



Swastika Night

Katharine Burdekin , Daphne Patai (Introduction)

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Published in 1937, twelve years before Orwell's *1984*, *Swastika Night* projects a totally male-controlled fascist world that has eliminated women as we know them. Women are breeders, kept as cattle, while men in this post-Hitlerian world are embittered automatons, fearful of all feelings, having abolished all history, education, creativity, books, and art. The plot centers on a "misfit" who asks, "How could this have happened?"

Swastika Night Details

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Author : Katharine Burdekin , Daphne Patai (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Swastika Night for online ebook

Dan Keating says

Along with *Brave New World* and *We*, Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* is often hailed a precursor to Orwell's earth-shattering work of dystopian fiction, *1984*. While *1984* is probably a better story (for story's sake, with deeper, more well-rounded characters), it has one weakness; it is largely a justification of the idea that a society so twisted when compared with our own might survive. Burdekin's *Swastika Night* is not so much about the survival of a sick society (as arguments can be made that all societies are sick and to feel the need to justify the survival of one over the other reveals the author's inability to unroot himself from the society in which he lives for the purpose of writing the book) as about the death of a sick society, and not due to heroism or any other external force but due to the weight of its own internal lunacy. We'd do well to have so probing an exploration of the lunacy of our own society.

But then, *Swastika Night* is, in its own way, a probing look into our own society as well. Its criticism of the treatment of women goes beyond the beyond-deplorable condition women find themselves in during Burdekin's narrative (which takes place seven hundred years into a world where the Nazis control half the globe and women have been relegated literally to the status of animals, kept shaved and degraded in breeding pens with no right to anything, especially no right to refuse any man copulation should he demand it of her) to theorize that women themselves were subverted long before these conditions were enacted, subverted by male dominated society which always determined the shape and character women should espouse.

In a particularly excellent section, an Englishmen, who has rejected the Nazi notion that due to his not being German he is inherently inferior to all Germans (a lie which is observably untrue throughout the novel), has come to the conclusion that for a person to truly be himself he must consider himself superior to those around him. The greater social issue facing their society - that women are no longer producing female children - he theorizes is due to a breaking of the female spirit, and that only if women learn to love themselves and consider themselves superior can a society with sustainability be achieved. So, in essence, he has rationalized feminine superiority which, given the backdrop in which he does so, makes the idea all the more incredible.

Readers should be warned, *Swastika Night* lacks two things: subtlety and strong narrative. The majority of the book is conducted through one-on-one conversations between characters, relating ideas and histories. There isn't much that happens in an active sense. On the note of subtlety, pretty much every page is dripping with the Nazi indoctrination of Burdekin's future society, to the point where at times it is almost difficult to remember that one is reading a satire. While the constant Hitler-worship and blunt rejection by the majority of characters of the idea that women may be in any way human lacks any kind of subtlety at all, there is a certain subtlety to watching the characters who reject this society's conscious precepts attempt to overcome the unconscious prejudices which it has instilled (one character even remarks on the difference between cultural conscious versus cultural subconscious directly, a truly progressive thing to discuss in 1937).

Anyone who is interested in dystopian fiction should have a look at *Swastika Night*. Although it is touted a precursor to Orwell's *1984* (as I even brought up above), to call it such and leave it there is a real crime. The irony of a woman's gender-based exploration of dystopianism being considered a precursor but a work of less esteem than a man's relatively gender-neutral exploration of the same would probably not have been lost on Burdekin, who published the novel under an assumed name to prevent people from knowing it was written by a woman in the first place. All that aside, to the serious dystopian-interested intellectual, *Swastika Night* more than stands on its own and is an indispensable experience.

Dystopia fans aside, I would also recommend Swastika Night to anyone interested in gender studies. I'd urge caution to anyone expecting a more action-oriented experience; a bad, if not inaccurate, description of the book may detail it as a narrative of the passing of the means of dissent from one generation to the next in a Nazi-dominated future history, which sounds more like action-sci-fi than the novel really is. I still wouldn't warn people away from the novel, as it is full of fodder for consideration, but I would urge people to be aware of what they're getting into when picking it up.

Sebnem says

Her ne kadar feminist distopya olarak öne ç?kar?lsa da, tek meselesi bu de?il Swastika Geceleri'nin. Kad?nlar?n dam?zl?k hayvana indirgendi?i Hitlerci bir dünyada kad?nl??? oldu?u kadar erkekli?i de sorguluyor. Üstelik ele ald??? tek düalist kar??tl?k da bu de?il. Almanl?k-?ngilizlik, seçilenler-seçenler, König-Kerl, Führer-Geführten, roman boyunca Hegelci diyalekti?e göz k?rparak ele al?nan kar??tl?klar aras?nda. Fakat en isabetli nokta vuru?unu bence "... demokrasinin sonu hep ayn?d?r. Bir kaosla son bulur ve bu kaostan otoriter bir hükümet ortaya ç?kar: bir Führer, bir oligar?i, bir ordu hükümeti, bu tür bir ?ey" (sayfa 177) sözleriyle yap?yor. Yine de karakterler daha derinlikli olmal? diye bekleyebilir insan. Oysa hakl? bir beklen?ti de?il bu: Kitab?n tasvir etti?i dünya, derinlik beklenebilecek bir yer de?il ne de olsa.

Bülent Özgün says

Ben bu kitab? sevmedim.

Kuvvetli, iyi tasarlanm?? bir distopya de?il. Kendisinden 5 y?l evvel bas?lm?? Cesur Yeni Dünya'n?n kurgusunun gücünden eser yok kitapta. Neden bunu söyledim: Distopyaya dair kuvvetli örnekler olmasa bir nebze anlay??la kar??lanabilir bu zay?fl?k. Hatta velev ki daha evvel hiçbir distopya örne?i okumam?? olsun Burdekin, iyi bir eser de mi okumam??? Olay sadece fikirleri aktarmaksa pekala makale de yazabilirdi. Dü?üncelerini büyük kitlelere aktarmak için roman yazm?? diyelim, o zaman da okuyucuya zevk vermeyen bu zay?f kurguyu tercih etmesini ba?tansavmal???na veriyorum. Bu bozuk düzenin geçmi?ine ve ?imdisine dair her bilgi uzun ve bezdirici diyaloglarla aktar?l?nca iyi bir roman m? yaz?lm?? oluyor?

