

ISLAM: THEOLOGY, IDENTITY, IDEOLOGY

Islamic Awakening: From Adolescence to Maturity (Al-Sahwatul-Islamiyyatu minal-Murahaqati-Ilal-Rushd), Youssuf Al-Qaradawi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 368

ISBN: 977-09-0840-1

The adolescence and maturity intended refer not to Muslims but to Islam, the youngest and (so Muslims believe) the last, definitive manifestation of the heavenly message. In this book Al-Qaradawi traces ten intellectual “impurities” that have beset “the blessed Islamic awakening” from its earliest times to the present, contrasting, within each issue that counts as a potential impurity, a positive and negative attitude, and offering a vast amount of historical information in the process. Al-Qaradawi progresses from the dichotomy of style and content to that of difference and solidarity within Islam, covering such vexed issues as the validity and extent of innovation, emotional vs. rational approaches to religion, extremism, fundamentalism and the ideology of violence. He proves himself a master diplomat in placing equal emphasis on the various schools of thought adopted by contending factions of modern and contemporary political Islam, even as he consistently argues for peace, moderation and tolerance. His glosses on the theory and practise of such political organisations as the older Ikhwan Muslimin (Muslim Brothers) and the more radical *jama’at* (gatherings, i.e. organised groups) are particularly luminous, while his recollections of the thought and personalities of well-known figures like Hassan Al-Banna shed fresh light on their contribution.

Our Culture: Openness and Closure (Thaqafatuna Baynal-Infitahi wal-Inghilaq) , Youssuf Al-Qaradawi

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Pages: 100

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A brief take on one of the most widely discussed issues of contemporary intellectual life, this book is both prescriptive and stimulating. Dealing with the difference between culture and civilisation, the concept and characteristics of “our culture”, the difference between religious and Islamic culture and the defining features of a broader Arab-Islamic civilisation, Al-Qaradawi argues that “our culture” has always been open rather than closed, that it is written into a Muslim’s mindset to seek out wisdom wherever it presents itself and that Islam, whether in the past or at present, is a civilisation that welcomes contact with other civilisations as a means to both dialogue and renewal. Citing the 11th-century religious scholar Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali and the 12th-century philosopher Abul-Walid Ibn Rushd (Averroes) as examples of constructive openness, Al-Qaradawi warns against three traps inherent to the process of cultural exchange, especially in times of relative decline: the willingness to adopt precepts the subjects may not be mature enough to benefit from; overenthusiastic openness, which leads to excessive admission of values not sufficiently tested; and infatuation, which results in the indiscriminate acceptance of potentially destructive modes of behaviour.

Awakening: How to Renew Religion and Improve Life (Min Ajli Sahwatin Rashida Tujaddidud-Dina wa Tanhadu bid-Dunya), Youssuf Al-Qaradawi

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Pages: 180

ISBN: 977-09-0687-5

This is a collection of essays and articles written by Al-Qaradawi over the period from 1956 to the present, revised and arranged thematically in a new, holistic context. Topics range from modern-day illiteracy to the ins and outs of *sunna* (the ways of the Prophet). Yet they all fit seamlessly into a fourfold thematic structure – the rectification of religious concepts, dialogue with incoming modes of thought, hope against despair and what is required of modern-day Muslims – which in turn promises to contribute to the generation of “a true and original Islamic renaissance, characterised by maturity, rationality and enlightenment”. Al-Qaradawi makes it clear that he addresses only “intelligent minds and pure hearts”, directing his suggestions and recommendations at politically concerned Muslims. He calls for renewal in the light of *sunna*, the unification of disparate sects and ideologies (or at least unanimity concerning the fundamental principles), a full-fledged “return to Islam”, not only as a religion and a mode of behaviour but, perhaps even more essentially, as a political identity, and an attitude that maintains optimism in the face of hardship through an enlightened, unwavering faith. Unlike much of his work, this book reveals Al-Qaradawi the activist, who employs Islam as a framework in which to call for fraternity, justice and freedom.

The Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities (Fi Fiqhil-Aqaliyyatil-Muslima: Hayatul-Muslimin fil-Mujtama’atil-Ukhra), Youssuf Al-Qaradawi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 204

ISBN: 977-09-0735-9

The global sheikh’s take on Islam as a minority religion deals with the social, economic, political and cultural questions facing Muslims living in non-Muslim contexts, producing not only viable answers but also a complete contemporary *fiqh* (jurisprudential doctrine) specific to them. Al-Qaradawi’s approach, typically, draws on *shari’a* (Muslim law) as the principal basis for jurisprudence, “returning the branches”, in the learned metaphor, “to their roots”. Starting with semantic, religious and geographical definitions of “minorities”, Al-Qaradawi goes on to delineate the central *fiqh*-related problem: the absence of clear-cut criteria with which to live in non-Muslim cultures and societies. Concluding that no such *fiqh* would be possible without contemporary *ijtihad* (effort of thought), Al-Qaradawi lists the sources, aims and special features of his own endeavour, citing nine “fundamental principles of the *fiqh* of minorities”. As always Al-Qaradawi’s discourse becomes progressively more prescriptive, and through the last three quarters of the book he deals with issues like the validity of marriage with non-Muslims (differentiating between “heathens”, atheists and Bahais), the fine points of a *halal* (un-prohibited) diet and the legitimacy of subscribing to European mortgage laws. While it remains restricted largely to the more mundane aspects of Muslim theology, this book will prove invaluable to its target audience – English-born Pakistanis, for example – simplifying the complexities of religion into easily practicable formulae.

Islamic Discourse under Globalisation (Khitabunal-Islamiyu fi ‘Asril-‘Awlama), Youssuf Al-Qaradawi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 204

ISBN: 977-09-1021-x

Ironically Al-Qaradawi's most globally oriented contribution is perhaps his most restrictive, focussing as it does on the fundamental precepts of orthodox Islam as opposed to both politicised Islamic ideology and non-sectarian secularism. Written in response to "those who called, in the wake of the 11th September 2001 events, for reassessment and review of our religious discourse, especially with respect to the Other, and our view of him and our position in relation to him", the book argues for a moderate interpretation of *sunna* (the ways of the Prophet) and a faith that sustains *shari'a* (Muslim law) without incorporating the ideology of armed *jihad* (struggle) or abandoning Muslim to secular beliefs. In his introduction Al-Qaradawi declares himself to have been free of the former influence since he directed his attention to scholarship and writing; he dates this change of heart back to 1960, when his first book, *Al-Halalu wal-Haramu fil-Islam* (The Un-prohibited and Forbidden in Islam), appeared. The book opens with the question of whether and to what extent religious discourse can change at all. And as he circumscribes the limits of such discourse as drawn by the Quran, Al-Qaradawi proves himself as staunchly orthodox as the earliest *fuqabaa* (*fiqh* authors), rejecting all but the most peripheral and least perilous changes in practise.

The Muslim State (Min Fiqhid-Dawlati fil-Islam), Youssuf Al-Qaradawi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 200

ISBN: 977-09-0375-2

In this solid treatment of one of the rarest topics in contemporary Islamic literature – that of jurisprudence pertaining to the state – Al-Qaradawi summons up the 14th-century imam Ibnul-Qayyim, complaining of the stasis of the *fuqabaa* (doctrinal authors) of his time, who concentrated so much on the *fiqh* (doctrine) of worship they left the *umaraa* (princes or rulers) at a loss in matters of statehood, obliging them to come up with systems of government in isolation from the path of *shari'a* (Muslim law). Such is the case with the vast majority of present-day *fuqabaa*, Al-Qaradawi contends, who maintain centuries-old ideas about statehood, forgetting that Al-Imam Al-Shafi'i "changed his doctrine within a brief period", giving rise to two Shafi'i schools, the old and the new, "and that those who followed Abu-Hanifa differed with him in more than a third of his doctrinal teachings" due to differences between his time and theirs. In this summary of the Muslim idea of a state, Al-Qaradawi delineates the status and nature of statehood in Islam, tackling such modern questions as democracy, pluralism, the place of women and non-Muslims in the dynamics of a modern Muslim order and the increasingly relevant question of political Islam. He also deals with the relation of Muslim citizens to a secular state, the extent of their contribution to a non-Muslim political system, and the political attitudes they should adopt. An accessible attempt at one of the most complex challenges facing present-day Islam.

Environmentalism in Muslim Law (Ri'ayatul-Bi'ati fi Shari'atil-Islam), Youssuf Al-Qaradawi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 260

ISBN: 977-09-0691-3

This is an impassioned call for environmental awareness drawn wholly from the Quran and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet). Conceived of as Islam's contribution to an increasingly relevant global discourse, the book is structured as a threefold intellectual project: establishing the origins of environmental awareness in *shari'a* (Muslim law based on either Quran or *sunna*, i.e. the ways of Prophet Muhammad, or both); the fundamental precepts of environmental awareness in Islam; and the range of environmental dangers accounted for in traditional Muslim discourse. It also includes expansive accounts of the meaning and history of Muslim environmentalism, the constituents of the environment from a religious perspective and received methods for adequate care of the environment. (Al-Qaradawi makes a point of using the term "care" instead of the more common term "protection", because it communicates a more anthropomorphic notion of the environment, he explains, giving a closer sense of the human-environment relation that he intends.) The book not only establishes Al-Qaradawi's concern with what is arguably humanity's most urgent issue at present, it demonstrates a long standing tradition of environmentalism that goes back to the time of Prophet Muhammad, revealing one of the faith's most admirable, and currently least publicised, aspects. "God created the environment in all its elements virtuous and pure..." the Azharite emphatically explains, "and... Islam... is worthy of presenting... a cure for the problems of the environment, and the gift of recovery, through its recommendations..."

Protecting the Environment: The Vision of Islam (Ru'yatul-Islaim fil-Hifazi 'alal-Bi'a), 'Abdullah Shehata

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 160

ISBN: 977-09-0614-x

Another Azharite statement on environmental protection in Islam, this is a tightly structured, economical monograph that opens with an interesting account of the etymological sources of the word *bi'a* (environment). The linguistic associations of the root verb *bana'a* in the Quran, as 'Abdullah Shehata points out, relate directly to concepts of living space and subsistence, so that in its purest sense *bi'a* means not the environment but home, the place in which God's creatures live and partake of His plenty; in addition, *bi'a* also means the state in which a subject exists, judged by material and moral circumstances. This notion of the environment provides a particularly attractive portal into the Islamic world view, revealing the way in which environmentalism is written into the Muslim mindset, and it is largely in light of the world view in question, rather than any of its constituent elements, that Shehata undertakes his task of describing and commenting on environmentalism in Islam.

Beginning with the origins and nature of the universe, Shehata progresses through the constituents of the environment as they appear in the Quran – day and night, the sky, water, the earth and soil, mountains, agriculture and animals – to a more conceptual discussion of the philosophy, morality and theology of environmentalism. Drawing on the Quran, Shehata provides much scientific information as well, producing yet another marriage of discourses but, perhaps more importantly, in so doing he stresses the meaningful wholeness of the Islamic world view, which does not exclude the beneficial deployment of science. There are sections on the atmosphere and cleanliness, a discussion of the connection between environmental protection and human well-being and an epilogue on general Muslim morality and how its sincere application would automatically result in a safe and clean environment. It is remarkable how much information Shehata manages to squeeze into a short text, producing a comprehensive, articulate, inter-disciplinary statement.

Islam: Creed and Law (Al-Islam 'Aqidatan wa Shari'a), Mahmoud Shaltout

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 560

ISBN: N/A

One of three reference works produced by the late Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar during the 1940s, this is the first part of what remains, arguably, the most comprehensive in-depth introduction to Sunni Islam to have been written in modern times. A hefty tome, the book begins with a detailed introduction in which the author defines and explains the topics he is about to deal with, summarising the main principles of the faith with a concise exactitude: the meaning of Islam as a human-oriented religion, the equality of the races and the sexes, the difference between creed and law, the precedence of the former over the latter and the truth of the Quran as the indisputable word of God.

The first section takes up the concept of *'aqida* (creed), the most primary element of the faith, circumscribing its scope and specifying its conceptual and behavioural elements – “the fundamental beliefs of Islam” – one by one. The entire creed, Shaltout asserts, depends on the *shahada* (testimony), that there is no God but God, and that Muhammad is His Messenger. Shaltout goes on to draw the line between belief and apostasy, differentiating rational and emotional approaches to the creed and enumerating the objects of belief: God, the angels, the Books, the prophets and the Day of Judgment, each of which he tackles more extensively in turn, starting with the intricate question of the nature and attributes of the divine being – His names, His essence (which can be described but never directly perceived) and, perhaps most distinctly, His indivisible oneness. Shaltout goes on to explain the more specific aspects of the faith – belief in *akhira* (the after life), and belief in heaven and hell – before asserting the affinity between Muslims and other People of the Book. In a separate division at the end, the grand imam discusses the criteria for establishing the presence or absence of belief and whether the unanimity of the judges is a necessary requirement.

The second section of the book takes up *shari'a* (law), the next most important element of Islam, dealing first with the fundamentals of worship, otherwise known, with the *shahada*, as the five pillars of Islam: *salah* (the five daily prayers), *zakah* (an elaborate system of charity or rather, more precisely, redistribution of wealth), *sawm* (the fast, to be undertaken from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan) and *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca, to be undertaken at least once in a lifetime). Shaltout goes on to deal with rules pertaining to the family, inheritance, polygamy and divorce, bringing Islamic discourse up to date with topics like contraception and woman's liberation. Finally he describes the laws governing wealth and commerce, concluding with the crimes and their punishments. Again, Shaltout devotes an entire division towards the end of the book to the two sources of *shari'a*, the Quran and *sunna* (ways of Prophet Muhammad), citing the reasons behind disagreements among theologians regarding those legal points not directly provided for by either.

Islam: A Contemporary Outlook (Ru'yatun Islamiyyatun Mu'asira), Ahmed Kamal Abul-Majd

Format: 23 x 16.5

Pages: 68

ISBN: 977-09-0069-9

The second edition of a pamphlet drafted in 1981 and first published in 1991, this declaration of principles regarding “a new vision of reform and renaissance” benefits from an excellent introduction by its author, the well known scholar and government figure Ahmed Kamal Abul-Majd, which brings the context of the manifesto up to date.

Taking as its starting point “the existence of a new intellectual Islamic trend” that, unlike liberal capitalist or socialist models of social-political transformation, answers to the aspirations of society, the pamphlet, as Abul-Majd emphatically points out, is not intended as a programme to be implemented but simply as a statement of intent.

As a total worldview – for “partial solutions” can only go so far – Islam is the one practicable system that will have a nearly unanimous support base among “the people, who will not back up a movement unless they understand it”. Rather than simply the faith, Islam is understood as a system of social organisation in which the rights of the individual remain foremost; what is proposed is the gradual integration of that system into contemporary life, a task that necessitates rewriting jurisprudential doctrine and prioritising those aspects of Muslim law that ensure the protection of immediate social and political rights.

See *Dialogue, not Confrontation* below

God’s Prophets (Anbiyaa’ullah), Ahmed Bahgat

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 512

ISBN: 977-09-0555-0

The 25th, revised and expanded edition of Ahmed Bahgat’s popular compilation of prophets’ tales drawn from the Quran, this book demonstrates all those qualities that contributed to its writer’s reputation: accessibility, light-heartedness and wide-ranging, one might say interdisciplinary knowledge. Starting his career in journalism while studying law at Cairo University, Bahgat quickly developed a distinct, literary style that was described as Chekhovian owing to its economy, subtlety and humour, and the writer’s feeling of affinity with the Russian master. In his *Al-Abram* columns, which he continues to write to this day, Bahgat was soon to emerge as an engaging humorist and social critic of immense versatility – a quality which, combined with his profound knowledge of Islam, qualified him all the more for producing popular Islamic literature.

This masterpiece of quasi-exegetical writing offers a uniquely contemporary perspective on an age-old subject, demonstrating not only the scope of Bahgat’s technical ability but his distinctly Sufi understanding of religious questions and, perhaps even more significantly, his passionate feelings about them. In a string of gripping, dramatic narratives, interspersed with quotations from the holy book, Bahgat recounts the stories of prophets recognised by Islam, beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad, as well as those of a few significant events and landmarks in the history of the universe. Indispensable to students of anthropology and comparative religion, the book makes compelling reading as well – testimony to Bahgat’s mastery of the art of story telling and his familiarity with an increasingly globalised contemporary mentality.

