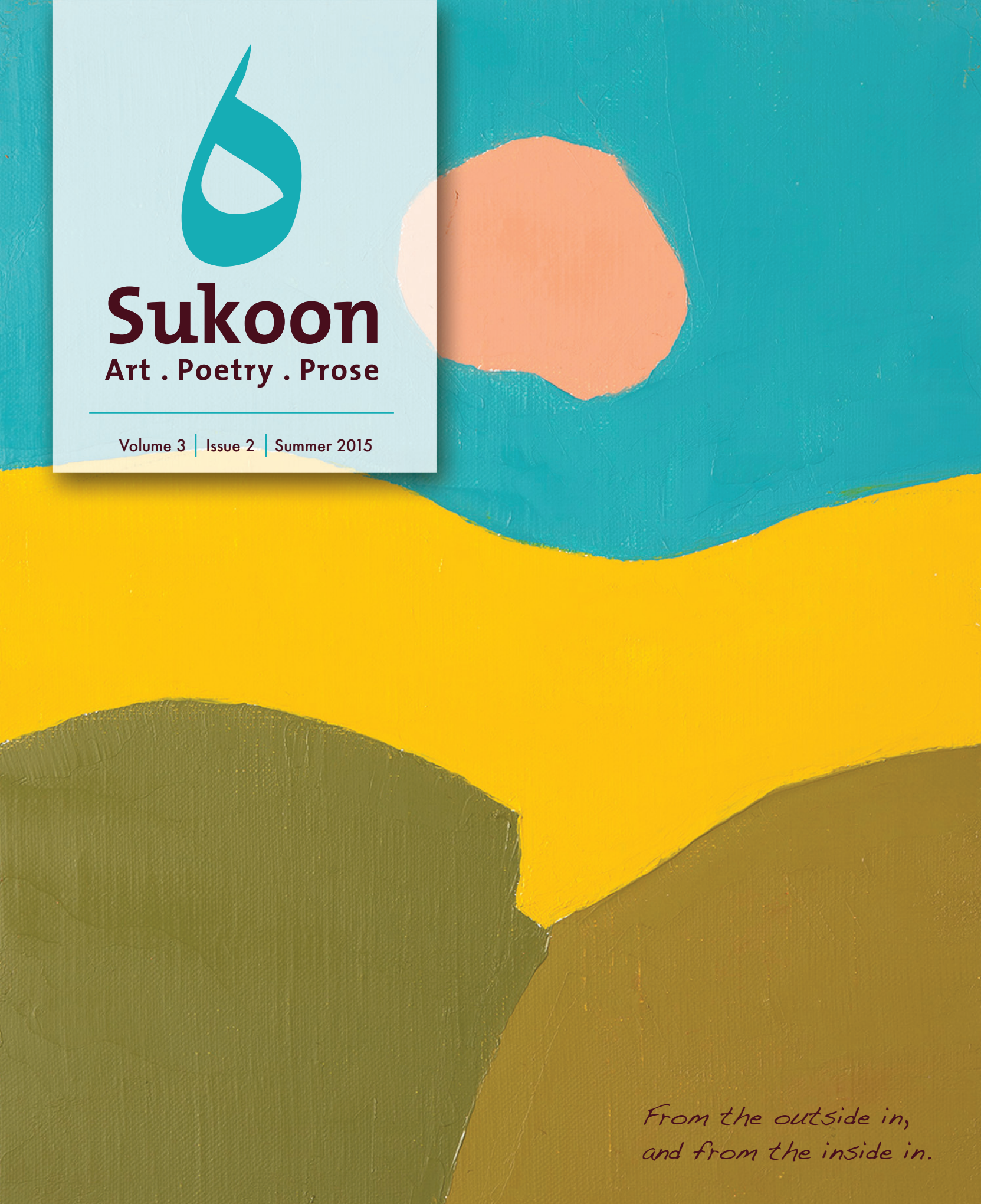

Sukoon

Art . Poetry . Prose

Volume 3 | Issue 2 | Summer 2015

From the outside in,
and from the inside in.

Sukoon is:

an independent, online literary journal. It is Arab-themed and in English. *Sukoon* publishes poetry, short fiction, creative non-fiction, books reviews, plays, interviews, and occasional translations by writers and artists from the Arab region, and/or by writers and artists who are not of Arab descent, but have an Arab story or art piece they would like to share.

Through literature and art, *Sukoon* aims to refelect the diversity and richness of the Arab world, where Arabic is spoken - a semitic language with over 30 different varieties of colloquial Arabic.

Sukoon is an Arabic word meaning "stillness." What we mean is the stillness discovered within when the artist is in the midst of the creative storm.

Sukoon is also a phonetic symbol used in the Arabic script. ه

Cover artwork by Etel Adnan

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Sukoon would like to thank Dubai-based calligrapher and artist, **Majid Alyousef**, for Sukoon's unique logo design.
www.majidalyousef.com

Editor's note:

It's November and I am in Beirut. It hasn't rained yet, not the way it used to, the way it rained when I was a child, in Beirut, where November was really Autumn, and we would wear light sweaters and carry an umbrella and dream of roasted chestnuts and hot chocolate any time soon. Beirut is still warm-ish and it is November and there are people on the beach and people in the mountains and people on the streets demanding their rights for water, for light, for warmth, for meds, for clean streets, for work, for love; mostly for a type of love that means that we are all safe, that means that we are all safe here.

But we are not all safe here. Nor are we safe elsewhere, where there's war and occupation and racism and apartheid and all kinds of discrimination, inside our homes and TV screens. There is loss here, and there is loss there, across the border, the sea and the street. "Sad land of monks & soldiers/ gardening the world's light" says Kenneth E. Harrison, Jr. in his poem "Elegy."

But there is also survival. There is always a protest for survival. And there is art. There is always art.

"Art inspires peace, encourages us to be kind to each other" says Muntaha, a character in Marguerite G. Bouvard's poem "Hidden Stories." In Zeina Hashem Beck's poem "Beirut Wall, August 24, 2015" written about the protests that happened in Beirut this summer, she says "I will draw. I will dance. I will dig / start within my heart."

A character in Philip Metres' poem "Letter (Never Sent) to Volodya and Natasha" says, "Art, you said, was a sacred place, resting by a river, where a person could feel some things come clearer. Not better, but clearer."

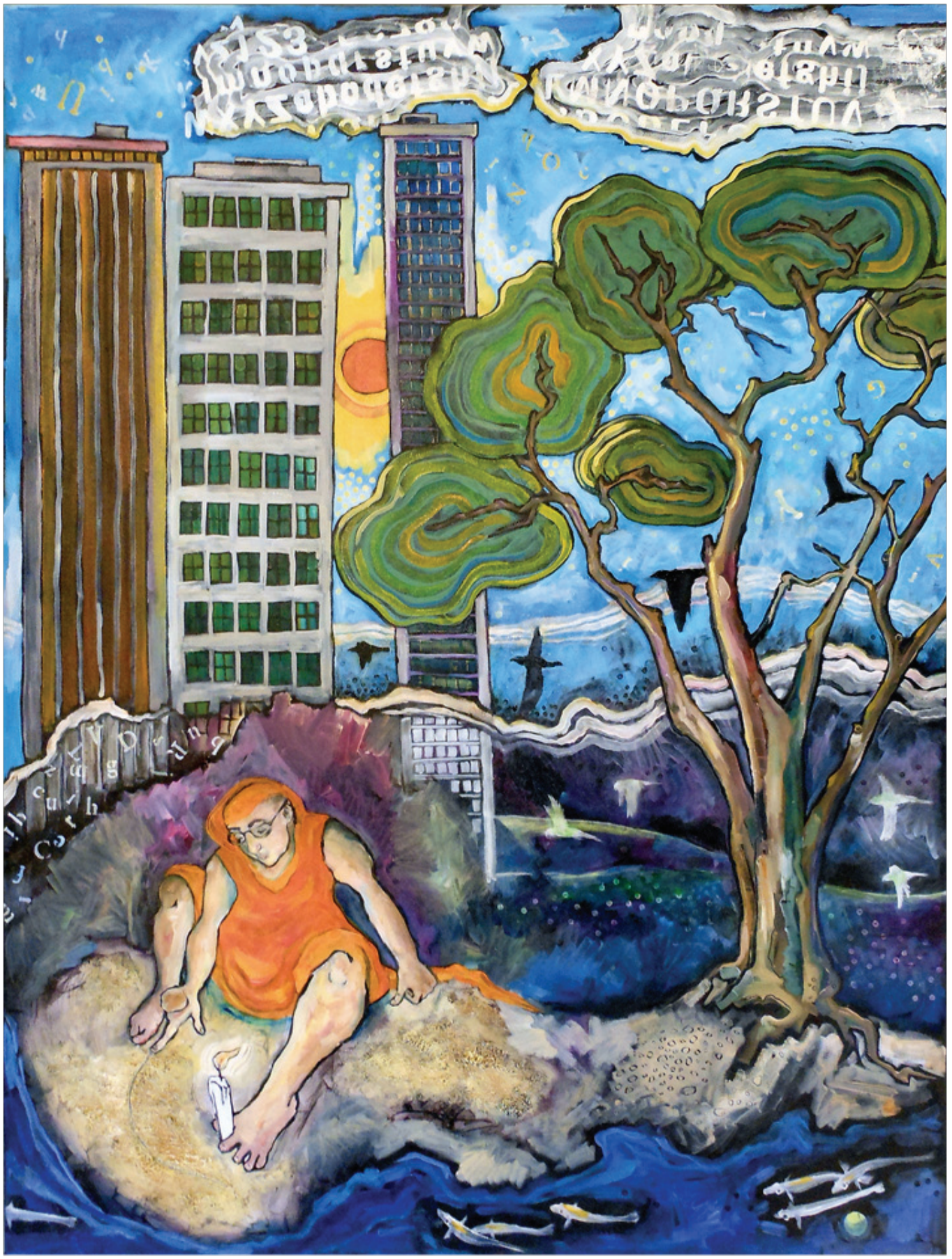
In the sixth issue of Sukoon, I bring you such art that perhaps makes things clearer, if not better. Art in the form of poetry and stories and essays, by new voices and new artists, as well as those who've been published in previous issues of *Sukoon.* I am happy to bring you *Sukoon*'s first book review, by Imene Bennani and *Sukoon*'s first play! Two plays actually; one by Shebana Coelho entitled "Are You Safe?" and one by Pam Laskin, entitled "RONIT AND JAMIL," both excerpts, both related to Palestine.

Sukoon is proud to collaborate with *Arabian Stories* - a literary project that tries to bring together the Arabic and Western world through expression and translation. Within this issue, you'll find the English translation of their literary contest's winning story, "The Beauty and the Gazelle."

I also bring you a special interview with a special poet, writer, editor, teacher and painter; the wonderful Etel Adnan, with whom I've had the pleasure and privilege to correspond. Adnan lives in Paris right now and I include an interview where she tells about her work, her plans, and her optimistic thoughts about a changing Arab world; a world where a civil society will always exist and will always win, even if that victory doesn't happen today. I include some of her artwork (exhibited in Galerie Lelong in Paris) as well as a previously unpublished excerpt from a poem she is currently working on, entitled "Night."

Adnan says that she's always believed that we were born to spend our time writing poetry. (What a different world we would be living in if that were the case.) I couldn't agree more, could you?

REWA ZEINATI



Finding the words, oil on canvas 100 x 75 cm
BY A. REED GARNER

ELEGY

Broken people thousands of miles beautiful as they are

pushed through to a fullness

made life suddenly love its farthest edge

belonged to no faith at last the air in July

merged along a path beheld our always going somewhere

sad land of monks & soldiers

gardening the world's light

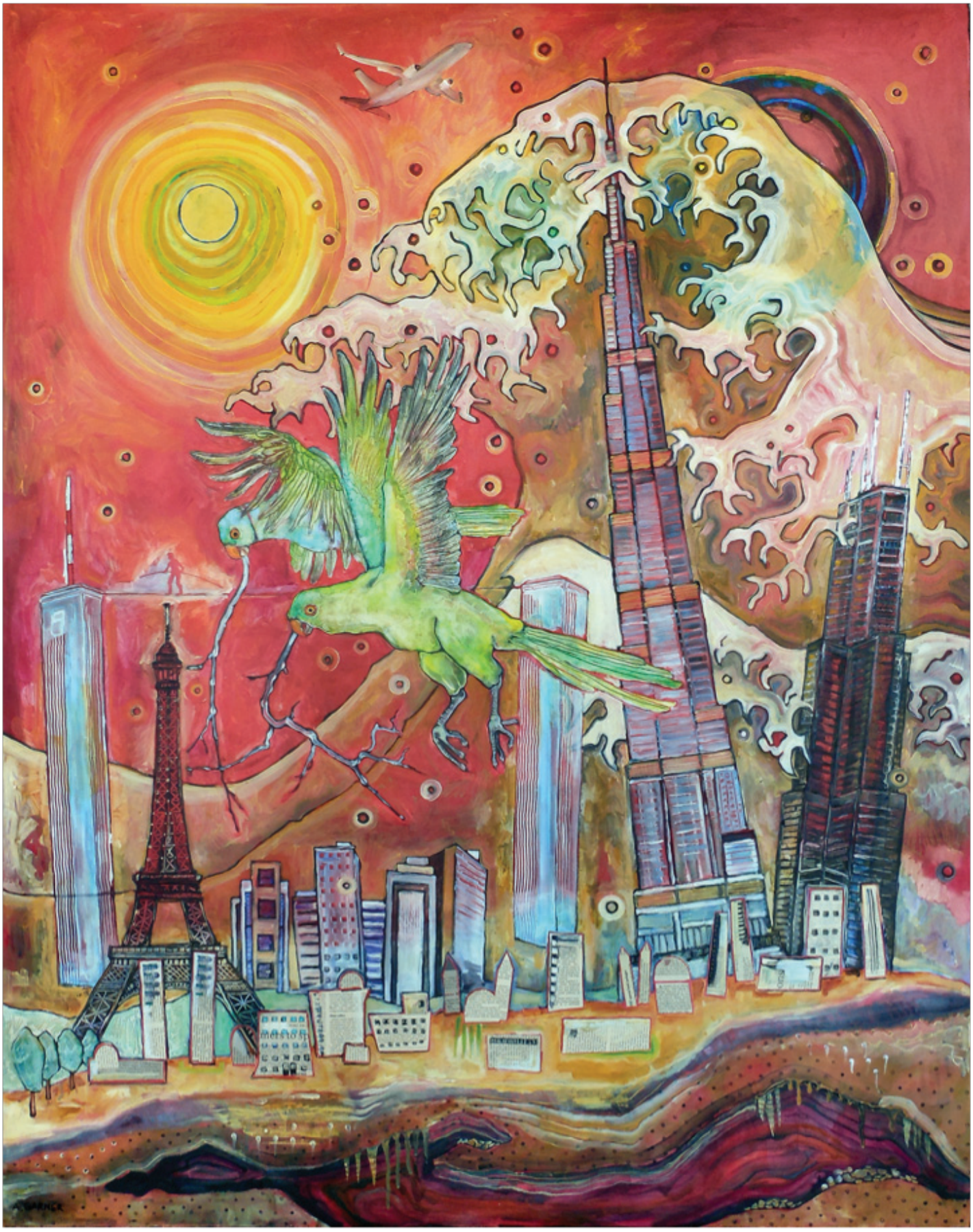
wore down memory's bluish husk—

KENNETH E. HARRISON, JR.

FROM "GNOMUS"

Returning from Amsterdam, when the ship's supply of beer ran out, Russian sailors stumbled upon Tsar Peter the Great's wunderkammern, his wonder cabinet of glass-jarred curiosities: a fetus dressed in lace; a four-legged rooster; botanical landscapes built from plants and lungs; a two headed-sheep; a vial of a sleeping child, its skull removed; a handkerchief into which a skeleton "cried," made of brain tissue; a severed arm, and held in its hand, a heart; a tiny head cradled in the open jaws of a gecko—all suspended in alcohol. Who started the rumor, we don't know—that when they tipped the glasses to their mouths to slake their impossible thirst, the sailors must have closed their eyes—lips kissing the sweet wet flesh.

PHILIP METRES



Thinking of lost cities mixed media on canvas 150 x 120 cm
BY A. REED GARNER

PALMYRA

the cradle of ancient civilizations
where monuments inspired by
Greco-Romans and Persians
hold up the sky, and time

stands still, when my hands can't
reach out or encircle the children
who were unable to flee
or to rebuild the walls of bombed out

houses, are unable to light
candles of hope when night and day
are reversed, and a woman who was a wife
and mother lies on the cobbled street

her blood leaving its marks,
while the blind-hearted man
who destroyed so many names
and faces turns away with his rifle

cocked, believes that he is cleansing
Syria in a holy war, cloaked
in ideology, exchanging
a slogan for his soul.

MARGUERITE G. BOUVARD

THIS WORLD

Behind my face is another
face that nobody sees.
It carries so many absences:
the fear of a child who has crossed
the border, her father cutting
a barbed wire fence between Syria
and Turkey, Falah, his wife
and their baby daughter changing their
residence for the twelfth
time in Iraq where life turns
on the axis of a roulette, and borders
crop up within other borders, and the cascade
of shouts are not intelligible,
where we have become fugitives
on the streets we once crossed
to buy a loaf of bread or to visit a neighbor,
streets that reflected sunlight
are now filled with wails, its trees
devoid of branches, its doors clanging
in the wind while walls buckle.
This shattered world can only
be pieced back together with
the words brother, sister, friend.

MARGUERITE G. BOUVARD

HIDDEN STORIES

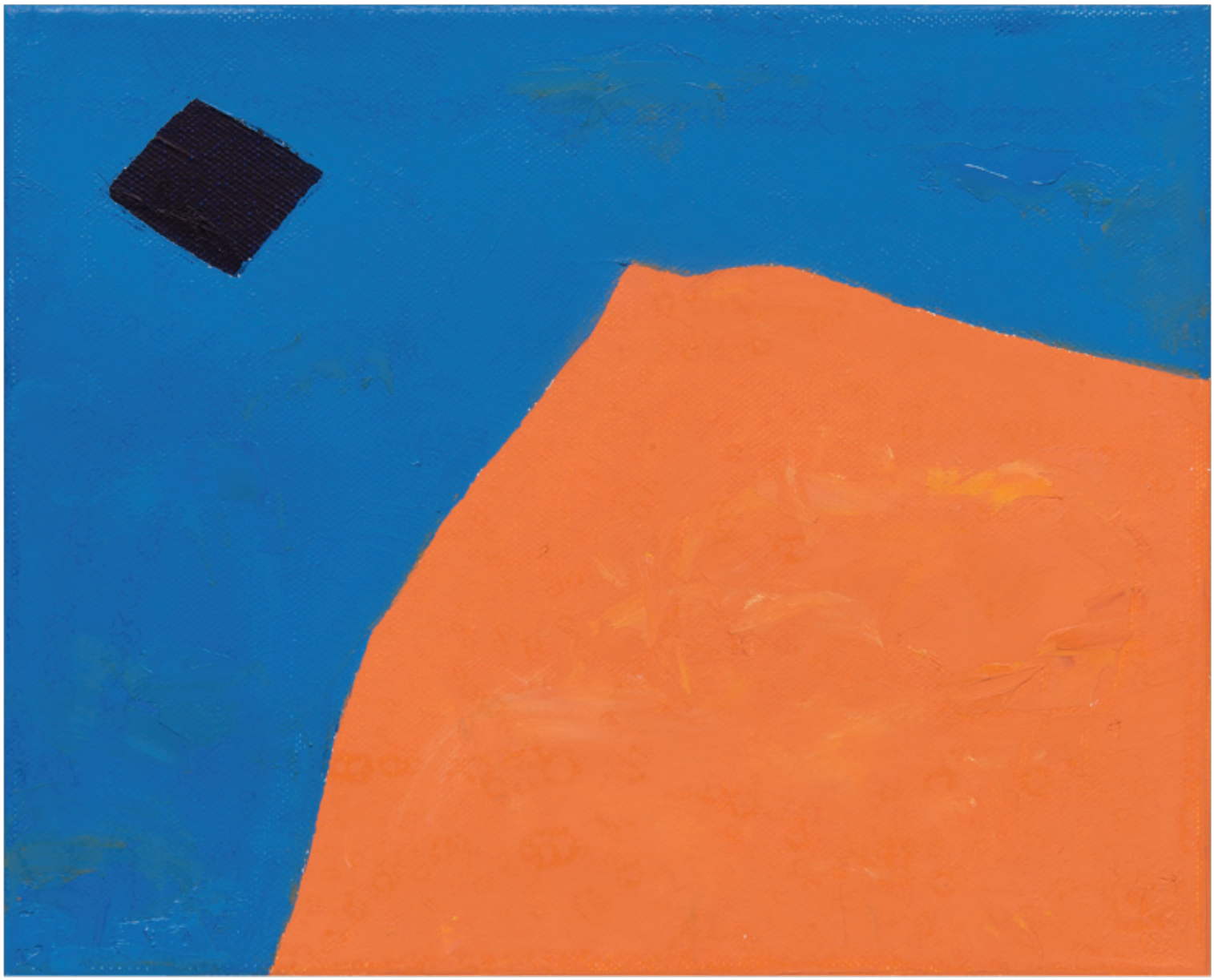
On the upper slopes of La Giettaz
patches of snow linger even when the sun
is high. But in the wall of boulders,
granite and schist stretching skyward,
a small but dense carpet of pale rose
wildflowers have emerged from
a crack, petals calling out
with rounded leaves that are thick
and dark green, holding their stories
while in a world struggling with the loss
of so many species, two monarch butterflies
flutter above the flowers,

and in the tsunami
of statistics as refugees cross
the Mediterranean in crowded and unsafe
 boats, we count the numbers
who have drowned, and too many countries
clamor against open borders while only a few
manage to avoid telling the refugees
that they do not belong.

Denial and thunderous silence
fill the air, and blind us to the future
of how adolescent Syrian girls are able
to weave a path beyond the noise
of discord and through the cracks of statistics:
Muntaha who began painting at home before
the war tells us at the age of thirteen,
"Art inspires peace, encourages
us to be kind to each other," Fatima
who now is in school after years
of longing reminds us, "education
is the most important thing in life,
knowledge is a weapon," and sixteen
year old Bassina remembers how
a pharmacist in Syria helped
the injured now works in a pharmacy
and studies at night.

If those of us whose
life passes by so fast, disputing
the loss of species, and the response
to borders, paid attention to the young
who do not fit into their schemes,
they would understand the hearts of others,
and how the war torn bring us hope
in tender hands that kindle sunrise.

MARGUERITE G. BOUVARD



Sans Titre, 2014, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 cm
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

GOODBYE, THEA STAVROULA

By Lisa Suhair Majaj

She died at 94. There are worse ages at which to leave this earth, but that doesn't dispel the sadness. How many changes did she see in her life? How many wars? When she was a girl, the quickest way from Limassol to Paphos was by boat. People stayed in their villages, grew their own food. Now there are highways, and cars, and smart phones, and all sorts of other things she probably never dreamed of—though some things, like wars and their after-effects, don't seem to change much.

She lived in Episkopi, a mixed village, populated by both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots until the invasion that split

the country. She raised three sons, losing a daughter at the age of four. My husband tells me she always wore the Hand of Fatima, at the time considered a distinctively Muslim symbol, next to the cross around her neck. That doesn't surprise me. From the first time I met her, as I struggled to find enough Greek to thank her for her coffee, her smiling hospitality, it was clear that she had a large, embracing spirit. Whenever we visited there were always stray cats she was feeding, children in the garden, a bowl of sweets for passers by.

And everyone passed by. Her house was at the heart of the village, right across from the church, down the street from the archeological museum. Neighbors, relatives, outsiders—all were welcome. She taught the young archeologists staying at the museum how to embroider, unperturbed by the lack of a common language. There was no better place for coffee than perched on one of the chunks of ancient Roman columns scattered outside her gate, breathing in the stunning vista of the coastline spread out below, the sense of timelessness.

But time never stops.

