

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

*Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World: Recasting the Area Studies Debate*. Edited by Ali Mirsepassi and others. Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East. Syracuse, NY : Syracuse University Press, 2003. Pp. 264. \$19.95 paperback. ISBN: 0815629826

*Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World* is a collection of essays addressing the on-going crisis in area studies: “The object of the Five Colleges faculty symposium Global-Local: Revisioning the Area Studies Debate, 16–18 October 1998 at Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts, was to reflect on the current state of area studies in some of the regions where such studies flourished traditionally” (p. 14).

Twelve essays bring forth contributions by sociologists, anthropologists, historians, political scientists, etc. Incidentally, these proceedings are published five years after the symposium. As a result, a generation gap (rather a changed era, given the widening difference between the pre- and post 9/11 worldview) might raise eye brows. An answer to these, however, is not found in the book.

A word about the conceptual framework from the book will be worth:

*Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World* takes up the challenge of how scholars can reconfigure “area based knowledge” in response to globalization. The editors have brought together a distinguished group of scholars to recast the area studies debate by situating conventional academic disciplines in their historical and cultural contexts and by elucidating the problems of traditional area studies, thereby exposing the limitations of both in regard to new global realities. (cover)

Anyone involved in the field of area-studies knows how this subject-of-study has continuously evolved for centuries—as a part of the multi- and interdisciplinary fields. Two points, in this sense, need to be stressed here: First, area studies are not a 20<sup>th</sup> century creation, and second, based on a few recent factors, an alarm about a crisis may misrepresent the otherwise historic strengths of the field. Quotes from this book contradict the historic knowledge map: “The major Western powers brought area studies into being in the aftermath of World War II in an effort to understand and influence geopolitical alignments.” (p.

3); “I propose a different history of area studies. This history finds the origins of area studies not in the Cold War or in World War II, but in developments beginning in the 1930s” (p. 148).

One cannot deny that the West did initiate study about the East. But, what is misleading is absence of any reference to the old name familiar among academia, Oriental studies—for the very topics covered in *Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World*. Interestingly, oriental studies, as a field, have had changes in connotations—albeit dealing with the Orient, linguistically and historically. A century or two ago, this term reflected the study of Islamic culture (West Asia, Middle East, Near East). Later, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, oriental studies also represented Indic studies (South Asia, India, the sub-continent and Indology). And in the last century or so, the focus of the term shifted further eastward, to connote Chinese civilization (Southeast Asia, Far East, and East Asia). And, all of the above historic presence is evident in the centuries old area-based collections at British Library (London), Library of Congress (Washington, D.C), School of Oriental and African Studies (London), Asiatic Society, (Bombay), etc., standing as distinct testimonies of this field of interest. Statements cited above may blur a holistic view and directly affect casual history. Then, it is for yet another symposium to re-read history and re-write a report with a balanced insight and far-sight to declare univocally if the field is in a ‘crisis recovery stage’ or ‘disaster recovery stage.’

This historic treatment apart, involving all concerned parties brings a holistic vision of real crisis, and enables avoiding short-sightedness in designing future the path for curriculum and research. Again, on this very accommodational benchmark, the book fails. Incidentally, all contributors are American academics, and missing in this transactional analysis are practicing professionals, from corporate and non-profits, as well as, decision makers, journalists, etc.

Among other contents, the keyword index is helpful and exhaustive (pp. 255–264). The list of “Works Cited” is updated to 2001 and quite detailed (pp. 233–253). A classic work, however, in this area by Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (1983) is surprisingly missing. With such omissions and limited involvement of other stake holders, the readership will be left to Google or to browse at Amazon for more, current and alternative approaches, rather than depending solely on *Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World*.

Nevertheless, what the book offers is still important as a collective memory of intellectuals recast in a globalizing context. That is its strength:

“The contributors to this volume disagree on many issues, including the character of global knowledge and studies, the importance of localities in relation to nationalities, and globalities, and the role of the state and private foundations in shaping scholarly inquiry. However, all the contributors share a background in area studies and a commitment to thinking about these areas in new and different ways amidst globalization. Every contributor makes clear that the discussion of area studies cannot be isolated from a larger discussion about knowledge, power, and culture, at home and in the world.” (p. 21)

The book alerts us to a misplaced status of local knowledge within a volatile globalizing atmosphere (that tends to drift towards transnational/borderless states). In order to get out of the crisis by accepting the realities, the symposium suggests a strategy, including first, identifying opportunities that may help reduce ethnocentricity in the existing academic framework, and second, revitalizing the current curricula and research programs:

“The fluid concepts of globalization can be made more precise and meaningful only by being grounded in area studies. It is precisely the relationship between global processes and area-based knowledge that opens up new perspectives on globalizing societies, nations, and cultures. Viewing globalization from the vantage point of particular localities necessitates the displacement of totalizing theories of globalization with the recognition that globalization has assumed diverse forms connected by unequal power relations.” (p. 13)

*Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World* will be a useful addition in any area studies library. In addition, those who wish to browse more on globalizing and localizing perspective will benefit from a similar title, *viz.*, *Rethinking Globalizations: From Corporate Transnationalism to Local Interventions*, Preet S. Aulakh (Editor), Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

