

Conscience of the Nation: Writers, State, and Society in Modern Egypt

By Richard Jacquemond

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Artfully combining social and literary history, this unique study explores the dual loyalties of contemporary Egyptian authors from the 1952 Revolution to the present day. Egypt's writers have long had an elevated idea of their social mission, considering themselves 'the conscience of the nation.' At the same time, modern Egyptian writers work under the liberal conception of the writer borrowed from the European model. As a result, each Egyptian writer treads the tightrope between authority and freedom, social commitment and artistic license, loyalty to the state and to personal expression, in an ongoing quest for an elusive literary ideal. With these fundamentals in mind, Conscience of the Nation examines Egyptian literary production over the past fifty years, surveying works by established writers, as well as those of dozens of other authors who are celebrated in Egypt but whose writings are largely unknown to the foreign reader. Novelists and poets, scriptwriters and playwrights, critics and journalists all have battled with and tried to resolve the tensions inherent in the conflicting forces of self and society.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

DAVID TRESILIAN was educated at Oxford University and Columbia University, New York. A former resident of Cairo, he lives and works in Paris.

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