Bahgat’s greatest achievement is that he manages to avoid preaching even as he expounds the characters’ lives as examples to be followed. From the stories of Jewish prophets like Joseph and Job to a concise if complete life of Muhammad, Bahgat presents a vision of elevated humanity, at once subject to the limitations of their mortal form and capable of connecting directly with the divine. Yet in this book the prophets’ stories shed every last sign of mythological or historical presence. Instances of all-too-human perfection, they are conceived of as sources of inspiration for the contemporary reader. Their theological purposes are not expounded didactically but rather as all but secular parables of existence – as relevant as they are lifelike.

Animal Tales in the Quran (Qisasul-Hayawani fil-Quraan), Ahmed Bahgat

Format: 26.5 x 19

Pages: 216

ISBN: N/A

The well-known art journalist Ihab Shakir beautifully illustrates this abiding classic, which has delighted generations of children and adults through the years. Written by Ahmed Bahgat, a popular

humorist and journalist whose newspaper columns are among the most engaging critiques of present-day Egyptian society, it is a compilation of Quranic narratives that feature animals; some, like Jonah's fish and Moses' stick, are concurrent with Old Testament versions of the same stories, others are specific to the Quran. But in retelling them from the viewpoint of the animals, making their role central to the unfolding of events and giving them distinct voices, Bahgat imbues the tales with a modern edge. While always stressing the Quran's spiritual message, he benefits from a range of sources including *The Animal Kingdom*, a manual of zoology written by eight scientists from the Washington Museum of Natural History, and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

The endeavour, Bahgat explains, is both theological and scientific, since he abides by the orthodox exegesis of the Quranic tales even as he deploys scientific fact; more than anything, however, it is a creative process, for it depends on intimating a context for the animals' lives, making up names and personal histories for them and interpreting their responses to the often miraculous experiences they go through in the service of God. The Quran, as it turns out, is a treasure trove of fauna lore, with the traits and characteristics of the animals it portrays in uncanny agreement with the findings of modern science. The animals make indispensable contributions to the success or progress of the prophets they accompany, or else they demonstrate, whether to the prophets or to the people whom they address, the majestic truth of the divine message: When the heathen Ethiopian king Abraha's greatest elephant, an otherwise ruthless monster, is brought to Mecca to destroy the Kaaba, it inexplicably stops in its tracks at the last minute, frustrating its owner's plans; and when the Prophet hides in a grotto with his companion Abu Bakr, a spider spins his web over the opening of the grotto in no time, diverting the attention of their Quraish pursuers and so saving their lives and ensuring the survival of Islam at an early stage of its emergence.

The Middle Culture: Towards a new Fundamentalism, On the Jurisprudence of Arab-Islamic Culture (Hadarutul-Wasat: Nahwa Usouliyatin Jadida, Fi Fiqhil-Hadaratil-'Arabiyyatil-Islamiyya), Rafiq Habib

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 260

ISBN: 977-09-0780-4

This is perhaps the only theoretical analysis of its kind to deal persuasively with the present moment in the history of Arab-Islamic civilisation.

The author's aim is to formulate a viable *fiqh* (Muslim jurisprudential doctrine) of contemporary culture. To achieve it he systematically categorises the constituents of present-day Muslim identity: the material and historical structure of the nation of Islam; the meaning and value of civilisation both within and beyond that nation; and the duality of *deen* (religion and, by extension, eternal life) and *dunya* (life in the phenomenological world) in its peoples' consciousness. Delineating the conditions necessary for a true Arab renaissance, Rafiq Habib offers new glosses not only on the philosophy that informs Muslim thinking but on the politicisation of Islam; and his book is particularly appealing to students of cultural history and philosophy in that he does so in a purely conceptual framework.

Habib's argument for "a new fundamentalism" is classificatory in essence, centring on the distinction between "factors that distinguish the identity of the nation" and "the nation's peripheral historical experiences". Perhaps surprisingly for many Western readers, in documenting what he calls humanity's "middle civilisation", as compared to ancient (Eastern, non-Islamic) and modern (Western) civilisations, he proves himself more of an historian of ideas than an ideologue. Instead of following the us-them paradigm all too often deployed by the zealot, Habib, writing from an orthodox Muslim perspective, speaks in terms of geographical and epistemological nations and ongoing, mutual exchange. Concepts of "the civilised Other" and "selective learning" play as

significant a role in his dynamics of cultural growth as collective self-awareness. And he pointedly rejects deterministic discourse, displaying a remarkable understanding of the relativity of human experience.

More significantly, perhaps, he does not give in to the temptation of projecting blame on the Other in question. It is rather the nation's own "tardiness in performing its role, and its procrastination from responsible civilised action" that could ultimately destroy it. "Its weakness comes basically from within, while external factors comprise the challenges and obstacles, the circumstances and the context" of its life. Such factors, Habib stresses repeatedly, "can not [in themselves] defeat the nation..."

See The Revival of Arab Traditions, On the Jurisprudence of Arab-Islamic Culture under 'Historians and Philosophers'

The Messenger's Wives: Reality and Fabrication (Zawjatur-Rasouli banyal-Haqiqati wal-Ifira'), Nabil Louqa Bibawi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 184

ISBN: 977-09-1069-4

A Coptic scholar discussing the fine points of Muslim history and theology: Nabil Louqa Bibawi's books are a phenomenon unto themselves. Born in 1944, Bibawi is a professor of law and a businessman, and has earned PhDs in law, economics and *shari'a* (Muslim law). His books on Islam have all been sanctioned by Al-Azhar, and he is active in promoting the "national unity" of Muslims and Copts. Bibawi has also written on law, the humanities and Christianity.

Introduced by several Islamic scholars, religious authorities and public figures – former Sudanese prime minister Imam As-Sadeq Al-Mahdi and Egyptian Grand Mufti 'Ali Jum'a among them – this book demonstrates the extent of Bibawi's commitment to religious tolerance and the task of confirming the friendly relations between Muslims and Christians in Egypt. In two-chapter sections dealing with the circumstances pertaining to, and the author's opinion of, Prophet Muhammad's marriage to each of his eleven wives (otherwise known as "the Mothers of the Faithful"), the book constitutes a perfectly orthodox, if sympathetically detached account of the Prophet's private life, conceived of as a model for all Muslims. In so doing it not only illuminates a significant aspect of Sunna (the Prophet's ways) but presents an objective Christian understanding of Islamic modes of social organisation and the place of woman in Muslim society.

More significantly, Bibawi defends the Messenger of God against accusations of unjustified polygamy, profanity and sexual excess, elucidating the reasoning behind marriage in each case; such reasoning turns out to be convincing considering the historical context of the Prophet's life and the fact that, in his capacity as the ideal individual, he set out to demonstrate to his followers how best to approach male-female relations under any given set of circumstances.

"Among the many suspicions raised by the enemies of Islam against this religion is the issue of the Messenger of God's many wives," wrote Hamdi Zaqzouq, head of the Awqaf (Endowments) Agency in one of the book's introductions. "They went so far as to say that the Messenger sought sensual pleasure while paying no attention to the spiritual aspects of life. Ignorant of the real reasons behind him having many wives, they rested content with appearances without delving deeper into the justifications and secrets [behind each marriage]... What distinguishes this book [from similar defences written by Muslims] is that its author is a committed and proud Christian who nonetheless zealously protects towards the religion of his compatriots..."

National Unity and the Perils of Debating the Monotheistic Creeds (Al-Wihdatul-Wataniyyatu wa Khutouratu Munaqashatil-Ghaybiyati wal-‘Aqa’idil-Muqaddasati fil Islami wal-Masihiyati wal-Yahoudiyya), Nabil Louqa Bibawi

Format: 2.5 x 16.5

Pages: 260

ISBN: 977-09-1045-7

Once again Islam’s Coptic spokesman, Nabil Louqa Bibawi, broaches a potentially explosive topic, displaying not only profound knowledge of all three monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) but exemplary tolerance and insight. In his eagerness to underline the three creeds’ common basis, Bibawi works in a tradition of religious national unity dating back to the 1919 Revolution. In itself the bibliography appended to this book demonstrates the astounding breadth of Bibawi’s understanding of Muslim-Copt relations, the sources of religious discourse and the intellectual and spiritual common ground of the three creeds in question. As a popular, easily accessible statement of the essence of monotheism, the book demonstrates how they all are in essence, relying not only on the Old and New Testaments and the Quran, but on books by church men, Muslim religious scholars and modern Coptic and Islamic commentators.

Bibawi exposes the most vexed differences between Muslims and Christians – recurrent subjects of sectarian debate and in some cases downright enmity – for the superficial variations that they really are. Instead of concentrating on these differences, he penetrates directly to the deepest root of the two religions’ common message: the indivisible Oneness of God. In addition to monotheism, the first few chapters of the book discusses three points relevant to Bibawi’s central argument: that all three religions call for love, that they recognise and respect each other and that they invariably concede that, had God wanted to unify the creeds, he would undoubtedly have done so; the differences between them must rather be accepted as God’s will.

In his usual classificatory style, Bibawi goes on compare the manifestations of monotheism in each religion, citing the holy books extensively and constantly cross-referencing as he progresses from one topic to the next. He provides an exhaustive list of the miracles of Prophet Muhammed, Jesus Christ and Moses, asserting that such events can neither be verified nor negated; true as they remain, they constitute the impenetrable gnosis of each creed, which cannot be comprehended by the human mind. It follows that it makes no sense for an adherent of one religion to question the miracles accepted by that of another.

The Psychology of the Quran (Al-Quraanu wa ‘Ilmun-Nafs), Mohamed ‘Uthman Najati

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Pages: 320

ISBN: 977-09-0156-3

A senior psychology professor traces out the principal postulates of his discipline in the verses of the Muslim holy book, marrying two seemingly incompatible discourses. In the process he provides not only scientific information but theological insight.

Like a latter-day Carl Jung, Mohamed Othman Najati stresses the psyche’s need for spiritual sustenance, but rather than seeking such sustenance outside the creed of his birth, he turns an existing text, widely accepted as the ultimate truth, into a manual of clinical psychology, compiling exhaustive lists of Quranic references to motivation, emotion, perception, the intellect, learning, dreams, memory and psychiatric treatment, and providing extensive commentary as he does so. Under the rubric of emotion, for example, he deals individually with seven different kinds of love;

each is covered not only as a Quranic subject but as a layman's research topic and a clinical field of endeavour.

Najati offers an impressive bibliography at the end of each chapter, evidence that his approach to psychology is not wholly without precedent. Part of the attraction of the book is that it makes readers aware of a particular legacy within traditions of Arab learning, highly relevant to contemporary life. It was while researching Avicenna for a Masters thesis in 1939-42 that the author first became aware of the psychological import of both Quran and Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad), as among the sources of Avicenna's discourse on perception and dream analysis. Not until 1980-81 was he on leave from Kuwait University for long enough to draft the first edition of this groundbreaking reference work.

Now in its third, expanded edition, the book has never been out of print since. Its popularity derives as much from its reliance on the Quran as from Najati's accessible style and interpretive power. A pious Muslim, Najati thinks of his book as an act of worship, but it is above all his veneration for the endless depths of the human psyche that comes through. His is an enlightened, forward-looking spirituality, reconciling religious and scientific modes of thought rather than emphasising the differences between them.

Memoirs of an Arab Afghan (Dhikrayatu 'Arabiyyin Afghani), Ayman Sabri Faraj (previously known as Abu-Ja'far Al-Misri Al-Qandahari)

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 328

ISBN: 977-09-0776-6

Introduced by the well-known journalist Fahmi Huweidi, this is one of the most valuable contributions to the annals of modern-day *jihad* (struggle in pursuit of God's will, whether peaceful or armed). Comprising the memoirs of an outstanding agriculturalist and desert reclamation expert, a perfectly ordinary "Egyptian citizen", in Huweidi's admiring words, "who never belonged to a *jama'a* (radical Islamist organisation) nor participated in... political activism", but "hearing the call of *jihad*, simply decided to heed it, and packed off to Afghanistan in the summer of 1988", the book is so gripping it can be read as a non-fiction thriller, comparable to Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Kidnapping*, for example – except that it is a wholly first-person experience and, in some ways, a reflection of its author's ideological position. As Huweidi points out, Faraj's lack of literary skill, rather than taking away from the book, gives it a spontaneous and unpretentious edge.

Faraj, who still prefers to be called by the name he chose for himself on reaching Qandahar as a *mujahid* (participant in *jihad*), Abu-Ja'far Al-Misri Al-Qandahari, continued to fight against the Soviet occupation until he was seriously wounded in 1990, spending seven months in the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Hospital in Peshawar. There, driven by intense pain and feelings of isolation – he could express neither to fellow *mujahideen* (pl. of *mujahid*) who visited him, for fear of demoralising them – he began to write, initially in the form of not-to-be-posted letters to his far-away family. Ending in 1990, the year of the Soviet withdrawal, the memoirs also comprise a song of innocence for *jihad*, whose subsequent songs of experience, as Huweidi points out, include power struggles among the *mujahideen* leaders, the emergence of the Taliban in 1994 and their rise to power in 1996.

From the geography and history of Afghanistan to the conditions surrounding the Soviet invasion, from minutely detailed accounts of battles and suicide operations to extensive character studies of some of the most significant or interesting *mujahideen*, and from encounters with the eccentricities and hashish-smoking habits of fellow fighters to the presence among them, in spirit or voice, of Saddam Hussein and the Egyptian master of Quranic recitation 'Abdul-Basit 'Abdus-Samad: Faraj gives a stimulating, unfailingly humane picture of one of the most engaging experiences that a 20th-century Muslim could go through, offering much insight into the mindset of *jihad* and recounting the

effect his sojourn in Afghanistan has had on his personal and social life in Egypt. For anyone interested in the politicisation of Islam or the recent history of Afghanistan, this book is worth its weight in gold.

Taliban: God's Warriors in the Wrong Battle (Taliban: Jundul-Lahi fil-Ma'rakatil-Ghalat), Fahmi Huweidi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 188

ISBN: 977-09-0734-0

One of the earliest responses to the problem posed by Afghanistan at the turn of the millennium, this book is written by one of Egypt's best known, Islamically oriented authors, Fahmi Huweidi, whose newspaper articles are avidly consumed by Muslims and non-sectarians alike, for he is rather more concerned with Islam in its cultural and historical aspects than committed to a predetermined belief system or ideological agenda, and his down-to-earth social and political commentary invariably exhibits a contemporary global perspective. Huweidi is also a compelling writer – something to which the two compositions making up this volume bear ample testimony. The book is so lively and engaging it verges on generic travel writing; and it makes an excellent introduction to Afghani politics.

Completed prophetically in April 2001, months before the fateful events of 11th September, the book reports on two journeys Huweidi undertook to Afghanistan in 1998 and 2001; and its principal point is that, while they became the world media's representatives of Islam, the Taliban were, with deplorable irony, displaying nothing but the backward cultural traits of the average religiously educated contemporary Afghani – nothing to do with Muslim culture. He bases his argument not only on eyewitness accounts of the way Afghani society was run under the Taliban, contrasted with his expert knowledge of the precepts of Islamic history at its civilised best, but on conversations with Western educated Afghani expatriates. "The nation of Islam is now judged by what the Taliban are doing," Huweidi writes, "and Muslim activists are everywhere denigrated [on the basis of] what [they] are doing in Kabul... The same sword that was drawn in support of Islam is now used to strike against it, while the warriors, out of excessive naiveté and lack of discernment, think they are doing well..."

Although Huweidi undertook the second journey as part of an Organisation of the Islamic Conference delegation, he describes himself as "a journalist trying to read events as they happen", and this is largely what he does throughout the book, with an undertone of level-headed, humane sympathy for the Taliban. From the opium trade to the abolition of women's education, from the logic behind the destruction of the two giant Buddhas to the appointment of three thousand mullahs as observers responsible for spotting and preventing *munkarat* (wrongdoings), Huweidi's reports are backed by first-hand statements of the Taliban and almost clairvoyant observations of their behaviour. They also benefit from Huweidi's previous visits to Afghanistan and his profound knowledge of Afghani history; his first book, *Hadatha fi Afghanistan* (It Happened in Afghanistan, 1979), dealt with the contemporaneous communist revolt against the monarchy. Even as he ultimately rejects their orientation, his book reads like an objective counterpoint to the media's demonisation of a more or less well-meaning group of underprivileged students implementing their sordid idea of God's will.

