

Prairie

A Rumman poetry zine



Cover art by Harold Rubin, from the
"Down with the Occupation"
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Introduction

This second volume of PaleZine continues from the belief that poetry can break silence and help us build communities of resistance. With these pages, we want to create a space where

words from different places and languages can meet. They describe different realities, but when read next to each other they show how connected our struggles are. The poems we gathered reflect what our extended Rumman community feels the need to say at this moment. They hold the things we want to tell each other, the things we want to keep, and the things we do not want to forget. We hope the texts and their translations stay with you longer than the short time we spend reading them together.

In this volume, you will find Arab poets from Lebanese and Palestinian traditions, personal contributions in English, and poets writing in Turkish and Swahili. You will also find work in German, Arabic, English and other languages. Most of us cannot read every language represented here, and the same is true for many who helped assemble this zine. We still choose to include them all. Poetry does not live only in exact translation. It also lives in intention, in the effort to communicate, and in the choice to share one's words with others. All the works here are connected through the theme of anti colonialism. This does not mean one single story or one single way of resisting. Each writer speaks from a different place:

from ongoing struggles against occupation, from the experience of migration, from daily life shaped by racism or by the long legacy of empire. Others write from personal experiences that show how colonial structures continue to influence language, labour, gender and the simple act of moving through the world.

Taken together, these voices do not claim to offer a complete picture. They show many small angles that, placed side by side, widen our understanding of what resisting colonial structures can mean today. They remind us that anti colonial resistance is not only large political movements, but also the work of remembering, of witnessing, of insisting on dignity, and of refusing silence.

Einführung

Dieser zweite Band von PaleZine folgt der Überzeugung, dass Poesie Schweigen brechen und uns helfen kann, Gemeinschaften des Widerstands aufzubauen. Mit diesen Seiten möchten wir einen Raum schaffen, in dem Worte aus verschiedenen Orten und Sprachen einander begegnen können. Sie beschreiben unterschiedliche Realitäten, doch wenn man sie nebeneinander liest, zeigen sie, wie eng unsere Kämpfe miteinander verbunden sind. Die Gedichte, die wir gesammelt haben, spiegeln wider, was unsere erweiterte Rumman-Community im jetzigen Moment auszusprechen braucht. Sie bewahren das, was wir einander sagen wollen, das, was wir festhalten möchten, und das, was wir nicht vergessen wollen. Wir hoffen, dass die Texte und ihre Übersetzungen länger bei euch bleiben als die kurze Zeit, die wir damit verbringen, sie gemeinsam zu lesen.

In diesem Band finden sich arabische Dichterinnen aus libanesischen und palästinensischen Traditionen, persönliche Beiträge auf Englisch sowie Gedichte auf Türkisch und Swahili. Außerdem gibt es Arbeiten auf Deutsch, Arabisch, Englisch und in weiteren Sprachen. Die meisten von uns können nicht jede hier vertretene Sprache lesen – und das gilt auch für viele, die an der Entstehung dieses Zines mitgewirkt haben. Trotzdem haben wir uns entschieden, all diese Stimmen aufzunehmen. Poesie lebt nicht nur in der exakten Übersetzung. Sie lebt auch in der Absicht, im Bemühen, miteinander zu kommunizieren, und in der Entscheidung, die eigenen Worte mit anderen zu teilen. Alle hier versammelten Werke sind durch das Thema des Antikolonialismus verbunden. Das bedeutet jedoch keine einzige Geschichte und keine einzige Form des Widerstands. Jeder Schreibende spricht aus einem anderen Kontext: aus andauernden Kämpfen gegen Besatzung, aus Migrationserfahrungen, aus einem Alltag, der von Rassismus oder dem langen Erbe des Empire geprägt ist. Andere schreiben aus persönlichen Erfahrungen, die zeigen, wie koloniale Strukturen weiterhin Sprache, Arbeit, Geschlecht und selbst die einfache Bewegung durch die Welt beeinflussen.

Zusammen ergeben diese Stimmen kein vollständiges Bild. Sie zeigen viele kleine Perspektiven, die nebeneinander gestellt unser Verständnis davon erweitern, was Widerstand gegen koloniale Strukturen heute bedeuten kann. Sie erinnern uns daran, dass antikolonialer Widerstand nicht nur große politische Bewegungen umfasst, sondern auch die Arbeit des Erinnerns, des Zeugnisablegens, des Beharrens auf Würde und des Verweigerns von Schweigen.

Etel Adnan

Etel Adnan (1925–2021) was a Lebanese-American poet, painter, and philosopher whose life and work were deeply shaped by anti-colonial struggle. Born in French-mandated Beirut to a Greek mother and Syrian father, her early life unfolded in a multilingual, colonially stratified society that sharpened her awareness of power, exile, and identity.