The day Thea Stavroula died, a massive sandstorm struck, blanketing the island for days in a cloud of dust so thick it was impossible to take a deep breath. Temperatures soared as the sky pressed down, gritty and clotted. Even the sweat rivulets rolling down my skin felt muddy. On the day of the funeral, we braved the brownish haze to drive from Nicosia to Episkopi. We parked outside of her small, familiar house, the usual coastal vista shrouded in dust, and crossed the street to the church. Family and neighbors were already gathering in the oppressively hot stone-paved yard, their black clothing a reminder of why we were there.

Inside, the church was dim and slightly cooler. I slipped some coins into the donation box and lit three candles: one for Stavroula, one for my parents, who died decades ago, and one for those still engaged in this battle called life. Then the chanting of the Orthodox service began, the musicality of the priest's voice carrying me out of my thoughts as the candles flickered. Soon enough the service was over—how quickly we mark passage from this earth!—and mourners gathered again in the churchyard, waiting for the coffin to be carried out. At the gate of the yard I noticed two tiny, ancient women clutching each other's hands for support. One, I saw with a thrum of sadness, wore mismatched slippers on her feet. Later my sister-in-law told me that after the 1974 Turkish invasion, when refugees took shelter in Episkopi, Thea Stravroula had been the first to help these two women, giving them olives, that staple of village sustenance. Decades later, they had come to say goodbye.

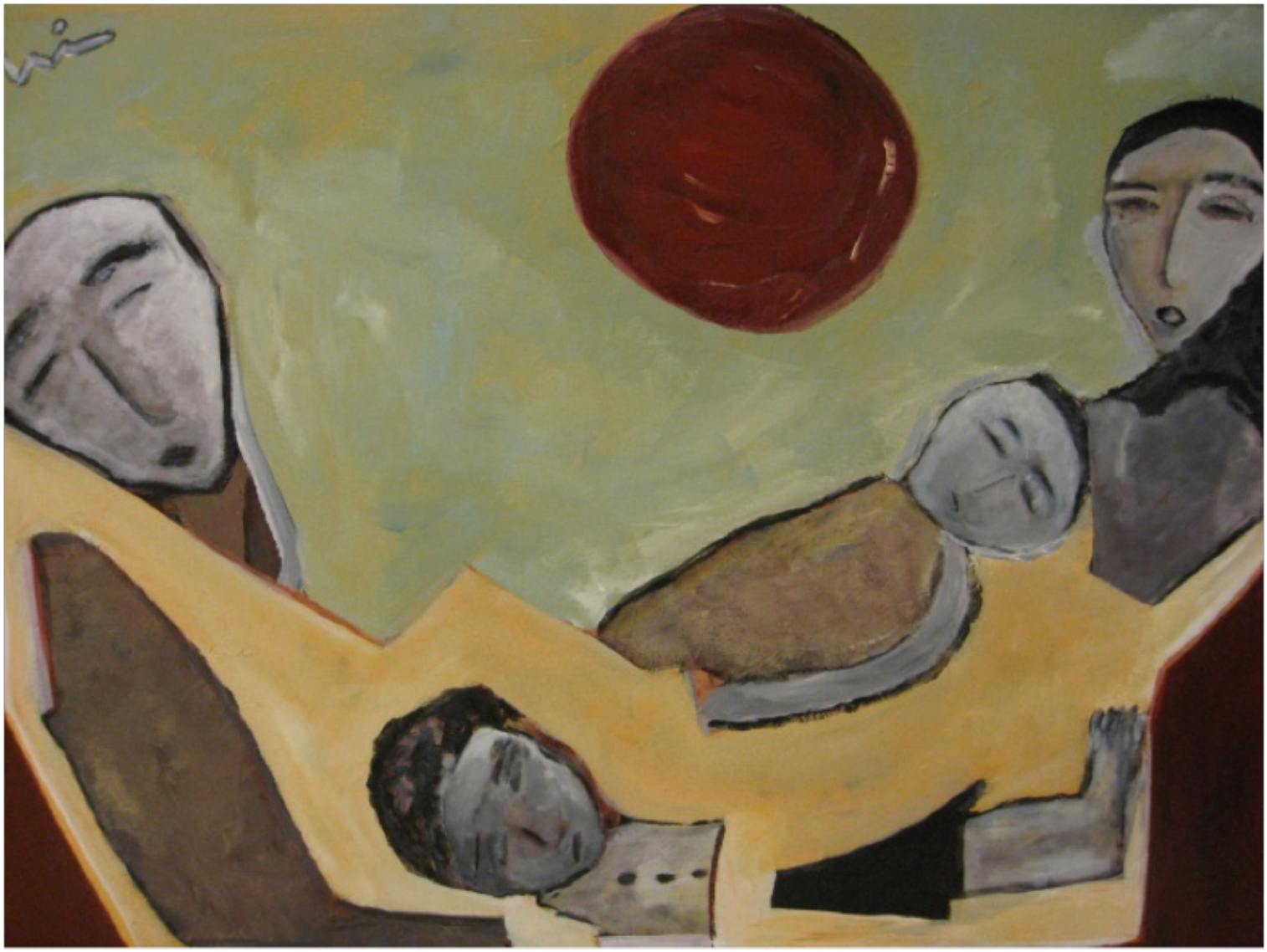
We proceeded to the cemetery, where the open coffin required confrontation. I hardly recognized Stavroula in the body that lay face up to the sky. Age and illness had replaced her calm, robust demeanor with a startlingly gaunt profile; her eyes were no longer smiling, but closed.

This was my son's first funeral. He watched carefully as they lowered the open coffin into the grave with ropes, poured oil on the body, scattered earth, and rinsed the shovel off with water over the coffin, mixing earth's elements with her human remains. Then the coffin was closed and buckets of soil were tipped on top, attendants shoveling in more to finish the job. Dust clouds rose to join the dust that hung in the heat-struck, lowering sky. Her body went into the earth, earth was shoveled on top of her, and the sky rained earth on all of us: a dusty kind of tears.

At bedtime that night, my son asked me, "What is it like when someone passes away? What do they feel? What do they see? Where do they go? What do they become?" I had no clear answers to offer. Instead I kissed him and stroked his hair till his breathing settled.

But Stravroula didn't settle. She lingered in the air around me, rich and full, her life too real to close a coffin lid on. I thought of an afternoon decades earlier, as we sat in the cool of her garden after hours at the beach—her laughter filling the air, the coffee she had brewed with careful hands waiting to be drunk, the future full in the unturned cup.

In my kitchen grows a plant started from a cutting taken from a tree in her yard, nestled in a simple clay pot. Like her, it is rooted in earth, arching toward the sun.



Moon Dancing in the Courtyard of the Dead, www.Palestinianart.com
BY ZAHI KHAMIS

ARE YOU SAFE? (or the occupation of love)
by Shebana Coelho

ACT I

SCENE 1

A pitch dark stage - as dark as you can make it - slowly lightens into shadows. A dim blue searchlight roves across the stage, and into the audience, and in the arc of its turning, it illuminates a table and two chairs. In one chair, facing the audience is a GIRL, fair-skinned, in her twenties with long black hair. Her hands are clasped behind her back, as if they are tied together. But they are not. Her head is lowered, as if she is sleeping. But she is not. One side of her face looks discolored, as if she's wearing a face mask, the kind you get in beauty salons. A MAN, in his fifties, sits in the chair to her left. When the spotlight reaches her again, her head swings up and she opens her eyes.

GIRL

Later, he tells me he knew my name all along.

MAN

Your middle name, to be exact.

GIRL

All it takes is a Muslim in the middle.

MAN

Naseema, to be exact.

GIRL

Naseema.

She slowly, sinuously leans towards the man and blows. He blanches, startled. She keeps blowing and slowly, with her breath, forces him to rise and he rises and steps back, and further back till her breath has forced him off stage.

GIRL

Naseema. Wind.

She turns to the audience.

GIRL

But earlier, first - the skin of my father gets me in. If they saw the brown inside, the brown of my mother, I'd be at the detention cell, at the airport with everyone else who had brushed against brown in their past or in their family or on the plane and the scent lingers, did you know? That's what the guards say. "We know how to smell you." They're trained to smell…roses. They're trained to smell…attar. I hear them whispering as if no one hears. But everyone hears. Those smells carry.

The SOUND of low bells, the kind cattle wear around their neck and a shepherd, NIDAL, about sixteen, enters from the opposite side of the stage. He wears a keffiyeh, a black and white chequered scarf around his neck. He's in a reverie, as if following his cattle and not noticing her at first.

NIDAL

I carry a new lamb. The sheep follow. We go to what is left of grass. They eat what isn't burnt. They eat what is left of green. I swallow the sand. I love a girl who I saw on a bus that went by very slowly so the people inside, behind the glass, could take pictures. I stood up straight when it passed. The minute you see anyone shooting…a picture, you want to stand up straight. It could be on the news. You have to think ahead. But that girl, she put the camera down when she saw me, and the sun hit her instead. It hit her through the glass as she looked at me and then I saw her hair…

Now he notices the girl and they meet in the center of the stage. Tenderly, he touches the girl's hair.

NIDAL

...hair like yours...

GIRL

...like how..?

NIDAL

like this, soft and clean from a place that has water, a place where you just ask for it and....

He takes a step back and a stream of water falls on him, drenching him. Like a waterfall, it falls as he stands there, arms akimbo and then he cups the water in his hand. The girl reaches forward and puts her hand in the falling water, cups the water in her hands as well. The waterfall stops. In unison, they drink from their hands. The Girl looks up at Nidal.

GIRL

In the desert where I used to live, where I used to love, the land is flat and the sky is so big you can see for days ahead. You can see the weather forming. You can see a storm coming. You can say (she points into the audience) it is raining there, just in that spot, and not there, in that other spot - like that.

Nidal shakes the water off him. He unloosens his scarf, squeezes the water from it, and then sits down slowly on his haunches, as if looking at a horizon only he can see.

NIDAL

Here, we watch the bombs falling. You can see (he points into the audience) there is someone dying, and there is someone not dying, not yet. You can see this bombed from clear across the ocean. You can see the planes. You can see the righteousness with which the bombs fall so we die righteous deaths (Laughs). Can't you see us all dying so that the rockets hidden under us may live?

He ties the scarf back around his neck, humming softly. It's not a carefree sound - as if he's deliberately calming the cattle, while keeping an eye out, being vigilant. Suddenly he YELLS, ducks and goes flat on the ground.

NIDAL

Get down. Now.

The Girl gets down, lying on her belly. Together, they look at the audience.

NIDAL

My father is an old man in a chair in a desert. A man like thunder. A line of sheep behind him. A gaggle of hens beside him. We live in a house with sheets of aluminum for walls and sheets of plastic for roofs. Bullet casings at our feet.

GIRL

The sheep nuzzle the casings. The chicken nuzzle the feet.

NIDAL

We dream of the well we can't dig. The land we can't farm.

GIRL

Not allowed.

NIDAL

Mamnou3...it says right here on the dotted line, in between the dotted lines, see that signature, see the shadow of that ink...

GIRL

The water in the river...

NIDAL

...the water is not allowed, mamnou3. The water we hear, running in pipes past us, the water that goes there...

GIRL
...settlements, swimming pools, dates...

NIDAL
...stockpiles, guards, guns.

GIRL
But still...

NIDAL
We know...

They slowly begin to rise so they are sitting on their knees.

GIRL
....that after a village is destroyed...

NIDAL
...what is needed is to build something even if it's only...

GIRL
...this high...

NIDAL
...that high...

GIRL
...this tall...

NIDAL
...that short...

GIRL
...building a wall...

NIDAL
...patting a wall into place...

GIRL
...by moonlight, only by moonlight...

NIDAL

...just so...

They slowly rise to their feet

NIDAL

...just so something is left standing at dawn. Fajer.

He sits cross-legged on the stage.

GIRL

At dawn, he was sitting outside...

NIDAL

...twenty feet from the mosque waiting for prayers to start.

GIRL

At dawn, they took him. Later, they hit him. They argued about hitting him more. Hitting him more, they decided. His small body on its side.

NIDAL

How do you burn a body? They didn't know. Burning my body, they learned.

GIRL

I dreamed him. Even as they found him, even then, I dreamed him and it was the dream that brought me here. I had never up and gone anywhere. I up and came here.

BLACKOUT

They exit in the dark.

SCENE 2

Lights up. The girl returns to the chair and sits. She places her hands flat on the table, closes her eyes. Her head falls forward. You can see the mask clearly now, green, covering one side of her face. MANJU, an Indian woman, also in her twenties, enters and sits on the other chair. She takes a nail file from her pocket, picks up the girl's hand and starts buffing her nails. Sounds of Bollywood SONGS slowly RISE on a radio we can't see. Manju hums as she buffs. The Girl slowly opens her eyes and raises her head. She yawns.

MANJU

Welcome back, Madam. Have a good doze, Madam?

GIRL

Ms.

MANJU

Oh. I thought the mister that you came with made you madam.

GIRL

No.

MANJU

Miss, what beautiful nails you have. Bloody beautiful, if I may say so.

The girl laughs, intrigued.

MANJU

So sorry, Madam, I mean Miss. It is a bad word but I love it.

She giggles. She has a distinctive voice.

MANJU

Isn't it good, my "bloody?" I practiced it watching those Bond movies. Uska nam kya hai? (what's his name)

GIRL

James. His name is James.

MANJU

Those only, Miss. I watch those only over and over again. If you heard me with your eyes closed, you wouldn't even know I'm not a native. I mean, Miss, would you...

The Girl already has her eyes closed.

GIRL

Go ahead.

MANJU

If I bloody well say so, then it bloody well is so. Those bloody people. No bloody manners. Now open your bloody eyes and look at me, I said...

The girl opens her eyes and smiles.

GIRL

You're bloody perfect.

MANJU

(giggling) Thank you, thank you, Miss. The hundreds of times I have practiced bloody, I can't even tell you, can't even count...

GIRL

Try.

MANJU

Twenty times a day, every day for a week - that makes twenty into five... No, wait... regular week is seven days, so that is twenty into...

A GUNSHOT offstage followed by a recognizably Palestinian SONG like "Wayn A Ramallah." The Girl and Manju listen.

MANJU

You want me to change the channel, Miss? I can't stand these shouting-bouting movies.

GIRL

That's the news, Manju.

MANJU

Same thing, Miss, all doom and gloom, kill this, win that, shoot this, save that.

The Girl is silent.

MANJU

Close your eyes, Miz. I'll take off the mask now.

The Girl closes her eyes. Manju takes a cotton pad from her pocket and scrapes the mask off the girl's face, in smooth, lulling strokes. The Girl's head drops and she snores for a few seconds, then starts and opens her eyes.

GIRL

(softly) Turn up the volume, Manju.

MANJU

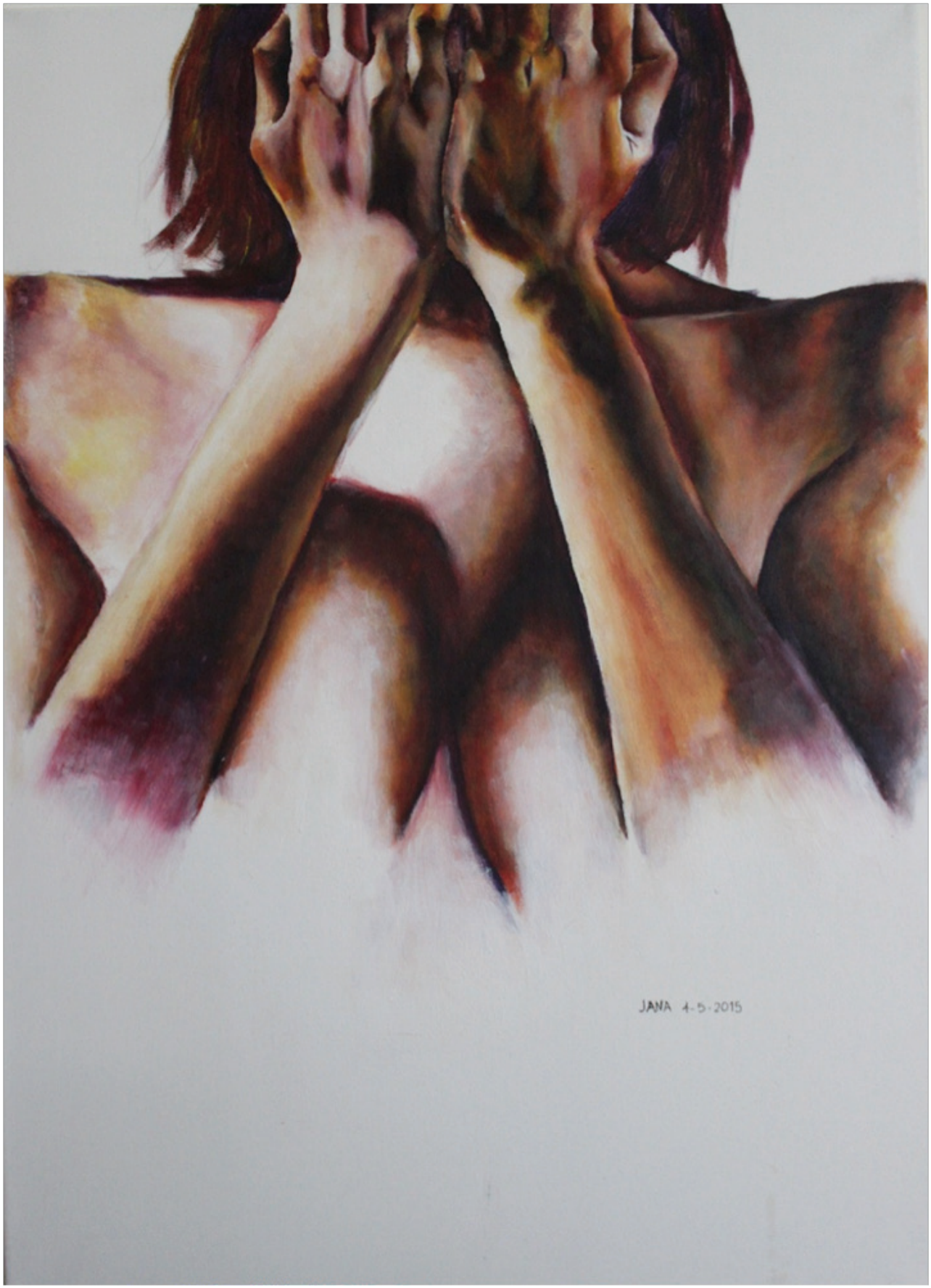
What?

She stops cleaning the girl's face.

GIRL

I said, go make it louder.

Manju drops the cotton pad on the table, rises and walks off stage. The SOUNDS of the SONG RISE LOUDLY. The Girl picks up the cotton and finishes cleaning her own face, till all traces of the mask are completely gone. As if looking in the mirror, she inspects her face. A harsh SPOTLIGHT finds her, and illuminates her, blinding. She begins coughing. The MAN enters.



Seek - acrylic on canvas - 50 x 70 cm
by JANA ARIDI

TRAPPED

By Farheen B. Khan

I wake up to hear tiny birds chirping in the birch tree outside my wide bedroom window. It overlooks the lakes, imported plants and private swimming pools of Al Barari; an exclusive estate sheltered by lush forestry and unparalleled views of Dubai's skyline. I lean back against the decadent headboard, ordered in especially from Milan, and observe the fissured ceiling tiles above my head; they're sliced in two by the early rising sun. I feel the warmth of my sleeping fiancée line the skin of my twenty-one-year-old body and shiver despite the heat.

I was raised in a conservative Catholic family in the North East of England, thus moving in with an Egyptian Muslim living in the Middle East was quite a departure from my primary upbringing. I'm the eldest of three girls and had always lived a sheltered life. Having lost our father to cancer at an early age, we were left in the care of my mother who found comfort in what could only be described as 'religious fanaticism'. The world and everything in it housed only evil. It was the reason my sisters and I were home-schooled. We followed a curriculum of Bible study and psalms, coupled with hymns and recitation. This was our routine for six hours a day and our lunch consisted of two pieces of unbuttered bread (butter was gluttonous).

My mother claimed school was not a place for good Catholic girls and expanding the mind with 'modern-day-thinking' was the same thing as inviting in the devil himself. A couple of years into our home-schooling regime, the local education board called us in for an independent assessment. My sisters and I were three years behind our peers and the board threatened to put us into the custody of social services, accusing my mother of child neglect. She, of course saw it as the devil's work but enrolled us into a Catholic school that very week. She devised a plan to break us free but was hospitalised for detaining a Jehovah's Witness not soon after. She believed the Witness was the devil in disguise.

At school, I learnt much more than psalms. I was introduced to things like the radio and television. I learnt about boys and where babies came from (not from storks); not to mention fashion, cigarettes and lipstick. I learnt about love and literature, losing myself in the romanticism of Austen, Bronte and Keats' words. I substituted one fictional world for another, not knowing the danger of my actions.

I get out of bed and pad across the tiled floor with my naked feet. I can hear the words my mother would have spat at me for such negligence ('barefoot makes way for worms') and I kick my slippers away in retaliation. I hear my fiancée stir in the silk bed sheets and pause until his breathing settles back into an even rhythm. I allow the cool stone of the floor underneath my feet to bring my temperature down and tiptoe across the room and slide open the mammoth glass balcony doors. I wrinkle my toes at the touch of the hot balcony surface and balance my weight onto the back of my heels.

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars–their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Revelation 21.8," I hear my mother say.

I ignore the voice and hold onto the warm railing, dropping my head back into an ustrasana yoga posture to iron out the kinks in my neck. I arch my back like a cat and feel every muscle in my spine unravel.

"The sexually immoral will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur," she repeats.

I close my eyes and see swirly patterns underneath the reds of my eyelids. I wait for the light-headedness to pass and take a deep breath in, filling my stomach with oxygen until it bulges out like a pregnant woman's. I clear my mind and the sun drinks in my shadow, warming my insides. I stretch my arms out and lean as far back as my spine allows.

"Bit early for yoga isn't it, Charlie?"

I jump, startled by the interruption and ping open my eyes. I'm temporarily blinded by the sun and spin around to see Ali standing behind me in nothing but a tan and boxer shorts. I blush despite myself.

Ali was an 'entrepreneur' when we met and worked between Dubai, England and Germany. He'd tried to explain his business to me but I'd got lost in his words of mergers, acquisitions and restructuring. I'd studied Literature at a small unknown college and commercial talk was alien to me. Ali had been staying in the area for work and that was how our paths crossed. I'd seen him a few times in the café next door to my college and caught him staring at me. I recalled feeling a small-redness creep up my neck and subsequently pollute my cheeks. In an attempt to avoid his gaze, I'd keep my nose buried in Austen's Mansfield Park, a novel which reinforced decorum and strict social rules. No doubt Austen would agree that staring was just plain rude. He'd approached me and sat down at my table before I had a chance to object. He was nine years older than I, which meant nine years more experienced.

"Just stretching. I don't think I've adjusted to this place yet."

He nods and I wrap my arms around myself.

"A man can divorce a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, Deuteronomy 24:1," mother says. "When he finds the Lord's way, he will leave you. You are living in sin. You must repent."

I force my eyes shut.

"To be expected, Charlie. You've only been here two months," he says, stepping forward and pulling me into a hug.

Two months? That's half the length of our entire relationship.

"'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one', Matthew 6:13," my mother says.

Sweet Jesus! I travelled to the other side of the world to get away from her! To run away to a man who adores me, who gives me whatever I want, whenever I want it. But my mother's voice still outshines his and it follows me everywhere. Every moment is haunted.

"What's wrong?" Ali asks. His forehead wrinkling in concern. "Is it the old battle-axe again?"

I flinch at the use of the term.

"No, no," I say, stepping back and looking at his dark and beautiful face. I reach up and run my fingers through his black-wiry hair. "Nothing like that, I just got a chill that's all."

"In this heat?" he asks, narrowing his eyes like arrow slits. "Really Charlie, you've got to leave her behind. It's not healthy."

He turns away and takes a swig from his water bottle, which he'd looped around his little finger. I could tell he was annoyed.

"I have left her behind," I reply. "I haven't thought of her in ages. The last time was, oh, I don't even remember—"

"Last night Charlie," he interrupts. "You were calling out her name and reciting some weird Bible stuff in your sleep."

I feel the familiar red creep up my neck and colour my face. The heat from the blazing sun is complicit in my embarrassment.

"Charlie, there's nothing wrong with having demons," he says. "You're twenty one, still young and healthy. You'll bounce back. But you need to face them."

"This is not wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic, James 3:15," she says.

