

HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY

THE HERALD



BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND THE PAST

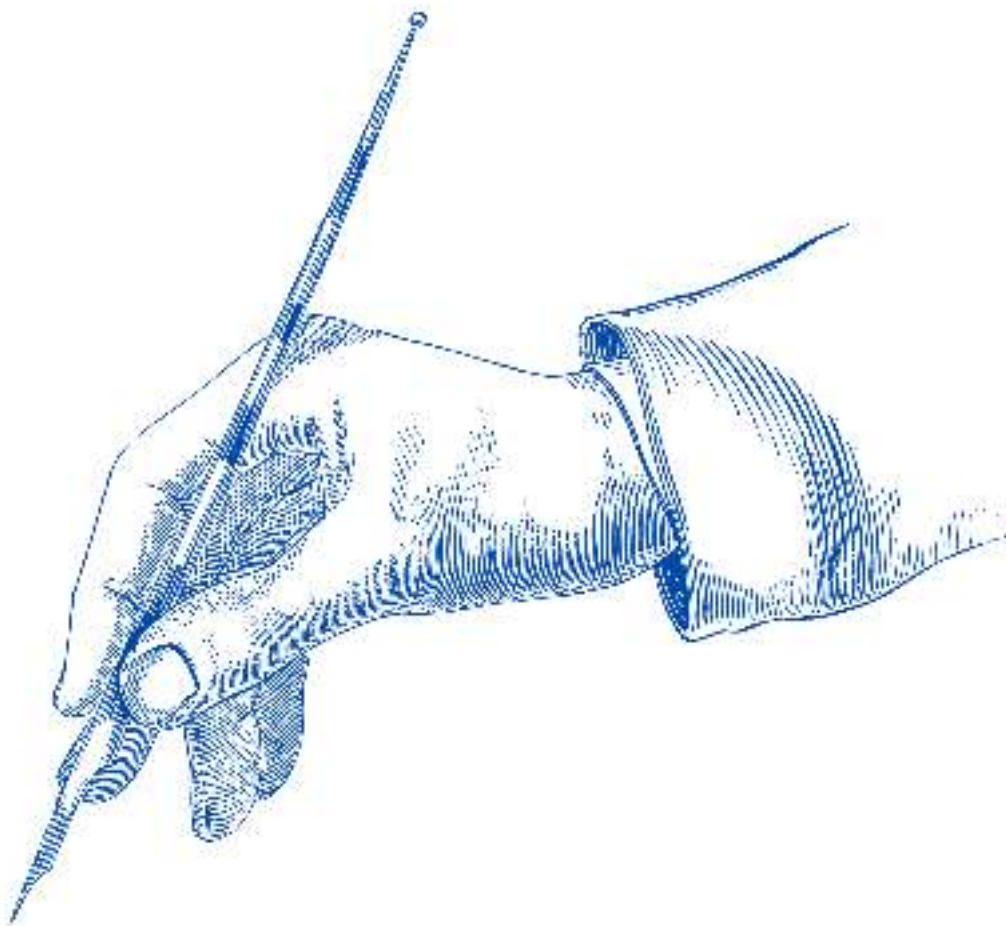
FALL ISSUE 2023

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writingcenter@haigazian.cdu.lb



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MEET THE TEAM

SUPERVISOR		PROOFREADER	CHAIRPERSON & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	
				
RAZMIG KAPRIELIAN <i>Director of Student Life</i>		MARIA BAKALIAN <i>Alumni Affairs Office</i>	DANIA AL BOUKHARI <i>Medical Laboratory Sciences</i>	
VICE CHAIRPERSONS			EDITORS	
				
ALIK DJINBACHIAN <i>Biology</i>			IBRAHIM AL NAJJAR <i>Economics</i>	HASMIG AINTABLIAN <i>Computer Science</i>
				
LILAS CHEHAB <i>Elementary Education</i>		FADY JAWHAR <i>English Language</i>	HELENA ABOU SEFIAN <i>English Language</i>	ARMAN KARAMIAN <i>Political Science</i>

WRITERS



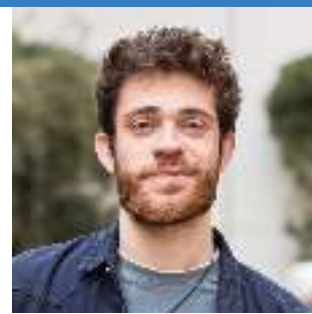
TIMOTEO PERIERA NEVES
Alumnus - Class of 2020
English Language



YEGHIA TASHJIAN
Alumnus - Class of 2013
Political Science



ARMEN SIMONIAN
Alumnus - Class of 2022
Political Science



JACK JIZMEJIAN
Alumnus - Class of 2022
Political Science



SUHA HADDAD NAIMY
Faculty Member



YASMINA NEHME
Biology



MICHAELLA SABBAGH
Political Science



AYA RAMADAN
Psychology



CAREN HAMZEH
Psychology



GARBIS DER GHAZARIAN
Psychology



JAD OTHMAN
Psychology



MIRA GHRAIZI
Psychology



NAJAH IDRIS
Psychology



TVIN HERGELIAN
Psychology



VANA WAKIMIAN
Psychology



MOHAMAD CHEHAB
Social Work



SERLY TOPEYAN
Social Work



LYNN FAWAZ
*Early Childhood
Education*



RALPH TANNOUS
Elementary Education



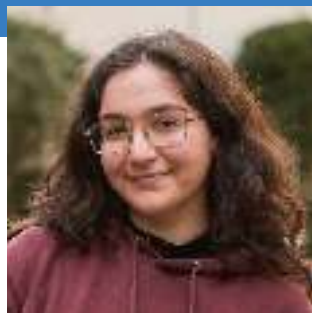
HAMZA DAMERJI
Special Education



YASMINA SROUR
Special Education



GORUNE KAZARIAN
Economics



**JEANNE D'ARC
DAVOULBEYUKIAN**
Human Resources



AYA ASSI
Marketing

Last semester, we were dreaming. We were believers in the inherent beauty of tomorrow. That is why we chose to discover the endless possibilities that the world can give us. But this semester, it was time to turn all the possibilities that we had fantasized into realities. That is when we were struck between the present and the past. We discovered that our quest to achieve our dreams and move into our future will be encountered with the harmony of our present and past selves. For that, we decided to delve into the folds of our present, understand its relationship with our past, and use that to create our future and ultimately make all our dreamt possibilities come into reality. It is crucial to introspect and connect with the depths of our past to explore the path lying ahead.

