

— ISLAM QUINTET 3 —

TARIQ ALI

SHADOWS OF THE
POMEGRANATE TREE

***** A NOVEL *****



Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree

Tariq Ali

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Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree Tariq Ali

Tariq Ali tells us the story of the aftermath of the fall of Granada by narrating a family saga of those who tried to survive after the collapse of their world. Ali is particularly deft at evoking what life must have been like for those doomed inhabitants, besieged on all sides by intolerant Christendom. "This is a novel that have something to say, and says it well." --"The""Guardian"

Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree Details


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Author : Tariq Ali

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From Reader Review *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* for online ebook

Roudy says

Actually it deserves 3.8. I won't deny that I really loved this novel, loved its characters, shared their feelings, dreams..etc, even was saddened at their death. The writer succeeded in portraying life at Andalusia, throughout the book you can see the gardens, the streams, smell the food. the characters are vivid and alive. Also he succeeded in showing how the muslims were civilized, how they carried the light to Europe and also their superiority to their European foes in different aspects of life. Even as conquerors they preserved the lives and civilization of their enemies never forcing anyone to convert to islam. But, the writer is at a great error in matters of islam as a religion dealing with every aspect of our everyday life. We see muslims who have extramarital affairs and the writer gives us the impression that everyone has such affairs. I don't think that Andalusians were that sinful. I can't get over the scene when Zubayda finds Hind in Ibn Daud's bed and acts as if this is normal, a situation that a muslim mother willn't see as normal even in our times. ?also we see muslims who drink wine but never touch pork, which is weird since both are prohibited(haram). If it weren't for such errors I would have willingly given it the whole 5 stars, but unfortunately I finish it and I feel disappointed.

Sue says

Though this is historical fiction, Ali's novel provides a window on the late 15th century world of al Andalus Spain, a world where Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand and the powerful heads of the Church have battled their way back to power in most of the country and have made treaties with the remaining Muslim population. These treaties promise freedom of life and religion and peace but it seems that the Queen and certain of the church leaders have other plans. Soon acts of violence against Muslim inhabitants begin with the proviso that only true converts will be allowed to stay.

The story is told through the lives of one formerly powerful and still well known Moorish family who live outside Gharnata (or Granada). Their lives are a microcosm of the beliefs and experiences of what might occur in a well to do family of that day, both enjoying the benefit of prestige and its responsibility. We see all that happens through the eyes of many generations. There is also occasional narration by the Bishop leading the Inquisition in Granada and here is a voice that makes my blood run cold.

At one point, among those worrying about the Christians who might be forming an army to come against them, one man says:

"Allah has punished us most severely. He has been watching our antics on this peninsula for a long time. He knows what we have done in his name. How Believer killed Believer. How we destroyed each other's kingdoms...." (loc 3431)

He is referring to the many wars that erupted within al-Andulus during the Muslim centuries, episodes that

ultimately weakened what had been a strong civilization.

I find myself wanting to read more, both fiction and non-fiction, about this time in history. So much of value came out of that earlier period before it was brutally ended in the Inquisition.

Recommended for historical fiction readers.

Received as an ecopy provided by NetGalley.

Chris says

I write this review after the close defeat of a potential US Senator, who believed among other things, that a Muslim should not serve in the US Senate because he wouldn't swear on the Bible (said douche bag also believes that women should stay in the home and that sex with 14-year-old girls when you're in your 30s is okay). This defeat occurred shortly after a sitting US president retweet the unverified "news" tweets of a British hate group. The tweets showed video supposedly showing Muslims behaving badly. A governmental group out of the Netherlands tweeted the president back and said, nope misbehaving dude was not immigrant and not Muslim, and was in jail. When questioned about his use of fake news, the spokeswoman for the president who chants fake news 99% of time, said the reality of the videos wasn't important, for the president felt they added to the conversation. When it was revealed that the last two "Muslim" terrorists had been radicalized after their arrival to the US, one could hear crickets chirping. Additionally, there are places in the US where a book that simply depicts a character who is Muslim is banned because it is promoting a religion other than Christianity. I have even taught students who refused to read part of the Korean in a World Lit Class, and before you ask, we had read parts of the Old and New Testament first (granted, I could understand the formal service member's refusal. Didn't agree with it, but could understand. The other students not so much).

Apparently, there are people in America who would feel right at home in the Reconquista, except for that Catholic bit because according to some of those Americans Catholics worship the Pope.

Ali's novel is about a family in Granada right after the conquest by Ferdinand and Isabella. The family is stuck, unsure of whether or not their culture will survive because of the pressure to convert. In short, Ali is telling of the death of a culture, of a lost, one that the reader feels most keenly at the start of the book with the description of book burning.

Is Ali's book flawless? No, and, in fact, it is in many ways one of those quiet books where everything is building but the bulk of the actual action is "small" family drama and issues -who will the daughters marry, what is the mystery of the old hermit, and whether a great aunt is truly mad. It is the focus on the quiet, on the family of quasi-believers who are not fully devout that Ali shows how hatred, extremism – on both sides – starts. For the actions of the Christians lead to hard choices of the Muslims, but it is those violent actions that also harden the Christians, against those values they should espouse. Ali's book is warning, intentional or not, about hatred of a culture or religion and how it destroys all.