"I don't have demons! Why would I have demons? I do not have demons, Ali! I'm perfectly fine!"

I step back through the balcony doors and into the coolness of the air-conditioned bedroom. The perspiration on my back immediately turns into a wet patch and I feel the icy floor against the palms of my feet.

Ali remains on the balcony, over-looking the forestry in front of him. I watch him exhale and drop his head low so it hangs over the balcony edge.

"The demons begged Jesus, 'If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs', Matthew 8:31," the voice says.

"Just leave me alone mother! You're not real. You're up here!" I shout, pointing to my head.

"Will you send your demons to the pigs Charlotte?" she says.

"Stop haunting me! You're dead," I cry.

"An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs, Corinthians 7:34," she says. "But you are concerned only with the earthly needs of your desires."

I flop down onto the bed and cover my head with a pillow. I'd convinced myself this was the world I wanted to live in.

A place so remote and removed from my old life that my past would never catch up with me. But, I know I'm living a fantasy.

The past knows not of country borders or of years gone by. It doesn't recognise life changes or other people. I was living the romanticised version of my life. Everything was a pretty shade of rose; I'd found my Mr. Darcy and I was his Elizabeth Bennet. This tale was supposed to be my happily-ever-after. But unlike me, my past was no fool. It saw straight through my false-truths and remained unconvinced with the life I was trying to lead. It pushed past my tense smiles and staged embraces, my dinner parties and posh dresses. It carried my mother's words high up into the sky and rained them down on me like angry thunderbolts. My mother would follow me everywhere and there was nothing I could do to change it.

Would I ever be free of her? Was I lying to myself, and to Ali? He was the future I ran to with open arms, but my past pulled me back. It held onto my ankles and dragged me back kicking and screaming to the small village in North East England. I'd see myself in a white cotton dress, lined up for Bible recitation with my two younger sisters. How could I ever be free of that?

I throw the pillow onto the floor and stare out to Ali on the balcony. I don't know what's worse; being trapped with the woman who'd broken my soul, or trapping someone else and breaking his?

"WITH THE CHILDREN"

The Sun, when we meet, sits in our long speeches
And cleanses us of our wounds, our sorrows, our laments;
So also the Sun and the Stars
At the banquet-table of the grandees where
Red epaulettes are pinned to our left shoulders –
Beautiful, like crimson flowers,
Or burning, like flames.
The Sun, my dear children,
Plays a song among the date-palms:
It is like the coming of the Messiah
Who can wipe away fatigue from our brows;
And who knows how to dispel the clouds.
It knows that the moment in which we convene…
Is too costly for us, like God in Heaven.
Our Sun comes both by night and by day
To sit in our laps, like children at play.
The Sun, my children, is a tale of which
The elders are ignorant.
For it comes to rest upon the children's outstretched arms
And it comes for us in the moment when we meet.
It comes without obscurity – innocent and strong:
It comes with the children.

QASSIM HADDAD,
TRANSLATED BY DARIUS M. KLEIN

"FROM THE EYE OF THE SUN"

O child of the Sun, who comes from the eye of the Sun -
Stretch out your tawny arms to embrace tomorrow's dawn.
Hold high the crown of your head, which flourishes
Like the freshly watered crops.
And pluck the lyre's strings:
Strings that fear to be touched
And have not yet returned to the world.
O child of the coming day,
The day born from yesterday's wounds,
Take up your father's hammer
And shatter the bonds of ancient decay.
So long as you lie wounded in the streets,
So long as you compose incitements to revolt,
You are no skulker in the back alleys…
Now you write of the coming forth
Of the one who shall return;
As long as the keenness of your vision prevails,
Beat down the old ways with your hammer,
Restrain the assassin's dagger,
And affix these things into the eye
Of the one who fears the Sun –
O child who is to come.

QASSIM HADDAD,
TRANSLATED BY DARIUS M. KLEIN

PEER GYNT
By Omar Khalifa

My childish dream for the final years of my life will see me living and working in a peripheral area by the sea where it rains a lot. There is a three-lane street with short buildings on either side, and I'll have a perfect job that allows me a couple of hours in the morning to sit down at a nearby coffee place. I'll wake up, uphold my routine with clockwork precision, and head out to sit on the farthest stool - the same stool every day - at the nearly-empty coffee place tended by a thirty-something woman who's tired of bullshit. By then I will have been enough environmentally-aware to have been done with print newspapers and I'll only read the news on an app on my smart phone. I'll do the same thing every day: First the coffee, black and without sugar, then a cigarette outside to the right of the door before I get back inside to order whatever it is they have on their menu that I like and will continue to like. I'll have that, ask for the bill and pay it, then I'll leave to do a mysterious, unglamorous job that involves writing reports on static affairs. Perhaps my job title will be Junior Static Affairs Specialist, and perhaps I'll have been junior for years.

I'll have a few party-animal friends with whom I'll go out every so often to get shit-face drunk. Other than that, I'll spend every evening reading and pursuing scholarly goals that involve learning Latin and minding my own business. There will be no woman, but there will be the occasional getting-in-touch with someone I care about very much. Some weekends may go rogue, and I may end up more drunk than I had intended, and I may end up thinking about my many past lives, but I'll get over it in the morning on the farthest stool at the nearly-empty coffee place, just like I always do.

The barista may be bored at one point and may ask where I'm from, and I'll say I'm from Port-Said. She'll say oh, where is that? I'll say Egypt. She'll say she's been to Egypt in 2008 and that she loved the Colossi of Memnon. She'll have a hard time remembering the name of the dish before I casually say koshari. One day she'll open up and say a thing or two about a child or two, or an abusive man or two, still engulfed in the lightness of the street and the city and the weather, and I'll say something reassuring - but not too reassuring - before asking for the bill.

I'll suffer from a sexy terminal disease that doesn't have visible symptoms. I'll go out less often and recede to my place - a studio or a one-bedroom with the least furniture and details necessary. Then one day I won't show up anywhere, and they'll have to break open the door and find me lying in a state. They'll look around for evidence and will find nothing. They'll look around for meaning and will find nothing, save for a last will and testament insisting that the funeral service be done by the funeral service employees. They'll inform a distant relative who will then decide to sell the old house. My old books will be put in a canister, and someone will push the canister far below the bed of a foreign house.

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Omdurman, Sudan

Draped head to ankle in a thobe of striped colors,
Fazila walks among mingling odors, through stalls
where fish lay drying in baskets. Above her
hang crocodile belts and bound grasses, crafts
created from date palms. She turns her nose
from vats of garlic to face ripe, plump mangoes,
stacked sacks of Kenana sugar, and toiletries.

While women huddle to make their selections
from bins of misshapen peppers,
Fazila, undetected, slips Haloderm soap into her bag,
determined to rid herself and her young husband
of the darkness of her face.

Though he has denied her wish
to purchase lightening products,
she notices how his eyes linger
on the faces of women with skin as fair as
elephant tusk.
Whenever Fazila comes to market, she sees
that stunning model on the billboard
her larger-than-life face
shades lighter than her own shoulders.

Today, among the hum of tribal dialects
a woman's lilting British voice, "Coppertone?
Doesn't anyone here sell suntan lotion?"
Fazila's eyes catch the swish of her light hair,
shopkeepers shaking their heads,
their eyes flitting
like the underbellies of toads.

Fazila rushes out to where she can see
that billboard model

one last time
before returning
the Haloderm soap
and wiping her hands
of any residue.

MARSHA MATHEWS

EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH FATHERS WARN

Alexandria, Egypt, 200 A.D.

Women who frizzle their hair and anoint their cheeks
open themselves to an insidious coil
that unwinds stealthily, inches toward the heart, lays low.

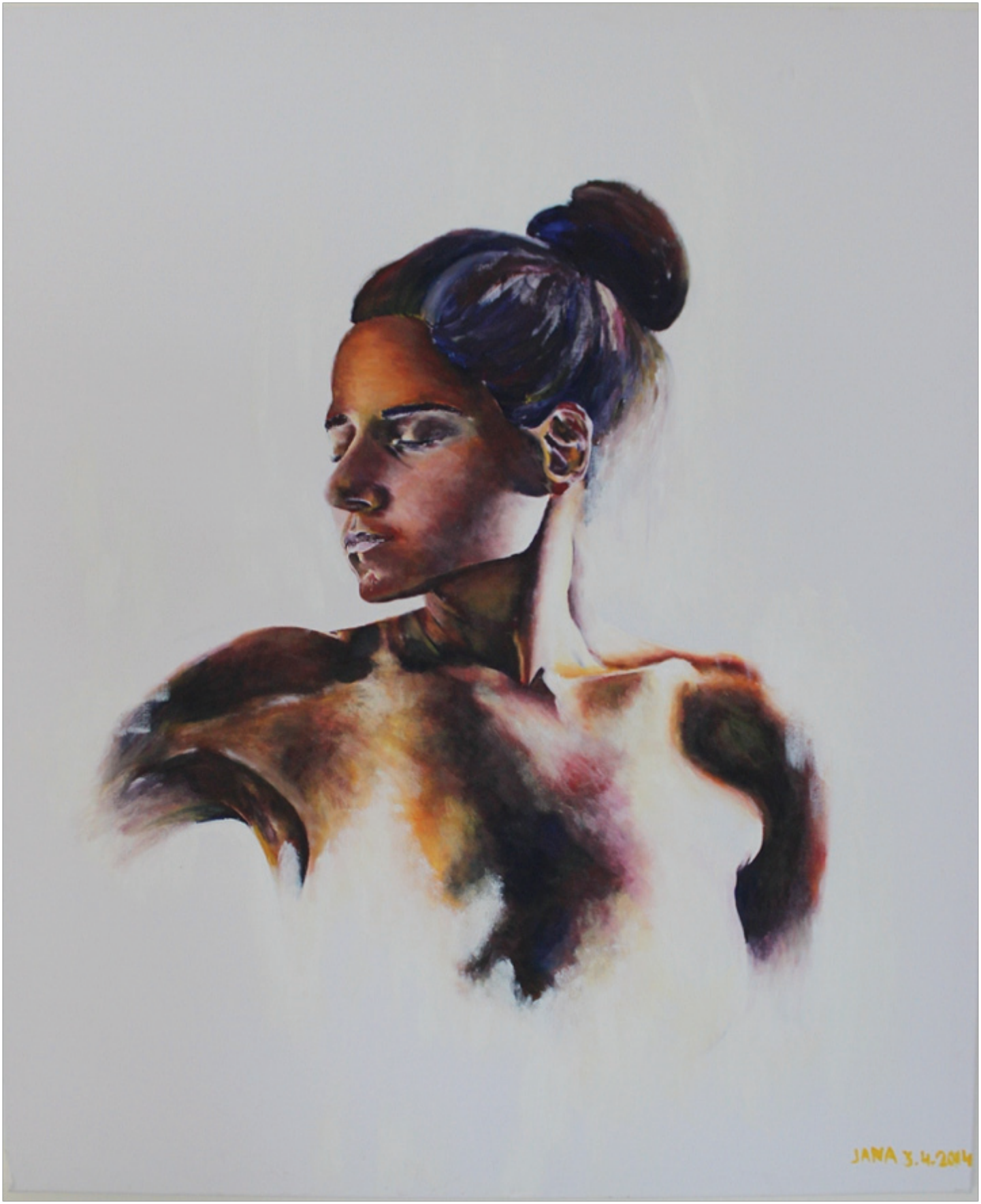
The gray hair, golden? the tired eyes, painted?
Yes, these women smile and chatter. But do they not
forget to shake the rugs
rinse the plates,
tend the arbor?

At dawn, they primp, rack, plaster
themselves with curious washes and creams.
Afternoons, they sew gold fringe onto hems
or lapis lazuli baubles into brooches,
while their children crawl at their feet.

These women do not see the frowns
behind their husband's facial hair.
These women who adorn the body
adore the body

flatten grace.

MARSHA MATHEWS



Still - acrylic on canvas - 120 x 100 cm
by JANA ARIDI

DEMAGOGUE

The lie spread from his lips and tongue
like a sweet syllable and it spread
from his fingertips like rays of light

and it spread from his legs and hips like music
and it spread from his skin like a pungent odor.
And then it spread from window to window,

like a piece of blue sky, and then it walked
over the river and then it strutted through town
clicking its taps on the pavement, and then

the wind carried the news of the lie
from clothesline to clothesline, from tent to tent.
It flew from the mouths of men and women

hunching over their work tables, flew
from the lips of cats stalking squirrels,
flew from the jaws of spiders,

from their sticky legs, flew from the nests of crows
over ragged rooftops. It flew at the sun, bursting
into bright fears, its bitter truth showering over us.

JEFF FRIEDMAN

HIS RIGHT PATH

I
No shortcuts: bushes bristle
above thin black hoses.
But branches dangle
rasping heads of sidewalk strollers.
Man's meant for cars,
wombs rich with wheels.

II
Drive as if elbowing
through a crowded souk,
sidling from lane to lane,
bullying slow fools
with high-beam blinks
to make way, make way,
you're off to another mall.

III
Money, yes, but prayer too:
speed for the space
closest to the hurrahing mosque,
dodge the underpaid illegal
racing on sandy feet.
Calling out five times each dazzling day,
Allah wants us all lined up for his right path.

J TARWOOD

WAITING FOR WORDS

Waiting for words, I live
in rooms. Bitterly broken rocks
kneel for a rosewood Buddha,
European birds prance through
imported African trees,
singing up invisible frontiers.
There is the feel of not to feel,
a garden of stone for what couldn't wait.
Contempt chews away at me, a dog's rubber bone.

I am my father's son, blood unblessed,
world a hex. Father: he carried letters
to big houses in a little cold town.
Books & beer were his gangplanks to sleep.
No friends, no kin: nothing to say:
I won't have anyone thinking better of me.

Waiting for words, I remember
what I always remember:
All that is mine, beloved & pleasing,
will change & vanish.

I miss the good witches, those lovely girls
generously in the streets while I got by
in torpid trailers. They sniffed
waste when I wanted them.
They wanted futures: I camped
on the minute's footbridge.

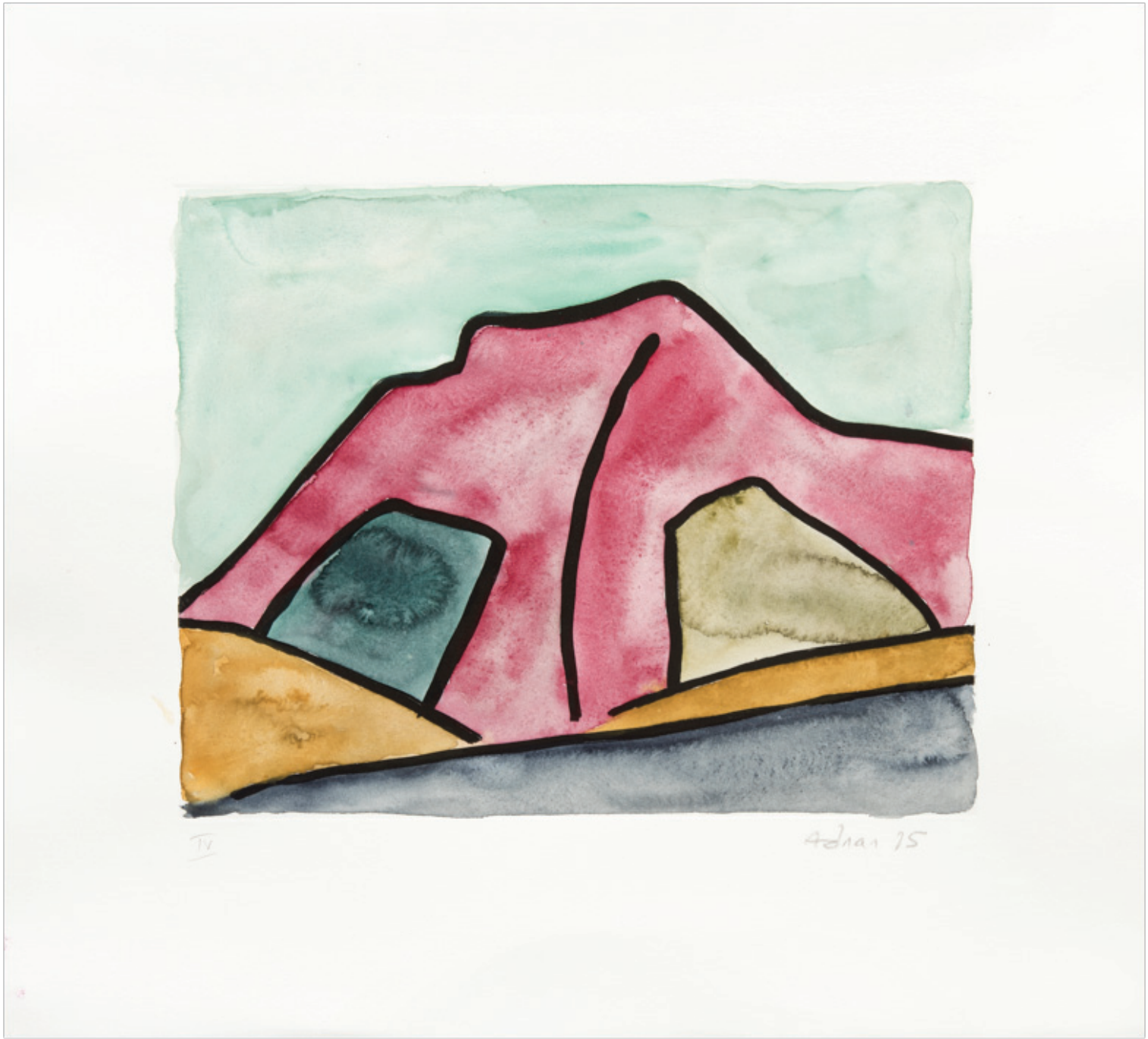
Nevertheless, nevertheless, nevertheless:
What heart they gave me, what heart they gave
a heartless world: permission to live granted!

All's a wrangle & bargain now;
our souk never closes.

Waiting for words, I am old,
forgetful of delight, walking backwards,
waving goodbye. I read math dreams
of alternate worlds, every road taken,
every choice blossoming into consequence.
Pretty to think so, so I think so,
sadly, longingly, as if vanishing could be wished away.

Waiting for words, I wait for you, goddess of ghosts,
who made me, a strange poor boy,
to sing away invisible frontiers.

J TARWOOD



Montagne I Aquarellé, 2015
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

RONIT AND JAMIL (an excerpt)
by Pam Laskin

1.You Don't Understand

I began
in black stones
and subterranean waters.

Allah spoke to me and said,
"claim this soil
its heart
beats in your breast!"

I know the Qur'an
is just a book,
but it is here
the Prophet Mohammed
made his journey
to the throne of God.

2.It's Complicated

I am not a terrorist
not my Abi either,
I pray to Allah
to ban the evil spirits
waiting bodiless at the door.
Yet everywhere I turn
a checkpoint
so I can't leave
nor can I stay.

3.Through the Window

Angry wasps
seek vengeance
under the cow-shed
in the red sky,
as Abi
grabs the mother
smothered in grief
while her baby wails wildly,

yet I know
there is a better way.
Ronit has shown me
the nest opens
if you allow it,
and it is possible
to lift your head above it
and see a sky
without rockets.

4. Jamil

I see your face
in the mirror
of the water-
sad eyes wandering
a lost fish,

and I say
this water is ours
no sign says
Palestinians here
Israelis here
stay away,

so I swim
towards you
and with you
away from the underwater
ugly currents.

5. Shihab (*)

So be it
I am the shihab,
still, there is a sky out there-Ronit
and what a fool
not to plant
in this garden of goodness,
discard
the sheets of hate
you have all tried
to plant in me:
my people and her people, too.

(*) Shooting star

1. Where I'm From

Trees
don't remember their roots
and hilltops
don't remember their hills.
I am the only son, half of a twin
who doesn't hear
the sighs of stars
or the hunger of the day.
I am from the love of school
and poetry
from the river, words and sky.
I am Doctor Assad's son
the one who lives in Ramallah
and East Jerusalem,
the holiest of cities.
It's strange to have two homes
and still feel like I have none.
I eat humus and kunafe nablusia
and listen to Firouz,
while I play on my ouds
and strum away
the sorrow.

4. No More

No more
tender-boned
Jamil. No more.
So tired
of being a sweet boy
like a shepherd
who herds his sheep.
Soon I will be
a ram
who watches
"the orchard hang out its lanterns.
The dead stumbling by
in shrouds.
Nothing can be bound
or imprisoned." (*)
Not me.

(*) Rumi, THE BOOK OF LOVE

Psychoacoustics no. 1
BY MARK TARDI

CITY OF NO FEAR

Kuwait

Sometimes out walking I would find myself
in a dead end, look up and see I was surrounded
by high rise apartments, look down and see
the dirt at the road's end, the broken cars,
laundry on the lines outside the unwashed windows,
the dumpster overflowing and crawling with cats,
no children at play under the simmering midday sun
and no way to turn that doesn't lead deeper
into the dead end. Then someone would walk
beside me and we'd go on in silence between buildings
until we reached the next street and at different paces
begin to disappear from each other. I have a woman
thinks I'm all right. I ball up my fists
when I wander down an empty street. I check out
my badass self in the shop windows I pass,
an old man now in a knapsack and cataract
sunglasses over bifocals, the heavy ice
and fresh fish I carry home from the market in one hand,
a new blue checked short sleeve shirt I bought at the store
in the other, while all the taxis tap their horns to see if I need a ride.

STEVEN SCHREINER

LESSONS

The students have become bored, unruly, seekers of new ideas. In this country where there is no Western history, no Greek mythology, or Roman classics to discuss, my students will soon ask, Is money the only reason for math? No, I will say, math deals with integers, calculations, measurements of spices, cups of sugar, and how far men will go to obtain such quantities in nautical miles. And when I return to the long division written on the board, one child will say to another, You are a dog. And the other will respond, Your father is a donkey. And I will have to report them both to the principal. Then the class will take sides and split into two groups as they head to recess. And one will return after hitting a boy, and I will ask him why he did it, and he will say, They said I pray like a khalifah. Later in the week, the students will ask, Why do we need to learn math? And I will say, To calculate the distance between one another. And one will say, He means, we need to give each other space. But before I can answer, the principal will invite us all into the multipurpose room to talk of healers and damagers. And he will stand two children up and say, If he does this, and this one does that, are they healers or damagers? And the children will answer all the questions correctly, and we will return having missed our period of math and most of English. And one student will ask, Why do we need to learn rules for English? Another will request, Why don't you teach us history? And the class will shout, Yeah, history! And I will say, You are learning history. And another will ask, What do you call our history? I will pause to think—and the class will demand to be taught history. So I will tell them of Columbus, and they will all listen intently. Then one will ask, What happened to the people? What happened to their lands? And I will say, The Spanish took them. And another will shout, Columbus wasn't a healer—he was a damager! And the class will all chuckle, then ask, What do you call our history?

