

Adel Esmat  
*Tales of Yusuf Tadrus*

Trans. Mandy McClure. Cairo. American University in Cairo Press. 2018. 216 pages.

It's no accident that the epigraph to this novel is from Nikos Kazantzakis's *Report to Greco*: "I said to the almond tree, 'Speak to me of God.'" Kazantzakis's book is a spiritual autobiography, which is short on facts but focuses on ideas, referring to the spiritual teachings of Christ and Buddha, Lenin and Odysseus. *Tales of Yusuf Tadrus* is a bildungsroman, although the artist-narrator, Yusuf Tadrus, reveals the secrets of his entire life, not just as a young man. Like Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Tadrus resembles Odysseus on a journey of profound self-discovery. However, Adel Esmat uses Christian mythology, not Greek allusions, to tell Yusuf Tadrus's story, a Coptic man from a humble family, living in the provincial town of Tanta as a child in the 1960s.

Yusuf is a bit of a vagabond and a rogue, and we have the feeling that everything he

### REYNA GRANDE

Reyna Grande  
*A Dream Called Home*

New York. Atria Books. 2018. 336 pages.

REYNA GRANDE shares her experiences as an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who, at age nine, accompanied by young siblings and a coyote, succeeded on her third attempt to cross the border near Tijuana. Her life story is a fascinating one, not only because of her willingness to be absolutely frank about her feelings and perceptions but for the impact the immigration experience has had on generations of families and the family structure.

When Grande was barely a year old, her father crossed the border to "El Otro Lado" (The other side) to find a way to earn money to send back to his family in desperately impoverished Iguala, Guerrero. Later, when Grande was five, her mother also left to join her husband in California. Feeling abandoned in Iguala, Reyna was left in the care of relatives who were often cruel. When she was nine, her father was able to send money for the passage to "El Otro Lado."

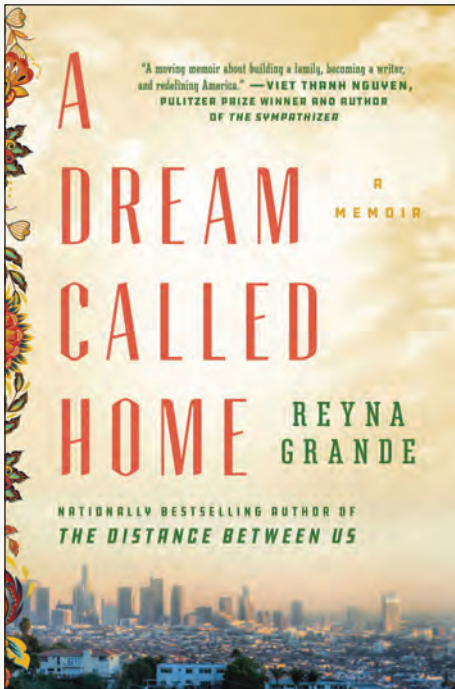
tells us might not be strictly true. He exaggerates to give the tale flavor. Esmat draws on the Egyptian tradition of oral storytelling. Rather than plot, the driving force of his novel is Yusuf's voice, which makes the narrative compelling: "Listen, the human being is a web of threads. I often reflect on my life. I arrived bound to a boy drowned in the Nile years before my birth; to a father who felt inferior to those who read and write, took pride in himself, and locked up his feelings in his heart; to a mother who wanted to dedicate herself to the Lord. All of these unseen threads came together to form your brother Yusuf Tadrus."

*A Dream Called Home* is a chronicle of public milestones and private sorrows. Grande's overall experience of immigration is an overwhelmingly positive one, where sheer force of will and hard work have enabled her to achieve the watershed moments of high-school graduation, college graduation, a job as a schoolteacher, the purchase of a house, motherhood, and marriage. But there is pain.

A closer look reveals the toll the immigrant experience takes. Long separations, uncertainty, feelings of extreme insecurity and of being considered a permanent outsider result in deep-seated anxiety, shame, and a clouded sense of identity. Hard work and achievable goals help Grande overcome them, but she reveals the life-long scars that the family fragmentations created. None of her family members are unscathed. The traumas are often not addressed directly but manifest themselves, as in the case of her mother, as quests for relationships and situations that will provide financial stability even if it means abandoning people and places along the way.

