



Otherbound

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Amara is never alone. Not when she's protecting the cursed princess she unwillingly serves. Not when they're fleeing across dunes and islands and seas to stay alive. Not when she's punished, ordered around, or neglected.

She *can't* be alone, because a boy from another world experiences all that alongside her, looking through her eyes.

Nolan longs for a life uninterrupted. Every time he blinks, he's yanked from his Arizona town into Amara's mind, a world away, which makes even simple things like hobbies and homework impossible. He's spent years as a powerless observer of Amara's life. Amara has no idea . . . until he learns to control her, and they communicate for the first time. Amara is terrified. Then, she's furious.

All Amara and Nolan want is to be free of each other. But Nolan's breakthrough has dangerous consequences. Now, they'll have to work together to survive--and discover the truth about their connection.

Otherbound Details

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From Reader Review Otherbound for online ebook

Jim says

This is an ambitious story. Not only does Duyvis create a believable fantasy world (inspired in part by the Netherlands) with its own messy history, politics, cultures, geography, and rules, but she also grounds Nolan's story in our own world, then successfully ties them both together. In some ways, Otherbound is a portal fantasy, but it's a portal fantasy with a lot more challenges and complications.

For one thing, when Nolan's mind is with Amara, his body remains here with no one at the helm. As a child, he slipped into Amara's world while crossing the street, which resulted in an accident that cost him his leg. Now, Nolan not only has to deal with his missing leg, but in many ways, his connection to Amara is presented as a neurological disability, one he's constantly working to manage.

Amara's tongue was cut out as a child, part of her "preparation" to become a servant. Later, she developed the power to heal from any new wounds, and uses this power to protect her princess ... a girl Amara can't decide if she hates or loves. In the meantime, they're constantly on the run, guarded by an abusive drunk of a man.

Reading through the past few paragraphs, it sounds like this is a grim, gritty, potentially depressing book, and it's not. There's plenty of darkness, but Duyvis presents it all without ever wallowing in despair or hopelessness.

I was particularly impressed with how she handled the growing connection between Nolan and Amara. At first, Amara isn't aware of Nolan at all. But eventually he learns he can control her. The first time this happens, there are layers of assumptions and misunderstandings on Nolan's part. Without going into details, Nolan is simply trying to communicate with this person, to try to do something about this connection that's cost him so much. But in the process, he takes total control of Amara. It's a violation that has echoes of sexual assault, both in the way Amara loses control of her own body, and in her reactions afterward.

That's Amara's first introduction to Nolan, and it's a hard thing to move past. Duyvis doesn't shy away from the pain and difficulties there, but she does a good job of making both characters sympathetic and understandable as they try to negotiate and learn to work together.

I did get a little disoriented in the beginning as we were going back and forth between worlds, and I would have liked a little more grounding in Amara's world, but overall I'm very impressed with everything Duyvis accomplished in this book. There's plenty of action to keep things moving, along with romance, a diverse cast of characters, and an interesting magical system.

It's a good book, and doubly impressive for being Duyvis' debut.

Emily Anne says

Sometimes a book just sneaks up quietly behind your back... and then slaps you. Hard. That basically sums up my reading experience with Otherbound. I had been intrigued by Otherbound for some time. So, when I had the chance to read and review the story for free, I gladly grabbed the chance!

However, I never expected to be so immersed in Nolan and Amara's story. The writing and settings were

exquisite. And, at the end of Otherbound, I felt as if I had lost a friend. This book will stick with me for a long time, and will definitely make it onto my 2014 favorites list.

Let's start with the two characters and two settings. Our two main characters are Nolan and Amara. Nolan is from our world. However, he is not your average boy. He is missing a good part of one of his legs, and he has "seizures" and "hallucinations". Of course, the readers learn pretty quickly that Nolan doesn't have either of these plights, despite what the doctors might say.

Every time Nolan closes his eyes, he finds himself in another world called the Dunelands. More specifically, he sees through the eyes of a girl called Amara. Amara is not only a mute servant from the Dunelands, she is also a healer protecting a cursed princess. This job is not nearly as glamorous as it sounds, as the healing process causes Amara to inflict terrible harm upon herself. Also, Jorn, her master, cruelly punishes Amara often. And, in turn, Nolan has to suffer through terrible pain as well.

Otherbound had a certain uniqueness that other books lack. Not only does the author evidently have a wildly creative mind, she also incorporates diversity into Otherbound. The characters are LGBT, Hispanic, disabled, mute etc. The character relationships were astounding. Whether it was the relationship between two love interests or between family, Otherbound made the interactions realistic, hopeful, and heartbreaking.