CHAUN BALLARD

FALAFEL

Chickpeas
herbs and spices
capsize in a sea of
oil until deep-fried vessels
emerge—

an entire fleet

CHAUN BALLARD

CALLIGRAM: OLIVE TREE

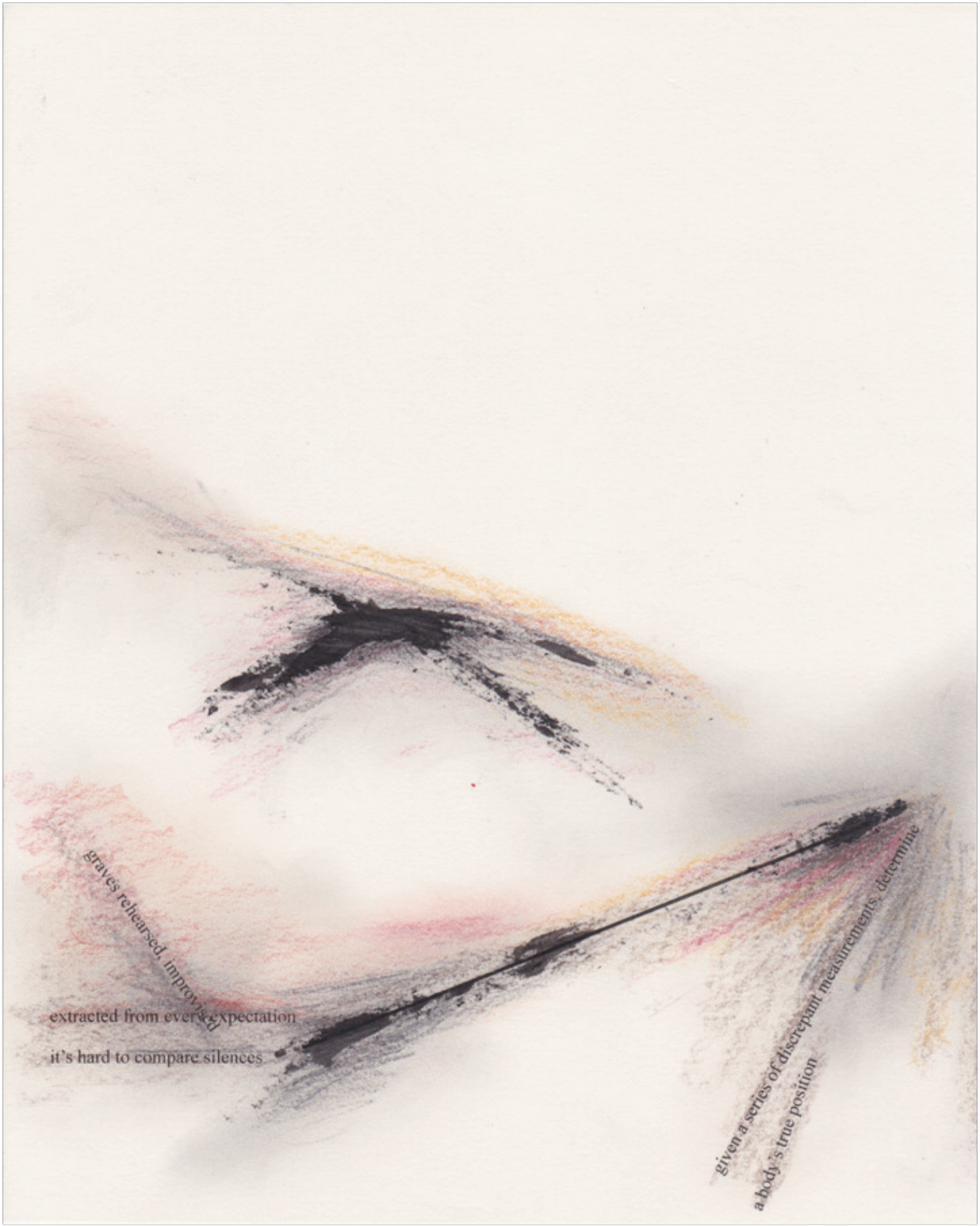
I have seen olive trees
folded and twisted into knots,
as though
God
were
trying
to
wring out
the last drops of peace

CHAUN BALLARD

STARS

Name was
that which came in-
to them—when, around us,
darkness could be occupied or
explained.

CHAUN BALLARD



Psychoacoustics no. 3
BY MARK TARDI

TRAVELER

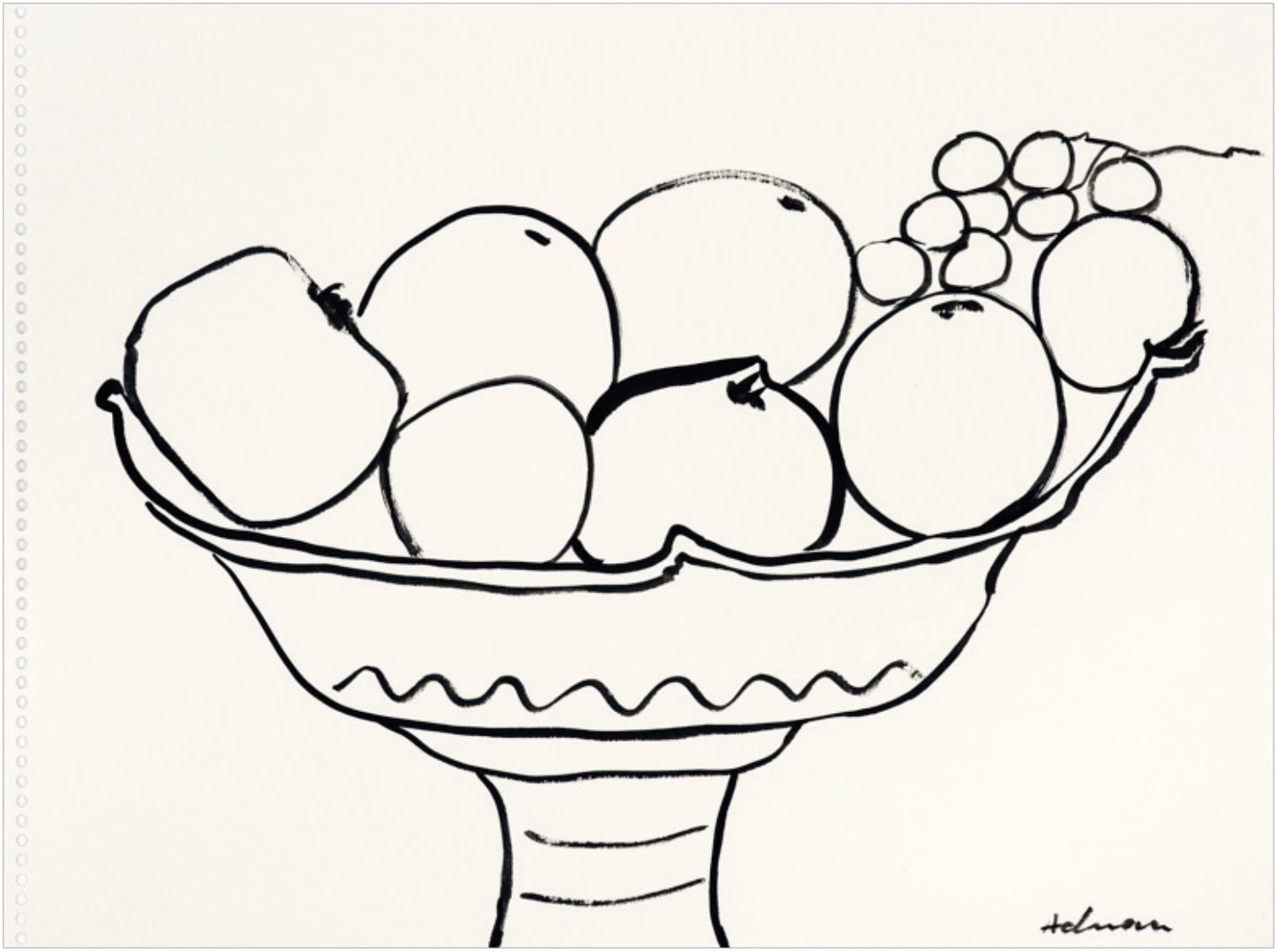
When you visit the dead
do not rely on easy charm
imagine instead
that you have traveled a long white
road
an uncertain coast
whose inhabitants the rocks
and whose soldiers the cactus
in their flat green fatigues
are alert to your presence
your wish to go on living.
All the usual anxieties
are relevant: Have I the right
papers, and where are they placed,
at what moment should I produce
the photo of my father? Is today
back in the world of neighborhoods
Tuesday of which I was unaware;
last evening when we leaned forward
appearing to wish to kiss
did I seem as the light reflected
the sheen of her skin
to hesitate? In which of my pockets
have I carried small tokens
of appreciation, the gifts well-loved
in the land of no more,
the batteries of devotion,
mysterious motors of continuing
affection, bouncing balls
that can never get lost no matter
how unpredictable their exertions.
There are no more disappointments
and yet you find yourself wondering
do medications work here,
is the hospital safe;
are there rules;
is there prayer; should I
look for my father?

STEVEN SCHREINER

POEM

This withered leaf
in a box of figs
resembles the one Adam
wears in paintings. It's
delicate and curled
imposing modesty. Why
place figs in the garden
to be split
by a bird's beak
and traveled by ants?
What did Adam think
the first time taking
her breast in his hand:
didn't he confuse that
tense response
with worship, as later
the people did with gold?
Around them in the outer
world, as when lovers are done
and the day resumes
its machinery
without tedium because
love exists, prey
took prey, and clouds rose
like wreaths around the new
sun,
and a cry rang out. You mean
to tell me they
were not awed by that,
not yet frightened
of everything they had
to lose, as though
beauty were not punishment
enough?

STEVEN SCHREINER



Untitled, 1991, Ink on Paper, 24 x 32 cm
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

"MORE THAN EVER, OUR ARAB WORLD IN PARTICULAR, NEEDS POETRY AND THE ARTS, NEEDS EVERY FORM OF THE AFFIRMATION OF LIFE."

Interview with Etel Adnan

BY REWA ZEINATI

RZ: Etel Adnan, you are a multidimensional writer and artist; an author, a novelist, a poet, and a cultural critic. You have written documentaries and operas, short stories and plays and you are a visual artist in different media. You were born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1925. You studied philosophy at the Sorbonne, U.C. Berkeley, and at Harvard. In 1972, you returned to Beirut and worked as cultural editor for two daily newspapers—first for Al Safa, then for L'Orient le Jour. Your novel Sitt Marie-Rose, published in Paris in 1977, won the France-Pays Arabes award and has been translated into ten languages. At least eighteen works have been published in English. They include The Arab Apocalypse (Post-Apollo Press, 1989); Sea and Fog (Nightboat Books, 2012), winner of the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Poetry and the California Book Award for Poetry. In 2011, you received Small Press Traffic's Lifetime Achievement Award. And, in 2014, you were awarded one of France's highest cultural honors: l'Ordre de Chevalier des Arts et Lettres. What drives you on?

Etel Adnan: What drives me on? I really don't know. Have never been asked such a question ever. I was a turbulent child and remained a restless person. When I enter a house I go immediately to the windows. And I remember when I was about 18 and I had a Russian friend in Beirut (there were many Russian refugees from WWI and their children) and I told her that we were living always projected into the future - a future with no idea or image attached to it - and she agreed with a great melancholy about her. My encounter with poetry came about the same time and age and I thought we were born for reading poetry. Nothing else mattered, of course there were the great French poets such as Rimbaud, Verlaine, Gerard de Nerval, Baudelaire; they really never left me.

What really drives me is the history of our area, the Arab World, and the Islamic World, and mainly because the trouble in them never stops. It's contemporary History that writes my books.

There are two other major concerns of mine. One is love, the failure in love, due to so many things, and the fact that the first person we really loved haunts forever. There is also my love for Nature, my need for it. So all this can keep me going.

RZ: In solidarity with the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), you began to resist the political implications of writing in French and became a painter. In your own words, "painting became a new language and a solution to my dilemma: I didn't need to write in French anymore; I was going to paint in Arabic." Then, through your participation in the poets' movement against the Vietnam War (1959-1975), you began to write poetry in English and became, "an American poet." What does it mean for you to be self-labeled, or thought of, as an American poet?

EA:- I lived the Algerian war of independence while living in California. I was teaching philosophy, and following the news. It seemed to me then, and I think I was right, that the loss of Algeria was going to be a defeat like the loss of Palestine. Those were the Abdel Nasser years and the dream of Arab unity was a real goal. It remains that it has been a positive model for the Third World, an incredible achievement.

I felt great being an "American poet", I had a home.

RZ: What makes good art/good writing?

EA: What makes good writing? Many, many things... you can't tell, in a way. It's also related to the times we live in. But The "Iliad" is still great writing! There is something that the reader recognizes, the soundness of a rhythm, something convincing, I don't know. But there is no proof. You do what you can... but there will always be some people that will like it and some that won't.

RZ: The sun is a central subject in your work. Is it your biggest inspiration? What inspires you?

The sun was a powerful element of my childhood in Beirut. As I was an only child, the world surrounding me was of great importance. The sun particularly, as it is very present over there, and the city had low houses, three floors at most, and I was aware of shadows too... I remember trying to look straight at the sun very often, and my eyes [would] burn and blur, and also in the summer I don't know how my mother found one of those colonial headgear, all painted white that I saw later in pictures of mostly British people in the colonies and I was then aware that the sun was a very dangerous being and I had to deal with it. So the sun is an omnipresent being in our countries, both beneficial and dangerous. No wonder our ancient gods were led by sun-gods, the pharaohs as well as the Babylonians had as a supreme god, a solar deity.

RZ: You have a way with writing that may appear, to the naïve mind, to be dizzyingly simplistic, yet, in fact, it is superbly full and brilliantly philosophical. I'm always struck by how your lines or sections end; you simply know when to stop writing and let the image or word resonate with the reader; always at the exact right moment, with the exact right word, not a moment too soon or too late. As simple as, "In the morning they all went to the small cages they call their offices. Some of them made telephone calls." What is your secret?

EA: We are in a period of cut and dry poetry, of minimalism; it has become natural to avoid developement in our writings. It's both new and very ancient. Look at the Greek pre-Socratics, their thinking is expressed as geometric equations, and it makes it very poetic.

RZ: Is there a difference between poetry and philosophy?

EA: Is there a difference between poetry and philosophy? Yes and no. There used to be a difference in western philosophy. Western philosophy was involved in the search of some truth, of some system explaining reality. From the English philosophers on, the possibility of reaching absolute statements, statements about the absolute, was dimming. But it's Nietzsche [who] demonstrated, or discovered himself that philosophical works are constructions, personal constructions that cannot pretend to be any definitive view of reality. That neared philosophy to thinking, brought it closer to intuition, to sudden "revelation." Heidegger followed that line and ended up asserting that the greatest form of philosophy is to be found in the great poets such as, for Germans, in Hölderlin and Rilke. I find that the great Islamic Sufis are theologians/philosophers/poets, the greatest poets of that world.

RZ: Is one born a political poet? Or is all poetry political? (Or should it be?)

EA: Poetry doesn't need to be political in its subject matter. It's not the subject matter that's important, it's the way you treat it. Of course if you manage to convey the importance of something that gets you, your passion for it, how existential is for example the political/historical situation of your country, or of a country that matters to you, then that text could be poetic. You speak of a rose, or of the situation of Palestine, you can write something that will be a poem. How? It's up to you, and to the reader... But in a way, everything is political, in the sense that everything says something about you that goes beyond the subject matter, and also that whatever we do affects the world, in minute ways generally, invisible ways, but it becomes part of the becoming of everything that is. In that sense, washing your hands is also a cosmic event.

RZ: Is there room for poetry and art in a region bursting with absolute turmoil; where fundamentalism, religious figures and politicians have taken over home and street?

EA: More than ever, our Arab world in particular, needs poetry and the arts, needs every form of the affirmation of life. The forces of death are very active, due to the abysmal mediocrity of our politicians, and also due to outside interferences. So all we have to counterbalance that evil is to be alive, and to sustain life. Poetry, art, is what will remain of these dark period ... I am always comforted by the existence of the great deal of creativity in our countries; they are suffering, but they're going ahead, they're surviving, and much more... we will not go under.

RZ: You mentioned once in an interview that, "It's possible that in the past, unconsciously, people paid less attention to women's work. Things are changing; there are more and more women curators, and more women gallery owners. It doesn't mean that they will automatically pay more attention to women's work, but it's changing. We can't complain." Are things changing fast enough, though, for women writers and artists?

EA: Our region is changing in good directions in spite of all our defeats and destructions. There is a civil society that's

emerging from the ashes of our patriarchal societies. It's a good sign, even if that society is regularly repressed.

RZ: What advice would you give emerging writers and/or artists?

EA: Giving advice is usually a pompous affair. If I have to give one, it is "don't be afraid, go ahead, pay the price it [will] entail, and you will certainly feel free, and probably creative too."

RZ: "Not seeing rivers is also another way of dying." Do you remember where you were or what was happening around you when you wrote this magnificent line?

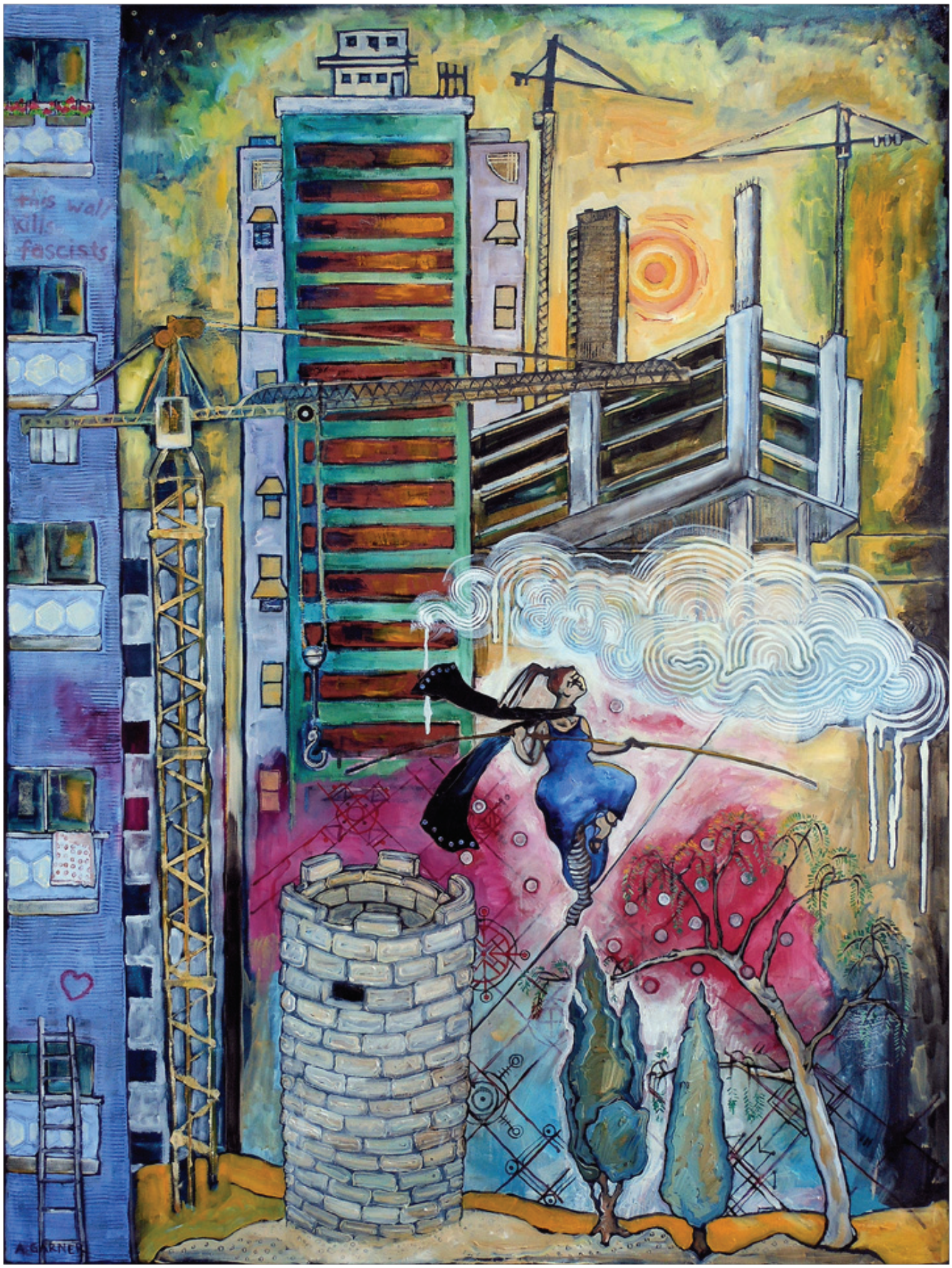
EA: Rivers, oh rivers... I don't know where and when I wrote the line you quote, but it is utterly true... without the sea, the ocean, or a river in my vicinity I am a dying plant.

RZ: What are you working on right now?

EA: Working on what these days? I am painting, mostly. For a whole year, I've had a poem already written, NIGHT, following SEASONS and SEA & FOG and I don't know why I keep it waiting... must reread it carefully and let it go...

RZ: How important are literary magazines, if at all?

EA: Literary magazines are dwindling, for money reasons... and indifference for literature - young people prefer dance, music, where physical goes, but [literary journals] are indispensable... they keep the pulse of the thinking of a society... it takes courage nowadays to run a magazine or a publishing house for poetry and literature in general.



High Wire, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm
BY A. REED GARNER

THE MELANCHOLY OUD

By Sahar Mustafah

As I come through the garage door, I hear the melancholy strings of the oud and I guess it's coming from the soundtrack of an Arabian soap opera my mother's watching on satellite. Quick, rhythmic clapping and another instrument I don't recognize lends its sound, and its melody seamlessly weaves into the thrumming of the oud.

"Allah, allah!" my mother croons, and I realize she's the one clapping. "Ente a'yooni…"

She's singing a ballad from Oum Kalthum—her favorite Egyptian artist. Every time my mother plays her CD she tells me that the entire world was present at Oum Kalthum's funeral in the 1970's, that she even surpassed Gamal Abdul Nasser—Egypt's most beloved president—in attendance by dignitaries from all over the Arab world. I guess she was like the Elvis of her times, or something. To me, her songs all sound the same. The one my mother's singing now is about a woman confessing her forbidden love. I don't think I've ever heard an Arabic song that wasn't about forbidden love, or unrequited love, or love that finally kills you.

From the kitchen, I see the back of a man's head I don't recognize sitting on a loveseat in our family room. His hair is slightly receding in the back so that the finely combed strands are visible lines like black thread against his pale scalp.

Khalo Ziyad is sitting opposite him on the big couch. His eyes are closed as he strums the oud. Seated beside him, my mother blissfully sings with her hand resting on her brother's shoulder. She motions me over without halting and pats the cushion for me to sit down. She winks at me and I'm impressed that none of them has missed a beat with my intrusion.

I feel like I've stumbled onto a secret clan, chanting something mystical. They look hypnotized by the music they're creating that lets them shut out the rest of the world. I suppose it's like the way I feel when I listen to Black Veil Brides; everything around me just fades into the walls and seeps into the floor and I'm just, like, floating on a raft.

The stranger has a weird-looking instrument in the shape of a trapezoid, propped across his thighs, and two metal cases over his fingers that he uses to pluck the strings. It's like a harp resting in his lap.

Almost five minutes pass, which feel like ten or more as I'm waiting for them to complete the ballad. After my mother belts out the final verse, they laugh and clap. Suddenly, they remember me and the stranger pounces with excitement.

"Mashallah, mashallah! Who's this?" the man asks me, setting his instrument on the loveseat before standing up with hand extended. "Where did this lovely lady come from?" It's that funny way of asking, like I'm five years old.

I extend my hand and he grips it tight while talking to my mother and uncle. "She's a pretty one, mashallah! You better keep your eye on her," he says. This is worse than the condescending tone—referring to me in the third person like I can't hear. "She looks just like you, Amina, thirty years ago, mish ah?"

His unkempt beard is speckled with white hairs, and he's got deep grooves on his forehead like bike trails. His eyes are blue and I suddenly remember that he's the one from Khalo Ziyad's story. The rest of his face is dull except for those blue eyes glittering with tiny diamonds. He's much shorter than Khalo and, like, only about an inch taller than me. His palm feels rough like he's spent years scraping it against asphalt.

I try to politely pry my hand from his grip but he's now going crazy over how much I resemble my mother, but declaring how much taller I am and definitely skinnier. She pretends not to hear the part about me being skinnier and keeps smiling.

He finally addresses me. "How are you, dear? I am Waleed." It is Khalo's best friend. I wonder if they can still see in each other's faces—past the disfigurement and deep grooves of worry—how much of the children they used to be scaling the mountains and trekking across narrow valleys.

"Elhamdulillah," I say and tug again to get my hand back.

"Did you know that I grew up with your uncle and mother? We were neighbors. I could see their kitchen from my bedroom." He laughs thunderously and turns to Khalo. "I'd see your father—Allah rest his soul—drinking yogurt right from the bottle."

This prompts another story about my grandfather, and my mother and Waleed laugh so hard there are tears in their eyes. Khalo Ziyad just smiles and nods.

"What good times! Your uncle always led our expeditions, insisted he had a sharper eye for determining the horizon." His head flits back and forth between Khalo Ziyad and me. "Did you tell her about the wadi?"

"Yes," Khalo Ziyad says. I'm getting used to his monosyllabic responses. I wish I could get away with it when the idiots at school ask me questions, or when teachers demand I "elaborate, please" when I've already answered correctly.

