

“We are so utterly othered that our hopes and lives mean absolutely nothing”: Rana Kabbani in conversation

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Abstract

Dr Rana Kabbani's work, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient* (2009), is a powerful critique of Orientalism, specifically examining and challenging the entrenched narratives, stereotypes, and myths about the East (the Orient) that were created and perpetuated by European cultures. The book has been widely praised for its nuanced analysis and accessibility, bridging the gap between academia and popular discourse. In this in-depth conversation with Dr Muddasir Ramzan, Dr Kabbani reflects on her works and offers insights into the politics of representation, the erasure of Muslim voices and the imperative for a far more nuanced understanding of the Middle East's intricate histories and cultures. Dr Kabbani shares her perspectives on the fallen Assad regime that had brutalised her native country since 1970 and on regional politics and conflicts to illuminate how these factors have influenced her own writing and intellectual pursuits. The interview also delves into her multifaceted experiences as a Syrian-British writer, including displacement, exile, and connections with literary figures such as Mahmoud Darwish and Attia Hosain.

Keywords

Assad, Mahmoud Darwish, politics of identity, Rana Kabbani, Syria

Introduction

Dr Rana Kabbani is a distinguished British-Syrian writer, who was born in Damascus in 1958. Her family background is notable for its rich cultural and diplomatic heritage. Her great-grandfather, Ahmad Aqbiq (known as Abu Khalil al-Qabbani), was the Ottoman world's leading dramatist, and wrote ballads that every Arab knows and loves. Her

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