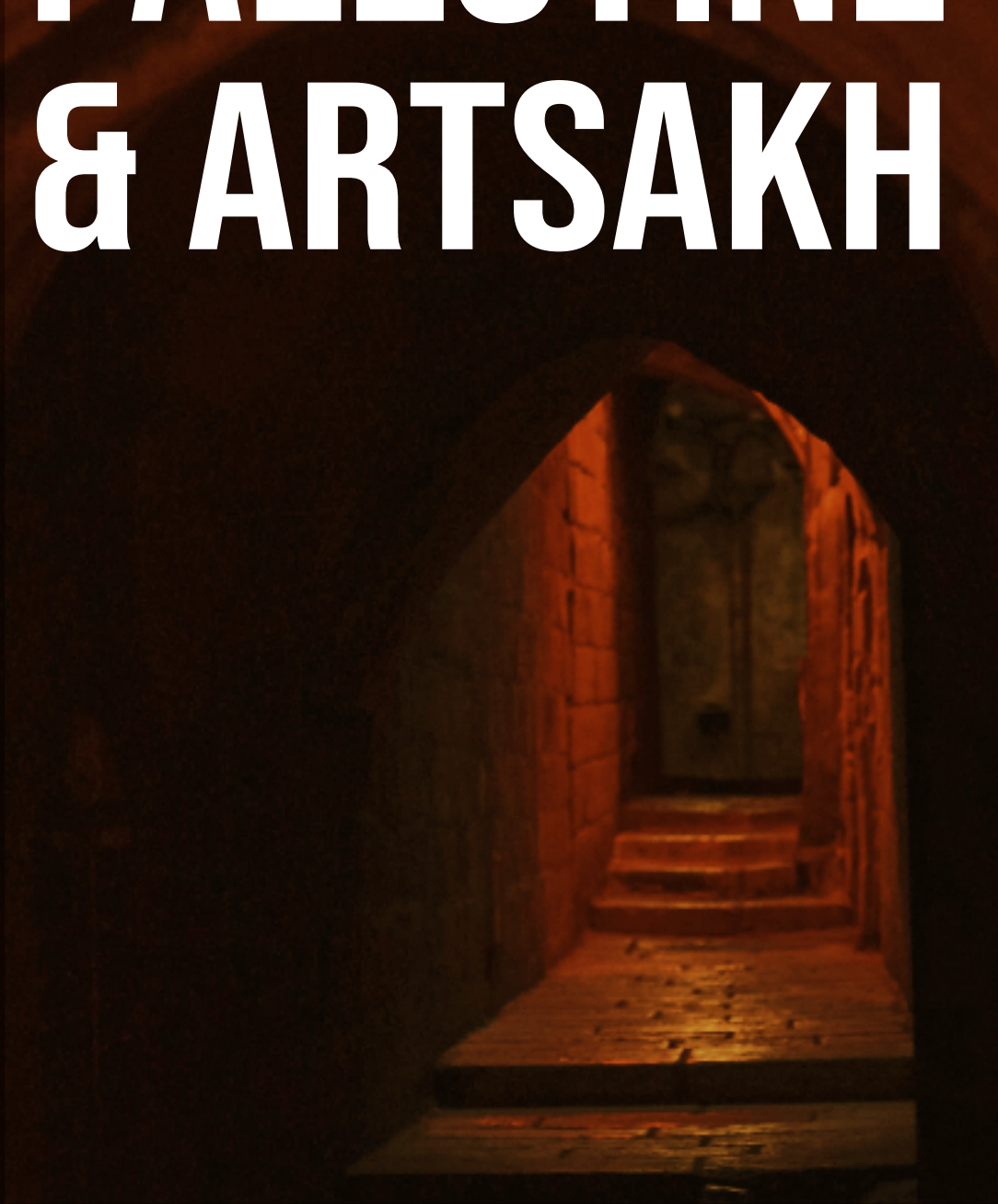
“Between the Present and the Past” is resonating deeply with me as I wrap up my roles as The Herald’s Chairperson and a Haigazian student and move into the outer world. I leave this club with a profound understanding of the impact of words and the importance of being connected to a community of like-minded individuals who believe in the value of writing and sharing their ideas. For that reason, I must express my heartfelt gratitude to each writer who joined me on this journey. I am particularly thankful for this semester’s team, from writers, editors, and our proofreader, all of whom allowed me to take this opportunity again this semester and lead them in bringing this issue to light. Their confidence, belief, and overflowing love were the pillars I needed to fulfill my duties and release an issue they would feel proud of. Conversely, it was one of my greatest privileges to bond and be inspired by their endless creativity. Every meeting, event, or session always brought me immense joy.

I am thankful for each person who tagged along on this journey and left a remark on this publication in their own unique way. I hope this issue inspires you, as it has inspired me, to explore the uncharted territory “Between the Present and the Past.”

With this being said, I leave you with pages filled with love to enjoy and I wish you a delightful read.

THE “ CHAIR- PERSON’S CORNER

PALESTINE & ARTSAKH



01

THE STORY OF HANDALA

Samir's earliest memories were drenched in the vibrant tapestry of his homeland. The joyous laughter of children from diverse backgrounds was the symphony of his childhood. In the narrow, winding streets of his beloved Palestine, Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived as one; a living testament to the beauty of coexistence. They didn't just share a neighborhood; they shared dreams, hopes, and life itself.

Samir's family home was a sanctuary of peace, nestled amidst homes where different faiths and cultures intermingled harmoniously. He would always pass by Masjid Al Aqsa during his morning walks, marvel at the Buraq Wall on his way to school, and see the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, since he lived near it. The very soil beneath his feet whispered the stories of various generations that had called this land home, due to its rich history and culture. There, neighbors were not just friends; they were a family bound by the tapestry of shared existence. They celebrated each other's festivals, held each other's sorrows, and under the moonlit skies, exchanged stories that painted the future with vivid dreams.

But as Samir grew up, the world around him began to tremble with change. The early 20th century brought distant whispers of Zionism, a movement that spoke of a Jewish homeland in the land he had always known as home. At that time, he couldn't fathom the tsunami of transformation that was about to reshape his world, nor could he foresee the colossal impact it would have on his life.