"Are you hungry, habibti?" my mother asks. She never fails to ask me about food—with or without company present. Once again, I feel like a little kid.

"No, thanks. I ate at Panera," I tell her.

"I didn't know you played, Khalo," I say, feeling ridiculous because I've only just met him so how would I know anything about him, really? His life is slowly unraveling like unwrapping a present in slow motion. Some parts are dull and expected, and other things are sort of cool surprises.

"Are you joking?" Waleed interjects. "The villagers made sure he was available to play at the wedding suhra before setting a date!" Waleed says. "Do you know what this is, dear?" He picks up his instrument and pulls me down to sit beside him. "We call this a qanoon," he tells me. "It's very del-ee-kate."

I nod and then he slides the instrument, which is like an oversized board game, onto my lap. It has rows of strings attached to tuning pegs on one end. It's actually pretty cool-looking, like an artifact from ancient Egyptian times. He places one of the metal clasps on my forefinger and urges me to pluck a string.

The sound is more twangy than the oud, and softer. Waleed positions my finger on a particular string and he strums away on several at a time. We produce medium to high notes like a mother grieving over the loss of her child. It becomes too intense for me and I abruptly stop.

"That's cool," I say awkwardly and slide the qanoon back to Waleed.

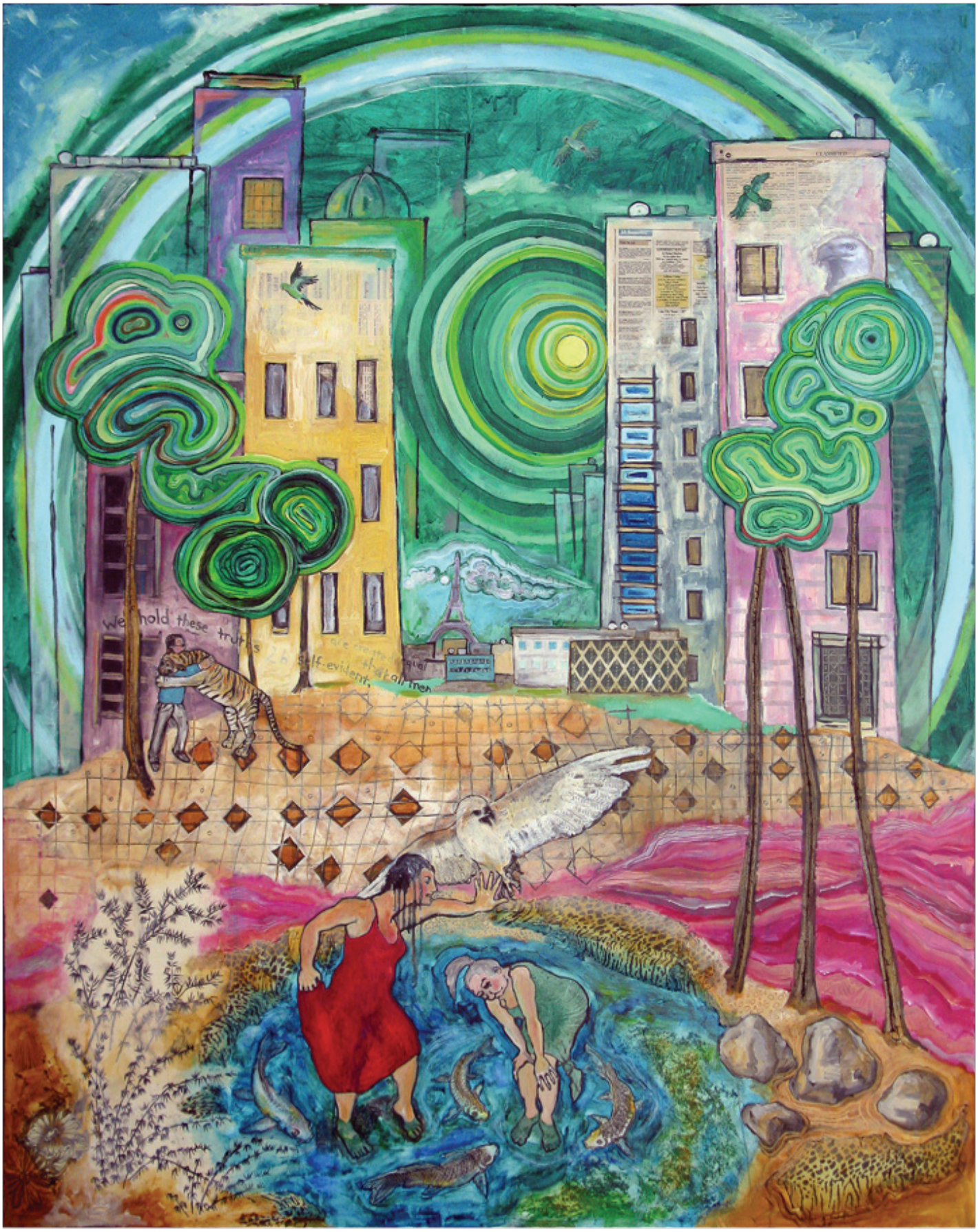
My mother demands they play a song about Jerusalem and I can understand most of the words:

I passed through the streets
The streets of Old Jerusalem
In front of the shops
That remained of Palestine

My mother's face is glistening with perspiration and she clutches a tissue paper and waves it in the air at certain intervals of the song. Waleed taps his shoe as he plays and his metal-protected fingers look like two miniature knights riding across a field.

I watch Khalo Ziyad as he strums his banjo-looking oud, and I'm impressed how effortlessly his fingers move over the strings. His face softens into a serene expression as though the tight fibers that make him smile or frown have gradually collapsed. His eyes are closed and the pulpy flesh temporarily disappears.

Towards the end of a verse, he opens his eyes in the middle of the song and catches me staring. He grins and winks like he's just shared a secret he trusts I'll always keep.



Hold the Truths, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm
BY A. REED GARNER

MOTHER AND THE LOVER'S ROCK

A blind beggar in Beirut
stopped my mother
by the Raouché
where unrequited lovers
used to jump.

She was pale
and very thin,
with a frightening
copper mane.

I wondered if
a spell she'd cast
before to attain
supernatural skills
had gone horribly awry
and this is how
she ended up
blind and destitute.

Did she not know
about the perils
of 'Gods bearing gifts'?

"You are veiled,"
she told my mother,
"And possess
a Kuwaiti citizenship.
Come here,
and I shall unveil
your future."
"No thanks,"
said mother,
"I don't believe
in soothsayers."

"There is greatness in your path!"
She shouted at my mother's back.
"You must not be confused
about your role when the time arrives."

That stopped mother in her tracks.
She glanced at the giant rock
where lovers came to die,
then trotted to the beggar,
who sat cross-legged
with an open palm.

In the car,
mother's eye twinkled with desire
that melted all thoughts
of the civil war
she came to Lebanon
to resolve.

NADA FARIS

HE TRAVELED ON A TRAIN

He traveled with history on a train,
but remembered that the train
was never built in Kuwait,
thus waylaying history. Or,
one version of it, at least.

He traversed lands
that were not his own,
in army uniform, dapper
though creased and crumpled,
his backpack full of energy bars
and batteries. He

was ever so polite,
tipping his beige bent hat
to strangers, smiling, asking
about their names and health

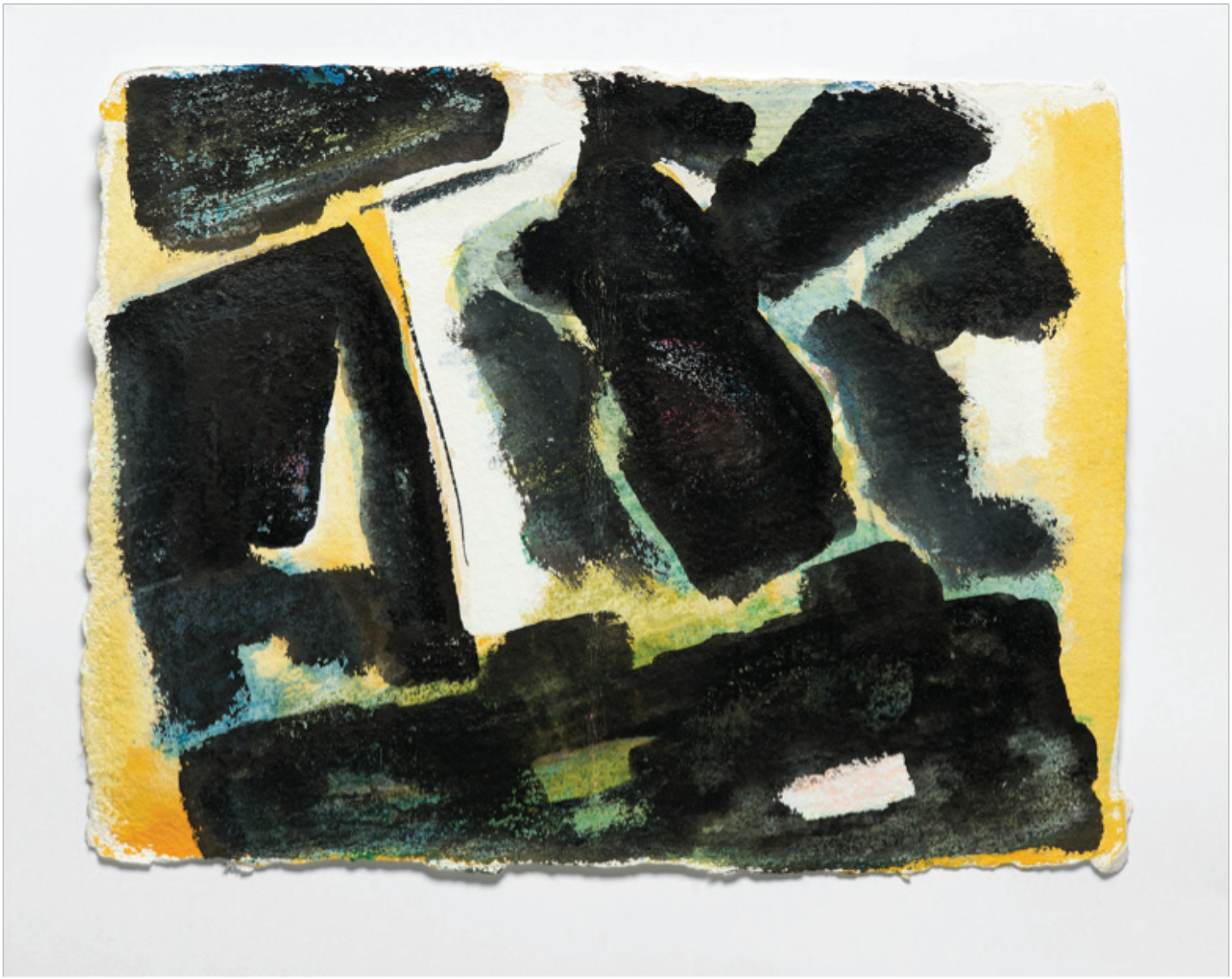
—strangers he would not hesitate
to bomb when elevated
thousands of miles in the air,
and they mere insects crawling
on the planet that gave him
his accent, his burgers, his beard.

He traveled with history on a train,
both passengers without a map,
but you know what he always likes to say,
"If there is a will, there is a way," and Bill
is a captain with orders,
blasting through the multiverse,
the loud air horns warning strangers
from trespassing, a heinous offence,

—strangers whose names he remembers
and to whom he gave out chocolate
and chewing gum and said,
"For your feisty little girls."

He, my captain,
never questions their color
from the air,
black, brown, or gray
are close enough
in a cubical, and besides,
when he divests himself of his uniform,
he retires to his office
to celebrate himself,
and wonders how he
and history
can sell another
50 Shades of Grey,
for our feisty little girls.

NADA FARIS



Untitled, 1996, Watercolour on paper, 25 x 32 cm
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

TERROR/MATHEMATICS

After the beheading of 21 Christian Egyptians in Libya, February 2015

Try calculated, think math.
Capture and + the numbers,
– the Muslims. 21 is what you are

left with, which is 3x7. Any multiple of 3
is blasphemous, is √all evil,
and we will / its neck open.

Islam is an X
in an equation we never
want you to solve. A % of you

will stop eating breakfast. Sure, there is the grief
of the mothers, who will pull at their hair,
+ the fathers, who will cover their faces with dirt,

& this can't be ÷, like ∞,
but who has time for pain>> the sea,
which we will turn red. The killer/killed

ratio is 1:1, + the orator, who names the horror.
Color too, is used in this ∑. Kneel now, face down,
and we will show you DeathOrange.

You can keep your // universe of Love. We ⍰
ourselves to Paradise, which is ⍁ and exact.
It's simple. Try this:

[(Allah + Blood) x (Scream + Akbar)] = Y^{Fear}
and this ⟹ ∄ God here,
but surely, ∃ a Hell.

ZEINA HASHEM BECK

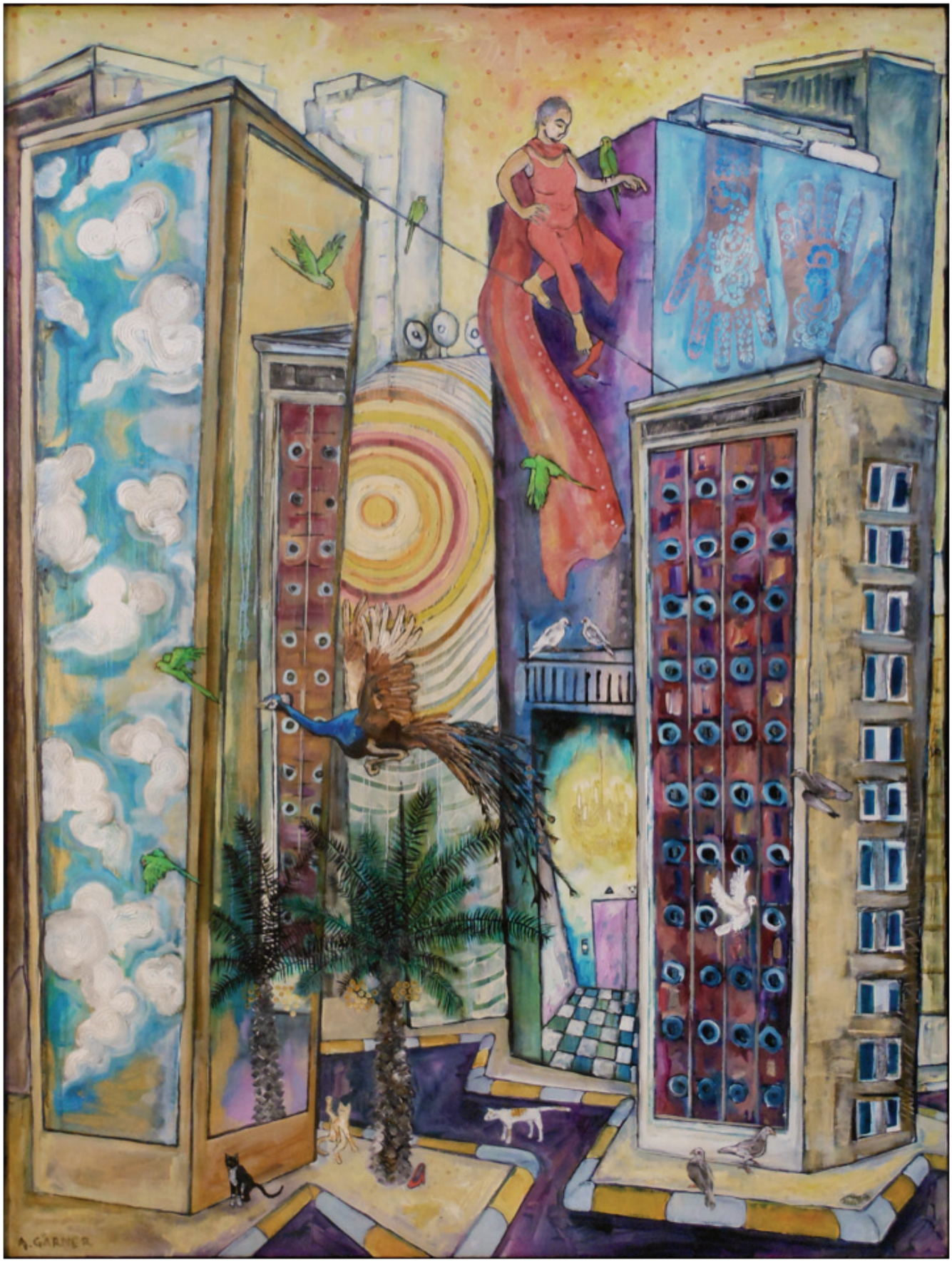
(first published in *One Throne*)

BEIRUT WALL, AUGUST 24, 2015

"There is no wall here," you are told.
"What an imagination. We will pray for you.
There is no wall. Perhaps
you should sleep. Sleep.
Yalla, yalla tnam. We have pills.
Take this in the morning. It will make you
sing. This one here
(take it at night) will burn
like tear gas, and you will stop dreaming
for centuries."

But you take your paint and your shovel, you say,
"There's always been a wall here, with barbwire roots
that smell of money and rust.
I will draw. I will dance. I will dig,
start within my heart."

ZEINA HASHEM BECK



High Wire, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm
BY A. REED GARNER

LOSSES

1.
All those nights we didn't make love
add up to years:
I mourn them in the morning
when a bright sun slaps me awake,
at night under the moon's muted light,
a white lily at a funeral.

2.
Surveying Beirut's cityscape, my eyes trip over
bullet holes, craters in buildings
trying desperately to see things whole.
Purple flowers gather
between cracks, abandoned optimists.
People here age faster,
their hair and nails grow
with a silent knowing.

3.
Nothing surprises me anymore:
the imam has an affair,
the homeless guy in the park
types on a laptop
by his overfull shopping cart.
I once read about a butterfly
that befriended a man, coming back
to see him every day for weeks.
Even planets look like they backtrack
in orbit, as if remembering they left
something behind.

4.
The lost amulet came from Sanaa's
deep labyrinth of sellers and stalls.
Silver hammered in a circle of geometry,
floral, radiating. A sun on my breast.
I wore it like a dog tag: if I die, then please
remember me by this loveliness.
Now I curse the weak link
in that forgotten chain.

5.
After we sign the papers
will we simply shut the door
of that chamber in our hearts?
Or will we keep one hand down and fisted,
the other open to the sky
like a balancing dervish
whirling for a blessing
from above?

ZEINA AZZAM

FEMININE

Kohl-ed eyes.
Straightened locks.
Voluptuous.
The judges eyed the participants.
"Must be an excellent surgeon."
Would they all pass as women?
Draw in your breath.
You're next.

SHAHD ALSHAMMARI

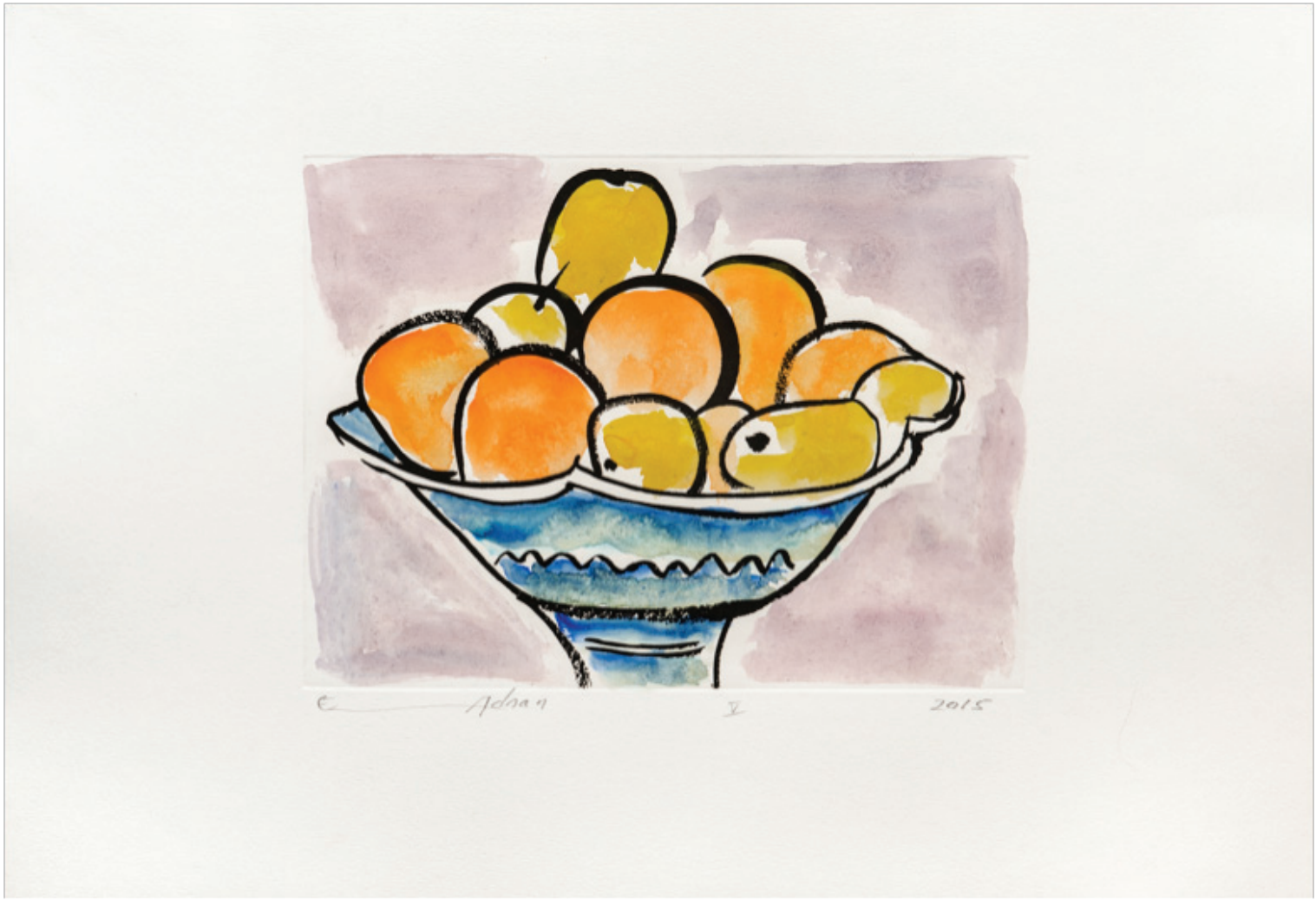
BEDOUIN

my bedouin roots prepare me
for the harshness of the heart.
nomadic, not by choice but necessity.
when the well runs out
when resources stop regenerating
i pack light and move on.

when i find my new oasis
i make a home out of small corner spaces
like an inconvenient guest
ready to leave whenever she is asked
whenever the wells run dry

i pack light and move on
i pack light and move on
i pack light and move on
over and over and over again.

NORA ALI BAKHSH



Compotier II, 2015, 29 x 56 cm
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

POTATO MARKET

Tata Azmi asks me to drive to the souk
batata. She holds the dashboard nook

and prays little duas under her breath;
those slight whispers wafting into the depth

of the floor's ancient soda stains. At the potato market
I park near the Tunisian carpets

rolled in bundles like retaining walls
for the "King Edward's" potato: carpeted halls.

Earthy brown roots tussle
with mud on Yukon Gold. Muscle

on the man who says, :"Hatha sinduk bandura;"

"Here is a tomato box;" Fresh wrapped lamb, yams,

and red potatoes for my mother fall from the basket
Tata makes with her skirt to the box. She asks

me to let my father, on his way home, know
the cooking time is slow, and
to retrieve our share after his tailor shop is closed.

