



De duistere kant van de liefde

Rafik Schami , Sander Hoving (Translator)

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Het verhaal van de verboden liefde van Faried en Rana is de rode draad in Rafik Schami's fantastische roman, die veel meer is dan een liefdesgeschiedenis. Het is een aangrijpend beeld van het Midden-Oosten vanaf het einde van het Osmaanse Rijk tot in onze dagen, een gebied dat een speelbal is van oorlogen en opstanden, geheime genootschappen en wrede dictaturen.

Het is de geschiedenis van het Syrische volk, dat gebukt gaat onder het juk van politiek en religie. En het is het portret van de mysterieuze en fascinerende stad Damascus, die met veel liefde en tederheid tot leven wordt gebracht. Rafik Schami betovert de lezer van de eerste tot de laatste bladzijde en neemt hem mee op een reis met vele onvergetelijke personages. Drie generaties omspant deze roman, die de donkerste kanten van de mens laat zien en tegelijkertijd een loflied is op de kracht van de liefde.

Er is maar één woord voor de grote inventiviteit waarmee Schami een tovertapijt knoopt uit de donkere wol van bloedwraak, stammentwisten en familievetes, doorschoten met de zilverdraden van de liefde, en dat woord is: grandioos. Voortdurend schept hij nieuwe beelden die een onvergetelijke indruk achterlaten, noit raakt hij buiten adem, nooit verliest hij aan kracht. Ik kan de lezer een ding verzekeren: u gaat een Sheherazade beleven van een stralende kleurenpracht, een grote liefdesroman, maar het scherpe mes van verdriet blijft u niet bespaard."

-Die Zeit

De duistere kant van de liefde Details

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Hilal says

הנהגה נכונה לראות את הספר הזה כהמשך ישיר של הסדרה "המבט" - וזהו טיפוס של ספרים שהוציאה הוצאת זמורה ביתן. הספר הזה נראה לי כמו סדרה של ספרים שכתב אותו המחבר, וזהו טיפוס של ספרים שכתב אותו המחבר. הספר הזה נראה לי כמו סדרה של ספרים שכתב אותו המחבר, וזהו טיפוס של ספרים שכתב אותו המחבר. הספר הזה נראה לי כמו סדרה של ספרים שכתב אותו המחבר, וזהו טיפוס של ספרים שכתב אותו המחבר.

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Laura-Ann says

This took me far too long to read. The blurb on the back gives the impression it will be a murder mystery kind of story that it sent in Syria, so I figured I would see how investigations like that work in that setting. It's nothing like that. Around 95%, possibly more, of the book bears absolutely no relation to the original event at the opening of the book. There was, frankly, no need to tell a story going back over such a long period of time to only get to the original event and summarise the outcome of it in a few pages. And it even felt like there wasn't a proper outcome, like the author just couldn't be bothered by that point.

Like some other reviewers I was expecting to read descriptions of Damascus and other parts of Syria that would give a true feeling of the area and that was one of the reasons that I got the book. There didn't appear to be much of this, there was hardly anything to describe or give character to the areas it was set in.

The story isn't even consistent in its timeline and jumps all over the place for at least the first third of the entire book before settling on the characters whose story is to be told. As it goes on the spelling and grammar gets worse - I can't tell if that's just a lack of proofreading, a poor translator or because there isn't quite a direct translation of what is being said. That said, it was written in German - a language that is easily translated to English.

For all of the hours that I put into this book most of them feel like they were wasted. I wouldn't recommend this to anyone unless you like banal families that go back multiple generations without anything worth sharing.

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Mostafa Mostafa says

This book started in a really amazing and creative manner, which reminded me of bks like "house of the spirits" and "one hundred years of solitude"....aaand that was really promising!
That was untill the bk was all centered around Farid and the plot goes astray...focusing on stuff that really didnt make any difference regarding the plot and was just used to fill more and more pages!
We could have been better off without many secondary characters and details that were simply a waste of time!
The backbone of the plot, the love story and the clan's fight, was really well written and interesting to read!
A gd back, not a great one, but gd none theless!

Fiona says

The Dark Side of love is an 853 page tome, set in Syria and written in German. Rafik Schami grew up in Syria but moved to Germany in 1971.

From the description on the back cover you would think this is a murder mystery, but it isn't in the general sense. It starts at the end and then works it's way backwards and forwards to create a mosaic of life and love that lead towards the end.