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*Sufism: The Essentials*. 2nd edition. By Mark J. Sedgwick. Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003. Pp. 114. Glossary, bibliography. \$17.95 (paperback) ISBN: 977-424-823-6

Recent years have witnessed the publication of a number of excellent introductory texts on Sufism such as Carl Ernst's well-received *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Shambhala, 1997), William Chittick's *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oneworld, 2000), and Alexander Knysh's more specialist-oriented survey *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Brill, 1999). The recent offering by Mark J. Sedgwick, *Sufism: The Essentials* (first published by AUC Press in 2000) comes as a welcome addition to this growing body of accessible overviews. Divided into five chapters, the book takes on a rather ambitious task, namely to explain the 'essence' of Islamic mysticism to an interested but non-specialist Western audience by furnishing "a basic understanding of the nature and history of Sufism as it first appeared in the Islamic world and as it is today in the Islamic world and in many other countries, including Western ones" (p. 2). Despite the difficulties inherent in such a project, Sedgwick does an admirable job of identifying and elaborating this 'essence' through bold strokes, strokes which, although necessarily broad, are executed with precision and clarity and illuminated with well-chosen and interesting examples.

As made clear in the text's introduction, *Sufism: The Essentials* was written for those with little or no prior knowledge of Sufism (or indeed of Islam) and as such Chapter 1 begins with a brief précis on the historical origins of Sufism as traditionally seen by the Sufis themselves, introducing it alongside the history of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community in such a manner as to guide the reader through an argument which places the origins—and all subsequent authentic articulations—of Sufism entirely within the historical unfolding of the Islamic tradition itself. The inertia of this oft-debated 'argument of authenticity' sustains the rest of the book, exemplified first in Sedgwick's discussion of the 'essential traits' of the Sufi tradition which strive to maintain a qualitative and experiential distinction between the 'esoteric' orientation and objectives of Sufi discipline *vis-à-vis* 'exoteric' Islamic legalism, the former enlivening the latter and the latter sustaining the former.

Thus, in the second chapter of the book ("How to be a Sufi"), the author discusses the essential traits of Sufism as both a 'practical program' of spiritual disciple and as a form of social organization, covering

its public and private rights and rituals—(e.g., *mawlid* celebrations and tomb veneration, *dhikr*, *wird*, and *khalwa*), the fundamental importance of the master-disciple relationship, the presence of Sufism across diverse socio-economic classes and within gender lines, how spiritual authority is acquired, legitimated, preserved, transmitted and memorialized, and the main constituencies inhabiting a typical Sufi community, including the oftentimes befuddled ‘fool of God’ (*majdhub*). The content of the third chapter (entitled: “The Orders”) flows naturally from the second, positing an archetypal pattern for the establishment, institutionalization, dissemination, and inevitable transformation, factionalizing, and/or routinization of individual Sufi orders (*turuq*). The author illuminates this process with numerous examples, including brief discussions of some of the main historical orders present within the regions with which he is most familiar (e.g., the Qadiriyya, Shadhiliyya, Ahmadiyya, and Sanusiyya in Egypt, North and East Africa), perceptively emphasizing that the history of individual orders are, above all else, the “histories of individuals shaykhs” (p. 65). This chapter also includes a brief discussion of Sufism and Sufi-inspired or neo-Sufi movements in the Western world, including René Guénon and the Traditionalists, a topic to which Sedgwick has recently devoted an entire monograph (*Against the Modern World*, Oxford, 2004).

The final two chapters of the book deal explicitly with the social, economic, military, and political dimensions of Sufism in varied historical contexts, including an interesting discussion of Sufism and *jihad* focusing—as one might expect—on Sufi-lead resistance to colonial occupation in North Africa and the Sudan (pp. 79–84), as well as the historical importance of Sufi networks in commercial trade and other economic activities (pp. 84–87). In the final chapter of the work, (entitled: “Whose Orthodoxy?”), Sedgwick returns to the debate over authenticity, but this time from within the Islamic tradition itself. Here, he looks at the anti-Sufi discourse of both medieval (Ibn Taymiyya) and early-modern critics (Kadizade and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab), as well as the contours of modern Salafi and Fundamentalist hostility towards Sufism and Sufi-inspired practices (pp. 89–105). The relationship between Sufism and the state is also considered, the case of Sufis in Republican Turkey, Egypt, the Sudan, and Syria all receiving special treatment, as does what Sedgwick identifies as the general eclipse of Sufism in the modern Muslim world, breaking the narrative to ask rather forebodingly that as: “Sufis are now more likely to be found in villages than in universities. . . (that) the tombs of great walis are falling into disrepair,

and the future of the Islamic world is debated between fundamentalism and materialism. What future does Sufism have?" (pg. 109). If there is an answer to this question, it might be found in the simple fact of its continued historical persistence.

