



The Raw Shark Texts

Steven Hall

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Eric Sanderson wakes up in a house one day with no idea who or where he is. A note instructs him to see a Dr. Randle immediately, who informs him that he is undergoing yet another episode of acute memory loss that is a symptom of his severe dissociative disorder. Eric's been in Dr. Randle's care for two years -- since the tragic death of his great love, Clio, while the two vacationed in the Greek islands.

But there may be more to the story, or it may be a different story altogether. As Eric begins to examine letters and papers left in the house by "the first Eric Sanderson," a staggeringly different explanation for what is happening to Eric emerges, and he and the reader embark on a quest to recover the truth and escape the remorseless predatory forces that threatens to devour him.

The Raw Shark Texts is a kaleidoscopic novel about the magnitude of love and the devastating effect of losing that love. It will dazzle you, it will move you, and will leave an indelible imprint like nothing you have read in a long time.

The Raw Shark Texts Details

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From Reader Review The Raw Shark Texts for online ebook

Paul says

A bit oversold, but certainly creative at times with a sprinkling of novel ideas which for me, almost worked; but not quite.

At heart this is a simple love story, which I didn't mind as I quite like simple love stories, being an old romantic at heart. That the love story was between a man whose memories had been eaten by a conceptual shark (see later) and a woman who he may have loved in his pre memory loss existence who is now dead (but not a ghost - nothing supernatural here) matters not a jot.

There are homages all over the book and references to films and books. Lots to Casablanca and of course Jaws; the last part of the film is played out at the end of the book.

There are quite a few oddities. A character we never meet called Mycroft Ward decides in the mid 19th century that he really does not want to die. He studies hypnotism and finds a younger suggestive subject and hypnotically gives him great detail about his own life and becomes him. He continues to do this creating a number of versions of himself. He eventually becomes an internet database.

Now the fish. The novel depends on the idea that there exist conceptual fish that feed on ... well, concepts and ideas. The Ludovician is a large conceptual shark that feeds on memories and seems have have developed a liking for Eric, the main character in the book. Eric receives messages from his previous self in the mail and from other sources telling him how to protect himself.

There is also unspace; the empty spaces in our modern urban world, behind shops, empty factories and warehouses, railway sidings.

The whole thing reaches a climax in the conceptual world, which becomes real to the protagonists. I quite like that idea.

There are some quite clever ideas and it has cult classic written all over it; I also suspect it is designed to be filmed; although quite how they're going to manage conceptual fish! The ending is a bit of a cop out and the first part of the book deserves better.

It is entertaining, but on closer examination rather flimsy. Apparently for each chapter in the book there is a negative (or unchapter) out in the world somewhere; on line, in other editions of the book or yet to be discovered. Am I bothered enough to seek them out; nope. That may tell you all you need to know I did like Ian the cat and had every sympathy with him being dragged around Eric's rather mad adventures.

mark monday says

10.

You are a book, The Raw Shark Texts. You are an unstable narrative. You are a story of loss and love and memory, of a broken heart and a broken mind. You are a mystery; you are a postmodern text; you are a Burroughs, with a certain sort of sunny spotless mind. You are a first novel, complete with a first novel's typical weaknesses: an intermittent stridency and repetitiousness that is occasionally tedious, a tendency towards wanting to amaze the audience with your brilliance, characters and dialogue that are intended to be cheeky & real but often come across as precious & cutesy-poo. You are overlong. Still, your ambition is pleasing. Your level of writing ability is impressive. There is a mad genius to it. You exist on multiple levels. You excited me, then bored me, then excited me anew. You made me think on many things: new ideas and old, what is a person, what is an emotion, what makes a concept real. You are a book that this reviewer liked, sometimes.

(view spoiler)

2.

" - *the view becomes the reflection, and the reflection, the view.*"

(view spoiler)

Oriana says

Hmm. Well. It certainly wasn't *bad*.

One problem with reading advanced reader's editions is that they lay out the marketing plans for you right on the inside cover, so I knew before I even started that this book has a 150,000 initial print run, that the movie rights have already been auctioned, that a website and a viral marketing campaign (puke) are in the works, etc. Soooo, hype hype hype, which always makes me worried.

