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At a glance

A shorthand guide to the month compiled by **Mahmoud El-Wardani**

Magazines and periodicals

Wughat Nazar, monthly review of books, issue 28, May 2001, Cairo: The Egyptian Company for Arab and International Publishing

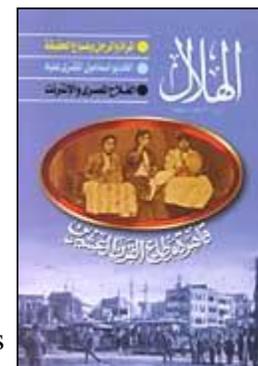


Veteran writer and political analyst Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, who opens every issue of this widely respected review of books, this month professes a discussion of the Arab League and its current role in the political life of the region, focussing on its new secretary general, Amr Moussa, and the contribution he might make. Other highlights include veteran critic Shawqi Dief on the effects of Colloquial Arabic on the quality of the written language, Hussein Abdallah on the negative impact that environmental protection programmes might have on Arab oil revenues and Mohamed Fouad Zikri on the history of Egyptian medicine: here as elsewhere a number of important books are discussed. Among other

translations, the issue includes a combined review of three recent books on Turkish history and culture.

Al-Hilal (The Crescent), monthly magazine, May 2001, Cairo: Al-Hilal Publishing House

An extensive section of this issue of the prestigious monthly appears under the title "The Future of Globalisation," and, forbidding as this might sound, the dossier does offer invaluable pointers as to the future of the "New World Order." Contributors here include: Galal Amin on development from the age of nationalism to the age of globalisation; Mahmoud Mortada on the activities of anti-globalisation activists around the world, and Mohamed Imara on Western globalisation from the standpoint of what he calls "Islamic internationality." Elsewhere in the issue, Raouf Abbas discusses the conservation of national archives, Ahmed Youssef Ahmed comments on recent Arab summits with reference to the future of certain Arab regimes, while Gamil Matar recaps what he calls a century of disasters, massacres and tragedies. Ahmed Abouzeid reviews studies and statistics pointing to the hatred that the Israelis feel towards the Arabs, and Hussein Ahmed Amin illuminates the life and work of the most famous interpreter in Arab history, Henein Ibn Ishaq. All in all, a rich and thought-provoking issue.



Sotour (Lines), monthly magazine, issue no. May 2001, Cairo: Sotour Publications



In line with recent editorial policy, this issue of the Cairo magazine Sotour explores a single theme, including several articles that look at various aspects of it in depth. The theme this time is crime, and, in addition to I'tidal Osman's comprehensive introduction, there are rewarding articles by writers such as Mohamed Nour Farahat, Assem El-Desouqi, Soliman Abusetta and Saad El-Qurashi, ranging from the concept and practice of criminalisation to the "Arabs' crimes against themselves." The issue includes, among other highlights, a round-up of the latest cultural events.

Books

Nouveau dictionnaire de mythologie égyptienne, Isabelle Franco, trans. Mahr Juwajjati, Cairo: Dar Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, 2001. pp364

This reference work emerges from French Egyptology, a discipline that has yielded many fascinating discoveries. The author is a prominent Egyptologist at the Cheops Institute in Paris, having supervised many digs in the Valley of the Queens on the West Bank at Luxor. First published in French in 1999, the invaluable compendium includes 417 entries, and it is particularly strong on the most recent digs and discoveries, though the entries summarise knowledge acquired in the course of centuries. Perhaps Isabelle Franco's greatest achievement lies in her ability to make epistemological connections between existing knowledge of Ancient Egyptian mythology and of new discoveries that have enhanced or expanded that knowledge. Franco's dictionary serving as a tribute to a civilization that offered much that was unique to humanity at the dawn of history.