Overall, *Sufism: The Essentials* is a well-written, earnest, and nicely conceived introduction to the 'essential traits' of Sufism as the author has come to conceive them in his years of work in, on, and among the texts, people, and places associated with Islamic mysticism in all of its diversity. In addition to an appendix containing a brief collection of sayings (*hikam*) attributed the great 13<sup>th</sup>-century Egyptian Sufi Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Iskandari, the book also contains a glossary of the limited technical terminology used in the main text, and a selective, partially annotated bibliography of secondary studies and primary Sufi literature in translation divided into two groups: 1) classic (perhaps 'classical' was intended); and, 2) modern texts written or translated into English, primarily from writings emanating from Sufi orders established in Europe and America (e.g., Özak, Nurbakhsh) as well as the Guénonian Traditionalists (Lings, Schuon, Nasr). Although a slim volume, the lack of an index is nonetheless a negative, especially for students who might be searching for quick facts regarding a particular name, place, or personage. Beyond this, the work is unimpeachable, covering what is by all accounts an extremely complex and historically diverse tradition of spirituality, social organization, mystical speculation, and popular religiosity operative in Islamic societies across time and space in a style which is informed, lively, well-executed and which, most importantly, never loses sight of its audience.

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*A Basic Course in Moroccan Arabic.* By Richard Harrell ; with Mohammed Abu-Talib, William S. Carroll ; [foreword by Margaret Nydell]. Georgetown classics in Arabic language and linguistics. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003. Pp. xx, 395 ; 23 cm. + 11 sound discs (4 3/4 in.) [Originally published: Washington, D.C. : Georgetown University Press, 1965, in series: The Richard Slade Harrell Arabic Series, no.8.]

*A Short Reference Grammar of Moroccan Arabic : with audio CD.* By Richard S. Harrell ; with an appendix of texts in urban Moroccan

Arabic by Louis Brunot. Georgetown classics in Arabic language and linguistics. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004. Pp. xix, 263 ; 23 cm. + 1 sound disc (digital ; 4 3/4 in.) [Originally published: Washington : Georgetown University Press, 1962, in series: Arabic series / Georgetown University, Institute of Languages and Linguistics ; no. 1.]

While Arabic has certainly managed to attain the status of a major world language, it has also suffered the fate of one that has spread over a large geographical area and has thereby spawned an array of dialects. Thus, while today Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) can be said to unite the Arab world in writing, speeches, newscasts, and newspapers, the plain fact is that the dialects of, for example, the Levantine (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) and the Maghreb (Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria) are for the most part mutually unintelligible. Anyone, therefore, who claims to “know” Arabic, must master not only the grammar of Modern Standard Arabic, but also the particular dialect of wherever he she or lives.

While for obvious reasons a plethora of English-language books exist for the foreign-language study of Modern Standard Arabic (it is, after all, the language which unites almost 300 million speakers), the same cannot be said for the many dialects which exist in the Arab world.

One of the earliest attempts to remedy the situation was the “Arabic Research Program” which was established in 1960 as a contract between Georgetown University and the United States Office of Education. Eventually eleven books were produced including *A Basic Course in Moroccan Arabic* (which presents lessons based on everyday situations consisting of lessons and dialogues) and *A Short Reference Grammar of Moroccan Arabic* (a more practical reference grammar for those who already have basic skills in Moroccan Arabic) both of which were written chiefly by Richard Harrell who died tragically in 1964 in Cairo.

Both of the books are essentially reprints of the original works published in 1965 and 1962 respectively, and the current series editors admit that some of the material is dated in terms of theoretical approaches. Indeed, as might be expected for books of their era when the communicative method popular in English as a Second Language classes today had not yet been devised, there is no sequence of Engaging, Studying, and then Activating the language. Still others might quibble that the Moroccan is rendered only in Romanized script with no Arabic script for comparison.

Nonetheless, despite the somewhat dated methodology, the two books remain classic presentations that no further English-language books have managed to surpass. As a modern addition to the original editions, the new editions include a set, respectively, of eleven and one audio compact disc(s). These CDs were remastered from the original audiocassettes, and as the books note, the sound quality reflects the early technology of the originals.

Certainly the two books are essential additions for any university library where Arabic is taught, and for those who already have the earlier editions, the CDs are certainly a welcome technological advancement over the previous cassette tapes.

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*Al-Kitāb fī Ta'allum al-ʿArabīyah: al-Juzʿ al-awwal* = *Al-Kitaab fī Ta'allum al-ʿArabiyya = A Textbook for Beginning Arabic: Part one*. By Kristen Brustad, Mahmoud Al-Batal, and Abbas Al-Tonsi. 2nd edition. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2004. Pp. 493. Photographs, drawings, glossaries, appendixes, index, 3 DVDs. \$54.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 158901104X

Over the past decade, the Al-Kitaab series has become the leading Arabic textbook series for post-secondary instruction in the English-speaking world. It was designed to emphasize communicative skills in Modern Standard Arabic, in a break from the Western tradition of focusing on reading classical Arabic (*fushḥá*). *Al-Kitaab Part One* is designed to follow the preliminary text, *Alif Baa*, which covers writing the Arabic alphabet and a few phrases of greeting; a new edition of this volume also came out in 2004.

The book begins with a general preface and introduction addressed to Arabic students, both in English, followed by an introduction in Arabic addressed to instructors. Together these introductions explain the philosophy behind the program. Throughout the book, Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian dialect (*ʿāmmīyah*) are introduced, often in parallel examples, so that students can learn to distinguish between registers. The book introduces concepts gradually in what the authors call the “principle of spiraling”—using a structure or phrase repeatedly in context so that the student begins to guess how it is used before it is formally explained. In the Arabic introduction the authors say that



their experience in teaching with the first edition has confirmed their commitment to the methodology developed for this series.