All the same, like everyone says, cross *House of Leaves* with *Memento* and you start to get the idea of *The Raw Shark Texts*. In the big picture, it's definitely got an original and creative plot, but as far as the details—the writing, the characters, and the development—kind of meh.

This is a backhanded compliment, I know, but the best I can say is that it'll make a really good movie.

Shovelmonkey1 says

Duh Dum.

Duh Dum.

Dum dum dum dum dum dum DUM!!!!

Ok that was a poor attempt to mimic the Jaws theme tune in text format, but hey, it's not that easy.

On Animosity Island, everyone is looking forward to the summer season. The picket fences are suitably white, the sky is picture-postcard blue and the beaches of fine yellow sand are ready to receive the beach towels and inflatable toys of hundreds of British holiday makers. For Chief Brady, head of the Animosity Island police department, there is one fly in the sunscreen - there's something in the water. A girl is washed up on the beach with huge L's and U's bitten out of her. Then little Alex Kidney is ripped from his inflatable doughnut and reduced to nothing more than a red ink blot on the ocean waves. Chief Brady and his faithful sidekick Mitt Hopper (renowned beard wearer and oceanographer) take to the high seas to investigate. They quickly stumble upon the half submerged and chewed up remains of a boat belonging to a local fisherman. When Hopper explores the damaged hull he is startled to find a huge letter U embedded in the hull. Then suddenly the boat shifts and a copy of the Raw Shark Texts drops in front of him. Hopper screams and breaks for the surface.

THIS IS NOT WHAT THE RAW SHARK TEXTS IS ABOUT

But it does contain some heavy referencing to Jaws and as I love that film, then that's ok by me.

The Raw Shark texts is conceptually quite brilliant and I have to admit I loved parts of it. The first Eric Sanderson has been "eaten" by a Ludovician, a conceptual shark which follows the stream of information that people generate (thoughts, conversations, mail, emails) and slowly takes great big bitey chunks out of their memory until they become a sort of un-person. Brilliant. Conceptual sharks. Love it.

Remnants of Eric survive these shark induced fugue states and so following notes left by the First Eric Sanderson, the Second Eric Sanderson tries to catch and kill the Ludovician before he's a goner too. In order to do this Eric has to hunt down Dr Trey Fidorous who lives in un-space. Un-space which is entered via Waterstones. Brilliant. To this end he is accompanied by Ian the cat and Scout who is an un-version of the improbably super-cool girlfriend Clio Aames.

There are all sorts of other "I'm mad but you're not supposed to know how mad" subtext occurring, most of which is based around the death of Clio Aames, improbably super-cool girlfriend of the First Eric Sanderson. Women reading this will in all likelihood intensely dislike the conceptual memory of Clio Aames. I was

secretly hoping that she got eaten by a real shark and that is why she wasn't around any more. Sadly not.

In the end the attempt to catch and kill the Ludovician is based on the shark-chase scene in *Jaws*, complete with a couple of chapter titles which are an outright homage to these ad-lib-ed scenes, including *Farewell and adieu to you fair Spanish Ladies*. If this book also had a chapter called *Show me the way to go home, I'm tired and I want to go to bed* then I might well have given it five stars.

Wikipedia also says that as well as the 36 chapters of the book I've just read, there are also a series of 36 un-chapters which have to be hunted down on line. This book is clever. This is also the kind of marketing wet dream that causes publishers to have a little sex wee and hi-five each other for being seven kinds of zeitgeist. Probably not as clever as *House of Leaves* and a number of people have dubbed it *House of Leaves-lite* (or maybe it was just me, I forget as the Ludovician has been taking chunks out of my own memory recently).

Anyway the star of the show was Ian the cat. He survived and wasn't as mad as Eric Sanderson (either versions one or two) and he wasn't as smug as Clio Aames either.

Brad says

For sheer ballsy creativity *The Raw Shark Texts* is an incendiary word bomb of conceptual fish, mad world hungry pseudo-immortals, movie geekdom, Greek tragedy and cats with mundane names.