It is set between Damascus and the village of Mala, homeland of the warring Mushtak's and Shahin families, who are both of the Christian minority who live within Syria. The Mushtak's are Catholic and the Shahin's are Orthodox – but the original argument between the two is mostly forgotten, replaced by decades of hatred and wrong-doings between the two families.

Caught between the two, Farid, a Mushtak and Rana, a Shahin, fall madly in love. Their love is illicit and from the beginning doomed.

The first half of the book goes backwards and forwards in time – starting in the present, moving backwards and forwards through time until it settles down half way through and become a more linear story. It is slow but well written – Schami breaks the common rule of writing to show and not tell, but it is so well written that it works.

Syria is a country ravaged by political coups for many decades, most which fail and very few lasting more than a few years, if that. Schami slightly changes the names of the various dictators making it somewhat hard to place within historical reality, which I found rather unsatisfying. I would like to have learnt more about

התקופה הזו הייתה מרתקת מאוד. הסיפור הראשי היה מעניין, אבל הייתה הרבה יותר סדרת סיפורי צדדים. מצאתי אותם מפזרים. קראתי חצי מהספר ואפילו לא הצלחתי להעלות את העניין להגמרו. אני חושב שזה היה יכול להיות ספר מעולה לחצי מהאורך ויותר דגש על הדמויות.

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Bridget says

The main story was interesting. However, there were too many side stories. I found them distracting. I read half of the book and just couldn't drum up the interest to finish it. I think it would have been an excellent book at half of its length and more focus on the main characters.

sara siza says

Since I bought this book in October 2013, it has been a challenge to get time and start reading it as I have never read those types of a long length book. The first 50 Pages been hard to Understand what the book were about, as it was not matching the title of the book. However this book is now one my masterpiece and favorite book, as the author have create a very individual and a unique type of writing, by connecting and linking more then 200 characters an one novel. This book is explaining of the power of Love and believe how to overcome the difficulties and barriers regarding many characters Father love to a Daughter, Mother to a Son , even an the strong love the Matta found within his auntie where she was holding a huge love to his nephew which he could not find it within his parents.

This book is reveals the true dark side of love within Arab's society, which they never accept the love from another nation as well as never quench a hate. As it shown within the two clan the hate has pass down to the third generation and it have affect a huge disaster for Rana and Farid. The novel highlight the power of dictator rule how it have been affect the individual human's life, and how everyone could take his or her revenge by the power of dictators that start from the ministry down to the power of clans and tribes.

Furthermore, the love the author had to publish his own book, which took him to overcome all the hard parts during reading, writing, producing and THINKING as well as LONGING to his own country which all those feelings made him to come up with this book.

On the other hand, this book it will take you to the heart of Damascus, the heart of the blossoms of Cactus. I really suggest for whom loves to know what love is! what a dictator can do! what hate can do! what is the hope and patient can breed! I recommend the Dark Side Of Love.....

The style of each chapter of this book, is literally has been inspired from each Mosaic's square beauty.....

Chrissie says

I am so very frustrated with this book! The violence is repetitive. The sex is disturbingly portrayed, and it is repetitive too. There is no beauty in any love relationship. Beauty....I thought I would glimpse the beauty of the Syrian landscape. No! I thought I would be drawn into learning about Syrian history and culture. I thought I would get a feel for Damascus. All of this is lacking.

There is no emotional tie between the reader and the numerous characters. You meet a character and he is married and has six children and then is killed or dies of an illness. All within three pages. Then the next character is delivered to you in the next two pages, and so on and so on. Yes, I am exaggerating a teeny bit, but not much. I need a feeling of attachment to at least one or two characters. I feel nothing for any one of them. Why? There are too many, there is zero dialog and you are told rather than having been shown. The classical failure of poorly written books.

Have I learned interesting facts of history? No! I have been told in a few short sentences about the conniving behavior and bribery of those in power, but there is no continuity to the historical facts. There is little substance to show me how the people were affected by life under these leaders. They merely appear and

disappear.

This book is poorly written. There is not one beautiful or thought provoking line. You learn nothing, neither about human behavior, history, Damascus nor Syria. You couldn't care less about any of the characters. There is no humor. It is inexcusable that more than 200 pages is necessary for a book to become interesting or the slightest engaging, so yes, I am dumping this book.