Hidden behind closed doors, far from Samir's neighborhood, British Prime Ministers Campbell and Balfour, along with advisors Sykes and Picot, conspired in shadowy meetings. Their geopolitical machinations might as well have been concocted in another dimension, but still, their actions would nevertheless unleash a storm that would change Samir's homeland forever. They conspired to tear apart what was once a united and peaceful front that flourished with resources, and to separate its people by creating conflict that would last more than a quarter of a century to come; all of that just so they could topple Samir's country for their own financial and selfish gains.



THE STORY OF HANDALA

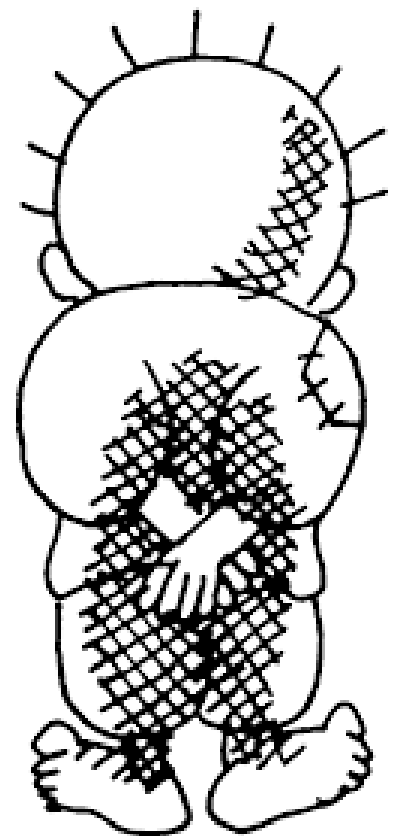
The promise made to the Zionists in 1917 was Balfour's declaration, which cast a long, dark shadow over Samir's family. He watched in sorrow as the Nakba of 1948 unfolded. It was a time of confusion, terror, and tumult. The very essence of his existence crumbled as homes were seized, families uprooted, and lives forever marred by the scars of dispossession. The Nakba was etched into Samir's soul, and the pain ran deeper than any wounds that could be seen.

As Samir matured, he bore witness to his homeland's transformation into a crucible of conflict. The previously echoing laughter of children in his neighborhood was silenced by the deafening roar of violence. The streets where he once played, learning life's lessons alongside childhood friends of all backgrounds, became battlefields where dreams met tragic realities.

The early 2000s brought the Second Intifada, a tempestuous storm of fury and unyielding determination. Samir and his friends took to the streets where every stone they hurled and every protest they attended was a testament to their unwavering demand for justice. In the face of a vindictive occupier, their spirit remained unbroken, an inferno of determination. The rest of the world saw them as terrorists, as "evil animals and monsters", yet that's the way the world looked at Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, or any great leader who opposed injustice.

One fateful evening, as Samir stood with his friends, chanting slogans of resistance, a tragedy unfolded. A burst of hatred, a vile act of violence, tore him away from the world. In a heartbeat, the vibrant life that was Samir was cruelly extinguished.

In the aftermath of this heart-wrenching loss, Samir's message thundered louder than ever. His spirit lived on in the hearts of those who believed in the dream he cherished. They stood unwavering, united by an unshakable conviction that Palestine would be free - not as a distant hope but as an imminent reality. The day of freedom was not a question of 'if' but 'when'. Samir's memory was a testament to their indomitable resolve, a stark reminder that even in the face of tragedy, hope and the resolute yearning for freedom would prevail. Palestine will be free, and its liberation will resound with the thunderous cries of justice, echoing across the world.



Handala (حنظلة) is a character created in 1969 by political cartoonist Naji al-Ali. It has become a prominent symbol of the Palestinian people and their resistance, representing themes of war, resistance, and Palestinian identity.

I am well aware that at the moment, all of us could think of stories that are far worse; it is a 75-year-old genocide after all. Yet, it's imperative to grasp the profound connection between these dire circumstances, the symbol of Handala, and the unyielding promise of freedom by Allah. Handala, a poignant representation of Palestinian resilience, serves as a beacon of hope amidst the sea of sorrow and heartache endured by these children. Never forget that while you were a kid choosing which toy to play with in a safe and loving environment, Palestinian kids were hoping to arrive at their homes after school, and not have their toys stolen. They hoped to see their moms alive, but this fragile hope was a tightrope they walked daily, their hearts aching with the fear of it being shattered by the cruel hand of fate. Their lives were a relentless game of chance, a heart-wrenching uncertainty as to whether they would witness a new dawn or if their innocent and modest dreams would be forever extinguished. These young souls aspired not to explore outer space as astronauts, perform enchanting feats as magicians, or emulate the heroic firefighters sliding down poles. Their dreams were modest, yet they were shrouded in sorrow and longing, like a dimly lit room in a world devoid of hope.

Palestinian kids' ultimate dream is to grow into adults to raise awareness about the horrors they witness. They dream of becoming journalists to tell us the stories of Israelis barging into their living rooms, claiming their houses as their own, and leaving them homeless; of the time their fathers got killed; of the time their moms or sisters got raped right before their eye; or of the time their baby brothers got shot or stabbed profoundly. Their journey into adulthood is not a pursuit of personal ambitions but rather a solemn promise, echoing the spirit of Handala, to bear witness to the unimaginable horrors they face. The survivors among these children choose to share their stories, not seeking pity from the world but driven by an unyielding resolve: "Even if I die, I will die as a Palestinian on my own land." A dear friend told me on the 2nd of November after Israel bombed Jabaliya, the biggest refugee camp in Gaza that massacred her own family, "Even if I must sacrifice my family, I will never abandon my homeland, God promised us freedom and to that, I have complete trust and faith in." Their unwavering faith in Allah's promise of freedom and revenge for the evils they have had to bear fuels their unrelenting spirit as they confront the blood that has been shed head-on. Their words and actions serve as an indomitable testament to the resilience of the human spirit, even in the darkest of times, as they persistently march towards a future where Allah's promise of freedom is fulfilled. And as humans, we are dutiful and responsible for fighting with them for their freedom; as Arabs we are more than capable of presenting a unified front that leads us to the freedom of our neighboring country. And as Lebanese, or people with Lebanese passports we are all accountable for the freedom of our own South, the occupied bits of it, from the horrors of Israel.

Indeed, the message is clear and unwavering: Palestine's freedom is not just a dream but an inevitable reality. The voices of those who strive for justice and peace are growing louder, and the world will soon bear witness to the triumph of hope over adversity.



FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA

October 7, 2023, perhaps one of the most historic days of indigenous resistance. In the early hours of the morning, the world was rocked awake with the news of the Palestinian resistance launching full-scale operations against the apartheid state, tearing down the barriers of Gaza for the first time in 17 years. After decades upon decades of oppression and occupation, Palestinians began to fight back with full firepower, forcing settlers to leave what they called “their indigenous lands”, signaling a call to the world the time for decolonization has come and the wrath of all our ancestors will rain down on settlers as hellfire.

As I follow the news as an Armenian, a small sliver of hope rises in my heart. As a child, I have always wondered “Why is no one standing beside the Armenians for our cause? Are we alone in our fight?” And as I grew older, I learned about Palestine, a land facing the same struggle and enemy as we do. Since before the formation of the apartheid, Armenians and Palestinians have shared a deep history, going back as far as the reign of Armenia’s emperor, Tigran the Great. With time, my admiration for the Palestinian cause grew stronger; a nation with no army, no powerful allies, and no wall to fall back to, resisting against what must be one of the best-funded militaries in the world. No matter the violence, Palestinians never bent to the enemy.

There is a quote by Najwan Darwish, a Palestinian poet, that forever lives in my heart:

“

“Who Remembers the Armenians?”
I remember them
and I ride the nightmare bus with them
each night,
and my coffee this morning
I’m drinking it with them.
You, murderer-
Who remembers you?

”

The Palestinian flag, alongside the Artsakh flag, will forever be a symbol of resistance and call to arms in my heart. I hope to live to see a liberated Palestine, celebrating its victories with a liberated Artsakh, to share my morning coffee with a Palestinian as we rejoice, our flags waving under free skies.

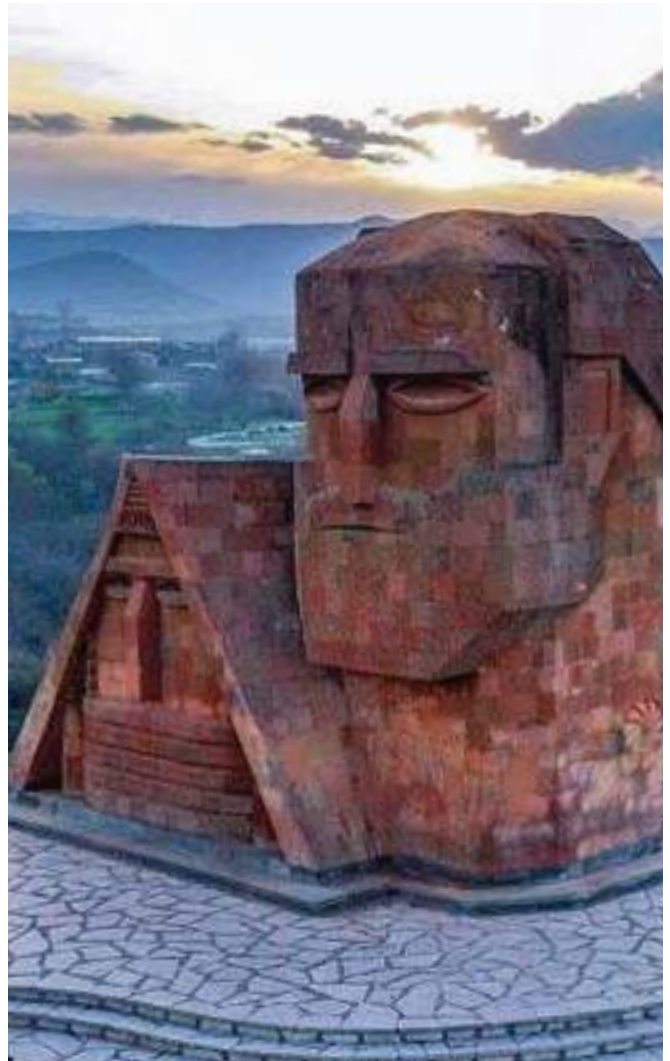


ARTSAKH: THE HEART AND SOUL OF A CIVILIZATION LOST

Artsakh. A land larger than life itself. Though it is small in size, roughly the size of Lebanon, yet it carries a history beyond what could be described in words. Artsakh and its people often remind me of the House Martel, Lords of Dorne from the Game of Thrones series; specifically, regarding their house slogan: “Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken”. That phrase is embodied by the people of Artsakh.

For centuries, before Armenia joined the Soviet Union, Artsakh remained self-governing, only paying a small tribute to foreign powers as terms of agreement. A mountainous land, Artsakh forged its people to be as strong and steady as its mountains, not succumbing to any power. The sheer will of Artsakh was clearly demonstrated during the Liberation War in the early 90’s, where even without a formal army, the people of Artsakh used whatever resources were available to capture Azeri military bases until they came into possession of proper munitions. Slowly but surely, the resistance of Artsakh began to liberate their lands. This came at a price though, losing many great, brave young men along the way. While this marked a great victory, it was sadly short-lived. Roughly 30 years later, after 2 consecutive wars, a 10-month blockade, and utter neglect, the people of Artsakh have been forced out of their ancestral lands. For the first time in about 5,000 years, Artsakh is left without its indigenous population, left for the vultures and wolves of the world to tear apart.

Now, there are some arguments to be made over why Artsakh was left alone against the world, but there is one thing that is certain, the people of Artsakh are not known to be forgiving. While now they struggle to find themselves in this storm of chaos, they will soon raise their arms and take back what was stolen from them. Whether this was treason or merely an unfortunate series of events, one thing is certain, everyone responsible, directly or indirectly, will answer to the people of Artsakh for their crimes because while God is forgiving, the Armenians of Artsakh are not.



