



The Cairo House: A Novel (Arab American Writing)

Samia Serageldin

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Samia Serageldin's heroine, the daughter of a politically prominent, land-owning Egyptian family, witnesses the changes sweeping her homeland. Looking back to the glamorous Egypt of the pashas and King Faruk, Serageldin moves forward to the police state of the colonels who seized power in 1952 and the disastrous consequences of Nasser's sequestration policies.

Through well-chosen portraits and telling descriptions of the era's fashions and furnishings, Serageldin conveys detailed social and cultural information. She offers a glimpse of the beach at Agami in the 1960s and conveys the change in mood through the Sadat years. Serageldin's fictional treatment of recent Egyptian history includes key events leading to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, such as the assassination of writer Yussef Siba'yi and the harassment of theologian Nasr Abu Zayd.

Serageldin's heroine goes into exile in Europe and the United States but returns to Egypt in an attempt to reconcile her past and present. Charting fresh territory for the American reader, this semi-autobiographical novel is one of the most sensitive and accessible documents of historical change in Egyptian life. The book will appeal to a general audience and will be particularly useful to students interested in the social customs of the upper class in Egypt in the Nasser and Sadat years.

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