



Vicious Circle

Robert Littell

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An Israeli government minister is assassinated in the home of his mistress. Days later, Elihu, an aging and decorated Mossad officer, leads his final raid, killing a Hamas leader in his bed and barely escaping with his life.

Out of this familiarly cyclical scenario emerges what is perhaps Robert Littell's most heartfelt and suspenseful novel. The action moves forward into the near future, when the global community, united under the leadership of a visionary woman president of the United States, brokers a major compromise between Israel and the Palestinian authority in the hopes of snuffing out the violent flash-point that fuels the flames of global terrorism.

But then, Isaac Apflbaum, a well-known fundamentalist Rabbi, is taken hostage by Dr. al-Saath, a legendary Palestinian terrorist, who demands the release of several Palestinian prisoners in exchange for his prisoner. As Israel coaxes Elihu out of retirement to hunt down the terrorist who motivated his final mission, al-Saath and Apflbaum find themselves building an extraordinary relationship between hostage taker and hostage: parallels between these two battle-hardened partisans become the bonds that could lead to reconciliation. But with the Mossad strike team closing in, has the vicious circle already been closed.

Ferociously suspenseful and brilliantly topical, *Vicious Circle* is a thriller that, like *The Company* before it, breaks down an entire culture of violence into the corrupted consciences that embody it.

Vicious Circle Details

Date : Published October 19th 2006 by Harry N. Abrams

ISBN : 9781585678556

Author : Robert Littell

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Genre : Fiction, Thriller, Spy Thriller, Espionage, Adult Fiction

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From Reader Review Vicious Circle for online ebook

Kevin Coombs says

Here is a remarkable book about the struggle for land and vindication in the disputed Holy Land. The Israelis and Palestinians are both presented extremely fairly, and with no writer's slant in either direction. While slightly dated (the fictional President of the US is a woman, unnamed but having followed GW Bush - a clear characterization of Hilary Clinton; the description of Arafat's death is different than what actually happened after the book was written; Hamas is not portrayed, and the PLO is a continuing force, etc.), the essential truths of what the whole conflict is about, and has been about, is true still today. The zealotry of the few overshadows the reason of the many, just as in real life.

The book revolves around the relationship - which I will not describe, so as not to spoil the book for anyone - between a prominent, if somewhat radical, Jewish Rabbi, and an equally radical Muslim fringe group leader. Where their lives intersect is a very different place from where the narrative leads them.

Though a part of the conclusion was inevitable, I found myself rooting for what is probably the "wrong" side. Littell's story serves the very valuable purpose of helping the reader see both sides of the problem of Jerusalem, the Gaza, and all of the disputed territory. In fact, I double-checked some of the historical background, and it is truly interesting how much the Jewish world, and the Arab world have in common. Their history, dating back to Old Testament times and beyond, comes from the same roots. The beliefs - secular and non - are fundamentally so similar that it is both intriguing and tragic that the divide is so wide. One of Littell's most serious works, I would recommend this book to anyone who appreciates history, the centuries-long saga of the Middle East, or even simply the expert telling of a very interesting story.

Dan Downing says

As I remember it, it was G.K. Chesterton who wrote a short story about a priest and an atheist thrown together in a compartment during a long train ride. They talked, each exposing his own position, although Chesterton does not present their arguments.

Littell's espionage story could have been condensed into a short story if he left out the parts where a Jewish and an Islamic fundamentalist argue, caught up together in a small room. Littell also gives us, by a neat device, an exposition of the European/American view of Isreali/Palestinian issues.

There is enough story to get us through the exegesis, but for the attentive and interested reader, it is the interplay between the two fanatics which holds insight into both the tragedy and the humor, albeit a black humor, inherent in Middle Eastern politics. The final picture is otherworldly, or future wordly, or perhaps new America wordly: two packs of hate-crazed animals separated by a fence, each pack trying to burst the bounds and kill its mirror image.

Recommended as a thriller.

Highly /recommended for anyone wishing to understand why 'the Isreali question' is so intractable.

Keith Nixon says

Like your thrillers full of political Middle East theory and chat? If so this is the book for you. If you prefer a fast pace and action then it's unfortunately not.

A rather disappointing affair with long segments political segments and exposition - rather than moving the story in it mires it in prevarication. Well written but disappointing.

Amy says

I found the premise handled ham-handedly: the idea that two extremists are far more alike than different is a cliche, not least because of its frequent accuracy. Add in their common semitic origins, the coincidence of both being near-sighted to the point of blindness (!), leaders of militant assassins. Good writing, no surprises. Nearly put the book down.

Johnsergeant says

Just bought from Audible.com 9/7/07

<http://www.audible.com/adbl/site/prod...>

Narrator: Scott Brick

Publisher: Blackstone Audiobooks, 2006

Length: 12 hours and 13 min.