Through page 175:

I hope this improves. There are two Syrian families that have a blood feud. If you can kill someone in the other family, you do it! Guess what happens then? A girl from one family and a guy from the other feuding family fall in love. Surprising? The biggest problem is that I have met about fifty people from these two families. (Thank God there are two complete family trees in the front of the book.) Too many characters to feel a thing for any one of them, let alone keep their names straight! Yes, there is murder and fornication and then another murder and more fornication. Multiply that by three or four. None of the characters mean anything at all to me so I couldn't care less..... I hope this improves. I have heard the book has a slow start.

Marie says

I really think the blurb on Goodreads and on the back of my English paperback does this book a disservice, making it out to be a simple murder mystery when it is in fact an 800-page social history of Damascus and wider Syria that was 30+ years in the writing. The murder plot exists mainly to conveniently bookend an epic story of decades of clan rivalry, peppered with countless loosely-related vignettes that serve to illuminate daily life in an Arab state and the way different cultural and political groups coexist there. I've seen some reviewers have complained that this book is full of violence, despair, honour killings, political persecution...that's true, but there is also joy, humour, friendship, strong women, lots to provide balance. I found it compelling & easy to read. Well worth the time spent on such a doorstep of a novel.

Najati Matrook says

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generation, the book and its characters started to grow on me after having ploughed through the first third of the novel. While I found the repetitiveness of violence and forbidden love a little bit tiring at first, it became one topic of many in the course of the book. I truly enjoy the Oriental way of telling a story - the narrator kind of meanders through urban Damascus and rural Mala, stopping here and there without obvious reason, thus creating a vivid image of the city, the country and its history. I've found this novel in a series dedicated to world's cities, and Damascus is definitely the hidden protagonist of the book. The prose is beautiful and evocative, and makes one smell the odours of the city, hear the chatter of the women and the noise of the children playing in the streets and the sheer vastness of the novel with its dozens of characters and sidelines reminds me of the labyrinth of Oriental medinas - definitely a book which makes one long for a journey to its settings.

Besides, I learned quite much about the history of this country and I believe Rafik Schami is a rather unbiased narrator - of course, most of his main characters are cristian Arabs, but there are Muslims and Jews as well and for me he did a good job in giving a voice to all the different parts of this complex society rather favouring a humanistic approach towards life. Especially women's lot is represented in a way that makes me admire his insight into the female point of view. Schami shows the beauty and the colours of Syria while at the same time pointing out the weaknesses of a patriarchal society in which tolerance and freedom of thought are not guaranteed. It's obvious that Schami's own biography has influenced this novel a lot and that parts of Farid's life is based on Schami's own experiences - like his main character, Schami had to leave Syria for political reasons and started a new life in Germany, writing this extraordinarily beautiful novel in a language not his native one which is quite a miracle to me.

Parts of this book made me laugh, others made me cry, and I'm sorry to leave Farid, Rana and the rest of the protagonists after the long journey I've shared with them.

Wael Al-alwani says

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Nisreen says

A literary mosaic about the mystery that is Damascus, where every "little piece tells a story, and when you have read them they show you their own secret colours. And as soon as you have read all the stories you will see the picture."

A story of forbidden love, misfortune and grief brought about by the antiquated Arabic notion of honour, and a nation's inability to come to terms with its multiplicity and embracing the richness of it's social, religious, political and ethnic mosaic.

Rafik Scahmi is a brilliant and gifted story teller, that's why he can get away with cramming the narrative with numerous details and characters, which I doubt caused the irregularities in the novel timeline, even though they contribute nothing to the plot nor to the characters' development. Yet may seem amusing to the Western reader who would like to get into the details of Easterners' customs and idiosyncrasies.

All in all a brilliant portrait of Damascus from the point of view of minorities, and a highly recommended reading for anyone looking for a less conventional history of Syria.

Suzanne says

I gave it the old college try, but decided to abandon this novel after 100 pages. *The Dark Side of Love* is a story of Rana Shahin and Farid Mushtak, whose love story is similar to Romeo and Juliet, only this tale takes place in Syria, and the fighting between the families is much more violent. The novel begins when a body is found – a high ranking Muslim officer, and I presume that the remainder of the story unfolds like crime fiction, which is not really my cup of tea. There are many reviewers who gave this book high marks, but perhaps they were lovers of crime fiction.