LAYLA A. GOUSHEY

DINNERTIME

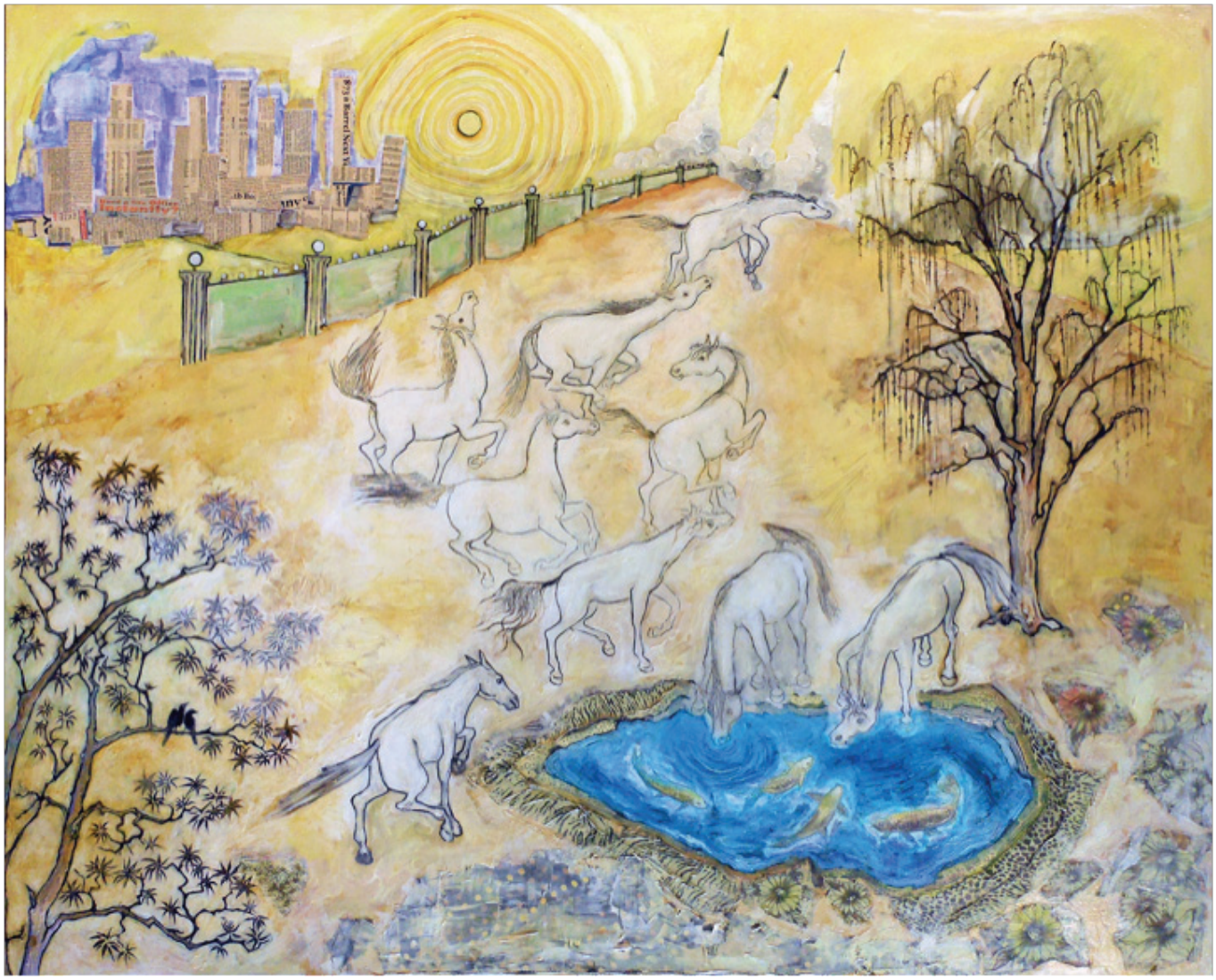
The forks to probe are where they belong.
The knives for cutting rest on the right.
The spoons of measuring don't know where
to fit, and whether we need them anymore.

Candles with black wicks, flowers
from my garden,

a goblet filled with wine
from Cana, where my father walked.
We can toast my family, Jesus's refugees.

But this feast is about us, you and me.
I invited you to my home, cracks in the plates
and all.

ZEINA AZZAM



Horizon watch
BY A. REED GARNER

CHAR

No world but this one brought to the skin's restless edge set us off

roads slipped by endlessly toward some distant city

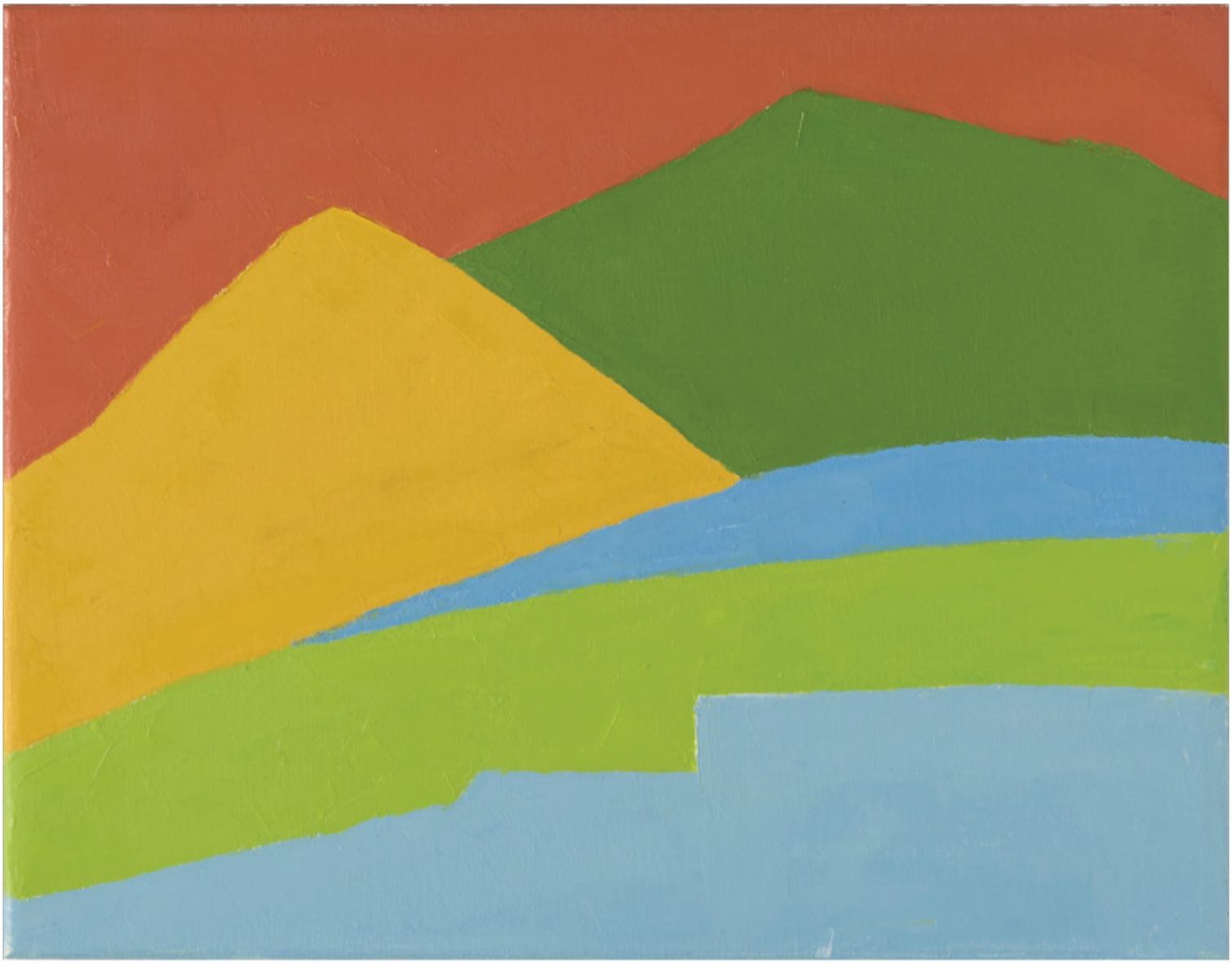
quickened the delight we couldn't take in the transition

from peace to war an impression of so much held back

overflowed in sight of wanted so badly to let go

the light that burns our shaken remains—

KENNETH E. HARRISON, JR.



Untitled, 2014, Oil on Canvas, 34.5 x 45 cm
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

ORCHARD

Given a river last I saw you given the sun

a quarter of a century later an orchard never comes to grief

so early in the day the hills lit with age

a feeling of having dreamt emerges

an impression of ourselves defining the appearance of birds

flatters us into a kind of belief

we live unshorn how grass breathes the shadow of a hedge—

KENNETH E. HARRISON, JR.

THE LOST MEN

In our viewing area

in the many windows

a city's solitary men

like veins of an eye

filled with blood

watch flat-screens

hoping now & again

tomorrow is better

right before bed

shuffling into kitchens

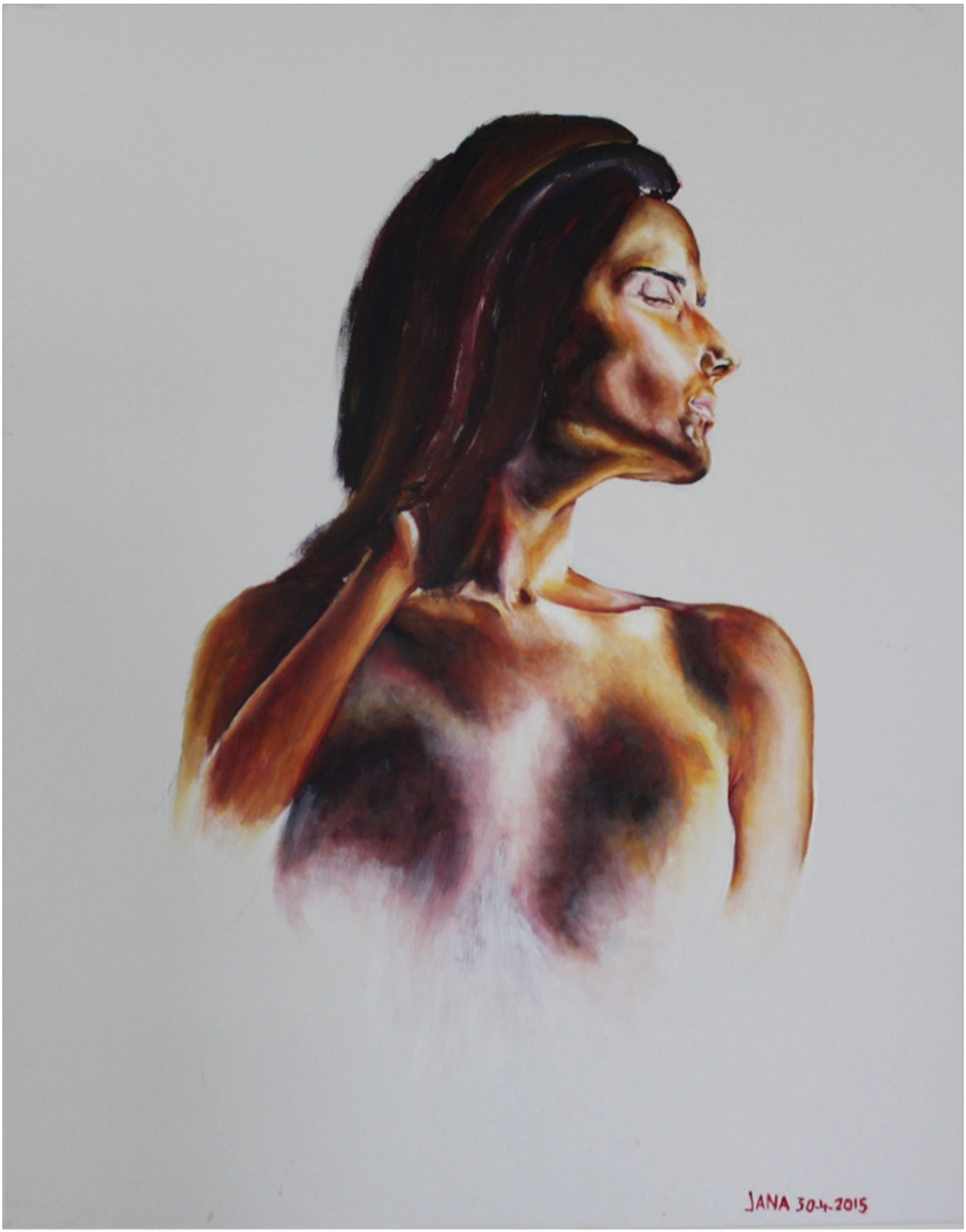
we've always liked

those little trash cans

when you step on it

the lid flips open—

KENNETH E. HARRISON, JR.



ignore(ance) - acrylic on canvas - 120 x 100 cm
by JANA ARIDI

GROWING UP SOLID IN KUWAIT

At first when I was young and frail
you used to beat my arms and legs
with a wooden stick, a candy pink
wrapping curved along its length.

You purchased your cheap
parenting aid by the dozen,
and said I had to obey, or else.
Did I not know that God
had placed heaven under your feet,
and hell outside my bedroom door.
And no, I couldn't have a key.

But now that you are older
than the right kind of old
your own limbs creak when you sit
and your body heat drops, your
frailty wedges in between your bones,
and your fingers, no longer coiling
around the pink-strapped stick,
but trembling on their own accord,

you say it's not about strength
anymore, or obedience, or
God's honest truth, but
about time spent in each other's
company, about soft embraces,
the smelling of necks, forehead kissing,
the old world, and a whole lot
of other things that never grazed
your lips before, when you
were upright and stiff.

I wonder if you remember
how much money you saved
buying those sticks by the dozen
and if you prefer purple to pink.

NADA FARIS

JANUS/PORTUNUS

In memory of 26/06/2015

Two sides of the same coin.
But what do you expect?

Gnawing with wet teeth
at the Eternal Spring of Dawn.
The river of blood within.
They gnash and claw each
other with rabid delight.
But what do you expect?

Forgiveness is merely a word,
man-made. A gun, a bomb, is not.
Glory is the holy crucifixion,
the burning bush and the
seventy-two virgins in a single shot.
But what do you expect?

A word is a word is a word.
A war is not. It is the will to forge
repose in the world for all of US.
Oil the spear. Prepare the Gods for oil.
But what do you expect?

The selfish soul of man
is found at last in greedy genes
disclosed in cells and coined in labs.
But a fact is a whore
working for the rich and famous,
fearing the cabal of mercenaries,
ready and willing and able, to teleport
at moment's notice at the brothel's door.
But what do you expect?

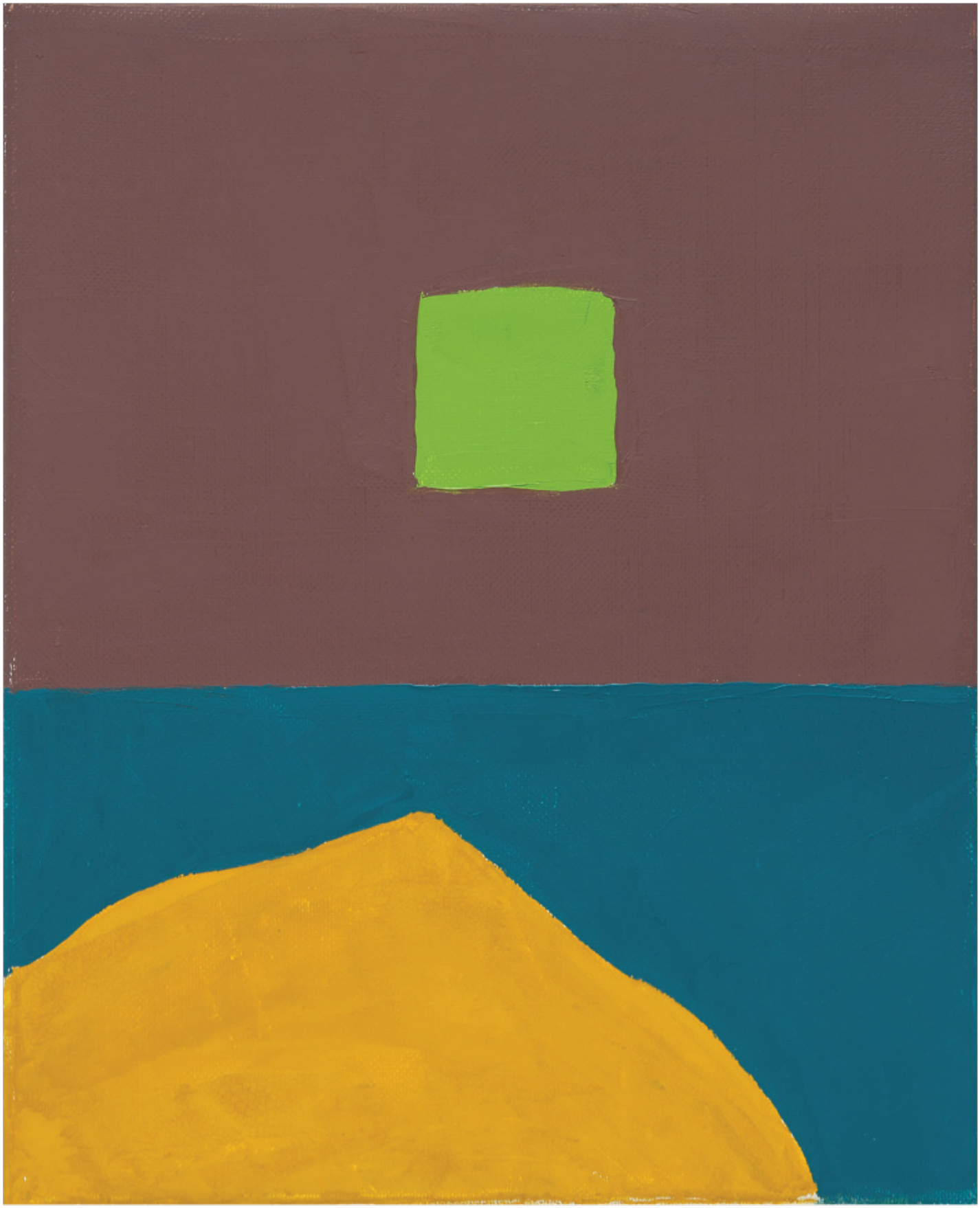
It was strapped to his chest.
When he detonated the bomb
his faith ricocheted against
the walls of the mosque,
severing limbs and stealing lives.
But what do you expect?

A massacre on the sand
unfortunate tide, untimely
waves. A head among the flags.
Unending cries spanning continents.
But what do you expect?

Start the fire.
Throw in the keys for luck.
Eschew the Spring for the Fountain,
the florid cheeks, slapped red and pink
with love.

What else do you expect?

NADA FARIS



Untitled, 2014, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 24 cm
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

"THIS SECRET BREATHING": THE POETRY OF DOM GABRIELLI
BOOK REVIEW
By Imene Bennani

In his latest collection, *Here is the Desert,* Dom Gabrielli offers a desert of rays and roses to his readers as much as to himself. The book is a ceaseless wandering through dunes, visions and recollections in search for the "deep windy unknown". Light and translucent, the poems proceed with grace and delicacy; ethereal, they take the reader on a magic carpet to a wondrous world where all the senses are engaged.

The approach to the desert should be flawless, the appreciation complete. While eyes can relish in "yellow swarms" and "emerald palms", and get hooked on "the bleeding eye of dawn", ears are "attracted by the subtle fountain's tickle" and the singing of the "frog of dawn". Enchanted by "the song of the beloved", they remain attentive "to the late skin in you/to the almond dance".

A plethora of tastes and scents render this intake partially maddening: from "salted kiss" and "perfumes sweetly minted" to "unknown sugars" and "cumin winds" that "simmered" on "the parched tongue of my tasting". Even touching ancient riverbeds and their "salts" becomes a sacred rite meant to "anoint the banks of their absences".
This plunging into the desert with all senses expectedly invites the erotic:
"can I hold it
This aroma of you
Burning in steamy mint
This erotic cloud of brown breath"

Like Ondaatje's Almásy, the poet not only values sensuality but also venerates the desert of desire and climax:

The night
is full of donkeys
screaming sex
at the stars.

Night in the desert is not only about intimacy and romance but also pain and loss:

Lost the night
I descended there
Into the lost loves

My tears silent pools
For the cynical diver

At once one and other
The pain of sunsets pulling

Amid this insane age's obliterating rush and noise, the poet is generous enough to propose a flight from pressure to a landscape where one can indulge in loss, "dissolve into deep blue", "lose [his] hand in dunes of golden sand". In fact, Loss becomes that superior fantasy; a cherished state offering an incentive to sing and boast of broadness, and providing a point of departure towards brighter horizons: "I am a lost brother of a lost race/you were never lost and you sit proud".

There is no fear from loss since in this broad, versatile desert, everything can still be found "by magic". On the other hand, there is fear from "losing the silence" and there is comfort at listening to the desert. A seeker who learns to listen to the desert in the manner of Coelho's Santiago, the poet is so blithe and composed, to the extent that he feels inclined to "converse/ with the amphibian's leap".

Silence is an art in this collection. Chosen rather than imposed, it is invited to greet the solemnity of the setting, its holiness. Light rather than heavy, it is congruent with the poet's communion and meditations. More significantly, silence is a ritual: "he writes/with her hands/on his dark body/ in silence/he bides timelessness".

The poet is forever drawn to "where the desert spoke/where the song sung itself". The desert is song and discourse; it is all the words and poems that are coming: "I lie in silence/eyes closed in my night vigil/waiting for the desert".

Broad and unlimited, the desert invites its opposites: "up the mountain/where the cool clouds gather/near the snowy summits/the English gather for tea". Is the poet invoking contrasts to better comprehend the true beauty of the desert or is he weighing the blissful gifts of each landscape and cherishing his right to embrace all regions, all seasons, all natural landscapes?

Still, Gabrielli's presentation of the desert is not mere intense admiration or pleasurable contemplation. Even amid entranced states, there is critique. How do foreigners deal with local beggars? "where does he go/in the dying wolf light of evening/do the tourists remember his words/as they sleep on frozen money". Poverty and need are detected, the glimpse of hope not neglected: "ten children in one room/night within night/stars within tomorrow".

