



ISSUE 2.
PASSAGE

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Contributors

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As a disillusioned idealist, *Marsya Abdulghani* constantly daydreams of endless possibilities of the future. She believes in how art and design go hand in hand to create a better society through the conscious decisions to reflect and evaluate, to become better. With a background in interior design and art history from VCUQatar, she aims to integrate various disciplines to create better solutions.

Aziza Afzal is a Pakistani American, Quaker, and Muslim writer, performer, and collaborator currently based in Baltimore, MD.

Sarah Ahmed is a creative based in Abu Dhabi and the founder of the MENA emag and online creatives' community, Jaffat El Aqlam. When she's not stressing out about meeting self-made deadlines, she experiments with glitch art, film photography or watercolor; sends postcards to strangers, publishes zines and waters her plants. Her art process involves experimenting with different traditional and digital mediums, and usually revolves around nostalgia and finding beauty in the mundane.

Omar Alhashani is the founder of *Khabar Keslan*. Born in Saudi Arabia, raised in Beirut, and graduated from Reed College, Omar now lives between Washington DC and New York City.

Jackson Allers is a filmmaker, music journalist, and broadcaster based in Lebanon for over 11-years. He directs and shoots documentaries about the subcultures around him for outlets like Netflix, VICE, BBC World Service, Radical Media, Red Bull Music Academy, and Boiler Room, and for 2-years has hosted a monthly international Red Bull Music Academy.

emy Radio program that exposes music from Lebanon and the region. Jackson is also a longtime member of the region's only all-vinyl funk and soul DJ collective—the Beirut Groove Collective. Through a commitment to overthrowing the system, he has embarked on a new wave of labor filmmaking.

Ammar Alqamash is a Yemeni interdisciplinary artist based in Doha. An investigational attitude and resilience among mediums comprise the bedrock of Alqamash's practice. His work is based on expressive graphics art, time-based media, and photography. Alqamash examines connotation of time, space, and belonging. How does one preserve romance that is on the verge of disintegration? Alqamash aims to capture these hopeful circumstances, both within the architectural realm and the human body.

As young as 10 years old, **Ahmed Alrefaie** started developing an interest in art and its differing forms. The Kuwaiti artist started with sketches, and developed his style as a an illustrator and graphic designer. He spends his time creating art that revives the Arabian culture and tradition in a more modern light.

Fatima Al Suwaidi is an architectural engineering student living in Dubai, author of When We Wonder. Her work has previously appeared in MICRO//MACRO zine by Nu Lit House and others. She is currently working on her second book.

Audri Augenbraum is a New York based researcher at Columbia University's Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory and Empirics, where she works with oral histories of Tunisia's post-revolutionary transition. She is interested in mobile populations and the states that seek to control them, including pirates, migrant workers, and diasporic elites. Her work has been published in *The New Inquiry* and the Oral History Review blog.

Hélé Béji was born in 1948 in the city of Tunis (Tunisia) and grew up in a family (Ben Ammar) who took part in the struggle for Independence from French colonialism. She is published widely in Tunisia and France. These days, Hele is a member of the executive Committee of Tunisia Alternatives, Tunisia Alternatives, and Think and Do. She is also the current president of the College International de Tunis, an NGO she founded in 1998.

Linnea Bennett is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C. Her work has been published in state and national outlets, including Forbes and The Hill. Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, Bennett spent a year teaching in Karabük, Turkey on a Fulbright scholarship. She is an avid fan and ardent critic of country music.

Hamza Bilbeisi is a short story writer from Amman, Jordan. He primarily distributes his work through Instagram (@ketabhamza) and hopes he can help form a community for young creatives from the MENA region to also put forward their creative outlets.

Ajna Biya is a Saudi writer and artist, who uses satire to portray her social experiences, and her adaptation to Saudi cultural norms. In her sarcastic comedic style, she describes personal incidents that her memories hold dear. Throughout her 25 years in Saudi, she has developed a healthy sense of humor which has guided and helped her grow into the Saudi environment, which she loves and calls home.

Eden Chinn is a first generation American, half Jewish artist and photographer born and raised in New York City, currently pursuing her undergraduate degree in Art History at Reed College. Her photography focuses on the performance of identity for the camera as a source of creative collaboration and communication, self-knowledge, and self-actualization for women and femmes.

Raphael Cormack has a PhD in Arabic Literature from the University of Edinburgh. He is also the co-editor of *The Book of Khartoum* (Comma Press) and has written for publications including the *London Review of Books, Apollo Magazine* and *The Scotsman*.

Amir H. Fallah was born in Tehran, Iran in 1979. He received his BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2001 and his MFA from University of California Los Angeles in 2005. Fallah's artistic oeuvre encompasses painting, photography, sculpture, and installation combined with a visual vocabulary that includes collage and complex patterning. Fallah has exhibited widely across the United States and internationally.

Rima Hussein was born in Berlin and moved to the US because the Nazis there scared her. She now knows that there are Nazis here, too. *Bummer*.

Born in the UK, in 1995 but raised in Syria, Entisar Mohannayeh only returned to London in 2011. She is currently studying Fashion Illustration at the London College of Fashion. In parallel to her education, Mohannayeh is an avid gamer who is visually driven by video games such as Assassin's Creed, Gears of War, and Dishonored. This aesthetic stimulation is combined with an emotional response to the situation in Syria. Damascus had initially influenced her work with the positivity of its beauty, security, and religious harmony; however, after the conflict and the flight it precipitated, Mohannayeh's work darkened as a result of a damaged urban landscape and a deracinated history.

Priyanka Sacheti is a cultural writer currently transiting from the United States to India. Educated at Universities of Warwick and Oxford, United Kingdom, Priyanka previously lived in Muscat, Oman. She has published articles in various publica-

tions such as Gulf News, Brownbook, and Khaleejesque, with a special focus on art and gender. She's the author of three poetry volumes, and two of her short stories have been published in international anthologies celebrating Indian immigrant writing.

Adnan Samman is a musician and visual artist from Syria. He has lived between Jordan and Saudi Arabia since 2011. His work revolves around the unification of disparate images and forms, both imagery or sounds, to create alternate narratives to those shown in the media. In 2016, Adnan participated in a well received exhibition at the prestigious Central Saint Martins University in London.

Born in Tehran, and raised between Tehran and Dubai, *Mahya Soltani* is an Iranian graphic designer currently residing in Brooklyn, New York. She has received her bachelors degree in Multimedia Design from American University of Sharjah, and is currently pursuing her MFA at School of Visual Arts in New York. Her practice as a graphic designer and animator engages 'time' as a design tool challenging expectations and perceptions while delineating the existence of alternate realities.

Amina Soulimani is a 21 years old Moroccan poet, photographer and artist. She is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences and African studies at the African Leadership University on the island of Mauritius. In writing, Amina managed to corral her existence into a precious prose narrative entitled "Beyond America" which can be read, lived and experienced. Yet, through her poetry and photography, Amina had been aiming to expand the dimensions of perception between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world through in depth research on various elements. such as language, that constituted identities and wisdom within post-colonial states.

Jorge A. Rodríguez Solórzano is a writer, translator and chief editor of the forthcoming literature journal Moly. His translation work has appeared in *Khabar Keslan* and *Angelaki Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*. Jorge's interest in postcolonial history and thought originated at Reed College, where he majored in French and Francophone Literature. He is currently based in Los Angeles.

Yasmine Rukia is a no-normal radical thinking Muslim who dabbles in short stories. An Arabesque-American trying to explain the unexplainable, sometimes, always.

Lizzy Vartanian Collier is a London-based writer with a special interest in contemporary Middle Eastern Art. She has a BA in Art History and an MA in Contemporary Art and Art Theory of Asia and Africa from the School of Oriental and African Studies. She runs the Gallery Girl blog and has written for After Nyne, Arteviste, Canvas Magazine, Harper's Bazaar Arabia, Ibraaz, Jdeed Magazine, Re-Orient, and Suitcase Magazine. Lizzy is also curator of Arab Women Artists Now-AWAN 2018 (London).

Mohammad Zaza, a Syrian artist, was born in Riyadh in 1987 and currently resides in Brussels. Growing up in an artistic family, he started drawing and painting at an early age. After completing high school in Saudi Arabia, he moved to Syria in 2006 to study at the faculty of Fine Arts in Aleppo University. He held his first solo exhibition in 2008 and, after his graduation in 2010, was appointed as a painting teacher's assistant at the University until 2012. Besides painting on big canvases, Zaza also works on illustrations and animations. Mohammad has held 10 solo exhibitions in Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, in addition to his regular participation in many group shows and international art fairs.

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Editor's Note

When you've moved more times than you can count, uprooted from very different soils, at some point, you'll get anxious. You'll stare longingly out a window, down a street, through a doorway. How can you know for certain that the life you're about to leave behind will keep on? Once you've left, does it stop existing altogether? Eventually, when your plane takes off or you pull out of the driveway, that last sliver of home in your periphery is replaced by clouds and wisps whizzing by. You're about to plant yourself anew—but until you're in the soil, do *you* exist? You're now in-between.

Our region is an ongoing migratory network with an ancient history, in which most of us—including many of the editors of this magazine—have participated. Some journeys are more violent than others. Some are voluntary, while others are the results of circumstance. But with every voyage comes a liminal moment wherein the anxiety subsides. While we move, wait, and reflect, an eerie quiet settles in, forcing us to confront our unknowns: a ritual that is, perhaps ironically, familiar and intimate.

The contributors to our third issue, PASSAGE, invite us to witness a diverse set of these confrontations. Their work shows us that time and memory defy our expectations, whether we seek to embrace growing older, finally realize our nation's autonomy, or discover the ghosts of past generations. They point out that new worlds, in the afterlife, in aliens, and in dreams, often resemble our own. They find home at their desks, in proverbs, among small possessions, at dinner parties, or nowhere at all. They highlight the creativity and empowerment that prevail in spite of forced displacement. Through their work, they render seemingly conflicting identities compatible.

PASSAGE illuminates the power of the in-between. It makes space for surprises—perhaps even beckoning them. It helps us remain open and welcome the unforeseen.

MOHAMMAD ZAZA UNGROUNDED



The Redman's Journey II, 2015,

Acrylic on canvas, 200x250cm.

EXPLAINS HOW THESE PAINTINGS, WHICH SEEM SO OTHERWORLDLY. ARE IN FACT GROUNDED THE ELEMENTS OF CREATION, BOTH NATURAL TECHNOLOGICAL, ARE ALREADY EXPRESSED IN THE UNIVERSE.

SPECIAL THANKS TO AGATA ZAZA FOR FACILITATING THIS INTERVIEW.

for you in your paintings?

Mohammad Zaza: The body represents the complexity of the Creation.

body and machine?

machine is a new, modern tool created by new circular gravity, I aim at reinventing the humans to serve specific functions, and configuration of reality.

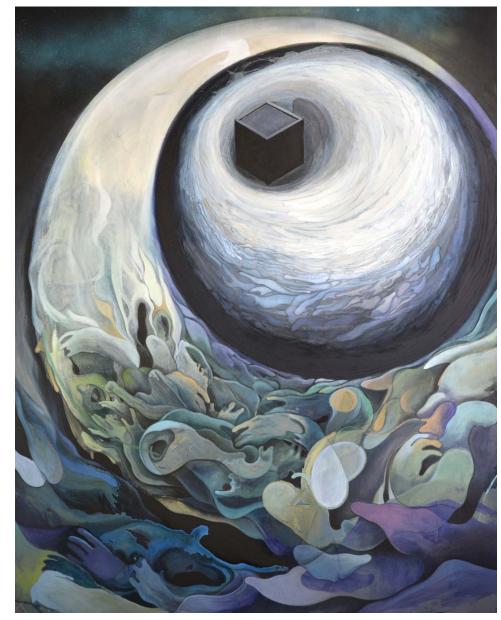
the body inspires its shape. More generally, technology developed by people always comes from shapes and ideas that already exist in nature. No new concept will ever come from outside our planet.

How do you conceptualize and execute your paintings?

When I start working on a painting, I have a general impression in my mind about the main, final shape it will take, which comes from the space and the initial abstract lines that I put on the canvas. The construction phase starts with a lot of overlapping colors and layers, and ends with specific shapes that are the collaboration between imagination and the initial abstract.

Omar Alhashani: What does the body mean For a viewer, your paintings convey an everchanging dreamscape. What relationship do they have to reality?

All the artworks come from and are part of it. My approach, when I try to express an idea What about the relationship between the on the painting in my own language, is to press reality, the perspective, the far and the close, into one image. By letting the elements The link between the two is very close. The fly inside the painting in order to create a



Altawaf in a Parallel Universe, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 200x150cm.



A Prayer, 2016, Acrylic on canvas, 170x150cm.



Do you see any problems with art in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf at large?

There has been, of course, huge growth in the Saudi art scene in the past five years. This happened thanks to private initiatives, which encouraged the opening galleries, various of offering art spaces workshops and related cultural activities, with a focus on visual art. But, very often, art in the Middle East is seen as something prestigious, instead of people looking at it as a genuine way of expression. A larger effort should be put into art education to develop sensitivity to artistic creation.

The sense of movement in your work is technical and conceptual approach; phenomenal. Is that important to you? which artists from home influence you?

surrounds us.

With regards to your

Movement is at the origin of the shape When I was studying Fine Arts in Aleppo, and, by its impulse, affects the form and I was influenced by the thinking and the the structure of everything. The shape then colors of the Syrian artist Omar Hamdi. The matches the need for this initial movement. expression of Marwan Kassab Bachi also I wish to depict the different stages of played a prominent role in the search of my this movement and its influence on what own work. But now, I cannot say that any artist from the Middle East influences me.

What is home?

It is a place where I can work with any barriers blocking my artistic expression.

Do your origins affect your artwork?

Of course. Whenever I travel, my identity is a window through which I look at the world. It defines my vision, ideas and my position towards other people. This applies to my personal life but also to my art.

As a traveling artist, how do you stay grounded?

I actually don't feel grounded! Idon't aspire to find a stability, I am

and bring me to new places, geographically but also in my inner self.

Why is migration important to you?

People are mirrors to each other. When I nourishing my art, it is most importantly a discovered that people are so different from personal quest that I want to go after. •

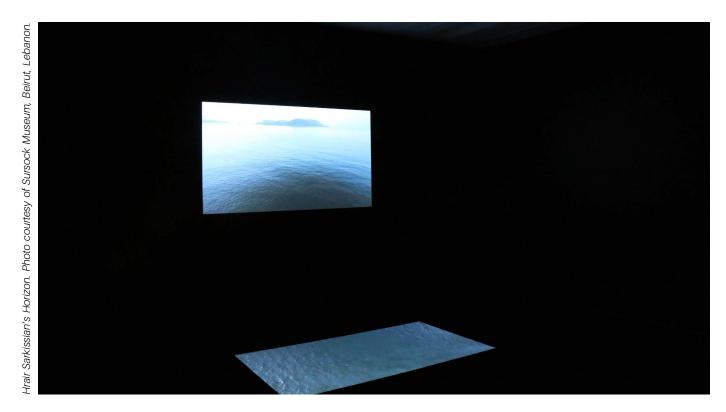
A Look at the Mountains, 2017, Acrylic and Oil on canvas, 110x130cm.



excited to see how can life still surprise me each other, I felt the urge to discover all their faces and lives, as a kind of pursuit to get a larger image of humanity. Seeing all those differences, but at the same time observing the same essence that lies in each of us, feeds me. Although this search is

THE JOURNEY

l 177y vartanian collifr



STEEPED IN THEMES OF LOSS. SYRIAN ART CON-TINUES TO GROW

Inside a dark room on the ground floor boat. It is possible that those on board this forwards, never appears to get bigger.

of Beirut's Sursock Museum is a light blue ship do not know what lies at their journey's screen. Projected onto the wall, and reflected terminus. This film, titled Horizon, is one onto another screen in the middle of a black part of Hrair Sarkissian's 'Homesick'—a two carpet below, a film documents a journey video installation displayed as individual taking place across a large body of water. In halves, documenting the journey taken by the distance lies an unidentifiable landmass those fleeing conflict across the Mycale strait that is easily seen but, despite moving from Kas in Turkey to the Greek island of Megisti.

Why is the film heading in this direction, and Many Syrian artists have been forced to leave what lies on this island? There are no signs theirhomeland, relocating across the Middle East of human life; the sea is free of any other and further afield to find safety, unable to come vehicle, although it is clear that, wherever back home. Sarkissian himself left Damascus this journey leads to, it is happening by in 2008 and has not returned to Syria since.

