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The Sheikh's Detective

By A. Alwan

Translated by Timothy Reece

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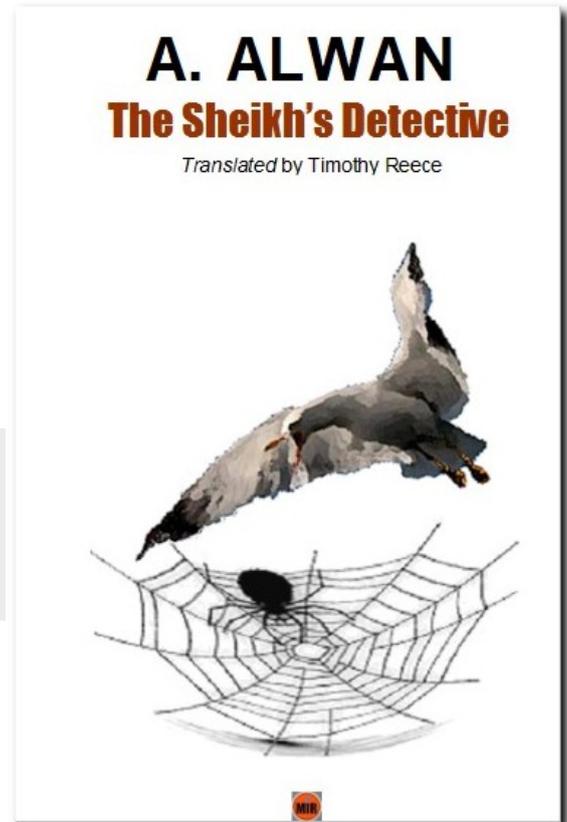
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The protagonists of this novel are a Muslim Arab wealthy man (the Sheikh), who's visiting Brighton in search of Julian Smith; the detective he hired back home (via the Internet) to find his teenage son Nasser, and an English postman who volunteered to help the Sheikh in this issue. Both struggle with their own confused inner lives in the sleepy town that seems only disturbed by the squawks of the seagulls and the waves of tourists on the beach of Brighton.

The novel, however, provides great deal of understanding of humans' emotions and conditions, with some very memorable scenes of lovemaking and manslaughter.



'If there is an animal which is smaller than a mule and larger than an ass which sports white fur, then it is a llama. The Arabian Peninsula is not known for this animal which lives in Latin America, so it wasn't heard of before the discovery of this region.

If Prophet Mohammed had flown from Mecca to Jerusalem to pray on what would become the site of the al-Aqsa mosque, Allah must have given him a strange animal to enable him to make the journey in the blink of an eye. Since this occurred at a time when Prophet Mohammed denied the concept of miracles, how then did he manage to marry that act with his denial?

Ibrahim was sitting at the dinner table which was filled with various religious books he had requested from his country. He had a dishevelled look with long hair and a beard. He read, discussed and reasoned to try and arrive at the truth of what makes up his religion; how it interlinked with other religions; traditions and fatwas; previous prophets and the stories in the Koran which had been produced to attract followers' P126

'In just one paragraph, Alwan controversially proposes that the entire understanding of miracles, and indeed religion, is based on myth and fallacy. A reader with significant knowledge of Islam would grasp this reference with ease. However, the same may not be said for a non-Muslim background. This example alone demonstrates my belief that translation is not merely a conduit of language, but of ideas and culture - and with that becomes an art form'

The translator



A. Alwan was born in 1941. After completing the high school in Baghdad, he left Iraq for good to work as a freelance journalist and researcher. He lived in Beirut through the Lebanese civil war before moving to Cairo, Khartoum, Morocco, Rome, and London. He finally settled in Leeds in West Yorkshire where he dedicated his life to writing.

Alwan's work reflects the notion that there are two sides to truth, yet both are built on illusion.