Un-Inviolable Citizens (Muwatinoun La-Dhimiyyoun), Fahmi Huweidi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 268

ISBN: 977-09-0001-x

A provocative statement on the position of non-Muslims in Arab or predominantly Muslim states by a widely read journalist and self-styled “Islamic writer”, this book takes as its starting point “the undeniable crisis that exists in relations between Muslims and non-Muslims”. It sets out to pursue the cumulative historical causes of that crisis with “as much frankness and courage and decisiveness as possible”, for failing to confront those causes, Fahmi Huweidi argues, amounts to ignoring land mines “planted into the Arab-Islamic body”. Only through confrontation with major historical frictions like the Crusades, European imperialism and American Middle East policy can the kind of sectarian explosion that has destabilised Lebanon and, on a smaller scale, Egypt, be forestalled; otherwise, Huweidi warns, it can happen again anywhere in the Arab-Islamic world, taking its toll on both people and resources.

Such is Huweidi’s declared objective. Yet the significance of his book goes beyond the historical and theological analyses through which he sets out to achieve it, for his main argument concerns the falsity of traditional *fiqh* (doctrinal) views of *ahludh-dhimma* (people in the custody [of Islam]) – those members of the Muslim community made inviolable by their truce with the Prophet, and whose present-day position, if seen in the light of such views, makes them, in effect, un-inviolable. Huweidi traces the concept of *ahludh-dhimma* to its earliest origins in Hadith (sayings of the Prophet), noting that it very seldom appears in the Quran, and arguing against the doctrinal positions that turn it into an excuse for persecution or disunity. On the basis of *shari’a* (Muslim law), rather, he calls for the integration of non-Muslims into the body of the nation and their being given equal rights of participation.

From a decidedly Muslim if often refreshingly contemporary perspective, Huweidi deals with the “lost keys”, or true historical causes, of Muslim-Other strife, studying “the lessons of 14 centuries of Islam” to establish that the root of sectarian “battles” lies not in the creed itself, but in power struggles and the dialectic of progress and backwardness. While not identical, Islam remains essentially in harmony with the creeds of other “People of the Book”; and to deny this is to myopically and perhaps purposely put forth an “erroneous diagnosis” of sectarian strife or the troubled relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Huweidi also cites examples of how Muslims treated non-Muslim subjects in the various countries they ruled, resorting to what he calls “the testimonies of Islam” to illustrate his point. In the second section he advances and elaborates his principal point: that Islam sees human beings as deserving of the utmost respect irrespective of their creed. He deals with overtly political aspects of the issue in the third section; non-Muslims, he contends, can even participate in *jihad* (struggle in pursuit of God’s will), the better to pursue the interests of a nation to which they belong.

Falsifying Consciousness (Tazyeeful-Wa’i), Fahmi Huweidi

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 172

ISBN: 977-09-0096-63

A clever critique of Islam’s home-grown detractors by the celebrated journalist and proponent of political Islam Fahmi Huweidi, this book makes a valid point about the Western (Orientalist) sources of “secular extremism”, a coinage with which Huweidi counters the understandably more frequent charge of Islamic extremism, questioning his opponents’ methodology and their knowledge of Islam in an effort, singularly heroic considering the evidence, to justify sectarian bigotry. Huweidi does expose the fallacies and superficiality of Arab liberals who denigrate the sectarian perspective, however, and whether or not one agrees with his intellectual standpoint, or indeed with the general (and surprisingly varied) tendency to force Muslim dogma on social, political and economic

discourse, in this book the seasoned debater undeniably exposes the prejudice and bias of a particular secular orientation, showing that it can be the attitude adopted by the proponents of any one ideological standpoint, to an even greater extent than the content of their discourse, that constitutes the greater stumbling block.

Opening with a definition of “secular extremism” in which he typically turns a potential apologia into an offensive point of departure, Huweidi goes on to quote and comment on several such extremists (his targets include well-known figures like the secular politician Faraj Fouda, who was murdered by religious extremists in 1992, and the late, luminous writer Lotfi Al-Khouli), often identifying their European sources precisely, thus pointing up their lack of originality and what he describes as “intellectual dependency” on the West. Among the numerous topics he touches on in this context is the debate concerning the possibility of conceding a complete divorce between *‘aqida* (the creed) and *shari’a* (the law), a kind of present-day re-enactment of the age-old drive to separate state from church. Huweidi’s principal point is that, however well meaning or rationally valid such a separation might be, it remains, according to the fundamental precepts of religion, an unequivocally anti-Muslim act, for it is written into Islam, as he points out, to be both a *deen* (religion) and a *dawla* (state). More persuasive is his point concerning the secular tendency to promote partial and unjust readings of Muslim history, denying the achievements of past Muslim states.

Factional and impassioned, Huweidi’s book makes provocative reading; in terms of accuracy of information and strength of logical argument, he surpasses many a non-sectarian philosopher, presenting the case for Islamism in a favourable light.

Our Intellectual Heritage in the Balance of Law and Reason (Turathunal-Fikriyya fi Mizanish-Shar’ wal-‘Aql), Mohamed Al-Ghazali

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 204

ISBN: 977-09-0040-0

The late Sheikh Mohamed Al-Ghazali (1917-1996), who shares his surname with the great 11th-century Sufi theologian, was among the most enlightened religious scholars to have entered the public sphere, and this sedate meditation on contemporary Islam bears testimony to both his profound knowledge and his freethinking spirit. To a greater extent than most Islamic scholars, he is an engaging stylist, and the contemplative flow of his writing makes singularly pleasurable reading. Though somewhat too highbrow for readers seeking theological practicalities, the book affords a unique perspective on its subject, and covers a vast amount of theological territory, revealing Al-Ghazali’s deeply personal relationship with the Quran.

Typically Al-Ghazali begins with a far-fetched topic: the epistemology of Islam. Mixing episodes from the history of the universe with passages of exegesis, he describes the kind of knowledge to which Muslims as the ultimate representatives of correct human consciousness should devote their minds, emphasising “respect for the intellect” and opposition to “blunt tradition and blind zealotry”. He broaches the philosophical question of whether Islam is knowledge, and to what extent knowledge can be Islamic, discussing the possibility of renewing Muslim consciousness before he moves on to several related topics: divine inspiration, the many and various veils covering the “greater truth”, and modes of thought that ensure a correct understanding of religion as both benevolence and progress.

The rest of the book deals with a range of interrelated issues from education and history to new glosses on the fine points of exegesis, contributions to a more progressive understanding of *sunna* (the ways of the Prophet) and even an assessment of the future of Arabic literature. The drive to “rewrite the history of Islam” from its emergence to the fifth century of the Hijra (the Prophet’s journey from Mecca to Medina and the start of the Muslim calendar), for example, fits in with the

need to differentiate between a true *murtadd* (an apostate who, once a Muslim, goes back on his word), i.e. someone who abandons Islam to its political-historical enemies, and a doctrinal innovator, whose view of religion might differ from the received conventions. Differences in loyalty to one or another school of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), Al-Ghazali argues, have no bearing on “closeness or distance from God”, or on “the unity of the nation”.

The Prophet’s Sunna in Fiqh and Hadith (Al-Sunnatun-Nabawiya bayna Ahlil-Fiqh wa Ahilil-Hadith), Mohamed Al-Ghazali

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 208

ISBN: 977-148-332-3

Toggling two essential, widely divergent sources of *sunna* (the ways of Prophet Muhammad) – jurisprudential doctrine and the canonical sayings of the Prophet – an intensely individual voice of religious scholarship sheds refreshing light on the more debated half of *shari’a* (Muslim law), offering a kind of Islamic re-education – and a stimulating read.

Now in its sixth edition, the book opens with “paradigms of opinion and narrative” relating to interpretations of *sunna* based on both books of *fiqh* and compilations of Hadith, progressing from down-to-earth matters of contention like the “battle of *hijab*” (the ongoing debate about legitimate dress codes for Muslim women), the etiquette of dining and keeping house and to what extent activities like singing and dancing undermine the morality of Muslims (especially as regards man-woman relations), through the place of woman in the family and public life and the value of her testimony in courts of law, and up to the more conceptual question of the difference between *‘ibadat* (acts of worship) and *‘adat* (habits and conventions).

Mohamed Al-Ghazali tackles the most vexed issues head on, displaying an exceptional aptitude for rationality and a progressive clear-sightedness, and following in the footsteps of the greatest pioneers of religious enlightenment from the 12th-century Averroes to the 20th-century Sheikh Mohamed ‘Abduh. In discussing the notion of being haunted by genies or devils, for example – a prevalent superstition among the psychologically disturbed – he recounts encounters with real people who sought his help as a man of God, delineating the way he dealt with them, before reporting on discussions of the issue with his peers. He refers to specific verses of the Quran and statements of the Prophet to establish that, while the negative principle definitely exists, it could not possibly take the form the alleged victims describe, concluding that they are giving in to nervous states of weakness, and recommending strengthening the faith in order to counter such delusions and to retrieve a positive connection with spiritual life.

Al-Ghazali ends his book with a powerful statement of his methodology: “to know men by the [criteria of] truth, not to know truth by [the criteria of] men”. Requiring both intelligence and sincerity, he says, the route to truth is so complex and beset by obstacles it leaves no one, however great his contribution, immune to error; only those who propagate hidden worldly agendas, the politically astute sheikh insists, are likely to be denying this fact.

Woman’s Issues: Stagnant and Incoming Conventions (Qadayal-Mar’a banyat-Taqalidir-Rakia wal-Wafida), Mohamed Al-Ghazali

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 224

ISBN: 977-01-6352-x

Mohamed Al-Ghazali's take on one of the most recurrent issues in Islamic discourse, this is an intricately structured book, with each of its four sections divided into several short, concise chapters. Starting with a call on Muslims to "understand Islam first", Al-Ghazali delineates the logic behind a progressive interpretation of the place of woman in society, putting forth on the effects of poverty and ignorance on the image of Muslim women and the need to improve that image in a wide variety of contexts. He also tackles positive and negative aspects of the role of *'ulamaa* (religious scholars, pl. of *'alim*) in the process.

While he acknowledges the role divisions prescribed by the Quran, Al-Ghazali asserts that equality between the sexes is a fundamental Muslim principle, and shows prescience and philanthropy in his response to the long-term effects of the sexual revolution in the course of reporting on a WHO seminar he attended. Extremist Muslims, he says, "have locked women in the house... and created conventions that make marriage prohibitive" for all but the most privileged. "We will not speak of the effect of this on the reputation of Islam on the local or international scale... [But] isn't it time we seriously considered the ideal method of implementing the recommendations of Islam in our country?"

Al-Ghazali's book may seem disjointed – chapters read like separate articles written at different times – yet the scope of his vision is astounding, and by the end of each section the reader has accumulated a complete understanding of the topic at hand. From a meditation on motherhood to progressive accounts of Muslim social history (the two chapters on the wives of the Prophet are particularly impressive), Al-Ghazali moves on to another range of family-related questions, from the conditions necessary for a successful marriage to romantic love as its rightful prelude and the link between homosexuality and AIDS.

The final section of the book is devoted to "the rectification of concepts" and acts to dispel prevalent myths like the notion that it is *haram* (prohibited) for the female voice to be heard in public. Al-Ghazali also argues against "mistaken efforts of thought" like the concept of *baytut-ta'a* (the home of obedience), whereby a Muslim man can force an unwilling wife to live with him rather than agreeing to divorce her. Al-Ghazali not only provides an attractive perspective on Muslim family law but offers a plan for social transformation.

Women's Liberation in Islam: Answers to the Detractors (At-Tahrirul-Islamiyu lil-Mar'a: Ar-Radu 'ala Shubuhatil-Ghulah), Mohamed 'Imara

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 144

ISBN: 977-09-0757-x

In this partisan account of women's liberation, a left-leaning Azharite and respected historian of Islam stands Western feminism on its head, arguing against European fem-lib paradigms and for a contemporary understanding of the role of women in Muslim society as prescribed by *shari'a* (Muslim law). Typifying the conventional Arab response to Western liberalism – Mohamed 'Imara's introduction denigrates the spiritual and cultural loss of direction to which it has given way in Western society and, even more vehemently, its mindless replication in the Arab world – this book also summarises the role of woman in Muslim patriarchy, dispelling myths and clarifying issues of significance to the Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

The first section deals with three crucial points: female participation in public life, woman's *jihad* (struggle in pursuit of God's will) and the rules of *fiqh* (Muslim jurisprudence) relating to the nature and extent of interaction between the sexes in various contexts, as well as their contemporary modifications. 'Imara's arguments are persuasive and thoroughly referenced, and he presents them with exemplary economy of means. In delineating Islam's prescriptions for women he cites

examples from Islamic and modern history and provides not only the fundamental doctrinal precepts, but also their justification, their modern-day applications and the theological reasoning behind them. He presents *shari'a* as a fundamentally intuitive system of organisation based on the natural inclinations of the human race.

Human beings are social entities designed to function in two principal contexts mentioned by the Quran, the family and a wider community; and in each of these two contexts *shari'a* supplies an optimal order for dividing the roles, rights and duties – one that, ultimately, from the viewpoint of her position as human being biologically and by extension socially different from man, gives woman far more rights and privileges than comparable social structures of the time or even secular modes of thought of the present, which have reduced her to “a commodity, a magazine cover or an advertisement promoting consumerist greed”.

The second section of the book is by far the more valuable; here 'Imara confronts the five principal objections raised by secular Arabs against Islam's view of women. One by one he explains them in context, illuminates the theological and socio-historical circumstances in which they emerged and, in the process, rectifies erroneous and superficial interpretations of their import. Regarding what is arguably the most often quoted objection of all, for example – Prophet Muhammad having said of women that they are “lacking in sense and religion” – 'Imara elucidates the context in which the statement was made, explaining that the Prophet was far from asserting this as a general truth or promoting belief in it, but rather simply describing one of the conditions of the pre-Islamic society he set out to revolutionise by, among other things, endorsing women's rights. Comparing it to another of the Prophet's statements – “We are an illiterate nation, we neither write nor calculate” – 'Imara illustrates how he was merely describing a pre-Islamic fact; the Prophet could no more have wanted women to be lacking in sense and religion than he wanted his nation to be illiterate.

Dialogue, not Confrontation (Hiwarun la Muwajaha), Ahmed Kamal Abul-Majd

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 304

ISBN: 977-148-191-6

In this impassioned book, the statesman and thinker Ahmed Kamal Abul-Majd expands on his earlier manifesto *Islam: A Contemporary Outlook*, setting out to define the scope of the late 20th-century's prospective “Islamic awakening”. Revival, Abul-Majd declares, cannot be the result of blind zealotry and extremism, nor can its champions live in isolation from contemporary life. The awaited renaissance depends, rather, on “the sentiments of the public and the consciousness of the intelligentsia”; it can only be “the fruit of a sedate realisation of the abortiveness of stasis... and the danger of being uprooted... the absurdity of rage, which destroys the proponents and allies [of the cause] before destroying its enemies and rivals”. Abul-Majd's hypothesis is that a lucid admission of the conditions necessary for the awakening in question is the only way forward; and he sets out to specify the conditions in question, setting them apart from discourses and practises – radical Islamism, for example – that do not contribute positively to Arabs becoming an effective part of the global dynamics of the millennium.

Abul-Majd envisages the proposed revival from five different points of departure: constructive dialogue among the various contending factions who might play a part in bringing about social, economic and cultural improvement; the difference between the theory and practise of even the most indisputable part of Muslim law, *shari'a*; the connection between Arab and Muslim identities, and the route to unifying them into a single nationally oriented movement; the reasons behind Arab failures through the 20th century (as represented by defeat in the 1967 War with Israel), the way to combat and eventually eliminate them in the 21st; and the necessity of dealing with a range of urgent contemporary questions from the perils of absolute political power to the need for dialogue between

Sunni and Shiite Islam. It is in this context of constructive interchange within the Arab-Muslim body that Abul-Majd favours dialogue over confrontation in the sense of conflict and discord. He also promotes a slow-paced, self-aware exchange rather than enraged, violent confrontation with the West as a necessary step on the way to a rejuvenated Muslim civilisation to occupy a place of prominence in the contemporary world.

In its present “historical crisis” – embodied by the rift separating discourse from action on the one hand and historical status from present-day rank on the other – Arab-Muslim culture must draw on imagination as well as planning, for “the Islamic tide” will never develop into a true awakening unless “one of the arms of the Islamic giant goes on grasping the essence of Islam, its values and origins... while the other extends to the horizons of the future”.