The fears of those who immigrated to escape the jaws of violence and poverty are never shaken off but instead are transmitted to the children. As a result, Grande battles

Each chapter is a thematic vignette, which begins with his brush with death at seven years old. Mandy McClure has rendered the strength of this novel into fluid, idiomatic English, as if someone were telling a story in a café. Yusuf's strange dream, poetic yet immediate, draws the reader in. From an early age, Yusuf has an attraction to light, color, and a passion for art. Much of the novel revolves around universal questions: What is the authentic life? Who am I? While he dreams of studying art in Paris, Yusuf settles for an art school in Alexandria, which awakens his thirst for learning.



the twin psychological demons of fears of abandonment and poverty, all the while recognizing that their antidote, the American Dream, may not actually even be her own dream.

Grande's American Dream may not be an authentic dream but instead a series of overcompensatory behaviors that lead to material success while generating a deep cognitive dissonance about her identity. Is

For financial reasons, he must leave the art school and returns to Tanta. Pressured by social conventions, he marries early and has two children. Because he feels constricted by domestic concerns, he has an affair with a Muslim art teacher. Sexual relations between Muslims and Christians can lead to murder. Rumored to be a sexual predator, he is banished by the school and the community to Sinai, where he succumbs to self-loathing and guilt.

It is only when Yusuf returns to his wife and children and a more conventional existence and faces his demons that he begins to heal from his depression. In his forties, he

she Mexican? Is she American? If she is Mexican American, what does that mean, and what are the cultural markers that give her a sense of self? Grande often describes herself and her true identity through her craving for certain traditional Mexican dishes, which comfort her not only in their taste but in their assurance of her essence, her core being.

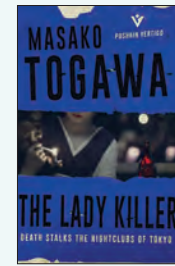
Grande also heals the rupture in her identity by joining a folkloric dance group and learning complicated Mexican dances. Enacting Mexican traditions helps her overcome an alienating sense of "otherness." She describes the complicated "skirt work," making the reader wish she had gone into more detail about the dances, costumes, and fusion of influences.

Grande's experience is valuable because it is shared by many undocumented and documented immigrants, not only from Mexico but from other countries as well, especially those in Central America. Understanding the nature of their traumatic experiences helps us develop compassion as it generates a great deal of admiration for those committed to building a better world for all.

Susan Smith Nash  
University of Oklahoma

starts "painting the reservoir of his dreams." He changes his attitude toward life, himself, and has a greater awareness of the creative process. True to his inner awareness, he makes "authentic art." He rejects the trendiness of the art world and finds serenity in the companionship of his long-suffering wife, Janette, and their family.

Even though *The Tales of Yusuf Tadrus* is a novel, it has the feel of a thinly veiled autobiography. Other books in Egyptian literature, like *The Days* (1933), by Taha Hussein, and *A Sparrow from the East* (1938), by Tawfik Al-Hakim, have explored the "education of an artist or intellectual as a



Masako Togawa  
*The Lady Killer*  
Trans. Simon Grove  
Pushkin Vertigo

Masako Towaga, one of Japan's greatest mystery writers, has led many lives as a writer, singer, actress, nightclub owner, feminist, and gay icon. Her latest novel, *The Lady Killer*, draws from aspects of her own rich personal experience to add colorful realism to the extraordinarily eerie mystery of a man's double life and the dizzying consequences of his role in the underbelly of Tokyo's nightclubs.