Across the corridor, opposite tranquility, a up by Raghad Mardini in 2012: "It's a space more violent and destructive pair of films play of freedom and hope for every young Syrian in a similarly dark exhibition space. Projected artist," she says of the project. The programme onto a large screen on the central wall is a occurs inside a 200-year old stable, which house in Damascus. The family home is falling Mardini discovered in ruins in March 2011. apart, with parts of the building crumbling into The building had been destroyed during the dozens of pieces as its foundations struggle Lebanese civil war, but Mardini, who had to support itself. This building is a model of trained as a civil engineer, saw beauty in its Sarkissian's childhood home in Damascus. To remains. After a year-long restoration effort, the right, on the adjacent wall, the artist can Art Residence Aley opened its doors in April be seen violently attacking something with 2012. Much like the Syrian situation, Mardini a hammer. We are unable to see what he is describes the restoration project as emblematic striking, but by being positioned so close to the of the artistic programme that now takes projection of the damaged house, it is almost place in its grounds: "I saw the opportunity to certain that he is destroying his former abode. turn the stables into something beautiful and In the film he appears distressed, annoyed also symbolic: ruined and in trouble but still even. The anger that he has manifested on possessing an inner beauty it was impossible screen and through violence may even be a to mistake, and which the right amount of result of complete despair. As is reflected in the love and energy could revive into something exhibition guide, together the films are: "both productive and new." an act of catharsis and reclamation of agency at the same time: to destroy before others destroy
Art Residence Aley hosts artists for four-week you." What makes the whole sequence even more impactful, is knowing that Sarkissian's necessities required for producing artwork and parents still reside in this Damascene house.

in Syria. While the two parts of the installation appear to juxtapose each other with one being aggressive, and the other being comparably the renovated stables in Aley. gentler, together they portray a sense of loss and trepidation. While *Horizon* seems lighter In Art of Resilience, a film about the programme, on the surface, in reality, it is just the beginning Mahmoud Majdal, who was a resident in of an ongoing journey that is often unfamiliar December 2013 says: "This place was like and dangerous: the beginning of life as a refugee.

Sarkissian's exhibition in Beirut is just one display of the situation of Syrian artists in Lebanon. In Aley, only 15 km north of Beirut, Art Residence Aley provide a space for art lies an art residency programme that provides making, but it also commissions projects for a space for Syrian refugees living in Lebanon young Syrian artists, and exhibits the artworks

كانون الاول ۲۰۱۷ DECEMBER 2017 مانون الاول

residencies, providing the materials and daily allowing artists to interact with each other. The non-profit organization has created a collective The exhibition in Beirut is a response to the war community of Syrian artists from different regions and different religious and social backgrounds, who live together peacefully in

oxygen to me with its spirit, people. This place has freed me." Coming from a zone of conflict, danger, and uncertainty, it is no surprise that the displaced artists, who make Aley their home, are re-energized inside its walls. Not only does to create artwork. Art Residence Aley was set produced during the residencies in galleries



Hrair Sarkissian's Homesick. Photo courtesy of Sursock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon.

across Lebanon and abroad. At the end of their her children in 2015. On arriving in the UK, stay, each artist leaves one artwork for Art Mardini realized there was a gap to fill in Residence Aley, allowing the organization to representing Syrian art and artists in London, build a unique collection of Syrian Art during where they had been overlooked despite being a critical moment in Syrian history.

artists to western audiences.

highly appreciated in auction houses.

The artists who stay in Aley are not only She went on to take further study, gaining encouraged to interact with each other but a masters degree in Museums, Galleries, also the broader local community, creating an and Contemporary Culture with the aim of on-going interactive platform between Syrian developing a space for Syrian artists within artists and the world: "It pushed me to create the London market. While Art Residence more, the residence was my release," says Aley remains in operation in Lebanon; in Rabee Kiwan (June 2012). Art Residence Aley the UK, Litehouse Gallery is a platform that has collaborated to exhibit in Lebanon, Jordan, is becoming a central hub for Syrian artists and Kuwait, and has also hosted poetry in London through cooperation with local evenings, film screenings and performances. institutions. Having launched formally in Art Residence Aley has also recently generated February 2017, Litehouse not only operates as an extension to the project in Lebanon, in a gallery but also has an educational strand, Litehouse Gallery London, exposing Syrian organizing talks, workshops, and exhibitions to increase the exposure of Syrian art.

Litehouse Gallery was born following Litehouse is the only gallery in Britain dedicated Mardini's decision to relocate to London with to showcasing emerging contemporary

artists from Syria. The space also functions the political objects, which once required as a platform to engage in new ideas and its primary audience to physically move perspectives, aiming to form dialogues with the posters from the digital to the physical diverse audiences. Activities touch upon dimension, gain an additional layer of meaning subjects of politics, war, exile, dreams, and visions, which portray the real image of modern Syria, bridging British and Syrian East, they are now being exhibited behind a cultures through collaborative educational programs and workshops with artists from both backgrounds. Litehouse is forming a strong identity that stands for freedom of expression and integrity, addressing the misconceptions that surround Syrian people and their present papers on display in London, screaming faces, predicament. So far exhibitions have taken a bleeding Syrian flag, propaganda statements, place at the Arab British Centre as well as in the residences of private London-based collectors. The gallery has also participated in conferences globally, most recently in Japan.

Echoing Litehouse's introduction contemporary Syrian artists to London earlier this year, the British Museum has acknowledged be ignored or overlooked. the value of contemporary Syrian art in an exhibition of artworks on paper titled Living Also on display in the British Museum Histories. The show includes posters, prints, exhibition are works by Fadi Yazigi on rice drawings and photographs that are, as the paper. "I can't stop working: art is not only exhibition's title indicates, living histories. The part of my survival – but it's also a way of powerful works speak of their time, confronting looking for a solution," says Yazigi. The artist the audience with the Syrian situation from the displays eight characters in eight different perspective of those directly affected by the contorted positions. Their posture is strained, war since the beginning of the 2011 uprising.

entirely anonymous. Alshaab Alsori Aref Tarekh (The Syrian People Know Their Way) is a collective of unknown artists who circulate create art despite the struggles and hardships posters digitally via social media platforms for activists to download and print for use in and difficult to acquire. demonstrations and to paste on walls in public spaces. It is possible that the posters were Displayed alongside the works on paper at never intended to be read as works of art at all.

and history. From having once been used to further political ideologies in the Middle glass screen in Britain, confronting a western audience with a situation that most of them can't relate to. These posters, like Sarkissian's film in Beirut, evoke violence, despair, and pain. Amongst the Alshaab Alsori Aref Tarekh and people in cages appear as a constant. The posters have been given evocative titles like The Struggle for our Sake, Prepare for Rebellion, and Self-Defense is a Legal Right and Freedom. The prints evoke desperation of and suffering, presenting the viewer with a powerful manifestation of emotion that cannot

and their poses appear uncomfortable, but the expressions on their faces seem light, some are The most striking works on display are even smiling. By using rice paper, the artist, who still lives in Damascus, demonstrates his perseverance and determination to continue to during a time where art supplies are limited

the British Museum are two sculptural series However, displayed in the British Museum, by Issam Kourbaj. Dark Water, Burning World,

1

been constructed out of "burned matchsticks" attempting to reach safety in Lesbos. While and the mudguards of old bicycles." They Lost is an alarming and shocking illustration of echo the voyage documented in Sarkissian's death, it is also a frank and honest comment on video, except this time what the viewer is the reality of real consequences met by those presented with is not so calm, or easy on the desperate to escape war. eye. Instead of pale blue, clear waters, Kourbaj exhibits burnt-out matchsticks and fragile During this summer's Shubbak Festival in vessels that have been battered and bruised. The dangerous materials from which these the war. Born and trained in Damascus, Kourbaj now teaches at Cambridge University, in Syria and the destruction of his cultural heritage. The installation of boats in the British of the journey made by those left with no choice but to flee from their homeland.

of objects that are incredibly harrowing. Lost consists of clothes that have been dripped in plaster, turning soft, protective garments From Sarkissian to Kourbaj, dozens of Syrian represent true horror. They are the remnants realities faced in an urgent situation.

consists of a fleet of miniature boats that have left of children who have lost their lives while

London, Kourbaj also presented a one-day installation/performance entitled *Unearthed*. boats have been made illustrate the desperate The work involved laying down hundreds measures and lengths people go to to escape of old hardback books across the floor of the British Museum's Great Court. These books had each been marked with a single black line, yet his work is deeply tied to his upbringing reflecting the Syrian tradition of mourning the deceased in photographs by placing a black line over the dead. As a result of the conflict in Museum reflects the terrifying passage made Syria, many lives are being lost without ever by Syrians fleeing violence via the sea between being mourned. Through his performance, Turkey and Greece, while the artist's choice of Kourbaj symbolically grieves the lives that have material stresses the severity and desperation been lost to the war. Throughout the daylong performance, the number of books laid across the museum floor increased to a shocking degree, confronting the predominantly British Alongside Kourbaj's tortured ships is a set audience with the reality of death in the artist's region.

into hard, lifeless phantoms haunting the artists who have been forced to leave their exhibition space. On top of the cold, white homeland are finding ways to make art that clothing inscriptions are written in Arabic and illustrate their predicament. By using a visual Greek, reflecting the languages spoken in the language to communicate what is often too departure zone and the arrival destination. complicated to tell people with words, these These garments are lifeless ghosts that artists visually inform their audiences of the

SEVEN YASMINE RUKIA

we are the ISIS flag design trapped between black and white interpretations of our reflection

ii. in the milky white water of my perspiration you can taste the diasporic salt of my pores seeping through broken drinking-glass as you swirl around sun and moon drunk

iii. the fireworks break the silence of dusk and all I can imagine is shrapnel and my rabbit my white rabbit caged under pine with no branch to catch bullets the sirens broke today

a dusty fez perched on mounted camel above blue eye that wards off evil you grab the fez and scatter dust like farmers seed you place the red dome a-top your head and swear you can fly home straight to heaven

the women march in black their cloaks catch wind and wave like flags like my grandmother who waves from home we cradled hands to heart to gaping sky and recite stolen flag design

vi. a record player scratches plumes of sweet smoke the sound calls to the birds. asfour, asfour, my hands have seven fingers but they are enough to hold you home white rabbit

vii. you win the lottery of random selection with your beard and fez seven fingers clutching blonde camel coat and blue eye sticky with perspiration the milky way is brightest over Texas we see the reflection of you no branches to catch bullets no flags to catch wind no rabbits to take home but a woman singing asfour, asfour between black battalions of white guards on your way to heaven

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THE UNTOLD STORY

ENTISAR MOHANNAYEH

I believe that everyone has a dark side, but most won't acknowledge it. My paintings depict cropped details of women in unusual situations where they seem to be distraught, terrified and tortured. The devil features in my work as the symbol of evil and darkness, characteristic of the chaos caused by human beings.

I focus on the harsh reality of life, a response seen through the characters populating my works and their surroundings. They are more than just subjects. Each face has a story to be interpreted by the viewer themselves.







FOLK SONGS SHARE A STAGE. BUT CAN THEY BUILD A BRIDGE?

When I first met Bashar classes, he reminded me of Balleh on a smoky patio above the Turkish students I taught Istanbul in the early hours of at a university six hours 2016, it was by accident.

A New Year's Eve snowstorm As we continued to talk, had turned the city into a however, it became clear picturesque postcard for New Balleh's story was quite Year's Day, but by January 2, different from those of my the soft powder had melted students. He had come to and frozen into alternating Turkey by way of Syria, he streets of slush and ice. Well told me, and was now stuck into the evening, with soaking in Istanbul after two failed socks and a thin winter coat, attempts to escape to Europe. I – and most of the city – were He was attending university looking for something or classes out of necessity, but someplace warm.

That hunt had led me to a café on İstiklal Caddesi, Istanbul's "I used to teach salsa, and most lively street, where I I play guitar," Balleh said, tagged along with a group pausing for a sip of çay. of American ex-pats that "And I'm in a band that plays happened to be meeting up country music." with friends of Balleh. After a long day out in the cold, we I stared at him blankly. "Like, were all eager for glasses of American country music?" I hot çay and—depending on asked. which language you spoke hookah, shisha, or nargile.

introduced to Balleh, seated Facebook." directly to my left. With an infectious smile and comical Ten months later, in a disdain for his engineering packed bar in Washington,

away.

what he really preferred was music.

"Yeah, exactly. Like American country," he said, nodding As we nestled in to our toward my phone. "You crowded table, I was should check us out on

D.C., I saw Balleh again. He and his eight but Syrian and Turkish bandmates were wrapping up their first songs are played too. tour of the United States, and I had hurried If the range of musicians across the city to catch their final show. The in Country for Syria is night's set list ranged from "Deep in the surprising, the band's Heart of Texas" to a popular Arabic song homebase is not. Istanbul is about a Mediterranean Girl, and featured renowned for its centuriesguitar, accordion, ukulele, violin, trumpet, long tradition of hosting saxophone, and drums. As the song ended, international guests. While Balleh came to the front of the stage. the Bosphorus divides

"Thank you for coming out," he said to the and Asian continents, months before.

"We are Country for Syria!"

A FITTING HOME

Country for Syria is a musical collective in ground for cultures almost every sense of the word. Onstage, it is hard to see exactly where the band collaborate upon. The begins and ends. Some musicians contribute band's focus on Syria also vocals to nearly every song; others focus speaks to Turkey's unique on instrumentals. Some hop on and off geographical position - in of the stage when a song changes, a new recent years, Turkey has absorbed more than instrument is needed, or a drink has three million refugees from Syria and other been poured at the bar. Most of the time, neighboring countries. though, their stage is a unified chaos.

"We have nine musicians who we would consider the full Country for Syria," Owen Harris, the band's accordionist, told me in an interview over Skype last summer. "But most of the time venues can't afford all nine of us, or our musicians are playing in other bands."

the songs they play are American country, every direction around him. Originally from

the city into European to bridge them. Country for Syria's diversity of nationalities, instruments, and languages is a testament to Istanbul's power to provide common to come together and

THE BEGINNING

Country for Syria started in 2015, after Harris encountered Balleh busking on a street corner in Beyoğlu – a neighborhood just next to Taksim square, where Balleh and I met.

As the band's two front men, Balleh and At various points in time, the group has Harris make an unlikely musical duo. Balleh housed members who identify as American, is a gentle lion of a human with a wide, Syrian, Turkish, Czech, Kurdish, Spanish, easy grin and a mane of untamed curly hair. and French. Their songs are performed in Some days, his curls are pulled back into a a mix of languages, though English is their bun or covered with a beanie. Other days, only universal tongue. A large portion of he wears his hair loose so that it falls in



Live Show. Courtesy of Country for Syria.

Latakia, Syria, he brings an impassioned

Harris is more reserved than Balleh. He's religions, ethnicities, and individual lives from Sarasota, Florida, spent his college years of the millions of people who had fled. in Asheville, North Carolina, and wears thin wire-framed glasses you'd expect to find on By playing songs alongside Syrians and an esteemed professor twice his age. After for audiences of Syrians, and by using an initial move to Turkey, followed by a stint music born in the American South to teaching English in Eastern Europe, Harris empathize with the plight of millions in the made his way back to Istanbul to see if he Middle East, Harris and Balleh hoped their could gather willing musicians to play what project would deconstruct the stereotypes

playing, however – at least not in this story. a band that could become home to One night during a show, he and Balleh all sorts of identities—country music ran out of songs, so Harris suggested they fans, try some country songs he knew by heart. Syrians, and everyone in between.

It was after this show that Harris began to wonder if country music might be an unexpected but fitting genre for connecting to Syrian and American audiences. Country music, he said, was born of the American Civil War as a mode for telling stories and for exploring themes of migration, loss, and longing in a region ravaged by conflict. This made it a good fit for a pair of musicians who hoped to shed light on similar stories from another country torn apart by war.

Playing songs that spoke to the Syrian experience was important to Balleh, but he had a complicated relationship with the way the world used the word "refugee."

"Syrians were being made out like a 'huddled mass,' or a desperate group, or something shapeless and de-individualized," he said of

and joyous presence not just to the stage, news coverage of refugees at the time. This but in every conversation around him. narrative stripped refugees of their own agency, Balleh said, and ignored the various

he envisioned as "Middle Eastern tango." associated with the word "refugee."

Tango was not what Harris ended up More importantly, they hoped to build refugees, Turks, Americans,

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BLURRING LINES

Country for Syria's shows were puzzled. fully understood. Soon enough, the crowds Was this band for Syrians, Americans, or at their shows began to mirror the members someone else?

Initial crowds were often composed of one group of people, all Syrians or all Turks, said Arabic was hard.

Eventually, however, the group's complicated identity became less cumbersome. People Harris is also married, to fellow bandmate liked their energy, their menagerie of and ukulele player Başak Oktay (now Harris). instruments and languages, and their funky Much like the city and band they love, their

renditions of familiar songs. Language, it seemed, mattered less than spirit. Rhythms At first, the crowds that showed up at and tones could be felt even if lyrics were not on stage: people from all over the world, united in a common curiosity and cause.

"Now there's a community of people who all Harris. After they played a show, the band come to our shows and sing all the songs, not would tweak their songs to fit what it seemed just the one in their own language," Balleh the audience expected, only to find their next wrote in an email. This community has gig was for a bar full of Europeans. Striking brought Country for Syria new friendships the right balance of English, Turkish, and and bandmates—and even love. Last year, Balleh married an American woman he had met at one of their shows.