Dahas? bu roman feminist bir roman da de?il. Romanda kad?n yok. Kad?nlar?n ne hissétiklerini ve dü?ündüklerini okuyam?yoruz? Böylesi bir roman için en gerekli bak?? buydu. Kad?nlar örgütlen?n ve ayaklans?n demiyorum (bunu da diyebilirim tabi, iyi bir kurgu içinde bu dedi?im gerçekçi bir ?ekilde aktar?labilir), en az?ndan erkekler onlar? a?a??larken, elliinden evlatlar? al?n?rken, saçlar? kesilirken ne hissétiklerini bilmeyi çok isterdim. O kad?nlar varl?klar?, erkeklerin kar??s?nda neden bu denli de?ersiz olduklar? hakk?nda hiç mi dü?ünmüyorum? Bir insan, ne kadar hayvan yerine konulursa konulsun, tecrit edilmedi?i sürece konu?ur, dü?ünür ve fikir üretir. Nerede kad?nlar?n fikirleri?

Bu kad?nlar?n kaderleri neden hiçbir güçlü yan? olmayan üç be? erke?e teslim ediliyor? Hem de bu kaderin de?i?mesinde ba?at önemi olan kitab? do?ru dürüst okuyamayan ve anlamayan üç-be? adama? Gerçi o kitab?n da hiçbir halta yaramayaca?? aç?k. Onu erkekler okusa ne olur okumasa ne olur. Ça?da? dedi?imiz dünyada bile erkeklerin ço?u, ne okurlarsa okusunlar ne kadar kültürlü olurlarsa olsunlar kad?nlar? zay?f ve kendilerine ba??ml? görmekten ho?nutlar. Bu böyleyken kitapta kad?nlar?n efendisi rolündeki erkekler bir

kitap okudu, bir foto?rafa bakt? diye mucizeler mi olacak?

Bana kal?rsa bu kitab?n tek mevzuu ?ncil. Romanda bahsedilen kitap bir Hristiyan?'n eline geçiyor ve böylece dünya kurtuluyor. Bu kadar s?? bir bak??la yaz?lm?? kitap.

“Dinin de?eri dü?ürüldü, safl??? kirletildi, ama kaç?n?lmaz olan da buydu. Eski H?ristiyanl?k dininde kad?n?n çok büyük bir yeri vard?. Teorik olarak ruh de?erleri erke?e e?itti, ama uygulamada böyle olmuyordu elbette. Kad?nlar?n rahip olmas?na izin verilmezdi. Ama erkekler onlar?n ?sa'n?n sevdi?i ruhlar olduklar?n? söylemi?ti, bu yüzden ruhlar? ve vicdanlar? varm?? gibi davranışları oluyorlard?.”

Bozulmu? Hristiyanl?k, gerçekleri anlatan bir kitapla birlikte yeniden düzenecek ve tüm insanl??a hak etti?i bar??? ve hakkaniyeti getirecek. Kitab?n söylemeye çal??t??? bu bana kal?rsa.

Belki biraz a??r? bir okuma yap?yorum, belki bir kere olaya Hristiyanl?k övgüsü olarak bakt??m için zihnim bu bak??la anlam ar?yor. Yine de kitab?n teslim edildi?i ki?iye bak?nca Joseph ismi özellikle mi seçildi diyorum kendi kendime, Fred'in babas? Alfred ölünce onun için babal?k yapacak ki?i Joseph de?il mi? Fred kitab? okuyarak dünyay? de?i?tirecekse, yani ?sa olacaksa onun vasisi olacak ki?i de Joseph (?sa'n?n dünyevi babas? say?lan Aziz Joseph'a ithafen) olmal?.

Joseph ?öyle diyor:

“Tanr? o kadar iyiken neden günah ortaya ç?kt?? Son Gün geldi?inde bu muamma da anla??lacak, ama siz anlayamayacaks?n?z elbette. ??te günah böyle ba?lad?, öldürmekle. ?ki insan aras?ndaki ?iddetle. Sonra binlerce y?l günah içinde ya?ad?lar ve onlar? günahlar?ndan kurtarmak ve dünyay? Habil ile Kabil'den önceki haline döndürmek için ?sa do?du.”

Yani Tanr? harikayd?, Hristiyanl?k müthi?ti ama insanlar bunun de?erini bilemediler ve her ?ey mahvoldu. Ve ?imdi de her ?eyi eski haline getirecek bir kitap ve bir erkek var. Ya?as?n!

Dahas? da var:

“Babam Friedrich von Hess, Onlu'nun ?ç Halkas?'ndan Alman ?övalyesi, bu kitab? bana 19 Haziran 2130'da verdi. Yetmi? ya??na gelmi?, neredeyse kör olmu? ve u?runa ya?ayacak bir ?eyi kalmam??t?; ama onun da dedi?i gibi, tanr?l??a ve Tanr?'n?n evrenselli?ine inançla dolu olan babam, kitab? verdi?inin ertesi günü, 20 Haziran 2130'da ya?am?na son verdi.”

Nas?l olur da tanr?n?n evrenselli?ini halel getirilir. Nas?l olur da Tanr? bir millete ait olabilir? Hitler'i tanr? sayan Naziler cezalar?n? çekenler bir gün. Friedrich von Hess'in yazd??? ?ncil'le Tanr?'ya ?irk ko?an bu millet harap olacak.

Bir distopyan?n bu kadar dinin yap?c?l???na odaklanması? beni deli etti. Benim okudu?um bildi?im tüm distopyalarda din, uyu?turucu bir ö?edir. Halk dinin korkusu ve sözde merhameti içinde itaat ederler ve isyan? dü?ünmezler. Ama bu kitap dini bir kurtulu? olarak sunuyor. Tüm distopyalar ayn? olmamal? belki ama özgür dü?ünceyi k?s?layan din, nas?l kurtulu? olabilir?

Bu konuyu bir kenara b?rak?yorum. Kitapta y???yla gereksiz sahne var: Alfred ile ?ovalye' nin aras?nda geçen olay ve diyaloglar?n ço?u kitab?n ana çat?s?na hizmet etmiyor. Sürekli milletlerin sanata katk?lar?ndan bahsediyorlar. Vay efendim ?u millet mimaride iyi, ?u millet resimde iyi, müzikte Almanlar?n eline su dökemezsin filan filan. Sonra ikisinin uça?a binmesi. Neden bindikleri bile belli de?il. Yaln?z

kalmak için mi? Bir ara Hermann ile Alfred çapa yap?yor. Neden yap?yorlar anlam?? de?ilim. Saçma sapan bir sahne. Asl?nda Hermann karakteri de saçma sapan bir yerde. Kitaptaki en sevdi?im ki?i olmas?na ra?men varl??? gereksiz.

