family saga covering the real history from the 1870s to the time of the telling. One of the children, now grown, is the re-teller of these tales, while the other, Miruna, perhaps has the gift of second sight. Incorporating elements of fantasy common to the storytelling

traditions of the Balkans, historical characters mix with imaginary beings in a landscape that recreates the world of an isolated village bearing an unusual name : Evil Vale. Ancestors are talked about as if ancient heroes, and the novel shifts focus between telling about their lives and the storyteller's own experiences through the prism of the village during both world wars. As past tragedies are presented in a way that the grandchildren might picture and remember them, the novel has been called a kind of meta-fairy tale, a story about the lost tradition of oral storytelling itself, the conveyance of a family history from one generation to the next via the spoken word. With the death of the grandfather, the children realize that confronted with the ubiquitous hand of modernity, which the village has managed to frustrate over a succession of regimes, a whole world of stories and the entire memory of a family and of its idiosyncratic way of life in the village might have been irrevocably lost.

Mircea Pric?jan says

Fantastic book! I recommend it wholeheartedly. Take it from one who's read it not once but three times so far.

Alta says

Enchanting, in the deepest sense of the word.

see review in Three Percent:

<http://www.rochester.edu/College/tran...>

Antonomasia says

Absolutely beautiful. The narrator and his sister Miruna listen to their ancient grandfather's stories of his remote Carpathian village and their forebears. If only it had been five times its 140-odd pages, with space to hear about more family members. (It concentrates on the great-grandfather, phrasing his story as if he were a hero of epic myth, and the grandfather himself.) The narrative's eye for detail is as if hearing one articulate villager's contribution to a microhistory like *Montaillou*, whilst time swirls with enchantments and stories emerge from and fade back into the mists. Hardships and attitudes of the past are not idealised - although there is no domestic violence, and some characters live to be a couple of hundred years old - but the writing is always exquisite. It's hard to know what to quote without pasting half the book, but here is something seasonal:

A harsh winter followed, one of those winters that consumes whole cartloads of wood in the stove, with cruel frosts, with snows that hid all the land and every last trace of the work of human hands, a winter that plunged the world back into its primordial state.

In Evil Vale, humans were not yet entirely master. There were only a handful of houses. In winter, wolf tracks dotted the snow in the village itself, wild boars rooted in the gardens not two paces away from folks, and lynxes prowled over the roofs. The villagers understood nature as hostile and inimical to them, and they did not rise up against it, for you would need to drink your brains away to rise against something so overwhelming. They all knew Evil Vale was a place in thrall to the forest, a place where human laws held no

sway, where the laws of the wilderness governed.

And this most of all is a world where magic is real, or was until very recently: folk magic of fae worlds and old wives and diviners, where there were more than thirty cunning-folk in a settlement of 2000.

The author is rather impressively polymathic: he is a mathematics professor in the US, having emigrated there in the 1990s, and has also written five novels in Romanian. His afterword shows a delight in folklore of both poet and historian. He goes into his own family history that inspired this: a grandmother who lived in a region too mountainous to have its culture obliterated by collective farming under communism. describes some research in a Mircea Eliade book showing how a fairytale with supernatural elements originated in real events in a Romanian village decades earlier. And the book is the most meticulously footnoted translation of contemporary fiction I've seen. (The extra information left me craving maps and pictures though.) Not many people are so flexible as to be able to set aside one of their major subjects like this: *Numbers are in fact of no use to anyone, because nothing ever changes. Evil Vale is always the same. The ages of man are not like the ages of trees, for they are not measured in the same way.*

I'd read one previous translation by Alistair Blyth, Mircea Cîrăscu's short story collection *Why We Love Women*. That barely scraped 3 stars. After seeing the sterling work in *Miruna*, (and seeing the differing ratings for the two books in Romanian) this is a translator I trust to put across the quality of the original.

The family setting of *Miruna* could, in lesser hands, have been syrupy. They're a fairly happy family. And it's hinted from the outset that the old man feels he doesn't have much time left and, whilst he still can, wants to pass on his stories to the grandchildren who connect with them best. But it is simply very lovely in as simple and magical a manner as - something that probably comes to mind because of the time of year - Raymond Briggs picture books.

Maria Roxana says

Minunat? carte, minunat? cîntorie într-un tîrîm de poveste! ?i da, poate cu to?ii purt?m -incon?tient sau nu- pove?tile ?optite de bunicu?i care se "sting mereu prea devreme, a?a cum se întîmpl? cu multe dintre întîlnirile din această lume, neîntregi ?i neîncheiate."