Also, I loved the unpredictability of this novel. I was never sure what would occur next. And two revelations in the novel caught me totally off guard, but, when I reread parts of the book, made total sense to me. Both of these new bits of knowledge were about magic and the two worlds! This brings me onto my next topic, the magic and worldbuilding! For fear of spoilers, I won't say much except the author had her world, and the awesome magic within, down pat!

Otherbound's ending is spectacular. Nothing is tied up in a nice red ribbon but the story ends at just the right place. Also, I was impacted tremendously by one of the sentences on the very last page. I may or may not have leaked a few tears.

Corrine Duyvis has truly written a gem. The book has it all: a fantastic plot, a vivid setting, diverse characters, major feels, wonderful themes, and a stunning conclusion. Also, despite the length of this review, I feel as if I have barely touched upon all the amazing aspects of Otherbound! Overall, I cannot recommend Otherbound highly enough.

5/5 Stars

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review!

Wendy Darling says

3.5 stars A lot of things to admire here--particularly a fantastic premise and a clear commitment to writing about characters that are not the usual white, straight, able-bodied, cookie cutter characters. Fantasy's combined well with more modern POV, and it's nice to have YA that doesn't cater to a typical relationship "norm," even within the heterosexual one depicted. And yet, for all that it's a perfectly well-executed story, is well-written, includes danger and intrigue, and has so many merits, this story and its characters didn't move me or thrill me as much as I would have hoped.

Still, it's well worth checking out from the library, especially if you'd like to read something that doesn't feel like a well-worn mass-produced product like so many young adult books published right now in the US. I think fans of Incarceron or Poison Study might also enjoy this.

An advance copy was provided by the publisher for this review.

My friend Elena's review sums up my own overall feelings for this as well, down to the need to put the book aside for a bit, as well as the truly good work the author does as an advocate for unheard voices in the YA community: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...> In a year that has seen a lot of fanfare for the need for diversity in children's publishing, this author's stance is one of the most sincere and thought-provoking.

And our own Layla has even more positive things to say about the relationships and "the power dynamics of reading and story-telling." <http://www.themidnightgarden.net/2014...>

Their eloquent reviews are very useful if you're thinking about checking the book out.

Jaclyn says

An inventive and gripping debut! I was lucky enough to pick this up at ALA Midwinter and it was one of the first books I started reading. I was instantly intrigued by the concept of Nolan seeing another world whether he blinks.

One thing I feel Corinne did so well was conveying both the wonder AND the alienation and trauma of having an ability like this. In that, it brought to mind, of all things, *The Time-Traveler's Wife*. In the real world, everyone around Nolan thinks he's having seizures and hallucinations. As the story opens we even find out he's lost a foot/leg because of blacking out. I felt instant sympathy for him, but at the same time, when he wasn't able to travel to the Dunelands for a time and the real world paled in comparison, I understood that too. Probably everyone who has ever gotten deeply lost in a fantasy world of their own making can understand this plight a little bit.

By the way, do you want more diversity in fiction? Well, I order you to buy this. It has disabilities, multiple ethnicities and skin colors, and girls in love, and none of it feels poorly researched or crammed in just for the heck of it. Plus, this book passes my own private test with flying colors: all that diversity adds to the book, but it would STILL BE INTERESTING even if you stripped it all away. Corinne isn't just using these aspects of the characters to add exoticism or angst.

What I also loved about this book was that it was very different. It really tried a lot of things I've never seen before, which made it a great ride that had me constantly wondering "What's next?" The unique world-building did confuse occasionally. I struggled a little to understand how the magic worked, and as the book gets to the climax there is a lot of body-switching and a lot of characters and it's a little head-twisting. But, even if I get a little lost I'd much rather an author try something different. Heck, it gives me an excuse to re-read the book later. Plus, I might have been reading kind of fast because I wanted to know what happened...

The writing style itself feels kind of classic, like the books I read as a fantasy-devouring teen. And I mean that in the best way. I can't wait to see what's next for this author.

Robyn says

What an interesting book - a quite unusual fantasy that I'm struggling to sum up quickly, but that was

wonderfully written.

Sarah says

I think we've all seen those posts where some douchebro is like "not every thing needs a bisexual low-income mute woman of color who use sign language or a one-legged epileptic Latino guy". Those examples are done in the spirit of spiteful condescension, like it would be TOTALLY RIDICULOUS to have a story like that. Which is why it gives me exceptional pleasure to say:

Go home boys, Corinne Duyvis has just pwned you all.

Otherbound is heart-pounding page-turner that sweeps you up in a thrill ride that you can't put down. This is a 'stay up until you just can't keep your eyes open please please one more page Mom!' kind of book. It's 400 pages but I blew through it in 3 days because I was absolutely enthralled by Nolan and Amara's intertwined stories.