Zaten roman ki?ilerin ço?unun içi bo?. Belki bir nebze ?ovalye etkileyici. Bilmek ama bildi?ini dile getirememek, onca gücüne ra?men bir ?eyleri de?i?tirememek ona ac? veriyor ve bu ac? onu gerçek k?l?yor.

Herrman ki?isi sadece ?ovalye ile Alfred'in tan??mas? için yarat?lm??. Sonra zaten yazar onu ne yapaca??n? bilemedi?i için ?ngiltere'ye yolluyor ama oradaki görevi o kadar saçma ki. Bahsedilen kitab?n ?ovalye'den ç?k?p Hristiyan Joseph'e varmas? sürecinin i?lemesi için çabucak harcanan roman ki?ileri yaratm?? yazar. Bu aç?kça roman sanat?na sayg?s?zl?k bana göre.

Tabi kitab? tümden yabana atmayal?m. Arada bir par?ldayan ifadeler mevcut:

“Her ?ey bir efsaneden ibaret. ?ngiltere efsanelerle doludur. Tabi ülkelerin hepsinde durum ayn?d?r herhalde. ?nsanlar?n i?leri ve maa?lar? ya da ?övalyelerinin kötülüklerinden ba?ka konu?acak bir ?eyleri olmu? oluyor böylece.”

...

“ ‘Kimse bilmeseysi,’ diye dü?ündü, ‘o ölmü? olsayd?, ben de ölseydim, gerçekler yine de var olacakt?. Dünya yüzünde hiç insan kalmam?? olsa da insan davranış?? ile ilgili belli baz? ?eyler do?ru olmaya devam edecektir. ‘Dü?ünce özgürlü?ünün olmad?? yerde onur da yoktur.’

...

“ ‘Neden ölmek isted?i?’

‘Ölme olas?l???na sahip olmak için.’ “

...

“ ‘Peki neden kendilerini bu kadar alçalt?lar?’ dedi Alfred.

‘Kad?n?n ?ndirgenmesi’ ni kabul ettiler. Alman erkekleri taraf?ndan dü?ünülerek planlanm??, kas?tl? bir ?eydi bu. Kad?nlar daima erkeklerin istedikleri gibi olacaklard?: iradesi olmayan, karakteri ve ruhu olmayan, sadece erkeklerin yans?mas? olan canl?lar. Bu yüzden, olduklar? ya da olabilecekleri ?ey onlar?n suçu ya da erdem? de?ildi. Erkekler onlar?n güzel olmalar?n? isterlerse güzel olacaklard?. Erkekler onlar?n irade ve karakter sahibi gibi görünmelerini isterlerse, böyle bir görünüm sergileyceklerdi ama bu sadece rol icab? olacakt?. Erkekler onlar?n özgür ve ba??ms?z, hatta erkek?i gör?nmelerini isterlerse bunlar?n taklidini yapacaklard?. Ama erkeklerin yapamad?klar?, asla ba?aramad?klar? ?ey ise, bu kötü körüne itaate son vermek ve kad?nlar?n erkekleri yads?yarak itaatsizlik etmelerine sebep olmakt?. Bu insan ?rk?n?n bir trajedisidir.’ “

...

“ ‘Erkekler di?i hayvanlar? sevemezler, ama insanla?t?rd?klar? ve erkek?i ?ablonlara oturttuklar? kad?nlar? sevebilirler ve sevmi?lerdir de.’ “

...

“ ‘O zavall? di?i ahmaklar, erkeklerin onlara dayatt??? ?eyleri ne?eyle ve can? gönülden yaparlarsa, erkeklerin bir ?ekilde mant?kl? davranışmaya ba?lay?p onlar? sevmeye devam edeceklerini sand?lar.’ ”

David says

This book makes 1984 look like the land of Shiny Happy People.

Gürkan Akkaya says

"1984", "Cesur Yeni Dünya" gibi büyük distopya eserleriyle birlikte an?lan, yazar? Katharine Burdekin'in 1937'de Hitler henüz ya?arken yazd??? eseri Swastika Geceleri geçen y?l ç?kt??? andan beri merak etti?im bir eserdi. Sonunda okuma f?rsat? buldum ve oldukça be?endim.

Kitap, Hitler'in dünyay? ele geçirmesinden 700 y?l sonras?nda geçiyor. Hikaye iki eski dost olan Hermann ve Alfred'in Almanya'da kar??la?mas?yla ba?l?yor. Hermann, inanc?na ba?l? bir nazi. Alfred ise Hitler dinine inanmay? çoktan b?rakm??, ?üpheci ve "gerçek" tarihe merak? bir ingiliz. Birbirleriyle eski bir görev de tan??m?? iki karakterimiz aralar?nda ki hiyerar?iye ra?men dostluklar? bozulmam??. Hermann ve Alfred'in kar??la?mas? ile birlikte Burdekin'in kurgulad??? dünyay? yava? yava? ?ekillendirmeye ba?l?yoruz.

Naziler'in zaferinden sonra dünya ikiye bölünmü?tür. Nazi imparatorlu?u ve Japon imparatorlu?u(Bunun hakk?nda pek bilgi sahibi olam?yoruz). Nazi imparatorlu?unda Hitler art?k bir tanr? pozisyonundad?r. Gök gürültüsü tanr?s? olan babas?n?n kafas?ndan infilak ederek olu?tu?una inan?lmaktad?r. Böylece o kad?nlarla girilen pis ili?kilerle lekelenmemi?tir. Çünkü, Burdekin'in dünyas?nda kad?nlar birer "hayvan" olarak resmediliyor. Bilgisizdirler, dü?ünemezler, hiçbir konuda söz sahibi olamaz ve hiç bir vatanda?l?k hakk?na sahip de?illerdir. Üreme d???nda. Evet, kad?nlar sadece üremek ve "erkek" çocuklar do?urmak için vard?rlar. Kad?nlara tecavüz de suç de?ildir.