Min A'la bimuhadhat Al-Mousiqa [From Above, Parallel to the Music], Gamal El-Qassas, Cairo: Centre for Arab Civilisation, 2001. pp119

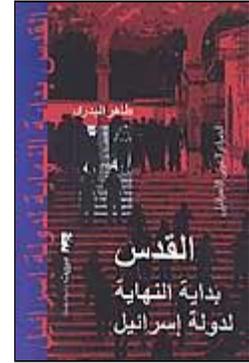


First due to appear in the Aswat Adabeya series [Literary Voices] put out by the General Organisation for Cultural Palaces, following the censorship controversy in the winter of last year, when three publications in this series were withdrawn amid accusations that they were pornographic, poet Gamal El-Qassas withdrew his manuscript and sought publication elsewhere. This is the poet's fifth collection, and in its garrulous prose compositions, El-Qassas plays with language and, significantly, with clichés. His subjects are everyday life, love and age, paralleled by a poetic failure to capture that moment in a single, satisfying image. "How many more storms will blow in the cup, before we exit our abandoned frame? Here, our primitive god was born. Here, we dragged him by the horns..."

Al-Quds: Bidayat Al-Nihaya lidawlat Israel [Jerusalem: The Beginning of the End of the

State of Israel], Taher El-Badri, Cairo: Merit Organisation for Publication and Information, 2001. pp176

The left-wing political commentator Taher El-Badri has here republished his book on the future role of Jerusalem in the Arab-Israeli conflict more than 20 years after its first publication, stressing that he has not thought it necessary to alter "a letter" of his original text apart from adding a new introduction, which deals with the Oslo Accords. The events dealt with thus occurred before the collapse of the Soviet Union and Arafat's unarmed entrance to Gaza while it was under Israeli siege, so it is unlikely that this book will be directly relevant to contemporary events. In particular, its unchanged republication following the flare-up of the Al-Aqsa Intifada seems misleading in that it imposes an analysis of a past situation on the unfolding of a present -- and in many crucial senses a different -- one.



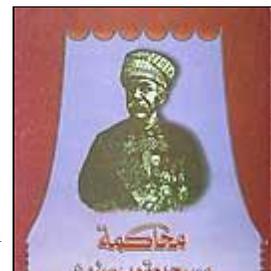
Al-Fasad wal Garaim Al-Iqtisadiya [Corruption and Economic Crimes], Ahmed Anwar, Cairo: Dar Misr Al-Arabiya, 2001. pp278



The so-called "money-employment companies" -- high-interest investment companies that emerged in Egypt in the 1980s and went bankrupt in the 1990s -- used various methods to penetrate social institutions and to commit the fraud that they later stood accused of. In many forms and under different names, bribery illegally facilitated these companies' foundation, as well as their swift progress, and in the present book Ahmed Anwar directs his attention to the companies' record of corruption, reviewing allegations of fraud, money laundering and the falsification of financial records. The companies exploited religion to further their ends, exponentially increasing the number of those who suffered financially as a result of their activities by using the notion that "interest" paid on capital, which is a point of contention from the standpoint of the Islamic Shari'a, can be replaced by "money employment," which is not only innocent of any anti-Islamic charge but also offers impossibly high rates of return. Ahmed Anwar explains how the corrupt businessmen involved in the companies managed to collect the necessary capital, while duping many thousands of investors out of their life savings and considerably setting back the Egyptian economy as a whole.

Muhakamat Masrah Ya'qoub Sannou' [The Trial of the Theatre of Ya'qoub Sannou'], Sayed Ismail Ali, Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation, 2001. pp371

A widely held opinion has it that the Egyptian writer Ya'qoub Sannou' is one of the most important figures to have dominated the Arab stage since 1870. In the present book, however, the critic Sayed Ismail Ali disputes this view, proposing instead that Ya'qoub Sannou' was nothing more than a myth created by Ya'qoub Sannou' himself. To this end, Ali has reviewed all the various documents relating to the pioneer dramatist, re-reading the texts ascribed to him



and comparing them with books and memoirs published in the period during which Sannou' emerged as a writer. He thus manages to demonstrate his theory that Sannou's texts were actually written by somebody else, possibly a ghost writer. Ali's conclusion is as astonishing as his premise: Sannou', in fact, neither wrote plays nor made a contribution to the theatre, and his subsequent reputation is therefore entirely without foundation; furthermore, it was Sannou's identity as a Jew and a Free Mason that enabled him to practice such sleight of hand. Be that as it may, it is regrettable that no other critic has yet taken issue with Ali's conclusions, since this book is likely to be of most value in the responses it provokes.

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