Band Watches Another Performance. Courtesy of Country for Syria.



marriage is a celebration of more than one His other options would be to return to Harris is Jewish American. In photos of their Europe. wedding ceremony this past summer, there is both a henna ceremony and a chuppah— The bandmates' perceptions of their host all with a hint of country western flair.

call Istanbul home, their reasons for staying vary widely.

almost anywhere, but choose freely to live I'llspendthreeyearsofmylifedoingnothing." in Istanbul, says Oktay Harris. Oktay Harris says she came to Istanbul herself for better The way the two pass through Turkey also education opportunities within Turkey. For speaks to their differences. Since learning Balleh, Turkey is the only country he can Turkish, Balleh say he mostly passes as a currently reside in without risking his life. Turk. But for Harris, even perfect Turkish

culture; Oktay Harris is a Muslim Turk and Syria, or try a third time for a boat bound for

country vary as well. In a Skype interview with Harris and Balleh this summer, BUILDING ON DIFFERENCE Harris said discrimination can make Turkey an unsafe place for refugees - an While all of the members of Country for Syria idea to which Balleh sharply objected.

"Turkey is the ideal place for refugees," Balleh said, turning to Harris. "If I go to Europe and Harris and his Czech bandmate could live spend three years in a camp—this is bullshit.

Visiting Refugee Camp II. Courtesy of Country for Syria.



wouldn't hide the fact that he is a yabancı. band's goals have never been political. Their These experiences might make it easy to put purpose is to shed light on the crisis in Syria the bandmates into one-dimensional boxes of and to give a voice to Syrian musicians and "Western" or "Middle Eastern" – but Harris audiences. says making music together has allowed the members of Country for Syria to breakdown "This is a humanitarian issue we want to point stereotypes about one another's cultures.

"There's no stereotype about East or West that has rung true 100%, because so much is personal and depends on the way that Despite the band's success, rising tensions culture makes itself manifest in ourselves," Harris wrote in an e-mail. "Working, living, and playing together has oddly taught us for Syria. that those differences are both fundamental but also not as consequential as we might This time last year, the band was finishing have thought before."

in Turkey, the band visited several refugee now his visa continues to be denied. camps along Turkey's southern border. This included a trip to a camp that is now Turkey has also undergone immense change. home to thousands of Yazidi Kurds who Even before last summer's attempted coup, fled the Islamic State in Iraq. Talking with the country was mourning its worst terrorist Yazidi children, and bearing witness to attack in modern history and grappling inspired the title track of the band's new followed. album, "Brave as a Pigeon," says Harris.

band discussing how the ban has impacted restrictions, will stay in Turkey for now. them, their families, and their spouses. Though their original music has taken on Last but not least, Istanbul is changing

out," she said. "We don't want to lose that."

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

in the bandmates' home and host countries pose questions about the future of Country

their first American tour. But in 2017, postelection of Donald Trump and several The band members' different backgrounds iterations of a travel ban, at least five band also influence their travel and the music members would no longer be allowed back they make. Last year, in an effort to highlight into the United States. Balleh and his wife different marginalized communities living hope to relocate to America one day, but for

their profound trauma and resilience, with the results of an election that closely

Tensions between Turkey and the United Earlier this year, the band penned a song States have reached an all-time high, as both called "In the States" in response to the countries have banned nearly all visas to the Trump Administration's travel ban on other. Harris says he no longer outwardly seven majority-Muslim countries. The identifies as American to strangers. He and accompanying video opens with stories Oktay Harris had plans to travel to the from band members and friends of the States for the holidays but, in light of visa

more political themes, Oktay Harris says the rapidly, too. Neighborhoods are growing



Owen Harris (left) and Bashar Balleh (right). Courtesy of Country for Syria.

more crowded, Taksim has been torn up are lit up with scenes from a Beyoğlu by developers, and activity on Istiklal—the bar, a wedding near the Black Sea, or street where Balleh and I met nearly two the Ambassador's residence in Ankara. years ago now-has been dampened by Last summer when I asked Harris if he was multiple terrorist attacks.

night, the band members' Instagrams he said, Country for Syria will still exist.

worried about the band's future, he shook his head. The band's members have always But even in the midst of all this tension, come and gone; change has never been a Country for Syria continues to play shows challenge but a norm. As long as there are and draw crowds. On any given Friday people willing to come together and play,



BLAST FROM THE PAST

AHMED ALREFAIE

As an artist, I have ventured in experimenting with different artistic styles, but have found myself deeply involved in a theme that captures the Arabian culture and traditions.

My art revolves around bringing culture and tradition into the modern age. In this day and age, I find that we are slowly moving away from our cultural values; but by inviting tradition into a form of modern art, I hope to bridge this gap—or at least narrow it down.



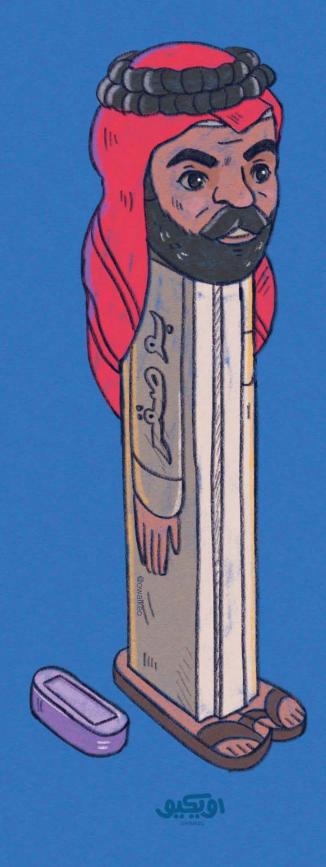


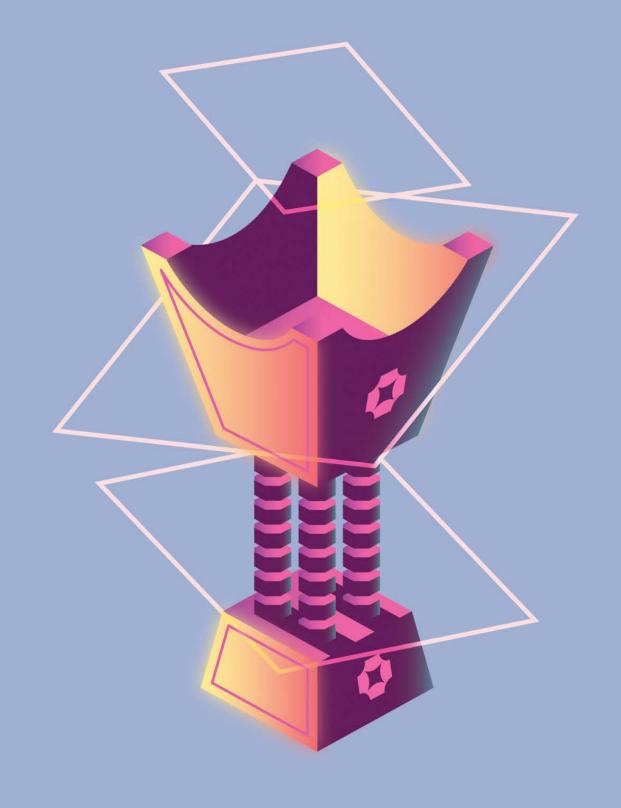




Head Snap.

Untitled.







ALTERED STATES: THREE ESSAYS BY HÉLÉ BÉJI

JORGE A RODRIGUEZ SOLORZANO & AUDRI AUGENBRAUM



HÉLÉ BÉJI EXPLORES THE DISSOCIATIVE FEELING OF TUNISIA'S TRANSITIONS

"To remain-leave is a hopeless mental state: if I am no longer colonized, and if I am not decolonized, what am I? Outside of secular oppression, but outside of the freedom of the soul. Nothing except the echo of this impasse can be discerned from the future."

-Hélé Béji, National Disenchantment: Essay on Colonization

The word "decolonization" is often used to "Decolonize your mind," "decolonize your designate the historical period during which body," "decolonize your art" is to say: "resist campaigns for national liberation across the their subjugation to racism." Despite the world were fought against European imperial wars fought against colonial rule and the powers. In its verb form, "decolonize," the official proclamations declaring its end, the term becomes a call to action among those struggles continue. This fact, as well as its seeking to dismantle white supremacy. renewed life as a call to action, evince the

persistence of colonialism. But, following Tunisian writer Hélé Béji, this is not to say

The fact that colonialism did not end after national liberation campaigns restructures our notions of subjugation and freedom. This, in turn, pushes us to re-evaluate over a century of resistance. It is with the hope that revisiting past struggles will teach us about present ones that we publish these in North Africa and the Middle East that three essays, spanning a period of more than eventually came to be known as the 'Arab thirty years, that Béji has generously shared Spring.' Major news outlets in the West, like with Khabar Keslan, available for the first The Economist, praised these movements time to a general English language audience: for signaling the advent of pro-Western <u>Decolonize Time</u> (2014), <u>Discourse of Identity</u> (1982), and Tunisian Islam or Civil Islam (2015).

For more than forty years, Hélé Béji has violent retaliation at the hands of state police endeavored to understand the position of forces. On January 14, protesters achieved the subject living in a decolonized society, addressing the various forms of violence the Ali. This inaugurated a series of regime nation state wages against its own people. changes—a total of seven between 2011 Béji, whose intellectual career includes and 2017—as Tunisians struggled to remain several books, philosophical essays, a novel, as well as hundreds of articles published that rose up against dictatorship. in France and Tunisia, was born on April 1st 1948, in the former's capital, to a family Béji's description of the aftermath of Tunisia's that participated in the Tunisian struggle revolution gives a complex interpretation for independence from French colonial of these years, one that decidedly does not rule. Béji moved to France to complete her fulfill fantasies for a spring of democracies in university education, where she studied modern literature at La Sorbonne and was a temporal maladjustment that led Tunisians later named "professeur agrégé" in 1973. to an important realization about their Her first book, National Disenchantment: condition as historical actors: "the modern Essay on Decolonization (1982), was awarded conscience, beyond the event itself, is not the Prix de l'Afrique méditerranéenne a year summarized by a simple threshold that one after its publication. Apart from her work crosses, beyond which all that which existed as a political writer and novelist, Béji is also beforehand disappears like a bad dream." the founder and president of the Collège It surfaced a paradox of modernity—the

with the aim of fostering open philosophical and social debate amidst the heavy police that it is the same colonialism of the past. surveillance and censorship of the Zine El Abidine Ben Ali regime.

DECOLONIZE TIME

The first of the essays featured, "Decolonize Time," was published three years after the Tunisian Revolution of 2011—the first of several revolutionary mass movements democracies in Muslim-majority countries. Over several months, hundreds of thousands of Tunisians across the country joined protests and peaceful sit-ins, where they often faced the ouster of president Zine el-Abidine Ben faithful to the objectives of the popular forces

the region. Instead, the revolution provoked international de Tunis, established in 1998 persistence of a malaise following rejections

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these tumultuous periods was a generalized discontent among Tunisians that reached across wide swaths of Tunisian society.

This discontent was linked to the duplicitous modernization narrative on which the infant nation staked its independence. A rivalry between two leaders negotiating with France, Habib Bourguiba and Salah Ben Youssef, nearly precipitated a civil war on the eve of the protectorate's termination. Bourguiba foils: Bourguiba was a Western-educated gradualist [étapiste], while Ben Youssef delivered fiery sermons employing Islamic rhetoric to preach a total break with French involvement. Ultimately, Bourguiba became the republic's first president as Ben Youssef Egypt. The new leader of the nation lost no time in consolidating both the executive and legislative powers of the previous Bourguiba's own terms, he "waged a jihad on for victims of state repression. underdevelopment," often by subordinating Islamic institutions to French ones. His The contiguity between decolonization and relationship to Islamist leaders was fraught.

their government seemed to have only grown and present, liberty and slavery are not to bring these paradoxes to light. §

of tradition and legacy. Neither the end of mutually exclusive, not an either-or. On the the French protectorate in 1956 nor the end contrary, Béji wants to emphasize how all of Ben Ali's dictatorship in 2011 set up a of these often share a temporal plane. The blank slate. What was common to both of revolutionary events of 2010-11 exacerbated this paradoxical situation. Progressives, traditionalists, and others across the political spectrum contributed to Tunisians' frustration with their present conditions. There was archaism in the technological age, progressive parties pushing for 'regressive' agendas. Individuals who had served under Ben Ali's regime and profited from it came together in the Bourguibist, anti-Islamist Nidaa Tounes party, and in unregulated private media outlets seeking to take down and Ben Youssef became near perfect the Islamist-led coalition known as the Troika. Religious fundamentalism, often regarded as a regressive ideology, had provided refuge and resources for antidictatorship activists—an example of what Béji calls "[the] reconstruction of faith in a progressive ideology." However, even the was forced to leave the country in exile to Islamists and secularists of the Troika who pledged to work together remained unable to push through economic reforms that would alleviate chronic unemployment, address Ottoman monarch in his own office. In security crises, and secure transitional justice

revolution is grounded on the fact that both propelled Tunisians into a radically different The disenchantment Tunisians felt toward mode of temporal being: "the revolution, like decolonization in its entirety, is a dissociated during the decades following Bourguiba's experience, torn from temporality, deprived rule. In "Decolonize Time," progress and of an ideal of continuity and unity." It takes a tradition, archaism and technology, past moment of crisis, the overthrow of a regime,

<u>View</u> the rest of this introduction to two additional Hélé Béji translations

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DECOLONIZETIME

HÉLÉ BÉJI



On January 14, 2011, Tunisia set in motion a from living them as our own, we realized Revolution, the first in the Arab world, one that the modern conscience, beyond the that suddenly made us enter into the time event itself, is not summarized by a simple of "liberty." We had believed it would be threshold that one crosses, beyond which all inaccessible for still many decades, perhaps that existed beforehand disappears like a bad forever. Suddenly, it seemed to us for the first dream. Submission, fear, religion, despotism, time that we enthusiastically coincided with ignorance, and obscurantism are not taken our epoch, that we no longer had the need away with a single blow to the anachronism to search for our place in time, that we had of bygone times. The feeling of having found it. But after this moment of fusion, overcome a historical fatality, the absence in which modern times no longer forbid us of liberties, does not thereby guarantee the

"Springs," in the impression of chaos and they are even born. The old times are not and exit from the religious. extinguished; they are ignited by their own revolutionary renaissance. The genesis of After the revolution, we remark that all

conscience of the past, present and future is does not happen to die. disoriented.

The revolution, like decolonization in its and dynamic, in which progression and entirety, is a dissociated experience, torn regression become simultaneous actors. from temporality, deprived of an ideal of The facts of progress are innumerable, but continuity and unity. I have personally regressive logics are not any less so. They observed when I travel between Europe and are not the breaks, but the accelerators of North Africa that I am struck by a strange somethingelse. For example, fundamentalism sensation of distance, not a spatial one, but [intégrisme] is not simply a residual archaism. temporal. I literally skip: a voyage in time. It is also a reconstruction of faith in a All this translates into a profound inner progressive ideology. It is a "progressive" displacement of the mind and of senses, regression, if I may allow myself this paradox. an indeterminate difficulty of the body. Suddenly, the abyss of anteriority takes We are thus confronted with the temporality of possession of my being, though I remain in a an off-beat Orient, transmuted, beleaguered kind of lucid vertigo, perfectly conscious of by a thousand foreign constraints, but in my epoch. My experience then plunges me which, far from dissolving itself, the energy into a prism of times in which old and new, of reminiscence is imprinted constantly. archaic and technological (in the broadest Everything bears the visible mark of this

eradication of servitude. We easily observe into the hearts of each other. From this, there this today, three years after the Arab emerges a new, indeterminate and unresolved dimension of our being. In fact, if one watches confusion that emerges from the invention of our societies well, they are no longer truly a democracy the general principles of which in the naiveté of belief, but neither do they do not suffice to reproduce the peaceful dwell in the efficacy of the technological. rhythm it demonstrated in old democracies. They would want to restore Being and, thus, And the mechanisms of democratic suffrage to produce Becoming, freeze the patrimony must suffer the tragedies of secular civil and edify the revolution, maintain tradition conflicts that attack new institutions before and embrace progress, resuscitate religion

democracy, as the philosopher Eric Weil has political parties struggle in order to articulate already stated it, is far from being democratic. themselves toward a consensus, but one observes an even more virulent antagonism The last political revolution of the twenty- emerge between those who think that they first century has taken this mutation to its defend a modern order and those who paroxysm. We feel ourselves to be submerged alternately propose a past golden age. We are in multiple temporalities the confrontation of left with the trivial poetry of a time that does which makes them unintelligible to us. Our not happen to be born and of another that

There stems a time simultaneously deformed

terms), tradition and progress, are projected destruction of the Orient, that is to say, the

invisible manifestation of its footprint and Memory is a kind of tangible, carnal its form. At the same time, the time of the compensation before a future asset that is Occident appears. Everything that has been yet too unreal. The fascination of memory taken from it does not exactly resemble can appear like the exact counterpart of what it; it is submitted to a severe test. But the in the West one knows as the celebration of destroyed part of occidentality also holds a the new. In a world laminated by the race redeployment, just as deformed, sometimes toward the new, how to avoid conceiving of absurd, but irresistible. Here we have, then, the ancient as a life-saving recourse? In the in the profusion of an untraceable time, an face of technologies of power, the technique unknown modality of time in which the of the ancient is without a doubt a way of presence of God encounters once again the forcing oneself as one wishes. death of God. Myth and disenchantment, republic and feudalism, individuation In both cases, slavery to the new or tyranny and tribalism, absolutism and democracy, restauration and revolution, despotism and loss of the human feeling of inhabiting time. liberty, form an acrobatic and pathetic scene The experience of decolonization was for us in which all our density holds before a sort of the experience of this erratic voyage in time. void into which it is threatened to fall, in the This says a great deal about the nature of our terrifying silence of infinite times.

combinations? It is as if decolonization temporal paradoxes to the point of the specter was already in a beyond, and not in a of a civil war barely avoided in Tunisia, but, within of civilization, but without having accomplished it itself. Civilization appears since independence and up to the revolution, in this elsewhere [cet ailleurs] like a new, unpredictable Self, like a future of itself the super-temporality [surtemporalité] and its primordial manifestation of which would be the rebirth of the past.

