



VALENTINE LOVE

written by Aymon Kreil
November, 2013



This red toy dog is one of the many plush animals that can be purchased for



Valentine's Day in the streets of Cairo. When pressed on the belly, it barks and then says "I love you!" in English. The choice of this language points at the foreign character of the event, called in Egypt the "International Feast of Love", hence adding to it the prestige of universality. From the end of the 1990's on, it became nearly an institution in the country, to the point that many young people think that it has always been celebrated in Egypt. Red Teddy bears are the most common gifts for Valentine's Day. However, the dog is interesting because this animal is often perceived as religiously polluting. On Valentine's day, the red dog opens up a realm of "cuteness" independent from Islamic standards. In a similar way, some pious merchants sell gadgets for Valentine's Day because it is important for their business even if they condemn the principle. Almost all of the products sold for Valentine's Day are produced in China. Through these objects, Western imaginaries of romanticism are available for a cheap price to almost everyone, so that to offer a gift to one's fiancée on February 14 each year is now almost an obligation.