What the Critics Say

"Littell's is one of the most talented, most original voices in American fiction today, period." (The Washington Post)

"Littell's latest brainy thriller probes very near the heart of the time-worn conflict over a land made and kept holy through regular libations of martyrs' blood....Must reading for fans of high-end thrillers." (Booklist)

Publisher's Summary

An Israeli government minister is assassinated in the home of his mistress. Days later, a Mossad officer leads his final raid, killing a Hamas leader in his bed and barely escaping with his life.

The action moves into the near future, when world leaders, united under the leadership of a visionary female president of the United States, broker a major compromise between Israel and the Palestinian authority. Their hope is to snuff out the violent flashpoint that fuels global terrorism. It seems to work until a well-known fundamentalist rabbi is taken hostage by a legendary Palestinian terrorist.

Ferociously suspenseful, *Vicious Circle* brilliantly dissects an entire culture of violence and the corrupted consciences that embody it.

Jon Koebrick says

I have been working my way through Robert Littell's books since I read his great book, The Company. Vicious Circle is the second best of his books I have read thus far. Littell masterfully educates on the Palestinian/Israeli positions in this intense thriller. There are a fair number of characters and organizations to keep straight but the dialogue between hostage and kidnapper is excellent. This is a fairly quick read that builds to an interesting crescendo. Recommended reading for people who like spy novels or anyone who wants to understand middle east tensions.

Anna says

This is an action genre book taking place in Israel. The author attempts to tackle the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Although he does reference some interesting historical points that a newcomer to this subject may find interesting, I found his protagonists not very believable. I didn't find the pious figures to be portrayed accurately. His plot twists are predictable. This book is readable and accessible but does not live up to the author's reputation.

Chi says

Interesting way to reveal how similar the beliefs of the Rabbi and the Palestinian are as they spend time together as kidnapped and kidnapper. They are both trying to stop the peace process for different reasons, and it seems that there is no answer to the conflict in the Middle East over Israel and Palestine...

Wes says

Loved this book -- it illuminates the mid-east conflict by personifying it in two of the main characters. The cat-and-mouse portion was vintage Littell (which made it enjoyable), but was a very distant 2nd to what made this story special. (I did hope for a more emotionally satisfying resolution, but it was a minor let-down).

Daniel M Siegel says

A master storyteller

A shame he is not writing as much as he once did. Among the best authors of all times. If you are new to his writing start at the beginning and go forward. No duds at all.

Bruce says

Pretty engaging Arab vs. Israeli spycraft book. His most recent. I'll be going back and reading some of his earlier work.

Carol says

It's about Palestinian/Israeli relations - which I'm, sadly, not very knowledgeable in other than top-line need-to-know - so it was a bit hard for me to follow at times. Not a huge fan of his style. He's reviewed at 'an American Le Carre'...I don't like him either. Although I do now want to read The Amateur, which gets great reviews. I'll get to it.

Dariusz P?ochocki says

Dzie?o ma dobry wyd?wi?k, i? oba fundamentalizmy zarówno judaistyczny, jak islamski s? równie niebezpieczne, a nie same pa?stwa czy religie. Autor nie ucieka od krytyki Izraela co si? chwali. Czy przeniesienie akcji w czasie do nieodleg?ej przysz?o?ci (mh? tak serio poza faktem, ?e prezydentem USA jest kobieta raczej tego nie dostrze?emy) pomog?o w czymkolwiek? Dziennik profesora i jego wizyta na Harwardzkim Kó?ku Obiadowym ?ydowskich Pedagogów chyba zdecydowanie jest jej najja?niejszym momentem. A same dzie?ko? No c?o? zgrzebna sensacja, gdyby nie powy?sze pewnie da?bym dwie gwiazdki.

Mazel says

Qui est Isaac Apfulbaum, et pourquoi a-t-on voulu l'enlever ?

Serait-ce le cerveau d'un groupe de terroristes israéliens responsables d'agressions contre les Palestiniens et farouchement opposé au processus de paix ?

C'est ce que veut savoir son ravisseur, Abu Bakr, lui-même une figure énigmatique, soupçonné d'être le mystérieux mujaddid, ou Rénovateur, attendu depuis longtemps par les musulmans.

Au cours de longues journées de captivité, d'interrogatoires pointus et de discussions fiévreuses, une étrange complicité semble naître entre les deux hommes.

Les extrémistes des camps adverses auraient-ils plus d'affinités entre eux qu'avec leurs propres compatriotes ?

Isaac Apfulbaum sortira-t-il vivant de cet éprouvant face-à-face ?

Liquid Frost says

I'm nearly done reading the book. It is a task not an enjoyed experience. I typically love this genre, but this story falls flat. I skim areas because there is absolutely no interest for me. I feel like I'm on a race to the finish line, just so I can see if the book ends as predictable as I believe - and to wrap it up and move to something else.