The refuge in tradition has not been enough to liberate progress from its concerns. And the hope in progress has not been enough to deliver tradition from its prejudices.

of the old, there is a bewildering of time, a epoch: namely, its faculty of taking from us the very place of time, its living place, its Where to find the key to these inextricable human face. The revolution exacerbated our alas, not elsewhere. From our different paths we have known this unprecedented test of revealing acuteness of a universal soul, its search of a time that would truly correspond to us, its representation of an epoch that still shirks, which it calls "democratic," the insufficiency of all our epoch to reconstitute a habitable figure of time, to bring together time with its human identification. §

Translated by Jorge A. Rodríguez Solórzano

LOST IN MEMORIES

AMMAR ALQAMASH

Space, time, age, and the numbers are indefinable terms for me. My life is an endless journey of finding meaning. I wonder, what does it feel like to find yourself?



The more I try to find myself, the more I get lost in my memories.

Memory #1

It has been 23 years since I lost my mother, I remember that day well. I was there, I saw her, she was beautiful, and it was peaceful. I was a five-year-old kid back then. I remember the chaos her death caused. Everyone around me was whining and crying except the younger me. I still don't know why I did not cry that day, or the next day, or the day after. 10 years later, I absorbed the fact that she's gone, and only then I started crying.



I looked for my tears, and I didn't find any... And here I'm, old, weak, and lost in memories.

As I grew older, I realized how her death reading books. I had a wild imagination, made a dent in my life and affected me flower in a cold winter?

NOTE TO MY KIDS

worst time.

Growing up alone, with an always busy father and a cold stepmother, made my childhood memories revolve around me, and only me. I spent most of my time How do you retrieve a memory?

so I ended up with 3 best friends; imagiin so many ways. Have you ever woken nary ones. When I remember them, I reup and realized that you're weaker than a member the good times we had together. I recall our time in the backseat of my dad's car, and in my almost-a-library bedroom.

Pain is a bitch, it always gets you at the I don't know what I'll do without my memories, I have no one to talk to. I keep retrieving them to feel alive. To me, my memories are my legacy, it's the only thing I want to leave behind.

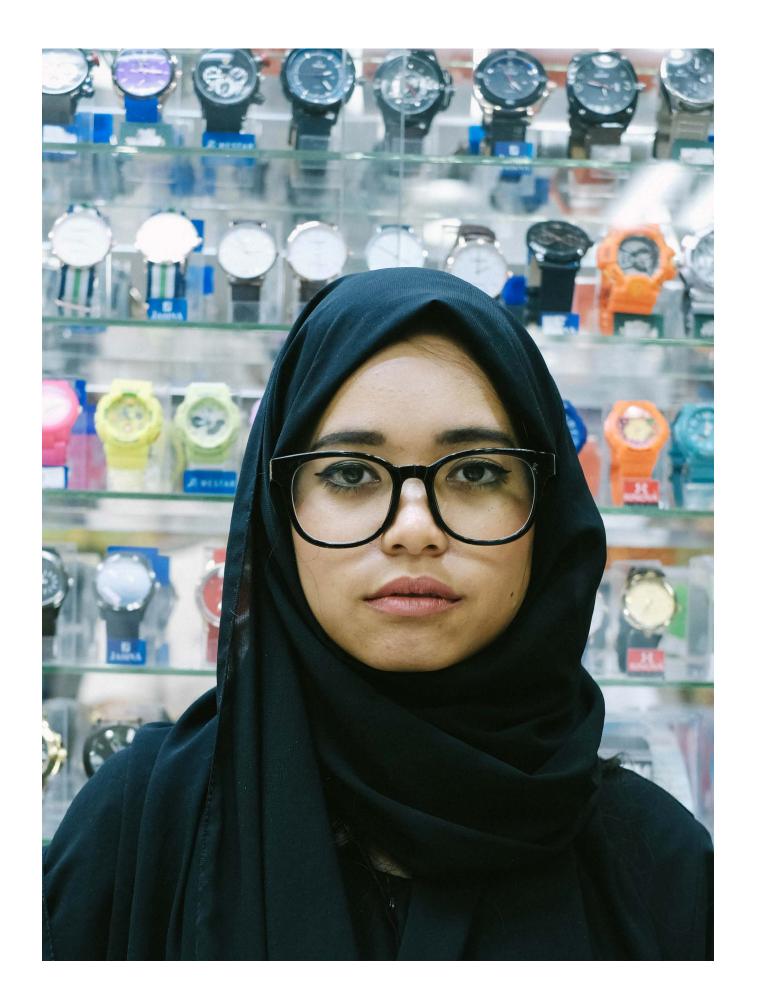
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Being part of a small family gives you no choice but to go wherever they're going. Family visits, for example; parties you are not interested in, shopping for clothes to hide their bodies/sins, and many more. Shopping for me was the worst among them all, I remember how I hated to stay in one spot for more than 10 seconds, always hyper, always wanting to explore and observe the big universe. I had 3 friends I wanted to enjoy my time with... My 3 best imaginary friends.



NOTE TO MY KIDS

Pain is a bitch, it always gets you at the worst times.



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Memory #2

Doha has changed, so did I. Unfortunately, I lost my imaginary friends and fortunately, I replaced them with real ones; precisely the way Doha is replacing the old Souq mannequins. It wasn't only a walk, it felt with skyscrapers and fancy malls. It's a like opening the book of life, a book of MY matter of time before we lose everything life. beautiful we had, and this project is about retrieving and preserving memories.

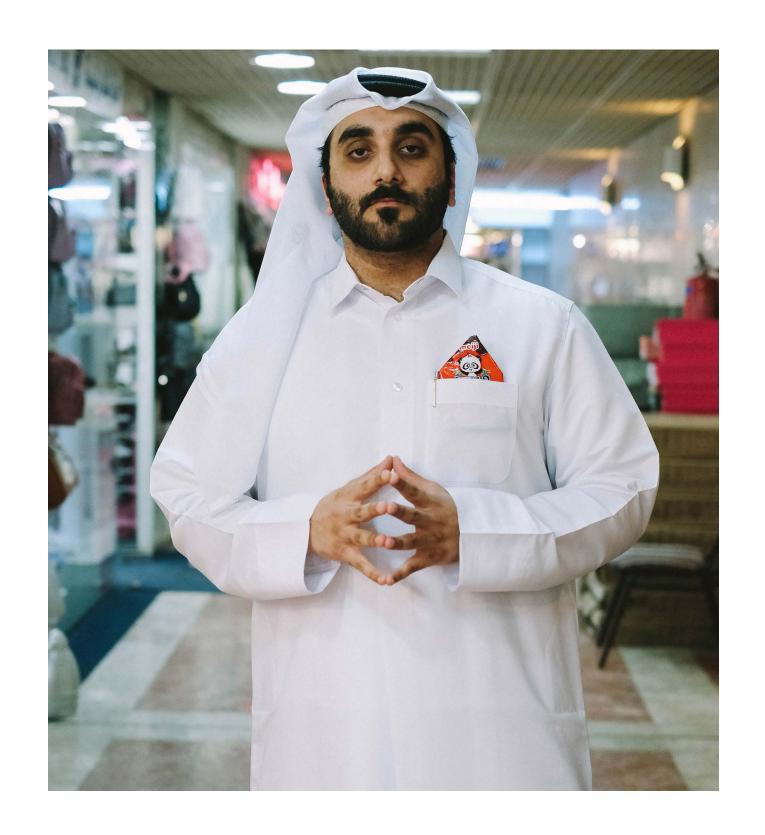
of my friends, real ones this time, and it memories back to life, the smell of this always be," He said.

place is a scent that lingers in my lungs everytime I visit, my eyes sparkled while gazing at the old neon signs and the silent

One day, in Istanbul, I met an old man, and he invited me for a cup of coffee. We Last week I visited the old Souq with 3 talked for some time, and I asked him to share some of his good memories. "There is felt like travelling back in time. Walking no such thing as a good or bad memory, memoaround the Souq brought all my childhood ries are memories, and that's how they should





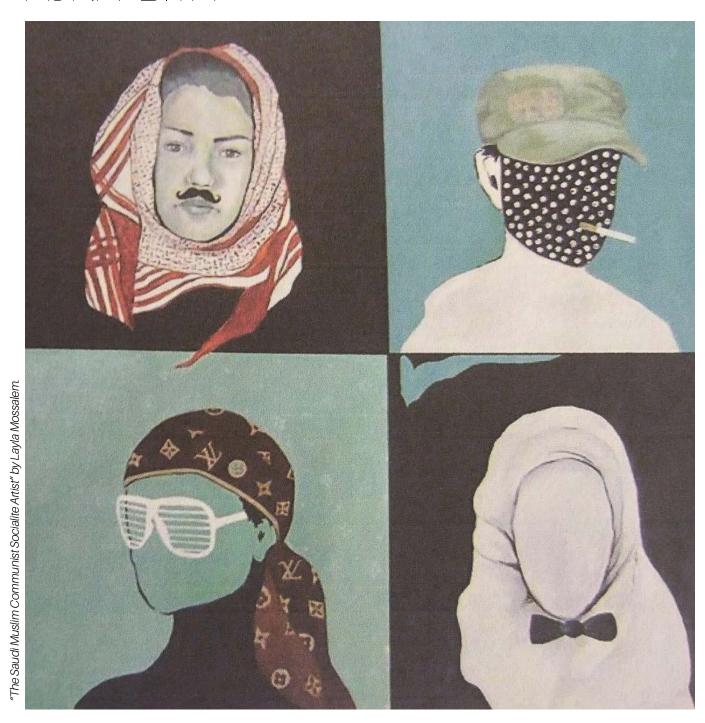




...And here I'm, old, weak and with no family. And here I'm, old, weak and with 3 real friends, 2 amazing kids and a lot of memories.

THE GATHERING

AJNA BIYA



HOW TO SURVIVE SAUDI WOMEN'S HIGH SOCIETY

When I first came to Jeddah in 1995, the for luxury brand outfits, and they had lavish two main occupations in life: they shopped luxury brand outfits.

women of my particular social circle had gatherings that required them to shop for

Rule #1: You don't want to be seen in the same provides shoes. It doesn't matter if they don't outfit twice.

These women gathered daily; usually for happy to have something new. Jeans were a lunch, sometimes for dinner, sometimes for luxury in the communist era, but believe it or both lunch and dinner. They gathered for not, I actually had a pair handed down to me, other reasons too: to get out of their houses; to which I wore like the rebel that I was. I also see the same people—even if they can't stand had some T-shirts to go with the jeans. My them (and especially if they can't stand them family was progressive, you see. so they can gossip about them); to look for potential wives for their sons; to keep track of So one sunny day in Jeddah, shortly after I who got married, divorced, remarried, whose settle here, my mother-in-law has a gathering. husband took a second wife, who gave birth, Of course, I have to be there, because now that who was pregnant again, who changed her I exist, everyone wants to see the new wife in hair color, and who died. These women also town. What nobody bothers to tell me is that gathered to check each other out. They were these gatherings are lavish affairs and that I curious to see who gained or lost weight, who have to make an effort to dress up, high heels, shopped where, and—since this was a time make-up, hair, and ATTITUDE. before Botox and fillers were the norm—who looked older.

Food was offered in exaggerated abundance, as this was the mark of a hostess' hospitality, and you would insult your guests if you did not produce enough food to feed the Russian Army. Also, you want everyone to get fat.

did not prepare me for this lifestyle. Nor did she introduce me to any of the capitalist values that would have eased me into these new activities. I did not even know how to shop for clothes, and luxury brands meant nothing to me. I was raised to be frugal, to only buy what the rest of the evening like something out of a a human being needed to survive, like bread Victorian painting and stare into space, only and galoshes. When I was growing up my closet speaking if spoken to, and limit your answers consisted of clothes that I absolutely needed, mostly my school uniforms and underwear. Hamdullah. You're supposed to vogue your I also had a few hand-me-downs. For those of you who don't know, they are clothes that down and whisper to each other. When they are handed down from kids who outgrew are done, you could make small talk—but not

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go together and you end up looking like Pippi Longstockings—you wore them, and you were

Attitude is key to making an impression. You need to walk in theatrically, nose in the air, Women of this circle primarily gathered to eat. in a fancy abaya, without looking at anyone in particular, because having a bitchy attitude and acting like you're better than everyone protects you from the jealous glances of toxic women, wards off evil eyes, demands respect and shows that you are from an upper-class family. You should smile coldly with your Unfortunately, my Russian communist mother lips but not with your eyes, as is the protocol when meeting strangers; you should give three kisses in a certain sequence with a semibored look that says, "I don't give a shit about you; just kissing you because I have to." Then you should sit still with your back straight for to three main words: Inshallah, Mashallah, and face like Madonna while they look you up and them; one parent gives a dress, another parent smart talk—and never spend too long with any one person because conversations are for life-enriching and entertaining activities like low-class women who talk too much.

law proud at this gathering.

I do not go shopping; I do not buy a new outfit. Rule #3: Never do anything yourself when you

I stumble into the room from the heat and might possibly need.

Turkish sword.

it is a luxury brand bag.

was practicing something called "Attachment what I'm supposed to say or to whom. Parenting," which requires you keep your a loving, caring place, and thrive. I believed in foreigner... She doesn't pray..." this method and stuck to it firmly, carrying my baby around in a sling while I did household Finally, somebody asks, "How are you?" chores, went to the supermarket, or anywhere else. I only put him down when I was cooking "Inshallah good," I reply. or when I went to the bathroom, for obvious reasons.

Everybody thought I was crazy. Why would I "Hamdullah, he's also good." spend so much time and effort on a meaningless little thing when I could be doing much more "Yes, Hamdullah," I reply, dumbfounded.

shopping and going to gatherings? The maid will sit with the baby. What does the baby care Needless to say, I do not make my mother-in- anyway? He's just a baby. He doesn't know anything.

can have someone else do it for you.

humidity of Jeddah, all sweaty in my jeans, I scan the room quickly, and it's all a blur Harley Davidson T-shirt, and practical of make-up, hairdos, heavy perfume, and Converse shoes, no makeup, with my hair scrutinizing eyes, which disorients me. I in a mommy ponytail, and my new baby in move around the room randomly, not sure a kangaroo sling in front of me, his bare feet if I should shake hands or kiss or both, so I dangling from the sides. Instead of a classy end up doing the awkward half-shake-halfbag, a huge Mothercare bag is slung over hug-almost-kissing-people-on-the-lips, not my shoulder that contains anything my baby knowing which way to turn for the next kiss, trying not to squash the baby and not get him too close to anyone so he doesn't suffocate Disapproving looks cut through me like a from their perfume. I smile a big, warm smile like I'm happy to be here with all you lovely ladies and your lovely smells. In my Rule #2: Never bring your child anywhere without awkwardness, I blurt out stupid compliments a nanny and never carry anything yourself unless to women I just meet about the color of their nail polish. I comment on color to a few more unimpressed women, probably because I am Perhaps it is worth mentioning that at the time I an artist, but mainly because I don't know

baby physically close to your person at all I'm sitting there with my baby on my lap, times. He can hear your heartbeat as he did in and the dreaded whispering begins. People the womb, feel secure and nurtured, develop eye me suspiciously and whisper to each healthy emotional ties, learn that the world is other, "That's the daughter-in-law... She's a

"How is your husband?"

"Mashallah, he's good."

"How is your baby?"

"Do you love your baby?" one woman asks.

Everyone smiles. Mashallah, everyone is good one arguing that hers is the original one. Then and Hamdullah, she loves her baby. Small talk they start talking about another TV show like is over. Not too painful. Hamdullah that was it's for real. all they wanted to know about me and nothing else was of interest.