To say there is something lacking in Steven Hall's first novel seems unfair and trite, but I can't shake the feeling that something in Eric Sanderson's relationship with Clio/Scout felt too forced and way too indoctrinated by current gender attitudes. If that was by design I can't imagine what the design was; if it was merely the truth that Hall found in his characters I have to admit that I couldn't see that truth. That could be down to me.

Besides, it seems a petty complaint when weighed against the moments of sheer genius in Steven Hall's debut. I know I will be back for multiple reads because there are so many questions I need to examine again and again. I almost started listing them here, but instead I will simply provide words for which I am compelled to seek answers: Dr. Ryan Mitchell. Dr. Randle. Mycroft Ward. Ian. Greg. Ludovician (one of the all time great antagonists in any novel -- ever). Eric Richardson the first, the other, the second.

The Raw Shark Texts is a rich mine of thought that I look forward to returning to, and Steven Hall is threatening to enter the rarefied upper region of my personal literary canon. I just hope he doesn't slip in the direction of Chuck Pahlaniuk with his next work. Promising beginnings can so often become failure to live up to potential. Oh well, who cares? I'll always have *The Raw Shark Texts* to enjoy if the future doesn't work out.

Neli Krasimirova says

San?r?m ayn? zamanda bir DW yazar? olan Hall hakk?nda beklentim fazlaca y?ksekti, ?yle ki 50 y?ld?r evrenin t?m hal?lar?n? ?n?m?ze sermeye ?al??an dinamik bir ekibin par?as?yd? yazar.

En k?t?s?n? en ba?ta s?ylemeliyim, ekrana yak??acak anlat?mlar? yaz?yla yapmak ?irkin. Un-space koridorunda sa?a d?nm?t?; o t?nele t?rman?nca kamp kurmu?lard?, yan yat?p ?amura batm??lard? diye s?ren s?nd?r?lm?; 100 sayfa bana yaln?zca bilek a?r?s? olarak d?n?p ritmimi d??r?d?.

Daha önce bir kitapta kullanılmam?? bu derece geni? geek altyapı? kurgu epey vurucu gözükse de inip ç?kan ritm, karakterlerin gizemini korumak adına onlar? tanımam?za izin vermeyip (Latince ve mitoloji bilenler için) isimlerinden esinlenmemizi beklemesi, kullanılan ikili sonuç/anlamlar vs.gibi tekniklerin tamamın?n bir arada kullanılması kitab? kapalı bırakm??.

Kendi adına bir whovian olarak başka bir whoviandan çok daha tatmin edici bir i? beklerdim. Bir başka İngiliz yazara bu kadar düşük puan verdiğim için çok üzgünüm.

Sinem A. says

Garip tarz?, bolca sayfas? ama hızlı akması?, bir kolaj çalınması?n? andırması?, daha çok bir sinema filmi tadı vermesi -sanırım senaryosu yazılm??- ile de?i?ik bir ilk kitap, de?i?ik bir okuma deneyimi.

Corinne says

I give up. I'm nearly halfway through the book and I'm putting it down. Maybe, at another time, I'll pick it up again and feel differently but the action/adventure vibe just isn't sitting with me at all. It's like reading *The Celestine Prophecy* -which I did many, many moons ago- only without the big morality question leading you through to the end. Or, it's like reading Haruki Murakami without his talent for subtle storytelling. Or -sorry to go overboard on this- it's like reading *House of Leaves* without all the decoding and, well, the effort. Or - just one more- it's like reading *The Illuminatus Trilogy* sans the brilliance of Robert Anton Wilson poking fun at his book for a thousand pages.

The over-narration is what really did me in. Every emotion is dropped on the page, every clue is highlighted with a flood light, and not a single important piece of information is given to the reader without fanfare. When Scout, his hip and pretty adventure guide shows up, I just couldn't keep reading. It was too much for me. The conceptual shark, I could deal with. The living room turning in the ocean and back, I was into it. But the sudden appearance of a hot, hip twenty-year-old pushed me overboard (ha).

When the movie comes out I'll watch it (maybe even in the theaters), it'll be a nice distraction for a few hours. But, the book and I are done.

Özgür says

Peki bakalım bir kaç kelâm etmeye çalışayım.

