

of the impasse” (pp. 119, 135). Fieni emphasizes these writers’ ability to enact the work of memory that falls to them as women navigating public and private spaces during times of unrest. Female solidarity is also evident “through language and outside of languages” (p. 119). Djébar’s novel *Le blanc de l’Algérie* (1995) exemplifies a shared preoccupation as it “meditates on the meaning of its own use of language while alluding to the multilingual reality of the country” (p. 130).

Tunisian writer Abdelwahab Meddeb’s postmodern novels, *Talismano* (1979) and *Phantasia* (1986) are the focus of Chapter 6. Fieni considers Meddeb a “Muslim atheist” and “critical secularist,” citing his claim that Islamic culture’s greatest strengths stem from transgressions of the Islamic letter of the law (p. 150). For Meddeb, the vibrancy of Islamic societies is due to revolt rather than a reliance on the past (p. 151). Like Nietzsche, Meddeb “deploy[s] discourses of decadence to articulate a future that is already inscribed in the past” (p. 157). Fieni contends that Meddeb, through his use of French, can “write Islam without Arabic” (p. 152) by evoking the practices of Arabic calligraphy and Islamic iconoclasm (p. 140). Fieni’s analysis is at times abstruse here and could be strengthened by including Meddeb’s *The Malady of Islam* and writings by Moroccan philosopher Mohammed al-Jabiri.

In his conclusion, Fieni explores how Said’s critical method of contrapuntal reading is enhanced by Moroccan writer Abdelkebir Khatibi’s *double critique* which deconstructs the oppositions inherent in imperialist discourse. Both theorists foregrounded “the continuing predominance of dispossessed languages and discourses” (p. 165). Fieni asserts that “Khatibi has taken this problematic of language conflict further than any other writer of his generation” (p. 168) (although Abdelfattah Kilito, Khatibi’s compatriot, might also be considered in this context). Fieni ends optimistically noting that “Orientalized writers and thinkers” will continue to move “beyond the rhetoric of blame” and enact “a will to escape, disturb, and act through language” (p. 171).

Fieni’s skillful close readings of primary sources help ground the book, offering a counterweight to the density of his jargon. He makes judicious use of secondary sources by both philosophers and literary critics (including a fair proportion of Arabophones), deftly summarizing and adding nuance to their theoretical positions. Occasionally Fieni’s metaphors of mapping, networks, and the body (e.g., “ideological skin on social body” (p. 4) feel somewhat heavy-handed. The historical and geographical breadth of the book is impressive but runs the risk of causing the theme of decadence to become amorphous when it carries multiple significations. Nevertheless, Fieni makes a laudable effort to create a cohesive argument across this collection of essays. In addition, the editing is nearly flawless and there are useful notes, a rich bibliography, an index, and a handsome cover featuring a painting by Moroccan artist Miloudi.

Decadent Orientalisms is a well-researched, thought provoking study that will be of interest to comparativists and translators as well as to scholars of Arabic literature and Francophone literature (*littérature monde en français*). The Saidian paradigm proves its continued relevance as a tool to dismantle discourses of otherness and inferiority.

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Egypt’s Beer: Stella, Identity, and the Modern State. Omar D. Foda (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2019). Pp. 264. \$34.95 paper. ISBN: 9781477319550

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On “Everyday Egypt,” an *Instagram* page committed to countering reductive media coverage through visual storytelling, an eye catching image surfaced on 16 June 2020. The picture, taken by Ali Zaraay, an Egyptian photographer intent on depicting daily life at a distance from Cairo, captures a wedding taking place in the Nile Delta four years earlier. In the shot, a group of men, sporting traditional clothing, sit

cross-legged, socializing, into the night. Before them, beer bottles and cans, largely drained of their contents, blanket a beige canvas. Unlike the comments of *Instagram* users, which vary widely from the critical to the comedic, the containers on display feature a single brand: Stella. The untold story of this alcoholic beverage is the subject of Omar D. Foda's new book, which adopts Stella as a starting point for reimagining Egypt's modern history.

In *Egypt's Beer: Stella, Identity, and the Modern State*, Foda sets out to explore how Stella became the beer of Egypt by tracing the ways through which the beverage, its breweries, and the technologies surrounding it were "Egyptianized" (p. 2). In the process of documenting these historical developments, Foda ultimately charts not only the course of one commodity, but the trajectory of a modern nation. The temporal scope of Foda's original study is expansive. Beginning with the rise of Egypt's beer industry against the backdrop of the British Occupation, which witnessed the establishment of Stella's two eventual producers, Crown Brewery in 1897 and Pyramid Brewery a year later, Foda concludes with the beer's decline nearly a century onward in the 1980s and 1990s. Archival materials from multiple collections (Dutch, Egyptian, American) substantiate his sweeping investigation of "Egypt's beer" and the inner workings of the industry behind it. The result is what the author calls a "hybrid history," or one that places cultural matters into conversation with economic affairs, as opposed to studying each in isolation of one another (p. 3).

