

Publishers Weekly

Fiction Reviews: Week of 7/7/2008

The Mirror in the Well by Micheline Aharonian Marcom

Dalkey Archive, \$12.95 paper (152p) ISBN 978-1-56478-511-4

Marcom's three previous (and provocative) novels earned her much critical acclaim, but none shocks the reader like her intensely raw latest endeavor. This short novel is the story of a nameless woman and her lover and husband, who are intricately involved in the oscillating pleasure and angst of passion. The text is filled with unflinchingly rendered sex scenes, stream of consciousness, mythology, dreams and dreamlike realities, all blurred into each other, resulting in a narrative that portrays with disturbing accuracy the intimate behaviors and thoughts of lovers. Its explicit language, an invigorating mix of debauchery and poetic complexity, is disturbing at times, as in episodes of sexual violence or of uncommon acts (urine-drinking, for instance). Through this vivid imagery, Marcom gives voice to the essence of obsession and sexuality while tracing the deterioration of relationships. This novel is a cultural, feminist and human statement, but at its core, it is an unrestrained exploration of the intersection of emotion and physical desires. (*Sept.*)