



Circling the Square: Stories from the Egyptian Revolution

Wendell Steavenson

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Through a series of stunningly rendered, character-drive vignettes, *New Yorker* writer Wendell Steavenson recounts the events of the Egyptian Revolution—from Mubarak’s fall to Morsi’s. Here is the panoply of Tahrir Square, a pointillist portrait of a people enacting and reacting to change and hope.

In January 2011, when the crowds gathered to protest Mubarak’s three decades of rule in Egypt, Wendell Steavenson went to cover the events. She spent her days on Tahrir Square, among the tents and the graffiti and the tanks, watching amazed as Egyptians of every stripe came together to challenge the might of the repressive status quo.

Circling the Square is the extraordinary story of the recent Egyptian Revolution as experienced by Cairo’s citizens. Steavenson takes us to the heart of the Revolution and paints indelible portraits of ordinary Egyptians grappling with hope and change amid violence and bloodshed. Here is Bakr, a young man from the slums with his homemade pistol; a seasoned observer who gives up on analysis; a leader who doesn’t want to lead thrust uncomfortably into the spotlight; a Muslim Brotherhood politician trying to smooth over a restless parliament; and a military intelligence officer convinced that only the army can save Egypt.

Steavenson captures the cacophony of dizzying events as violence and elections ebbed and flowed around the revolution, tipping it towards democracy and then back into the military’s hands. Mixing reportage and memoir, anecdotes and incidents and conversations, Steavenson shows how the particular and the personal can illuminate more universal questions: What does democracy mean and what happens when a revolution throws everything up in the air?

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