See *Islam: A Contemporary Outlook* above

HISTORIANS AND PHILOSOPHERS

The Complete Works of Sheikh Mohamed ‘Abduh (Al-A’malul-Kamilati lil-Imamish-Shaykh Mohamed ‘Abduh), edited by Mohamed ‘Imara; five hardback volumes

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

ISBN: N/A

Introducing this fully annotated compendium of every available piece of writing by the seminal intellectual and political figure Sheikh Mohamed ‘Abduh (1849-1905) – teacher, scholar, theologian, editor, reformer, philosopher, judge – the well-known Islamic writer Mohamed ‘Imara places one of the late 19th-century’s greatest cultural achievements in the context of “a small constellation of... intellectual phenomena who have continued to influence ideas since the nation entered into its [most recent] phase of... renaissance and enlightenment”.

‘Imara arranges material thematically rather than chronologically, allowing the reader to follow the development of ‘Abduh’s thought within each theme and in so doing facilitating research. In addition to ‘Imara’s own essays and statements and the texts of contested attribution, **the first volume** (898 pages) contains ‘Abduh’s “political writings”. These include newspaper articles on political subjects (mostly published in *Al-Waqa’i’ Al-Misriyya*), a journal and a history of “the ‘Urabi events”, the latter commissioned by Abbas, twenty two letters to members of Al-‘Urwatul-Wuthqa, transcriptions of interrogations and interviews, prison writings, open letters to politicians and scholars and, in a separate section entitled “After Exile”, ‘Abduh’s later, more theologically oriented essays and articles on a range of topics relating to the polity, from the persecution of Copts to the legitimacy of economic intervention by the government.

The second volume (714 pages), devoted mostly to ‘Abduh’s vision for social and economic reform (many Azhar-palace battles revolved around the *amqaf*, religious endowments, which figure extensively as a subject of debate throughout this volume), also includes some of ‘Abduh’s most remarkable letters, addressed to, among other figures, Leo Tolstoy, the Sultan of Morocco and the famous Egyptian poet Hafiz Ibrahim. ‘Abduh’s literary portraits, including a biography of Al-Afghani and a truncated autobiography, stand side by side with his *fatawa* (pl. of *fatwa*, i.e. a religious finding or verdict) and early editorial introductions and comments.

Starting with a handful of articles on literary criticism, the humanities and science, in **the third volume** (578 pages) ‘Imara presents ‘Abduh’s reform declarations in full. The book presents

extensive commentaries on religion and education, including five speeches on “educating the children of the poor” delivered by ‘Abduh in 1900-02, with much material devoted to the reform of Al-Azhar, the aim he was to prioritise till the end of his life. ‘Abduh engages in several long drawn out intellectual debates, producing, among other texts, an extensive *Reply to Farah Anton on Persecution in Christianity and Islam*, the result of his correspondence with the Lebanese writer, who had been conducting a colloquium on religious persecution. Along with philosophical articles on topics like determinism, intuition and the numen, ‘Imara provides the reader with ‘Abduh’s definitive statements on monotheism, Islam and Averroes’ philosophy.

The fourth and fifth volumes (746 & 722 pages) are entirely devoted to exegesis, based on transcriptions of ‘Abduh’s Azhar *tafsir* (interpretation) sessions made by Sheikh Rashid Reda. ‘Abduh started at the beginning of the Quran and completed the first four *sūwar* (pl. of *soura*, chapter of the Quran), which include the longest, *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow); he also interpreted the 30th division of the holy book. Though far from unorthodox, ‘Abduh’s interpretations display all the rational, progressive and critical qualities that characterise his approach to religion. It was something, ‘Imara insists, no one had done before. Of immense use to students of the Quran and researchers interested in the modern literary renaissance, ‘Abduh’s exegesis remains a uniquely valuable reference point.

The fifth volume ends with a comprehensive index of themes that divides the pages of *The Complete Works* by subject, facilitating browsing – a major achievement in its own right. It is preceded by a bibliography of sources and followed by an index of names and places.

Return of the Spirit (‘Awdatur-Roh, 1933), two volumes,

Format: 20 x 14

Pages: 200

ISBN: N/A

Diary of a Country Prosecutor (Yawmiyyatu Na’ibin fil-Aryaf, 1937),

Format: 20 x 14

Pages: 148

ISBN: N/A

A Bird from the East (‘Usfourun minash-Sharq, 1938), Tawfiq Al-Hakim

Format: 20 x 14

Pages: 156

ISBN: N/A

Otherwise known as “the dean of Arabic drama”, Tawfiq Al-Hakim (1898-1987) is one of the pillars of the modern literary renaissance, and his vastly prolific oeuvre, of which the three novels in this selection make up some of the earliest and best-known examples, spans a broad range of genres from the novel to the essay to the humorous sketch, from political commentary to philosophy, poetry and literary criticism. (Copyrights to Al-Hakim’s entire opus are available from Dar Al-Shurouq.)

Following a life path set forth by his father, an affluent judge, Al-Hakim graduated from law school in 1925, but sent to Paris to earn a PhD in the same subject – his father thought that being out of the country would keep him away from the popular performance circles of which, to the family’s shame and distress, he was already becoming part – Al-Hakim failed to pursue his formal education

and concentrated instead on the cultural attractions of the city. It was there that he realised that theatre and high art are not mutually exclusive, discovering such artistic wonders as classical music and the contents of the Louvre. **A Bird from the East**, a short autobiographical novel about an Egyptian student in Paris, is a romanticised account of the three years he spent there. It tells a story of unrequited love, by turns sentimental and politically conscious (during his sojourn in France Al-Hakim was still in the thrall of the 1919 Revolution, in which he participated as a student), reflecting in subtle ways on the historical rift separating East from West and, by extension, on the cultural and political confusion besetting the East in an age of Western superiority. In the book the young hero, Mohsen, acquires a Russian friend, Ivan, another representative of eastern civilisation whose own experience complements the hero's, shedding oblique light on Egyptian politics. Perhaps one of the earliest reflections on culture shock in modern Arabic literature, the book also introduces some of Al-Hakim's most abiding concerns: love, expatriation, identity and the perils of sensitivity in an insensitive world. It reveals a side of Al-Hakim seldom encountered elsewhere, whether in literature or in life: the idealist, the revolutionary, the romantic, the dreamer.

On returning to Egypt in the late 1920s Al-Hakim embarked on a career as a prosecuting attorney, initially in Alexandria, where he resumed his writing at the same time. Transfer to the provinces was to give him access to a wealth of experience, one result of which was **Diary of a Country Prosecutor**, an exquisite gem of narrative precision and perhaps one of the most convincing depictions of Egyptian provincial life during the first half of the 20th century. A gripping crime thriller, the novel serves equally as a panorama of Egyptian society, a compendium of human types and a vehicle for social critique. Al-Hakim emerges as a humorist, ironist and poet, as aware of minute variations in (colloquial Arabic) dialogue as he is capable of turning an idea into a convincing dramatic episode. Through a string of anecdotes and encounters, all of which are seamlessly integrated into the plot so as to contribute to the development of the action, he contrasts the mentality behind the mostly French laws enforced at the time with the attitudes and economic conditions of the fellahin to whom they are thoughtlessly applied, reflecting with subtle eloquence on corruption, incompetence, ignorance, inequity and other negative aspects of life under colonialism. In a less obvious way, the book reflects Al-Hakim's own disillusion with his career in law, a feeling that eventually drove him to seek out a string of equally respectable, if less alienating positions in the emerging cultural establishment – his life-long mode of compromise. He worked at the education ministry, the ministry of social affairs, the National Library and, after the July Revolution, at the Supreme Council of Art and Literature, UNESCO and eventually *Al-Abram*. In the wake of the Revolution Al-Hakim was quickly lionised, becoming a member of the Arabic Academy in 1954 and receiving the state merit award in 1961. He devoted more and more time to drama, laying the foundations for an Arabic theatre rooted in literature.

It was while in Paris that Al-Hakim completed **Return of the Spirit**, a delightfully engaging novel comparable, in some ways, to Naguib Mahfouz's famous *Trilogy* (*Palace Walk*, *Palace of Desire*, *Sugar Street*). Due to its title, the book is often erroneously compared to his later critique of the Nasser regime, *'Awdatul-Wa'yi* (Return of Consciousness, 1974), the book to which his reputation for political inconsistency is due; Al-Hakim had hailed the Revolution as the harbinger of justice and freedom, but it was not until the Sadat regime, now firmly ensconced in power, announced its revisionist stance on Nasser's policies, that he spoke out against the perils of totalitarianism. *Return of the Spirit* is doubly interesting in that it contains not only Al-Hakim's most vital account of Egyptian social life in the early 20th century – evincing greater familiarity with a set of middle-class characters and a fuller awareness of their circumstances than *Diary of a Country Doctor* – but also the clearest, most innocent statement of his political orientation. Drawing on ancient Egyptian mythology, the book proclaims Egypt's resurrection, as it were, viewed in the context of the statesman Sa'd Zaghoul's struggle against the occupation and the 1919 Revolution. Another autobiographical love story, it tells of Mohsen's life with his uncles and old-maid aunt Zannouba, away from his parents'

residence in Cairo, where he falls in love with his beautiful, older neighbour Saneyya while pursuing his education. But the humorous term Al-Hakim invents for the occupants of the house – all bachelors – is *ash-sha'ib* (the people), a telling expression since Mohsen's uncles are in some ways representative instances of the entire Egyptian people. Humorous, insightful and beautifully written, the book combines Al-Hakim's virtues as writer, thinker and prophet.

Renewing Arab Thought (Tajdeedul-Fikril-'Arabi, 1971),

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 288

ISBN: 977-148-139-8

An Arab and Two Cultures ('Arabiyun bayna Thaqafatayn, 1990),

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 420

ISBN: 977-148-402-8

Values in Heritage (Qiyamun minat-Turath, published posthumously in 2000), Zaki Naguib Mahmoud

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 396

ISBN: 977-01-6356-2

Born in the Delta village of Mitel-Kholi 'Abdullah, Domiat, and educated at Khartoum's Gordon College, Sudan, Fouad I (now Cairo) University, and King's College, London, Zaki Naguib Mahmoud (1905-1993) is often regarded as the last true Arab philosopher.

The three volumes in this selection are among Mahmoud's later works, which emerged in response to his Western academic grounding. They are markedly different from the scholarly essays he produced under the influence of British positivist logicians with the liberal ideals of the Arab literary renaissance at the back of his mind. In early books like *Towards a Scientific Philosophy* (Nahwa Falsafatin 'Ilmiyya) and *The Myth of Metaphysics* (Khurafatul-Metafiziq), Mahmoud explored the limits of language and the functions of philosophy in a largely a-national context.

By the time he wrote **Renewing Arab Thought**, his best-known book, on the other hand, he was already painfully aware of the rift separating his Western epistemology from the roots of his national identity, and he sought to marry the methodology of his earlier books with his growing knowledge of Arab heritage. In formulating the blueprint of "a life at once Arab and contemporary", the book traces traditional Arab "modes of behaviour" that can fit seamlessly with "modern science and modern problems". In the first section of the book Mahmoud progresses from the question of whether or not a truly contemporary Arab thought is viable at all, through obstacles in the way of such a project, to a more precise statement of the issue.

He focuses on the misuse of power, whether through political autocracy, undue belief in the cultural-intellectual supremacy of Arab predecessors or superstitious misunderstanding of spiritual influence. Discussing the divorce of present-day interpretations of Arab identity from beneficial aspects of cultural heritage and religious tradition, he concludes with a description of the three-way

conflict of literalness, rationality and mystification in present-day approaches to the Quran, understood as the basic, unalterable reference point.

In the second section Mahmoud suggests answers to the questions he raises in the first, asserting the need to renew not only the conceptual groundwork of Arab life but the behavioural content of living it, and to differentiate between hypotheses and facts. Specifically he recommends a “revolution of language” to bridge the gap between the discourse of heritage and the requirements of modern life; it was through the widening of that rift that colloquial Arabic emerged, he contends, contributing to divorce from inherited sources of cultural sustenance. Only with a truly contemporary language can Arabs live a contemporary life, resuming cultural development in a way that ensures a dynamic and regenerative rather than a fossilised component of heritage. Mahmoud puts forward a “suggested Arab philosophy” in which the “duality of heaven and earth” plays a crucial role. There could be, he suggests, two harmonious epistemological processes, one for “absolute reality” or metaphysics, and the other for “nature”, a word he uses to signify not only the natural world but modern reality at large.

On a parallel plane Mahmoud proposes a dialectic of constraint and freedom, with the thesis inherent to knowledge of the outer world, the antithesis to the need for inner release; a synthesis that results from this dialectic, he says, would make for a truly contemporary orientation. Above all he stresses two staying values found in the discourse of heritage: the rational mind and the methodology of doubt, the latter spilling over into modern empiricism. In the final chapter of the book Mahmoud explores the concept of the human being, drawing on traditional models in three canonical authors, Ibn Maskuiyyah, Al-Ghazali and Al-Razi, to formulate a more or less detailed plan for a behavioural confrontation between Arab humanity and “nature”.

In the twenty-six *Al-Abram* articles making up **An Arab and Two Cultures** Mahmoud elaborates further on the cultural duality that informs the modern Arab intellect. Writing in a less conceptual, often autobiographical mode, he goes back to his earliest theme – language as a metaphor for cultural being. Meditative and fragmentary, the book oscillates from one topic to the next, giving a complete picture of the question Mahmoud sets out to ask, i.e. the book’s principal subject: what could be the meaning of a present-day culturally specific intellectual identity over and above Western modes of thought? Unlike the theorists of political Islam, Mahmoud accepts the necessity of integrating the intellectual, mainly scientific achievements of the West, something that complicates an already difficult task. And he broaches the subject with the confessional sincerity of an intellectual to whose own life the question makes a difference.

He begins with the memory of a translation class he attended at primary school, in which the English expression “what a nice horse” and its possible translations into Arabic captured his child’s imagination. In the book that simple expression becomes the basis for a long meditation on the difference between Arabic and English, and by extension the difference between Arab and Western culture. Mahmoud breaks human life down into its simplest possible constituents, or “elements of arrangement” – knowledge, inner reality and behaviour.

He progresses from an understanding of Arab identity as a cultural standpoint, through the supremacy of science as the basis of modern civilisation, to the possibility of Arabs not only assimilating scientific modes of thought and behaviour but transcending them. Taking his own life as an example, he pursues the differences between Arabs of the present and the past, comparing the intellectual at the age of forty to his counterpart at eighty.

In the next few chapters Mahmoud outlines a range of issues from the cultural orientation of Egypt’s 1952 Revolution to the increasing decline, among educated Arabs, in mastery of their own, difficult tongue. With the Kaaba literally in sight, the author converses with two of his friends, companions on a trip to Mecca, about the mystery behind the ethical differences between Arabs and the West, with each culture having divergent virtues and vices despite the two sharing the same moral-religious background. Mahmoud moves on to the criteria for judging individual Arab

achievements of the present era: who are the trailblazers? And why? He differentiates between three different kinds of trailblazer, according to their position on the West. The most numerous kind comprises those who reject the West altogether, conceiving of the culture and objectives of the Arab world as entirely independent of that civilisation. The least numerous, by contrast, call for total integration with the West, so much so that their aim, in effect, is to be part of it. The third kind envisages progress in a new cultural formulation that seeks to preserve the given precepts of Arab identity while nonetheless embracing those of present-day civilisation.

Concluding with a series of contemplative pieces on monotheism and the perils of dogma, the relation between life and art, modern alienation, the Arabs' cultural loss of direction and the future of Arab thought, Mahmoud ends the book with a list of nine themes that inform every one of its articles, not only demonstrating how these articles make up a whole but helping the reader make sense of them as such.

Values in Heritage, another collection of interrelated articles, picks up a different strand of argument present in *Renewing Arab Thought* – the need to capitalise on beneficial values available to modern Arabs in the discourse of heritage.

A complex exploration of the Arabs' philosophical methodology, which, unlike the empiricist *modus operandi* of modern science, tends to rely not on inference but on deductive logic and pure reason, the book starts with three canonical examples: the intellectual methodology of Averroes, the symbolism in Ibn 'Arabi and the ethics of Ibn Masku'iyah. All rely on deductive as well as inductive logic, a feature of the Arab mind, Mahmoud implies, that remains valuable.

Much of this book revolves around religious questions, with Islam – a creed that relies on acknowledging the oneness of God – occupying centre stage. The contrast of revelation and vision, for example, is explored in detail. Inspired by a trip to the Kaaba, Mahmoud ponders Abraham's life and the place that oldest of patriarchs occupies in the monotheistic psyche, a topic from which he progresses to the conditions necessary for correct monotheistic upbringing – prioritising knowledge over ritual, for example – and on to the differences between philosophy and religion.

