

AMARA LAKHOUS
CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS OVER
ELEVATOR IN PIAZZA VITTORIO

a novel



Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio by Amara Lakhous

Amara Lakhous (1970-)

- Polygotl novelist
- He is the author of five novels, three of which were written in both Arabic and Italian.
 - *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio* (2008),
 - *Divorce Islamic Style* (2012)
 - *Dispute over a Very Italian Piglet* (2014).
 - *The Prank of the Good Little Virgin in Via Ormea* (2016)
 - *The Night Bird* (2021)
- He moved to Italy in 1995
- He has a degree in philosophy from the University of Algiers and another in cultural anthropology from the University of Rome, La Sapienza where he completed a Ph.D.
- Currently a professor at Yale (USA).

Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio

- Satirical novel
- A murder mystery
- Translated into English from the Italian *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a piazza Vittorio* (2006)
- Award Winning
 - Flaiano Prize

Clash of Civilizations: Discussion

- What is the premise of the novel?
- How is the novel structured?
- The novel has several characters. Each member of the group should mention two of the characters that they found most interesting or intriguing and explain why.
- What is the tone of the novel (for example, is it humorous, tragic, satirical?)
- The title of the novel “*Clash of Civilizations*” suggests an environment of major conflicts among the ethnically diverse neighbours in the novel. Does the scale of conflict in the novel reflect what is suggested by the title? Explain
- Where is the novel set? Does that setting remind you of any places in your own city?
- What is the symbolism of the elevator?
- What are the themes of the novel and how are they illustrated through aspects of the novel, such as the structure, characters, setting, symbolism, tone?

Piazza Vittorio

- “ Piazza Vittorio is located a few blocks from the city’s main train station, Stazione Termini, and even closer to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, the Esquiline’s most famous monument. The area around the square was once considered one of the Eternal City’s most coveted bourgeois quarters, featuring many elegant buildings that were constructed in the empire style and neo-classical architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But it now shows signs of dilapidation and general neglect, though there have been sporadic and uneven efforts to refurbish the neighborhood’s monumental edifices. ... Piazza Vittorio today hosts the largest and most diverse immigrant population in Rome. Made up mostly of Chinese, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Indians, there are also others, including Africans and Middle Easterners, who have begun moving into this gritty and lively district.” (Robert Mickens [“The Eternal City’s Most Ethnically Diverse Neighborhood”](#))

Clash of Civilizations

- “Civilizations that clash? That’s incorrect. If we want to say that civilization is culture and poetry, then I have never heard anyone speaking of a clash between Italian and Lebanese poets. Clashes are over oil, power.... With my novel I wanted to present the idea that the “clash of civilizations” is a pretext to justify political and economic choices.”
 - Amara Lakhous ([*“Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio. Interview with Amara Amara Lakhous”*](#))

Migration As an Act of Identity Expansion

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvUemZIBvS8&t=263s>
- Migration according to Amara Lakhous
 - Positive experience
 - Migrants
 - are dreamers
 - are courageous people
 - challenge their destiny
 - “ Every migration is a birth and every birth a migration”
 - Migration is a movement from comfort and stability to instability
 - It expands your identity and challenges you
 - It makes you part of a minority -challenging but opportunity for growth, transformation and adaptation