Rule #4: At least one of these three words, Inshallah, Mashallah, and Hamdullah, is a requirement in each sentence, especially in answering questions he didn't like her cooking." about husbands and children. You can use two together for extra credit.

Maids in pastel colored uniforms bring out watch the Cooking Show and try harder; she's tea, coffee, juices, and begin serving dates giving us all a bad name, I bet you anything and other snacks while more maids bring out she's going to have an affair with her brother the shishas. Soon everyone is smoking and in law. Either tomorrow or the next episode." discussing various topics. First, they compare drivers: "You can't believe how annoying my I'm sitting there thinking this better be over Indonesian driver was yesterday. I told him soon before I kill myself and thankfully my to go left, and he went right! We kept going baby starts to cry. I make an excuse to my round in circles, and by the time we reached the mother-in-law about it being too smoky for the Boutique it was prayer time, and they closed baby, hurriedly pick up my stuff and leave. already! I wanted to buy a new blouse, like the one I bought last month but a bigger size, for "Why is she leaving?" one woman asks. some reason that one got small on me..."

"Well, my Indian driver is more annoying "Of course she does," my mother-in-law says say! The other day I told him to buy Otrivine for her husband." from the pharmacy, and he went and got an walking into the house asking where is the AC would be the only acceptable excuse. that needed fixing!

"Well, my Pakistani driver is the worst. He of what happened post-traumatically, but keeps forgetting to buy Pepsi. I explained to my husband had to buy his mother a really him a billion times my husband can't eat if expensive luxury brand bag to apologize for there's no Pepsi. He doesn't know how to take my behavior. What pissed her off the most was care of us; he just doesn't get it that we can't not that I did not dress for the occasion, or that live without Pepsi..."

Another group of women is talking about the Cooking Show and comparing recipes, each Rule #5: Always stay for the food.

"Can you believe she showed her hair to her husband's brother? She's such a slut!"

"Well, her husband was beating her because

"Well, that doesn't give her the right to go running off without a tarha! Besides, she should

"Doesn't she want to stay with us?"

than yours; he doesn't understand a word I politely to her guests, "but she has to go cook

electrician to fix the TV... I almost got a heart Approving glances stab like a thousand attack because all of a sudden I see this man Turkish swords as I realize that, to them, this

> You really don't want to know the details I brought my baby—but that I did not stay for the food, the whole purpose of the gathering.



DIASPORA // IDENTITY LOST IDENTITY FOUND

IMAN ABBARO

Whether we immigrate to escape the harsh realities of political turmoil, or to seek better opportunities in another man's land; leaving our home often means leaving a part of our identities behind. According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), there are more than twenty million migrants working within the MENA region, or in Europe. Those who are a part of the African Diaspora in particular, are no strangers to the loss of their identities as they immigrate elsewhere due to inevitable assimilation.

Although I lost a part of my Sudanese identity as I attempted to integrate into different societies, I found myself clinging on to my heritage. As immigrants, we often hold on to our identities without realizing it as we attempt to assimilate or integrate into a new society. This is a reminder that immigration does not mean completely letting go of our heritage and our identities. We may lose ourselves along the journey only to find ourselves with a stronger sense of our heritage and a new identity formed within our new home.



PEACHFUZZ

HAMZA BILBEISI



MASCULINITY COMPLICATES DEATH AND GRIFE

Saturdays are not usually for mourning. blankly scooped up the last bite of breakfast. It was around ten in the morning, and Nasser Labneh and za'atar. still had sleep in his eyes. Mama edged into

the kitchen looking uneasy. Ibrahim is dead. He locked the door to his bedroom and lay The room became deathly silent. *He snuck out* on the floor. He reached for the box under with his cousin last night and took the family car. his bed and grabbed the Marlboro Reds. He His mom just called me. They were both drinking. blew thick smoke out the window while She shuffled her feet and the washing the fan whirred behind him. Who was he machine hummed in the background. Nasser kidding? Mama probably knew. Everyday

old ashtray. He'd say the bus driver liked to coffee in paper cups. Firas' cousin noisily smoke while driving; that's why acid couldn't sipped his and drove with one hand. They even wash the smell out of his uniform. Still, Mama wasn't about to barge in and bust him right there.

The phone rang four times before he picked it up. You heard? Firas was his loose friend through Ibrahim—and he almost never called. The three of them always sat together like dominos. Nasser's eyes welled up. He in History class and made fun of the teacher. cocked his head and held his breath. He was Mr. Suleiman had moved from Turkey and only learned Arabic a year before. He rolled his L's funny. We should get ready for the 'aaza tonight. I'll come pick you up with my cousin.

He checked his cupboard for a clean suit. cigarette in Firas' palm. He cupped his hand Wearing jeans to the funeral would be *eib*. His only white shirt was wrinkled and smelled like cigarette ash and fries. He decided not his hand warm. to shave the few hairs on his chin and cheek. Mama hugged him close before he left the At school, smoking was a rite. Nasser took apartment. He kept his arms to himself.

going to a wedding, for God's sake.

up front and ushered his cousin forward. His cousin offered his condolences and kept driving. The next ten minutes were unbearable. Ibrahim's death was wedged between the three of them. His death filled the car. Nasser was paralyzed. Firas locked and unlocked his phone over and over.

he came home from school smelling like an They stopped by Abu-Saleh to pick up bitter stopped at an open plot of land and sat on the hood. The muted-beige brick buildings snaked around the hills down there. Firas sparked his cigarette and coughed a ball of phlegm on the soil. It was that time of the day. The adaan went off in the distance, then each mosque chimed in, one by one. Just a man. He rarely prayed but he found himself reciting the Fatiha. If God was really up there, he wanted him to take care of Ibrahim.

> You need a cigarette. Nasser reached for the over the cigarette in his mouth to keep the wind from stealing his light. The flame kept

his first puff two years prior when Firas told him it was time. Firas had always been a little Firas was leaning against the car. He looked larger than Nasser, and a rough outline of his ghastly. His cousin hung his head low in the beard had surfaced before either of the boys'. driver's seat and didn't make eye contact. He never backed away from fights after Nasser hugged Firas tight. Only for a few school. His older cousins always showed seconds, until they pushed one another up to fight too. He would pick up the phone away. Firas had sprayed knockoff Calvin and they would all show up in minutes. Who Klein cologne under his chin. They weren't has that kind of time? They were a pack of wolves. Firas had picked up his first shisha that year too. It was no wonder he coughed Firas dropped his eyes to the street. He sat like an old engine. The ritual happened behind the school, by the recycling bins. How ceremonial. Firas smiled when he handed Nasser his first cigarette. Saying no would be suicide.

> Firas was huge. He looked like he could be nineteen. Sometimes Nasser wondered if

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saying much at all. It didn't seem like he was cousin's eyes were still fixed to his screen, thinking. Or mourning. Firas was really good his cigarette still smoking. at seeming confident and relaxed no matter the situation. He sipped his coffee. Then he The smoke was suddenly suffocating. The sucked on his cigarette.

cousins were also trouble though. Maybe ever cigarette. they let a bunch of kids drink coffee and smoke cigarettes. Maybe they helped steal Nasser flicked his cigarette butt. a household car late at night and got kids "Firas, are you ok man?" killed. But nobody could avoid it. Nasser "I'm fine, dude." knew it was either ride with them or stay at "It's ok man, you can say it." home. He was a man. He always told Mama "Dude, I told you. I'm fine." he was taking a taxi when he left the house. Sometimes he did take a taxi. Except, if they Firas was usually cool-headed. If he ever got

You want another cigarette? Nasser had barely Firas was always on the brink of 'fucking finished his first one. He didn't even like someone's mom'. The Firas that Nasser smoking. Firas passed him the lighter. He and Ibrahim chilled with was different. He was still closed up, holding his shoulders wasn't softer, just different. The Firas at the near his ears. Like a man. He avoided eye shisha cafe, or the bar, or at home playing contact at all costs. His eyes were fixed on FIFA, or in the street sipping shitty coffee, the mosque down the hill. The building's was a mystery. He laughed like any teenager blue dome broke the beige arrangement. would—in explosive bursts that turned

he ever felt anything. He sat on the car not his cousin. But he never felt anything. His

Adaan was ringing in his ears. Ibrahim was dead. His best friend, gone forever. What the His cousin was content sitting in the car. He fuck. The last time he was forced to mourn dangled a smoky cigarette out the window someone was four years prior. Diabetes took and endlessly scrolled his phone. Until Teta away. At the time it was ok to cry. He everyone got their licenses, they relied on was with family, and family didn't tell you beat-up yellow taxis and older cousins. Did he to man up when family died. His dad never want another cigarette? He's fine. It was also cried, even at his own mother's deathbed. convenient to have washed-up older cousins He probably cried later though, when people around. They were bigger and burlier. Even weren't looking. Nasser knew he would bigger than Firas. Nobody could fuck with eventually be expected to do the same. His you if you were with an older cousin. Older cue came when Firas handed him his first

were going somewhere as a group, and an mad it was because some kid cursed at him older cousin came, he wasn't going to be and said some shit about his mom. Or his that whiny asshole. Mama would have him sister. He didn't even have a sister. He would skinned if she found out. Ibrahim just got promise to knock their teeth out after school. killed with his older cousin behind the wheel, He made sure everyone at school knew how and, there, he was doing the exact same thing. he was going to fuck this poor kid up at three, sharp. This Firas was hotheaded. This Maybe he felt like he was being watched by adults' heads. He made jokes like any other

horny piece of shit kid. Still, he never really playing football during break, he ate his talked to anyone. He spoke a lot but he didn't lunch alone. Ibrahim was the first to break say anything. Nasser knew nothing about the silence. He seemed confident, like he Firas' parents, except Firas was a spitting image of his dad. His mom was sweet and offered Nasser tea every time he went over. houses on Fridays after praying salaat al-His dad gave firm handshakes and never dhuhr, and they would play video games and smiled. He walked with his shoulders pinned to his ears. Just like a man. At school, Firas never had a bad day or a good day. They all drifted through their friendship without really knowing him. He was just a big ball have sleepovers and sometimes watch of energy they associated with in class and on weekends because he ran shit. Nasser opened up to Ibrahim sometimes. Ibrahim did too. Ibrahim didn't run shit though, and nobody opened up to Firas, ever.

Ibrahim was Firas' best friend before Nasser too early. ever joined them at school. Their moms were best friends growing up, and they were raised together. They had inside jokes that Nasser could never get in on. But Ibrahim was dead, and all Firas could talk about was smoking.

"Firas, seriously, we don't have to talk in front his cousins and some older kids from school. of your cousin, but tell me what's up, dude."

better?"

eyeing Firas. They shuffled back into the car, and Firas cocked his head forward to usher stop them when they were in a pack with his cousin to move. Nasser tore his phone out older kids. Ibrahim would invite Nasser of his pocket. The backs of his eyes were on fire. He slouched deep in his seat until they reached the 'aaza.

Nasser couldn't help but think about fifth grade. Nobody had facial hair then. He had just moved schools, and while everyone was

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was sure they would be best friends. Their parents would drop them off at each other's mess around outside. Firas would come over too. They would play hide-and-seek, or they would sneak into neighbors' gardens and pretend to be undercover spies. They would movies. If they weren't watching movies they would just talk. It was ok to talk then. They would walk to the neighborhood dukaan and buy too much chocolate. Firas wasn't always the way he was. He used to make fart jokes and throw a fit if his parents picked him up

Nasser had seen him cry a few times too. Like the time he fell off his bike.

Eventually there were less sleepovers. In seventh grade Firas began to hang out with Ibrahim tried to please everybody. He spent Fridays with Nasser, but on Thursdays he He sighed, "Nasser, it sucks, ok? Is that left with Firas after school. The two of them would sit on a street corner and eat bizr. They would whistle at girls in the street that His cousin watched them go at each other, would hurry by in discomfort. The girls were definitely too old for them, but nobody could out of guilt sometimes. Those days were uncomfortable. He laughed at their jokes and whistled with them. He would have rather been at Ibrahim's house, like it used to be.

> Firas rolled down the window and hacked up more phlegm onto the street.

"Firas, sorry I kept pushing you to talk." of it. Take a cigarette."

Nasser's lungs were going to deflate at his with stiff handshakes at the 'aaza. pace. Firas pressed his chest out and cleared his throat.

"Unbelievable that he died, right?" "Yeah, it's crazy."

believe he didn't tell me he was sneaking out."

sneaking out?"

"No, but at least if I went with them I could have stopped them from crashing." "Yeah."

Ibrahim had just died, and Firas seemed like he was bragging more than grieving. wanted to tell him it was ok to cry. He wanted then left. •

to as well. But Ibrahim was only dead for a "Whatever, man. Don't make a big deal out moment, then he would disappear and life would start over again. They needed to be ready to greet all the men in Ibrahim's family

They got out of the car and fidgeted with their belts. Firas' cousin poked his head out the window. Yeslam rasak, habibi. Salaam, *Nasser.* Then he dumped his cigarette butt on "Man, I was his best friend ever. I can't the floor and veered off. The 'aaza happened so fast. They shook hands with every man in Ibrahim's family. They started with his father, "What—were you going to stop him from brothers, and uncles at the door, and then they went around to the older men sitting in chairs. They sat down together in the back. Firas took two dates and a small coffee in the fancy cup when they were offered. Nasser's water was just fine. Some men fiddled with glimmering prayer beads. Nobody cried. It was quiet except for the yeslam rasak every All Nasser could do was nod. Firas looked few seconds at the front of the room. A sheikh lonely for the first time that day. Nasser stopped by and called out a few prayers,



TICK TOCK FATIMA ALSUWAIDI

dressed in a dark cloth is a tick tock rushing I see it between thirty nine thousand and five hundred words six hundred and thirty two eyes three hundred and sixteen breaths all at once strange wind it ticks and ticks

clockwise no I see it counter clockwise it stops how can a place hold so much oxygen

I stop baggage claim fifty four hands breathe breathe

strange chill how can air feel different three thousand and sixty kilometers away from home

home; a word that is stuck under a bomb a word buried under a heavy heart deep inside a heavy soul

home; they say is where the heart is but home, was engraved on my soul by an old mans smile a child's laughter in the park a woman's knitting needles a tick tock, on the wall



AMIR H. FALLAH DISCUSSES RESEARCH. SMALL POSSESSIONS. AND HIS CURRENT EXHIBITION WITH SHULAMIT NAZARIAN

many projects throughout your life. In stop working on it and focus on my own the case of Beautiful/Decay for example, projects. I wanted to have more time to which you founded when you were 16, devote to my own work and there simply what was it like to hand off the reigns of wasn't enough time for both. I learned a the project?

Follow the Sun, 2017, Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 14 inches.



Omar Alhashani: You have been a part of Amir H. Fallah: It felt like the right time to lot by publishing but, in the end, it made

> me realize how bad I wanted to spend all my time in the studio.

> Out of curiosity, has what Beautiful/Decay been up to since the last issue? Also, where can I find a copy of Issue 1?

Beautiful/Decay is now archived. The first print issue is sold out as are many of the back issues. But I'm sure you could find one on Ebay.

Did 'A Stranger in Your Home' start as a research tool for your portraits or did it precede the series?

I started thinking about this body of work during the 2016 presidential election in the US. There was so much talk about immigration it made me think about what it means to be an American and how I see myself fitting into this country that I've spent 32 years in. Unfortunately, things got only worse for those of us who were not born here or are of a darker complexion.

Themostunexpected thing that I realized during my research was that my family struggled even more than I remembered. We had a very turbulent move to America. I knew it was bad but while I interviewed my parents I found out many horrific details that were new to me.



Genealogy, 2017, Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 48 inches.

How do you find your subjects? Are you there I photographed each subject in their looking for something specific?

relatives. I was looking for either immigrants or children of immigrants. I How about the research/interview found the group in a few hours. From ritual' look like for your paintings?

home and created an audio interview with them that eventually turned into a Most of the subjects were friends and sound piece that plays in the gallery.

posted a call for models on Facebook and process? What does a typical 'research

For this project my interview process paintings. What does was very straightforward. I asked all my your art hope to do by subjects the same set of questions. I wanted representing the female to capture the similarities in their feelings figure? and stories. I wanted the audio recording to turn into a universal story of the life of Well, I honestly don't only immigrants, regardless of which country think about the female they came from. One surprising thing I body. An assumption that encountered was that, regardless of the viewers often make is that country of origin, all immigrants brought the figures in my work jewelry and photographs with them. are all female. I paint both These small possessions are not only easy men and women without to carry but most are charged with deep a distinction as to how sentimental memories. I decided to create I conceal their bodies. a series of botanical paintings for the I'm not making any sort show that featured some of the jewelry of commentary on Islam and photographs that people brought or veiling. Rather, I'm over with them.

How has your experience with person without showing immigration engendered your craft?