Öncelikle, "kitap hacmine göre çok akıcıydı" lakırdısı yapmayacağım çünkü bu söylem kendi içerisinde hiç bir olumlu durum barındırıyor. Bu ve hiç bir kitap için de bu safsatay? yapmam!

Kitaba gelecek olursak ben iki bakışla değerlendirilmek istiyorum.

İlk olarak aralara serpiştirilmi? Bilimsel tanılar (Anagram sarmalları, insan hücrelerinden dünya döngüsüne bağlanan saptamalar), Psikolojik anlatılar (Çözülmesi Rahatsızlık, Fûğ hastalığı) ve edebi küçük ayrıntılar? ciddiye de alsanız bir süre sonra klişe kovala-kaç hissiyatından kurtulamazsınız ki bu duyguyla okuma zorlanabiliyor.

Ne yalan söyleyeyim uzun bir sayfa sayışı kadar da bu gözle okumaya devam ettim ve tutunacak bir dal aradığımdan müddet bilemiyorum işte o anlarda yazarın bile farketmediğini düşündüğüm (aslında bu konu bilinmeden yarıdan bile geçilemez) Dil konusu yavaş yavaş kendini göstermeye başladı?.

Dil, benim için; Evrim, ?nanç, Sosyoloji kadar önem arz ediyor. ?nsan dü?üncesinin ve dü?ünce geli?iminin Dil'e paralellik gösterdi?ini anlad???mdan beri, dü?mem bu konuya hep iliklidir.

??te tam burada da kitaba olumlu ama güçsüz olan di?er bak???m ortaya ç?k?yor. Yazar?m?z bu konuya tam giremeyip etraf?ndan dola?m?? olsa da, kitapta dil, kelimeler ve uzant?lar?yla kurulmu? olan materyal yakla??m "dur bakal?m bu konuda ne kadar derinle?ecek "merak?, devam etmemi sa?lam?? olabilir. Dil'in güzel, etkili ve do?ru kullan?lmas? konusuna "Dil Bekçili?i" gibi güzel bir yakla??m? da var. Ama kitab?n genel havas? bu yönde gitmedi?i için de san?r?m puanlamas? çok da fazla olam?yor. Yazara anla??lamam?? gibi yakla??mlar var ama çevirinin bu kadar iyi oldu?unun söylenip eserin bu kadar kapal? olaca??na da inanm?yorum sadece tek kitapla olumlu veya olumsuz kesin yarg?lara var?lmamas?n? savunabilirim.

(Bahsetti?im Dil konusu kitab?n Dil'i de?ildir diye not dü?üyorum kusura bakmay?n) Sayg?lar.

Danger says

I tried explaining the plot of this book to someone and I sounded like a crazy person. Not because it's overly-complex (it's just the right amount of complex, actually) but because it's so strange and original and realized, every little detail seemed important. The Raw Shark Texts succeeds on all levels. I'd give it 6 stars if I could.

Jenbebookish says

Ugh. I struck out with this one.

This was something I'd been wanting to read for awhile. It's looked super enticing on my bookshelf and when I finally had it in my hands I was brimming with excitement. I had read the first couple pages awhile back and knew that this was the kind of book that grabbed you from the get go.

And welp! That's about the only time it grabbed me, it grabbed me then and let me go about 75 pages in. Maybe I'm just not smart enough...but the whole concept of "conceptual" sharks and predators was just...weird? For me.(weird--for lack of a better word) Once I realized that that was what the entire book was about and I would be stuck in the world of conceptual fish that can recognize you or bits of your personality if they somehow push thru the efforts made to keep hidden & then come back to erase your memory AGAIN. I felt cheated. And apparently these sharks hold grudges, they nibble till the death if they get any hint of your essence floatin around in conceptual space. Or un-space?
Whatever.

Point is--I did NOT dig it. And I know a lotta people really did so that kind of makes me feel stupid but it's not that I didn't understand what was going on...I just didn't LIKE what was going on. I like living in the real world, or in a fantasy world...NOT a conceptual one. And Clio. (Named after the goddess of history I presume? Which is obviously appropriate--ties in with memory and all that very neatly and clearly) I liked clio. Slash scout. Every nerd girl's role model and every nerd guy's dream. But I would have rather had the story play out some other way.

