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Latifa Zayyat, ?????? ????????

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Genre : Fiction, Novels

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From Reader Review ????? ?????? for online ebook

Rana says

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Sarah saied says

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Noha Haikal says

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Margitte says

I don't know much of the literature, neither the history of the Egyptian struggle for independence from British rule, so I cannot really appreciate the impact this book must have had in the 1960s when it was published.

Was it controversial? Welcomed? Condemned? Inspiring? Probably all of it.

What I DO know, though, is that it was an excellent historical fictional literary experience for me as reader.

The patchwork of characters, family issues, politics, community and history presented a colorful piece of word art to the reader.

I had sympathy with all the characters, since at the time the Sulayman family was in a transitional zone for various political and social reasons. There was the old versus the young. It was Mama Sulayman's teachings of old traditions versus Prof. Fuad Ramzi's intellectualism for women, although his ultimate goal was to 'enslave' Layla to his stream of thought in much the same way as the teachings of the matriarch. Layla is the protagonist. A middle-class young woman who had to find her way among the different social stratospheres of ideologies and ideas.

Perhaps the novel can be described as a literary romance as well. Love and Marriage form center stage as talking points in both the Sulyaman family's colloquial dinner conversations and the philosophy lectures of Prof. Fuad Ramzi. Layla and her friends, all coming of age, romanticize the different options for women in their girl-talk about love.

Add to all this the 1952 overthrow of the unpopular monarchy, the anti-British riots in Cairo, the Coup by the Free Officers's Movement (part of the Egyptian Communist Party)-- all in the same year, then 1953 declaration of a Republic, 1954 election of Gamal Abdel Nasser as first prime minister, and the final withdrawal of Britain in 1955 after violent and brutal clashes, and the novel becomes much more than just an ode to love in all its manifestations.

The vivid detail of these events add a disturbing and much deeper dimension to the story of this young girl in transition. The introduction of the Marxist feminist ideology into young women's lives, highlights the split it causes in the family and society as a whole.

The ending is a good one for the reader.

In my humble opinion it is a must-read for anyone interested in Middle-Eastern life. The diversity of social practices and ideas, makes it an eye-opening book to begin with. It is evident from various Middle-Eastern authors, and Egypt in particular, that the Arabian society was never monochrome. This book illustrates it brilliantly.

Lebanese author Layla Baalbaki, one of the first writers to give a voice to women with her 1958 novel, *I*

Live, was charged with obscenity and immorality. She was eventually acquitted. Latifa Zayyat's novel, *The Open Door* was written in the same historical period with the same theme. It can be assumed that she might have experienced the same pressure.

RECOMMENDED

PS. HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY tomorrow!

Claire McAlpine says

So glad this was brought back into publication, to give a view on a young woman's coming of age in Cairo, Egypt, the roller coaster of emotions she goes through as she hits that turbulent period of becoming aware of both the effect she has on a young man and what his proximity does to her. It is heightened by the fear of how she will be perceived, judged, which in their course cause her to suppress her feelings and turn inward, when really she wants to be able to express herself or explode.

It's a novel about Layla, her brother Mahmoud, their friends, parents and the Aunt and cousins living upstairs, all of whom have slightly different opinions and ways of dealing with life, and beliefs on how it should be lived and how one should behave, that make it a riveting read and insight into the debates this novel provoked at the time it was first published in 1960.

In addition to the turmoil Layla goes through, the advance and retreat, so too does Egypt confront her own coming of age, with the semi-advance of independence from British rule, the inner rebellion against the monarchy and the final agitation that brought about the nationalisation of the Suez canal. While it's not an overtly politically involved novel, the history of the nation over a ten year period, deftly matches the progress of the young woman as she tries to forge a path for herself, realises how tied to social codes she is, both complies and considers busting out of those expectations, to live life more on her own terms.

The final section felt a little rushed, as if the author had trouble bringing the novel to its conclusion, although that chaotic feeling it generates could also be said to fit with the events that were happening at the time, which were chaotic and dangerous.

Overall, I thought it was excellent, engaging and thought-provoking, particularly by putting a young woman and her confusion in the act of becoming a woman at the centre and demonstrating through the other women, her family and friends around her, the pressures that disrupt that development, that question it, mould it and can sometimes even destroy it.

Huda Yahya says

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Aya Ehab says

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