Moving all over the world at an early age idea of what a portrait can makes you realize how large it truly is. I or could be? experienced many cultures and got to see how wonderful exposure to diversity can Canyouspeakalittlemore be. I can't help but think that these early about these aesthetic and experiences not only changed my world social relationships we view but also influenced my work. For draw between fabric and instance I sample, reference, and borrow femininity? from many movements in art history and from different cultures. I want my work I think some often to feel just as Iranian as it looks American. associate clothing and Within the same painting, you can have fashion with femininity, references to Persian miniatures, graphic but I never think about design, graffiti, dutch painting, and clothing in those terms eastern ornamentation. Life is made richer when it comes to my when you allow yourself to experience paintings. I'm looking a variety of cultures and ways of life. I primarily for patterns think the same could be said about art.

an objectifying lens in Orientalist a curtain, a quilt, or a piece of raw fabric.

interested in how one can create a portrait of a their physical features. How can you reinvent the

rather than clothing, and I'm not thinking about fashion. I'm not always covering The female figure has historically been the figure with actual clothes. It could be



Young Pioneers, 2017, Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 inches.

I'm interested in the patterns on the fabric down a bit for 2018 and working on

drape a white piece of fabric over a figure and then superimpose a pattern I find elsewhere in the home. This pattern could be from wallpaper or it could be a pattern I create based on a book cover illustration.

You've had numerous exhibitions throughout your career-California, UAE, and Iran, to name a few. Do these places feel connected?

When I first went to Dubai it seemed like the regular rules of the Western art world didn't apply. However, in only a few years, Dubai had its own biennials, fairs, museums, etc. I'm actually amazed at how fast they went from not having an art scene to being on the global art radar. I don't think this could have been possible even twenty years ago. Technology has allowed us to access anything and everything with a click of a button. This helps places like Dubai become part of the global dialogue in less than a decade. It's quite amazing.

Do you have anything we should expect?

2017 was a whirlwind of a year. I'm looking forward to slowing

and the various symbols and embedded fewer projects. My next big project is a meanings that they contain. I also solo show with Denny Gallery in NYC sometimes create my own pattern. I may which will happen in the Spring of 2018.



THE OTHER SIDE

RAPHAEL CORMACK

SPIRITUALISM IN THE ARABIC-SPEAKING WORLD CLAIMED TO BE SCIENTIFIC. PROGRESSIVE. AND MODERN

After World War II, Egyptian teacher, pioneers and its pages provide fascinating Ahmed Fahmy Abu al-Khayr, ran a monthly accounts of the séances that Arab spiritualists magazine called 'Ālam al-Rūḥ (The World were conducting in the heyday of the of the Spirit). In its heyday—from 1947 to movement. 1960—it featured articles on the science and history of communicating with spirits. It also included advertisements for spiritual healers and translations of texts from spiritualist The methods that mediums used to magazines around the world—all run from Abu al-Khayr's house on Rhoda Island in there does not seem to have been any specific Cairo. Abu al-Khayr produced an issue of 'Ālam al-Rūḥ every month until his death in They could be either men or women, young 1960. After 1960, the magazine continued to publish, albeit on a less frequent schedule, under the name *Al-Rūḥ* (*The Spirit*).

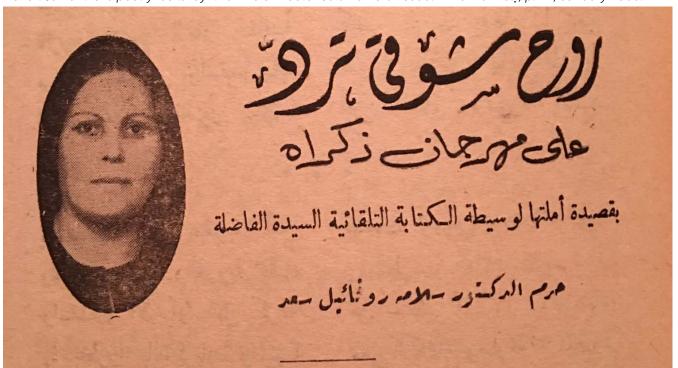
Although published in Egypt, its readers and contributors came from across the Islamic world. They were excited to share their spiritual experiences with the like-minded readers of 'Ālam al-Rūḥ. In the early to mid-20th century, many magazines closed down after a few years of operation if they were In another example, Hosni Kanaan, a lucky, paling in comparison to 'Ālam al-Rūḥ's contributor from Syria, describes a séance thirteen years. Proponents of spiritualism— in Damascus in 1959 in which the medium's which attracted a considerable following in body would go stiff before speaking in the the 20th century but has now been treated voices of the dead. One Egyptian attended a as an eccentric and unorthodox movement, meeting in Indonesia where a skeleton was especially by modern secularists—were dressed up in a suit and a mask. After the involved in a serious attempt to reconcile attendee asked some questions, the skeleton's science and religion, providing logical hand would move and write its answers on explanations for what had previously been a chalkboard or piece of paper. Other times, thought of as supernatural and metaphysical. a medium would become the vessel for

THE SÉANCE

communicate with the dead varied, and requirements for the status of 'mediumship.' or old. For example, one of the regular contributors to the magazine, Dr. Salama Rufa'il Saad, enlisted both his wife and his son to help him contact the world beyond. His wife acted as a vessel for the Egyptian neoclassical 'Prince of Poets' Ahmed Shawqi, who died in 1932, and his son was the medium for a new ode by another deceased Egyptian poet and nationalist, Hifni Nasif.

This magazine stands as a tribute to these the spirit to write a message rather than to

Advertisement for a poetry recital by "the wife of Doctor Salama Rufail Saad." ʿĀlam al-Rūl̄ɪ, p. 11, January 1959.



speak; the medium would enter a trance and To start, 'Ālam al-Rūḥ's spiritualism is produce a small note. Then, someone in the characterized by explicit attempts to produce, crowd would invariably confirm that it was, predict, and influence. Additionally, a indeed, in the handwriting of the deceased and that the note must be genuine.

POETS, POLITICS, & **PARENTS**

Most interestingly of all, during 'Alam al- $R\bar{u}h$'s thirteen years of operation, the spirits contacted situate the magazine's audiences' concerns firmly within the twentieth-century War I. Yusuf told his son that he needed to Arab world. Furthermore, the figures who secure justice for his father's death. communicated with the Arabic-speaking spiritualists from the other side—namely But the souls of the dead also loved to meddle artists and political figures—and the in their family's business. In the same séance, information they conveyed to their audiences Yusuf al-Hayek went on to give his son gives a rare insight into the interests and advice about his personal life. He claimed concerns of Arabic-speaking spiritualists in to have known that his son had been seeing the mid-twentieth century.

common request from spirits was the desire for their deaths to be properly remembered. In 1942, for example, Beirut's attorney general, Dimitri al-Hayek, attended a séance at the same house where Khalil Gibran appeared. He managed to reach the spirit of his father, Yusuf al-Hayek, who was famous for his anti-Ottomanism and his related death in Damascus by Turkey's hand during World

a dermatologist for a particularly painful

and persistent skin problem. He knew the name to help Palestinian refugees. Having location of a box of ointment in his house died in 1947, before the consequences of the that will help clear his skin. He then made 1948 Arab-Israeli War, she could have known the cream appear in his son's pocket. After little about the exodus of Palestinians during Dimitri reached into his pocket to find the her lifetime. Her spirit still wanted to let cure to his rash, he left that séance a believer. it be known that, after her death, she was

At another séance in 1959 in Damascus, the mother of one of the members of the group spoke through the medium. She warned her to appear in the pages of the Cairo-based son not to take a second wife, saying that spiritualist magazine were those of renowned it would not be fair when he already had poets. As we have seen, Ahmed Shawqi was a wife and children who loved him. Death a particularly prolific communicator. In 1952, was no obstacle when it came to parents who a reader called Kamel Nakhla sent a letter to wanted to correct the paths of their unruly or $\bar{A}lam\ al-R\bar{u}h$ describing a vision he had as wayward children.

participants of séances also made political in the eternal world of the sprits." Shawqi predictions. At a séance in Indonesia in 1958, forced him to repeat two lines of poetry three the spirit of Egyptian Prime Minister Saad times over so he would remember them. Zaghloul spoke from beyond the grave. He When Nakhla awoke, he dictated them to his predicted that Algeria would be liberated sister: from the French, that Arab Nationalism would remain a powerful force, and that Britain would become lower than a secondtier power in the world. Indonesian general Sudirman, who died in 1950, followed Zaghloul, predicting that General Charles de Gaulle would win the upcoming referendum Nakhla comments that this poem is very on a new French constitution with 91% of voters in agreement. When asked why the his lifetime. This legendary poet appeared in number was high, Sudirman replied that it was because Charles de Gaulle would rig the He even composed an introductory poem vote.

events that happened in the world long after at his side. At one Syrian séance, he appeared they left it. When Huda Shaarawi's spirit with Hafiz Ibrahim and Al-Mutanabbi, and returned during a séance in Egypt in 1960, they all delivered some verses, which they she asked for a charity to be set up in her improvised on the spot.

supporting them.

But by far, the most common personalities he was dozing one afternoon in his home. "Perhaps," he said, "in a temporary state In addition to giving family advice, the of dissociation, my spirit met with Shawqi

> Tell my people that Shawqi is none other than, the poet of eternal creation. Or he is the pipe, on which this world sings its songs of eternity.

similar to the ones that Shawqi wrote during more places than Kamal Nakhla's dreams. from beyond the grave for Dr. Raouf Ubayd's book, A Human is a Spirit, Not a Body. Shawqi's The dead sometimes expressed interest in spirit frequently appeared with other poets common poet to communicate from the part of both Arab and Islamic histories and prominent spiritualists in Lebanon in the the dead spoke the truth in these dreams. 1940s saw Gibran as a predecessor to his own work.

In 1942, Gibran appeared to pass on some says, "Whatever a dead person tells you detailed instructions to the attendees at about himself in a dream is true, for he a séance in Beirut. He was annoyed that dwells in the abode of truth, and he cannot his memory had not been preserved as he lie when he is there." He also adds that if wanted. First, he asked the assembled crowd you see a dead person whipping someone, to tell his friend Mikhail Naimeh to write then that person must be wrong because the an article about his life in a journal "like al-dead cannot commit false deeds in a dream. Makshuf," addressing the rumors plaguing Appearances of the Prophet Mohammed his reputation. He then ordered them to (PBUH) himself in a dream were said to be move his body from where it resided. The particularly trustworthy since the devil could "empty ornamentation" that had been not take his shape (122, Bukhari, Volume 9, added by "traders in religion" was pure Book 87). In early 20th century, the Shaykh self-aggrandizing arrogance and against his of al-Azhar, Tantawi Jawhari, produced wishes. His spirit informed the individuals spiritualist writings that were grounded gathered that he wanted his grave to be both in Quranic learning and contemporary moved to a simpler plot. To this day, Gibran's Western writing on psychic science. body still lies in his original mausoleum, pomp and all.

LOCATING 'ĀLAM AL-RUH's SPIRITUALISM

Beyond reporting on séances, 'Ālam al-Rūḥ carved out a space for spiritualism within the Arab world. But did Abu al-Khayr create a distinct Arabic spiritualism? If he did, he did not do it in the way that we might expect; he did it by situating the Arab world in a wider global history of spiritualism.

Khalil Gibran, who died in 1931, was another "Spiritualist practices" have long been a spirit world. It is not hard to see why the cosmologies. In particular, oneiromancy, the spiritualists might have been drawn to his interpretation of dreams, has a history that work. In his seminal work, The Prophet, he goes back to the Quran, such as Joseph's wrote, "for life and death are one, even as dream, in which the celestial bodies prostrate the river and the sea are one." In fact, this themselves before him. Islamic scholars have metaphysical verse was, in a sense, proto- written that the dead could communicate spiritualist and Dr. Dahesh, one of the most with the living in dreams or visions and that

> For instance, the 8th-century dream interpreter Ibn Sirin, in his Book of Dreams

> It is striking, therefore, that 'Ālam al-Rūḥ, did not devote much space to the discussion of the local histories of spiritualism. Abu al-Khayr did not completely ignore the topic—a few articles appeared, for instance, on "The Spiritualist Dimension of the Quran" or "The Spirit in Sufi Islam"—but it was far from his focus. When Islamic justifications for spiritualism did appear, they were taken from the greats of classical Islamic philosophy, such as Suhrawardi, or from the Quran. However, he was much more likely to turn to contemporary English-language

periodicals, such as *Psychic Times* and *Psychic* created for people to write in about their News, or Western spiritualists like Arthur Findlay or Dr. Nandor Fodor.

spiritualist movement, the magazine shied away from discussing Egypt's rich traditions in the Light of Modern Science" or "The practices. The most prominent of these was Zar, which is a ritual that involves (in Abu al-Khayr wanted to construct a modern some cases) curing a disease by embodying spiritualism situated in a worldwide context, a possessing spirit and inducing it to stop reporting on international spiritualist causing illness. The ceremony, often led conferences that took place around the by women and accompanied by music, globe. Egyptian spiritualists were proud to calls upon the spirits in a way similar to a be represented at one of these conferences séance. Despite the similarities between by the Brazilian ambassador to Egypt, who local traditions and spiritualism, Zar is not was a keen spiritualist and member of their mentioned in any of the copies of 'Alam al- association. It demonstrated that national $R\bar{u}h$ that I have seen.

For Abu al-Khayr, spiritualism was a science. In the history of spiritualism, "The East"

healing. In the 1950s, a special section was modern, global and scientific movement. §

experiences with spiritualist healing and the magazine published a letter from a member of UN's Permanent Central Opium Board. Although classical Islamic scholarship Additionally, Abu al-Khayr's own articles had was used to lend some credibility to the titles that emphasized the modernity of his movement such as "Spiritualist Phenomena that had a close resemblance to spiritualist Atomic Bomb and Spiritualist Phenomena."

borders did not restrict their outlook.

Any association with "folk practices" like has long been seen as a place of untamed this may have been simply embarrassing. He mysticism and esotericism, that could had to show that spiritualism was compatible inspire travelers in search of a world beyond with the Abrahamic faiths, but he aimed the materialism of the West. The spiritualist to be a part of a modern, global movement pioneer Madame Blavatsky famously went that could be empirically proven across the to India with her Theosophical movement, world. The articles that were published on searching for the spirituality of the East. the practice of spiritual healing situated it She also went to Egypt for similar reasons. firmly within the sphere of modern medicine. These Arabic spiritualists themselves, however, rejected traditional, local forms In June 1948, for example, Dr. Saber Gabra, the of spiritualism. 'Alam al-Rūḥ's mission was head pharmacist at the Qasr al-Aini hospital, not to romanticise Eastern spirituality but to wrote an article in praise of spiritualist show the world that they too were part of a

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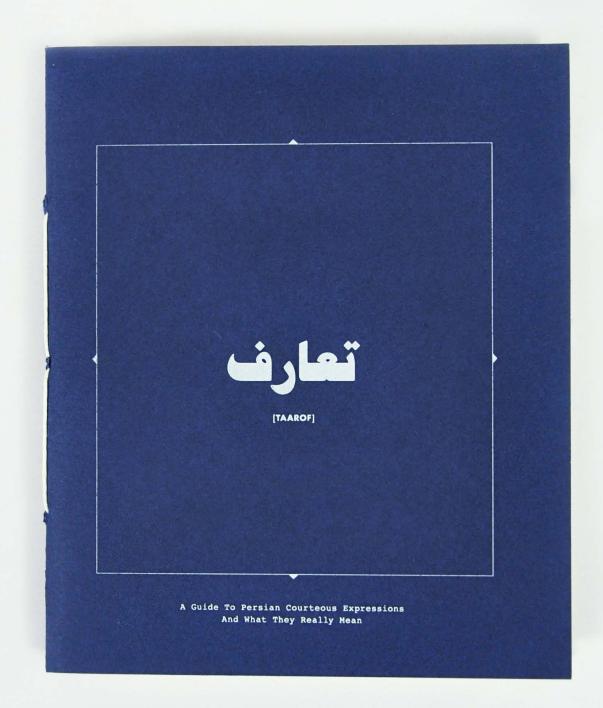
View the original "The Atomic Bomb and Spiritualist Phenomena."



[taa'rof] is a form of verbal and practical etiquette in Iran. Persian culture is very courtesy-conscious and the language (Farsi) is exceptionally rich in polite and formal proverbs. It is difficult to fluently communicate in Farsi without knowing these expressions of civility. They sound extremely polite, sometimes poetic, or perhaps even flamboyant as they are almost utterly divorced from their literal meanings and are used rhetorically.

This book attempts to gather and list some of these verbal models of etiquette. Each spread is dedicated to a common 'taa'rof'. On the right side, the literal translation of each phrase, its pronunciation, its setting in Farsi, and its usage can be seen. On the left, the real meaning of the phrase is revealed—with the help of the mirror.

Using these expressions usually leaves an inexperienced, non-native listener in a muddled state, as they never know how serious they should take you on your offer. But a Farsi speaker always knows an acquaintance does not really mean it when, for example, they insist that you should step on their eyes (to pay them a visit).