The book is arranged in twenty chapters followed by Arabic-English and English-Arabic glossaries containing vocabulary from this volume and from *Alif Baa*. There are also tables of pronouns and basic grammar, conjugations of sample verbs representing the basic verb forms (*al-awzān*), and a grammar index. While the first edition was paired with separately available compact discs with vocabulary, monologues, and a few listening exercises (as well as a videocassette usually only available to instructors), the second edition is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of three DVDs. There is a DVD chapter corresponding to each chapter in the book, and each DVD chapter includes sections labeled Vocabulary, Story, Grammar, Listening, Egyptian Colloquial, and Culture.

Some of the DVD material corresponds directly to activities in the book, but there is a wealth of additional material. Notable additions to the audio-visual material in this edition are videos of two colloquial monologues and dialogues in each chapter, an orally presented sentence for each vocabulary word, and various additional videos, some purpose-made and some taken from Arab television. The additional videos simultaneously shed light on cultural issues and provide opportunities to practice listening comprehension. There are, for instance, television clips about historical events, documentary-style collections of Egyptians talking about the members of their families or the pressures of the final year of secondary school, and even a wordless montage of soccer highlights set to a thumping soundtrack. The DVDs can be viewed on a TV set with a DVD player, but the non-video portions are best accessed on a computer. It is easier to read the Arabic words on a computer screen, and one can quickly navigate through menus with the mouse, clicking on vocabulary and grammar to hear it pronounced.

Over the course of the book we are introduced, through monologues, to cousins Maha and Khaled and their friends and family members. New, more engaging actors have been cast in these roles for the new edition, and they appear both on the DVDs and in photographs in the book. The design of the book is slightly improved, with better illustrations and design elements, but is still workmanlike and not visually interesting. The adhesive binding is extremely sturdy and should stand up to daily use, but the decision to bind the DVDs into the book with cardboard sleeves, while convenient to the bookseller, has made the book awkward to open and write in. The sleeves are thin enough, how-

ever, that if the DVDs are removed and housed separately they will bend with the pages and not cause too much trouble.

The book has a few typographical and editorial errors, with one that could prove particularly problematic to a student—on page 130, in a table of past, present and verbal noun forms (*al-māḍī*, *al-mudārī*, and *al-maṣḍar*) of common verbs, the labels for present and verbal noun forms are reversed. While the forms are listed in the correct order on the grammar menu on the DVD, after choosing this review there are no labels at all when interacting with the list of verbs. Most students will figure out the mistake from the forms they have already learned, but this sort of error is unfortunate. Nevertheless, the book is a boon to Arabic instruction for speakers of English and a vital part of the collection of any post-secondary institution in which Arabic is taught.

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*Zaat*. [*Dhāt*. English] By Sonallah Ibrahim ; translated by Anthony Calderbank. Cairo ; New York : The American University in Cairo Press, ©2001. Pp. 349 ; 24 cm. ISBN 9774246470.

Egyptian writer Son Allah Ibrahim is one of the leading lights in modern Arabic, and indeed, world literature. After studying law and drama at Cairo University, he became a journalist until his arrest and imprisonment in 1959 for promoting leftist causes. When he was released in 1964, he moved to Berlin to work for a news agency and to Moscow where he studied cinematography. Since his return to Egypt in 1974, he has devoted all of his time to writing, and through his writing he has continued to be a thorn in the side of Egyptian officialdom.

Ibrahim's writing has always been controversial. For example, his first novel *The Smell of It* followed the life of a man who has just been released from prison. Its sexual explicitness and its descriptions of masturbation and homosexual sex in Egyptian prisons caused it to be censored, and it was only allowed to appear in an abridged version. His Kafkaesque, satiric novella *The Committee* has become a classic of modern Arabic literature, telling the story of an intellectual who confronts a mysterious committee which serves the interests of multinationals. The novel ends with the writer biting his arm and later eating himself.

His 1992 novel *Zaat* continues the black humor and the attack on globalization, rapacious capitalism, bureaucracy, and the absurdities of living under a corrupt and greedy authoritarian regime under the yolk of American influence. The novel follows the life of a simple Egyptian woman named Zaat (which translates as “self” in Arabic) who works in the archives of a government newspaper, through the presidential eras of Nasser, Anwar al-Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. In between the regular plot-line is a montage of press extracts including headlines, news items, photo captions and advertisements that portray the ridiculous and meaningless nature of modern Egyptian (and by extension world, life). In one news report, Mubarak is quoted as saying, “We should not be ashamed that there are poor people in Egypt. What we should do is work to make our country appear suitably civilized because we need to attract tourists.”

As a novel, *Zaat* has attracted critical acclaim, both for its uncompromising view of totalitarian government and globalization, as well for its innovative style. Certainly anyone tired of hearing the corporate elite’s repeated refrain of the benefits of globalization or the current U.S. administration’s hypocritical cries of expanding “democracy” to the Middle East (when it itself is the prime reason for the lack of democracy in that region) will welcome *Zaat*’s insights. Moreover, not only is *Zaat* a hardnosed, skeptical look at the greed and corruption of modern life, it is also extremely funny, and is a refreshing antidote to what Ibrahim himself terms Arabic literature’s suffocating seriousness and unwillingness to simply tell interesting stories.