Trained in philosophy in Paris and later teaching in the United States, she wrote in French, English, and sometimes Arabic—each language carrying its own political weight. Her writings consistently resisted imperial narratives, centering the experiences of colonized peoples, especially in her landmark novel *Sitt Marie Rose*, which exposed sectarianism, patriarchy, and the violent legacies of French colonialism in Lebanon.

Exile became a central theme of her life and art: she lived between Beirut, California, and later Paris, turning displacement into a creative force. Her paintings—bold, abstract, and non-representational—were also a form of quiet resistance, asserting beauty and self-determination outside Western artistic hierarchies.

Adnan's life can be read as a continuous anti-colonial practice: rejecting imposed identities, amplifying marginalized voices, and transforming personal diasporic experience into a broader political and artistic testimony.

The night of the non-event

The night of the non-event. War in the vacant sky.
The Phantom's absence.

Funerals. Coffin not covered with roses. Unarmed population. Long.

The yellow sun's procession from the mosque to the vacant Place. Mute taxis.

Plainclothed army. Silent hearse. Silenced music. Palestinians with no Palestine.

The night of the Great Inca did not happen. Engineless planes. Extinguished sun. shermen with no fleet fish with no sea fleet with no fish sea without fishermen Guns with faded flowers Che Guevara reduced to ashes. No shade.

The wind neither rose nor subsided. The Jews are absent. Flat tires.

The little lights are not lit. No child has died. No rain I did not say that spring was breathing. The dead did not return.

The mosque has launched its unheeded prayer. Lost in the waves.

The street lost its stones. Brilliant asphalt. Useless roads. Dead Army.

Snuffed is the street. To shut off the gas. Refugees with no refuge no candle.

The procession hasn't been scared. Time went by. Silent Phantom.

Stagnant tide. Weightless blackness. Motionless cold around a non-existent fire.

Car with no driver Achrafieh-Hamra words under lock. Fear with no substance.

Windowless walled City.

A dead man forced to go home on foot. A bullet in the belly.

Prayer in the mosque. Black procession tinier than ants. Allahu Akbar.

Cybernetics of Doom broken machine. A breeze but no garden.

The much awaited enemy has not come. He ate his yellow sun and vomited.

Time: lemon crushed by a wheel grating under funerals.

Between Beirut and Sidon there is the sea. This night is not of war.

Nothing is crushed by the Silence. Guns are rusting in travel bags. Revolution.

Die Nacht des Nicht-Ereignisses

Die Nacht des Nicht-Ereignisses. Krieg im leeren Himmel. Die Abwesenheit des Phantoms.
Beerdigungen. Ein Sarg ohne Rosen.
Eine unbewaffnete Menge. Endlos.
Der gelbe Zug der Sonne, vom Minarett zum verlassenen Platz. Stumme Taxis.
Ein Heer in Zivil. Ein stummer Leichenwagen.
Erstickte Musik.
Palästinenser ohne Palästina.
Die Nacht des großen Inka hat nie stattgefunden.
Flugzeuge ohne Motoren. Eine erloschene Sonne.
Fischer ohne Flotte, Fische ohne Meer,
eine Flotte ohne Fische, ein Meer ohne Fischer.
Waffen mit verblassten Blumen.
Che Guevara zu Asche geworden.
Kein Schatten. Der Wind erhob sich nicht, und er legte sich nicht. Juden und Jüdinnen – abwesend.
Platte Reifen.
Die kleinen Lichter brennen nicht. Kein Kind ist gestorben. Kein Regen.
Ich sagte nicht, dass der Frühling atmete.
Die Toten kehrten nicht zurück.
Die Moschee sandte ihr ungehörtes Gebet,
verloren in den Wellen. Die Straße verlor ihre Steine. Glänzender Asphalt. Straßen ohne Zweck.
Ein totes Heer. Verloschen ist die Straße.
Das Gas abgedreht. Flüchtlinge ohne Zuflucht,
keine Kerze.
Der Zug erschrak nicht. Die Zeit verging.
Stummes Phantom.

Stagnierende Flut. Schwerelose Schwärze.
Reglose Kälte um ein nicht existentes Feuer.
Ein Auto ohne Fahrer. Achrafieh-Hamra, Worte unter
Verschluss.
Furcht ohne Gestalt. Eine Stadt, zugemauert, ohne
Fenster. Ein toter Mann, gezwungen, zu Fuß nach
Hause zu gehen. Eine Kugel im Bauch.
Gebet in der Moschee. Ein schwarzer Zug, kleiner als
Ameisen. Allahu Akbar.
Kybernetik des Untergangs – eine zerbrochene
Maschine. Eine Brise, doch kein Garten.
Der lange erwartete Feind ist nicht gekommen.
Er fraß seine gelbe Sonne und erbrach sie wieder.

Die Zeit:
eine Zitrone, zerquetscht unter einem Rad,
schabend zwischen den Beerdigungen.
Zwischen Beirut und Sidon liegt das Meer.
Diese Nacht ist keine Nacht des Krieges.
Nichts wird vom Schweigen zermahlen.
Gewehre rosten in Reisetaschen.
Revolution.

Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi

Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi was born in 1909. He received his formative schooling at Zaytouna University in Tunis, where he immersed himself in Arabic language and literature, before going on to study law. Yet what made him a lasting figure was not his biography but his poetic rebellion.

In the 1920s, when Arabic poetry was largely traditional and static, al-Shabi emerged with verses full of nature, emotion, human longing, and a romantic spirit charged with revolt. He read classical Arabic poetry but also absorbed European literature, which filled his work with fresh imagery and a new imaginative tone.

He was among the first to call for liberating Arabic poetry from imitation and stagnation. His ideas provoked conservative criticism, but they also marked him as a voice of renewal.

His most famous work is *Songs of Life*, which includes the line that later became a political slogan across the Arab world:

"If the people one day desire life, then destiny must respond."

This single verse was enough to turn al-Shabi into a symbol of hope, willpower, and liberation, especially during the Arab Spring, where it was widely chanted. Although he died young at 25, in 1934 his short life intensified his legend: a sensitive, innovative poet who refused stagnation and sang of freedom, nature, and human possibility.

Al-Shabi endures because his poetry showed how imagination can become resistance, and how a verse can outlive its author and inspire entire generations.

عذبة أنت كالطفلة

أَنْتِ تُحِينَ فِي فَوَادِي مَا قَدْ ماتَ فِي أَمْسِي السَّعِيدِ الْفَقِيدِ
وَتُشَيِّدِينَ فِي خَرَائِبِ رُوحِي مَا تلاشَى فِي عهْدِي المَجْدُودِ
مِنْ طَمْوِي إِلَى الْجَمَالِ إِلَى الْفَنِّ إِلَى ذَلِكَ الْفَضَاءِ الْبَعِيدِ
وَتَبَيَّنَ رَقَّةِ الشَّوْقِ وَالْأَحْلَامِ وَالشَّدُوِّ وَالْهُوَى فِي نَشِيدِي
بَعْدَ أَنْ عَانَقْتُ كَابَةً أَيَّامِي فَوَادِي وَالْجَمْتُ تَغْرِيدِي
أَنْتِ أَنْشُودَةُ الْأَنَاشِيدِ غَنَّاكِ إِلَهُ الْفَنَاءِ رَبُّ الْقَصِيدِ
فِيَكِ شَبَّ الشَّيَابِ وَشَحَّةُ السَّحْرِ وَشَدُوِّ الْهُوَى وَعَظَرُ الْوَرَودِ
وَتَرَاءِي الْجَمَالُ يَرْقُضُ رَقْصًا قُدْسِيًّا عَلَى أَغَانِي الْوُجُودِ
وَتَهَادُتُ فِي أَفْقِ رُوجُوكِ أَوْزَانُ الْأَغَانِي وَرِقَّةُ التَّغْرِيدِ
فَتَمَايِلِتُ فِي الْوُجُودِ كَلْحِنٍ عِبْرِيَّ الْخِيَالِ حَلُوِ النَّشِيدِ
خَطْوَاتُ سَكْرَانَةِ الْأَنَاشِيدِ وَصَوْتُ كَرْجَعْ نَاي بَعِيدِ
وَقَوَافِمُ يَكَادُ يَنْطُقُ بِالْأَلْحَانِ فِي كُلِّ وَقْفَةٍ وَقَعُودِ
كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَوْقَعُ فِيَكِ حَتَّى لَفْحَةُ الْجَيْدِ وَاهْتَازُ النَّهُودِ
أَنْتِ أَنْتِ الْحَيَاةُ فِي قَدْسِهَا السَّامِيِّ وَفِي سَحْرِهَا الشَّجَّيِّ الْفَرِيدِ
أَنْتِ أَنْتِ الْحَيَاةُ فِي رَقَّةِ الْفَجْرِ فِي رَونَقِ الرَّبِيعِ الْوَلِيدِ
أَنْتِ أَنْتِ الْحَيَاةُ كُلَّ أَوَانٍ فِي رُؤَاءِ مِنْ الشَّيَابِ جَدِيدِ
أَنْتِ أَنْتِ الْحَيَاةُ فِيَكِ وَفِي عَيْنَيِكِ آيَاتُ سَحْرِهَا الْمَمْدُودِ
أَنْتِ دُنْيَا مِنَ الْأَنَاشِيدِ وَالْأَحْلَامِ وَالسَّحْرِ وَالْخِيَالِ الْمَدِيدِ
أَنْتِ فَوْقَ الْخِيَالِ وَالشِّعْرِ وَالْفَنِّ وَفَوْقَ النُّهَى وَفَوْقَ الْحُدُودِ
أَنْتِ قُدْسِيِّ وَمَعْبُديِّ وَصَبَاحِيِّ وَرَبِيعِيِّ وَنَشُوتِيِّ وَخُلُودِيِّ

Tender you are, like childhood

You awaken in my heart what had died in my happy,
bygone yesterdays.