The creed depends on belief or lack of belief – it is, in a sense, comparable to deduction, a truth either directly perceived or not at all – whereas one's final verdict on a philosophical argument depends, to a greater extent than anything else, on the validity and truth of its propositions, which is verified by induction – observation of partial evidence in the process of accumulating information with which to build a larger picture.

This attitude of “ascending to the principle” is perceived in contrast to the religious attitude, in which the logic “descends” from an indisputable truth to its partial manifestations. Empiricism, as Mahmoud argues, has led to “an aimless civilisation”, while Islam constitutes a holistic culture whose aims are written into its principles. And it is the canonical Arabs' methodology that demonstrates this. That said, Mahmoud adds that the Islamic world-view in no way excludes the legitimate pursuit of inductive-empirical knowledge, asserting that Islam should allow for a full-fledged acceptance of modern science.

Anecdotal and occasional pieces make up a good portion of the book. Mahmoud good-naturedly reprimands the popular man of religion Sheikh Mohamed Mutwalli Ash-Sha'rawi, who publicly denounced him along with two famously secular authors, Youssef Idris and Tawfiq Al-Hakim, challenging them to a debate – to mention but one example.

The book also contains a stimulating range of philosophical pieces. Mahmoud undertakes a metaphorical comparison of two human attitudes to knowledge: that of ants (which hoard their winter supplies during summer, merely postponing their consumption, never effecting any change in their constitution) and that of bees (which actively turn the nectar of flowers into honey, a creative process necessary for human development).

Or else he answers a question two of his students have levelled at him recently: the transformation that took place in his perspective, from the doggedly rational to the emotional, merely reflects his

growing understanding of the need for alternative, conjunctive approaches to life. The emotional attitude is a necessary component of human experience, and in much the same way as the direct apprehension of spiritual truth does not exclude the empiricist pursuit of knowledge, so too with emotion and rationality; the juxtaposition of the two becomes risky only when the subject fails to distinguish a situation that requires the latter (a scientific question, for example) from one that admits of the former (a religious belief).

The Fall of a Regime (Suqqoutu Nidham), Mohamed Hasanein Heikal

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 608

ISBN: 977-09-0907-6

One of Heikal's most dispassionate books, this is a complex attempt at answering the question of whether or not, and why, Egypt's army-led July 1952 Revolution was necessary. The answer to the question, as Heikal indicates in a brief introductory note, "is but an attempt to read recent history, its principle aim being to contribute to... warning Egyptian-Arab consciousness against blemishes and shadows that threaten to overtake the future..." On the 50th anniversary of the Revolution (23 July 2002), Heikal sets himself the task of reviewing the fall of the monarchy as a historical event, and in so doing maintains a remarkable degree of detachment.

He begins with the assertion that he writes as journalist and witness, not as a historian, since rewriting the history of the Revolution "is a task [for those] who are more specialised and bolder, and perhaps more imaginative". Heikal brings together an astounding amount of information, much of it from primary sources, to construct a kind of flow chart of the events leading up to the Revolution and the causal relations between them.

Starting with "the first coup d'état in Egyptian politics" on 4 February 1942, when the British ambassador Sir Miles Lambson forced King Farouq to accept a Wafd Party cabinet with Mustafa Al-Nahhas as prime minister, Heikal goes on to discuss the three-way power dynamic dominating Egyptian politics during and directly after World War II, how the lessons the Wafd Party, the British Embassy and the Palace learned from 4 February were played out, and the position of these three forces in an increasingly contrary atmosphere.

Heikal explains the significance of seven assassinations that occurred from 1944 to 1949; the targets were the British envoy to Palestine Lord Moyne, Egyptian prime ministers Ahmed Maher and Mahmoud Fahmi An-Nuqrashi, the influential Wafd figure Amin Osman, the head of the Cairo police Selim Zaki, the Egyptian judge Ahmed Al-Khazendar, and the Muslim Brothers leader Hassan Al-Banna. Towards the end of the book he similarly details the events of five crucial nights leading up to the Revolution (18-22 July 1952), concluding with the immediate aftermath of the Free Officers' takeover. Circumstantial detail abounds in the intervening chapters, with comments on King Farouq's increasingly powerless position, Washington replacing the British Empire as the primary foreign force in Egyptian politics, the general disintegration surrounding the Palace and parliament and the role of important if by now forgotten figures like the Wafd foreign minister Mohamed Salahuddin.

The Lost Arab, 2001 (Al-'Arabiyyut-Ta'ih 2001), Mohamed Hasanein Heikal

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 292

ISBN: 977-09-0807-x

Divided into six sections, this book is a collection of articles subtitled “Road’s End”, after a similarly titled Arab summit, held in Amman in March 2000, when Heikal started writing. By the time he completed the last article, another summit, to be held in Beirut in March 2002, was planned, yet the questions raised by millennium’s end seemed as intractable as ever. Through the 20th century, Heikal writes, “the lost Jew”, a reference to the Diaspora that prevailed in previous centuries, “has found himself a place in which to settle down, and built a fortress around it, while at the same time the Arab”, previously secure in his stability, “became muddled, and it seemed as if he lost track [of] his heritage and future...”

In the first section of the book Heikal comments on the topics of the Amman summit – the peace process, a unified Arab position on American Middle East policy and the ever more vexed question of Palestinian rights – while the second expands on Arab-American relations towards the end of the 20th century. The third is a critical assessment of the 2002 Francophone Arab League initiative. In the fourth section Heikal divulges the secret byways of international relations as revealed in the CIA operative-turned-novelist Eric Jordan’s thriller *Operation Hebron*, wearing the hat of the literary critic on top of that of the political analyst. The fifth section comprises a series of personal encounters with important figures – the Algerian statesman Al-Akhdar Al-Ibrahimi and the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said among them – and the reflections their conversation gave rise to during a sojourn in London.

In the sixth section Heikal reports on ten general-interest volumes – mostly, as might be expected, contemporary history and political analysis – his sole companions during a summer vacation on the Mediterranean coast. He draws interesting connections between topics like the making of modern Japan, the “dark years” of France under German occupation during World War II and Queen Victoria’s personality, on the one hand, and the book’s central theme, Arab politics and international relations during the 21st century, on the other.

Talking Politics (Kalamun fis-Siyasa), Mohamed Hasanein Heikal

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 452

ISBN: 977-5999-00-6

Another collection of long articles written in 1999 and published in *Wujbat Nadbar*, the tabloid-format review of books which acquired enviable status as Egypt’s leading cultural monthly within a few issues of its appearance, this book shows Heikal the political analyst at his penetrating best. Examining a range of “issues and figures” pertaining to “the third millennium”, Heikal gives a lively, sceptical picture of the political age. From reports on his travels in the former Yugoslavia to reflections on the Syria-Israel negotiations, he draws on his rich and varied experience of the ruling echelons to illuminate some of the most significant and interesting events of the late 20th century, often with ironic insight.

Starting with an account of the Kenneth Starr investigation into President Bill Clinton’s involvement with Monica Lowinski, Heikal quickly moves on to two books written by the former UN secretary general Boutros Ghali – the first on his two terms as minister under President Anwar As-Sadat (1977-81) and President Hosni Mubarak (1981-91), the second on his experience at the UN (1991-96) – which, Heikal says, came as a pleasant surprise. He recounts his first-hand observations of Ghali’s career since the days of Nasser, producing a uniquely intimate portrait of one of Egypt’s most accomplished contemporary statesmen. Jordan’s late King Hussein follows on Ghali’s heels, with Heikal advancing a kind of semiotic comparison between the scene of his funeral and that of Yitzhak Rabin’s.

Hussein’s funeral – a five-hour-long affair in which, as Heikal notes, many divergent parties seemed to play a part – turns out to be a trigger-off point for an extensive examination of the Hashimite

monarch's character (Banu Hashim is Prophet Muhammad's clan), benefiting from Heikal's personal relationship and continued contact with him. Later on in the book Heikal provides a similar character study of the late Moroccan King Hassan, another monarch who traced his lineage back to the early caliph and grand imam Ali Ibn Abi-Talib, the Prophet's cousin and son in law. But the book's most absorbing encounter with a head of state is the series of interviews Heikal conducted with Libyan President Mu'ammār Al-Gadāffī on their reunion in Cairo in 1999; Heikal had not met Gadāffī in person since 1973. Here he tells the Libyan president of developments in Egypt since Nasser's death in 1970, complaining of his own persecution under Sadat, and relays Gadāffī's responses to them.

Crisis Year ('Amun minal-Azamat), Mohamed Hasanein Heikal

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 500

ISBN: 977-09-0716-2

Dating from March 2000 to February 2001, a period, according to Heikal, of exceptional significance for "ongoing dialogue in the process of [political] enlightenment", the articles making up this book are divided into "internal concerns" and "regional concerns". The book opens with the seasoned analyst's take on Muslim-Coptic strife – a theme he links with the issue of Nile water, which he discussed, as he recalls, with André Malraux in Paris in the spring of 1971 – addressing his recommendations straight to the presidency. "The question of two religions on the same land, and that of a river that is the sole source of life," Heikal writes, "do not admit of delegation or accommodate too much argument..."

Heikal invests both issues with much historical background, placing them in the context of international relations and drawing on a range of historical episodes to illuminate them, from President Sadat's relations with Pope Shenouda to the earliest missionary activities in Egypt of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic papacy.

The British Labour politician Woodrow Wyatt's posthumously published diaries, the second part of which is relevant to British Middle East policy, are followed by an assessment of the Egyptian presidency – both the place it has occupied in government since its institution in 1953 and the faults besetting its present-day constitution. In the context of the problematic triad of religion, politics and literature, Heikal discusses Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and the Iranian president Ayatollah Khomeini's notorious 1989 *fatwa* calling for Rushdie's blood.

The American historian John Lukacs's book on World War II, *Five Days in London, May 1940*, a series of interviews with Nasser undertaken directly after the 1967 War on 9 June and reflections on political news through June 2000 make up the rest of the first, longer half of the book. They give way, in the second half, to an extensive reading of Israel's place in the region: its view of Egypt, its long-term strategy in the ongoing conflict with Arab states and its sectarian mentality. Heikal relies on a range of documents from the diaries of David Ben Gurion, the founder of the Jewish state, to Israeli intelligence reports.

From New York to Kabul (Men Neyoyork ila Kaboul), Mohamed Hasanein Heikal

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 304

ISBN: 977-09-0808-8

This fragmentary history of America is written with the intention of answering a question: the United States having dominated the 20th century, will the 21st too be an American century? Starting with his own “rediscovery of America”, Heikal reports on twenty-nine journeys he undertook to the United States from 1951 to 2001, listing “twelve keys to understanding America”. Among these he mentions the United States’ abundant resources, which gave rise to wealth, capitalist economics and the American dream; the sense of openness, youth and freedom resulting from the country having been an immigrants’ destination prior to becoming a homeland as such; and the settler mentality, which legitimises the ruthless elimination of natural and human resources perceived to be in the way of progress. The latter, Heikal contends, might help explain the American position on the Palestinian question, which stands wholly in support of Israeli settlers, seeing Palestinians – long before the association between Arabs-Muslims and terrorism – as an obstacle in the way of a democratic settler state.

The rediscovery is followed by an extensive analysis of five foreign policy reports submitted to President Bush in 2001 in which Heikal tries to interpret Bush’s motivation in the light of American history. Next comes commentary on 11 September, with Heikal reliving what went on in President Bush’s mind when he was informed of the news while visiting a school. He explores terrorism as a global phenomenon, explaining how Bin Laden’s Al-Qa’ida, the prime suspect in the attacks, emerged as a result of the CIA’s support of the Islamic movement in Afghanistan during the Cold War, and in this sense compares Bin Laden to Dr Frankenstein’s monster. At length he discusses the figure of Bin Laden himself, his personal history, his connection with Saudi Arabia, America and Afghanistan and the ideology he champions.

Heikal argues that, while it was never established that Al-Qa’ida was responsible for 11 September, Washington was compelled to react instantly to appease the American people. He discusses alternative plans available to Washington by way of response – the Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon offering to have Bin Laden abducted, for example – and concludes that the war on Afghanistan was but a convenient option for the Bush administration. In addition to exacting revenge, it kept the public from reaching any conclusions about their elected government. Yet the destruction the war wrecked on Afghanistan and its people remains unjustified, Heikal believes, and it could only have contributed to making Washington unpopular not only in Arab and Muslim states but throughout the world.

American Empire and the Incursion on Iraq (Al-Imbratouriyatul-Amerikiyatu wal-Igharatu ‘alal-‘Iraq), Mohamed Hasanein Heikal

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 444

ISBN: 977-09-0979-3

A brilliant discussion of some of the most significant topics of contemporary politics, Heikal’s second statement on America takes its cue from the war on Iraq rather than 11 September and its consequences for Afghanistan. The book opens with a description of “the near impossibilities” inherent in either friendship or enmity between the Arab states and the US; the Arabs, Heikal contends, can not afford to wait for the rise and fall of “the American empire”, since it is impossible to ignore the magnitude of Washington’s involvement in Arab politics.

Heikal devotes many pages to describing how America turned from a state into an empire through the modern age. The country emerged and grew without the benefit of a unified people, a historical homeland or a universal creed, he explains, with the result that Americans have yet to fully grasp the concept of national identity. They are driven, rather, by a macho boldness, a thirst for power and the adventurous spirit of the explorer. Following a history of war in America, he goes on to list the distinct characteristics of American imperialism; the American penchant for superlatives and world

records, for example, could explain the rapid pace at which the progress of empire took place. Discussing books, documents and reports as he progresses from one theme to the next, Heikal pictures the genesis and development of American empire in the context of both the history of European imperialism and modern international relations.

He discusses the American involvement in the two world wars, the strategies informing the Cold War and both open and secret methods of intervention in subsequent world politics, often insidiously, with the object of tipping the balance of power. He describes how American politicians sought to replace other empires of the 20th century, dating the emergence of “the tornado” that was to take its toll on the Arab world to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Only towards the end of the book does Heikal begin to tackle his principal subject – the empire’s war on Iraq. He starts with the aftermath of the war, perhaps America’s most obviously imperial action to date, recounting his experience in London directly after the fall of Baghdad. Londoners were debating whether or not to hold a military parade to celebrate the end of the war, he says, and in the end decided against it out of respect for the British who died in battle. It is here that Heikal broaches the issue of whether what happened in Iraq counts as war, concluding that “incursion” is a more accurate description. He goes through the weapons of mass destructions debate – the Iraqi regime refusing, then agreeing to let international observers into the country – moving on to the hidden objectives of the Bush administration and its unprecedented use of brute of power in defiance of international law. Heikal concludes with a six-point assessment of the future of American foreign policy and its implications for the region.

Muslims and Copts in the Framework of National Union (Al-Muslimouna wal-Aqbatu fi Itaril-Jama’atil-Wataniyya), Tareq Al-Bishri

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 900

ISBN: 977-09-1030-9

One of Egypt’s most accomplished historians tells the story of Muslim-Copt relations during modern times – in full. A project Tareq Al-Bishri conceived of in the wake of the 1967 War, this long book was not completed until 1980. Initially inspired by the 1919 Revolution, a “glorious” occasion on which Muslims and Copts united in the face of a foreign occupier, Al-Bishri was disturbed by the notion that “defeat could undermine trust in [the] self evident [truth of national unity], uprooting the given precepts of mind and heart alike”. In effect Al-Bishri tells the story of the emergence of modern Egypt from the perspective of sectarian strife and national unity, covering the period from the early 19th century to the July Revolution: the 1882 ‘Urabi Revolution, the 1919 Revolution, the 1923 Constitution, the 1936 Alliance...

After publishing several essays on the topic in 1967, Al-Bishri was “astounded by the abundance of material”, and rethinking his approach, decided to supplement his interpretation of the flow of events and their historical significance with “a study of the institutions, whether state institutions or parties, including the two main religious establishments, Al-Azhar and the Coptic Church, from the perspective of those political conflicts that surrounded them”.

Opening with a discussion of “the modern state” – the emergence and development of Egyptianisation under Mohammed Ali Pasha, the problematic process of uniting a wide variety of ethnicities and cultural identities and the emergence and practise of a concept of citizenship – the book moves on to “the invention of difference” between Muslims and Copts at the beginning of the 20th century. Al-Bishri deals with “the scope of disunity”, relating the circumstances and consequences of events like the assassination of Prime Minister Boutros Ghali in 1910, and reporting on the Islamic and Muslim conferences of 1911.