"Bunicul îi povestise lumea întreag? ca într-un joc, ca într-un descîntec, un joc care poate s? nu aib? sens pentru nimeni altcineva, dar care r?mînea de acum s? tr?iasc? în Miruna, la fel de mult ca ?i-n mine, undeva cît mai aproape de marginea mirabil? a lumii, cea care se afl? nea?teptat de aproape, îngropat? sub dealul acesta, c?ci de n-ar fi, nu s-ar povesti."

?i bunicul meu spune pove?ti minunate.?i toate vorbesc despre mine parc?...c?ci am crescut cu ele ?i m? alin cu ele, c?ci sunt pline de f?g?duin?e ?i minuni.

Wilde Sky says

An old man tells his grandchild tales / stories / myths.

I found this book difficult to get into – there were a few places where it really grabbed me, but overall it left me a bit cold as there were too many unfinished (or at least for me) threads.

Io Nuca says

Ce bine c? am citit recenzia Emei (cum care Ema? Cea cu lecturile, c?uta?i-o! :p) ?i m-am apucat de cartea asta!

Nu m? a?teptam s? o termin at?t de repede, dar c?t am fost ?n concediu mi-am f?cut timp s? citesc mai mult de 10 pagini odat?.

L-a? fi ascultat nop?i ?ntregi pe bunicul Mirunei spun?ndu-le pove?ti nepo?ilor, mai ales c? eu nu am crescut cu astfel de istorii fantastice. Bunicii nu mi-au spus despre iele, babe care fac vr?ji sau blesteme. Bine, m? speriau cu Mar?ana, un fel de baba-cloan?a care ap?rea doar ?n serile de mar?i ?i fura copiii care nu fuseser? ascult?tori sau care umblau dup? c?derea serii pe uli??. dar cam la at?t s-a limitat contactul meu cu lumea fantastic?.

Timp de c?teva zile am fost acaparat? de ni?te pove?ti altfel, de o familie cu un trecut altfel, ?i mi-a p?rut tare r?u c?nd s-a ?ncheiat copil?ria celor doi fra?i din carte.

Miruna Elena says

" ?i acolo s-a terminat v?rsta noastr? de aur, cea dup? a carei trecere nu mai puteam fi am?gi?i sau ?n?ela?i de nimic, nici de umbre, nici de pove?ti, nici de iluzii sau de promisiuni. "

"Miruna,o poveste" este, p?n? ?n acest punct al lecturilor mele, prima ?n ale carei file m? reg?sesc ?n totalitate. ?i nu pentru c? eu ?i personajul principal avem ?n comun acela?i nume, ci pentru leg?tura cu bunicii no?tri, o leg?tura ce, pentru mine, dep??e?te limitele rela?iilor umane. Cumva, ?tiu c? niciodat? nu voi mai avea o astfel de rela?ie cu un alt om ?n afar? de cel ce nu m-a certat niciodat? ?i m-a ?n?eles ?ntotdeauna. ?n ochii lui "bunu" am vazut paradisul, ?i-l voi mai putea revedea doar la re?nt?lnirea noastr? din Ceruri.

C?nd am privit ace?ti ochi ?nchiz?ndu-se, am ?tiut c? o bun? parte din mine a pierit odat? cu el. ?i de atunci, de la o luna de c?nd am ?mplinit 16 ani, intr-o zi de 16, nu mai sunt copil.

Claudia says

If you want to recollect some of your childhood memories, read this book. It's a sweet, heart touching tale of two children and the time spent with their grandfather in a remote village, somewhere near Fagaras mountains.

Beside the magic and terrific tales, it brings forth the traditions and superstitions which were a way of life in the past (maybe they still are, but I don't have the connection anymore).

It was a delightful, lovely but also bitter sweet journey into my own childhood times. Bogdan Suceava really knows how to tell a story.

Zzrak says

Romunsko ljudsko izročilo, posredovano skozi vnukove spomine na dedkove pripovedi o ne tako daljni preteklosti. V izolirani vasi sredi romunskih Karpatov, kjer še po svojih zakonih, se v loveška življenja še mešajo vile, uroki in druge mitske nadnaravne sile. Vas, pozabljena od upravnih služb, kjer zapozneli časopisi veljajo za govorice in govorice za preroške napovedi, ima pa svoje naštine, kako se v gorah streže stvarem.

Mihaela Strenc says

O carte minunata! Bogdan Suceava e un Petre Ispirescu al vremurilor noastre.