And you build upon the ruins of my soul what faded in
my shattered days.

From ambition to beauty, to art to that vast distant
sky.

You breathe into my anthem tenderness longing,
dreams, melody, and love.

After the gloom of my days embraced my heart and
silenced my singing.

You are the song of songs; the god of singing, the lord
of poetry, sang you.

In your youth blossomed, touched by magic, love's
melody, and the scent of roses.

And beauty appeared, dancing sacredly upon the
songs of existence.

And across the horizon of your spirit rhythms of songs
and softness of chirping swayed.

You swayed through existence like a melody of
brilliant imagination, sweet in its hymn.

Steps intoxicated with songs, a voice like the echo of
a distant flute.

A form almost speaking in melodies with every stance
and rest.

Everything is inscribed in you, even the brush of your
neck and the sway of your breasts.

You are life itself, in its highest sanctity, in its unique,
soulful magic.

You are life itself, in the tenderness of dawn, in the
freshness of a newborn spring.

You are life itself, at every hour, in the radiance of
renewed youth.

You are life itself, and in you, in your eyes, lie signs of
your extended enchantment.

You are a world of songs and dreams, of magic and
boundless imagination.

You are beyond imagination, poetry, and art,
beyond intellect, beyond limits.

You are my sacredness, my temple, my morning, my
spring, my rapture, my eternity.

Nâzım Hikmet Ran

Nâzım Hikmet Ran (January 15, 1902, Thessaloniki - June 3, 1963, Moscow) was a Turkish poet and writer. He was arrested several times for his communist beliefs and membership in the banned Turkish Communist Party (TKP) and spent most of his life in prison or in exile. He was tried in 11 separate cases in Turkey and served more than 12 years in prisons in Istanbul, Ankara, Çankırı, and Bursa.

After leaving Turkey in 1951, he was stripped of his Turkish citizenship; this decision was revoked 46 years after his death, on January 5, 2009. The themes of exile, longing for his homeland, and longing for his family are frequently seen in the poems he wrote in exile. One of these poems is "Ceviz Ağacı" (The Walnut Tree), which he wrote in 1957 while in exile in Bulgaria.

Ceviz Ağacı

Başım köpük köpük bulut, içim dışım deniz,
ben bir ceviz ağacıyım Gülhane Parkı'nda,
budak budak, şerham şerham ihtiyar bir ceviz.
Ne sen bunun farkındasın, ne polis farkında.

Ben bir ceviz ağacıyım Gülhane Parkı'nda.
Yapraklarım suda balık gibi kıvıl kıvıl.
Yapraklarım ipek mendil gibi tiril tiril,
koparıver, gözlerinin, gülüm, yaşıını sil.

Yapraklarım ellerimdir, tam yüz bin elim var.
Yüz bin elle dokunurum sana, İstanbul'a.
Yapraklarım gözlerimdir, şaşarak bakarım.
Yüz bin gözle seyrederim seni, İstanbul'u.
Yüz bin yürek gibi çarpar, çarpar yapraklarım.

Ben bir ceviz ağacıyım Gülhane Parkı'nda.
Ne sen bunun farkındasın, ne polis farkında.

Walnut Tree

My head foaming clouds, sea inside me and out
I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park
an old walnut, knot by knot, shred by shred
Neither you are aware of this, nor the police

I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park
My leaves are nimble, nimble like fish in water
My leaves are sheer, sheer like a silk handkerchief
pick, wipe, my rose, the tear from your eyes
My leaves are my hands, I have one hundred thousand
I touch you with one hundred thousand hands, I
touch Istanbul

My leaves are my eyes, I look in amazement
I watch you with one hundred thousand eyes, I
watch Istanbul
Like one hundred thousand hearts, beat, beat my
leaves

I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park
neither you are aware of this, nor the police

Shabaan Robert

Shaaban Robert was a Tanzanian writer and poet whose exact inspiration for the poem is unknown, as he died in 1962. He is widely admired for his belief that truth ultimately prevails, a theme reflected in his works. Robert spent much of his life working as a civil servant under the colonial government, an experience that shaped his anti-colonial perspective. His position allowed him to observe the flaws and injustices of the colonial system firsthand. In addition to his political insights, he was deeply committed to preserving the Swahili language. Through his literary work, he engaged in cultural resistance against colonial influence and strengthened East African identity.

Kweli itashinda namna
tunavyoishi
Kweli haihofu tisho wala
nguvu za majeshi
La uongo lina mwisho, Kweli
kitu cha aushi
Kweli itashinda kesho kama
leo haitoshi

The truth will prevail
because of the way we live,
the truth does not fear
threats nor military power
Lies have an end, truth is
always enduring.

The truth will win tomorrow
even if it does not win
today.