Over the course of eight chapters, which progress chronologically, Foda explores the making of modern Egypt and its beer. In Chapters 1 and 2, he chronicles the advent of Egypt's beer industry and traces Stella's origins to a partnership between Crown and Pyramid Breweries in the 1920s. In Chapter 3, Foda pivots to two influential players in this arena: Heineken and the Egyptian government. If the former's relationship with Stella's creators is based on "mutual interest," then "opposing desires" characterize the government's interactions with the beer's makers, whose international elements were both an asset and a liability (p. 76). The tensions arising from economic nationalism and the multinational connections of Crown and Pyramid gain greater clarity in Chapter 4, where Foda details the birth of Stella as a "brand" in the 1950s and highlights how the "foreign" became increasingly suspect under Gamal Abdel Nasser's rule (p. 80). In Chapters 5 and 6, the author proceeds to unpack the impact of Egypt's union with Syria on Stella and its manufacturers and the nationalization of Crown and Pyramid in 1963. As Foda goes on to show in Chapters 7 and 8, the newly formed al-Ahram Brewing Company enjoyed success under Nasser's successors, but neither Stella's popularity nor government ownership were destined to last. Poor leadership and rising religiosity contributed to Stella's subsequent downturn, while a multinational investment group purchased the beverage's producer in 1997, only to then sell the company to a familiar face in 2002, when Heineken added Egypt's breweries, once more, to its global empire.

In crafting this narrative, Foda flourishes on two major fronts. First, he breaks new ground in recording the histories of businesses. Foda's close reading of personal correspondence, in particular, provides a unique window onto company politics and elucidates the trials, triumphs, and internal dynamics of Stella's two breweries. Here, the author's discussion of technology and efforts to modernize and master it in Egypt and abroad is especially informative. Second, the beer industry that surfaces in Foda's book does not exist in a vacuum. The author places it in dialogue with Egyptian society. At times, the connections introduced by Foda are direct, such as when he recounts a conversation between Nasser and a brewery director that brilliantly illustrates the power wielded by Egypt's president over economic affairs (pp. 121–3). In other moments, these links are less immediate but equally instructive, such as when Foda considers how Nasser's populist policies and criticisms of foreign capitalists resonated with Egyptian workers (pp. 100–4). The outcome is a socioeconomic history that writes Stella and the beer industry, more generally, back into Egypt's historical memory and presents a fresh perspective on a period of immense change.

At the same time, this perceptive study raises several questions. First, Foda's discussion of "Egypt's beer" left me wanting to know more about Stella's social life beyond the breweries responsible for its creation. Notably, the author begins to explore the brand's appearance in newspaper advertisements and its presence in the writings of Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus and the films of Husayn Kamal, but refrains from diving much deeper into Stella's cultural biography. At one point, for instance, Foda mentions in passing how all "public traces" of Stella have vanished in Egypt (p. 2). How did these disappearing acts play out in practice and what are we to make of them in relation to Stella's continued consumption? Later on, Foda notes that portrayals of alcohol were permitted in films but prohibited on television in Egypt

(p. 155). Why was this the case and what may this reveal about Stella's status in Egyptian society? There is then the matter of Stella's audience. Foda identifies multiple communities that came into contact with alcoholic beverages. The voices of these actors, though, receive relatively little attention. What did beer and Stella, specifically, mean to the *Islami*, *infitahi*, effendi, and urban worker, and did these views change over time? Lastly, in meticulously tracing Stella's ascent, Foda clearly demonstrates that alcoholic beverages, perhaps contrary to popular belief, played a prominent part in the past of at least one Muslim majority country. The exact relationship between Egypt's Islamic Revival and Stella's decline, however, is less evident. In a time of rising religiosity, how did Stella surface in contemporary debates and what work did public critiques of it perform for those intent on speaking in the name of Islam? Answers to such questions stand to shed valuable light on Stella in action and lend further support to Foda's claim that it was "an inseparable part of Egyptian culture" (p. 1).

Notwithstanding these questions, which merit further research, *Egypt's Beer* constitutes an important contribution to the study of Egypt, consumer goods, and the history of technology in and outside of the Middle East. Foda skillfully scrutinizes the transformation of a multifaceted industry and uncovers the story of an iconic commodity at its center. The resulting history weaves together a wide array of economic, political, and social phenomena integral to the making of modern Egypt. Foda's book, moreover, is well written. The monograph is approachable, engaging, and assumes little in the way of background knowledge, making it accessible to a broader audience, including graduate students and upper level undergraduates. At times, I wondered how chapters organized around particular themes, such as colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism, may have impacted Foda's exploration, but the book's chronological organization works in the end and is easy to follow. For all of these reasons, *Egypt's Beer* would make a wonderful addition to courses on consumer culture, Middle East history, and the history of technology and businesses. Ultimately, those who read this book will enjoy not only its content, but the inquiries inspired by it. How may the histories of other commercial ventures impact our understanding of the Middle East? In what ways may scholars operating in different historical contexts similarly intertwine the economic, social, and political in the spirit of crafting more panoramic narratives? And what insights may be gained by thinking creatively with, and critically about, objects we often take for granted?

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Prophetic Translation: The Making of Modern Egyptian Literature.
Maya Kesrouany (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019). Pp. 250.
\$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9781474474504

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Prophetic Translation unfolds in the space between the genealogy of modern Arabic literature and the attempt to historicize literature as an ideological form, as well as a reading and writing praxis. The concern with the history of the emergence of modern Arabic literature haunts students of 19th and early 20th century Arabic literature, making it almost impossible to interpret these texts independently of the history of modernity in the region. Consequently, canonical texts from the period have been at the heart of contending visions and readings of modernity; from modernization narratives of the rise of a national-self from the shadow of European colonialism and the Ottoman Empire to post-colonial deconstructions of the former as self-Orientalizing projects. In recent years, there have been attempts to implode this cartographic imaginary and its reduction of literary history to an uneven dialogue among two unequal and distinctive cultural identities—i.e., Europe and its others. Michael Allen's recent work is particularly inspiring since it reframes the history of modern Egyptian literature from its focus on textuality, representation, and exchange amongst cultural identities to the globalization of a reading practice constitutive