The poet portrays many characters in the Moroccan setting: a robed beggar, a veiled woman, a master and his mules, and a nomad. Rather than portraying her as an odalisque crossing the "souk", the "veiled woman" is looked at with wonder, with veneration for feminine beauty and a bowing to "the poems in her eyes". The nomad is not characterized as an uncivilized barbarian; neither despised nor looked down, he is valued for his idiosyncratic self-expression; there is recognition of his charm and intelligence, his power to write and express his origins and heritage "directly/ in the wind the sun the sand". The poet's conviction is categorical: ""domination is in vain/vanity must be banished".
Free from the colonizer's gaze, this is a mature approach to the desert. There is recognition, a tracing down of origins, a mapping of belonging. The I becomes we and they, all of us: "we were all Moors once/expelled from a rich land/ stigmatized/the skins of our wanderings"
There is an urgent plea for tolerance and understanding too: "will you banish what I banished/in the womb of tomorrow/ for our children to play/sipping sweet mint tea/on the Henbel carpet". There is even an obsession with warning from "hatred":

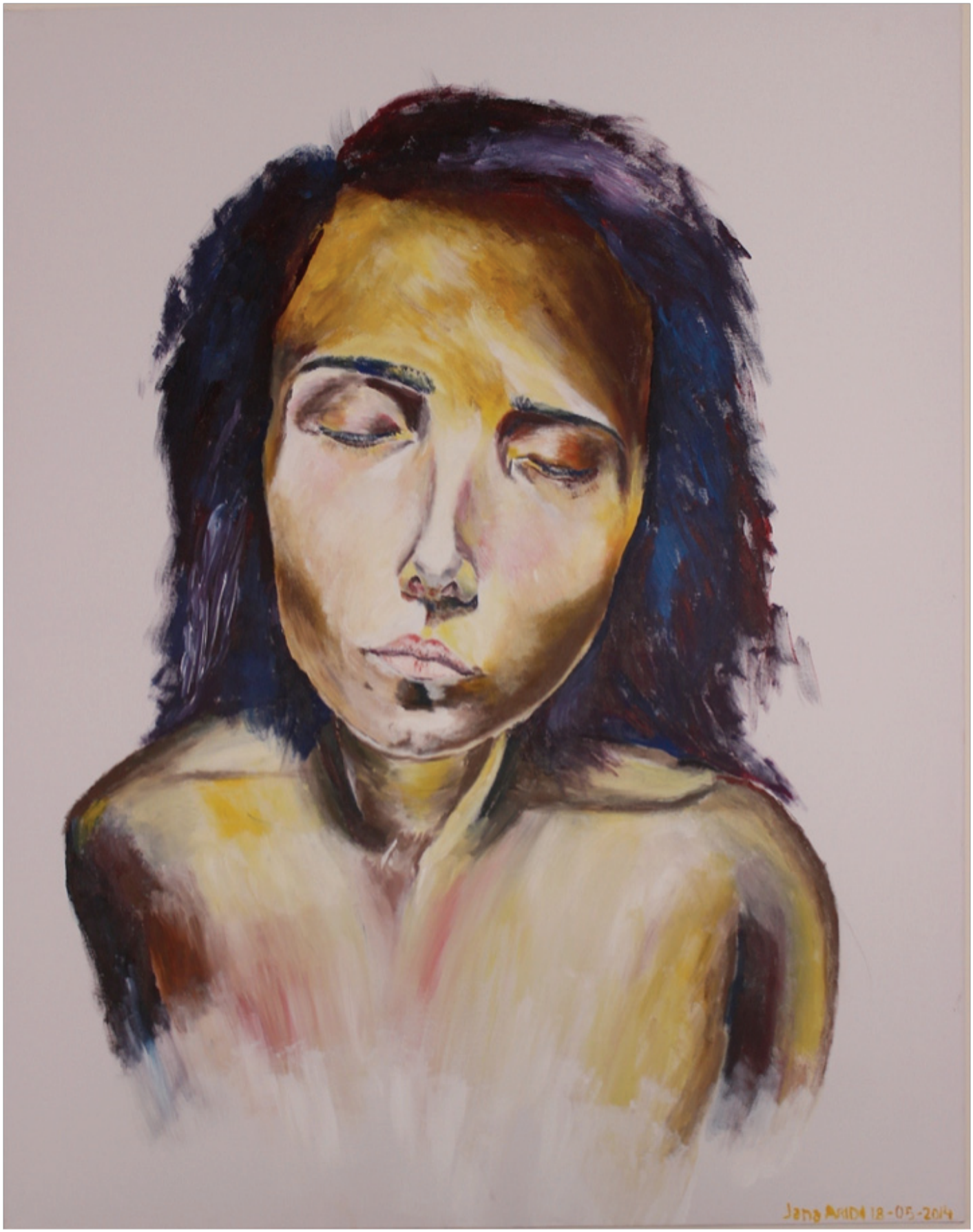
trust me
if words
do not first
crackle in the boiling creases of your skin
if they do not breathe
on you
before you infuse them with floral charms

they will always stink of hatred

And the breathing is there, from start to "finish". Brief, and with comfortable space between its lines, the poems in this collection breathe. Is it the "desert effect"? Spaciousness becomes enmeshed with the poems' texture and the textual fabric cannot help succumbing to the principle of broadness. The broadness is similarly conveyed through the beautiful calligraphy by the Tunisian artist Najeh Jegham, and which is a transcription in French, English and Arabic of some of the poems and selected lines in the collection. These serve as an aesthetic and semantic illustration of Gabrielli's words. There is much play with space, shapes, density, and length. Some tableaux look like Berber carpets made up of innumerable letters or figures of mules, or tribesmen. Others look like camels or tents. But all are attempts to echo Gabrielli's vision and message in a different but no less catching artistic form.

The poems in their itinerary cannot help but form a circle, the roaming. Loss begins the book and seals it. There is no fixed point of departure or arrival; there are no definite shapes: we are in the spaciousness of dawn, light, and sun rays; we are in the "immensity of everything". Perhaps, the only destination available, again, remains the poems themselves, "the lost poems", "the ones written with instinct", and which should be followed and heard.

The poet did write "with instinct" and his "pen had dipped into impossible rains." Gabrielli's book is this "kora song lost in the dunes," this echo "nested in the rocks." A "smile," do not hesitate, follow it; a "kiss," tarry not, "pluck it now at sunset".



Nearness - acrylic on canvas - 120 x 100 cm
by JANA ARIDI

PROPHET

A river sloshes through Egypt land,
hosts a film of frogs' eyes, ebony, grasses,
and bamboo shoots. First verdant terrain
then sand, sand, sand . . .

She rises at dawn to pace through reeds
at the foot of the Nile. Brown skin, black hair
forced into braids, she seeks a sign from Isis
or the Sun, its telltale shifts casting equinoctial
shadows amid the pyramids with their
arterial secrets—chambers empty and dark
like a god without a heart.
She seeks a goddess with gills or scales,
hooves or horns, a jackal-headed deity
or baboon divinity, only to find a prophet.

First the distant shriek of the slave driver
and a lotus-scented breeze
then the basket, losing its way down stream,
rocking like an ark through troubled currents,
faltering forever toward the sea.

Warm water licking between her toes,
she wades into the paper-sharp glades,
risking herself within the papyrus swamp,
faltering in slime, privy of leaches and snakes.
She lunges for the woven reeds:

A child in a ratty blanket,
damp as dewed barley. His dark eyes
gaze upward. His mouth parts wide as he cries.
Inside her heartbeat is pumping the wildness
of life through her body's tubes. Within her pith
the song begins: a gentle lullaby.

ANNA CATES

Psychoacoustics no. 2
BY MARK TARDI

Vereshchagin's "Doors"

All entrances forbid. But I linger
before the enormous
gold arabesques of painted doors
in *The Doors of the Mosque*—

as if by following the lines
to their end, I might enter
what I couldn't understand.
Ten years since I first stood

dizzied by its beggars—one
cross-legged, hands working
over something not visible, face
turned away. Half in terror

they might return his gaze,
Vereshchagin must have hurried
back to sketch them still
blazing the edges of his sight.

A world so far from where he came,
that, upon arrival, he was
someone else. How he fled, could not
but return in his mind again

to the country he was born to paint
and throw himself against,
his brush retouching the hands that lifted
as he passed them daily, brushing

his sides, as if he were a canvas.
It's not my place, he'd want
to say. Or I can't understand. The gold
minaret ablaze, the beggar

soured in filth, his hand a child's mouth.
Judging eye. Window
without frame. Why do I turn my face again
to what looks away?

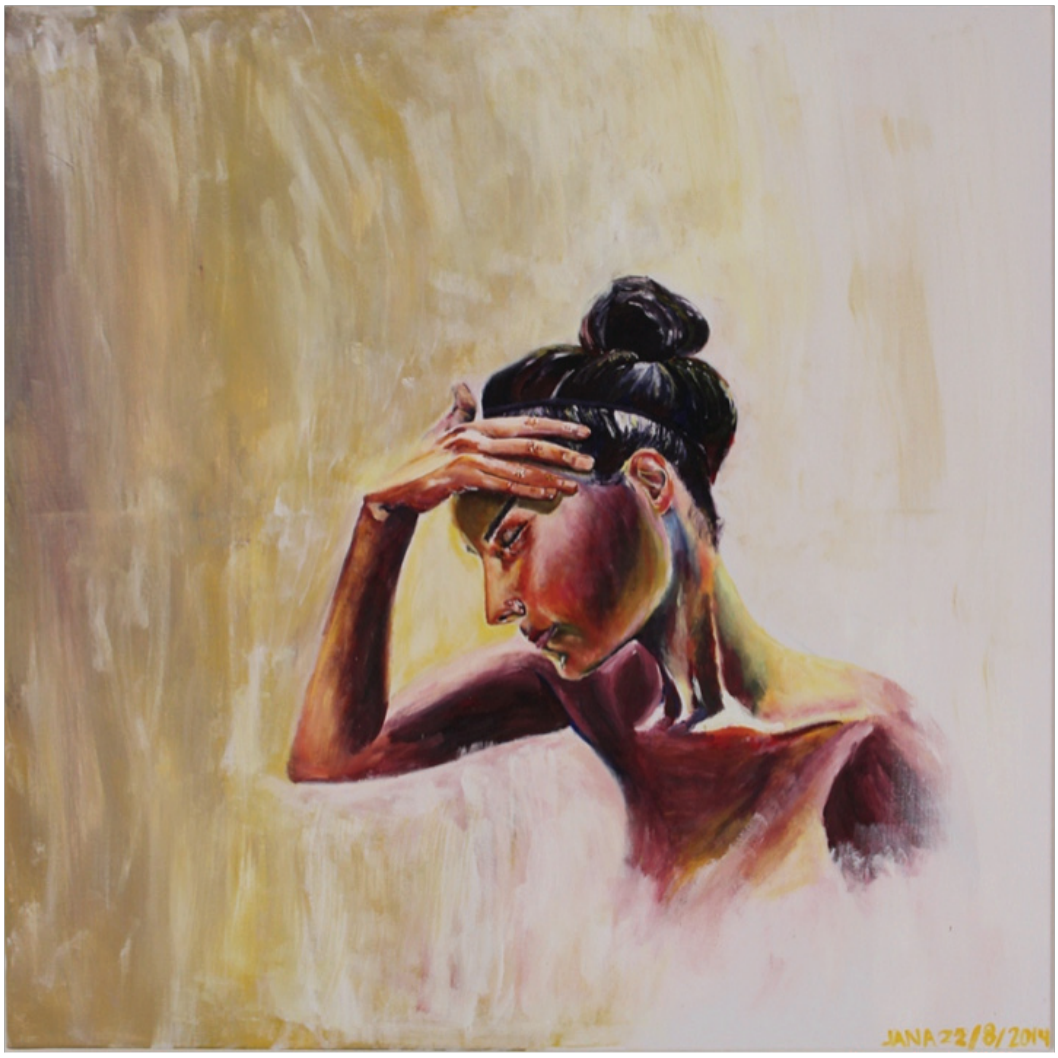
Years ago, in winter, so sick
it hurt to inhale, in the shell
of what I did not know
I was, I stumbled on a station—

its five tracks stretching
past the horizon, took the thumb
to St. Petersburg, tilted
with the crowd past a legless vet,

his palm open as if holding up
the globe. I went inside,
saw the doors and they did not
open. I stood at the doors

and they did not open—and I could rest,
at last, before them.

PHILIP METRES



Pending - acrylic on canvas - 100 x 100 cm
by JANA ARIDI

Letter (Never Sent) to Volodya and Natasha

Lying on your bed, the only bed you'd lend me, the fevered stranger a winter train coughed out, I faced the wall-sized photograph of a waterfall so large I woke sputtering in sheets and sprays, cotton mists glittering. Mirror of the eros you made. Sudden uncle and aunt, way station for the wayward.

In the rain, in the mind, in the wind outside, where Vuillard's "Children" ignore an open door, where blues of greens come to nothing we can settle into names. Natasha, do you still watch "East of Eden," read the journals of Sofia Tolstoy, make frayed ends meet?

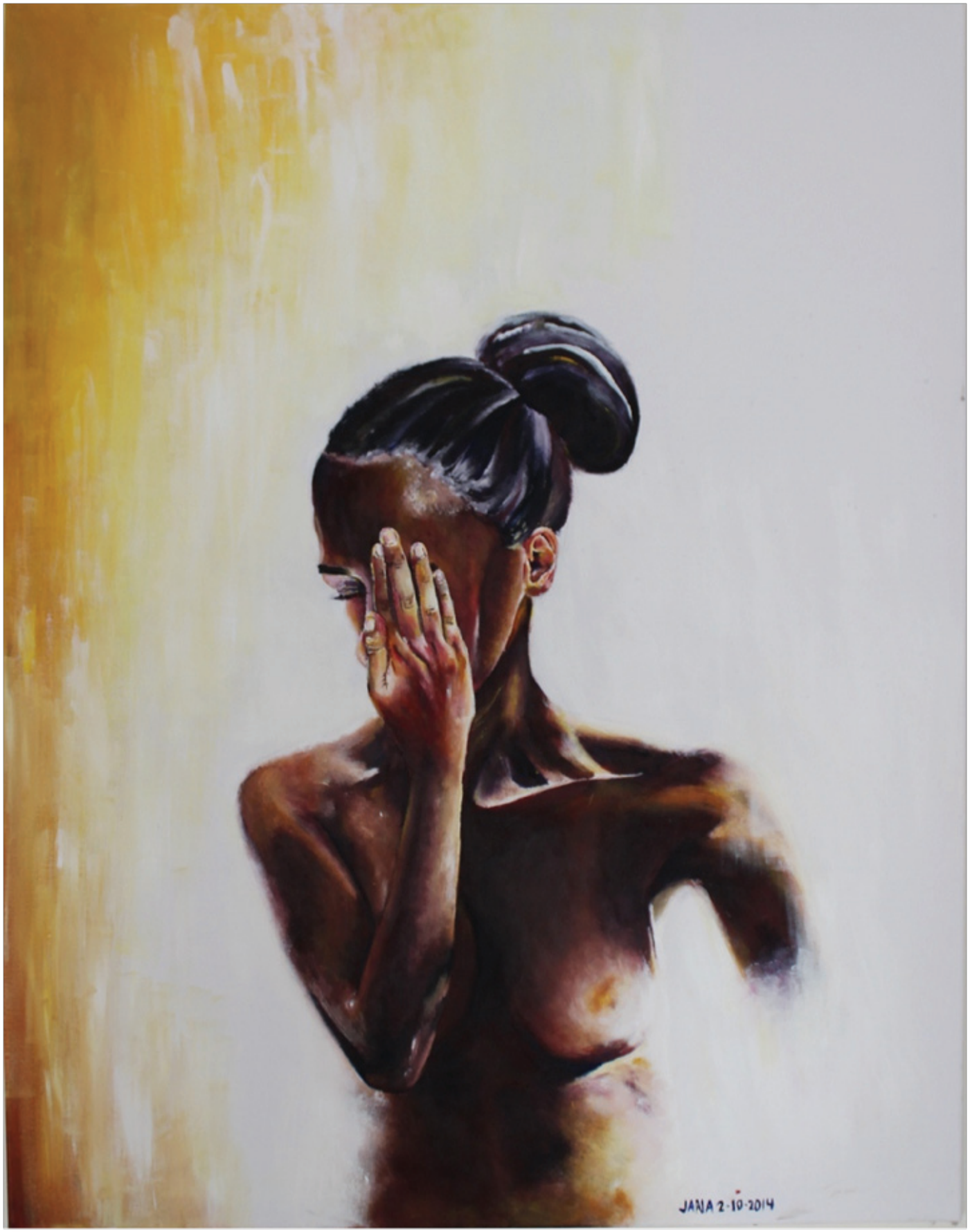
On the train, in the bed, on the mend. Art, you said, was a sacred place, resting by a river, where a person could feel. Some things come clearer. Not better, but clearer. Volodya, remember the noir we watched? I understood enough to know I'd missed the obvious clue.

I'm still looking for it, twenty years later, listening to the singing monk you played for me on a gramophone—his voice so consumed in suffering, it lifts above his untouched body. The old needle still holds fast inside the circling groove.

It's true, Volodya, the soul is not yet complete. Is it ever?

Your eyes, stones in the bed of irreversible river.

PHILIP METRES



See/Unsee - acrylic on canvas - 100 x 100 cm
by JANA ARIDI

THE BEAUTY AND THE GAZELLE

By Ali Latife

Translated from the Arabic by Rita Tapia Oregui

Winner of the "One Thousand Nights and Awakening" literary contest

www.arabianstories.com

This was over eight years ago, before the statue of the Beauty and the Gazelle was stolen from the heart of the city. She was the last naked woman to parade along Tripoli's history. I was in the car with my father. He is a traditional man from ElKedoua, a rural region 40 kilometers outside of Tripoli. Despite all the obstacles standing in his path, my father had done well for himself. He had grown up to be a doctor, although he had once desired to become a pilot. Every time he saw a plane cruising the sky he would yell, "Look at that plane! Do you see it? Isn't it just stunning!"

I remember the shape of his black narrow eyes, as well as the dark bags underneath them. I didn't understand them until recently, when I got to experience the feeling of having one's dreams replaced by nightmares that don't present themselves as such until right before the end.

During my teenage years, we used to hang around the Park of the Gazelle singing songs on the guitar whose meaning we didn't grasp until we listened to them years later. My voice sounded pretty appalling when I sang, but everyone just lied to me and complimented me on my vocal cords.

The park lay next to the statue of the Beauty and the Gazelle and was named after it. It had a bad reputation for attracting hookers, drug addicts, maniacs, and tramps. "The dregs of society," that's what they are called—even nowadays. But they are able to love. That is what society can't fathom. I met my first girlfriend at that same park. I kissed her at that park. I touched her breasts at that park. They were the first I had ever touched in my entire life. On that occasion, she sang with me. Her voice was gorgeous. She had been labeled a whore, but I didn't care.

I used to say to her, "Your body is like that of the beauty and your mind like a gazelle."

When I think about my pick-up lines back then, I laugh, seeing how trite they were. But they made her giggle. Her cheeks would turn the color of two almost ripe peaches and I would sink, dazzled by her glittering hazel eyes that reminded me of fall leaves. Her bosom completed the once virginal woman who tries to break out of the ground by fucking voraciously and devouringly.

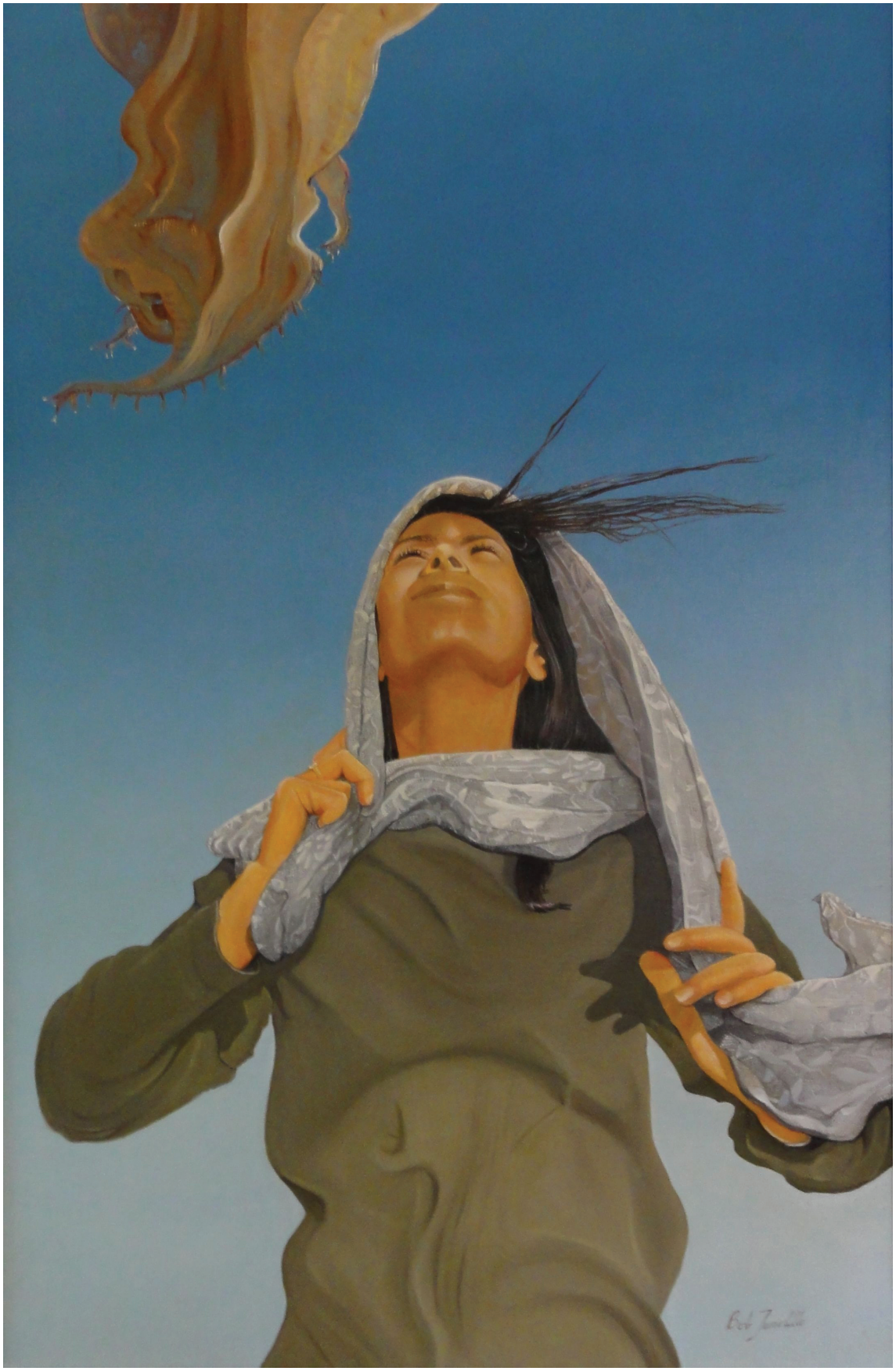
I don't know why, but all I know is that whenever I remember her these days, my thoughts end up drifting to my father and the statue of the Beauty and the Gazelle. That time my father and I drove by the statue of the Beauty and the Gazelle, he dropped me off at the Mosque of the Islamic Prayer at Algeria Square, which is only a couple dozen meters away from the Park of the Gazelle. He then told me a story that I have never forgotten.

"There was once a man who took his wife's red bra, showed up at dawn next to the statue, covered up the Beauty with it, and fled. The red bra stayed on the beauty until noon. Nobody dared to strip it from her body. You should have seen the faces of the passersby. That was funny!"

Right after finishing his story, my father burst into laughter. I distinctly remember his laughter. It wasn't bashful despite his shy-looking face, his narrow eyes, and his lips, which his habit of smoking had rendered blue. I thought he was handsome, like a statue Michelangelo would carve or a pilot who had rescued people from a fatal plane crash.

The statue of the Beauty and the Gazelle was plundered about a year ago. First, she was shot at and, after a few months, she was stolen. Hence, the Park of the Gazelle developed into an ordinary park, indistinguishable from any other you would find in Tripoli—a park without flowers but brimming with the random ideas people get, based on what they think they remember about the scum that meandered around it in happier times, which have faded into oblivion.

My first girlfriend emigrated with her family after the revolution spread. Her father had been engaged in some dirty business with the former government, and that was the last I heard of her. I haven't spoken to her in years. The day my father returned home, all sad and sullen because of the gloomy news he had just learned concerning the theft of the statue, I thought of her. I imagined her laughing at the way I used to flirt with her, with my worn-out pick-up lines, before starting to weep over her current situation. Afterwards, I recalled the manner in which I used to stroll around the statue on my way to meet her. I was scum as well but the kind able to smile when going on a date with beauty.



Eastern Wind
by BOB TOMOLILLO

GHORAB IL-BEIN

—"O stranger of the house" –Muzaffar Al Nawab

The subject turned
to the cluster of birds
perched in the sarow سرو
across the way.
Raucous, unsettling cries
filled the sky.

Ghorab, he called them.
غراب
and the word sounded
like destruction
or the arrival of a stranger
in the midst of a storm.

Ravens or crows, we wondered.
But they were not the color of our ravens
and not the color of our crows.
The plumage was black, except for the grey
cape across breast and back—like a tarnished collar
or a stole of ash.

The ghorab is an omen
whose root is estrangement. Cross her once
and count on revenge. She'll stalk you
and scold you, cut you and bleed you.
She will never forget
your face.