Alamin Mazrui

Alamin Mazrui is a writer and academic who became a political prisoner before eventually seeking asylum in the United States. During his imprisonment, he wrote a poem in the margins of a Bible using pens he had secretly taken from prison guards. His time in prison shaped both his worldview and his creative expression. After leaving his home country, he continued his academic career as a professor at the University of Michigan. There, he remained outspoken on global political issues. He was particularly known for his strong support of the Palestinian cause.

Mimi ni mimi

Waniita mkomunisti
Waniita mkapitalisti
Na mimi ni binadamu tu,
Kwani hilo halitoshi?
Nchi zinajiwakia
Mamama wakiomboleza, wakilia
Tumbi ya watoto wakiumia
na maneno yote tunayotumia
Kuuana na kuangamia
Ewe mto,
Tumesimama pambizoni mwako
machozi yakitudondoka
yakichangika moyoni mwako.

Mimi ni mimi

They have called me a communist
They have called me a capitalist
 I am only a human being
 Why is that not enough?
 Countries set fire to themselves
 while mothers grieve and weep
Innocent children are suffering from
the words we use to kill and destroy

 O River,
 We stand at your shores
 Our tears falling
 mixing in your heart.

Tawfiq Ziad

Tawfiq Ziad (1929–1994) was a Palestinian poet, writer, and political leader whose entire life was shaped by resistance to colonial oppression. Born in Nazareth under British rule and living through the Nakba of 1948, Ziad became a central cultural and political figure opposing the dispossession and marginalization of Palestinians inside the new Israeli state.

As a poet, he used simple, direct language to express the daily struggles of Palestinians living under military rule, land confiscation, and systemic discrimination. His poetry—especially the famous line “Here we shall remain”—became a rallying cry of steadfastness (*sumud*), celebrating survival, dignity, and collective resistance.

Politically, Ziad served for many years as the communist mayor of Nazareth, championing workers' rights, cultural identity, and community self-determination. He played a leading role in organizing the 1976 Land Day protests, a seminal moment in Palestinian anti-colonial resistance within Israel, during which six Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces while protesting land seizures.

Throughout his life, Ziad viewed culture as inseparable from liberation. His art and politics were unified in the belief that Palestinians had not only the right to exist on their land, but the right to resist colonial domination through both political action and cultural affirmation.

He died in 1994 in a car accident while returning from welcoming Yasser Arafat to Jericho, symbolically linking his life's work to the broader Palestinian national movement.

أمة فوق الصليب

علقونا أمةً كاملةً فوق الصليب
علقونا فوقه .. حتى
نتوب ..
هذه النكسة ليست .. آخر الدنيا
ولا نحن عبيد فامسحوا أدمغكم
وادفنوا القتلى وقوموا من جديد
أيها الناس الحزانى
أنتم الدنيا وأنتم منبع الخير الوحيد
أنتم التاريخ والمستقبل باسم
في هذا الوجود فتعالوا
نشبك الأيدي بالأيدي ونمسي في اللهيب
فغد الأحرار إن طال - وإن طال

A Nation, upon the Cross

They hung us, an entire nation, upon the cross

They hung us upon it

Until... We repent

This Naksa is not the end of the world...

Nor are we slaves

So wipe your tears

Bury the dead

And rise again

O sorrowful people

You are the world

And you are the sole source of goodness

You are history

And the smiling future In this existence

So come

Let us join hands with hands And walk in the blaze

For the tomorrow of the free, if it is long delayed

And even if delayed – It is near

كأننا عشرون مستحيل
في اللد ، والرملة ، والجليل
هنا .. غلى صدوركم ، باقون كالجدار
وفي حلوكم
قطعة الزجاج ، كالصبار
وفي عيونكم
زوبعة من نار
هنا .. على صدوركم ، باقون كالجدار
تنظيف الصحون في الحانات
ونملأ الكؤوس للسادات
ونمسح البلاط في المطابخ السوداء
حتى نسل لقمة الصغار
من بين أنبياكم الزرقاء
هنا على صدوركم باقون ، كالجدار
ن Jou .. نعري .. نتحدى
تنشد الأشعار
ونملأ الشوارع الغضاب بالمظاهرات
ونملأ السجون برباء
ونصنع الأطفال .. جيلا ثائرا .. وراء جيل
كأننا عشرون مستحيل
في اللد ، والرملة ، والجليل
إنا هنا باقون
فلتشربوا البحار
نحرس ظل التين والزيتون
ونزرع الأفكار ، كالخمير في العجين
برودة الجليد في أعصابنا
وفي قلوبنا جهنم حمرا
إذا عطشنا نعصر الصخرا
ونأكل التراب إن جعنا .. ولا نرحل
 وبالدم الزيكي لا نبخل .. لا نبخل .. لا نبخل
هنا .. لنا ماض .. وحاضر .. ومستقبل
كأننا عشرون مستحيل
في اللد ، والرملة ، والجليل
يا جذرنا الحي تشيث
واضري في القاع يا أصول
أفضل أن يراجع المضطهد الحساب
من قبل أن ينفتل الدولاب
لكل فعل : ... إقرأوا
ما جاء في الكتاب