Jalilah says

This novel by Tariq Ali is the first book in the "Islam Quintet, a series of stand alone novels based on different periods of Islamic history. *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* takes place in Granada, Al Andalous, Spain 1499, a time when the Castilian Christians had just taken over Granada, the last of the Arab-Muslim cities. Anyone familiar with this time in history will know that these stories will always be sad. Under "Moorish" rule Christians and Jews were allowed to freely practice their religions. When Isabelle and Ferdinand took over they signed an agreement that the Muslims and Jews would still be allowed to practice their religions, however within a short period they began persecuting all non-Christians, banning not only their religions, but Arabic and Hebrew languages as well as their dress and customs, (such as bathing). The Jews and Muslims had a choice to either leave or convert. These people had called Spain their home for 800 years. For many moving was not an option, however converting also did not solve their problems. New Christian converts known as "Conversos" were looked upon with suspicion and ultimately were subjected to torture until they confessed that they only converted to save their skin. It was a no win situation and this is the situation in which we find the characters in this book. The story focuses on the Banu Hudayl, an old Arab-Muslim family that has lived in the countryside of Granada for 800 years. The Hudayl family chooses neither to convert or leave. Aside from the characters, *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* is basically a retelling of actual historical events and from this angle it's an excellent way to deepen ones knowledge about this time period. It is also clear that Ali's purpose is to show how things change in history. While nowadays many in the West view Islam and Muslim countries as being backward and fanatic, this was not always the case. At the time of the reconquest it was the Christians who were backward and fanatic and Islam was definitely the more progressive religion. One of my few complaints about this novel would be that the author does this in a rather heavy handed way. The Spanish are depicted as inhuman monsters and the Arabs are depicted as being so tolerant and liberal it seemed over the top. In particular their attitude towards sex seemed unbelievable. An example would be a young woman who wants to sleep with her fiancé before their marriage and the mother actually walks in on them and is not upset. Another example would be the young man confesses both to his fiancé and her father that he'd previously had a sexual relationship with another man and both father and daughter react fine with it. The father only wants to be sure that the young man really loves his daughter. I was going to write this off to the author's imagination, but then spoke to an acquaintance who is a professor of medieval Arab history. The professor confirmed that in Muslim Spain depending on which period they actually were quite liberal sexually and there is a lot of erotic poetry and literature confirming it. From what I've been researching same sex relations were also not uncommon, so I guess this was not Tariq Ali's wishful thinking! There was one incident involving incest that was off putting for me, so much that it prevented me from enjoying the novel as I should have. This is too bad because the characters are not even very relevant to the story and could have been left out entirely.

Dergrossest says

This tragically beautiful tale of the aftermath of the Reconquest of Moorish Spain is told through the lives of three generations of a noble Muslim family living near Grenada. The promises of tolerance betrayed by Ferdinand and Isabella, the story revolves around the family's attempt to survive a sadistic Cardinal intent on the destruction of not just their existence, but every memory of them, their faith and their way of life. While the Catholic Church is the ostensible bad actor in this story, the real villain is religion itself. Every religion's greatest enemy is its own adherents, and this book demonstrates how Islam in Iberia weakened itself fatally through the same factionalism, conservatism and intolerance which plagues it today throughout the world.

While the author also illuminates the same failings in Christianity, and its similarly self-defeating tendency toward extremism, it is the rare glimpse into the struggle between moderate and fundamentalist Muslims, and the glory which was the Moorish Kingdoms of Spain, which is most interesting. Highly recommended.

Note: Even though it is the first volume of a 5 part series, this reads like a stand alone work.

Diana Shamaa says

Gradina cu rodii simbolizeaza viata, credinta, prosperitatea, dorintele, nasterea si renasterea. E scut impotriva dusmanilor, martora a iubirii, depozitar al secretelor. E locul unde membrii clanului gasesc un refugiu atunci cand au nevoie.

<https://dianashamaablog.com/2017/11/0...>

lina Rashdan says

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Ahmed says

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Ayat Mahmoud says

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Moors in Spain and their expulsion during the Inquisition. I didn't know previously that it was Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, the ones who sent Columbus to discover America, that were also behind the terrible Spanish Inquisition! The book brought to life the fall of Granada, the terrible burning of all the Arabic literature, except for a few hundred medical science books. Furthermore this book dispelled a lot of misconceived ideas about how Muslims look on sex and marriage. At least back then! For me the characters were very real, in fact their thoughts and feelings felt very modern. I was happy to read a book that isn't about the very strict Islamists. The Moors were a very tolerant people, and I enjoyed learning more about that culture. I feel that what they went through was horrible and it was the Christian world that did this to them. I have to understand their anger. What I cannot get out of my mind is that wars, all wars, have to stop. People perpetuate the killing because they cannot forget what has happened to them in the past. We need a clean slate - but how do you achieve that? And what do you do when a leader makes the life of a people in a country "unlivable". Shouldn't that leader be removed? But who decides, and here we go again, with more fighting and killing. Sigh. I have no answers I am glad I read the book. More people should read this book. Maybe knowledge will help us understand others. Now I have to read a light book, one that you lick your lips after each sentence - I think *Lighthousekeeping* by Jeanette Winterson will do that.

Entertaining, and might be useful to make some people acquainted with the tragedy of the Spanish Moriscos. Nonetheless, the author passed some important historical errors. One of those - the plot is in Granada around 1499-1500. There are Jews at the service of Christians or living among the Moriscos, and they have Jewish names... That is simply impossible, since Jews had been unfortunately expelled from Spain in 1492. Those who remained were officially Christians and, as such, couldn't have had Jewish names.

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