

I Sweep the Sun Off Rooftops

Hanan Al-Shaykh , ????? ????? , Catherine Cobham (Translator)

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Since the U.S. publication of *Women of Sand and Myrrh*--which has now sold more than 35,000 copies and was selected as one of the Fifty Best Books of 1992 by Publishers Weekly--Hanan al-Shaykh has attracted an ever larger following for her dazzling tales of contemporary Arab women. In these seventeen short stories--eleven of which are appearing in English for the first time--al-Shaykh expands her horizons beyond the boundaries of Lebanon, taking us throughout the Middle East, to Africa, and finally to London. Stylistically diverse, her stories are often about the shifting and ambiguous power relationships between different cultures--as well as between men and women. Often compared to both Margaret Atwood and Margaret Drabble, Hanan al-Shaykh is "a gifted and courageous writer" (*Middle Eastern International*).

I Sweep the Sun Off Rooftops Details


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Author : Hanan Al-Shaykh , ????? ????? , Catherine Cobham (Translator)

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From Reader Review I Sweep the Sun Off Rooftops for online ebook

Coco says

A very enjoyable collection of short stories from the Arab world. Most of them involve the relationship dynamics of the Arab culture--men/women, marriage, conservative/liberal dress, Europeans/Arabs, etc. Many of them also talk about how Western culture has snuck in and what people think of it--some become obsessed and totally abandon their own culture only to find later they've denied themselves, some reject it totally, some in between. An interesting look at women, veils, sand, and what happens behind closed doors. (August 2009)

Alix Méav says

The one story that stood-out from all of the other stories in this book was "Apple." An absolutely heartbreaking and beautiful story of a girl who never receives a suitor and instead is faced with the social stigma of being an old maid in her village.

Sue says

I had high hopes for this book of short stories based in Lebanon and started reading with some of those hopes fulfilled. Gradually I found a certain sameness creeping in, primarily of writing style and tone, negativity toward most "others" in whichever protagonists' life and constant wistfulness, dreaminess. Perhaps this comes of living in a war zone. This would not account for the style itself which sometimes seems to bludgeon the reader with its words.

There were a few stories I liked, primarily "The Spirit is Engaged Now (You May Want to Hold). Others such as "The Land of Dreams" just didn't seem to have substance, seemed to be completely unreal, beyond any possible meaning of the title I could come up with.

I didn't finish all stories, but read 2/3rds of the book, and feel that was enough to make a meaningful review of this book.

Christine says

I was curious to read stories about the Middle East and picked up the book enthusiastically at the library. Unfortunately, what I got was below my expectations.

The quality of the little stories in the book varies greatly. It seems that the stories have been written at different times in the author's life, some are memories told through a child's voice, some are coming of age and others about marriage/sex, etc.. I thought that at times the author has described the role of women in a negative way and it was a bit depressing.

Biogeek says

While I am not sure if the comparisons by some reviewers to Atwood are appropriate (are they ever?), I did enjoy this collection of short stories focused on the experience of Arab women. The locations are as varied as these stories. I love the first story in the volume, a study in method in madness.

Molly says

Nearly every story in this collection is a gem, and the writing is exceptionally terse and powerful. Young children on an Oil compound in the middle east are horrified to learn that their Indian servants have been cooking their pet rabbits, their distress calling into question the treatment of servants and the self-serving naivete of children. A woman moves from Morocco to London and learns the humiliations of freedom. Another woman wants to get a divorce but cannot ask for one, so she feigns insanity, which further traps her in her marriage. And my favorite story, "The Land of Dreams" beautifully portrays the impossible reconciliations of culture between the west and east, when a Denmark missionary is proposed to by a Yemeni man. I love the sensations this book provoked- of austerity and sensuality, of intense focus and vague alienation, very excellent.

Maria Tinawi says

This book portrays the lives of women in the modern arab world. Each chapter talks about a different family in a different country; jumping from Lebanon, to Egypt, to Yemen, and so on. The events happening in the chapters, wherever they are in the Middle East, are very realistic, and could happen to anybody at any time. The fact that the main characters are women in each chapter, shows the significance of the roll women play in the Arab World. Feminism and a woman's needs are recognised, and contributed to by the plot of the story the chapter tells. Whenever a man appears, he is acting the same way I see, or hear of, the way husbands and brothers act in the real world. This novel certainly has opened my eyes about my culture as an Arab woman; and has taught me many things I didn't know about from before. Truly a masterpiece.

Jane Routley says

I've had this book 15 years and finally took it on holidays this year intending to read it and leave it. Of course I didn't. The writing was wonderful sensuous and observant and the stories evocative portraits of the lives of contemporary Arab women without being overly grim. Like all short story collections you like some more than others I especially liked Louloulah a portrait of a woman generously in tune with her limited traditional life style and I sweep the sun off roof tops a wonderful portrayal of cultural misunderstanding. An interesting point she makes is that in oppressing its women the Arabic world only becomes more erotic because its women "are entrapped by sex, either avoiding it or trying to make it happen."

Nakib Hoq says

I picked up this book from the local library just because I was intrigued by the name of the author. Yes, sometimes I do pick up books just because the author has an exotic name. It helps me to expose myself to different perspectives and different cultures that I have never been exposed to. And so the Arab name really attracted me!

'I Sweep the Sun off Rooftops' is a collection of short stories by the Lebanese female author. Dealing with sexuality, feminism and stereotyped Arab women the characters are quite nuanced and worth giving a thought. Overall, not a bad read at all; but nothing extraordinary either.

And my favorite story in the collection is 'I Sweep The Sun Off Rooftops' by the way!

Bel Murphy says

Some of these short stories were very engaging, for instance 'the Marriage Fair', 'The Land of Dreams' and 'The Funfair'. Others were less so, with story lines that didn't appeal to me, most notably 'A Season of Madness' and the story from which the book gets its title: 'I Sweep the Sun off Rooftops'. There were some interesting insights into different cultures and I'm glad I persevered with the collection.

Diane S ? says

I loved this book, about women in the Middle East in present day, trying to keep their traditions alive while entering into a new world. Loved the visuals and the writing, learning about their cultures and the way they interacted in their daily lives. The first three stories were my favorites, but really there was not one that I disliked. Glad that I read this book, not one I would have picked up had it not been a book group read.