THE TALKING CURE

RIMA HUSSFIN

THE SEARCH TO UNDERSTAND ONESELF SPANS GENERATIONS

I look at my mother's crying face. The Algeria and she had broken into tears. I hadn't question about her childhood in colonial

corners of her mouth pull it into a downward- anticipated this. I sat there—awkwardly facing moon. Her eyebrows frown. Her aping the signs of empathy. I placed my face sits atop her small c-shaped body in a hand on her knee, and she clung to it. Her recognizable crying pose. She clutches her tears fell aimlessly from her eyes and landed right arm with her left hand. Her knees are on the top of my hand. At no point did I pressed together and her feet point towards think that unearthing this story unknown the ceiling. I had just asked her a follow-up to me would make her cry. But it did.

My plan had been simple: I wanted a story extent, so I dove into psychoanalysis to that had the potential to make me understand cure myself. After having read everything myself. After all of these years in which my available to me, after having taught an entire parents repeated the typical immigrant line class on psychoanalysis, after a long year of that I wouldn't understand the stories of trying to fix 'it,' I had found myself with no their past, they had left me in quite a difficult other conclusion than the following: Some of situation: They had taught me behaviors these symptoms were the very real result of informed by their pasts without telling me inherited trauma. They must be. these same stories. So, me not knowing these stories, let alone knowing about them, All the stories that I had told myself about means that my learned reactions to specific myself were laid out in charts, tables, and situations will have me shooting into a void statistics on my desk in front of me. I had again and again. If I don't know what exactly makes me angry about this situation, then my anger becomes irrational to me.

phenomenon in people whose histories are inaccessible to them: either because their looking pile of material. In the attempt to family died or abandoned them or they were perfectly balance out the utter randomness of displaced or sold into slavery; or just because what we remember with the clarity and force they do not talk to their families; or because of the recurring symptom, I had exhausted they never understood that there is family myself trying to win this battle for peace, joy, even in the absence of blood ties. I have seen and beauty to determine my life. it in people who simply don't assume their parents have good reasons for any of their On the day that I had decided to interview behaviors and in people who—much like my parents, I was sitting in a brightly lit but me—cannot stand the idea of their parents windowless room at the university, looking having been vulnerable, tortured, lonely children at some point.

beyond measure to think that, at some point, someone had been this cruel to my mama reductionism of psychoanalysis. Exhausted and my baba whom I love with all my heart. by the prospect of more metatheory but After hearing their assertion that I would never understand these stories, I created a comfortable mental image of my parents neither growing nor changing—and the to it," I would tell myself. "The attempt to stories of their pasts became-mysteries.

many voids created pain and provoked my anger and misunderstanding to an intolerable

gone all-out crazy on this one. Account after account and narrative after narrative on the same event piled on top of each other in neat plastic Herlitz folders. Thank the Germans I have seen endless iterations of this for teaching me the filing cure. Numbers, charts, words, maps, all formed an insane-

at some of the data that I had thrown onto a whiteboard. I was looking at a list of symptoms and their traumatic trigger. "That's a bad It could not enter my mind. It would hurt me theory of causality," I mumbled to myself, not really knowing what to do about the intrigued by the possibility of putting off the inevitable next step, I contemplated theories of the causality of trauma. "There is no logic control is a symptom itself," I would tell At some point in my life, my shooting into so myself. "Fear of the inevitable may be fear of change," I would tell myself.

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I went back to Gayatri Spivak. I thought, third bullet point, which read, "Panic" "Unearth the unknown narratives." in situations of spatial confinement." I thought, "Talk to them." I thought, This was a symptom. I took a pen and "Make them hear it come out of their wrote next to it: "Did you ever panic own mouths."

I pulled back my hair with my hands and let it spring into my face. Three months later, I'm sitting with my on me. It meant that I would start the previous boyfriends. process; it meant that I might actually change. It meant that I could not fix "Go marry a Jew," she it, and it meant that I had to let go of tells me. An endless the desire to control the situation. This stream of words from this terrified me. But I needed to do it. mouth that never had to Shitshitshit.

I pulled my hair out of shape, let it do its thing, and pulled it back again, let it I ask again. "No," I say, jump to its form and pulled and pulled. "that's not what I meant, I felt the curl-shaping creme coat the I meant were you ever tips of my fingers. This hair will not locked up? As a kid?" change. Some things will yield and others will subsist. Calm down. Think She tells me that when about rivers, think about machines, she was five years old think about skin, and make them speak. and attending school in Make the stick-figure-family in your colonial Algeria, one of fantasy come alive. It's the only way. the French teachers had My finger moved on the whiteboard locked her up for hours and erased some of the writing. I drew in a dark hole by herself. a line from the top right corner to the

in confined spaces when you were a child?"

"Shitshitshit," I said. I dreaded the mother in a small café in Berlin, on a moment when I had to move on from sofa, erratically scribbling notes into assessing which theory made the most my tiny white book, writing down her sense, to collecting more data. Figuring stories as fast as I can. The beautiful out whether a Lacanian, a postcolonial cousin Jahya, colonial Algeria, the word or a Marxist account would have more "Aljazair" itself. When my mother plausible explanations for the trauma quiets down, I look at my prep notes was easier, much easier, than starting to and ask my question, "Did they ever conduct interviews. I could find comfort leave you alone when you were little?" in abstract, politically ambitious theory, And she talks and talks and talks. Her but real people would force change teaching job, her father's death, her

> answer to the genuine interest in her story.

and tears start flowing from her eyes. I once read in an Elias Khoury novel She becomes-child. My awkward hand that Europeans think we Palestinians pulls itself away. Her suffering is so have been hurt so much, we can't be genuine; it bothers me. This is one- human anymore. You know, we've been dimensional, pure, un-ironic pain. I had traumatized so much that we can't even not anticipated this. I do not want to appropriately react to horror anymore. admit my lack of empathy, but it is hard This 'shattered soul' kind of bullshit. So, for me to understand authenticity and I before everyone effortlessly slips into do not like to lie. After all, there's nothing this line of argument, let me just say this: authentic about me. Born a Palestinian on He's a funny man. His mode is joking. paper, which, according to the discursive He's a funny man, not inhuman. Gods that be, is not a real nation to begin with. Born on German land, which, We sit in the kitchen of my parent's home according to the discursive Gods that be, in Charlottenburg, Berlin. I stare at the not a real German to begin with. Born black and white tiles on the floor, trying from an Algerian womb and dropped to regain control of my face. After I out of the motherland by decree, which, reassume a professional shape, I ask him according to the discursive Gods that be, more questions and he draws maps, tells

authenticity?

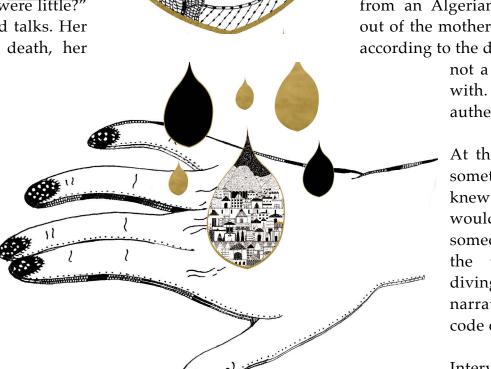
diving more into the gaps in code of myself.

to two cars and then the cars moving, not even a bit.

Her body curves into a small c-shape driving off. That's how they treated us."

not a real Algerian to begin stories, and reconstructs memories. He with. What do I know about doesn't know much about our family's history before colonization. Nobody seems to. But he sure knows how to At the end of our meeting, confess as if he had jumped straight out something unlocks. Who of the Victorian age. He says, "I was a knew that the talking cure bad father." He says, "I never forgave my would work, even when father for giving away my sister." He says, someone else was doing "I just walked out of the camp into the the talking? So, I start sunny road, I knew they would kill me."

narration to find the source Among others, these are the stories he chose to keep from me until I insisted. In the hope that my upbringing in Germany Interviewing my father is would keep me from the memories that pleasant. He's a funny man. hurt him so much, he will not give details. He leans toward me with Not even now. And yet he curls up in the biggest grin on his face, front of the television, routinely once smiling so widely I can't every other year or so, to watch bombs help but join in. "You know," drop on our homeland. Not moving, he says, "I saw a man be tied eyes wide open in constant horror. Not



And yet I do the same. I take a blanket and started labeling Palestinians with nonquit replying to emails, consumed by the heteronormative sexual behavior "queer" in wars. Gaza, Iraq, Syria. Guilty to watch, order to single out the ones who would be guilty to look away, guilty to survive, guilty easy targets to provide information about to feel well, feeling the same wired fence Palestinian society. Through my desire, I tightening up around my throat and chest became-spy. as he does, clutching my right arm with my doesn't know I emulate him in my grief. He unknowable par excellence? thinks, "What does she need this for?" He thinks, "She doesn't need to know any of We sit in white, wired chairs in a French this." He thinks, "What is wrong with her?" café in the Village. We sit at a round white And believe me, Baba, I wonder, too.

into the past, the future, and the present do I composition that I call "Haneen." have to dig in order to find this thing called 'myself'? Blood ties are neither beginning nor I say, "Identity politics are dead." end of me. I need to dig deeper, look further, I say, "I don't know, I actually don't." find more kin, find different kin. I sit down I say, "Palestinians hate Palestinians even with Haneen. She is so beautiful, I want to more than they hate Israelis." tell her--but before I do, the words stick to the inside of my lower lip. I bite them.

I ask, "How have you been?" She talks and talks and I talk and talk. Stories rolling off the tip of my tongue like loose pearls.

She says, "The word 'queer' was introduced into Palestine by the Mossad in 2005."

She says, "We're queer when we're working I say, "Let's just hope the next generation for them."

She says, "Before this, there were no queer I can ever be free. Palestinians."

And indeed, after some research into She says, "What?" the matter, I found that the Israelis have I say, "I was talking to myself."

left hand, clutching my left arm with my My own history is made while I look away. right hand, bent over the cool screen of my 2005! The never-resting mills of the state computer in dread dread dread. "This is produce a self that I have to run run run the story of my people," I think as I watch after if I ever want to catch it. Isn't it funny severed heads of Syrians displayed publicly how this thing called the self-turned from in a Vice News video. Baba loves me, but he being the basis of all knowledge to being the

table. Her freckles, her gums, the bend of her nose, her pitch-black hair, and her heavy All this information exhausts me. How far eyelids arrange themselves into the perfect

She looks at my face. She thinks, "What is wrong with her?"

I pull my hair back and fix it with an elastic band. I look at my notes. I pull the band away and let my hair fall into my face. I wonder, "Why is she hanging out with me?"

will remember our work." I wonder whether

I say, "Maybe."

SATURAT-ED?

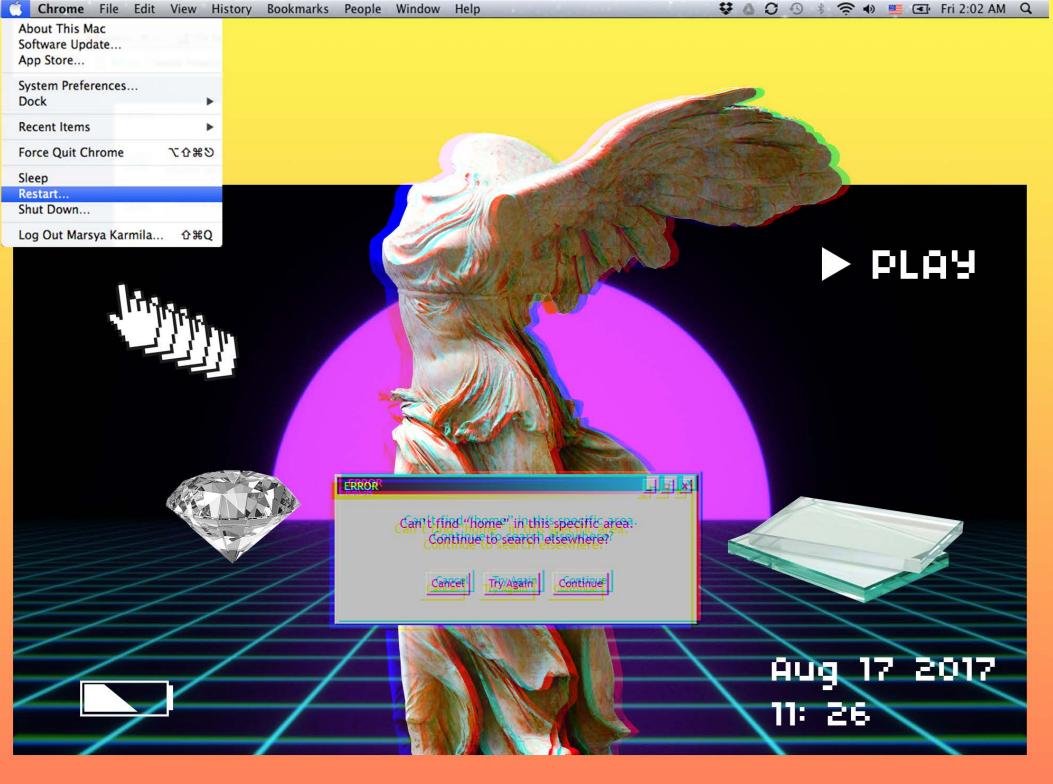
AMINA A.SOULIMANI

Unborn—in a bleeding womb Bathing in a sinking cradle, soft and silent. A colonial hand fed me, or so I thought, as they spelled the words for my illiterate granny.

The poetry that I held on my bare hands looked at me, and laughed. It walked slowly towards a regulating compass Half broken, half varnished, and tore it into pieces. It ain't your tongue, it ain't your turn yet.

And I stood there, in a liminal space tracing this skin complexion that whispered pain.

I engraved our maid's lineal heritage on the footprints of those who claimed to own her, through the routes of Tombouctou— Those I called my people, never gave place to a rite of passage to succumb the mourning, of the unborn flesh.



See the rest on KhabarKeslan.com



I FEEL HOMESICK

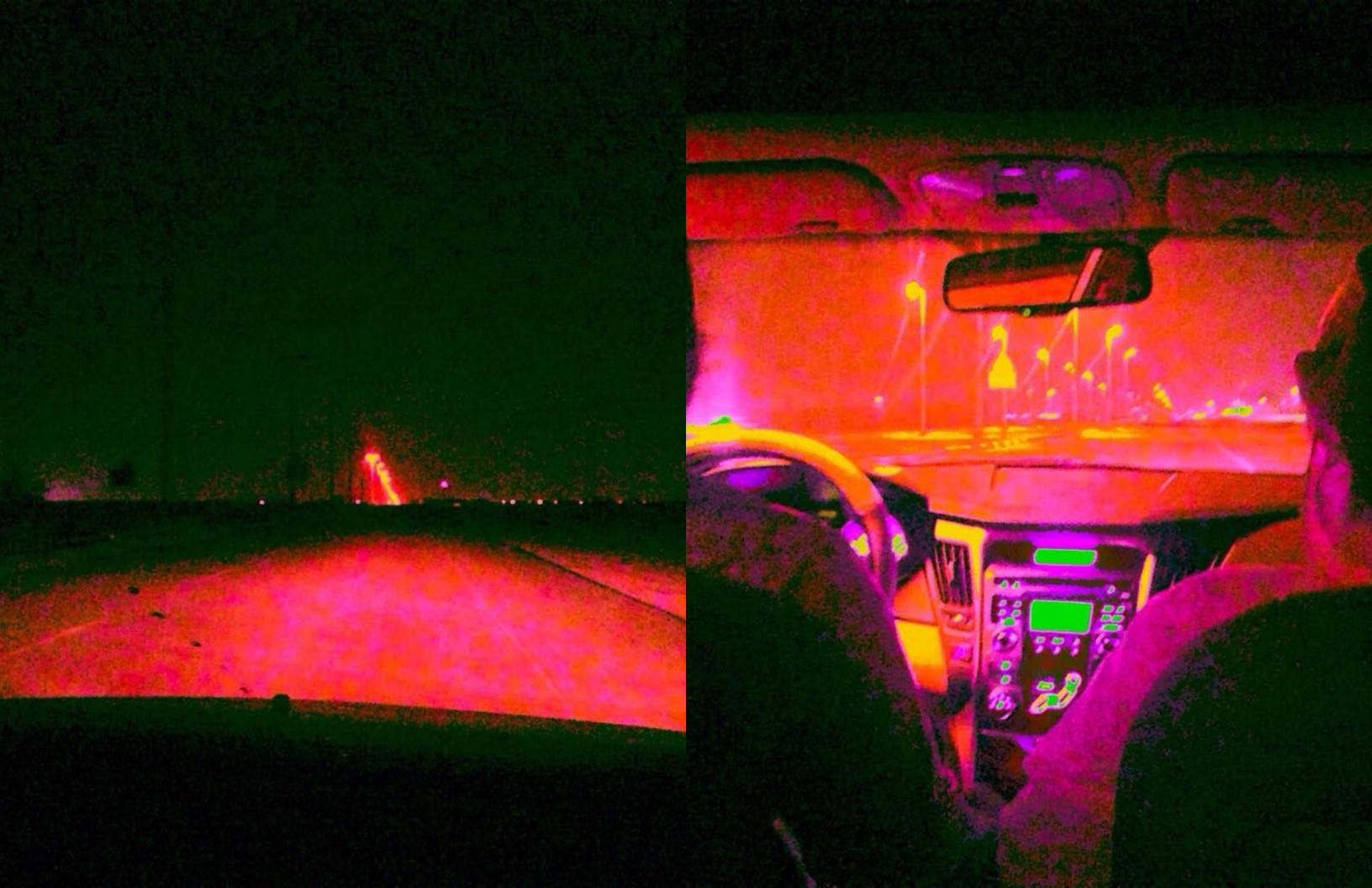
ART: MARSYA @BRBTEATIME POEM: HAZEL HIRA @HAZELHIRA











THE HERMIT CRAB'S HOME

PRIYANKA SACHETI



A PERPETUAL MOVER BUILDS HER HOME OUT OF WORDS

For the past few days, as fat gray monsoon engulfing my apartment recalls the brilliant interpret as a symptom of missing Oman. into palettes of blush, mauve, and lavender. In this state, the oddly luminous rainy light

clouds congregate over Bangalore, where I sunlight that would flood my room every now live, I have been experiencing a peculiar morning before turning into stuff of poetry lassitude, a sense of lacuna, which I usually at dusk, transforming mountains and desert

Oman's scorching summer heat becomes a and crowded bazaars that teleport me to the visceral, palpable memory and I don't miss souks where I grew up. It doesn't last more it as much as I miss being home. Once I start than a moment, this illusion of returning, remembering, I find myself being caught but it's enough to nourish me for a while, up in an avalanche of memories, the giant inducing this feeling of security—that home conjoined memory mass that was my time is just around the corner. in Oman now crumbling into pieces. I sift through each distinct piece, jumping from childhood to early adulthood to adolescence, each conjuring up a set of sub-memories. I smell the mountains, petrol fumes, baking tarmac, hot desert sand—and most of all, the overwhelming scent of the sea.