Try it out, see for yourself. I truly believe each book means something different to every person!

Deniz Balç? says

'Köpekbal??? Metinleri' ile ilgili uzun uzadıya bir ?eyler söylemek için fazla kar???k kafam, kitab? tam olarak nereye oturttum, neler hissettim tanımlayamıyorum. K?saca birkaç bir ?ey söylemem gerekirse, zekice yazılm??, çok ilginç, özgün bir roman ancak bazı noksanlıklar da barındırıyor değil. Yazarın tamamen kurgunun gücünü arkasına ald??? ve yanlışsamsal? bir ak?? kullanarak, anlatmak istedi?ini çok daha giriftli, zengin bir anlat? çal??mas?na dönü?türdü?ü roman, bir aç?dan edebiyatın? sinemasal ak??a yaslad??? s?ralarda güçten dü?üyor.

Beklentisiz okumanız? tavsiye ederim.

Bittikten sonra keyif veriyor, bunu unutmadan okuyun derim:)

7/10

Kinga says

(There might be very minor spoilers here but I doubt they will make any sense to you if you haven't read the book, so read on, unless you are uber-paranoid about spoilers)

“The Raw Shark Texts”. It’s supposed to be a literary psychological thriller where Jorge Luis Borges meets Danielewski meets Matrix meets Fight Club meets Jaws. I thought: Oh dear. Steve, I hope you know what you are running up against and I hope your game is tight.

The book starts with the main character waking up on the floor not knowing who or where he is. His personal memory seems to have been wiped clean. This is a tried and tested opening that is sure to grip anyone from the first page. The problem with it is that you have to back it up. The book has to live up to its premise.

I give credit where credit is due – Steve Hall had a superb idea. Our narrator, Eric Sanderson, is hunted by a kind of conceptual fish (the kind of fish that lives in a purely abstract world and feeds on thoughts, ideas, memories). Somehow he stepped on the toe of the most dangerous conceptual fish out there – the Ludovician, a conceptual equivalent of the great white shark. And it eats his memory. Nom, nom, nom.

There are also very funny/scary (albeit gimmicky) typographical illustrations in the text. They even looked cute on my kindle.

While I think the idea was brilliant, I feel there was a little of wasted opportunity there. We are made to understand that the way to fight the shark (or at least to keep it at bay, so to speak) is to use some sort of flow of information to throw him off your scent and set up a conceptual loop which works like a shark cage. And our hero uses other people’s post and Dictaphones to do that. Dictaphones? What is it, 1985? What else? Maybe he should fax the shark as well?

Why not set up some computers with facebook and twitter accounts that would constantly get new followers and feedback to each other ad infinitum. Perfect conceptual loop! Or why throw ‘letter bombs’ (made of shredded phone books and such) at your shark? Why not treat it with a stream of penis enlargement and Russian brides spam? That should send it all the way back to last century. Why go through other people’s post where you can just download their blogs, twitters, tumblrs, facebook, and emails? I mean, if I were looking for tons of pointless information, the Internet would be the first place I would go to.

But fine, Steve. I am with you. Let’s party like it’s 1985, Dictaphones and all. So I am suspending my disbelief, conceptual sharks, some zombie like figures, Un-space (yeah, me neither) until Hall introduces

Eric's love interest in its two incarnations Scout and Clio. And boy, oh, boy, ain't she a dream come true for any nerdy boy? She's got boobs and likes to show them, she knows about computers, rides a motorcycle, and talks like she is reading a sitcom script. She never mentions kids or marriage. She is a superhero but also slightly damaged inside so can be occasionally protected. She is Lara Croft meets Leelo from the Fifth Element. And here comes the love story with the extra cheese on top. Here comes the melodrama when Eric decides to sulk for half of the book over something that a PMSing sixteen year old girl would have a hard time sulking over for longer than 40 minutes. I can't take this. I shout : "Jeez louise, Steve, what are you doing? Why are you doing it?".