Արծիւը Լքեց Իր Բոյնը

Արցախի մեր հայրենակիցները, հայոց ազգի արծիւներն են: Անոնք անվեհեր կ'ապրէին արցախեան բարձունքներուն վրայ, անվեհե՛ր մեր լեռներուն նման:

Արցախցին չէր ճանչնար պարտութիւն, կը մսար կանգուն եւ հպարտ, ինչպէս սլացող արծիւը ընդդէմ փոթորիկներու: Արցախցին պահապանն էր Հայոց աշխարհին. ամէն տունէ ելած էր նոր Վարդան մը, Սողոմոն Թեհլիրեան մը, Գարեգին Նժդեհ մը... Այո, ամէն Արցախցի հերոս է:

Ընդդէմ աշխարհի բոլոր փոթորիկներուն, Արցախցին երբե՛ք չէ խոնարհեցուցած իր թեւերը վայրագ հովին դիմաց: Արցախի ժողովուրդը հանդուրժեց աներեւակայելին՝ ինչպէս պատերազմներ եւ շրջափակում, սակայն ստորագրութեամբ մը յանձնուեցաւ, արարք մը՝ որ ունի միայն մէկ բացատրութիւն՝ դաւաճանութիւն:

Արցախի հողը ջրուած է մեր սուրբ նահատակներու արիւնով, եւ հայերս այդ օրհնուած հողին ճիշդ ձեւով տէր չկանգնեցանք:

Ո՛վ հայ, Արցախի լեռները նորէն մեզ կը կանչեն: Ինչո՞ւ մեղամաղձոտ նստած ես: Քու ծնունդդ իսկ սուրբ խոստում է պայքարի, ազատութեան, եւ արդարութեան: «Թող մի անգամ էլ հայը լինէր ոճրագործ, թող մի անգամ էլ հայը լինէր բարբարոս ու գազան» ըսած է Շահան Նաթալի: Ո՛վ հայ, գործի դիր զէնքդ, թուղթէ շերեփով հերիսա չես կրնար ճաշակել:

Այո, Արցախի արծիւը լքեց իր բոյնը, թէկուզ բռնի ուժով, բայց օրը պիտի գայ երբ պիտի վերադառնայ իր հայրենի բարձունքները:



THE CLOCK TOWER CHIMES

The clock tower chimes its melodious tune, as my parents and I take an evening stroll in the heart of my hometown, Anjar. It's 8 p.m. and the familiar sound reverberates through the town square. The clock tower has been standing tall for four years now, its presence a testament to time itself. As the chime fades, my mother breaks the silence, her voice tinged with nostalgia, "I don't know why they took it down in the first place."

The story of the clock tower dates back to 1946. It was a different clock then, one of simple, minimalist architecture that reflected the humility and resilience of the people it was built for; the people who had endured the ravages of war, hunger, bitter cold, disease, and injustice.

Back then, the clock functioned as the heartbeat of the town. It was the villagers' daily guide, waking them up at 6 a.m., calling them home for lunch at 12 p.m., and bidding them goodnight with its final chime at 9 p.m. These residents, who had grown up in tents and one-room houses, cherished this clock tower like a precious gem.

The clock tower's history started with the arrival of dedicated sisters from the Swiss-German *Hilfsbund* mission.

Alongside an evangelical church and school, they organized the construction of this clock tower, which became a symbol of hope and progress. To the villagers, it wasn't just a luxury; it was a beacon of their collective spirit.

As we stop walking and sit across the clock, my father's solemn voice breaks the stillness once again, "More bad news today." I stare at the clock and tears well up in my eyes as I think, "When will this ever be over?" For in that silence, our thoughts transcend the confines of our peaceful town. Far from us, Artsakh, the heart of Armenians, is gripped by a heinous tragedy. It is fading and its people are fading with it. 120,000 people are besieged there; they have been starving for months due to blockade and are now facing genocidal terror.

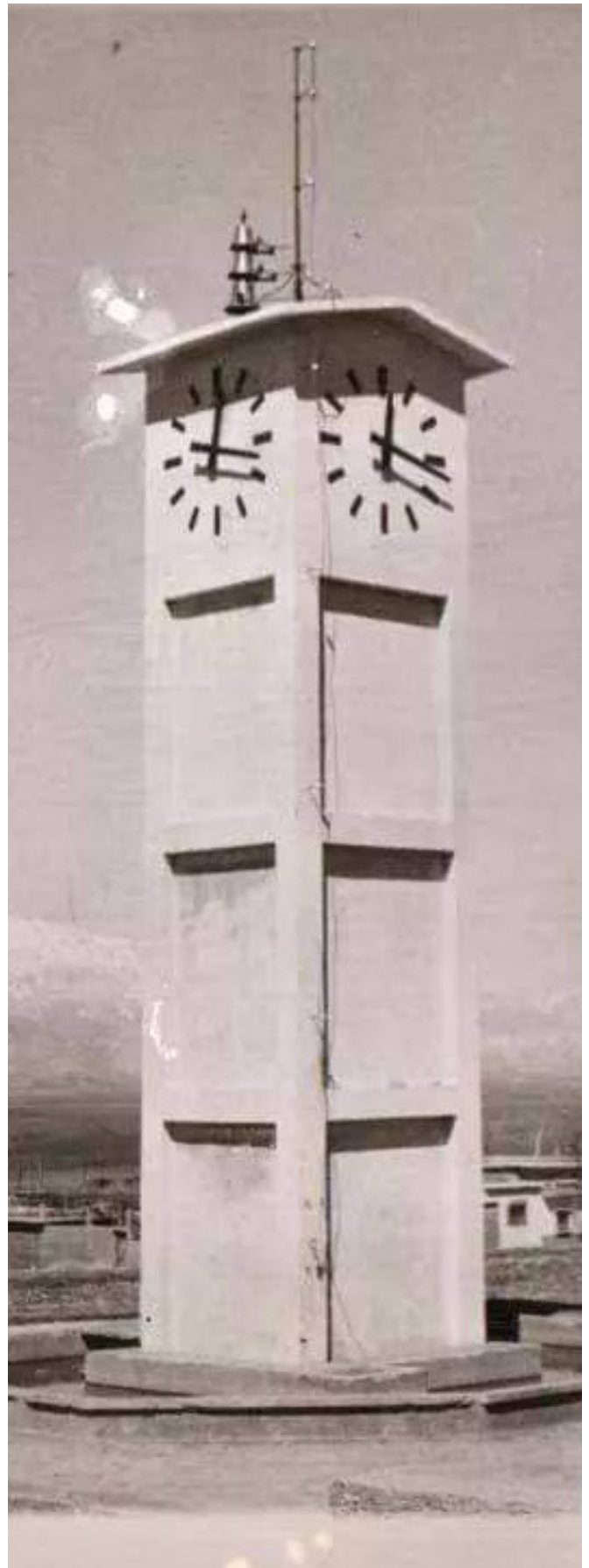
In this moment of silent meditation, I'm jolted by the realization that sometimes I take my history for granted. I've heard people say, "They lost some land," but it's not just land; it's their families, their homes, their identity, a part of their very soul. Now, I truly understand their pain, for we lose a part of ourselves every day as we receive news from Artsakh. We are reliving the lives of our ancestors, our connection to them growing stronger with each passing day. It's a stark reminder of what they endured, a legacy of strength and resilience that lives on within us.