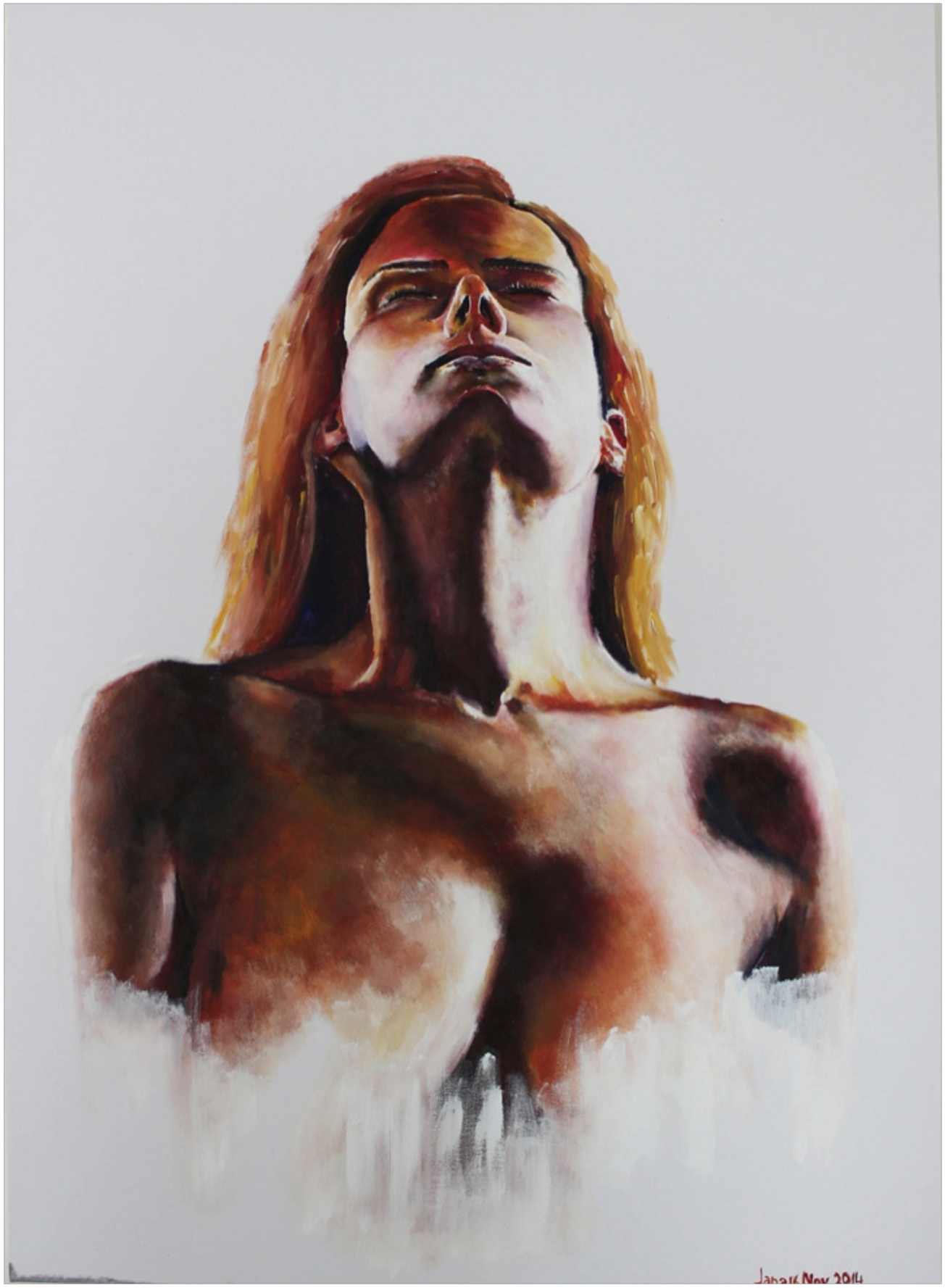
I was sure they were ravens
from the tone of his voice
but I should have known
—when he called them a she—
that they were nothing more
than household crows.

I studied them from afar
the four large birds, hunched
in the boughs of the towering cypress
cowering close to the spine of the tree.
With bent wings, half-unhinged
they began to move upward

branch by branch
—a skittish, unpredictable ascent
until they reached the peak
unfurled completely
and took flight
in a trail of scalding caws.

And then, they were shadows.
ظلال

KIM JENSEN



Inhale - acrylic on canvas - 120 x 100 cm
by JANA ARIDI

NIGHT (an excerpt)

Tides: yes, breathing, and love being a tide coming, and receding, a pendular insanity, as impatient in its regularity as this gaze the inbuilt instability of metals.

When unruly forms move too closely to laptops there occurs a transfer of transparencies. A passenger is boarding a ship with me. Let's live before dying.

Vision is a rumor, some steam. The body produces thinking, behaves like movies. Moves and makes move.

At times, an appetite for death creates a withdrawal into the origin of heat, and turns the world into a blur.

A woman mourns her dead lover while everything buckles under her sorrow's pressure. Her days are going to grow longer.

Nights are breathing. Divine will circulates around their edges. A precocious summer lies naked on a granite wall. The ocean is my land.

Disastrous are disasters. Paradise is such a lonely place that we are doomed, anyway. At the meeting point of its rivers the horizon is always enlarged, the imagination, unleashed.

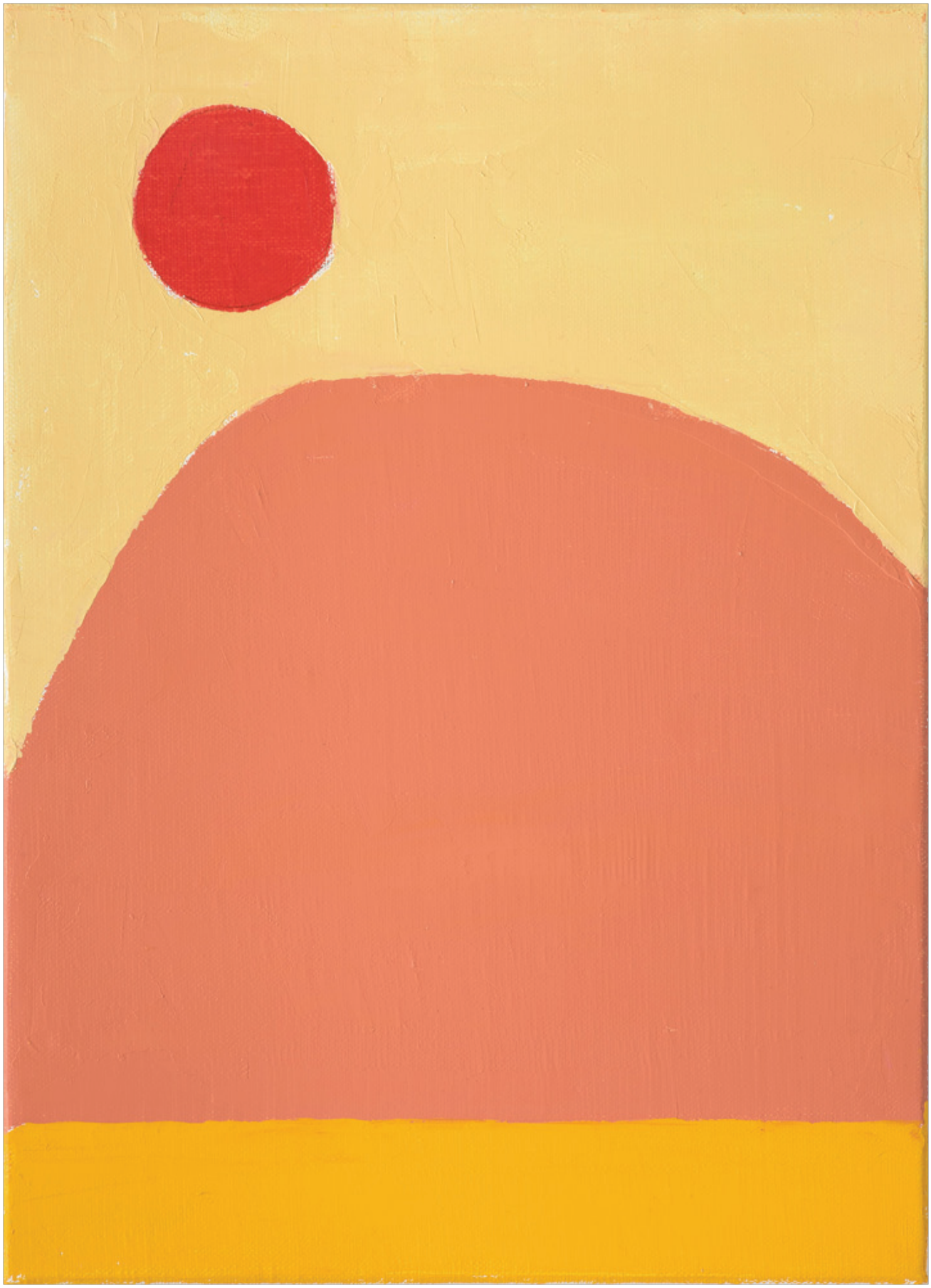
In the courtyard, the sun is scribbling shadows on the fading roses. I'm spending hours waiting for the next hour.

Love is a sandstorm that loosens reality's building stones. Its feverish energy takes us into the heart of confusion. Sometimes, a frozen moon illuminates frozen fields.

There's so much life around me, and I will have to leave.

My breathing is a tide, love doesn't die.

ETEL ADNAN



Sans Titre, 2015, Oil on Canvas, 33ff x 24 cm
BY ETEL ADNAN - Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, Photo by Fabrice Gibert

Artists' /Writers' bios:

ETEL ADNAN is a Lebanese-American poet, essayist, visual artist, university lecturer, editor, and cultural critic. She was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1925. She studied philosophy at the Sorbonne, U.C. Berkeley, and Harvard. She taught philosophy of art and also lectured at universities throughout the United States. She has written a number of documentaries, short stories and plays, and one opera. Her novel *Sitt Marie-Rose*, won the France-Pays Arabes award and has been translated into ten languages. At least eighteen works have been published in English. They include *The Arab Apocalypse* (Post-Apollo Press, 1989); *Sea and Fog* (Nightboat Books, 2012), winner of the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Poetry and the California Book Award for Poetry. In 2011, she received Small Press Traffic's Lifetime Achievement Award. And, in 2014, she was awarded one of France's highest cultural honors: l'Ordre de Chevalier des Arts et Lettres. Adnan was named "arguably the most celebrated and accomplished Arab American author writing today" by the academic journal MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States. She currently lives in Paris.

SHAHD ALSHAMMARI is Assistant Professor of English. She currently teaches in Kuwait and released her first poetry collection entitled *On Love and Loss* by Strategic Book Publishing, New York.

JANA ARIDI is a freelance architect and designer based in Beirut. She started painting at around age 13 but only picked up portraits recently. She is fascinated by the human body, nature, materials, light and scale and tries to show that in her work. In addition to painting, she likes creating objects keeping true to their material and origin as well as their role in our everyday life.

ZEINA AZZAM is a Palestinian American educator, writer, editor, and activist. She works as executive director of The Jerusalem Fund and Palestine Center in Washington, DC. Zeina holds an MA in Arabic language and literature. She has dabbled in translation (Arabic to English), hand drumming, and choral singing.

ZEINA HASHEM BECK is a Lebanese poet whose first collection, *To Live in Autumn* (The Backwaters Press, 2014), has won the 2013 Backwaters Prize. It was also a runner up for the Julie Suk Award, a category finalist for the 2015 Eric Hoffer Awards, and has been included on Split This Rock's list of recommended poetry books for 2014. Her second poetry manuscript, titled *Louder than Hearts*, has been recently named runner-up for Bauhan Publishing's May Sarton New Hampshire Poetry Prize, judged by Mekeel McBride. She's been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize (most recently by Ploughshares), and her poems have been published or are forthcoming in various literary magazines, among which are *Ploughshares, Poetry Northwest, River Styx, The Common, Mizna, Rattle, 32 Poems, Mslexia, Magma, The Rialto,* and *Sukoon*. She lives with her husband and two daughters in Dubai, where she regularly performs her poetry and runs the poetry and open mic collective PUNCH.

NORA ALI BAKHSH was born in Saudi Arabia and lived scattered years in many different parts of the world before settling in the UAE 9 years ago, only to rediscover and fall in love with her long lost connection to the Arab world. Aside from writing poetry, Nora is also a musician, singer and composer and works in the environmental sector.

CHAUN BALLARD was raised in both Missouri and California. He recently returned to the US after living with his wife in Ghana, West Africa, where they taught at a local area school. For the past four years, they traveled and taught throughout various countries in the Middle East, and are currently preparing for their new relocation.

IMENE BENNANI is a Tunisian academic. She graduated from the Faculty of Arts of Sousse, Tunisia. She currently works as an assistant at the English department of the Higher Institute of Applied Studies in the Humanities, Sbeitla, University of Kairouan, Tunisia. She is preparing her PhD on contemporary Arab American Poetry. Her fields of interest include Arab American literature, culture studies, literary theory, and literary translation. Her interview with the poet Lahab Assef Al-Jundi appeared in *Al-Jadid* magazine Vol. 16, no. 63, 2011. Her paper: "Voices So Clear: Suheir Hammad's Strategic Resistance and the Move from the Margin to the Page" is forthcoming from the English Department of the Faculty of Arts of Sousse, Tunisia. She also contributed with a paper entitled: "The Other Side of the Hyphen: Americanness in the "Poetry of Lawrence Joseph and Khaled Mattawa" at the conference held in Michigan, Dearborn, in honor of Michael Suleiman (2011). Her review of *No Faith At All* (Pecan Grove Press, 2014) appeared in *The Enchanting Verses Literary Review:* XX (May 2014). Her translations of Youssef Rzouga's and Fawzia Alwi's poetry appeared in *KNOT* magazine (Autumn & Winter Issues 2012). A few of her poems also appeared online: "Mother" in *Today's Alternative News*." "Threads" &"A Bit of Pout" in *Contemporary World Poetry Journal.*

SHEBANA COELHO is a writer, filmmaker and facilitator of creativity workshops. She received a CEC Arts Link Project award to collaborate with Ashtar Theater in Ramallah for the multimedia project Land Out Loud. She was born in India and lives in New Mexico. Her website is shebanacoelho.com

NADA FARIS is a Kuwaiti writer and performance poet who writes in English. In 2013, she represented Kuwait in London's Shubbak Festival, UK, and at Iowa's International Writing Program, USA. She is known locally as "Kuwait's Finest Slam Poet". Website: www.nadafaris.com.

MARGUERITE GUZMAN BOUVARD is the author of eight poetry books, two of which have received awards. Her work has been widely published and anthologized. She is also the author of 12 non-fiction books in the field of human rights. She is a Resident Scholar at the Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University.

ANNA CATES's poems have appeared in *Acorn, Modern Haiku, Shamrock Haiku Journal, Frogpond,* and other publications. She teaches graduate creative writing for Southern New Hampshire University online and maintains several other part time positions. She holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and several other advanced degrees related to English studies. She resides in Wilmington, Ohio with her two cats, Freddie and Christine.

JEFF FRIEDMAN is the author of six poetry collections, five with Carnegie Mellon University Press, including *Pretenders* (2014), *Working in Flour* (2011) and *Black Threads* (2008). His poems, mini stories and translations have appeared in many literary magazines, including *American Poetry Review, Poetry, New England Review, The Antioch Review, Poetry International, Hotel Amerika, Vestal Review, Flash Fiction Funny, Smokelong Quarterly, Prairie Schooner, 100-Word Story, Agni Online, Journal of Compressed Creative Arts, Sukoon,* and *The New Republic*. Dzvinia Orlowsky's and his translation of *Memorials* by Polish Poet Mieczslaw Jastrun was published by Lavender Ink/Dialogos in August 2014. They were both awarded an NEA Literature Translation Fellowship for 2016.

ANGIE REED GARNER is a second-generation self-taught narrative painter. A serial expat since 1999, she has lived in Germany, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates. Garner has exhibited actively since 1996 with thirteen solo shows in the USA, Europe, and the Middle East. Since 2012, she also serves as director for garner narrative, a contemporary art gallery in Louisville, KY. Garner paints saturated, symbolic narratives; a favorite theme is the fragility of that which makes social life possible: identity and belonging.

KENNETH E. HARRISON, JR.'s poems have appeared in *Cutbank, Denver Quarterly, Drunken Boat, Pleiades,* and other journals. He has also written lately for *PopMatters*. He teaches writing and Literature courses at Webster University and Florissant Valley Community College in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

KIM JENSEN is a Baltimore-based writer, educator, and activist whose books include a novel, *The Woman I Left Behind*, and two collections of poetry, *Bread Alone* and *The Only Thing that Matters*. Active in the peace and justice movement for many years, Kim's articles, poems, and stories have been featured in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Bomb Magazine, Rain Taxi, Al Jadid Magazine, The Baltimore Sun, The Oakland Tribune, Baltimore Review, Left Curve, Al Ahram Weekly, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, and many others. In 2001 she won the Raymond Carver Award for short fiction; her recent doctoral dissertation is a new novel called Forget Jerusalem. She is associate professor of English at the Community College of Baltimore County where she is the founding director of The Community Book Connection, an interdisciplinary literacy initiative that demonstrates the vital connection between classroom learning and social justice issues in the broader community.

FARHEEN B. KHAN is a British, Dubai-based Writer. Described as a talker, reader, laugher and hoarder of shiny things, she has published articles for Business, Travel and Lifestyle magazines. She has a degree in Business Management from Kings College London and completed several writing courses (Oxford University, Faber Academy, Dubai International Writer's Centre). She has written a psychological thriller which is being reviewed by publishers, and writes short stories, plays, articles and blogs. For more info go to: www.farheenbkhan.com

OMAR KHALIFA is a Dubai-based Egyptian fan of certain forms of literature who sometimes writes. He is devotedly and superficially interested in history, politics, poetry and sociology.

Born in a village outside of Nazareth, Palestinian artist **ZAHI KHAMIS** now teaches and lives in Baltimore, Maryland with his wife, author and poet Kim Jensen, and his two children. Informed by the Palestinian story - and his own life in exile - Zahi's paintings attempt to capture universal themes of memory, tragedy, and yearning.

DARIUS M. KLEIN is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Indiana University's Department of Comparative Literature. He obtained an M.A. in Comparative Literature at University of Washington in 2012. The foci of his studies have been literary translation, Arabic language and literature, Latin language and literature, Hermetic studies, and Native American oral literature.

QASSIM HADDAD (b. 1948) is widely recognized as one of the first major Arab poets to use free verse. As a translator, Darius was first drawn to Haddad's work by its unique fusion of lyrical, and sometimes mysterious imagery, with themes that address concerns of revolutionary societal change. Few poets, Darius believes, demonstrate such skill in conveying the essence of experiences usually beyond the power of human speech to express. Although Haddad's poetry in some ways resembles that of Adonis, one of his influences, his political commitments impart a greater sense of hope and humanitarian concern to the struggle against tyranny and oppression. Qassim Haddad's skill is evident in the two attached poems, With the Children and From the Eye of the Sun, which were published in Haddad's first volume of poetry, *Good Omen* (1970). In these poems, Haddad envisions social change as an ineffable, almost mystical experience, with imagery suggestive of messianic renewal and childhood nostalgia.

PAM LASKIN is a professor at The City College and Director of The Poetry Outreach Center at the college. She is working on the completion of RONIT AND JAMIL, a Palestinian/Israeli ROMEO AND JULIET, in verse, for young adults. Four of her poetry books have been published as well as two young adult novels.

ALI LATIFE is a medical student in Libya. He writes as a hobby to express frustrations and grief.

LISA SUHAIR MAJAJ is a Palestinian-American writer. Her poetry and prose address issues of war and peace, culture and politics, homelessness and homemaking, and the multiplicities of hyphenated identities. Her books include *Geographies of Light* (winner of the Del Sol Press Poetry Prize) and three co-edited collections of critical essays on international women writers. She also writes on Arab-American literature. She has lectured and read her work widely across the US, Europe and the Middle East, and has taught at various institutions, most recently the University of Cyprus. She currently works on *Little Plato Magazine,* a children's magazine in Arabic and English. lmajaj@cytanet.com.cy.

MARSHA MATHEWS is an American writer and educator living in Dalton, Georgia. Her most recent book, *Hallelujah Voices*, presents unique voices of a Southwest Virginia congregation as they experience unexpected, pivotal moments. Her love poems, Sunglow & A Tuft of Nottingham Lace, won the Red Berry Editions 2011 Chapbook Award, and was published. Her first chapbook, *Northbound Single-Lane*, was released in 2010 by Finishing Line Press. This book follows the journey of a woman who finds herself suddenly single, with young children to care for. She leaves home and all she knows to travel north through Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Virginia. Marsha's poem "Kidnapping Mary" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her story "Ride to the City" was honored the 2013 Orlando Prize (by AROHO) for Flash Fiction. Marsha is writing a book *Beauty Bound*, which explores globally the human desire for beauty and the entrapment of beauty.

SAHAR MUSTAFAH is Palestinian American writer, editor, and teacher. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in The Bellevue Literary Review Story, The Grief Diaries, Great Lakes Review, Word Riot, Mizna and Chicago Literati, and others. She was named one of "25 Writers to Watch" by Chicago's Guild Literary Complex and was selected for Voices of Protest, a collaboration co-sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation. Her short story "Code of the West" is a 2015 American Fiction Prize finalist. She's co-founder and fiction editor of Bird's Thumb. You can visit her at www.saharmustafah.com.

RITA TAPIA OREGUI is a professional literary translator working with Arabic, German, English and Spanish. Besides being the founder and person in charge of all translations of the "Arabian Stories" project, she is often entrusted with freelance literary translation assignments by individual authors, cultural institutions and embassies, and is currently based in Hamburg, Germany.

> About the "Arabian Stories" project:
> "One Thousand Nights and Awakening" is a literary contest organized within the framework of Arabian Stories, a literary project that tries to bring together the Arabic and Western worlds by both providing Arabic writers a safe forum where they can express their ideas through literature, as well as translating said literature into English and Spanish to make it accessible for foreigners who are interested in acquiring a better understanding of the differences and similarities between both cultures.

STEVEN SCHREINER is the author of the collections *Belly* and *Too Soon to Leave*, and the chapbook *Imposing Presence*, and co-author with Allison Cundiff of *In Short, a Memory of the Other on a Good Day*. His poems have appeared in many magazines, including *Poetry, Image, Colorado Review, River Styx* and *December*, and numerous anthologies. He is the recipient of fellowships from the VCCA, Tall Rock Retreat, and The National Writer's Voice of the YMCA. He teaches in the MFA Program at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and is the founding editor of *Natural Bridge*, a journal of contemporary literature.

MARK TARDI is the author of the books *Airport Music* (Burning Deck, 2013) and *Euclid Shudders* (Litmus Press, 2004). A former Fulbright scholar, he earned his MFA from Brown University and is currently a lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Nizwa in Oman.

> His work in *Sukoon* is a series of poem-scapes called "Psychoacoustics," which reflect on the, at turns, beautiful and unforgiving landscapes around Nizwa, Oman. They are best viewed side by side to form a triptych, though they can also stand alone or be rearranged, much like the dunes and mountains shift shape and perspective depending on where one stands.

J. TARWOOD has been a dishwasher, a community organizer, a medical archivist, a documentary film producer, an oral historian, and a teacher. Much of his life has been spent in East Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. He has published three books, And For The Mouth A Flower, Grand Detour and The Cats In Zanzibar, and his poems have appeared in magazines ranging from *American Poetry Review* to *Visions*. He has always been an unlikely man in unlikely places.

BOB TOMOLILLO began his career during the burgeoning of the print workshops in 1970. He worked at Impressions Workshop in Boston and at the Printshop in Amsterdam, Netherlands as a professional printer. He earned a B.F.A. from University of Massachusetts and an M.F.A. from Syracuse University. A faculty member at the F.A.W.C. in Provincetown, Mass. and currently executive board member of The Boston Printmakers, his lithographs are included in collections here and abroad. In 2009 he was the co-winner of the first Dayton Peace Museums Peace Prize for The Arts. He recently participated in the London Liberal Arts College, "Year of Subversion Exhibition." His essays on "Art" have appeared in the *Print Alliance Journal* "Prints and Politics" and *Visual Overture Magazine*. Other writing has appeared in *Literal Minded, Orange Alert, Shine Journal, Askew Reviews, Glossolalia, Creative Writing Now, Blinking Cursor, Bap Q, Lunarosity, Icelandic Review, Writers Billboard , First Writers Magazine, Milspeak, Subterranean Journal, South Jersey Underground , Cavalier Magazine, Yellow Mama, Visual Overture, Vox Poetica, Ascent Aspirations Magazine, Bangalore Review, Forum Magazine, The Red Fez,* and *Spilling Ink Anthology*.

REWA ZEINATI is the **founder and editor of *Sukoon***, and the author of the creative non-fiction book, *Nietzsche's Camel Must Die: An Invitation to Say 'No'* (xanadu*, 2013), as well as the poetry chapbook, *Bullets & Orchids* (Corrupt Press, 2013). She studied English Literature at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, where she is originally from, and earned her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Missouri, Saint Louis, USA (where she is not originally from). Several of her poems, essays, articles and translations have been published in various literary journals and anthologies across the USA, Europe, Middle East and online, including *UNCOMMON:DUBAI, Common Boundary: Stories of Immigration* and *Nowhere near a damn rainbow*. She teaches writing at Phoenicia University in Lebanon.

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