And then at the end, Steve tells my why he was doing it. And it makes sense, and I get it. And he knew that I knew, but I didn't know that he knew that I knew. And ha, ha, the joke is on me. But you know what, Steve, I could've stopped reading there and then if I wasn't so OCD about finishing every book that I start. I really do get it, but I still don't know why I was forced to read 100 or so pages of that bad soap-opera. So there goes one star from what could've been a four star book.

And then of course there is the ending... Oh.

Gorkem says

Bir Slipstream * Türü Olan Romana Güzellemeler,

Köpek Bal??? Metinleri , orjinal ismiyle The Raw Shark Text, ismini Rorschach Testinin fonetik yapas?n? romana yans?tan zekice bir kitap. Geleneksel kal?plar? thriller (heyecanlı? kitap) formunu tamamen de?i?tirdi?ine inan?lan roman, okuyucuya birçok farklı? okuma deneyimi sunmaktadır. Steven Hall, Köpekbalk??? Metinleriyle ilgili olarak, okuyucuyu da romana katan "aktif okur" fikriyle bu roman?n? olu?turdu?unu kitap ilk yay?nland???nda kritiklerin övgüsüyle duymu?tum . Ki yazar?n kendisi, tek bir kitapta birçok farklı? zeka alg?s?n?n ve disiplinin, tek romanda meydana getirilebilir mi tezini bu kitapla ortaya koymak istemi?.

Bu aç?dan bakt???mda, kendimce, bu tarz bir deneyimi yaz?msal anlamda ba?ard???n? gönül rahatlı???yla söyleyebilirim.

Roman bir çin bulmacas?n?n parças? gibi tane tane aç?l?p ana karakterimiz olan Eric Sanderson'un travmatik bir kaza sonucu belle?inin silinmesi ve doktor Randall'dan ald??? bir telefon ile haf?zas?n?n kaybetmeden önceki ?lk Sanderson'dan gelen mektuplarla kendi kay?p geçmi?ini aray??? ile aç?lmaktadır. Hall'n?n ilk Sanderson ve kendine gelen Sanderson ile insan?n kendi geçmi?i, ve ?u an ile nas?l ba?a ç?kt???n? ve gelecekte dü?üncelerin an?lar? nas?l yönlendirece?i sorular?n? son derece basit birkaç kavramdan yola ç?karak kitab? okurla birlikte ilerletiyor..

Güzellemeye Kötüleme

Kitab?n benim aç?mdan bakt???m yukarıda da belirtti?im gibi birçok farklı? okuma deneyimi bir kitapta denenmi? oldu?unu görmek keyifliydi. Aynı zamanda bu kadar çe?itlilik bir süre sonra s?kabiliyor.

Kitab?n benim aç?ndan bakt???mda, Hall'n?n kendi dilsel anlat?mdan kaynaklanan bir durumdan dolayı ve s?ralad???m a???r? çe?itlilikten dolayı? kitapla ve olay ak???yla aral?klarla kitapla aramdaki ba?lant?n?n ne yaz?k ki kopmalara neden oldu. Bu nedenle de kitaba ba?lanamad?m. Ve ne yaz?k ki Sanderson'un ya?am?? oldu?u aray???lar?, okur olarak içimde hissedemedim. (Bu durumun kesinlikle çeviri ile ilgi oldu?una

inanm?yorum. Keza,kitab?n çevirmeni Aylin Ülçer, çeviri konusunda son derece ba?ar?l?, birçok zor metni son derece etkileyici olarak çevirmen usta. Çeviri inan?lmaz, ak?c? ve çok ba?ar?l?)

Sonuç olarak,

Kitab?n Hall taraf?ndan tür aç?s?ndan bak?ld???nda okuru rahats?z ve farklı hissettirmesi, birçok farklı sanatsal ve görsel alg?n?n edebiyat ile birle?tirilmesi aç?s?nda son derece farklı bir okuma deneyimi sunan bir eser. Benim aç?mdan, her okur ad?na bu bir k?stas olmayabilir, bu eserin Hall'un ilk eseri olmas?ndan dolayı kesinlikle okurun beklentisini yüksek tutan bir kitap. Belki bu kitab? uzun zamandır listemde tutup beklentimi a??r? yüksek tutmam kar??ndan anlat?m aç?s?ndan arad???m bütünle?meyi yakalayamam eserle aramda kopma yaratm?? olabilir. Buna zamanla karar verece?im.