More at bisexual-books.tumblr.com

Corinne says

As Goodreads is a place for reviews, I want to use this space to share these four starred trade reviews:

"Rich worldbuilding, convincing nonheteronormative relationships, balanced class issues, and nuanced, ethnically diverse characters add to the novel's depth. The well-paced action builds toward an unexpected, thrilling conclusion that will leave readers eager for more from this promising new author. **Original and compelling; a stunning debut.**" —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Debut novelist Duyvis smoothly integrates elements of diversity and disability into her cast without letting them stand in for deeper characterizations ... **Duyvis makes ingenious use of a fascinating premise.**" —*Publishers Weekly*

"While Duyvis's debut is an exciting take on the fantasy genre ... the true strength of the novel is in **its positive portrayal of LGBT issues.**" —*School Library Journal*

"The portrayals are believably complex, avoiding gimmickry or heavy-handed messages in favor of **subtle, nuanced examinations of power dynamics and privilege.** Framing all this is a brilliantly paced edge-of-your seat adventure ... paired with an intriguing, twist-filled mystery ... **[T]his is how you do fantasy in a global world.**" —*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

For more reviews, check out my website.

In terms of categorizing/shelving:

- * young adult
- * fantasy (half our world, half secondary world)
- * standalone
- * dual PoV (male and female)

- * queer! queer ladies!
- * PoC leads
- * physically disabled leads

Anything else you want to know? Hit me up in the comments. Thanks for sharing my excitement. <3

Mizuki says

3.75 stars I believe. *Otherbound* is an outstanding YA fantasy novel with good world building, realistic characters and a fine ending. I also appreciate that the author included homosexual characters in her story and surprise, surprise! She also allows her male and female leads to NOT fall in love with each other.

The main characters in the book have been put into difficult situations and I like how they must face those situations in realistic ways--with no easy way out or shortcut, and I admire the ending with my whole heart.

I enjoy this book, but not love it, still I can appreciate the author's effort and the ending result of her hard works.

Sue (Hollywood News Source) says

Actual Rating: 3.5 stars

I wanted to rate this four stars, but the last thirty percent dragged. I couldn't bring myself to. Even though that is the case, *Otherbound* have a lot of selling points. I would still heartily recommend it to YA readers.

Compared to its peers, this book is distinctly progressive. The premise is quite unique. It reminds me of *Sense8*'s cluster, except they are *only* filled by two people.

Meet Nolan, the disabled, Latino main character who resides at the contemporary world. And Amara, who is disabled, bisexual, poc main character. She lives in a world where running is the only option. Duyvis executed their individual struggle very well. How disability shapes and affect someone's life. The profound difference between cultures. And a whole lot more.

I am genuinely in awe of *Otherbound*'s world building. The author weaves a different, distinct culture for each state in Amara's world. The appearance, livelihood, magic, language. This book is cleverly planned and well researched. For a standalone, there is no shortage of history.

Like I said, *Otherbound* is a book I wouldn't mind recommending to readers. If you're looking for a unique story that doesn't fall into YA's default. This is for you.

Tara says

Wow. Where to begin when discussing this book? It's part fantasy, part contemporary, and with the possession-of-other-people's-bodies element, I'd even say it could claim to be part horror. It's got real-feeling characters of many ethnicities, sexual orientations, and abilities/disabilities. It's got beautiful, evocatively descriptive passages as well as sections full of action and revelations that had me flipping pages with bated breath.

In short, this book has one of the more original and creative concepts I've encountered in some time, and is backed up all the way through with terrific writing. I think that teens looking for something different in the world of YA fantasy are really going to embrace it.

Kogiopsis says

If I were to write a wishlist for YA, this book would check so many boxes: queer characters, nonwhite characters, non-European fantasy settings, interestingly limited magic systems, multiple portrayals of disability, serious examination of the meaning of individual agency, and a smart reworking of older tropes.

And all of those aspects I loved! Nolan and Amara in particular were fascinating characters; Duyvis has clearly put a lot of thought into the way their life histories affect their perspective on the world, and it makes them compelling to read about. I had not at all expected the many, many ways Nolan's flashes of Amara's life intruded and limited his ability to function, and was glad that Duyvis paid it such close attention. While his 'seizures' are magical in nature - having lived for years with a close friend who had non-magical seizures, the impact they had rang true to me. Amara's worldview was clearly and constantly shaped by her life of servitude and abuse, and her constant sense of lacking power, and again it was beautifully rendered.

Yet... I can't rate this book higher. I want to, but it doesn't feel right. Because here's the thing: as much as I loved the concepts of this novel, there just wasn't enough execution. I mean that quite literally in terms of quantity; had there been more of the book, especially more exploration of the world of the Dunelands and of the relationships between characters there, I think I would have come away much more satisfied. As it was - the narrative wrapped up tidily at the end, but I still found myself looking for a sequel, because there's so much more to explore!