My focus returns to the clock, and I wonder "How did people keep track of time in Mousadagh?" My thoughts now drift there—Mousadagh—our lost land, the place where my forefathers dwelled before escaping the horrors of genocide in the summer of 1915. They lead me to the faded pictures and grainy videos of my ancestral home, where my grandparents took their first steps and uttered their first words.

Mousadagh, perched above Kessab and nestled along the Mediterranean Sea, was a mountainous oasis of green. It consisted of six vibrant villages, each echoing the resilience of its villagers. The story of Mousadagh brings to mind the forty-day resistance that took place atop the formidable Mousaler mountain against the Ottomans. It was a desperate fight for survival that finally saw salvation through the timely arrival of French ships. Those ships, upon spotting the towering flag that was made by the desperate people, waving as a plea for aid on the mountain, swiftly came and transported them to Port Said, a city in Egypt, where they sought refuge for four years. The years between 1919 and 1939 allowed a brief return to Mousadagh. But when it fell under Turkish rule once more, our ancestors left and were transported to Lebanon, to a desert land I now call home.

After facing countless challenges and battles with diseases, our people began to rise from their misfortunes like a phoenix; they started building anew in Anjar, turning it from a harsh wasteland to a beautiful haven. It was then that the clock tower rose for the first time as a symbol of enduring hope and unity. Unfortunately, it was taken down a few decades after its construction for reasons lost to history. However, a few years ago, in 2019, the clock was resurrected as a tribute to the strong spirit of the old villagers and to the missionary sisters who played a huge role in bringing life to Anjar.

In the quiet of the evening, as the clock tower chimes 9 p.m., we remember not just the passage of time but the passage of generations and the echoes of history that shape our present and our future. We carry forward the indomitable resilience that defines our nation and the unbreakable bonds that tie us to our past and to each other, just as the new clock carries the legacy of the old.





SELF- REFLECTION & GROWTH

02

HOW LIFE GOES

Some recent observations and occurrences have led me to believe that time, despite its agonizing weight, is not meant to be torturing:

1- I came upon an old photo of a beautiful and bright young girl, age 15. I never realized how beautiful I was at 15 and I will probably never realize how beautiful I am at 18 until I'm 22, but that's just how life goes.

2- My heart filled with melancholy as I drove past my old school. The huge school building no longer seemed as large as it had looked before. I miss the place which I used to dread so much, its scary halls and tiny classrooms. I wish I had savored that period of my life more and stopped trying to speed up the journey towards adulthood, but that's just how life goes.

3- From a chubby-cheeked kid with a bob haircut and curious eyes, to a girl who now towers over me. My younger sister, who is a beacon of kindness and fun, also represents the passage of time. She mirrors my fleeing youth and is a representation of the cold reminder that permanency is a myth. I wish I bottled her childlike innocence instead of fighting it, but that's just how life goes.

Time is a thief. It is wrinkles, loss, and grief. It is a perpetual cycle of wishing you did things a different way.

But time is also memories so fond, your flesh softens at the thought. Memories that tie you to people and places that are no longer a part of your present. Time is the flower your friend gave you a while ago, now withered, resting on your nightstand. Time is the unchangeability of the tiger stripes on your mother's belly, a permanent mark of your existence. It is hushed conversations with your siblings past curfew and the familiarity of praying in your mother tongue. Time exists so you can read all the books that entice you and travel to every country on your list. It exists in order for you to fulfill your potential and be every version of yourself you want to be. Time is a precious thing, dear reader, so tell people you love them more often. Kiss your friends on the forehead and hug your parents. And the next time you find yourself sitting with your loved ones, cheeks flushed and hearts full and gentle, take a moment to thank all the forces of the universe that have led you there. Breathe in the air that engulfs that moment and savor it.



HOPEFUL ECHOES

We always hear people saying things like “don’t think of the past” or “never look back”, but is that really how it should be? Or at least, is this how it should *always* be? Because they also always say “history repeats itself”. The reality is that it does, albeit with some degrees of change. It is crucial that people **learn** from it and not repeat past mistakes. This brings up an interesting question: is it only the history we have learned through world wars, revolutions, and movements that we should use and learn from? Or do all our past experiences play that role as well?

Allow me to paint you a picture. Imagine yourself trapped, like there were walls so high and impenetrable that you could neither jump high enough to see over nor push hard enough to break. The walls might have been slowly closing in, darkening everything and sucking the oxygen out. Imagine that you have been there for so long that it has started feeling ‘normal’. Yes, you still see and feel the walls, but now, they are a common part of your life. Then out of nowhere, a hand reaches in and ushers you to grab it but you hesitate. You look up at it and think: can I trust ‘the hand’? What if ‘the hand’ will take me somewhere I’m not familiar with? I’m used to my situation so why should I listen to ‘the hand’ and do what ‘it’ wants? What if ‘it’ is wrong and ends up hurting me? Minutes, hours, days, and weeks pass and ‘the hand’ is still there, still outreached, unwavering. Seeing as ‘it’ is not going away, you reach upwards and weakly hold onto ‘it’. The second you do, ‘the hand’ grips you strongly and pulls you out.

Coming back to reality, you may have remembered a situation you were in that resembled the description you just read; a time when you felt trapped, suffocated even. You probably felt that you would never be able to move on, get better, smile, laugh, or even be genuinely happy again. As someone who has been in such situations multiple times, I can say “yes, I’ve felt that”.

Allow me to take you back, back to the shocks and aftershocks of the Turkish earthquake of February 2023 **harp music used in movies indicating going back to a memory**. At 3:00 a.m., I was asleep when, suddenly, I heard a crash and felt like I was on a boat. I jolted upright as the bed rocked back and forth beneath me. Granted, I had no idea what was happening, seeing as I was very groggy, but I knew something was wrong. As I slowly got out of bed, my sleepiness totally replaced with panic, I understood that it was an earthquake.

Now you should keep in mind that I, like most people, am terrified of natural disasters so you can imagine the type of thoughts that were going through my mind. It was not only that. Previously, the Beirut port explosion that had happened a little over 3 years ago, the same thing had happened; the ground started shaking like crazy. So not only did my fear of earthquakes kick in that cold February night, but my PTSD started coming back.