Kitab?n kahraman? ve seçilmi? ki?isi say?labilenek Alfred'in bir alman ?övalyesi ile kar??la?mas? ve dü?ünceleriyle onu etkilemesinin ard?ndan kar??l?kl? günler sürecek anlat?lara ba?l?yoruz(roman ço?unlukla diyalog ?eklinde ilerliyor.) ?övalye, Alfred'e babas? Von Hess'in sahip oldu?u eski bir kitap ve Hitler'in kanl? canl? resminin oldu?u bir foto?raf? (yan?nda bir k?z ile çekilmiş?) gösterir ve günlerce nazi imparatorlu?u öncesi "eski tarihi" ve dünyyan?n ?u an ki inanç ve özgürlük de?erlerini tart??rlar. Kitap ve foto?raf, Hitler'in asl?nda tanr? falan olmad???n?n ve kad?nlar?n eskiden erkeklerle yak?n e?itlikte bir hayat sürdürdüüklerinin kan?t?d?r...

Burdekin'in kurgulad??? dünyaya benzer bir gelece?imizin olabilece?i dü?üncesi bile insan?n içini ürpertmeye yetiyor. Kitab? okurken ister istemez günümüz Türkiye'siyle kar??la?t?rma yap?yorsunuz. Ülkemiz de ?u an ki kad?nlara ve farklı? inançlara bak?? aç?s?n?n 700 y?l sonras?n? hayal etti?imizde Burdekin'in distopyas?ndan a?a?? kal?r yan?n?n olmayabilece?i akl?n?za geliyor ve ürperiyorsunuz.

Roman?n, Hitlerin iktidara geli?inden sadece iki y?l sonra yaz?lm?? olmas? ise yazar?n öngörüsüne hayran b?rak?yor insan?. Ayr?ca, feminist bir distopya olarak geçen bir kitapta kad?n sorununun tart??lmas?n?n erkekler taraf?ndan yap?lmas? ise gerçekten çok ilginç. Kitapta kad?n karakter olmad??? gibi kad?nlar?n bak?? aç?s?yla tasvir edilen dünyay? görme ?ans?n? da elde edemiyoruz. Burdekin'in kurdu?u ?u cümleler ise sanki kad?nlar?n yenilgisini ba?tan kabulleniyor; "Ba?ka bir hayata imrenerek, özlemle bak?yorsan?z, kendinizi kaybetmi?siniz demektir. Çünkü her ?eyden üstün oldu?unu bilmeyen hiçbir ?ey kendi olamaz. Kad?nlar kendilerini asla üstün görmediler. Sadece e?itlik istediler; makul, küçük ?eyler...". Kitap her ne kadar kararl?k bir dünya sunsa da Alfred gibi kad?nlar?n indirgenmesini sorgulayan ve bu durumun

de?i?ebilece?ine inanan insanlar?n hala var olabilece?ini göstererek de bir “umut” ta??yor ayn? zamanda.

Kitab?n anlat?m dili aç?s?ndan biraz zorlay?c? oldu?unu söyleyebilirim. Ço?u bölümü diyalog ?eklinde yaz?lm?? olmas?na ra?men çok ak?c? de?il. Baz? ?eyleri tekrar tekrar okuyormu? hissine kap?l?yorsunuz. Kurgulanan dünyay? anlatmak için yarat?lan karakterler ise çok iyi i?lenememi? bence. Ama yine de eser çok etkileyici. Rahats?z edici ve dü?ündürücü distopyalar? okumay? seven herkese öneririm.

Bu arada Daphne Patai’?n esere yazd??? önsöz muhte?em. Sizi kitaba haz?rlad??? gibi yazar ve kitab?n yaz?ld??? dönem hakk?nda müthi? bilgiler içeriyor. Kitap kadar ba?ar?l? bir giri? k?sm?na imza at?lm??.

Aurélien Thomas says

Burdekin tells of a chilling world hundred of years after the triumph of Nazism -where Europe is plunged into a new dark age, ruled by a brutal elite and, above all, where men are celebrated for their tough violence and women reduced to breeders. Indeed, here lies in fact its main interest: no matter how striking and clever such an alternate history is (the tabula rasa, the violence, Hitlerism having turned into a cult and, the whole society having collapsed to the level of that new feudal-like and chaotic system Hitler would have relished) it is mostly a powerful and haunting look at the relationships between genders. It's even unsettling because, it goes beyond masculinity and femininity as defined by fascistic ideologies to question our more often than not own views about such identities. If the warning against the triumph Fascism turned useless (the Third Reich was defeated after all), 'Swastika Night' remains indeed a terrifying illustration of where certain views regarding manhood and womanhood, taken to their extreme, can lead to. That it was written by a woman (an unknown fact until decades after its publication) makes some of its insight even more striking:

'what is a man? A being of pride, courage, violence, brutality, ruthlessness, you say. But all those are characteristics of a male animal in heat. A man must be something more, surely?'

Or, more bluntly:

'women are nothing, except an incarnate desire to please men.'

You get it, although the story is very simple, and the cruel world being built is by itself a very good piece of alternate history, it's the haunting questions about genders being thrown at our faces that makes 'Swastika Night' such a powerful dystopia. It would be terribly unfair to reduce it, as is often the case, to 'feminist science-fiction' (whatever that is, by the way) as, how to define manhood and womanhood finally address us all -beyond both ultra-conservatives ideologies and feminism. I therefore recommend it highly.

Ashleigh (a frolic through fiction) says

Rated 4.5/5 stars

I'm honestly a little bit blown away by this book. It's the first "if hitler won the war" dystopia, and yet reads like something that could very well be published (and extremely popular) now. Just the way the world is imagined brings about so many discussions of racism, sexism/feminism, religion, you name it.

Now I will say that some of the discussions did seem to go on for a little *too* long, and the majority of the

book seemed to be going through the "big reveal" stage of the plot. But since that's my favourite part of any book - finding out all the secrets and whatnot (especially since this one concerns a made up alternate history) - I loved it! Maybe it would have been nicer to see a little more of the aftermath, but also I kind of like how it ended. It just seemed right.

As a book I'd never even heard of before, I can safely say this one has taken me by surprise!

TW: Extreme sexism & racism, rape, mentions of suicide

Adaya Adler says

Swastika Night – A book review...

I originally picked this book up because a friend of mine said that it was always what she thought of when I described my relationship with my parents. And after reading it I can see **exactly** where she was coming from.