The American University of Cairo’s translation by Anthony Calderback, who lived in Egypt and discussed his attempts at translation on an ongoing basis with Ibrahim, is seamless. Arabic expressions are incorporated into the text in italics and are explained at the back of the book thereby avoiding stilted and awkward translations when translated into English. If this book is not already in the collections of academic libraries with Middle Eastern or world literature collections, it certainly should be.

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*Farewell to Alexandria : eleven short stories.* By Harry E. Tzalas ; translated by Susan E. Mantouvalou ; illustrated by Anna Boghiguian. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2003. Pp. 224. Glossary. Map. Paperback. US\$17.95. ISBN: 977 424 8104. [www.aucpress.com](http://www.aucpress.com)

Harry Tzalas' work is determined, imaginative and moving. He describes each character with great sensitivity and perception. Tzalas was born and educated in Alexandria. In 1956, he emigrated with his family to Brazil before settling in Greece. He is the founder and president of the Hellenic Institute for Ancient and Medieval Alexandrian Studies, in Athens.

*Farewell to Alexandria*, published by AUC Press, comprises eleven short stories: Osta Antoun—The Little Armenian girl—The Maestro—Frau Grete—Sidi Bashir, October 1942—The Three brothers—Athinodoros and Iordanis—Amm Ahmad, father and son—Alexandria and Aegyptum—The As and the Fs of history—The Quails.

These eleven stories are accompanied by evocative illustrations by Anna Boghiguian who also has illustrated editions of Constantine Cavafy and Giuseppe Ungaretti. The artistic cover art of the paperback of *Farewell to Alexandria* is done by her also. She is the author of *Anna's Egypt: An Artist's Journey* (AUC Press, 2003).

*Farewell to Alexandria* tells the story of everyday people whose lives become interrupted by turbulent currents of history. Eleven short stories written over fifteen years, celebrates the diversity of Alexandria and finds heroes among its ordinary citizens. These are ordinary people, people of different nationalities, religions and traditions, but they are all Alexandrians. Tzalas says: "These are the true Alexandrians, and it is to them that we owe a debt."

Each of these stories explore affection, devotion, loneliness and sadness. In "Osta Antoun", Antoun is a poor Lebanese shoemaker living in Alexandria with his wife and two little daughters. He goes to work every morning. Antoun had an unfulfilled desire, a yearning for that which would make his life comfortable. Antoun wanted a watch. Every Sunday Antoun went fishing and everyone pushed to get the bait, because the shrimp man, a cunning Copt, put the live bait on top with the old, stale bait underneath for the latecomers. Antoun said: "There were so many fishing grounds in Alexandria and everywhere there were fish, so many fish!" Antoun would ask "What time is it?" when he went to the shoeshop and also when he went to the cafe on Sunday before fishing.

So when his uncle Michel died and remembered him in his will and when the expenses were deducted, there were just two hundred pounds left. So he bought a pocketwatch with a long chain for him, a wristwatch for his wife, a watch for each of his daughters and pendulum wall clock for the house. Antoun had heart attack and died. He was buried in Alexandria holding his watch tightly in his two hands.

The story of "The Little Armenian Girl" is very sad and moving. The white ship the *Pobeda* was anchored in the port of Alexandria. This modern passenger liner was going to carry all the Armenians to newly-formed Soviet Armenia. The story focuses on an Armenian family with a very sick girl who has leukemia. There is a turmoil in this story about how could they leave with a dying child? Should they leave Alexandria without her? The boy from next door is very anxious about the dying girl, he states that death was something that happened to the aged and for the first time he was becoming aware that death threatened little children too. The little boy was very sad and could not sleep at night, worrying about her and praying with all the faith a child's soul can muster. The little girl died on Friday and they buried her the next day and they left Alexandria the day after. Throughout the story, the reader feels the pain of the sick girl and the next door boy who is so anxious about her.

The other stories include that of a German family caught in the city during the second World War; the three French teachers of Tzalas and another story about some elderly Alexandrians who meet by the shore to talk about the Alexandria of the past.

There are some specific issues which need to be addressed. The translation flows, but it has occasional awkward sentences and phrases: in "Sidi Bishr", "as she awoke" and in "Osta Antoun", "working all through the night in his paltry apartment." There are sentences which sound foreign like "chattered like a spinning wheel" and "she died like a little bird" when speaking about grandmother Nonna Beatrice in "Sidi Bishr". Every story has a large evocative illustration. The artist could have done without the tiny sketches on the right hand side of the beginning of each story. The binding is of poor quality: Some pages of my copy are coming out of the spine already; some of the margins are not even; and the binding of some pages has cut off some words. The map of the "Buildings and Landmarks of Ancient and Modern Alexandria" is very useful.

*Farewell to Alexandria* is a wonderful book. The stories tackle complex issues in simple language. The *Egyptian Reporter* calls it a masterpiece. *Farewell to Alexandria* is good investment for Middle Eastern and Oriental Libraries. Because prices for AUC Press books may vary in different parts of the world, check the above website for prices in your region.