He discusses British policy in Egypt, which worked to exclude Copts from government posts and positions of influence – unlike Protestants, for example, they had proved themselves as opposed to the occupation as Muslims – and to perpetuate sectarian strife. Under the heading of the 1919 Revolution, Al-Bishri tackles a range of issues from the vindication of national unity, when Copts refused to condone British propaganda about their alleged persecution by the country’s predominantly Muslim political powers, to the spread of slogans like “Nationalism is our religion” and “Liberation is the common creed”. He progresses from the minority debates surrounding the truncated, ineffectual declaration of independence of 28 February 1922, the drafting of the 1923 Constitution and the parliamentary and electoral battles of this period, to the position of Copts in government institutions and bureaucracies, the introduction by the Wafd Party leader Sa’d Zaghloul of Christian religious instruction in schools and the largely disruptive impact of the rise of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the abolition of the caliphate in Turkey.

Dealing with Al-Azhar’s relations with the palace on the one hand and democratic life on the other, Al-Bishri moves on to popular political movements of the 1930s, the rise and development of Arab nationalism, Zionism and the war in Palestine, the rise of the Muslim Brothers and their relations with the nascent regime. He concludes with the nationalist programme eventually adopted by Jamal Abun-Nasser and its implications for Copts.

This Man of Egypt (Hadhar-Rajulu min Misr, 1997),

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 672

ISBN: 977-09-0291-8

Women and Men from Egypt (Nisaa’un wa Rihaalun min Misr, 2003), Lam’i Al-Muti’i

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 878

ISBN: 977-09-0789-8

Biographical lexica of notable 19th- and 20th-century figures “who enriched political, social, intellectual, literary and cultural life in a period we might refer to as the formative years of modern Egypt”, these two books are indispensable reference works that fill a crucial gap in Arabic letters. Lam’i Al-Muti’i’s concise, informative entries are arranged alphabetically and divided into manageable sections, with each subtitle illuminating an aspect or stage of the subject’s achievement; each is followed by a brief bibliography of references.

A former ministry of culture official and acclaimed biographer and writer, Al-Muti’i describes his entries as “analytical studies” that present not only “temporal and material definitions” but holistic visions of the subjects, each of whom embodies “almost an independent school in his own right”. The “studies” are intended as much for posterity as for present-day readers, with the author citing as his reward for completing the first book, which includes ninety male characters, the positive responses of the Arabic-speaking children of Egyptian friends living abroad – a small number, compared to that of non-Arabic-speaking second- or third-generation immigrants who will be interested in such comprehensive and accessible summaries of lives and works.

Al-Muti’i concedes that, in making their contributions, the luminaries he has selected “emit varying degrees of light”, but insists that they all “gave” within the limits of their standpoints, social and intellectual contexts. Keeping these figures fresh in the memory of future generations, he says, acts to “turn the past into blood running through the veins of the present”, and contributes to defining the nature and scope of modernity in this part of the world. Al-Muti’i sought a full and

representative sample, “from all the various creative spheres, political and economic as well as social, religious and cultural”. Though they adopt a generally positive perspective on their subjects, the entries are not without “objective [standards of] assessment”. In his introduction to the second book, which includes seventeen female and eighty-two more recent male figures, Al-Muti’i announces his intention to produce a third volume devoted wholly to women.

The two books serve to map the dynamics of public and intellectual life in late 19th-century and throughout the 20th, offering, in effortlessly appealing biographical form, a comprehensive if not exhaustive picture of the birth and subsequent development of modern Egypt – the state, the culture, the economy and society at large. Thoroughly cross-referenced, the entries provide exciting browsing material and work as an aid to in-depth research.

This Man of Egypt presents an exceptional range of well-known and important figures from the pillars of the literary renaissance (Rifa’ a Rafi’ At-Tahtawi, Taha Hussein, Mohamed Mandour, Tawfiq Al-Hakim, Naguib Mahfouz) and “pioneers of enlightenment” (Sheikh Mohamed ‘Abduh, Ahmed Lotfi As-Sayed, Qasim Amin, Ahmed Amin) to Wafd Party politicians (Sa’d Zaghoul, Mustafa An-Nahas, Mohamed Sabri Abu-‘Alam) and July Revolution leaders (Presidents Mohamed Naguib, Jamal ‘Abdun-Nasser and Anwar As-Sadat, Free Officers Youssuf Seddiq and Salah Salem). It also covers significant historical figures like the nationalist economist Mohamed Tal’at Harb (1867-1941), the lawyer and international legal representative Wahid Ra’fat (1906-1987) and the mathematician ‘Ali Mustafa Musharaffa (1898-1950).

Perhaps reflecting the ebbing political tide of the second half of the 20th century, **Women and Men from Egypt**, an altogether less intellectually laden achievement, covers much literary territory, discussing many figures that *This Man of Egypt* excludes: writers Abbas Mahmoud Al-‘Aqqad, Ibrahim ‘Abdel-Qader Al-Mazni, Zaki Naguib Mahmoud, poets Ahmed Shawqi, Hafez Ibrahim, Ibrahim Nagui, Ahmed Rami, Kamel Ash-Shennawi and Salah ‘Abdus-Sabour, novelists Ihsan ‘Abdul-Quddous, Youssuf As-Seba’i and Yahya Haqqi, critics Louis ‘Awad and ‘Ali Ar-Ra’i, and journalists Ahmed Baha’ed-Din, Mustafa and Ali Amin, to mention but a few. Al-Muti’i also gives the arts greater scope, with actors like Naguib Ar-Rihani, Youssuf Wahbi, George Abyad, Zaki Tulaymat and Ali Ak-Kassar standing side-by-side with such towering musical figures as Sayed Darwish and Mohamed ‘Abdul-Wahab and popular men of religion like Sheikh Mohamed Mutwalli Ash-Sha’rawi. But it is in the entries devoted to women that the spectrum of modern life in Egypt emerges in full colour. As well as such female liberation pioneers as Hoda Sha’rawi, literary figures like Malak Hifni Nassef and Fatma Al-Youssuf, the founder of Ros Al-Yusef, one of Egypt’s most prominent press institutions to this day, Al-Muti’i provides endearing portraits of two of Egypt’s most defining characters of the 20th century: the diva of Arab singing Umu-Kalthoum (1904-1975) and the great belly dancer and actress Taheya Karyouka (1919-1999).

Partial and Total Secularism (Al-‘Almaniyyatuj-Juz’iyyatu-wal-‘Almaniyyatul-Kulliyya), ‘Abdul-Wahab Al-Mesiri, two volumes

Format: 24 x 16.5

Pages: 344

ISBN: 977-09-0832-0

This book will comprise a significant reference point for anyone interested in the secular-sectarian debate, benefiting the scholar and the lay reader alike. Written by one of Egypt’s most prominent scholars, Abdel-Wahab Al-Mesiri, it exemplifies so called Islamic writing at its best, dealing with one of the most vexed issues of present-day life in the Arab world – secularism.

Currently a part-time professor of literature at Ain Shams University, Al-Mesiri is the author of, among many other books, the acclaimed *Encyclopaedia of Jews, Judaism and Zionism* – the first comprehensive, critical take on the subject by an Arab, and a major achievement that took two decades to complete. He graduated in 1959 with a BA in English literature from Alexandria University, continuing his education at Columbia University and Rutgers University in the United States, where he earned his PhD ten years later. Active in numerous academic organisations and international associations, Al-Mesiri is a proponent of, among other causes, Palestinian rights, and his approach to the academic issues he deals with is almost always politicised.

As this book demonstrates, perhaps to an even greater extent than others, Al-Mesiri is unique among Islamic writers in that his scholarly background is almost wholly Western-secular. His approach to the problems of contemporary Muslim discourse is distinctly individual, benefiting from a strong sense of belonging to Arab-Muslim culture combined with a profound understanding of Western thought. He also displays a remarkable degree of ethical awareness and a gift for presenting the most complex theoretical issues in an relatively accessible way. He shows not only independence of spirit and intellectual rigour but a precise lucidity seldom to be encountered in comparable Arabic texts. More importantly, Al-Mesiri is always passionately involved in his subject, however much detachment he maintains in putting forward and backing up his arguments.

Al-Mesiri is driven as much by the topic's relevance to local debates, especially "analytical discourse", as by the failure of "Western sociology to develop a complex, total paradigm of secularism" since the concept was widely adopted as society's mode of operation in the 1960s. It is in response to this failure that he sets out to define the secular stance in the light of both its antecedents in the history of knowledge and its implications for contemporary life. He presents "the problematic of defining secularism" in the context of several prevalent misconceptions: that secularism may be defined simply as the separation of the state from the religious establishment, a rather superficial view that does not take into account the most significant aspects of the question; that secularism should be thought of as a clear-cut set of ideas and practises, when in fact it is full of ambiguity; and, finally, that secularism is often dealt with as a static notion, a tendency that ignores its dynamic relations to a constantly changing historical context.

The purpose of the thesis, Al-Mesiri explains, is to dispel the ambiguity surrounding the concept with the object of reaching a complex, exhaustive definition that serves an interpretive function. To accomplish this task Al-Mesiri distinguishes between two kinds of secularism, total and partial, the latter constituting a separation between state and religious establishment accompanied by complete silence as regards the universal questions, the former implying the "separation of human, moral and religious values from life in both its public and private aspects, and tearing the sacred away from the human being and nature so that the entire world turns into usable material to be employed by the more powerful party". Dealing thoroughly with the theoretical side of the problem in the first volume, Al-Mesiri depicts practical examples of both kinds of secularism in the second. He provides not only general instances but specific, detailed examples of total secularism as a reformulation of society based on the materialistic paradigm.

A Defence of the Human Being (Difa'un 'anil-Insaan), 'Abdul-Wahab Al-Mesiri, two volumes

Format: 24 x 16.5

Pages: 796

ISBN: 977-09-0834-7

Subtitled "Theoretical and practical studies in complex paradigms", this is one of the Islamic thinker and professor of comparative literature 'Abdul-Wahab Al-Mesiri's most impressive sociological texts. Arguing against materialist views of human beings as part of nature, Al-Mesiri discusses a

range of topics from cultural specificity to functional paradigms, largely in the context of 20th-century Jewish experience, his principal subject of interest. “According to this materialistic view [of human beings],” Al-Mesiri explains in his introduction, “it is possible to judge human beings by the laws of nature, and to explain him in his entirety in its framework, and to study him in the same way as natural-material phenomena. Proponents of this view therefore attempt to use the same methodology in dealing with natural and human phenomena, reducing the human being to one or two elements and ignoring many of the complex dimensions that distinguish between him and other creatures. In denying his complications and the uniqueness they also deny his humanity... only by using complex analytical paradigms [can human beings be dealt with]. Such paradigms are composed of a variety of diverse, interconnected and even contradictory elements, including the political, the social, the economic, the religious and the cultural...”

Opening with a theoretical discussion and practical study of “functional groupings”, Al-Mesiri moves onto the notion of the messiah, concentrating on Hassidic Judaism as the “messianic movement” that paved the way for the rise of Zionism. He also discusses anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish attitudes and the Jewish genius – contending that viewing Jews as agents of evil that endanger the human species (anti-Semitism) is no different from viewing them as the chosen people, ingenious and superior. Al-Mesiri brings up the contested Masada incident of AD 73, a complicated historical episode that was the subject of “stenographic mythologizing”. He attempts to explain the Nazi extermination of European Jews, placing the Holocaust in the context of both the modern West and German society in the inter-war period. He also engages with the Crusades and the role of Jews in Medieval attempts by European powers at occupying Palestine, as well as the rise of Freemasonry. Al-Mesiri concludes with “a problematic that is somewhat new in Arabic writings”, that of the connection between the architecture and design of a museum and the national identity that museum represents – a model for a the kind of analytical discourse he promotes and practises, as opposed to the aforementioned materialistic models prevalent in modern thinking.

The Egypt-Europe Confrontation under Mohammed Ali (Al-Muwajahatul-Misriyya Al-Aurobiyya fi ‘Ahd Mohammed Ali), Mohamed ‘Abdus-Sattar Al-Badri

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 236

ISBN: 977-09-0721-9

A diplomat’s comprehensive take on a subtle point of contention, this book sheds fresh light on international relations during the first half of the 19th century. The topic may sound unimaginative to conspiracy theory-prone historians: how major European powers with the exception of France pooled their influence to curb the global ambitions of Mohammed Ali Pasha – generally regarded as the founder of modern Egypt.

Yet Mohamed ‘Abdus-Sattar Al-Badri’s analysis depends not on a conspiratorial interpretation of the build-up to the British occupation of the country (1882), but rather on an understanding of Mohammed Ali’s role in the global balance of power of the time. Mohammed Ali had worked towards independence from the Ottoman Empire since rising to power in 1805; he first arrived in the country as a young Albanian officer in the course of the turn-of-the-century Turkish-British takeover of Cairo. By 1840 the Pasha was finally in a position to formalise Egypt’s sovereignty, laying the foundations of a new world power that encompassed the Sudan, the Levant and Hijaz (in present-day Saudi Arabia) as well as Egypt. It was then that an allied European force set out to hinder his progress towards empire...

Based on a doctoral thesis submitted to Bilkent University, Ankara, the book is extensively referenced and persuasively argued; it makes compelling reading for the layman and scholar alike. Al-Badri relies on a relatively narrow range of almost exclusively European primary sources, offering

insightful readings of the diplomatic correspondence and foreign policy documents of the period. He traces the emergence and development of what would come to be called “the Egyptian question” from the earliest European applications of the concept of the balance of power in the 18th century, through the 1798 French Expedition to Egypt, Egyptian involvement in the Greek War of Independence and the struggle for independence, to the ways in which Mohammed Ali managed to destabilise Europe’s presence on the world stage.

In so doing Al-Badri breaks new ground in several interconnected areas: the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of European imperialism; the Greek Battle of Navarino (1827); and the two Egyptian-Ottoman wars (1831-33; 1839-41).

Suggesting an alternative interpretation of Egypt’s place in the international community of the early to mid-19th century, the book lives up to the Averroes quotation Al-Badri cites at the start of his preface, written in Brussels in 2001: “If everything that requires judgement according to rational criteria was fully sought out by [our] predecessors, then we must strike with our hands at their books, regarding what they say. So that if it is correct we accept it... and if there is in it something incorrect, we turn away from it.”

The “History’s Answers” Series, Younan Labib Rizq

In this innovative monthly series of history books, to appear shortly under the aegis of Dar Al-Shurouq, one of Egypt’s best-known historians, accompanied by a team of respected historians, addresses well-known figures and events that remain stimulating in that the most prevalent ideas about them do not necessarily correspond to historical fact. At the theoretical level, Younan Labib Rizq and his team-mates hope to underline the role interpretation plays in the writing of history, showing the hidden side of established “facts”, only one side of which has been stressed, and thereby displaying the full spectrum of historical reality. One difficult part of this task relates to inevitable negative reactions to what has come to be called, in Arab discourse, “the soiling of symbols”. Showing the darker aspect of a venerated historical figure like Ahmed Orabi – a symbol of the struggle for independence, Orabi in fact handed his sword over to the British general in charge, in a ritual gesture of submission – will solicit resentment and anger. But part of the purpose of this exercise is to “rid the Arab mentality of the one-sided view to which it has become too used... in pursuit of pluralism, or rather objectivity, free from fear”, a much needed change of perspective that will prove relevant not only to issues of political participation and the power structure of Egyptian society but to international relations as well.

Born in 1933, Rizq is a well-known professor of history and a prolific and popular writer associated with such widely circulated publications as *Al-Abram*. In 1993 he founded the Al-Ahram History Centre, an active department that involves research as well as press-oriented writing. He has so far contributed nearly four hundred episodes of his “Diwan of Contemporary Life”, an invaluable historical chronicle drawn from the *Al-Abram* archives, parts of which are published in English in *Al-Abram Weekly*. His accessible style, aimed at the lay reader rather than the specialised historian, seeks to spread historical awareness among newspaper readers, an aim the proposed series of books will undoubtedly achieve, servicing the student of Middle East history and anyone interested in a balanced view of the workings of power in this part of the world alike.

Globalisation and Contemporary Arab Thought (Al-‘Awlamatu wal-Fikrul-‘Arabiyyul-Mu’asir), Al-Habib Al-Janhani

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 120

ISBN: 977-09-0867-3

A chillingly sober slim volume that tackles one of the most pressing topics of the age with exemplary economy of means, this is a scholar's take on the Arab world under globalisation. "It must be asserted in this context," Al-Habib Al-Janhani writes, "that developing countries, with the Arab countries at the top of the list, will doubtless fail to win the bargain of globalisation or successfully surf its waves if they do not, first, reform their political affairs... [They cannot] rest content with adopting the economic side of the ideology of globalisation, neo-liberalism, while at the same time ignoring the other side of the coin, liberal democracy."

