

## BOOK REVIEW

# Quill of the Dove

by Ian Thomas Shaw

Reviewed by Jim Napier

Canadian novelist Ian Thomas Shaw has taken on a topic of monumental proportions in his latest work, *Quill of the Dove*. His subject is nothing less than the conflict in the Middle East, in all of its myriad dimensions; and the result is a political thriller that is enlightening and disheartening and always riveting.

*Quill of the Dove* is a wide-ranging tale, spanning the mid-1970's to late 2007, and encompassing events that take place in Palestine, Lebanon, Greece, Spain, France, and Canada. Writing in the present tense, Shaw achieves an immediacy that keeps readers in their seats. The book has an assured—and informed—sense of place, but Shaw is no mere armchair traveller; he is someone who has made the journey, tasted the food, interacted with the locals, and above all striven to understand the viewpoints that drive that most byzantine of conflicts.

The plot revolves around the efforts of celebrated French journalist Marc Taragon to promote a private peace initiative between Palestinians and Israelis. He pulls into his plan two friends who were once adversaries in the Lebanese civil war. One is a dissident Palestinian leader, a hero in the resistance to Israel's occupation of South Lebanon; the other is a left-wing Israeli journalist, who once served as a top intelligence officer in Lebanon. Both men have had their fill of war and embrace Taragon's project to negotiate a just peace agreement that will challenge hardliners on all sides of the conflict. A young Canadian journalist, Marie Boivin, joins the effort, although her primary interest is discovering through Taragon the secret to her tragic childhood.

*Quill of the Dove* is a well-structured story in which characters large and small are convincingly described, and converging plotlines are cunningly used to build the suspense, ensuring the reader will remain hooked until the final (and surprising) pages.

Make no mistake, following the turbulent events of the Middle East requires patience and open-mindedness, and not least a certain intelligence on the part of readers, but for those willing to make the effort, Shaw provides a fine account of the impact of bigotry and the dehumanizing effect of war, and chronicles the tensions within families and the challenges of trying to broker a

peace among polarized groups whose turbulent histories reach back generations. It is a first-rate effort, and it has paid off handsomely in a richly-told and layered tale that succeeds on many levels. Thoughtful readers whose goal is to gain a better understanding of one of the most troubled regions of the world will be rewarded, but so too will the casual reader simply in search of a gripping and well-told tale. *Quill of the Dove* is quite simply one of the most rewarding novels I've read in a very long time.

*Quill of the Dove* will be published by Guernica Editions (MiroLand Imprint) in early 2019.

IAN THOMAS SHAW

