



The Corpse Washer (The Margellos World Republic of Letters)

By Sinan Antoon

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The Corpse Washer (The Margellos World Republic of Letters) By Sinan Antoon

Acclaimed and celebrated in the Arab world for its vivid portrait of Iraq, this heartbreaking novel confronts the war-torn nation's horrifying recent history

Young Jawad, born to a traditional Shi'ite family of corpse washers and shrouders in Baghdad, decides to abandon the family tradition, choosing instead to become a sculptor, to celebrate life rather than tend to death. He enters Baghdad's Academy of Fine Arts in the late 1980s, in defiance of his father's wishes and determined to forge his own path. But the circumstances of history dictate otherwise. Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and the economic sanctions of the 1990s destroy the socioeconomic fabric of society. The 2003 invasion and military occupation unleash sectarian violence. Corpses pile up, and Jawad returns to the inevitable washing and shrouding. Trained as an artist to shape materials to represent life aesthetically, he now must contemplate how death shapes daily life and the bodies of Baghdad's inhabitants.

Through the struggles of a single desperate family, Sinan Antoon's novel shows us the heart of Iraq's complex and violent recent history. Descending into the underworld where the borders between life and death are blurred and where there is no refuge from unending nightmares, Antoon limns a world of great sorrows, a world where the winds wail.

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Editorial Review

Review

“The Corpse Washer is a remarkable achievement . . . a compact masterpiece, a taut, powerful and utterly absorbing tale that, with luck, will secure Antoon a wider, more international readership.”—*The National* (*The National*)

“Antoon gives us a remarkable novel that in 184 pages captures the experience of an Iraqi everyman who has lived through the war with Iran in the first half of the 1980s, the 1991 Gulf War over the Kuwaiti invasion, and then the 2003 war.”—*Three Percent* (*Three Percent*)

Longlisted for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize 2014.
(Independent Foreign Fiction Prize *Independent Foreign Fiction* 2014-03-11)

Winner of the 2014 Arab American Book Award in the fiction category, given by the Arab American National Museum.
(The Arab American National Museum *Arab American Book Award* 2014-06-05)

“Sinan Antoon’s self-translated (from Arabic) novel . . . is a book that comes bearing bittersweet gifts. The story can only be described as a tragedy of accumulated loss, but the language Antoon employs — simple, direct, fiercely poetic — is an affirmation of life and culture.”—*Minneapolis Star Tribune* (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*)

“A powerful and important novel of the Iraq War, and a necessary counterpoint to American stories focused almost exclusively on the suffering and trauma of Iraq’s occupiers . . . Sinan Antoon’s *The Corpse Washer* offers a moving literary elegy not only for the numberless Iraqi dead, but also for those who remain to bury them. It must be read.”—*The Kenyon Review* (*The Kenyon Review*)

“The strength of the novel is its rendering of a complex and human narrative of war and violence. Readers gain emotional attachment to characters and can relate to their everyday problems and the way that they are affected by war. Jawad’s story is one of deep sadness, chaos and confusion. The constant changes in time, the disconnected snippets of Jawad’s life, the constant loss and disappearance of characters and the haunting dream sequences make Jawad a very real character and his experiences understandable. *The Corpse Washer* is a powerful companion for anyone trying to understand the drama of post-2003 Iraq or of war in general.”—Kevin Alexander Davis, *Warscapes* (Kevin Alexander Davis *Warscapes*)

"It is not surprising to find contemporary Iraqi writers responding, like others before them in countries fated to prolonged periods of extreme stress, with a mix of black humor and gloomily whimsical fantasy . . . Not much of such work . . . has come into English. One fine exception is *The Corpse Washer*, ably translated by the author himself, Sinan Antoon, a New York-based Iraqi poet."—Max Rodenbeck, *New York Review of Books* (Mark Rodenbeck *New York Review of Books*)

Winner of the 2014 Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation.
(*The Banipal Trust for Arab Literature*)

About the Author

Sinan Antoon is a poet, novelist, and translator. He is associate professor at the Gallatin School, New York University, and cofounder and coeditor of the cultural page of *Jadaliyya*. *The Corpse Washer* is his second novel. He lives in New York City.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Krumm:

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William Ward:

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People live in this new day of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the spare time or they will get lots of stress from both daily life and work. So , if we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely sure. People is human not a robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer can unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, often the book you have read is *The Corpse Washer* (The Margellos World Republic of Letters).

Margaret Babin:

The Corpse Washer (The Margellos World Republic of Letters) can be one of your nice books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to get every word into pleasure arrangement in writing The Corpse Washer (The Margellos World Republic of Letters) nevertheless doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource info that maybe you can be one of it. This great information may drawn you into brand new stage of crucial thinking.

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