However, putting my personal psychoanalysis aside, what I can say is that I am deeply and profoundly disappointed that the main body of the book isn't... well... better. Because the author had a truly amazing idea - to present institutional patriarchy as such absurd hyperbole so that what the characters in the story see as just their normal world but the absurdity of it screams at us from the page. For me, it hit on a core of truth that had been too subtle for me to name before, but in the outrageous exaggeration of the book it was an utterly clear fact of the world in the book: Women are nothing.

Ok, let's get this out of the way right now. I am here to review a book. To review a book, I have to be able to talk about it. If for some reason my ringing endorsement above has made you desire to go out and read this mediocre book with a good idea behind it, heed my warning before reading more - "Spoilers" will abound in this review.

You have been warned.

Anyway, the premise of the book is 700 years after the Nazis won World War II. The Nazis control all of Europe and Africa, and the rest of the world is controlled by Japan. The inner-most circle of power in the Nazi regime are men called Knights, and about 100 years after the death of Hitler a Knight named von Weid decided to destroy all books, destroy all history and teach the kingdom that everyone existed in prehistorical darkness until Hitler and the Nazis came and brought light and understanding to the world. In this book, Hitler is portrayed as a giant blond demi-god who becomes that religion's ("Hitlerism") *savoir*. Germans are seen as the master race, of course, and all other races of men - British, French, African - are taught that they are inherently inferior.

And speaking of inferior, while he was at it, von Weid decided that women needed to be Reduced. I capitalize it because that's what's done in the book - it's called the Reduction of women. Women are no longer to be treated as people. Not only are they denied education, which, let's face it, is pretty standard in many parts of our world, but in the full Reduction they are denied a place in the family, a place in society and their very personhood. Women are nothing. After 700 years of Reduction women have become ubiquitously ugly, are forced to live in a giant cage and rape has become universal. No woman is allowed to deny any man anything - unless she wears an armband that shows that she is the property of one man.

Armbanded women don't live with their men; they will simply not get raped by any man but their master.

If you're wondering how people in the world get born, it is in the cage of women. Men come in, rape and leave. If a woman has a baby that's a girl, people, including the women, are unhappy and ashamed. If she has a boy, after the baby is 18 months old, the rapist comes in to remove his offspring. Women do not leave the cage at all, except once a month to be driven like cattle to the Hitler chapel so the local Knight can make them cry about how awful, stupid and low they are.

In a wonderful Classic Greek twist, love, or, rather, lust is reserved for men toward boys. And boys make a special effort to appear feminine in this world. And since all women have shaved head and wear only jackets and trousers, boys dressing in robes and having long hair doesn't look like women to them. They look like boys. And can I just say having the world of grown male lust directed at boys so young their voices haven't changed yet?? YUCK!!

So what does the destruction of history have to do with the Reduction of women? Well, a lot as it turns out!! Both happen for the exact same reason - to preserve male vanity, and German male vanity most of all.

History is destroyed to protect the kingdom. If the "inferior" races know that at one time they themselves had empires, what would stop them from trying to have empires again?? No, no, no... Better to let them think they are not capable of building empires and it will be less work for the Germans to keep everybody in line.

For what they have built here is a strict authoritarian regime. 100% top-down rule, and everyone shits on the people below them. Their moral code enshrines lust, anger, cruelty and above all it venerates strength. Anyone expressing feelings far outside this is considered weak. To have too much fondness for your son is weak. To love a boy (YUCK) instead of just lust after him (Double YUCK) is weak. Inferior races are institutionally weak, for to be physically violent to a German would get a non-German beaten to death. So keeping the inferior races thinking of themselves as inferior is important simply as a labor saving device. All these races trying to rise up against you would cost you literally hours of ass-kicking a day.

So the reduction of women also had to do with protecting male vanity. It was seen, before women had been fully Reduced, as an intolerable source of insult that women had the "right of refusal" and the ability to choose their own sexual partner. And it was extremely intolerable that some women, the beautiful ones, had lots of power over lots of men. For the cult of masculinity to be fully expressed, women had to completely submit to men. They had to have no rights to their own bodies, own children or own selves.

And in this environment of selfless submission to male rule all women became ugly. Part of it was being required to shave their heads, dress in ill-fitting clothes and denied physical exercise outside of what they need to keep their wombs functioning, but the author stresses that women had become truly ugly. At one point Alfred sees a picture of the real Hitler talking to a woman and he is shocked to see that women were once beautiful. Alfred asks the Knight that showed him the picture why the women couldn't have been Reduced but left beautiful. (Of course that's what he would ask. Grrrrr...) And the Knight said no. For women to be beautiful, they would also need to have the right of refusal. Being fully Reduced has physically changed the women and they the misery of their existence on their faces and in their bodies.

And all men despised them. The main character, Alfred, talked about how it is the nature of each living being in creation to think that they are the greatest expression of creation. A rabbit will think that rabbits are the highest form of creation. And that rabbit will think that she or he is the highest form of rabbit that there is. Alfred says that is not egotism, but a natural feeling that every being should possess. And the Original Sin of women was to accept that men are a higher form of being that there is.

Now think about that for a minute. Really think about it. The Original Sin of women is their sin against themselves. Their sin of accepting the idea that men are better.

Who doesn't know someone like this? I'd hazard to say most of us, not all, but most, of us have a little of this running around in our heads. I remember one of the first female bosses I had, and how she spent endless hours mentoring the two guys on our Education team, totally ignoring the rest of the team. Eventually, she promoted one of them, who had no management experience and no college degree, over the rest of us. Because he was better at having a penis than we were. And me? I grew up believing that my interests were less serious and more burdensome to my parents than the endless gaming nights and sports practices of my brothers, simply because they were mine. And I'm just a girl. Why should they spend precious time and energy driving me to my silly choir practices and rehearsals when that wasn't going to make a difference.

The only thing my mom encouraged was my interest in volleyball. She thought that I was too fat to find a husband so the physical activity might help me lose weight.

Wait, I said I wasn't going to go into my own psychotherapy...

So back to the book.