I will not bore you with details of the next few days, weeks, even months, but let me tell you this; it was hard, tough, scary, and made me feel vulnerable. It took me a long time to get over what had happened, that is if I even completely did.

Fast forward to September 2023 when an earthquake hit Morocco. I have a friend who lives there, and she sent me all these messages about how terrified she was, how horrible it had been, how she had lost some family members, and so on. I was in shock at first. How do you reply to something like that!? What do you say!?

Then slowly, I remembered what I had once heard: if you are going through something rough, it might be for you to be able to help someone experiencing it later on. I started telling her the things that had eventually helped me feel a little more at ease when it had happened to me and as a result, she started calming down. By doing so, I had *shown* her that I understood rather than simply *telling* her that I did.

When going through a rough situation, we would either try to figure it out alone or seek help from a professional or simply from people who have gone through something similar. That is because they would be able to quite literally understand what we're going through. They would know what we are feeling and thinking of because they had felt and thought of that too. But most importantly, they would be able to help us through and out of our darkest moments because they had been able to do so too. There's a saying in Lebanon that says: *إِسْأَلْ مَجْرَّبَ مَا تَسْأَلُ خَبِيرَ* (Ask an experienced person rather than an expert).

Yes, an expert can help but someone who has gone through what you are going through would most likely be better equipped with practical solutions.

I can guarantee that you have done something like this at least once in your life. It doesn't have to be a life-or-death situation; it can be an everyday problem that you're more equipped to deal with because you have gone through it more times or you have learned how to handle it. When you do this, you become 'the hand' in someone else's scenario. This is the time when we have to look back at the past.

I'll leave you with this: if you are ever in a tough situation, please know that your feelings are valid, you *can* seek help, you *will* get through it, and, chances are, you will help someone one day.

“

ONE DAY YOU WILL TELL ***YOUR STORY***
OF HOW YOU OVERCAME WHAT YOU
WENT THROUGH AND IT WILL BECOME
SOMEONE ***ELSE'S SURVIVAL GUIDE***

-BRENE BROWN-

”

A MOMENT IN TIME

Have you ever felt stuck between the past and the present? More specifically, between success and failure? Well, I know I have... However, because of that feeling, I came to the realization that what stands between success and failure is mental toughness. Life is a series of different events; some days we are on cloud nine while others we are at our lowest points. During these lows, people say some things are better left unseen, unheard, or even unspoken. I used to believe in that concept, thinking that people should only see the bright side of me. However, now that I think about it, I realize how scared I was of people seeing or finding out about my other side, the side most human beings tend to hide. For the past couple of months, I acknowledged and valued the importance of establishing emotional wellbeing, especially during obstacles and hardships. Moreover, I discovered the main reason why I had been struggling in my life. The missing key element... Mental Toughness which is the ability to perform consistently under stress and pressure. To remind myself of this concept, I have established a daily routine where I talk to myself every morning while looking straight at my reflection in the mirror saying, "Nothing can break me. I've got this." However, I admit that reaching this mentality was a struggle and not easy at all. I experienced unfair and painful realities that ultimately shaped me into the fierce individual I am today.

This year, for work purposes, and as a soon-to-be social worker, I got exposed to various group settings, communities, students, and youth groups where I had the opportunity to be the speaker of the day and deliver content, presentations, and awareness sessions of different themes and topics to them. Through these experiences, I got to meet a lot of new people from different backgrounds and established meaningful bonds and relationships with some of them.

Every individual I met was a warrior; seeing as how each of them came from a difficult past and had their own set of struggles and hardships.

Throughout those sessions, I approached those individuals with the intention of empowering them and assuring them of their bravery and strength to fight any negative situation. As an example, I told them about my own negative experiences and how I had managed to create my own philosophy and mindset. I know that it is easier said than done, but I truly believe that every human being can, sooner or later, find a moment in time to embrace the past and live in the present to the fullest while increasing their capacity for mental toughness. This only comes with practice, patience, and perseverance!



FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

It's been nearly 4 years since I graduated, and you'll still see me crossing Haigazian's blue gates at least 3 times per week. There are some familiar faces that I gravitate towards as soon as I see them. They are like shooting stars, filling me with warmth and pushing me to value the precious moment.

The campus at times has the feel of a childhood playground. Every place brings the memory of people who are no longer there and the reminder that I've grown. There is the bench next to Mehagian where a friend used to sit so frequently that she wrote her name on it, the unsupervised nook in the library where I could meet with people 1 on 1 for secretive conversations, and Rev. Wilbert's office where some students would hang out and ask philosophical questions, to name a few. Also, how could I forget the colors and dances brought by the UNESCO club and the Brazilian carnival dancer who entered semi-naked in the auditorium (to Razmig's horror)?

It's easy to look at all of this and say, man, those were the days. The past can become coated in gold with time, especially when the unfinished present and uncertain future start to weigh. I'm very fond and glad of my memories as a Haigazian student and I want to enjoy it like a tasty drink. I want to acknowledge how great of a gift these memories are; at the same time, I want to invite us to focus on the present.



In the Old Testament Survey course, the story of Esther is highlighted. Esther lived as a minority in her days when Ancient Persia was a powerhouse. Because of her beauty, she rises from poverty to the position of the wife of a king. One day, the king decides to wipe out Esther's people. As a queen, she has the potential to talk directly to the king and beg for mercy, but King Xerxes was moody and could kill anyone who came to him without an appointment. This is when her cousin, who was also her caretaker, tells her: "who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

This line for me is a clear reminder of the direness of the present. Similar to Esther, I have my own set of experiences and talents. A lot of them have been shaped by my 4 years in Haigazian. So, though at times I may feel unsatisfied with the current state of things and may long for the golden past, I also believe that I can add positively to the place where I currently am.

It's interesting how Esther is part of the Bible, but it does not mention God at all. I think this might make it even more approachable to a variety of audiences. You may believe that God has placed you in the position you are currently in or that He doesn't play a role, but don't undermine your potential to be an agent of change now. There is a need you can meet in the place where you are, in your immediate circle, at this very moment. Don't underestimate the impact your actions can cause.

Esther takes up the challenge before her and, even facing death, she embraces the direness of the present and faces the king, who agrees to save her people.

Who knows, but that you too have come to where you are right now, to Haigazian, or a place post-Haigazian, for such a time as this?

A JOURNEY BETWEEN INK AND IDENTITY

By the time this article reaches your hands, I will have fulfilled my academic requirements and finalized my graduation procedures. And so, I write my last piece as an undergraduate student. Composing this article makes me think about how transformational joining this club and writing have been for me.

