



The Time and the Place: And Other Stories

Naguib Mahfouz, Denys Johnson-Davies (Translator), Naguib Mahfouz

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Selected and translated by the distinguished scholar Denys Johnson-Davies, these stories have all the celebrated and distinctive characters and qualities found in Mahfouz's novels: The denizens of the dark, narrow alleyways of Cairo, who struggle to survive the poverty; melancholy ruminations on death; experiments with the supernatural; and witty excursions into Cairene middle-class life.

The Time and the Place: And Other Stories Details

Date : Published June 18th 1992 by Anchor (first published 1991)

ISBN : 9780385264723

Author : Naguib Mahfouz , Denys Johnson-Davies (Translator) , Naguib Mahfouz

Format : Paperback 192 pages

Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, Northern Africa, Egypt



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Kabrina says

Read "The Answer Is No" in the textbook for my Literary Heritage class. Loved that the main character stood her ground even though she was still affected after being sexually assaulted at 14. Wish I could find out what happened next but alas the abrupt ending was part of the reason this short story was good.

Matt says

I wanted to read this collection of 20-30 years of stories because I'd only ever read "Zabalawi" by Mahfouz, and without context, I found that story kind of unresolved. I think in the process I learned that Zabalawi's mystifications are the context for themselves and much of this book, and that probably short stories are not Mahfouz's prime vehicle; if I had a year, I'd read the Cairo Trilogy and probably know what I wanted to know. But instead, I read a collection with a lot of parables, mostly about the relationship between modernity and faith, a lot of them interested rather grandly in Egypt's future and its relationship to Islam, all interesting subjects but maybe not foremost literary subjects. Really, there are a lot of gauzy parables here about unnamed people facing faceless judges, etc, but without the reality of Kafka's judges and it's a little tiresome. Very few stories have fully developed plots or characters-- there's a longish one about a small "family" living at the edges of Cairo during the peak years of WW2 that is memorable, but then the story is almost all driven by outside actors. There are a couple sharp satires which were enjoyable. There are some interesting elements here, but this probably shouldn't be read as a collection?

Cheryl says

3.5 stars

b bb bbbb bbbbbbbb says

Mahfouz has otherwise been consistently good, not sure why this collection of short stories didn't work for me. Read about half of them.

keith koenigsberg says

Amazing. These short stories are utterly un-western. They take place in Egypt, and the perspectives on narrative are very different. Emphasis can often be on the context, the continuity of life, themes of man's place in the universe, etc, all of this above the actual narrative. A story about a crime investigation focuses more on the investigator's life and thoughts than the actual crime. Disorienting. Read this.

John says

One of my students at IUP recommended Mahfouz to me. I have wanted to read him since he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in the 1980's.

This collection of short stories are excellent. Some have an otherworldly quality to them. When I have a little more time next month, I will read his Cairo Trilogy.

Joe says

Fantastic collection of stories.

Matthew says

My two favorite stories were "The Norwegian Rat" and "At the bus stop."

Abah says

Salam. Wah klo G yang kasih rekomendasi, tentunya atuh buku yang okeh punya. Wismilak with my time controlling ya. Oom lagi klenger asyik nulis aja kok G. God bless you.

Gratcia Siahaya says

Sedang membaca, versi terjemahannya dalam bahasa Indonesia, disini judulnya adalah Zahiya (Kafe yang Kosong), hasil bongkar2 dari attic, malah ketemu dengan buku yang sudah lama terlupakan, lupa sudah pernah baca atau belum, yg ada cuma tanda tangan saya saja menandakan bahwa saya yang membelinya.

Madhulika Liddle says

A group of people, sheltering from the rain in a bus stop, are witness to a baffling series of scenes—the near-lynching of a thief, a horrific car accident, a couple making love in public atop a corpse—and cannot tell if what they are watching is real, or the shooting of a film. A man comes home to a house that he realizes is like his but isn't and a woman who resembles his wife but is not. A man dreams of himself, in a medieval avatar, burying a mysterious box in the place that is now his home—and on a whim, digs up the place to find the box.

A young woman meets again the man who sexually abused her as a child. A man, his marriage fallen apart, goes wandering about the town, remembering the past. A little boy, sent out by his mother on an errand, abandons it after several attempts and goes off to enjoy himself...

Naguib Mahfouz's stories in *The Time and The Place and Other Stories* are a varied collection. Many of them have a certain whimsicality to them, a theme that, while set firmly in 20th century Cairo (mostly), could well be straight from *The Arabian Nights*. Ends are invariably left hanging, for the reader to interpret (along with the rest of the story) as he or she pleases. Themes such as love (requited and not, platonic and savage, youthful and mature), lust, ambition, greed, ennui and fear play out in story after story.

What impressed me the most about these stories was the obvious evidence of a master storyteller at work: at no point did I feel bored, not once did my interest flag. Yes, there were some stories that left me wondering, "*But what happened after that?*"", but this was usually followed by the realization that Mahfouz was using metaphors and symbols to say something beyond the vivid tale in itself. Commenting, perhaps, on the stupidity of humans, our inability to look beyond our own petty interests, our desire for what lies beyond our reach.

That said, the stories that I especially liked in this collection were *A Day for Saying Goodbye*, *By a Person Unknown*, *The Norwegian Rat* and *A Long-Term Plan*. All the stories are good, but these ones in particular stayed with me for different reasons, ranging all the way from poignancy to humour, but all of them, in some way or the other, letting me relate to them.

Nausheen Husain says

"Necessity has its own rules."

Fred Daly says

Short stories, some very short. They are strange -- he reminds me of Kafka, Camus, and the editor says Proust. Not sure how students will like them, but they are short. They aren't exactly memorable individually, but they add up to a pretty interesting world view.

Mark says

These are some of my favorite shorts stories by such an amazing author!

Kitty says

Learning about Egyptian culture through these short stories, translated by Denys Johnson-Davies is to have a sample of different strata of Cairene life. Perhaps my favorite was the story, rather, more parable than story, called "The Wasteland" in which a man is forced to give up his wife to follow a leader; his plans for revenge are thwarted -- "why is it that all beings disappear and nothing is left but dust?" It makes you think about the

expression, "another time". But time does not come again. Which road do you pick, after facing degradation? The one where you will not be seen, through the Wasteland.