As if twenty impossibles we are

In Al-Lid, Ar-Ramleh and the Galilee
Here ... on your chests, staying as a wall
Remaining we are
In your throats
Like a piece of glass, like cactus
And in your eyes
A storm of fire
Here ... on your chests, staying as a wall*
Remaining we are
Hungry we get ... naked ... we challenge ...
Chant poems
Fill the street with angry demonstrations
Fill prisons with pride
Produce children ... a revolting generation ...
after generation
As if twenty impossibles we are
In Al-Lid, Ar-Ramleh and the Galilee

Plant ideas, like yeast in dough
The coldness of the Galilee in our nerves
Live coal ... hell in our hearts
If thirsty we get rocks we squeeze
If hungry we get soil we eat ... and we never leave
Our redolent blood we don't spare ...
We don't spare ... we don't spare ...
Here we have a past ...
A present ...
And a future

Meli

A poem for absurd times - between what remains incomprehensible and what keeps us grounded and warm. Written almost two years ago, at the end of a Dresden tram journey.

When we live

When you live and step in a tram, that takes you past an old factory that spews gray clouds into a blue sky and you think about the transition to clean energy, and how we all strive to be so clean

So clean we wipe the dirt from our grass and dump our waste into large pits we cover with earth

So that our grass stays green and no one worries about what grows underneath

I imagine plastic roots that leak a tragic sap

Toxic tears deprived of air

The leftovers of our scraps of indifference

And perhaps mortality

When you sit back in your room and think of your exams

Studying a pretty map while ignoring the one that instructs a nation-state where to strike its drones

You think of the gridded plots, the arbitrary squares that huddle people's homes

And you think of the olive trees of which so many speak and you think if you know what it means to truly belong to this globe

One dirty and throbbing and raw

While outside tractors scream on city streets

Mostly men with big machines

I've never seen a Palestinian map

Only heard one

Through stories and songs

When you unexpectedly find love
In the night of a cup that keeps you warm
Snuggles you close
You later read a headline about a man with
money who wishes to build his grave on the moon
And you think even the sky, the brilliant sky, is not
too far away to be colonized
Constellations of man-graves and smoke
It gives you then a small satisfactory stroke to
think again a man with a machine is strong
But a rock alone is always stronger than a man
A dull, brilliant stone
That the core of this earth crushes to glaring
heat, man machine rock
That there are still corners of our planet, by time
untouched, I think, at least
And you drip the dregs of your love tea onto a
carpeted floor and feel it
Alive and angry, grateful and absurd

Amin Haddad

Amin Haddad was born in 1958 and is the son of the well-known poet Fouad Haddad — he inherited a love for poetry early and started writing by the age of 23. He pursued a career as a computer (or systems) engineer while maintaining his identity as a poet — combining "the world of letters and the world of numbers." Over the years he published many poetry books (beginning with *Rihet El-Habayeb* in 1990) and engaged with social and political reality — for instance reflections on war, identity, homeland and memory.

He is also co-founder of a performance collective (Ferqat Al-Sharea, "The Street Troupe"), which since 2000 has brought vernacular poetry to public performance, often combining poetry with music to reach a wider, younger audience. recognition of his work, he was awarded the International Cavafy Poetry Prize in 2011, and the Best Vernacular Poet Award at the Cairo International Book Fair in 2017.

راجعين ياحياة

راجعين راجعين راجعين ياحياة
راجعين بقلب جديد
راجعين أمل بيزيذ
خطر بروح لأمان
شجر يقول أناشيد
راجعين
راجعين من الماضي
رایحين على المستقبل
بعزمنا الماضي
الدنيا تصبح أجمل
راجعين
ياحياة ياحريّة
ياروح يانسانية
يعيش وملح وماء
الناس سواسية
راجعين
كلمة وقلناها
الدنيا تسمعنا
حياتنا معنها
قلوب تجمّعنا
راجعين
اتجمعوا ياناس
املوا الهوا بحماس
املوا الحياة إحساس
النور هييجي أكيد
اتجمعوا ياناس
املوا الهوا بحماس
املوا الحياة إحساس
النور هييجي أكيد
راجعين راجعين راجعين ياحياة
راجعين راجعين راجعين للحياة

O life, we're coming back

O life, We're coming back—
Coming back with newborn hearts,
Returning with hope that rises,
Danger melting into peace,
Trees whispering their hymns...
We're coming back.
Returning from the past,
Heading toward the future,
With our unwavering determination,
the world grows more beautiful—
We're coming back.

O life, O freedom,
O soul, O humanity,
O bread, salt, and water—
All people are equal.
We're coming back.

A word we once spoke
Now echoes through the world:
The meaning of our lives
is to have hearts that gather us.
We're coming back.