"I just want more" is not, in the grand scheme of things, the worst reason to feel unsatisfied with a book. I'm certainly interested enough in the world that I *would* buy a sequel, and I'm going to keep picking up Corinne Duyvis's other works as they come out. But I did have such high hopes for this, and there's something very sad about ending it with them unmet.

Emily Lloyd-Jones says

This book made me grateful for every time I blink and only see darkness. It has a fantastically original premise and nuanced characters. A must-read for fans of YA or fantasy.

(And I love that cover so much.)

autumn says

EXCELLENT!!!!!!!!!!!!!! genre-saving ya fantasy!!! great premise, outstanding worldbuilding, lovely characters. corinne duyvis has a wonderful way of incorporating diversity in a way that doesnt seem awkward or token-y at all, but just natural, like real life. i liked this even more than her other book, on the edge of gone, and now i cant wait for her next one!

representation: one main character, nolan, is disabled (prosthetic foot and fantasy epilepsy) and has indigenous mexican heritage (nahuatl). the other main character, amara, is disabled (mute, uses a sign language) and bi; her (spoiler) gf, cilla, is gay. i couldnt quite keep track of the fantasy nationalities so i cant say for sure but i think cilla is supposed to be black? most of the characters are described as being dark skinned at some point or another, at least

Elena says

I struggled for a long time about how to rate this book and how to write this review, because here's the thing: Even though this book wasn't my favorite, reading this book and seeing things here and there on the internet has made me a *huge* fan of its author, Corinne Duyvis. And even though this was a "meh" book for me, there are several really awesome things about it that make me absolutely sure I'll be recommending it over and over in the coming years.

Otherbound has two protagonists, Nolan and Amara. Nolan lives in our world, and from the time he was very young, whenever Nolan closes his eyes he finds himself riding along as a passenger in another person's life. It has cost him a normal life (and, when he was younger, his leg, gone in an accident caused by one of his "seizures" when he blinked), and his entire family has suffered. Nolan's unwitting host is Amara, and she inhabits a completely different world, where she's an indentured servant on the run with a cursed deposed princess. For over a decade, Nolan has been a helpless passenger, tagging along with Amara. But then, something changes, and Nolan is able to take control of Amara's body. Suddenly, Amara becomes aware that not only does she have a shitty, dangerous life, she's got a parasitic person tagging along in her mind, and her body isn't completely her own. As Amara's life takes a turn for the even more dangerous, Amara and Nolan must learn how best to work together to ensure that both of them have safe and happy futures.

The first thing I loved about this book is that it had a new and interesting premise. I've always loved the mental connections trope, and this was a completely different spin on it, with characters who share a mental connection across worlds. I haven't read anything like it before, so that was refreshing.

The other thing I loved about this book--and the reason I wholeheartedly recommend it despite my three stars--is that Duyvis made a clear and conscious decision to write protagonists with racial, ethnic, sexual, and body diversity. In a single book, she's got a Mexican-American boy with Nahua heritage who has one leg, and a bisexual dark-skinned girl who had her tongue cut out as a child and communicates via sign language. And none of those characteristics really define or overwhelm the characters--this isn't an "issue" book, this is just a book with characters who happen to be the most diverse protagonists I've ever read in YA. Amara is bisexual? No big deal, just a fact. Nolan speaks a mixture of English and Spanish with his family and misses out on Nahuatl language lessons because of his disability (the "seizures" that land him in Amara's world, not his leg).

I was so prepared to love this book. And yet it took me two and a half months to read. Yikes. I kept setting it aside to pick up other books. It was easy to set aside. Things were happening, but it felt like they were happening in slow-mo. For whatever reason--and I still can't put my finger on any one thing that was wrong--I just couldn't engage with this book. This isn't a particularly huge book, but when I finished, I breathed a sigh of relief that I was finally--*finally!*--done with the Book that Wouldn't End.

But despite the fact that this book ended up not being my cup of tea, I will champion it because it represents what I dearly hope is the beginning of a wave of diverse, original speculative fiction written by people who are committed to making the fiction landscape one that is representative of our diverse world.

Thanks to Amulet for providing me with an ARC of this book through a Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

Robin Herrera says

This book was SUCH a joy to read. I loved all the way the characters were described, and the clothes, and the way this didn't feel like any other fantasy book I'd read. I also really loved the way a romance between two people of different statuses actually took into account how the status difference affected their relationship. (I'm a fan of "Unequal Pairings," as they're known by TV Tropes.)

The way it ended, too, made me really happy. I refuse to give anything away, but the way it was written, and the sentiment behind it, and the general feeling of it made me so glad I'd invested a bit of my life with these characters.

PLUS, TWISTS. Not only were there LOTS, they were SURPRISING and GAME-CHANGING!

I am really looking forward to adding this book to my shelf when it comes out in June!
