

*In the Shadow of the Ark – A Love Story from the Dawn of Civilization* by Anne Provoost, translated by John Nieuwenhuizen. Simon and Schuster 2004.

This is the first of Anne Provoost's books to be published in the UK and a very fine writer she is too.

Set in the period leading up to the biblical Flood, *In the Shadow of the Ark* tells the story of Re Jana, a beautiful young woman with great skills as a masseuse, who travels with her ailing mother and boat-builder father to the valley where the Ark is being constructed.

Most of the story takes place before the flood waters rise, and describes the relationship between Re Jana and her father and the family of the Builder (Noah). This is an intricate tale that fleshes out the biblical narrative and makes the reader question many aspects of the latter in a way that the biblical text never does.

There is much in this book that is memorable; but for me what stands out is the terrifying and all too real depiction of the falling of the rains and the rising of the floodwaters and the impact on all those whose fate was not to sail safely on the waters towards Ararat.

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