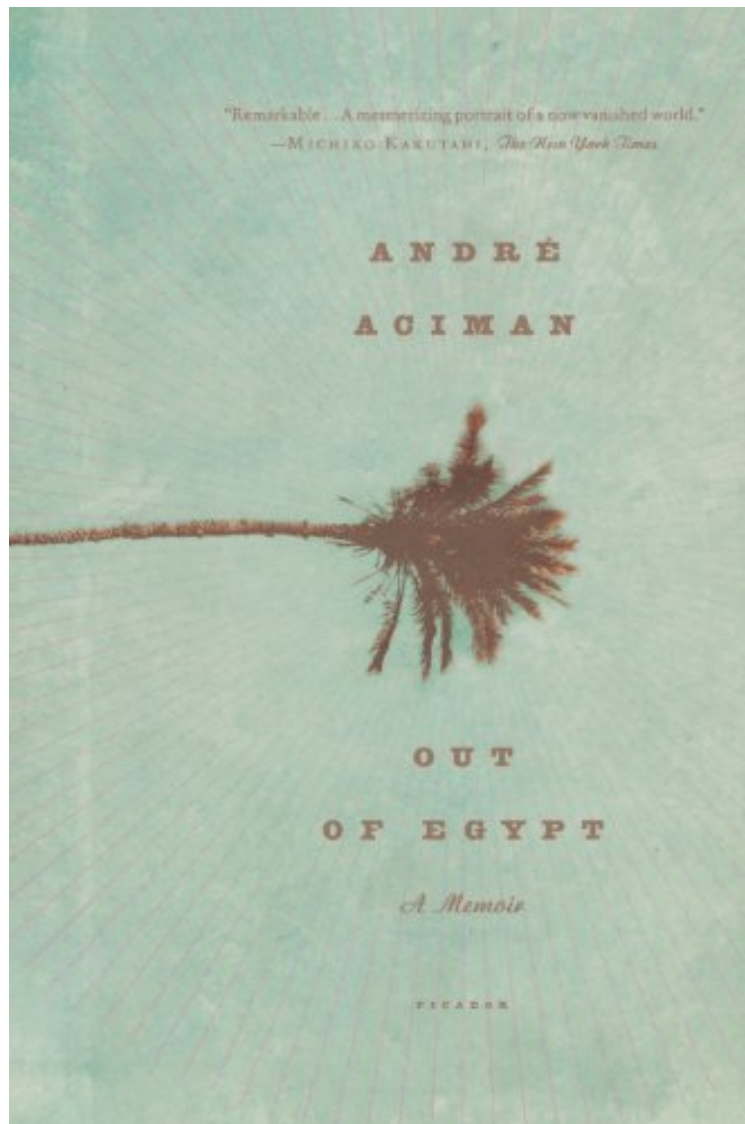


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## Out of Egypt: A Memoir

*Andr Aciman*

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#36315 in Books Picador USA 2007-01-23 2007-01-23 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.14 x .93 x 5.491, .70 #File Name: 0312426550352 pages Picador USA | File size: 25.Mb

**Andr Aciman : Out of Egypt: A Memoir** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Out of Egypt: A Memoir:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A nostalgic poemBy expat on the moveAciman's book reads like a dream. Every word exudes love and with it a sad sense of loss and nostalgia. Unlike any other such biography I have read, it does not have "Poor Us" as a main theme, rather a description of how the actions of the few on both sides, had shattered a beautiful world, which existed, with no regards to the difference between the individuals involved. It is a

classic account of loss of a home due to changes taking place around us, which are bigger than us and outside of our control, regardless of what we try to do; just a new tide that can't be stopped. The book is such a tender account, which touched me deeply and which I recommend to anyone who wants to learn about this aspect of Egyptian history and this phase of Alexandria's story. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Margaret L. Lemberg Interesting story and era. I had trouble keeping characters straight and also when things were happening. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I Love This Book By jlw Have always enjoyed learning about different cultures. Interest comes from growing up in a neighborhood which, while small, had families from many different cultures living in a rather small geographical area. That many not only served very different food than we ate in my childhood home, they also spoke differently, attended churches different from the one I grew up attending and still do attend, I however learned much from all of those to whom I was exposed. What a shame our that many of our children, (including my own and their own), no longer have the benefit of this kind of education.

