

LETTERS FROM CAIRO

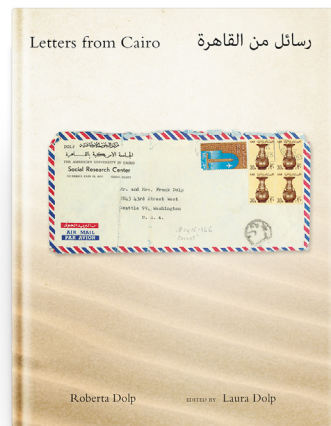
“In his pathbreaking work on human geography, Yi-Fu Tuan asserts that through our multitude of sensory experiences, spaces go from being vague abstractions to increasingly defined and meaningful places. Across our lives, we might undergo this process of converting spaces into places countless times, yet it is exceptionally rare to step into another’s experiences as this transformation unfolds. It is just the sort of privileged intimacy that *Letters from Cairo* offers, complementing the personal memoirs of Edward Said, his sister Jean, Leila Ahmed, Penelope Lively, and Olivia Manning.

This genre-bending collection is part book, part archive, part reflective essay. Its editor, Laura Dolp, helps us reconsider how new technologies allow us to rethink the archival collection, less as something cloistered and instead as

something shared and creative. The result is a kind of accessible and revelatory material archive, striking in its beautiful simplicity ... a collection that is itself a piece of art.”

—Annalise DeVries, author of *Maadi: The Making and Unmaking of a Cairo Suburb, 1879–1962*

On the eve of the Six-Day War, a young American woman writes from her desk in Cairo to her parents thousands of miles away in upstate New York. Over hundreds of letters, she relates the greatest adventure of her life: the delights of molokhia soup, to camping



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under desert stars, to the seasonal flooding of the Nile, to the cacophony of street vendors. Lurking below the surface are the tensions wrought by culture and politics: for Roberta as a smart, highly-educated biochemist thwarted by her male Egyptian peers, and for her husband Franz, a labor researcher at the American University in Cairo, whose interest in the Aswan High Dam involves one of the most consequential flashpoints of Nasser’s United Arab Republic. *Letters from Cairo* weaves the accounts, travels, and discoveries of Roberta and Franz with the broader social and political history of the era to tell the story of a country as rich as it is complex.

This full-color facsimile edition includes over 100 letters and 75 historical photographs of Cairo, the Aswan basin, the Middle East, and North Africa, as well as an extensively-researched Foreword, Historical Timeline, and a multilingual transcription and English translation of its accompanying archival recording, “Sounds of Cairo.” This book will fascinate the wanderluster, the historian, the storyteller, and anyone who believes in the capacity of quotidian life abroad to nourish life-changing exploration.

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