Come together, people—
Let passion fill the air,
Let feeling flood the world,
For the dawn will surely rise.

Gather, people—
Let passion fill the air,
Let feeling flood the world,
For the dawn will surely rise.

O life, We're coming back,
We're coming back—to life.

Sasá Mendez

The poem is dedicated to a people who teach us everyday what resilience and resistance look like. They need to thrive under fair conditions.

Palestine

Filistin, Falastin
You must live,
Your thirst satisfy.
With your rain water,
Your kids will play hide.
From the olive trees
Till the soil that sustains them,
You will own your land.
Witness a genocide live,
Makes me get the chills
How did we get to the point
To utter dismissal of our humanity?
Resembles the holocaust archives
Kept in Yad Vashem
Ironically occupied land.
How do we learn from collective trauma?
It took the world a while...
the silenced voices,
Became cries.

The white man will have to comply.
Reparations in form of land back.
Recognition as a planet revolution.
The global majority affected by colonialism
We are here to change this plot.
Africa and Asia, they want to destabilize,
Their resources soak down
To keep oppression's hold,
a stench so tart!
When little ones break free,
with hearts so smart,
This wicked system will fall apart.
From our communities
we have to take hold.
Palestina, your spirit's bold.
For your right to be,
our fight untold.
To scroll a genocide,
and stay still
Would make me the true evil,
wrongly sprung.
My Jewish grandma,
before her final song,
Asked me to go to Jerusalem,
Al Quds,
if it's in Palestine.

Palästina

Palästina, o Falastin,
Du musst leben, das steht fest,
Still deinen Durst, hab keine Ruh,
Bis dein Regenwasser fließt.
Deine Kinder spielen Versteck
Unter Olivenbäumen frei,
In dem Boden, der sie nährt,
Wird dein Land für immer sein.

Zeuge eines Genozids,
Mir läuft's eiskalt den Rücken hin.
Wie sind wir nur so tief gesunken,
Menschlichkeit ging ganz dahin?
Ähnlich den Archivberichten
Von dem Holocaust, die man kennt,
In Yad Vashem – Welch Ironie –
Auf besetztem Land gespenst.

Wie lernt man aus kollektivem Trauma?

Es dauerte eine Zeit, doch dann
Die verstummtten Stimme wurden Schrei.
Der weiße Mann muss es begreifen:
Land zurück als Wiedergutmachung sei!
Anerkennung als Planeten-Revolution,
Die globale Mehrheit, kolonial geplagt,
Wir sind hier, um die Handlung zu drehen,
Das System, das so lange tagt.

Afrika und Asien, man will sie destabilisieren,
Ihre Ressourcen absaugen, klar,
Um der Unterdrückung Hand zu festigen-
Ein beißender, ein scharfer Gestank fürwahr!
Doch wenn die Kleinen sich befreien,
Mit Herzen klug und unerschlafft,
Zerbricht dieses böse System
In aller Zukunftskraft.

Aus unsren Gemeinschaften
Müssen wir die Hand jetzt nehmen.
Palästina, dein Mut ist rein,
Für dein Recht zu sein, wir kämpfen ein.
Bei einem Genozid zu scrollen
Und reglos einfach still zu sein,
Das würd' das wahre Böse in mir wecken,
Falsch entsprungen, nicht gemein.
Meine jüdische Großmutter,
Bevor ihr letzter Sang erklang,
Bat mich: "Geh nach Jerusalem, Al Quds,
Wenn es in Palästina liegt - geh bang."

Decadente efervescencia

Soy una casa de tuberías oxidadas,
archivo de luchas ahogadas.
Mi entrada, empolvada con resignación,
guarda fotos sin dueño en cada rincón.

Sus caras teñidas de trabajar de sol a sol,
monedas que benefician a la máquina del patrón.
El censo me denominó "estructura en riesgo",
pero mis grietas saben de motines y fuego.

Generaciones perdidas bajo mi techo,
ante la mirada cómplice del liberal. ¡Malhecho!
Ahí seguimos, aguantando el aguacero,
con filtraciones y mucho invierno.

Impávidos, dando refugio hasta al más olvidado,
mientras el genocidio está siendo televisado.
Nos llaman "ruina", pero somos espejo.

El catastro me tachó con tinta roja:
"zona de riesgo", "terreno baldío"...

Pero mis muros recuerdan:
aquí hubo arepa, aquí ardieron fogatas,
aquí crecimos a pesar del frío.

Ahora los bulldozers gruñen a mi puerta
bajo las estrellas de la gentrificación.

Pero escuchen bien, señores del cemento:
cuando me derrumben,
saldrán raíces de mis cimientos
y preparán por sus torres de cristal
hasta rajarlas con verdades verdes.

Soy la casa que nadie quiso heredar,
pero en mi sombra crecen los niños
que mañana van a tumbar
cada pilar que sostiene la vida del buchón,
la paz individualista e irresponsable del moderado,
y respetarán el orden natural.