Bu kadar ?eyi yazd?ktan sonra her ?eyi kitaptan çok sevdi?im bir al?nt?yla sonland?r?p, okuma okumama fikrini size bak?yorum.

Keyifli okumalar.

3,5/5

?nsan?n akl?nda binlerce soru olmas? demek, gerçekte sorabilece?iniz hiçbir ?ey olmamas? anlam?na gelir ço?unlukla.C?mb?zla seçilip di?erlerinden daha önce sorulsa kula?a tuhaf gelmeyecek, iyi ba?lang?ç noktas? olu?turabilecek tek bir soru yoktur.

Slipstream Roman:"kabullenilmi? gerçeklik alg?s?n?n tamamen yok edilerek, okurun en basit anlamda kendisini garip hissettirmesi"*

Allycks says

A brief behind-the-scenes recap of "The Raw Shark Texts":

Steven Hall is inspired. Writes a brilliant one hundred pages of an unfinished novel. The first hundred pages of 'The Raw Shark Texts' are truly a great read, hinting at something avant-garde, something page-turning in the finest sense of the term. We're all clicking off the rusty old disbelief mechanisms because 'The Raw Shark Texts' is putting it all together. OK, sure, it is yet another "piece-my-life-back-together-after-what-would-seem-to-be-amnesia" kind of plot, but it is raging, it is rhythmic and totally unapologetic, like screw you if you think you've heard this song before. Steven Hall is promising to tease out the mystery with total originality and brio. The characterization of the shrink in particular is extraordinary. What is going on here? The reader awaits, the reader is prepared to suspend many further unknown belief mechanisms...

Then: Steven Hall is feeling kind of dull and uninspired, but here we go. Up and at 'em! Another 200 pages of "The Raw Shark Texts" coming at ya. Ah-hem... Kicking in with cutesy-poo winsome boy-meets-girl capers in post-modern clichèland... But Steven Hall is just MESSING WITH YOU, get it? Ok, ok, let's get back to the good stuff.

Then: "JAWS." Yeah, we're gonna re-do JAWS. But it's gonna be, like, a CONCEPT SHARK, get it? No? That's ok, really, no problem. Because the girl who appears out of nowhere but could also (but might not) be the over-simplified key to an overly-convoluted plot is, like, fortunately, the MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL OUR MEMORY LOSS DUDE HAS EVER SEEN and, like, THE COOLEST GIRL EVER, and, umm, let's

see, SHE DROPS TONS OF WITTY ONE-LINERS and stuff.

Also: This might be the afterlife.

Or: A dream.

I mean: It's what you what you might think if you're in a coma.

Then: This reader is thinking: I can't believe I finished this awful fraud of a book.

Michael says

Mix *A Clockwork Orange*, *VALIS*, and *House of Leaves* in a blender, and you would get something like this book. It combines a number of my favorite things, not the least of which is the unreliable narrator - and as an aside to some reviewers, if you think 'Memento' did it first, you really ought to read more and do some research. I was a little wary of the kind of 'fontplay' such as in Danielewski's book, but when Hall used it, he used it purposefully and to good effect.

Note to self: 'fontplay' sounds kinky.

I don't think this book is great literature, especially considering the level of (unseen by me) hype involved, but then again, my own interests made me its target demographic, and I'm not complaining. Intriguing, compelling and chewy, that's what this book was to me.

Brandon says

The Raw Shark Texts was released back in 2007 by first time U.K. author, Steven Hall. In some circles, it's been referred to as some bizarre cross between Jaws and The Matrix with perhaps a little Da Vinci Code thrown in there for good measure. It follows the story of Eric Saunderson who awakes on his bedroom floor without any memories. While the man retains his basic motor functions, he remembers nothing resembling emotions or sense of identity. Shortly upon awaking, Eric finds a note left by the "first Eric Saunderson" with basic instructions on how to resume his life. From this point forward a proverbial can of worms is opened and the mystery unfolds itself in an addictive way, by which I mean, it's really hard to put this book down.

