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A SEA OF BOOKS

IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE AT THE BEACH, YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2009

Blog Tour and Book Review #15: CAFE TEMPEST: Adventures on a Small Greek Island by Barbara Bonfigli

CAFE TEMPEST:
Adventures on a Small Greek Island
A Fictional Memoir
by Barbara Bonfigli

Synopsis:

*When Sarah, a thirty-something American theatrical producer, is asked to direct the locals in their summer show, she picks Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. What follows is a hilarious adventure in casting, rehearsing, and consuming. Her neighbors are excited about acting but delirious about eating. Their rehearsals in a deconsecrated church become a feast in four acts.*

Armed with a sizzling wit, a dangerously limited Greek vocabulary, and a pitch-perfect ear for drama, Sarah navigates the major egos and minor storms of a cab driver Caliban, a postmaster Prospero, and a host of fishermen dukes and knaves.

When she falls in love, there are even trickier seas to navigate. Her own offstage romance provides an exhilarating, unpredictable counterpoint to Shakespeare's story of magic, intrigue, and the power of love.

My Rating: 3 out of 5 Stars

My Thoughts:

CAFE TEMPEST is an ambitious novel that covers a lot of territory. True, the setting is a small Greek island, but you will be exploring Sarah's heart, soul, sexuality, and spirituality.

As she sets to work on an article for *Yoga Journal*, Sarah examines various mantras, such as "The jewel is in the lotus" and "I am That," and how to invoke them for coping with daily life. When she agrees to direct the locals in a production of "The Tempest," she begins to see correlations between the mantras and Shakespeare. Needless to say, there are a lot of Shakespearean quotes tossed about, and a familiarity with "The Tempest" will enhance your enjoyment of this novel.

There is also a liberal sprinkling of Greek terminology and phrases which are translated as you read along. A small glossary at the back of the book helps for a quick reference.

Tossed into the pot of Eastern philosophy, Shakespearean and theater references, and Greek vocabulary is Sarah's bisexuality. All this is a lot for the reader to take on, and I sometimes felt more like an outsider looking in rather than having that sensation of stepping into the story. I think another reader with more of a background in theater and travel might not feel the same way.

CAFE TEMPEST often reads like a play – the bulk of it is dialogue. I found this distasteful at times as I tried to keep up with who said what. It made me realize how much I like descriptive prose. However, so much of the story is witty and flirtatious conversation, or scenes centering around misinterpretations due to inaccurate translations, that the abundance of dialogue is a necessary device.

Several recipes are included at the back of the book to tempt the culinarily inclined. For the truly adventuresome, the recipe for the Tempestini, the only retsina based cocktail, can be found on the author's website.

CAFE TEMPEST is illustrated throughout with beautifully evocative line drawings and sketches by Gaia Franchetti - a special treat in themselves.

I would recommend CAFE TEMPEST to anyone who enjoys travel books, humor, Shakespeare and the theater, or is specifically interested in Greek culture and food.

About the author:

Barbara Bonfigli is an author, lyricist and theatrical producer. When she isn't writing songs or travel articles, or producing shows, she packs some French roast and catches a plane to Athens. Then a ferry or a hydrofoil to . . . but that's classified.

She hitchhiked to Greece in her first nomadic summer, and discovered her native land. She's been exploring it ever since -- hiking in the Pelion, kayaking in the Dodecanese, sailing the Aegean. In a tiny seaside taverna, over fried kalamari and a pitcher of homemade red, a few Greek families and she watched Obama conquer Berlin.

Maps are her recreational drug of choice. After wearing out five passports and four continents she uncorked her memories and imagination -- and a bottle or two of retsina -- to write her first novel, "Café Tempest: Adventures on a Small Greek Island". It's a kind of "A Year in Provence" meets "Zorba the Greek". You are invited to the mythical island of Pharos, to laugh and dance in the hammock, not the cradle of Western civilization.

To learn about Barbara Bonfigli and CAFE TEMPEST, please visit any of these sites.

Order Café Tempest directly from the publisher - http://www.tellmepress.com/pub_ct.php

or from Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/Café-Tempest-Adventures-Small-Island/dp/0981645313>

To see the complete tour schedule visit <http://virtualblogtour.blogspot.com/2009/05/cafe-tempest-by-barbara-bonfigli-summer.html>

Visit Barbara Bonfigli's website - www.cafetempest.com

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