Because women show how miserable AND how obedient they are to the men who caused this misery AND show their Original Sin of accepting that men are better than them men despise them. Male vanity in this strict authoritarian regime could no longer allow women the right of refusal because the basis of authoritarian rule is that although you get shit on a lot, you also have the right to shit on those below you. Think about it, if you're on the top few rungs of the authoritarian regime your life is pretty damn good, but most people in the regime aren't on the top few rungs. And the regime NEEDS those people there to do their work, produce their goods and fight their wars. So how can you incentivize people to stick around to do their work and get shit on?? But assuring them that they get to shit on those below them, of course!! Although men are organized in power structures themselves, they at least have the cold comfort of know that every single last one of them is higher than women. They have complete power over women.

So women were told that their highest calling was to be Reduced and “freed” to focus on their true role: submitting to men and making babies. And men despised them for falling for that line of shit, and continuing to stand still and just take it. Eventually Alfred admits that what lies behind the contempt they all feel for the women is guilt. Their very misery, the one thing that men cannot take away from them, is a screaming condemnation of the lives that men have made them lead so that they could bear to continue in their authoritarian world. The basis of the authoritarian system is power and control, and the basis of that power and control is the Reduction of women.

And really that's the reason why I say this book has this excellent idea behind it. Because you're going along in this ridiculous topsy-turvy world where Hitler is Jesus and NAMBLA is an international institution, and suddenly you're hit in the face with an elegantly stated universal truth. The enduring problem with the book is that all of these ideas are hidden in page after page of the main characters having utterly meaningless conversations about the quality of their musical instruments (which, the author could note, we CAN'T HEAR because it's a godforsaken book!!) and critiquing one another on their accents (see complaint above). The dramatic twists and turns in the narrative just aren't. I'm not a surprise junkie, I don't need intricate plot structure. In fact I thought it was one of the least interesting things about the Da Vinci Code. But when the way the author reveals the action actually takes away from the excitement it just reduces the quality of the book.

In the coup de grace of the book, Alfred visits a Christian and visits his baby daughter.

The bottom rung of this society are the Christians. In this world Christians have become similar to the Untouchables of India. The lowest race. So low they live outside of the law. And they also live with the women who produce the children.

Christians of this world seem to be free in the same way the Proles of 1984 are free. And the Knights are like the black-clad Party members. While the Knights are above the harsh scrutiny of the authoritarian regime, the Christians are below it. Only Christians and Knights are exempt from the home searches designed to make sure that no one has illegal contraband like books or women stashed around their homes.

Interestingly enough, the Christian women are “below” rape. To be caught attempting to rape a Christian woman would bring shame on you and your entire family. One of the only things a Nazi can get punished for is falsely accusing another Nazi of raping a Christian woman just to shame him.

The Christian Alfred visits, Joseph, considers Hitlerians heathens, and spends a great deal of time telling Alfred how he will burn in hell for all eternity while he is raised with all the Christians into glory on Judgment Day. Then he tells Alfred that on this glorious Judgment Day the Christian women will simply cease to exist. Because they are nothing, just like all the other women. That's a surprise, isn't it? Didn't you think that if Christian women lived with their families and were, somehow, exempt from rape, they might have a better shot at being people??? I know I did. I thought that this was some tiresome religious work, like Left Behind, were the big reveal at the end was that Christians are better people than everyone else. Nope! Joseph is just as into the violence of the cult of masculinity as the rest, and the women are just as nothing as everywhere else. The same power dynamic exists everywhere.

Then Alfred visits his woman in her cage and he asks to hold their three week old infant girl. The woman hands her over with great trepidation. The only reason a man would ask to be handed a baby girl would be to kill her. But Alfred assures her he only means to hold her, and he takes the warm bundle into his arms.

Looking at her face, he thinks the words, "My daughter," which is something men don't think. They only have sons. Girl babies are ignored. He knows that women once had it better. He knows what will happen to his daughter if he does nothing. He thinks wildly to himself that he could raise her. He could steal her away and raise her to think of herself as the highest form of creation, higher, even, than him. He could help her become strong and beautiful...

And...

Nothing.

There would be no place for her. Not in the entire world. When, or even if, she came out into the world, she would be instantly killed. It is illegal for women to have self-respect. It is illegal for women to have a self to respect.

And, again, we have the elegantly stated truth. In all of his travels in the book Alfred is looking for a way out. A way to end violence and the extreme power dynamic of his world. He wants to spread the gospel of not-Hitlerism, and get everyone to believe that Germans are not the master race and all MEN are equal. But he realizes that he cannot make all men equal without also making all women equal. And the women have been ground under for so long, and all men are so invested in keeping them that way, that he realizes he can't even save this one baby girl. So he hands her back and leaves.

I realize that, and am glad that, this is not everyone's experience. But it was mine, and, unfortunately, many others as well. The idea behind this book is something that I've experienced. Everywhere I turned in my life, from school to church to work to relationships I got one consistent message – I am less than because I am female. And for me, and lots of other people like me, it started in my home. My parents had a very strict top-down rule and someone in our family had to be the worst. And that was me. They hated me and constantly complained about everything that I did or didn't do. And the more I tried to please them, the more they despised me.

And of course the focus on misogyny in this book resonates with me and my history. But many other people have found themselves in the same situation based on race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, gender identity and, most of all, economic background. And I'm not trying to diminish any of that by focusing only on misogyny in this review. So please know that I don't see misogyny as the only form of discrimination in THIS world, but it is what this book focused on.

I am so very lucky to have found a way out. I found new people, new community, new churches and a wonderful new love. I live in a world that is ridiculously full of blessings. But there is this part of me that is always waiting for the world to be taken over by the Hitlerians again. And when I express this fear to the wonderful people in my life, they always laugh. Oh silly Adaya! Don't you know we'd never leave you?? And I have to wonder, for those of us that have been through this, and found a way out, do you ever fear that you might, somehow, end up back in it? It seems to me that the exaggeration in the book is one of its strongest elements. But what it is exaggerating is something that is always and has always been there. The rule of the elite few over the many. And this world, our world, has found many ways to accomplish that, some better than others. But it seems to me that the bad, cancerous form has a way of popping up when we least expect it. And this book, in its imperfect way, seems to me to be a fair warning to all.

Bilge B says

it is just all over the place and poorly constructed.

She constructed a world and rather than explaining it with actions and situations, two people just sit down and discuss the history of the world for 3/4 of the book.

Changes subject in the following paragraph without a warning and you're like "what? huh? where did that come from?"

Mathieu says

Quand on découvre Swastika night, on serait tenté de penser qu'il s'agit d'une uchronie. Jugez plutôt : l'histoire se déroule dans une Europe entièrement dominée par les Nazis. Hitler a été divinisé et un culte à son nom a été établi.