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*Post-Gibran Anthology of New Arab American Writing*. Edited by Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash. Jusoor ; 11/12. West Bethesda, Md. : Kitab ; Syracuse, NY : Distributed by Syracuse University Press, 1999. Pp. xiii, 460 : ill., ports. ; 23 cm. ISBN 0965203131 (paperback) \$19.95.

*The Post-Gibran Anthology of New Arab American Writing*, edited by Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash, is not a typical anthology, and this was their express intention. From their introduction, we understand that the editors wanted to create something different. Not challenged enough by the task of gathering together pieces from authors already of some literary repute, the editors combined a couple of unique strategies to ensure they ended up with a collection of material that indeed could not have been collected by just anyone with preexisting favorites among Arab American writers.

The first strategy was to not require that the materials chosen for the work be already of some public renown and available elsewhere. Indeed, most of what is in the collection has not been published anywhere else before.

The second strategy, the editors tell us, was to request from contributing authors pieces of literature in genres that are not their most comfortable. Thus they encouraged short stories from poets, poetry from novelists, stories from biographers. Furthermore, they encouraged the the authors to contribute experimental materials, those that exhibited a stretching of their creative talents, particularly those that demonstrated what “they are doing with the language” (Arabic) and whether or not they had “found a vocabulary that negotiates the Arabic language and Arab concerns” (p. xiii).

A third strategy was to include as Arab American writers, Americans whose identity is not Arab at all, but who still project a flavor of what

the editors call “Arabness” (p. xii). Included in this group are writers such as Penny Johnson and Sarah Rogers.

Many of the works in this collection are universal in their appeal. Pauline Kaldas’ poem “From a Distance Born” (pp. 239–241) is a touching poem about childbirth and a mother and child’s first moments of bonding. Paula Haydar’s poem “Picture Us” (pp. 243–244) recalls the freedom and seemingly endless hours of summertime youth. The poem recounts the joy of being children free to explore a mountain’s nature, chase insects, and investigate all of nature’s surprises as they leap from under upturned rocks and slither through tall grass. It is well-written and concise, such that readers can picture the scene and recall carefree afternoons of their own childhood summers.

Other pieces are terribly personal and sensitive: quite distinctively the work and the experience of one person, but of a nature interesting to all. For instance, Evelyn Accad, one of the more famous of the contributors, contributes excerpts from her personal journal. Her piece entitled, “All Around Still: From My Cancer Journal” is an frank discussion of her struggle with breast cancer, family deaths, and ways she has devised to continue to be determined to live, and be loved, and to reach out to others as much as she can, while she can. The reader senses immediately the desire she has to live, to beat down the beast inside her and to win. Accad demonstrates a strength and determination that we would all hope we could summon if ever in the same situation, though few of us could be so brave as to share the experience and pain with the world as she does here.

Naomi Shihab Nye, a progressively more famous Arab-American short story writer, has here contributed a poem. It is “Long Overdue” (pp. 127–132). It is also very personal and like Accad’s piece is intimately biographical. In this poem Naomi expresses some of the exasperating situations that arise when one is Arab-American but not necessarily visibly so. Naomi’s poem speaks of Arab-Americans who often deal with bigots making remarks around them against Arabs or Middle Easterners because they are unaware of her heritage (she is one half Arab). She finds that although she is a wordsmith, such instances paralyze her tongue and she is struck dumb. No possible reply seems damning enough or powerful enough to undo what is certainly years of racist socialization.

The striking similarities between the emotions and flash—points in the west for native born Arab-Americans and for Arabs who have

moved to the United States are evident upon juxtaposing the pieces by Elmaz Abinader and Naomi Nye with those of Hisham Sharabi and Khaled Mattawa. For example, Elmaz Abinader's "Sixty Minutes: A Poem and a Journal" (pp. 19–41) is a wonderful mixture of images of Middle East cities different cultures in place not so far apart, and the way an Arab-American is seen by Arabs. Hisham Sharabi's journal—like the presentation of his arrival in the states just six months before Palestine was lost to Israeli and other occupiers—copiously describes his first minutes, days, weeks, and years in the United States. It incrementally discloses how one comes to stay in the United States even after making a pact with oneself on one's first night in a lonely dorm room to "go back home within a year" (p. 359).

Alienation, frustration, confusion reside in these works, but also the joy of discovery, visible personal growth, and earned success or self-knowledge even if at some price. This is a collection that should appeal to many audiences: general fiction readers, biography readers, and lovers of poetry.

CHRISTINE DYKGRAAF

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*A History of the Modern Middle East.* By William L. Cleveland. Third Edition. Boulder: Westview, 2004. Pp. 539, Epilogue, Glossary, Bibliography, Index. \$42.00 (Paperback) ISBN:0-8133-4048-9.

In this third edition of *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Cleveland gives the reader primarily a political narrative, but covers major social and economic issues of the Middle East over the past two centuries, beginning with the rise of the Safavids and Ottomans to the 1990 Gulf War. Cleveland, a professor of Middle Eastern History at Simon Fraser University, does an excellent job with this introductory text of combining numerous aspects from a complex history into five well organized and easy to understand sections. These five sections, each of which begins and ends with a brief summary analysis, is then divided further into specific chapters making it easier for the reader to follow. This introductory text is enhanced by maps and illustrations, a glossary of terms, an extensive index and an excellent English bibliography which is fully annotated and arranged by country and topic. It is a resource that academic libraries need to include into their collections.



