



Features The Beirut Link

The Erotic Revolution



You wouldn't imagine the cultural editor of a serious daily like Al Nahar to look so good, then again, that's just one of the surprises Joumana Haddad holds up her sleeve. The 38-year-old writer, who speaks no less than seven languages and has published several decadently mysterious poetry collections has an important project on her hands: an erotic revolution.

"Why is it that Abu Nawas in his time, could speak about sex but today, you say "breast" and every one goes crazy?"

For Joumana Haddad, Arab culture should stop hiding from its past, and admit that in our day, we were pretty rowdy ourselves, with writers who would make the

Marquis de Sade blush (she would know, as she's writing a Phd dissertation on the 18th century French writer and Arabic literature at the Sorbonne in France.)

“What I want to do” she explains “is sexualize the Arabic language.” For that, she’s asked 50 of the best writers in the Arab world to contribute to Al Jasad. So don’t expect a kind of soft version of Playboy. Al Jasad is anything but porn, though some enthusiasts who subscribed before reading the actual magazine, probably thought it was.

Haddad is particularly proud of Ali Zagaret, who confessed in his essay that he was a foot fetichist. She was also touched by a translator who expressly asked to leave her name at the end of an article she had worked on – an excerpt from Catherine Millet’s explosive book “La Vie Sexuelle de Catherine M.” Haddad also talks with Catherine Millet (the editor of another serious magazine, Art Press) in “praise of masturbation.”

Whether you’re into erotic literature or not, Al Jasad is a monumentally important magazine. Its aim is not to provoke – or perhaps just a bit – but rather make our society – on the surface so conservative – reclaim what is also ours and stop with the ridiculous taboos.

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