



## Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter: A Palestinian Fairy Tale

By Emile Habiby

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**Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter: A Palestinian Fairy Tale** By Emile Habiby

Fiction. Middle Eastern Studies. Translated from the Arabic by Peter Theroux. This hypnotically lyrical last novel by the leading Palestinian prose writer of the twentieth century is equal parts allegory, folk tale, memoir, political commentary, and ode to a ruined landscape. Rendered for the first time ever in English by one of the leading translators of contemporary Arabic literature, it is a haunting tour de force-essential reading for anyone interested in the imaginative life of the Middle East. "In Arabic, Habiby has had no precursors and has had no successors.... Acknowledging his debt to Voltaire and Swift, he has proven inimitable." -Middle East Magazine.

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## **Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter: A Palestinian Fairy Tale By Emile Habiby Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The final novel from Habiby (1921–1996), written in 1990, is an impressionistic semiautobiography in which an aging writer and political activist mulls over a half-century of conflict and disappointment, while still summoning moments of nostalgia and tender humor. The book emerges as a patchwork of memories and an array of digressive references—from philosopher Ibn Tufayl to *Wuthering Heights* to Albert Einstein, and above all to the fairy-tale heroine Saraya, a girl held captive by an ogre—in which Habiby's alter ego sees a girl's ghost while fishing and then becomes obsessed with discovering who the girl was. His quest takes him into Arab myth, his own past, and the causes and outcomes of the violence that has plagued the Middle East. Habiby writes passionately of the predicament of Arabs in Israel and the Palestinian diaspora, recounting the struggles of the narrator's close friends and family members as they "become used to the rumble of war." Theroux's expert translation makes accessible to English readers the author's delight in the Arabic language and its possibilities for wordplay. (Nov.)

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### Review

"Habiby [is] a master, a magician, a virtuoso of complexity, as readers of English are now able to discover in Peter Theroux's translation.... [Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter] is amazing. Read it...and see the world around us here, and everywhere, with new eyes." --Ha'aretz

"An homage to the ways imagination, proverbs, and legends help us discern the truth, even as adults.... The narrative is fiercely original at the same time it's an importunate reinvention, breathing life into the past to see what remains possible...[Saraya] is a parable of life set to the music of bombs." --The Chicago Tribune

### About the Author

Emil (Emile) Shukri Habibi (28 January 1922 - 2 May 1996) was a Palestinian writer and politician. Born in Haifa to a Protestant Palestinian Arab family (his family had originally been Arab Orthodox but converted to Protestantism due to disputes within the Orthodox church), he became one of the leaders of the Palestine Communist Party during the Mandate era. He supported the 1947 UN Partition Plan and chose to remain in Haifa until his death, despite it coming under Israeli control following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. He served in the Knesset between 1951 and 1959, and again from 1961 until 1972, first as a member of Maki, before breaking away from the party with Tawfik Toubi to found Rakah. He left Rakah in 1989.

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##### Eric Chabot:

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**Meredith Daugherty:**

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**Loretta Yoder:**

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