700 ans se sont écoulés depuis la victoire des Allemands et de leurs alliés japonais, et le monde est entièrement dominé par l'un ou l'autre Empire. Les Juifs ont été éradiqués, et se sont les Chrétiens (désormais considérés comme déviants) qui ont endossé leur rôle dans la société nazie.

Tous les livres ont été brûlés, la culture quasiment éliminée, et le monde vit dans l'ignorance totale de ce qui s'est réellement passé 700 ans plus tôt, le roman national nazi ayant complètement falsifié l'Histoire.

Sauf que ce n'est pas une uchronie, car ce roman a été publié en 1937, par l'anglaise Katharine Burdekin, sous le pseudo de Murray Constantine ! Cette édition est la première traduction française de ce texte.

Le moins que l'on puisse dire, c'est que la vision de Burdekin est à la fois brillante, et terrifiante. Brillante car imaginer un monde nazifié en 1937, avec autant de précision et d'éléments plausibles implique de s'être penché sérieusement sur l'idéologie nazie, et d'en avoir bien assimilé les concepts et les implications, et terrifiante finalement, pour les mêmes raisons.

La société décrite par Burdekin fait froid dans le dos car elle est plausible. Les Nazis ont rabaisé les femmes au rang d'animaux que l'on parque à l'écart des hommes et qui n'ont d'autres vocations que de "pondre" des hommes pour l'Allemagne et les hommes eux sont dévolus à la guerre, l'agriculture et l'industrie, sous la supervision des Chevaliers, sorte de super-nazis chargés du culte d'Hitler et de l'administration du Reich.

Les peuples vaincus, eux, sont réduits au rang de citoyens de seconde zone, avec toujours cette distinction homme / femme très marquée. À ce niveau, on ne parle plus de patriarcat, mais de Phallocratie.

Le ton du roman est étonnamment moderne et parle sans fard d'homosexualité masculine, les hommes ayant appris à mépriser les femmes s'en détournent, limitant leur rapport aux femmes à la seule fonction reproductrice. L'un des points d'intrigue du roman repose d'ailleurs sur la baisse drastique du nombre de naissance de filles qui, à terme, pourrait entraîner l'extinction de l'Humanité.

En filigrane, se dégage une thématique féministe forte, le rôle des hommes accentuant l'injustice et l'ignominie faite aux femmes dans ce Reich triomphant. On comprend de plus entre les lignes que la critique du machisme ambiant du roman est aussi une charge contre les mâles contemporains de Burdekin.

Je ne veux pas trop en dire sur l'intrigue du roman, mais disons simplement qu'heureusement, tout n'est pas noir. Une lueur d'espérance semble subsister dans ce monde devenu ignare, violent et finalement arrivé dans une impasse.

Un roman d'anticipation dystopique donc, qui est ma foi de fort belle tenue et qui vaut la découverte. Notons que l'ouvrage se termine en prime par une post-face sur les romans ayant imaginé un Reich gagnant la seconde guerre mondiale, que ces textes aient été rédigés avant la dite guerre (et on se rend compte que dans les années 30, il y en a quand même eu une poignée) ou après.

Sinem A. says

Genel olarak kötü diyemem. Ama bir disütopyadan sanır?m benim beklenim biraz fazla oluyor; türü seven biri olarak.

Kitap genelde kar??l?kl? dialoglar halinde devam ediyor, pek olay yok. Son bölümde biraz hareketleniyor o da 5-10 sayfa. Açıklamas? teorik dialoglar?n bu kadar yo?un olmas? biraz yazar?n dü?üncelerini dayatmas? gibi geldi. Yine de yaz?ld??? döneme hümet, eme?e sayg? ve türü sevenler için okunulas? diyebilirim.

Bir de feminist disütopya olarak de?erlendirilmesi var kitab?n; bu konuda çok tatmin edici oldu?unu söyleyemiyem; tabi kendi ad?ma.

Selin Seçen says

De?ersizle?tirme, itibars?zla?t?rma bir süreçtir. Hiçbir ?ey bir anda olmaz; raz? olduklar?n?z, ses ç?karmad?klar?n?z, isyan etmedikleriniz gün gelir sizin ilme?iniz olur; hangi ara boynunuza geçti?ini anlayamazs?n?z. En küçüklerine ses ç?karmazsan?z, büyüdüklerinde ses ç?karacak gücünüz kalmama riski var. Distopyalar, kurulu düzenin olabilecek en uç noktalar?n? anlat?yor ama yan?ba??m?zda bu riskleri sürekli görüyor olmam?z hissizle?memize neden olmamal?.

Yaz?n?n devam? için:

<http://www.benyazarsamolur.com/swasti...>

Edward Davies says

I actually enjoyed this book, with its bleak look at a future that could have happened if Hitler had won World War II. It's amazing to read when you realise that this book was actually published before the war had even begun, so Burdekin not only comes up with a dystopian future based on a fiction but also predicts the war itself. The idea that Nazism moves its focus onto women once it has all but wiped out anyone else they deem unfit to be part of the so-called master race is a scary one as women are portrayed here as being treated like animals or something almost sub-human. An interesting parable of what could quite easily have been.

Brad says

Katherine Budekin wrote her frightening vision of a Nazi future in 1937, at the height of Hitler's power in Germany, as a scathing attack on the powerful patriarchies engaged in fascism.

Her argument , however, goes far beyond the confines of Nazism and her imaginary Nazi future. She is concerned with the history of all of Western Civilization: a history driven by gender politics, wherein women's voices have been erased from the collective memory almost as completely as her Nazis wiped out the history of previous Empires.

Budekin (who tellingly wrote under the name Murray Constantine) achieves much in her story: her argument is compelling, occasionally prophetic and often disturbing. Sadly, despite the profundity of Budekin's message, Swastika Night doesn't hold up aesthetically.

It is a book packed full of explication. Budekin rarely shows us what is happening; she tells us through an interminable series of discussions between her major characters. Because of this, Swastika Night lacks immediacy. And immediacy would have catapulted Swastika Night into the status of other dystopian classics, like Orwell's 1984.

As it stands, however, Swastika Night is an excellent, though artistically flawed, vision of our male driven world. It is absolutely worth a read, but don't expect to be entertained by the experience.