In the first section of this book, Cleveland begins his historical survey by introducing the reader to the origins of Islam in the Middle East during the seventh century. Cleveland defines the region of the Middle East to include the area between Egypt in the west through Iran in the East, from Turkey in the north to the Arabian Peninsula in the south. The first two chapters briefly highlight the prophet Muhammad and the foundation of the Islamic faith, the creation of Islamic social and political institutions, during the Umayyad and Abbasid Empires and ends in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with the Mongol invasions. The third chapter examines the rise of the Ottoman Empire and looks at the rise and fall of the Safavid Empire in Iran.

The author then turns his attention to the era of transformation in the Middle East and how this area attempted to handle European influences. Specifically, it highlights the changes that took place in the Ottoman Empire and compares it to Egypt and Iran between 1789 and the end of World War I. This second section of his work begins by looking at the reigns of Selim III (1789–1806) and Mahmud II (1808–1839) and the reforms they implemented, which laid the foundations for the Tanizmat period in the Ottoman Empire. Cleveland then mirrors what is happening under the Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali and the Iranian leader Nasir al-Din Shah during this Ottoman reform period to see how they were affected by this reorganization. He shows how society reacts to these reforms and how out of the reaction to these reforms the Young Turks and Iranian Constitutionalists were born. This section ends with World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

The third section of his book looks at the struggle of state independence which occurred between the end of World War I and up until the creation of Israel in 1948. Cleveland focuses on the Arab struggle for independence in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Transjordan. Not only does he highlight the effects of the bonds that these states had with the former Ottoman Empire, but he shows how European influence impacted the advancement of these nations under particularly the French and English rule. The final chapter in the section discusses the Palestine mandate and the birth of the state of Israel.

The fourth section examines independence of the Middle Eastern states from 1945 to the early 1970s. It examines how democracy and authoritarianism play a role in shaping both Turkey and Iran and how the age of Nasserism affected both Egyptian and Arab politics. He concludes by looking at the Israel and Palestinian strife between 1948 to the 1970s.

The fifth and final section focuses on the history of the Middle East since the 1970s. Specifically, he examines the political strife in Egypt and Lebanon during the 1970s and 1980s. Then he turns his attention to the domestic and foreign policies of the Iraqi and Syrian regimes, the Iranian revolution of 1979 and then the implication of the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the Middle Eastern region. The Intifada and the 1991 Gulf War are discussed along with the failure of the Oslo peace process. New to this edition is an epilogue, which offers a review of al-Qa'ida's September 11th, 2001, terrorist attack in New York and the early periods of the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003.

What is refreshing about this text is Cleveland's avoidance of terms like 'modernization' and 'westernization', which he deems either 'value-laden or culturally judgmental'; instead, he favors the word 'transformation'. He believes this term 'better conveys the objectives of nineteenth-century reformers and also places nineteenth-century changes in the context of earlier eras of Middle Eastern transformation.' (p. xiv)

Despite the fact that Cleveland covered Israel's history only in its framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and not within its own historical existence, this book remains an excellent overview of the history of the modern Middle East and is highly recommended.

WYOMA VANDUINKERKEN

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE STATION

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*Iranian Cities: Formation and Development.* By Masoud Kheirabadi. 1<sup>st</sup> Syracuse University Press ed. Contemporary issues in the Middle East Series. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000. Bibliography, Index. Pp. xiv, 132 : ill., maps ; 23 cm. ISBN 0-8156-2860-9 Paperback.

First published in 1991 (University of Texas Press), *Iranian Cities* discusses the effects and impact of climate and the physical environment, the caravan trade, and religious influences on urban development in Iran. These factors or influences are discussed in three separate chapters which subsume discussion on individual cities. Although the author does not emphasize a single factor as root of the development of Iranian cities, the book could have benefited from a more robust discussion on trade influences as well as political and social factors. The discussion is augmented by maps, sketch city plans, photographs, and three

appendices—on the *qanat*, the bazaar, and mosques. In addition, the book includes a useful glossary of Iranian urban terms and a substantial bibliography.

Masoud Kheirabadi is now on the Geography faculty at Portland State University. *Iranian Cities* is Kheirabadi's revised Ph.D. dissertation, "A study of factors that have influenced the formation and development of Iranian cities", University of Oregon, 1987. He is also the author of *Iran* (2003) for Modern World Nations series, and *Islam* (2004) for Religions of the World Series, both of which are aimed mainly for elementary and junior high school students.

Citing a literature gap in analysis of special patterns and physical structures of Iranian cities, Kheirabadi hopes this book serves as "a springboard for further study" on the morphology of Iranian urban development. *Iranian Cities* will be a useful addition to libraries collecting resources in support of research on Iran, specifically Iranian society and cultures, or, more broadly, Islamic urban development.

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*Be Thou There: The Holy Family's Journey in Egypt*. Edited with an introduction by Gawdat Gabra; text by William Lyster, Cornelis Hulsman, Stephen J. Davis; photographs by Norbert Schiller. Cairo : The American University in Cairo Press, 2001. Pp. 162 : col. ill., map ; 33 cm. ISBN: 9774246063.