Abundantly referenced and precisely argued, the book is divided into two sections. In the first Al-Janhani discusses globalisation as a political phenomenon in the world at large: the fate of the state, and the future of democracy, under globalisation. He expands on the economic and political implications of globalisation, elucidating its benefits and costs.

In the second section Al-Janhani presents Arab views of globalisation. Quoting extensively, he relies on six examples of "contemporary Arab thought" – As-Sayed Yasine, 'Abul-Ilah Balqeziz, Jalal Sadeq Al-'Adhm, Isma'il Sabri 'Abdullah, Mohamed Al-'Abid Al-Jabri and Hassan Hanafi – representing the full (geographical as well as political) spectrum of Arab perspectives on the world's latest ideology. Al-Jabri, for example, discusses the implications of globalisation for cultural identity, while Hanafi questions globalisation from an Islamic viewpoint.

Within the limits of the topic, the authors are given ample space to speak for themselves with lucidity and concision, with the result that the second section reads like a thorough critique of globalisation from the Arab standpoint. Though the extracts are, to Al-Janhani, "examples of texts that count among the most prominent put forward by contemporary Arab" thinkers in the late 20th century, his "Critical Notes" illuminate his dissatisfaction with the views they represent. And it is in his doggedly pragmatic approach, explaining what it would take to engage productively with globalisation, that the value of this book resides.

The Revival of Arab Traditions, On the Jurisprudence of Arab-Islamic Culture (Ihya'ut-Taqa'leed Al-'Arabiyya, Fi Fiqhil-Hadaratil-'Arabiyyatil-Islamiyya), Rafiq Habib

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 236

ISBN: 977-09-0891-6

Another of Rafiq Habib's "jurisprudential" statements on contemporary Arab-Islamic culture, this book uses concepts like convention, value and balance to build an elaborate structure of relations with the aim of defining contemporary Arab life. The text functions as both a process of collective self-definition and a call for "rejuvenating the Arab way of life and... Arab traditions... not in order to imitate the past but rather to achieve a kind of continuity with it... through awareness of those factors that control Arab life". Habib's professed approach is to "rediscover the secret of Arab renaissance" and "the secret power of Arab-Islamic culture".

Typically of this author, the book is structured with precision. It starts with a complex meditation on the meaning and implications of *taqleed*, a word that means not only "tradition" and "convention" but "imitation" as well. Progressing from a largely credible premise – it is the tradition of any one cluster of human beings that forms the basis of that cluster's social life – Habib stresses that traditions are to be understood in relation to evolution; even as they have a direct bearing on the identity, cultural and ethical integrity of any one group of people, their interpretation and practise must alter in order to meet the needs of changing times.

Tradition as Habib understands it does not belong to the past, and this book lays the conceptual groundwork for any attempt at deciphering exactly how it might belong to the present. Three approaches are discussed in detail: conservatism, which calls for implementing tradition in its original, received form; renewal, which demands a new, contemporary application of the abstract side of tradition; and rejection, which seeks to abandon tradition altogether, replacing home-grown, inherited precepts with the incoming intellectual categories of a different human cluster. Habib discusses “the fundamentals of Arab life”, moving on to social values and the rules of social behaviour among Arabs. Summing up at the end, he proposes his own recommendations for a contemporary “vital balance”, which does not overlook tradition as a central component of identity but staunchly rejects any vestige of heritage that does not wholeheartedly live in the present. The past exists, Habib says, in order to be transcended.

*See **The Middle Culture: Towards a new Fundamentalism, On the Jurisprudence of Arab-Islamic Culture** under “Islam: Theology, Identity, Ideology”*

MISCELLANY: IMAGES AND STORIES

The Aesthetics of Islamic Architecture (Al-Qiyamul-Jamaliyatu fil-‘Imaratil-Islamiyya), Tharwat ‘Ukasha

Format: 26.5 x 19.5

Pages: 456

ISBN: 977-09-0192-x

Part of the “History of Art: the Eye Hears, the Ear Sees” series, this architectural manual by contemporary Egypt’s foremost encyclopaedic intellect, former culture minister Tharwat ‘Ukasha, brings together thirty-five colour and three hundred and fifty black-and-white photographs and sixty-nine illustrative diagrams, fully annotated and accompanied by the stories of the buildings they depict. ‘Ukasha does not set out to “present an academic architectural thesis”, he explains, but rather pays individual tribute to the majesty of Islamic architecture, which he witnessed first-hand in many countries – Samarqand, Bukhara, Iran and Iraq, the Levant, Turkey, the Maghreb and Andalusia – a pleasure, he says, he would like to share with the reader.

The pictures, including lithographs by 19th-century artists, are accompanied by “impressions that further illuminate them, closer to aesthetic contemplation and artistic appreciation than architectural research”. It was nonetheless necessary, ‘Ukasha adds, to “dive a little into architectural details” without which it would be impossible to appreciate “facets of beauty in these unique monuments”.

In his introduction the celebrated late architect Hassan Fathi describes the unprecedented scope of the book, which brings together a wide variety of architectural styles never previously juxtaposed in this way. On even greater value of the book, Fathi goes on, is that it reflects “the impressions of an Eastern man” whose love of Islamic architecture will inevitably be more intimate, more personally felt than a Westerner’s fascination, however much better researched the latter.

This condensed introduction to Islamic architecture, divided into an “Introduction” and “Examples”, reflects ‘Ukasha’s personal interest in the topic, which becomes evident, for example when he speaks of inhaling the scent of “a bygone age... a nation with its own distinct style and civilisation” by embracing, epistemologically, all that remains of it. It also reflects his thirst for knowledge not only of the conceptual, creed-related principles behind architectural practise – the Muslims’ aversion to figurative art, especially depictions of the human form, resulting in the not otherwise obtainable ingenuity of design adorning both the interiors and exteriors of buildings, for example – but for the variety of forms resulting from interaction between Islam and any one of the

many environments in which it flourished, which allowed the architecture to benefit from the cultural and geographical features of that environment.

‘Ukasha pays as much attention to the local cultures as he does to the often royal figures who commissioned the construction of its edifices. In delineating the distinctive features of any one construction – the vase-and-flower designs on the especially made faience used in the restoration of Istanbul’s magnificent Blue Mosque many years after it was built by the Ottoman Egyptian Ibrahim Agha Mustahfidhan, for example – ‘Ukasha pays attention to those responsible for the work, as if to illuminate the spirit in which it was undertaken.

The Art of Al-Wasitiy in Al-Hariri’s *Maqamat* (Fannul-Wasitiy min Khilal Maqamatil-Hariri), Tharwat ‘Ukasha

Format: 28 x 20.5

Pages: 160

ISBN: 977-09-0110-5

Based on the painstaking analysis of a manuscript of fifty of Al-Hariri’s *Maqamat*, a well-known text exemplifying one of the most popular and abiding canonical forms, the *maqam* (an often humorous, eloquently composed narrative involving a complex, ironic plot and plenty of dialogue), this is a comprehensive treatment of one of the most interesting artistic movements in Arab history, the 13th-century “Baghdad School” of illustration. ‘Ukasha concentrates on a single representative of that movement, the calligrapher-artist who copied and illustrated the Schaeffer Manuscript, No. 5847 at the National Library in Paris, Yahya Ibn Mahmud, better known as Al-Wasitiy after his home town of Wasit in southern Iraq. “Al-Wasitiy is almost the only artist to whom we can attribute a body of work representative of the Baghdad School at its best,” ‘Ukasha supplies, “the manuscript he copied and illustrated being one of the most remarkable in that movement.”

Discussing the manuscript in relation to both Al-Hariri’s text and ten comparable manuscripts of Al-Hariri dating from the same period, ‘Ukasha illuminates the originality of “the first work of Islamic painting whose creator’s name we know for sure”. He explains the qualities that set Al-Wasitiy apart from lesser artists of the period who followed Greek or Byzantine models, observation of everyday Muslim life combined with profound understanding of Al-Hariri’s narratives resulting in vibrant, intelligent depictions of living human beings, however simplified or iconic they remain, rather than abstract decorative motifs. Drawing eclectically on the artistic conventions of the time – the influence of Farsi art, for one element of those conventions, is particularly evident in Al-Wasitiy – he nonetheless breathed life into the rigid forms and formulaic geometries of miniature painting, with the result that his illustrations remain movingly lifelike and engaging.

With every page of the manuscript reproduced in full colour, ‘Ukasha presents and discusses Al-Wasitiy’s illustrations of fifty *maqamat*, analysing both the front and back of each page, and bringing to this examination of the artist’s modus operandi a critical understanding of the narratives that inspired it. The result is an absorbing foray into a fascinating world of wit and intrigue, one that seems timely in that it confirms Iraq’s place of prominence in the annals of Arab art, giving an alternative, rarely remembered picture of the country in which Muslim civilisation reached the height of its cultural achievement. A connoisseur’s gem of scholarly devotion.

Tales of the Establishment (Hikayatul-Mu’assasa), Jamal Al-Ghitani

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 320

ISBN: 977-09-0827-4

A defining work by one of the Generation of the Sixties' most prolific representatives, Jamal Al-Ghitani – novelist, cultural critic, columnist and founding editor of Egypt's best-known literary journal, *Akhhbar Al-Adab* – this book is a parable of the genesis of modern Egypt that can be read at a range of levels – as a political statement, an entertaining fable, a fictional biography, or a philosophical fabrication à la Jorge Luis Borges. Unlike many Al-Ghitani books, although it employs a typically staid idiom, displaying profound knowledge of classical Arabic and familiarity with the language's most complex constructions, the book does not draw directly on the Arabic canon, opting instead for a more open and neutral system of references.

Initially centred around the Founder, it opens with an account of how that larger-than-life figure chose a plot of land in an as yet out of the way part of Cairo, building the most impressively high-tech structure in the history of the country and equipping it with unheard-of wonders of modern technology, like a satellite communications system. As the action progresses this building, soon to become the Establishment, turns out to be the basis of an enormous and largely ethical enterprise, driven not only by the Founder's extraordinary intelligence but by his indelibly benevolent spirit. The Establishment, which acquires public rather than merely private status, acts to revitalise the Egyptian economy by providing employment, expanding and improving production, generating and redistributing wealth. Eventually, following the Founder's death, the Establishment falls into the hands of less benevolent spirits, and rumours questioning the Founder's reputation begin to circulate. His right-hand men are evicted, his pictures removed and the principles on which he founded his huge economic venture violated. Soon the Establishment becomes implicated in a series of corruption scandals, some of which even involve Zionist parties...

At the most obvious level Al-Ghitani seems to be commenting on the July Revolution, but an identification between the Founder and its leader Jamal Abdun-Nasser – though a plausible interpretation – would take away from the rich ambiguity of an airtight literary composition, reducing a truly universal piece of writing to political commentary.

The Pyramid Texts (Mutounul-Ahram), Jamal Al-Ghitani

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 128

ISBN: 977-09-0778-2

This is one of a few books by the prolific novelist and champion of freedom of expression Jamal Al-Ghitani to have an ancient Egyptian theme. It bears testimony to the technical skill and intellectual insight that went into the making of *Al-Zaini Barakat*, a remarkable historical novel and the one contemporary Arabic book to have been published in the Penguin Classics series.

A slim volume, the book recounts the story of a young Moroccan religious scholar who, on passing the Pyramids on the way to, and back from, Mecca, while performing the Hajj, fails to pay sufficient attention to them. Told off by his sheikh, he determines to find out as much as he can about them, arriving in Cairo ostensibly to study at Al-Azhar but, more importantly, to explore the cosmic secrets of these singular structures. At a certain point the reader becomes aware of the protagonist's sheikh having told him that, while living in Cairo, he would be given a manuscript that would aid him on the way to his goal, but otherwise the quest remains shrouded in mystery – a sole, inexplicable figure progressing through the thick of Cairo life swathed in an atmosphere of esoteric mysticism. The young man studies at Al-Azhar, sets up a book stall and eventually settles in his own bamboo shack on the Guiza Plateau – all the while focussing obsessively on the Pyramids, until he knows by heart the patterns of light and shade they create at different times of the day and the year. The secret quest invests a largely slow-paced, modern composition – ostensibly modelled on the famous funerary texts inscribed on the interior walls of the Pyramids – with a thrilling edge, bringing a sense of drama to the pursuit of knowledge – the book's principal theme.

Algerian Doll Brides (‘Ara’is minal-Jaza’ir), Zainab Al-Miyali

Format: 26 x 22

Pages: 220

ISBN: 977-09-0842-8

Introduced by the well-known journalist Mohamed Hasanin Heikal, this book is the culmination of what may be the most heart-rending self-assignment in the history of contemporary journalism. After losing her little daughter in a tragic car accident in 1985, Zainab Al-Miyali, a celebrated journalist, set out to realise one of the school girl’s casual suggestions, that there should be home-grown Algerian dolls to replace Barbie and other imported specimens – brides to represent the various regions in Algeria and their matrimonial customs, for in Arabic *‘arousah* means both “doll” and “bride”. The project was not completed until 2003.

Transforming her grief into creative energy, Al-Miyali travelled the lengths and breadths of Algeria searching after bridal customs, and for each regional variation she created a doll replicating the physical and ethnic features of the region’s inhabitants as well as their distinctive finery, giving the finished product one of their most common names. In this book she publishes photographic depictions of her creations, the first indigenous Algerian dolls in existence, accompanied by brief if remarkably informative comments on their origins – a process that sheds oblique light on the history and geography of Algeria, affording the anthropologist a wealth of material. The book also includes reproductions of oil paintings and embroideries undertaken by Al-Miyali in the process, as well as photographs of the bridal implements and matrimonial paraphernalia she collected and on which she modelled her small-scale triumphs of individual craftsmanship.

Algeria emerges in all its diversity, from the desert to the coast to the mountains and the Tunisian and Moroccan borders, from the various Berber tongues of non-Arab-speaking ethnicities to the various dialects of *darja* (the Arabic vernacular), and from the Sufi saints to the leaders of the liberation struggle – a country full of legends and superstitions, conceptions of beauty and modes of interaction, and one exceptionally rich in craftsmanship.

In her moving reflections on the project, Al-Miyali describes how the process helped her deal with the greatest loss of her life, the “transformation of grief into [creative] work” proving therapeutic. To borrow Heikal’s words, she proves herself “an extraordinary woman who expresses her grief not through mourning and tears, but turns it into a new life...”

Mistress of the Ancient World (Sayyidatul-‘Alamul-Qadim), Zahi Hawwas

Format: 32.5 x 23.5

Pages: 334

ISBN: 977-09-0716-2

Available in Italian, Japanese, French and English as well as Arabic, this lavishly produced, abundantly illustrated tome by the celebrated archaeologist-Egyptologist Zahi Hawwas is a comprehensive presentation of women in ancient Egypt, commissioned and introduced, appropriately enough, by Egypt’s present-day first lady.

The book’s thirteen chapters deal, respectively, with life in ancient Egypt, female monarchs, the women of royal houses, palace harems, love and marriage, motherhood and child-care, housewives, clothes and finery, the woman’s place in society, women in the workplace, religious life, death and the afterlife and art and aesthetics. Conceived of as “a series of articles, as varied as they are unique, that cover the phenomena... of ancient Egyptian civilisation, especially in relation to woman”,

Hawwas's text benefits from new, hitherto unpublished information gleaned from the recent archaeological discoveries he presided over in Guiza, Saqqara and the Bahareya oases.

One such addition to existing bodies of knowledge of ancient Egypt, a result of the discovery of the western cemetery of the Pyramids – the tombs of the Pyramids' builders and their wives and female team-mates – concerns points unequivocally to the fact women engaged in all forms of labour up to and including the construction of the Pyramids themselves, contrary to previous assumptions.

Hawwas also undertakes an in-depth discussion of women's legal rights in ancient Egypt, explaining that they enjoyed more civil rights and social privileges than their contemporaneous counterparts anywhere else in the near east, their legal status in some cases surpass those of their present-day counterparts. They were men's equals in matters of matrimony and ownership before the law, able to buy, sell and manage their own financial affairs.

In this and other ways, he book elucidates "the secrets and mysteries of the female world in ancient Egypt", seeking "a closer and more complete picture of her life"; Hawwas draws not only on his and his predecessors' discoveries but on his extensive theoretical research in Egyptology, inspired as much as anything by the drive to find links between life in ancient Egypt and everyday life in the Egypt of today. Nor does he restrict himself to everyday life: the religious and political dimensions of existence are consistently taken into account, with whole passages devoted to the transformations that occurred from one age or dynasty to the next and their implications for women.

