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AUC PRESS PUBLISHES FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF POPULAR NOVEL

BY PROMINENT EGYPTIAN WRITER IHSAN ABDEL KOUDDOUS

January 3, 2022, Cairo – The American University in Cairo (AUC) Press has recently released

Ihsan Abdel Kouddous's novel *I Do Not Sleep*, translated from Arabic by Jonathan Smolin.

Published by Hoopoe, an imprint of AUC Press, the novel is the first prose work by the prolific

Egyptian fiction writer to be made available in English.

"We are grateful to Jonathan Smolin for his skillful translation of Ihsan Abdel Kouddous' masterful novel, *I Do Not Sleep*," said Miriam Fahmi, AUC Press associate director. "Its publication is a great honor for AUC Press and Hoopoe and a fulfillment of our mission to publish inspiring writing from the Middle East."

A story of revenge, betrayal, and desire, *I Do Not Sleep* shocked readers in the 1950s when it first appeared in Arabic, in serial form, in one of Egypt's high-circulation magazines.

"Unlike Naguib Mahfouz, Ihsan employed simple vocabulary and sentence structure in a way that appealed to the widest possible readership," writes Smolin in his translator's introduction to the novel.

The novel's main character, sixteen-year-old Nadia, who her father raises after her parents get divorced, is an indulged and petulant teenager who is determined to remain the only female in her father's life. When she finds out one day that he has remarried without her knowledge, Nadia conspires to restore her rightful place, carefully plotting a family drama of misery, pain, and destruction.

Written as a letter, a confession, by now twenty-one-year-old Nadia, the novel explores the theme of good versus evil and lays bare repressed desires and seething jealousies while challenging traditional patriarchal norms with its portrayal of strong female characters.

“It is shocking that Ihsan Abdel Kouddous is still largely unknown outside of the Arab World,” adds Smolin. “When he began writing *I Do Not Sleep* in 1955, Ihsan was already considered Egypt’s most popular writer.” Abdel Kouddous published more than sixty books during his lifetime, including twenty novels and hundreds of short stories.

Many of Abdel Kouddous’ novels, including *I Do Not Sleep*, were adapted to feature films, such as the classic drama *There’s a Man in Our House* (1961), directed by Henry Barakat, starring Omar Sharif, Rushdi Abaza, and Zubaida Tharwat, and considered one of Egypt’s top 100 films. Radio plays and television series were also adapted from Abdel Kouddous’s work. Much more recently, in 2017, his two-part novel *Don’t Put Out the Sun* (1960) was turned into a Ramadan television series.

In his early years, Kouddous built his career as a high-profile and incendiary journalist for some of the country’s leading media outlets, including the political weekly magazine *Rose El Youssef*, founded and owned by his mother, and as editor-in-chief of various important publications. Later in his life, Abdel Kouddous turned to writing fiction after spending time in jail for speaking out against Nasser and the Free Officers.

The English translation of *I Do Not Sleep* is already attracting the attention of reviewers. Respected ArabLit blogger and literary critic Marcia Lynx Qualey calls the novel “fresh, unpretentious and irresistibly cinematic.”

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