*Be Thou There* is a lavishly illustrated tour of the churches, shrines, and other sacred spaces associated with the Holy Family of Jesus, Joseph, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. This cult of the Holy Family, important especially to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, is also observed, to some extent, by the Muslims of Egypt who revere Jesus as an important prophet in the line leading up to Mohammed.

The veneration of the Holy Family in Egypt is based on several verses in the second chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. St. Joseph, following an angelic directive, flees the murderous wrath of King Herod and goes to Egypt. This is, in good Matthean fashion, the fulfillment of the prophecy from Hosea 11:1 that read, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

As Christianity spread in its early days throughout Egypt and among Jews, Greeks, and native Egyptians, the lines from Matthew, them-

selves silent on the duration of the flight into Egypt and on its geographical expanse, grew into a well-developed pilgrimage of sites mainly in the Sinai Peninsula and along the Nile River. The calling of the Messiah from Egypt would appear to be a rehabilitation of the country that figured so prominently as the oppressor in the seminal tale of the Hebrew nation's liberation from bondage and slavery.

*Be Thou There* touches upon the history of the places associated with the Holy Family and their development through Roman and Islamic periods. This is done in the context of the received pious tradition of these sites, and there is little critical appropriation of this history. This received tradition is full of stories of miraculous events that occurred during the Holy Family's stay in Egypt. Often the infant Jesus himself is the source of the miracles. Many springs and wells are associated with the cult. That said, there are some places promoted as cultic sites that are deemed outside the itinerary of the Holy Family in Egypt, even as expansive as the general possibilities are in this contest.

If one is looking for a critical assessment of the cult of the Holy Family in Egypt, this is not your book. On the other hand, if one desires to learn about the reality of the Holy Family's current veneration in Egypt, the text will give you a great deal of information. Pilgrimages are narrated, and the quest for the healing power that is believed to be a part of many of these shrines is described. The importance of Joseph and Mary as actors on the grand stage of Salvation History within the Coptic tradition is another important aspect of belief in the context of the Holy Family's sojourn in Egypt. The Blessed Virgin Mary is especially notable in this regard.

Perhaps, the most important aspect of this book in terms of the information conveyed is that it describes a living faith among the Coptic Christians who have lived, and sometimes dangerously, under Islam for more than a millennium. The introduction makes clear that the Coptic Church and its institutions have been strengthened during the reign of Pope Shenouda III.

The most valuable part of *Be Thou There*, however, is clearly the photographs that accompany the text. They are vivid depictions not only of the holy places themselves, but they are often accompanied by photographs of the surrounding territory to provide context. Also, in conjunction with their ongoing importance, in that these cultic and sacred spaces are part of a living and thriving tradition, there are many pictures of liturgical events taking place in them.

Those looking for an introduction to the Coptic Church will find this book a useful beginning. Those looking for a more scholarly appropriation of the Coptic traditions that focus on the cult of the Holy Family, while appreciating the photographs and depictions of the cult's present importance, will want to seek elsewhere for that appropriation.

PAUL CREGO

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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*Coptic Monasteries: Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture.* By Gawdat Gabra; with a historical overview by Tim Vivian. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002. Pp. 142 : ill. (some col.), maps ; 24 cm. Includes bibliographical references (p. 124-133) and index. ISBN: 977 424 691 8.

Gawdat Gabra's *Coptic Monasteries* is a good introduction to the history of monasteries in Egypt and to the current state of some of these monasteries. The brief chronology at the beginning of the book is useful in situating the various monasteries' histories in their proper context. Tim Vivian, an Anglican priest, has given a history of the Coptic Church useful for those picking up this volume who have had no previous exposure to its history. Christian monasticism, particularly as it is manifest in Egypt and within the Coptic tradition, is also introduced for the person who is new to this topic.

The main body of this work details several clusters of monasteries important to the history of monasticism in the Coptic Orthodox Church. Within each one of these clusters, several are singled out for detailed analysis. The analysis includes maps to situate the location of these monasteries in Egypt, as well as detailed architectural plans. The plans are used to make assertions about the pattern of living within each one of the monasteries covered.

Gabra indicates that the monasteries described are not just important to the history of the Coptic Church, but that many are also significant international points of interest in the wider Christian community. For example, speaking of the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun which "played a crucial role in the history of the Coptic Church," Gabra adds, "Ethiopian, Syrian, Franciscan, and Armenian monks enriched the cultural life of the area in medieval times, endowing it with a multiethnic character."

*Coptic Monasteries* also has a section of color plates that show general scenes of the monasteries, details of frescoes in the monasteries, and various architectural details. These pictures add greatly to the textual description to which they are referenced.

Gabra also makes the point that this study of the monasteries of the Coptic tradition is not just an archæological exercise in ruined piles of stones and faded frescoes, but rather that some of the monasteries are still part of the life of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Its hierarchy, including the current leader Pope Shenouda III, is drawn from the monks that presently inhabit active monasteries.

*Coptic monasteries* is an important introduction for readers who have not been previously exposed to this part of the Eastern Christian tradition, despite its antiquity and its current status as a living part of the Christian community. The extended bibliography at the back of the book supplements the bibliographies of the various chapters and will be useful for the students of church history who are interested in pursuing further reading on this topic.

PAUL CREGO

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