Employing an engaging narrative style borrowed from dramatists and fiction writers, Hawwas recounts the stories not only of celebrated women like Hatshepsut, Nefertiti and Nefertari but of lesser know women of similar accomplishment, whether of the ruling classes – Hawwas points out that women in ancient Egypt found their way not only to the throne but to the priesthood or religious establishment, the judiciary and the world of industry – or of the ordinary working classes. He discusses each group's approach to daily rights and duties, its behavioural codes, cultural and spiritual beliefs, down to modes of dress and aesthetic tastes.

The Strange World of Popular Literature ('Alamul-Adabish-Sha'biyil-'Ajib), Farouq Khourshid

Format: 19.5 x 13

Pages: 228

ISBN: 977-09-0041-9

A later link in writer and folklorist Farouq Kourshid's seminal chain of books documenting and commenting on the previously inadmissible – often oral and usually fantastical – traditions of non-canonical literature, this is an absorbing account of one of the most interesting if least appreciated aspects of Arab culture. Kourshid begins by explaining his particular understanding of "popular Arabic literature", which raises several important questions.

"Arabic", for one term, does not confine the subject to the Arab peninsula; it rather embraces the full geographical expanse of the world of "Islamic civilisation" from Asia Minor to Andalusia which was largely dominated by the Arabic language for long stretches of time – something that serves to enrich the scope of the creative endeavour and its various literary manifestations, incorporating not only the indigenous beliefs and modes of thought of those areas combined with the incoming Arab beliefs but all the neighbouring cultures as well. Similarly "popular" is not to denote narrowly local or culturally limited but rather indicates the inclusive collective genius of generation upon generation of creative agents, rather than the historically conditioned imagination of individuals. Popular Arabic literature is thus a delightfully prosperous arena, and one that needs to be broached with awareness of the diversity of cultural elements that have contributed to it.

Kourshid employs the methodology thus outlined in discussing love, humour and eternity, to cite but three themes, played out among genies, angels and animals as well as human beings. One

chapter deals with “animal language”, a recurrent theme in Arab folklore, here probed from the viewpoint of both scientific fact and received popular wisdom; another broaches the recurrent motif of the horse from the same dual angle; two consecutive chapters compare Arab conceptions of the dragon, an imaginary beast that penetrated the Arab imagination through other cultures, and the home-grown Ghoul; yet another chapter explores a frequent creative premise of genies falling in love with human beings. Khourshid concludes with an assessment of the place popular Arab literature has occupied in human civilisation at large, arguing that it is far greater than that occupied by any one canonised author or canonical book.

The Poor Man’s Hermitage (Khulwatul-Ghalban), Ibrahim Aslan

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 136

ISBN: 977-09-0879-7

Novelist Ibrahim Aslan’s penultimate book, this is a delightful collection of humorous articles in which an otherwise subdued Generation-of-the-Sixties voice finds expression in the complexities of day-to-day existence, referring not to the by-far-restricted realm of Aslan’s fictionalised Kitkat, the Imbaba neighbourhood where he grew up and still lives, but to a range of settings from the Cairo office of *Al-Hayat* newspaper, in Garden City, to the gatherings of French intelligentsia in Paris, where the author meets Jacque Hasoun, an Egyptian Jew who, many years before, had immigrated from a small Egyptian village named Khulwatul-Ghalban. Yet the book displays all those qualities that make Aslan one of the Arab world’s most arresting talents: observational intelligence, poetic economy of means, the ability to see extraordinary shades in the most ordinary colours.

Notwithstanding Aslan’s feeling for that name – and *Khulwatul-Ghalban* is an undoubtedly evocative title – one cue for interpreting the book can be found in the notion of writer as economically modest hermit, a notion that recurs, in a broad variety of contexts, throughout the articles. Indeed it is possible to read this book as an extended, multifaceted statement on the predicament of the writer, particularly the Arab writer. Many of the pieces focus on specific figures: Abbas Mahmoud Al-‘Aqqad, Naguib Mahfouz, Yahia Haqqi, Youssuf Idris, ‘Abdul-Wahab Al- Bayati, Mohamed Hafez Ragab, Yahia At-Taher ‘Abdallah... Others, of a more anecdotal nature, revolve around writers’ antics and disputes. Others still convey the writer-intellectual’s experience as an ordinary citizen, offering a wide range of humane insights.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this book is its capacity for inducing laughter – to an even greater extent than books like *Malek Al-Haz̧in* (Heron), Aslan’s best-known novel. The comedy is a result of Aslan’s enchanting sense of humour, his awareness of irony, his ear for dialogue and his ability to penetrate directly to the ridiculous in even the most serious contexts. Laughter is merely one facet of the total world-view Aslan presents in this book. His fascination with a French-Moroccan girl who introduces herself to him at a conference in France, his response to news of the death of Youssuf Idris while on a bus in Lebanon, his memory of ‘Abdul-Mo’ti Al-Messiri, an “alternative writer” with whom Aslan’s early encounter was a profound and moving disillusionment, along with numerous other literary stimuli, all tentatively outline the sense of helplessness and isolation captured in the title of the book – themes that, to a greater extent than the all-important topics of love and death, inform Aslan’s entire corpus.

With this book a Sixties writer who typically of his Generation has tended to refrain from revealing too much, finally tackles his most abiding concerns head on. He resorts to neither a well-trodden setting nor a group of characters; and the heroic tones of an intellect always at pains to conceal its presence finally come through. The occasional meditation on world politics, the unexpected confession, the well thought-out opinion add to rather than take away from Aslan’s by-now-familiar, superbly engaging world. And the reader never stops laughing out loud.

My Love, Do Not Depart (Habibati La Tarhali), Farouq Juwaida

This collection of popular love poems testifies to the abiding power of traditional verse, a medium through which Farouq Juwaida manages to reach a far greater audience than that available to the vast majority of modern poets. Born in Kafr Ash-Sheikh in 1945, Juwaida graduated from the Faculty of Arts in 1968 and started working as an economic reporter in *Al-Abram*, quickly climbing up the bureaucratic ladder to assume major editorial positions in Egypt's oldest press institution. He eventually founded the culture department of *Al-Abram*, and today occupies the post of managing editor. As the poems in this collection show, Juwaida addresses universal themes in accessible, emotionally charged language. And the two modes in which he operates – polemic and amorous – can be traced back to the canonical *aqbrad* (literally, purposes) of pre-Islamic poets.

His is a largely conventional outlook, firmly rooted in the sedentary life style of the Nile Delta – something that comes across not only in his poems but in his literary criticism, cultural commentary and travel writing. Here as elsewhere Juwaida's work proves both technically sound and moving, raising the rhythms of everyday speech to rhetorical heights seldom encountered in the work of others. Yet it is arguably his commitment to ordinary people, the simple trials and tribulations, that has made his work so popular not only in Egypt but throughout the Arab world.

Dreams of the Old Horseman (Ahlamul-Farisil-Qadim), Salah 'Abdus-Sabour

Salah 'Abdus-Sabour (1931-1981) – along with such Iraqis as Nazik Al-Mala'ika and Badr Shakir As-Sayyab, a central figure in the free (*taf'ila*) verse movement of the mid-20th-century – brought to Arabic verse all the intellectual sophistication and spiritual focus of European modernism. Evident in this defining collection – written in 1964 in response to disappointment with the effects of the July Revolution on society and their consequent impact on the Arab sense of self – is both his technical polish and emotional sincerity. Lamenting the loss of a culturally specific sense of dignity in beautifully transparent, movingly economical language, it may be argued that the poems in this collection prophesied the Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war with Israel – and, typically of this author, it did so in the most reserved and subdued terms.

Employing such disorienting devices as subtle repetition and jarring rhymes, and revelling in the elegiac to a greater extent than any other poetic modality, 'Abdus-Sabour's poems reveal the influence of T.S. Eliot – it has often been said of him that he is the great modernist's Arab counterpart – although by the time he wrote *Dreams of the Old Horseman* such influence had been fully incorporated into an intensely individual style and a world view all his own. One significant dimension of 'Abdus-Sabour's work is the extent to which it overlaps with philosophy – something that at no time undermines its lyrical power, with the elevated if still at some level vernacular language operating in its own enclosed space. The poet often focusses on the minute details of daily life, here contrasted with the traditional imagery of Arab heroism – an ironic, heart-wrenching interchange that makes for an absorbing experience.

Much contemporary Egyptian poetry, indeed, has since been written in response to 'Abdus-Sabour's salutary use of language, even if the poet's concern with the historical grand narrative of the Arab national movement has increasingly subsided – to be replaced, in the Nineties, by a critique of the spiritual emptiness of individual lives in a globally oriented consumerist culture. This work remains a benchmark in the history of Arabic literature, a measure against which to judge the power and relevance of subsequent poetic experiments. It is the kind of material literarily minded people will tend to know by heart. Indeed 'Abdus-Sabour's is one of a handful of crucial contributions to modern Arabic literature, at once accessible and profound.

The Greats Laugh Too (Al-Kibaaru Yadhakoun Aydan), Anis Mansour

Format: 23.5 x 16.5

Pages: 794

ISBN: 977-09-1003-1

“It is not enough for an Arab writer to be accessible and interesting, he must also be lovable... literature being always a form of autobiography...” Thus Anis Mansour, author of over two hundred and forty popular books on an extremely broad range of topics, from the occult to the Egyptian educational system, Nobel nominee, versatile journalist, popular columnist, translator, playwright, scriptwriter, official figure, professor of literary criticism and traveller.

(This is but one of many available through Dar Al-Shurouq, including such abiding favourites as *Fi Salon Al-‘Aqqad*; In Al-Aqqad’s Salon, and *Hawla Al-‘Alam fi 200 Yawm*; Around the World in 200 Days, the latter, the third edition of which was introduced by the literary pioneer Taha Hussein, described by UNESCO as most widespread Arabic book).

Born in Mansoura in 1924, Mansour graduated from Cairo University in 1947, having studied both literature and philosophy, embarking on a parallel careers in journalism and academia. He edited numerous newspapers and magazines, founding the popular *October*, and earned many awards, becoming a world public figure and an Arab household name.

The concept of the present book typifies Mansour’s often light-hearted, if always informed and thorough approach to his subjects. The premise is simple enough: do such “greats” as heads of state, stars and sages also have their laughs? Are the rich and famous capable of appreciating jokes? Mansour draws on his vast experience of Egyptian cultural life to provide this hilarious series of anecdotes featuring some of the best-loved Arab figures in recent history. From the famously self educated man of letters Abbas Mahmoud Al-‘Aqqad – an almost stern figure – performing a love song for a party of friends, to President Sadat of Egypt and Colonel Gaddafi of Libya brawling within the precincts of the Kaaba, Mansour scales the lengths and breadths of Arab public life, providing the equivalent of “the making of” some of its most important figures’ public performances – singers like Umu-Kulthoum and ‘Abdul-Halim Hafiz, actors like Fouad Al-Mohandes and Isma’il Yasmine, writers like Yousuf As-Siba’i and Tharwat ‘Ukasha – and in the process, no doubt, inducing not a few laughs from his unsuspecting audience. The book takes the reader into the houses of the famous and out of the country to Moscow and Venice, to mention but two examples. It brings up historical figures like Jean-François Champollion and King Farouk, and benefits from Mansour’s experience as a politician and, occasionally, the subject of political persecution. Woven seamlessly into each other, the anecdotes make up a coherent whole, with Anis’s trademark wit punctuating the shifts from one setting and group of characters to another. Like everything written by Mansour, the book incorporates a subtext of philosophical conjecture, revealing a profound, joyful fascination with humanity and the universe.

Mansour becomes the object of his own irony when, prior to the Friday prayers one week, he hears the imam of a small mosque near his house invoking God’s vengeance on Anis Mansour, and a whole mosque-full of the devout responding “Amen”. The author decides to slip among the ranks, as it were, to find out how so many people have come to hate him. Eventually he discovers that the barely literate imam, having found out that a writer named Anis Mansour is an “existentialist”, jumped to the conclusion that he must be an atheist as well – and decided to call on God to take revenge on him. No one in the mosque quite realises the difference, and even those who do, do not care enough about philosophy or Mansour to raise an objection...

A Piece of Europe (Qit’a min Auroba), Radwa ‘Ashour

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 224

ISBN: 977-09-0948-3

Though it makes an instantly engaging and largely compelling read, it is a challenge to tie the threads of this learned post-modern composition together. Generation of the Sixties novelist and scholar Radwa 'Ashour's most recent work, it lies somewhere in the space separating history from fiction. The narrator-protagonist, identified simply as An-Nazer (the Looker), a word that acquires a didactic association due to its being the term for a school master in current Egyptian usage, repeatedly expresses fear of losing hold of his subject. His existence is circumscribed by two historical events: the July 1952 Revolution and the 1991 Gulf War, which coincides with An-Nazer's paralysis, an all too forceful allusion to the breakdown of the Arab nation. The two dates inform both the largely non-chronological progress of events and the sense of loss the book seeks to evoke.

An-Nazer documents not only what he sees with his own eyes but, perhaps more crucially, what history grants him as well; and it is this metaphor of sight that informs his quizzical reflections on modern history and contemporary politics. The weak-sighted Khedive Ismail, for example, the founder of downtown Cairo, modelled Wistel-balad, as the area is generally known, on the European cities he had been sent to for eye treatment; likewise the neighbourhood does not come to life until the name plates on the buildings are looked at and the names they bear assessed; 'Ashour's is fascinated with a particular triangle of buildings that continue to bear the names of the Sephardim Jewish and French entrepreneurs who owned them prior to the July Revolution. More generally, the novel can be read as an attempt to map the fate of the Arab world through the history of downtown Cairo. Probing Egypt's problematic relations with Europe, and drawing extensively on history, 'Ashour historicises the cultural and political dilemma of contemporary Arab life. The abundance of material can be overwhelming at times: notes, citations and quotes from various documents invoking, among other things, the Cairo Fire of 1952, Zionist activity in Egypt during the 19th and 20th centuries and America's 2002 incursion on Iraq.

Yet there is a method to An-Nazer's madness. His historical meanderings and personal confessions all seek to raise if not summarily answer the same question, a question around which 'Ashour's entire corpus may be said to revolve: how is it that Arabs have reached their present state of failure and disintegration? The book closes on multiple and ambivalent endings, leaving the reader with a distinct impression nonetheless. All historians write about the past in order to say something about the present. What Ashour says about the Arab world today is that, Israel has become a part of Europe, the Arab world is now a part of nowhere, a state of affairs that Khedive Ismail's dream of making Egypt a part of Europe a frightening nightmare.

Ms. R's Reports (Taqarirus-Sayyida Raa'), Radwa 'Ashour

Format: 19.5 x 13.5

Pages: 136

ISBN: 977-09-0736-7

A left-leaning, historically oriented novelist dabbles in humour and the fantastical, producing an obscurantist autobiography of unique appeal. Drawing on a wide variety of sources – her experience as a visiting university professor in the United States, her reading of Arthur Conan Doyle and her relationship with her Egyptian made Fiat 127 car, to mention but three examples – 'Ashour indulges her propensity for postmodernism, reflecting ironically on life and literature. And it is in this respect, the constant interplay of reality and the text, that 'Ashour manages to recall the writing of Italo Calvino, a writer she does not otherwise resemble.

Mimicking the language of investigative reporting, this is deceptively dry writing, with the bulk of its intellectual and emotional import hidden between the lines. 'Ashour puts forth on her various connections with the phenomenological world in typically impersonal, if uncharacteristically light-

hearted and often absurdist frameworks. She broaches her position as an intellectual woman in millennial Cairo in a range of modalities: intellectual distress (Ms. R literally throws herself out of the window and breaks down in pieces, only to be put back together by a sympathetic friend); media-conscious political critique (Ms. R reflects on Arab history and regional politics as she watches the funerals of Prime Minister Rabin of Israel, King Hussein of Jordan and King Hassan of Morocco on satellite television, glued to the screen); melancholy reminiscence (Ms. R digs out a book on the Algerian Revolution that she bought with her mother as a young woman, and the occasion gives rise to an inter-generational conversation with her son)...

One interesting aspect of the book is that, even though it is presented as a single body of work, in reality it constitutes a series of independent articles, all of which betray not only the author's troubled relationship with the self-as-agent-of-history but a sense of incompleteness, a mission not yet done. Yet it is precisely this fragmentation that sets the book apart from the bulk of 'Ashour's sedate and carefully constructed work. It will prove valuable not only as an indelibly entertaining read but as an aid to understanding the hidden, inner dynamics of the author's more conventional books. This is personal history at its disorienting best.