

A small anthology of 12 short stories written by 9 daring contemporary authors from 7 Arab countries, translated into Serbian from the modern standard Arabic language. Each of the stories has once been the reason of either imprisoning its author or banning the literary periodical in which it was published and/or a violent break-up of the periodical's editing board.

In the second part of the book each story is followed by its own "political history" as well as by concise information on its author's work in general. Particularly intriguing is the long-term quest after the Saudi author of the first story, who signed it under a pseudonym, avoiding the retaliation from secrete police. When in 1989 the translation of this story first came to a Belgrade literary magazine to be published together with the translator's essay on the mysterious author and his hypothetical destiny (which might easily have been similar to the tragic fate of his heroes), the translation was signed by somewhat uncommon name and surname of Srpkko Leštarić. The text looked as if it had nothing to do with changing from one language to another, so the editors agreed that it was not a real translation but a brilliant genuine story written by a postmodern Serbian writer who was for some reason hiding behind a fairly strange nom de plume...

At the end of the book the 13th story entitled *Post Scriptum* is signed by the compiler-editor bringing about his personal view on the importance of such defiant literature no matter from which language and part of the world it comes and translating it into as many languages as possible. Both the translation of the original stories and the compiler's *stories behind the stories* are written in the best tradition of the European narratives.

The title of the book, as elaborated to a certain extent in the 13th story, has been chosen after the pattern of *The Magnificent Seven*, referring also to the highly esteemed powers of the number 12.

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About the translator-compiler-editor:

Srpko Leštarić was born 1949 in Serbia, former Yugoslavia. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in the Arabic Language & Literature at the Department of the Oriental Studies, Belgrade University in 1975.

During the last two decades Leštarić has translated and published 20 books by prominent Arab contemporary authors. He is laureate of the Serbian prize for achievements in the field of Oriental studies bearing the name of *Dr. Ivan Šop* for the year 2006.

Leštarić pioneered in the former Yugoslavia the translation of genuine Arab folktales into Serbian. One of his articles on this topic, published in the USA, is a part of the recommended literature at several world's universities (cf. <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article26.htm>).

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