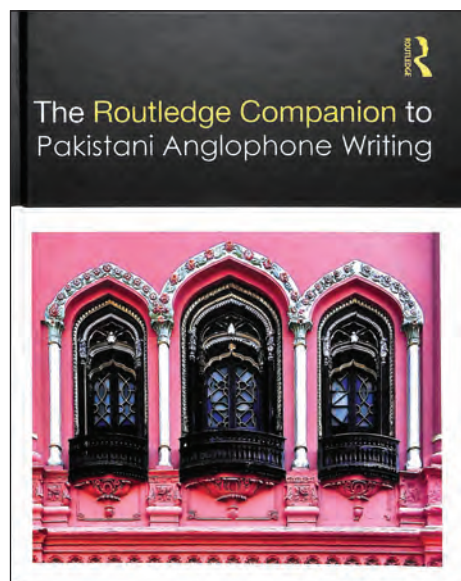


David Turgeon  
*The Supreme Orchestra*  
Trans. Pablo Strauss  
Coach House Books

*The Supreme Orchestra* is novelist, essayist, and comics writer David Turgeon's first appearance in English. Part parody, part thriller, this book centers on a woman, easily charmed and generally frustrated, who is swept into one of the art world's greatest intrigues by her fourth marriage. Witty without being self-involved, this novel is a charm to read for lovers of art history and spy-based mystery alike.

young man,” especially in France. One is surprised, though, by the ending of the *Tales of Yusuf Tadrus*, since the hero, Yusuf, seems to accept his lot but then suddenly decides to follow his adult children to America. The novel ends on a grim note about the future of Egypt: “Tell me, for God’s sake, when will the light shine on this country?”

Gretchen McCullough  
American University in Cairo



### *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing*

Ed. Aroosa Kanwal & Saiyma Aslam.  
London. Routledge. 2018. 416 pages.

*The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* is a stupendous collection of essays, serving as a comprehensive preamble to historical, regional, local, and global issues ambient to cross-cultural relations, which are imperative to the reading of Pakistani anglophone literature. It covers the foremost issues such as terrorism, fundamentalism, intolerance, global security, and alienation in thirty critical essays. In addition, the book is a comprehensive and significant step toward the corollary of a transnational perspective of canon construction in Pakistani literature.

Controversies and transformation have been observed in Pakistani anglophone literature since 1947. This companion reinforces the “presentness” of historical contexts, reminiscence, and their prodigious pertinence to what we think of as contemporary Pakistan. It includes eight parts, pursuing the basics of a historical understanding of Pakistani anglophone literature. Each part is interrelated to historical incidents such as civil wars, migration, ethnic and sectarian crises, and gender while covering minority issues such as Islamization, Talibanization, violence, otherness, and military dictatorships.

For example, the earlier addressed phenomena of context and connection are hard to cover completely without political and social adherence to major historical events in Pakistan during General Zia’s dictatorial period (1977–88); the US-led Afghan jihad; Talibanization of Pakistan in the 1980s; the US attack on Afghanistan after 9/11; and the post-9/11 war against terrorism and religious and sectarian rivalries in the region based on multigenerational ethnic and political issues in the years of partition, first in 1947 and then in 1971.

Through the interconnectedness of historical contextualization, the first two parts deal with partition events of 1947 and 1971 and the readers’ understanding of how partition continued to spatialize non-Muslim Pakistani identities, reassessing the forgotten national narrative and angularities in the “post-memory generation.” Part 2 links these angularities with the US-led Afghan war, 9/11 attacks, and Islamophobia along with stereotypes that Muslims and especially Pakistanis have experienced during the war against terrorism.

The essays in part 3 underscore human rights contested widely in the Pakistani context, the subtlety of regional and local cultures and human agency as correctives to neo-Orientalized versions of operating dialectics: who says what, when, and why from what side of the power divide. The next two parts focus on vengeance and the complexity of Pakistani religious, social,

political, and cultural contexts and history, including shifted gendered identities and multiple modalities of generation, sexuality, and nationalism. Part 6 critically evaluates the ways in which the sense of belonging and identity are addressed by the gestures of mobility and space.

The last two parts present a thorough history of colonization and its contesting identities in which the comparison of narratological perspectives highlights the narrative unsteadiness and new horizons toward a Pakistani idiom. Pakistani diasporic authors act as interrogators of exoticism for metropolitan audiences and readers and take into consideration ideals and ideas about the literary canon; they investigate the “normative,” “curatorial,” and “dialogical” attributes presented by various types of Pakistani anglophone literature.

Students of postcolonial and Pakistani anglophone literature should find this companion a valuable addition in literary studies of space and mobility, contemporary South Asian literature, religions, cultures, gender, diaspora, postcolonialism, and feminism.

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