I had an experience like this when I read "House of Leaves". The stories are quite different but the layout is just as ambitious. While Danielewski goes above and beyond with liner and foot notes as well as scratches and interchanging fonts, Hall goes with long gaps of pages with little to no words as well as diagrams and exhibits. The changing style throughout the novel really adds to the experience and gets the reader more involved in what is happening to Eric's world. There's something about this style that I really like. I guess it's refreshing to pick up a book that not only feels different but looks different as well. Some people could probably write this off as some sort of gimmick but changing things up once in a while should be welcomed.

While Hall is working on a second book, whether he can produce something on par to Raw Shark Texts remains to be seen but I know that I'll be checking it out. Let's just hope he doesn't go in the direction of Danielewski's Only Revolutions.

Cross posted @ Every Read Thing

MJ Nicholls says

Hall's conceptual sharks are clever, baffling and original. His typographical quirks are deployed to interesting and, in one infamous instance, hilariously terrifying effect. However, the writing suffers from an overuse of dramatic verbs, an overly stylised relationship between the hero/heroine (regardless of any ironic intentions), moments of prolonged confusion and plot dullness, and melodrama. Still, it shows a clear love of language, words and books, so I can overlook the long sloggy parts.

Janet says

Holy. Crap.

I picked up *The Raw Shark Texts* this past weekend - not sure if I wanted to tackle something this long since I'm still trying to catch up to a good "38 in '08" pace - and I swear it was like disappearing off the face of the earth for two days. I can't remember the last time I was so absorbed in a book that I opted to postpone plans to stay home and do nothing but read, and despite my copy's 448 pages, I *devoured* the book in less than 24 hours - pun intended.

Without giving away more than what you would find in a description on Amazon, or on the back of the book - basically this story is about Eric Sanderson, who gasps awake one day to discover that he remembers nothing - literally nothing - about who he is. In a house that feels familiar yet sits completely devoid of personal information, all he finds is a letter from "The First Eric Sanderson," who "with regret and also hope" directs him to a psychologist, Dr. Randle. Randle explains that Eric has a dissociative condition, stemming from the loss of a loved one three years prior, and that for the past several years, Eric has been experiencing episodes that leave him remembering less, and less and less. Yet things may not be as clear as just a mental condition, because soon Eric begins receiving letters and packages from "The First Eric Sanderson." Letters he chooses to ignore until one night he is attacked by something bizarre and nearly inexplicable, something he quickly learns is a Ludovician, a conceptual shark that "feeds on human memories and the intrinsic sense of self." A shark that is stalking him.

If that doesn't make your toes curl with intellectual delight, *The Raw Shark Texts* is probably not for you. But if, like me, you loved *The Phantom Tollbooth* as a child, step right up because this novel is like one of my favorite children's books adapted for grownups. It's a thriller, a quest and a cleverly nerdy adventure, filled with unspace and metaphysical villains and the lost memories of love. It's basically everything I love in a book, and I'm tempted to pick it up immediately and start reading it again.

Rick Monkey says

You know what I like?

This whole genre of stuffy British dudes who find themselves unwillingly going on adventures and

discovering that there's more to them than just being pasty and flustered.

And, yeah, it's a genre. There's TONS of books with that same damn plot. Thing is, they're often very entertaining.

They're also usually played for laughs. Which is not the case in *The Raw Shark Texts*. Yes, the protagonist eventually finds himself drawn into a world where the old rules don't apply. Yes, he has an adventure. Yes, he even has a sidekick in the form of an irascible, unflappable (fortunately, non-talking) ginger cat.

But it's a story of confusion and grief and loss. Eric Sanderson has lost everything he ever held dear, including himself, beginning with a stupid, everyday accident and culminating in the predations of a conceptual beast who feeds on memory and swims the currents of ideas and information.

It's a very meta sort of story, with much of the narrative being dedicated to the biology of ideas and memes, how they grow and evolve, how they have their own ecosystem that interacts with our material one. There's also a fair bit of fourth-wall breaking (but not in the usual sense) as the words and type on the page are molded and re-arrange to become more illustration than text.

I'm not sure I can properly review this book, I really don't have the language for it. But I can assure you, even if the plot is a bit familiar, the ideas are quite unlike anything you're likely to have encountered.