Las casas se pueden derrumbar, los versos no.

Verfallsgärung

Ich bin ein Haus aus rostigen Rohren,
Archiv ertränkter Kämpfe, verloren.
Mein Eingang, staubig mit Resignation,
Bewahrt fotos ohne Besitzer an jedem Ort.

Ihre Gesichter gefärbt von Sonne bis Mond,
Münzen, die nur der Herren Maschine lohnen.
Der Zensus nannte mich „Gefährdetes Gebild“,
Doch meine Risse kennen Aufruhr und Glut.

Verlorene Generationen unter meinem Dach,
Vor dem komplizen Blick des Liberalen. Ach!
Dort harren wir aus im strömenden Regen,
Mit Undichten und viel Winter entgegen.

Unbeirrt geben wir Obdach selbst dem Vergessenen,
Während der Genozid live übertragen wird.
Man nennt uns „Rune“, doch wir sind Spiegel.

Das Kataster strich mich mit roter Tinte:
„Risikozone“, „Braches Land“...
Doch meine Mauern erinnern sich:
Hier gab es Arepa, hier brannten Feuer,
Hier wuchsen wir trotz der Kälte.

Nun knurren die Bulldozer vor meiner Tür
Unter den Sternen der Gentrifizierung.
Doch hört gut zu, ihr Herren des Betons:
 Wenn ihr mich einreißt,
Werden Wurzeln aus meinem Fundament schießen
 Und eure Glastürme erklimmen,
Bis sie sie spalten mit grünen Wahrheiten.

Ich bin das Haus, das keiner erben wollte,
Doch in meinem Schatten wachsen die Kinder,
Die morgen jeden Pfeiler einreißen werden,
 Der das Leben des Ausbeuters stützt,
Den individualistischen, verantwortungslosen Frieden des
 Gemäßigten,
Und die natürliche Ordnung achten werden.

Häuser mögen fallen, Verse nie.

Eduardo Galeano

Eduardo Galeano was born in Uruguay and became one of Latin America's most influential and beloved writers. After a military coup seized power in Uruguay in 1973, Galeano was imprisoned and forced into exile in Argentina. Only a few years later, in 1976, when the Videla dictatorship took power in another bloody coup, his name appeared on a death-squad list, and he fled once again, now to Spain.

Galeano's work blends documentary, fiction, journalism, political analysis, and history into a lyrical, fiercely human voice against oppression and colonialism.

Following the CIA-backed execution of Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967, Galeano wrote:

The life of Che Guevara, so perfectly confirmed by his death, is, like all great works, an accusation, formed in this case of bullets aimed at a world, our world, which converts the majority of men into beasts of burden for the minority of men, and condemns the majority of countries to slavery and misery for the benefit of the minority of countries; it is also an accusation against the egoists, the cowards, the conformists who do not throw themselves into the adventure of changing it.

The Nobodies

Fleas dream of buying themselves a dog, and nobodies dream of escaping poverty: that one magical day good luck will suddenly rain down on them—will rain down in buckets. But good luck doesn't rain down yesterday, today, tomorrow, or ever. Good luck doesn't even fall in a fine drizzle, no matter how hard the nobodies summon it, even if their left hand is tickling, or if they begin the new day with their right foot, or start the new year with a change of brooms.

The nobodies: nobody's children, owners of nothing. The nobodies: the no ones, the nobodied, running like rabbits, dying through life, screwed every which way.

Who are not, but could be.
Who don't speak languages, but dialects.
Who don't have religions, but superstitions.
Who don't create art, but handicrafts.
Who don't have culture, but folklore.
Who are not human beings, but human resources.
Who do not have faces, but arms.
Who do not have names, but numbers.
Who do not appear in the history of the world, but in the police blotter of the local paper.
The nobodies, who are not worth the bullet that kills them.

Los Nadies

Sueñan las pulgas con comprarse un perro y sueñan los nadies con salir de pobres, que algún mágico día llueva de pronto la buena suerte, que llueva a cántaros la buena suerte; pero la buena suerte no llueve ayer, ni hoy, ni mañana, ni nunca, ni en lloviznita cae del cielo la buena suerte, por mucho que los nadies la llamen y aunque les pique la mano izquierda, o se levanten con el pie derecho, o empiecen el año cambiando de escoba.

Los nadies: los hijos de nadie, los dueños de nada.
Los nadies: los ningunos, los ninguneados, corriendo la liebre, muriendo la vida, jodidos, rejodidos.
Que no son, aunque sean.
Que no hablan idiomas, sino dialectos.
Que no profesan religiones, sino supersticiones.
Que no hacen arte, sino artesanía.
Que no practican cultura, sino folklore.
Que no son seres humanos, sino recursos humanos.
Que no tienen cara, sino brazos.
Que no tienen nombre, sino número.
Que no figuran en la historia universal, sino en la crónica
roja de la prensa local.
Los nadies, que cuestan menos que la bala que los mata.