At over 800 pages, this book just didn't capture my interest enough to stick with it.

Mark Staniforth says

Spanning eight hundred and ninety-six pages and three sprawling generations of Syrian families, 'The Dark Side Of Love' is a massive, monumental paean to passion in all its tragic glory.

Decades in its creation, Schami's work consists of three hundred and four separate fragments ordered together in the same intricate manner as the mosaics which adorn the Arab world's most splendid mosques. 'Each of these pieces tells a story, and when you have read them they show you their own secret colours,' says the author in his afterword, relaying the vivid dream he says finally presented him with the concept for this narrative form. 'As soon as you have read all the stories, you will see the picture.'

Seldom have books this long and exhaustive remained so utterly compelling from the first page to the last. Schami has not left as much as a single tile out of place.

'The Dark Side Of Love' starts with a murder and ends with its solution. But this is no detective novel. This is first and foremost a book about Syrian love, unfurled in startling vignettes of tragic, forbidden trysts that sprinkle its pages like the sugar-coated fennel seeds which fall onto the streets of Damascus one night as if by magic.

Two strangers gallop into the remote, mountain village of Mala in 1907, fugitives from a brutal arranged marriage, and inadvertently begin a feud between the Mushtak and Shahin clans which will spill the blood of generations to come. Some seventy years later in Damascus, the teenaged Farid Mushtak will meet and fall in love with a girl whom fate cruelly dictates is a Shahin. Their choice is stark: to deny their passion, or face death.

Embracing a breathtaking array of characters, but managing to retain a clarity characteristic of so much translated Arabic fiction, Schami proceeds to fill in the gap of those three-score years, revealing why Farid and Rana's nascent love is doomed.

Schami's work is in itself a love letter to a Damascus which in the course of his book survives the turmoil of occupation by the French, the terror of a never-ending series of brutal dictators and their Secret Service goons, short-lived union with Egypt and the birth of Israel. Yet so richly painted is Schami's picture of Damascene life that through all its turmoil and tragedies, the city never loses its allure.

The novel develops through countless doomed affairs and periods of suppression, both individual and collective. In the 'Book Of Laughter', there are beautiful anecdotes about Damascene childhood; in the 'Book Of Hell', a nightmarish portrayal of life in Syria's secret prisons. It involves an extraordinary amount of sex,

me ha envuelto en una Mil y una noches de historias prohibidas; de secretos y pasiones, de carceles y manicomios, de amores imposibles y venganzas... Sin dudar, de momento este es el mejor libro que he leído este año!

"No hay peor falta de libertad que la que uno se ve obligado a sopotar tras haber aprendido a respirar libremente."

Fatma says

This is without a doubt one of my favorite books of all time. I'm surprised to see that some of the other reviewers criticized for being yet another book about honor killings in Arabia; one of the things I loved about was that it did NOT deal with honor killings as the all-encompassing story, in fact, it was just one of the many haunting and exquisitely told stories in this mammoth of a book.

Definitely the length of the book should not be looked at as a hindrance: once I really got into the book after the first 70 pages or so, I found myself thinking, yay I still have a lot more to go! I actually didn't want to get to the end because I was so thoroughly enjoying myself.

Somewhere towards the end I remember the author mentioning the story as a mosaic, and I think that's the perfect way to describe this novel. I also think it's the ideal way to show readers an image of life in an Arab country: each piece is a little fragment of the whole, on its own may not make much sense, but its still beautiful, and will be laid down, and little by little the image will build up in your head, until you see the whole picture.

Love is everywhere in this book, but I think the greatest love of all is the author's love of Syria, the country from which he has been exiled for many years. The dark side of love for land is a very strong theme throughout. Whilst personally I can't get over the title - I feel it's too cheesy to do the book justice, I guess it fits in some ways.

A. says

I've reached page 172 and I admit I've lost interest!

The book is cluttered with too many characters; I can't tell who's who anymore.

I believe Rafik Schami is gifted in story telling but needs to acquire some zooming skills.

This is the second book I read for him and I like the Calligraphers Secret way better than this one

the other reason that pushed me away from this book is the amount of negative energy packed between its lines

This writer has the talent for romantic settings, so I wish to read for him a love story that is free from religious and political conflicts