For most of my life, I lived in a city by the sea. However, since I moved away from Oman five years ago, I've lived in landlocked cities: Pittsburgh had a river, Delhi a dying one, and Bangalore is dotted with ghost lakes. There is also this truth: when I was growing I have come to observe that homesickness advances and recedes like waves, which India I was constantly searching for. During deposit beautiful gifts at your feet. Wherever our annual trip to India, around June-July, I go, I search for Oman, as if I'm cajoling it we would fly down to Jodhpur. Even now, to emerge from wherever it is hidden. And I associate these months with anticipation, sometimes, just sometimes, I chance upon it in departure, flights, and brief but joyful the brilliance of papery fuchsia bougainvillea displacement. We would return to Oman blooming against the blue sky, intricately in August in time for school to start - and I

The hermit crab borrows a home and lugs it on its back and I too carry around my adopted home in suitcases, layering them with an exhaustive library of memories. I am a perpetual nomad, never fully inhabiting the present, forever yearning to be somewhere else. I may be an Indian citizen but the fact that my formative years took place in Oman means that the country has shaped me like no other place in which I have lived. I am what I am because of Oman and Oman alone. up in Oman a couple of decades ago, it was patterned carpets draped over ochre walls, recall the intense homesickness that would



humidity, the noise, the sheer lushness that felt more like India to me. permeated and indeed defined it. To abate in the neighborhoods of Ruwi and Muttrah Muttrah represents the confluence of cultures

envelop me for a week. I would gloom in downtown Muscat, where large numbers about in the hot, dry air, yearning for India's of Indian expats resided and which always

this homesickness, I would either lose As we drove back from the Shiva temple in myself in the material objects I had carried Muttrah, more than two centuries old, we back—books, magazines, clothes, food, would stop by a little shop near the Muttrah audio tapes—or visit the two Hindu temples Corniche to munch on freshly fried samosas.

Jodhpur, Rajasthan, by Priyanka Sacheti.





Rajasthan Architecture, by Priyanka Sacheti.

that shaped Muscat: the Portuguese forts Kochi-Muziris Biennale in the port town of rising from the rocky outcrops and the still Kochi, Kerala. The Biennale seeks to pay preserved traditional coastal architecture, homage to both the present Kochi city's which is a marriage of Indian and Omani rich cosmopolitan legacy as well as its neararchitectural styles. Gujarati merchants had mythical predecessor, Muziris. A port city, been trading and living in Oman since the Muziris played a central role in the trade 16th century; I would see glimpses of that between southern India and the Phoenicians, past in the Gujarati script above a door in Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Roman a three-storied house squeezed between Empire, primarily exporting spices and other traditional buildings on the Muttrah facilitating the Spice Route. It had trade Corniche, testifying that Oman's cultural dealings with Oman, too. Oman's equally

third edition of India's first Biennale, the When I visited one of the beaches, I imagined

geology is as fascinating as its physical one. rich maritime past witnessed its voyages to many lands, resulting in cultural cross-In March this year, I happened to attend the pollination—food, costume, and architecture.

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sailors journeying from Muscat to Kochi and were once a gigantic conjoined physical back.

on a research paper to present at an Indo-Oman conference. We spoke to several Indian creatives living in Muscat, wondering In an interview some years ago, Indianwhether and how their temporary home had American writer Jhumpa Lahiri, acclaimed played a role in their aesthetics and creative for her short stories delving into the Bengali sensibilities. Did the fact that Oman's immigrant experience in the United States, almost-home-like air mean that India was remarked that her desk was her home. After too close to allow Oman to influence their moving away from Oman and having lived creative production at all? Us Indian expats in Pittsburgh, Delhi and now, Bangalore, I would ultimately never settle down in ultimately find myself conjuring up home Oman: we would forever be expatriates, not through words; if homesickness is a sea immigrants who eventually assimilate into depositing beautiful memories at my feet, I the cultures of the countries they moved to. Both the awareness of this disorienting temporariness, and the process of questioning If commerce continues to be a language others, found me more deeply contemplating binding Oman and India together, words the writing I had produced over the years— are my personal equivalent of this cultural and my relationship with Oman. While I exchange. When I write about the searing had extensively written about Oman in my warmth of the sun, I am thinking of May journalism, I realized that very little of my in both Muscat and Rajasthan. When I fiction had much to do with Oman; for some think of the sea, I see Kochi's cobalt waters reason, I found it impossible to do so.

and the yearning to return has never begins, is impossible to tell. I jigsaw my left me since. This yearning is also the dual selves, those distinct continents of realization of how influential Oman has memory and identity, through my words.

the waters churning all the way to Oman, been in making me. Just as the continents mass called Pangea and which had now split into the world that we know today, In 2010, friend and colleague and I worked I too was a product of constantly shifting tectonic plates of cultures, Oman and India.

turn them into imaginary palaces built along the coast, constructing them one word at a time. juxtaposed with those of Seeb. The mountains of Oman merge with the ones that surround And then, I bid adieu to Oman in 2012 Bangalore. Where India ends, where Oman

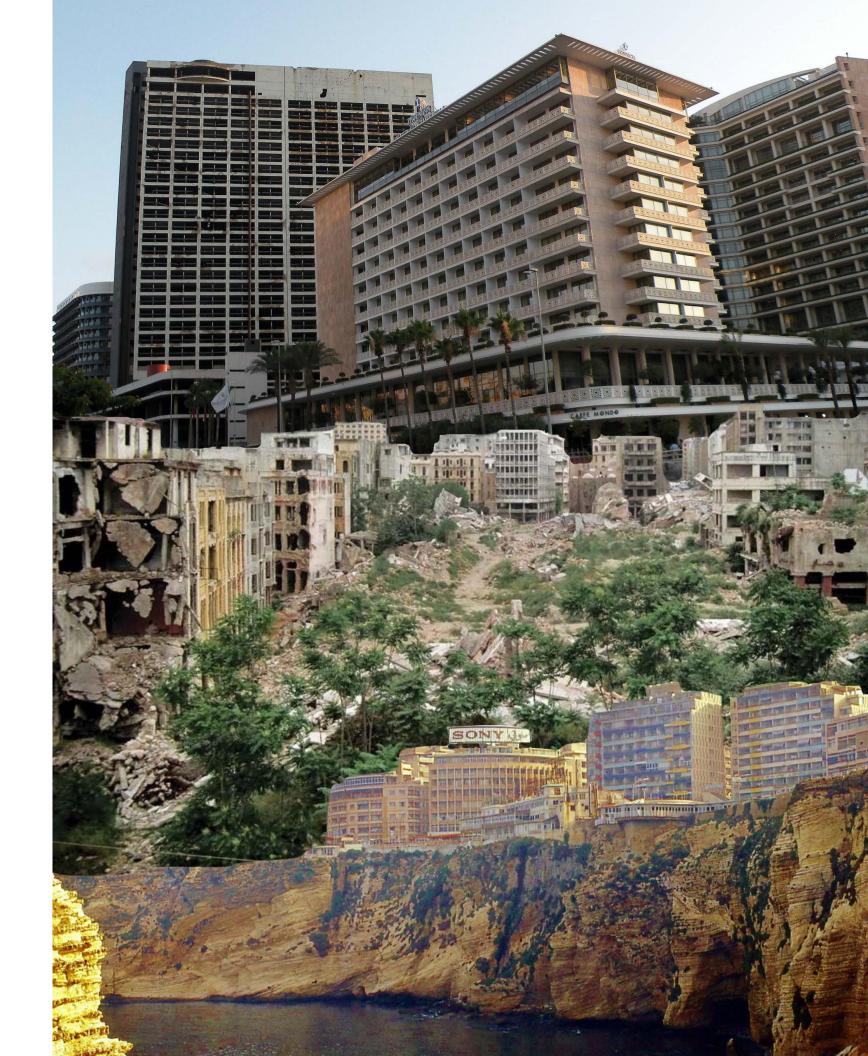


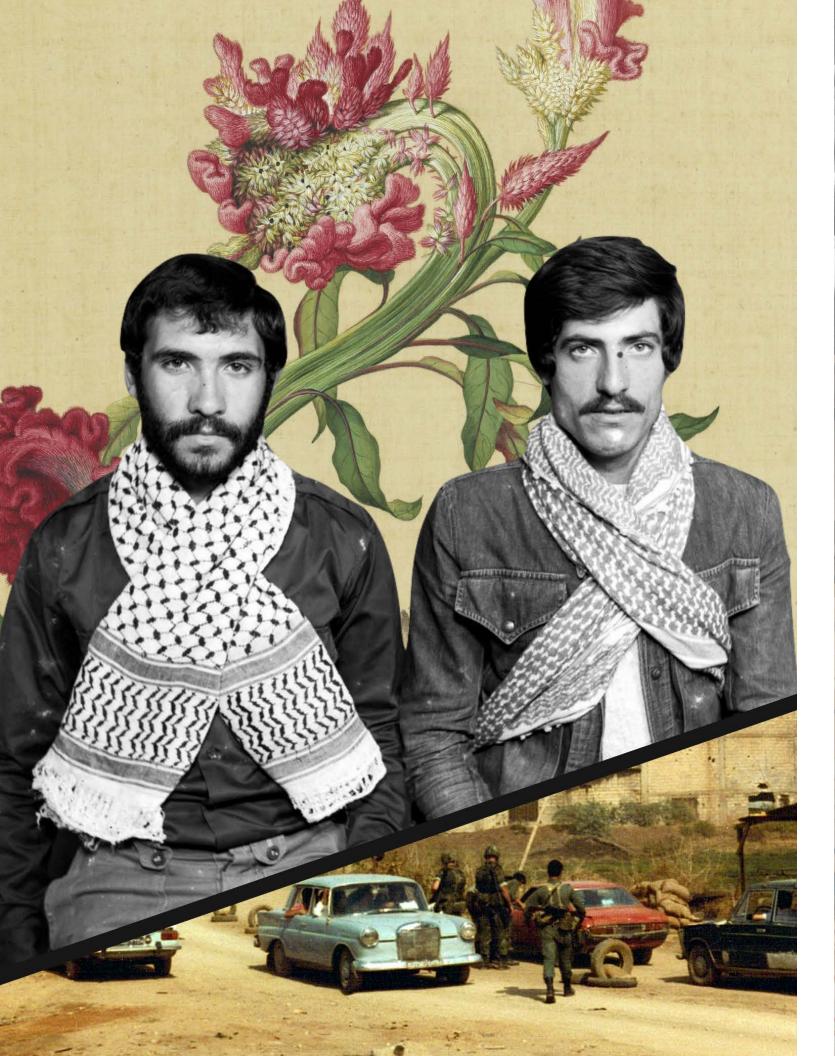
THE LEBANESE WAY

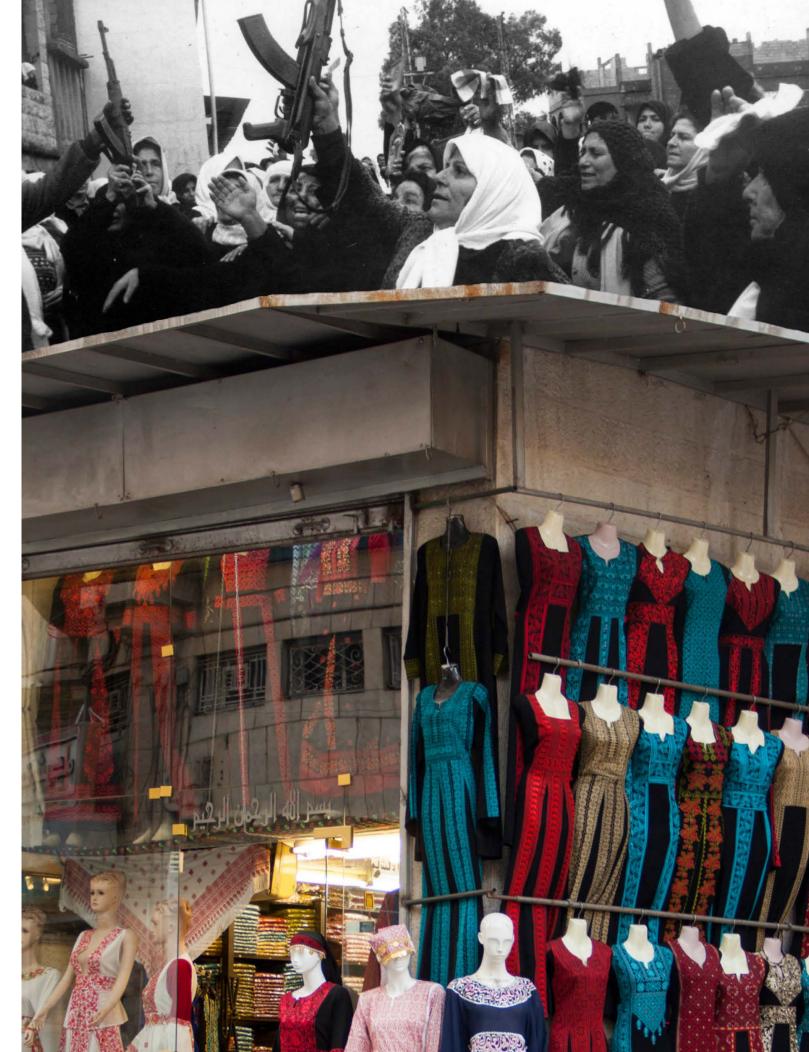
ADNAN SAMMAN

My work almost always comes to life on its own. I start by brainstorming a general concept, and then immediately begin my attempts at realizing it. The process is much more rewarding when one gives freedom to the spontaneous side of the brain! My collages start to take shape, then it gets to the point where both the self and the work become actualized and satisfied. There is usually some sort of concept in my mind, but I tend to leave things open for interpretation by the viewer. I've been interested to see works hold different meanings depending on the viewer.

One of my recent series focuses on Lebanon. I chose Lebanon for its incredible story of dealing with decades of war. I love contrast; there's a beautiful one within the stories of civil war. I don't think that many people would remember the delightful details of a happy Lebanese life when they see images of war and violence, and vice versa. I try to bring both together to create contradiction.







BISMILLAH / IN THE LIGHT

AZIZA AFZAL & EDEN CHINN

I pass through space thinking about how I am seen. I conceal and expose elements of myself to feel permitted. I am not pretending. Just conflicted. To hold conflicting truths, "bismillah" (R Hand) and "in the light" (L hand), as one. I am a whole entity despite my many halves. I give myself permission to exist opaquely and transparently. Bismillah, I hold you in the light, may safe passage be granted to all the parts of our wholes, no matter what parts are visible as we move.



Khabar Keslan is an independently run, volunteer-based, primarily English-language online review featuring art and critique from the Middle East, North Africa, and South (East) Asia (MENASEA). This is a dedicated platform for dissidents, artists, critics, and those on the margins to express themselves.