This richly colored memoir chronicles the exploits of a flamboyant Jewish family, from its bold arrival in cosmopolitan Alexandria to its defeated exodus three generations later. In elegant and witty prose, Andr Aciman introduces us to the marvelous eccentrics who shaped his life--Uncle Vili, the strutting daredevil, soldier, salesman, and spy; the two grandmothers, the Princess and the Saint, who gossip in six languages; Aunt Flora, the German refugee who warns that Jews lose everything "at least twice in their lives." And through it all, we come to know a boy who, even as he longs for a wider world, does not want to be led, forever, out of Egypt.

From Publishers Weekly When Aciman, born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt, was asked his nationality as a boy, he automatically replied, "French." His confusion was understandable; his family were Sephardic Jews who had wandered from Italy to Turkey, then settled in Egypt. His father owned a woolen mill and his parents were very rich, as were the rest of the exotic clan who lived with them or gathered regularly for elegant, memorable teas, fetes and fierce but transient squabbling. Like Russian nobility of old, they disdained the common language. Few of them learned Arabic but preferred French, English, Ladino or Italian. They concealed their Jewishness when Nasser was in power, a time of high Arab nationalism, intense anti-Semitism and then war. Eventually they fled to Paris, leaving behind much of their wealth but little of their culture, which Aciman--his mother's darling, his teachers' despair, his father's worry, a child spy in a house of eccentric, cultivated adults--here recalls with a magical sensibility streaked with antic humor. A marvelous memento of a place, time and people that have all disappeared. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Aciman presents a rich and captivating portrait of a Jewish family from cosmopolitan Alexandria, Egypt. From their arrival there at the turn of the century until their departure three generations later, the members of Aciman's clan experienced adventures and harrowing disappointments. Their stories are in many ways similar to those of other Jewish families in vanishing communities throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Most impressive among the siblings is Uncle Villy, who led a colorful life as a British spy, Italian fascist, and soldier. Aunt Flora, a refugee from Germany, maintains a rather pessimistic philosophy about life. With this memoir, the author in part redeems the social life, customs, and history of a community that barely exists today amid an inhospitable milieu, due to political turmoil in close and remote lands. This is not simply another nostalgic account but a well-written and touching depiction of life in a community that has almost ceased to be. Highly recommended for most collections. Ali Houissa, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, N.Y. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s Aciman (French Literature/Princeton) delivers a clear-eyed eulogy of a lost past and a family in decline. Aciman's Jewish-Turkish-Italian family came to Alexandria, Egypt, in 1905, long before young Andr was born. There they lived in highly leveraged splendor as Aciman's great-aunts and -uncles--particularly Great-uncle Vili, the flamboyant youngest brother--made and lost fortunes, despised the Arab natives, and survived two world wars. The family rose to, and fell from, the heights of government and European-Egyptian society, and by the late 1960s the entire clan had either died, emigrated, or been expelled from their adoptive home. Aciman begins his memoir in the recent past, with a visit to Great-uncle Vili, the first of the family to emigrate. The octogenarian had achieved his goal of becoming a genteel--and gentile-- Englishman: Because of his service to the British during WW II--all the while remaining faithful to Italian Fascism--he was granted a country estate in Surrey, where he lived out his life as Dr. H.M. Spingarn. Vili's sister Esther, Aciman's grandmother and one of the last to leave Egypt, was a mazmazelle, a European grande dame who dined at Alexandria's Sporting Club, fingered produce in the market, and bargained mercilessly with the local merchants. She also smuggled money out of Egypt for years before she was expelled along with her sister Elsa and Aciman and his parents. Aciman creates a romantic portrait of a bygone time without idealizing his colorful ancestors. Much of their interest is, in fact, in their pettiness, spitefulness, and bigotry. They were simultaneously assimilated, anti-Semitic, and practicing Jews; masters of their Egyptian servants and ``Dogs of the Arabs." Aciman's father was an unrepentant philanderer, his deaf mother a source of shame. He himself appears mainly as observer of the group's deterioration. A skillful portrayal of an extraordinary clan. -- Copyright 1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.