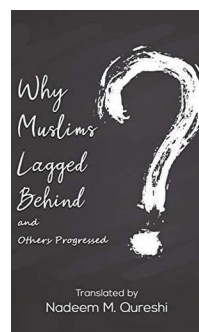


“Romig makes the plotline compelling through well-written sex scenes that first smolder, then burn.”

DEVIL'S DEAL

Typewriter in the Sky (1940), could be thrown by the plotline's chain of bang-up jolts in the concluding pages.

A superhero creator's angst-y perils make this tale a strong start to a space saga.



WHY MUSLIMS LAGGED BEHIND AND OTHERS PROGRESSED

Arsalan, Shakib

Trans. by Qureshi, Nadeem M.

Austin Macauley (126 pp.)

\$22.95 | \$12.95 paper | \$4.50 e-book

Feb. 26, 2021

978-1-39-841282-8

978-1-39-841281-1 paper

A new translation of an Arabic treatise arguing that the Muslim world has fallen behind its European counterparts.

Arsalan's work first appeared in 1929—this new translation by author Qureshi makes available, in accessibly lucid terms, a perspective largely absent from today's public debate regarding the relationship between Islam and modernity. Arsalan, a Druze prince (1869–1946), posits that Muslims worldwide have suffered from a state of decline—that they are no longer as wealthy or politically powerful as the rest of the world; they no longer command as much respect or fear as they once did; and they no longer contribute to the advance of science. However, the author rejects the theory that this loss or this diminishment of cultural vitality—this “weakness and backwardness”—is the result of a devotion to Islamic religion or somehow an expression of the doctrinal demands of the Quran. In fact, Arsalan contends that the historical success of Islamic civilization was precisely because of its religion and that the faith has become corrupted, along with Muslim leaders, over time. As a result, he contends, the Muslim world suffers from general ignorance, cowardice and fear, moral weakness, and a lack of self-confidence deeply experienced as a “collective sickness.” Muslim conservatives are rigidly backward looking and timid about adapting to the modern world, the author argues, while Muslim progressives thoughtlessly imitate European culture, conflating modern sophistication with an abandonment of their religious identity.

Arsalan makes, in spirited and sometimes strident tones, the case that a rededication to the Quran is what Muslims need most. In his view, the Quran demands that Muslims work and sacrifice; faith and prayer are not enough. “So, it is possible for Muslims if they resuscitate their determination and work in accordance with what their Book urges to reach the level of the Europeans and Americans and Japanese in terms of knowledge and advancement while remaining connected to their Islam just as these others have remained connected to their religions.” Even the lack of technological advancement, as far as the author is concerned, is a symptom rather than the crux of the issue. If Muslims can recover their “determination, zeal and courage,” they can catch up. The author's argument can be peremptory. He rarely if ever rigorously examines the possibility that there

are elements of Islamic theology that conflict with the tenets of modernity, and the discussion of the Quran is less than searching. Also, there are significant issues simply sidestepped in his analysis—for example, the place of women in Muslim society. Furthermore, the author's discussion, while never self-skeptical, can be vague. He has very little to offer regarding what will inspire the rededication to Shariah law for which he issues a resounding call, and he doesn't provide much of an analysis of why, as he says, a spirit of sloth and a lack of self-assurance overtook the Muslim world in the first place. However, Arsalan does provide a fascinating assessment of the double standards by which Europeans and Muslims are judged, the former trumpeted as thoroughly secular despite their Christian commitments and the latter derided as fanatics for their Islamic ones.

For all its limitations, a stimulating peek into an argument now rarely made.



DEVIL'S DEAL

Romig, Aleatha

Romig Works (330 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | \$4.99 e-book | May 18, 2021

978-1-94-718964-5

A young woman finds herself at the mercy of a powerful, charismatic man in this romantic suspense novel.

Emma O'Brien, 26, and her business partner, Ross Underwood, have traveled from Pittsburgh to New Orleans to confer with a possible investor in their publishing venture. But Ross doesn't show up for their dinner meeting, and the investor—tall, dark, dangerous, and alluring Everett Ramses—whisks Emma to a private dining room. There, during the course of a delicious meal, he demands her erotic submission, brings her to stunning orgasms, and informs her that she must marry him: “It's me or death.” At one time, Rett explains, two families ruled New Orleans from the shadows. When their patriarchs, Abraham Ramses and Isaiah Boudreau, decided to vie for control, they both lost to Abraham's ruthless son—Rett. Rett tells Emma, who was adopted, that she's Isaiah's child with Jezebel North. As he puts it, she's the daughter of a king and a whore, thus “perfect to not only handle my desires but to also find pleasure in them.” Emma's adoptive brother, Kyle, who she believed died four years ago, is also the child of Isaiah and Jezebel. Now, he's in New Orleans claiming the throne as Boudreau's true heir, his ambitions putting Emma's life in danger. Rett asserts that only he can protect her, though he also warns: “I won't pledge not to hurt you. I'm not an easy man. Marrying me will save you from your brother but not from me.” Emma agrees for the moment and is taken blindfolded to Rett's lavish mansion, where she's kept in a locked suite. When she escapes Rett's boundaries and is kidnapped, she discovers the truth of his warnings and the depth of their connection.

Romig, a prolific writer of dark-tinged romances, first introduced Rett and Emma in a prequel short story, “Fate's Demand” (2021). The author recommends a free download for