

DEAR READER,

HARVEST TIME

It seems that book publishing follows the passing of seasons; autumn is not only harvest time in the fields but also for publishers in releasing new titles. Of the rich crops that we got on the market during the autumn of 2014 I would like to highlight two that provided me great pleasure during the cold winter months: *Papegaai vloog over de IJssel* (*Parrot Flew over the IJssel* by Kader Abdolah, and *The Architect's Apprentice* by Elif Shafak.

Papegaai vloog over de IJssel is the latest novel of Kader Abdolah, which is the pen name of Hossein Sadjadi Ghaemmaghani Farahani, was published in September 2014 by the publisher Prometheus in the Netherlands. Kader Abdolah In his mid-30s he fled to the Netherlands as a political refugee in 1988. There he learned Dutch in a record time and in order to overcome the trauma of fleeing and exile he started to write in this language and publish columns, short stories and then novels. Soon he became the Netherlands' number one writer. *Het huis van de moskee* (*The House of the Mosque*) catapulted Abdolah onto the Dutch bestseller lists. It was voted second best Dutch novel ever in the Netherlands. His works have been translated into most of the major languages. It seems that his destiny was to become a literary spokesman in the West for the Persian literature in specific and for the Oriental culture in general.

Having read and liked all his volumes I was reading his latest novel with much anticipation. The main topic of this novel is the fate of immigrants in the Netherlands, who arrived during the past 25 years or so, mainly from countries with Muslim background. It is a relatively new voice in the European literature and it tackles the historic process of the arrival of some 30 million immigrants to Europe during the past few decades, of which about 1 million landed in the Netherlands. This process affected not only their lives, but mostly unexpectedly also the lives of the old inhabitants of their new homeland. Abdolah paints this historic process, undoubtedly using his own personal experiences too, with a fine, highly emotional and humanistic literary brush. This is literature of the highest order, neither plain documentary, nor a romanticized mass literary product. Through the parallel, intertwining and intriguing personal stories of many immigrants and of Dutchmen, we are presented with deep reflections on the human affairs at the turning of the 21st century both in Oriental lands and in the West, in this case specifically of the Netherlands. *Papegaai vloog over de IJssel* is another literary delicacy presented by this highly talented writer of Persian origin, now living and writing in the historic Dutch city of Delft, which I highly recommend to those who can read it in its original, and just let us hope that translation in major languages will follow soon.

The Architect's Apprentice is Elif Shafak's (Elif Şafak) ninth novel, this one also written originally in English and released in November 2014 by Viking. Being Turkey's bestselling female writer, her main themes are centered on cosmopolitanism and sophisticated feminism. In this novel she pays homage to

Mimar Sinan (1489-1588), the greatest Ottoman architect, and one of the greatest ones of mankind. Like Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*, the plot of *The Architect's Apprentice* is taking place in 16th century Istanbul, the Golden Century of the Ottoman Empire, which is always a fascinating epoch to read about. Elif Shafak created a fictional story based on historical events. The style of the novel exhibits all the mature elements of her writing skills like deep humanity, Sufism, and cosmopolitanism. Both those familiar with the 16th century Ottoman history and those who are not can enjoy and learn from the historical framework and the fictional story. Next to that she peppers the narrative with her usual wise ideas, comments which make the reading a real intellectual pleasure. I can only highly recommend this book for every book lover.

Flórián Farkas

Editor-in-Chief

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