M. Özgür says

Kitabın yarattı? Dünya, çizdi?i insan portreleri, kadın?n ve erke?in toplum içindeki statüsü çok iyi?lenmi?. Daphne Patai'nin önsözü ise müthi?! Yalnız, mükemmel seçilmi? konunun, yarat?lan karakterlerle ve geli?en olaylarla örgüsü iyi yap?lamam??.

Demek isted?im ?ey, yazar?n, yarattı? Dünya'y? gözlerinden anlatmak için seçti?i karakterler (yani, o Dünya'ya biz okuyucular için açtı? pencere), maalesef özenli seçilememi?. Ve ayrı?ca, kitap 230 sayfada hemen bitiyor :)!

Ona rağmen, betimlenen Dünya çok ürkütücü ve bu yüzden belki de mutlaka okunması gereken kitaplar arasında giriyor. Burdekin'in bu kitabı?n ilk baskı? 1937'de yapılmış? olmas? ise ayrı? bir tat kat?yor. Herkese iyi okumalar!

The world that the book creates, the statue of woman&man among the society have been issued very well by the writer. The foreword written by Daphne Patai is also awesome! However; they are not woven together very well with the main fictional characters and events.

I mean; the eyes of the characters through which we have a chance to look through the disutopic world of Burdekin, are not selected properly; also the book has ended within 230 pages and it was not enough :) !

Due to the terrifying world portrayed, the book is really worth reading! It is also important to mention that the first edition of this book was published in 1937.

Printable Tire says

Swastika Night envisions a world thousands of years in the future in which the Nazis have joint world dominance with the Japanese and the past before Hitler has been obliterated from collective memory. It is a static world in which Hitler is worshiped as a blond, blue-eyed Viking-god that was not born of woman but exploded, where Knights rule small feudal societies, where the cult of manliness dominates to such an extent that boys are taken as lovers and women are hairless cattle kept in cages, to be distastefully raped when male heirs are necessary. Christians are the new Jews, and they roam the countryside like hippies, shunned by society but more or less left alone.

There are things to like about this book, such as the author's ability to imagine a reality where social indoctrination is so extreme it is difficult for even the most likable characters to imagine women ever being beautiful, or having a soul or free will of their own, or that another form of life could have existed before Hitler's descendants changed the history book to a vague and worthless bible. And the writer is fine at expressing how every seemingly likable character- the freethinking Englishman Alfred, the sympathetic Knight who knows the most of the past because of a hereditary curse of knowledge, the Christians with their incomplete hand-me-down version of Jesus- is flawed because they can only see "Reality" through their own very strict slant of reality, which has been doubly thwarted by thousands of years of lies and cultural

programming. Also, the author wisely sees reprogramming, not violence, as the only way of ever affecting any sort of inner change. This must have been a very unpopular message indeed, considering this book came out before WW II even began.

Nonetheless, the book was too boring, the writing too sloppy, the strawmen too strawy, the expositions too exposing, the Socratic dialogues too dull, the plot too slow. And it suffers from all the shortcomings of dystopian fiction that I despise: uninteresting flat characters, a God Narrator entering too many heads, unrealistic moments of awakening. Dystopian novels are often better essays than novels, and I wish they would present themselves as such instead of trying to come across as persuading and entertaining narratives, which they all hopelessly never turn out to be.

I do like one of the messages of the book (or at least find it interesting) which is to see your kind and you yourself as superior to others, that the only crime is to not value oneself. "Women's submission is not due to their nature, but rather to the fact that women have never had two things that are available to men. One is sexual invulnerability; the other is pride in their sex." (viii) Writing back then was, in many ways, ahead of our time.

Cemre says

Konusu itibariyle büyük bir merakla ba?lad?m, asl?nda çok da iyi ba?lam??t?; ancak bitirdi?imde bir ?eylerin yar?m kald??n? hissettim. Yazar sanki fazlas?yla k?sa kesmi? gibi bir his olu?tu içimde kitab? bitirdi?imde. Merak uyand?r?c? bir distopyan?n daha fazla karakterler anlat?lmas?n? isterdim san?r?m. Özellikle temeline "kad?n"? oturtan bir distopyada kad?n karakterlere neredeyse hiç yer verilmemesini garipsedim. O dünyay? kad?nlar?n gözünden de okuyabilmeyi isterdim. Yine de Burdekin'in di?er roman?n? da k?sa zamanda okumay? istiyorum.

David says

Frightening! So many pederast Nazis.

The oddest thing is that for much of the time I was thinking "The fact that this was written by a woman (who might have been a lesbian?) makes it OK." But for much of its life, everyone thought it was written by a man. They must have thought he was insane.

Bits:

"But the English had remained just as queer as ever, sloppy and casual and yet likeable."

"You ought to be ashamed of your race, Alfred, even though your Empire vanished seven hundred years ago. It isn't long enough to get rid of that taint."

Alex Sarll says

Goodness. Nazi victory is one of science fiction's mainstays, but this 1937 iteration is (one of?) the first. Still a possible future, rather than a nightmare alternate present - but Burdekin calls details like extermination of

the Jews, which at that point wasn't even official policy yet. In some ways this is less a novel than a fable; in others it reminds me of a Socratic dialogue, except that no participant represents Truth fully - they are all plausible products of an unutterably fucked situation. The key detail is the vision of the Nazi empire as patriarchy taken to its logical extreme: "A man could sit with a dog quite indefinitely, but he could not stay with a woman except to satisfy his natural needs". I imagine this world would have been taken up by misogynist fuckwits the way Gor has, were it not for its open acceptance of the inevitable homoerotic corollaries of these attitudes.

Jake M. says

Swastika Night is a dialogue driven and philosophically laden tale of a pilgrimage of an Englishman named Alfred to Germany, the center of the Holy Nazi Empire. This fusion of alternate history and dystopian fiction is set six hundred years after the German victory over the Allies where Hitler is worshiped as an Aryan god. During his pilgrimage, Alfred encounters a Nazi knight who has doubts about the effects of holding women to an animal-like status. This book should not be typecast as a feminist work; it is just as political as it is gender-centric. Oddly, all main characters are male, with women playing bit parts to demonstrate their tragic condition under the Nazi jackboot. Written in 1938, the book discusses a world war, the annihilation of the Jews and a colossal encounter with Soviet Russia before any such events had taken place. This book is eerily prophetic and philosophically engaging which heavily compensates for its lack of character development and pace.