Reaching this milestone evokes the memories of when it all started in my sophomore year. Many may not believe this but joining the Herald happened by mere coincidence rather than a deliberate choice I had previously planned. I hesitantly registered for the club and attended its first meeting to silence my fear of missing out. Unexpectedly, I was drawn to the club's purpose of using writing to represent and uplift one's voice, a purpose that resonated with me deeply. Shortly after, the October 2019 Revolution began meaning that we did not attend classes for a considerable part of the semester. This made composing a piece as a fresh high school graduate with little background in creative writing challenging given the limited guidance available due to the circumstances. It was my first attempt at writing something non-academic for a wider audience. With that, my very first piece came to light. While it was satisfying to publish my work, I couldn't shake off the disappointment I felt. My piece, while out there for others to read, seemed to lack my voice and personal touch.

Honestly, not knowing who I was or what my voice stood for was discouraging, as it highlighted the absence of my identity. Despite that, something within me urged me to continue writing, even if I was disappointed with my first article. So, I continued, one article after another, one topic after another, and one issue after another. Little did I realize at the time how these little steps I was taking would slowly establish my voice and confidence.

Given how unplanned joining the Herald was, if someone had told me when I first joined that I would one day become the chairperson and inspire others to write, I would not have believed it to be possible. But here I am. Moving along with my undergraduate years, I felt the need to do it. I wanted to take the opportunity to share my love for writing and its power to inspire transformation and personal growth with others. Personally, it was not for the purpose of seeking a "high-ranking" position, or else I could have been a chairperson for much longer. This position has always been fueled by my passion for introducing my friends to a journey of self-discovery they might not have thought possible. And for that, I hope I've served them well.



1- Club Sign-up day September 2019



2- Last Club Meeting Pre-COVID February 2020

As I wrap up this fulfilling journey, I am filled with mixed emotions. Leaving a place that has given me so much discovery and understanding of who I was, am, and want to be is undeniably difficult. It saddens me to say goodbye to a club that has become such a cozy room in my second home. But I am also beyond grateful. I am thankful for the deepened connection with myself through writing, the satisfaction and joy that this position has brought into my life, and most importantly, the support of the club members who stood by me from the beginning to its end. They consistently offered love and strength on the days I could not connect with myself, simply loving me on the days when I couldn't love myself. With that, they taught me to savor every part of this journey, from its lowest to its highest.

Joining this club has taught me a lot about what it means to be a writer. It is a transformational experience that one goes through. It means disliking and doubting your own words but persisting in sharing them. It involves struggling to find the correct words and ideas, but still insisting on finding inspiration even if it feels elusive. Most importantly, it is a continuous choice to write, inspire, express, and create even in the highs of self-doubt.

In short, joining the Herald has given me a more enriching experience than I had expected. And with lots of love, warmth, and a strong sense of belonging I depart from this club and leave it for the others to grow.



3- Club Sign-up Day September 2022



4- The Herald's Black Out Poetry Event- October 2022



5- The Herald Team March 2023

THE WALL

Social media has uncovered a “blunt” truth about society and especially the youth. For example, before the emergence of social media, teenagers had always been thought of as incapable of committing dreadful actions. Yet, low and behold.

It's easy to point out a wrong from a right when viewing a situation externally. And accordingly, we are all likely to label a person with certain traits or actions. We're all familiar with the concept of “cancel culture”, mainly online, but this practice in itself has been infiltrated long before its popularity. While nobody can claim a saintly lifestyle and traits, there definitely are individuals with harmful actions and intentions. And while the intention does not excuse the act, it doesn't always explain the reason behind this “culture”. With such information, one ought to ask oneself “Why? It's clearly been shown to have consequences, so why do young adults still repeat what caused the demise of individuals before them?” A possible reason is the concept of maturity, which is a multifaceted journey that transcends age, encompassing emotional growth, self-awareness, and embracing one's TRUE self. The pursuit of maturity can be a unique and, sometimes, challenging experience that involves delving into self-discovery, self-acceptance, and the needed resilience to navigate the complexities of growth. This journey is rather common in the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

For a young adult, the process of self-discovery is crucial for developing maturity. A subtopic within this component is the realization of an individuality that may or may not conform with the environment or context we are in. Then, acceptance becomes a journey on its own. It is only when “the other” no longer fazes you nor places doubt on your own thoughts and feelings that you would have mastered the arts of “self love”. This journey may often involve questioning societal norms, gender roles, and deeply ingrained beliefs you grew up with. So, where can one go from here?

The goal is to understand oneself and know what to work on and what assets can be used to lift oneself up. We all wear masks in different contexts, but it is not an excuse to fully cover the parts that form the person we are. However, we might be challenged by deeply engrained fears that have roots in the past starting from our minds and trapping our souls. A common fear in this path is the fear of rejection, which can be overwhelming and quite understandable. Thus, it is important to find a support group that understands or at least respects us during this journey. Healthy support systems are a necessity, and it is their therapeutic interactions that get you to accept parts of yourself. The beauty in such interactions is their unpredictability. They can be minimal and maybe unrecognizable, even to the person who made a change within you. This only accentuates the vitality of cautiousness on what we say and how we say it, in short: the impact of words.

Words may impact others, but it should never mean that your opinions should be silenced. As long as you're not intentionally attacking someone and targeting ideas, you remain entitled to your views and feelings. Confrontation is never and should never be avoided for the sake of your rights. It is by showing certainty in ourselves, our speech, and our thoughts, while showing respect to others, that we are least likely to be stepped on or silenced.

Moreover, seeking help and achieving personal milestones requires balance. No matter how helpful or comfortable we might get, dependency is as toxic as addiction. Asking for help is a key, but not a resolution to the problem(s) at hand. It is only **personal initiative** and **the will to be vulnerable** that will start this transition process. Each step taken can provide a sense of empowerment and progress. In addition, age, life experiences, and background only form a part of the individual you are today. Throughout my journey, I received direct and indirect support from a range of individuals. One example is the kindness of a peer, colleague, and good friend, Lilas Chehab. She provided a space for me to reflect on myself and on topics I always thought I had a strong stand on.

To emit your light, you need to find the source of it. You can always seek help, but only **you** can know **your** potential. Once you find your sun, look for the areas you wish to shine over. A good ground can be within groups and/or places you're more at ease in.

Lastly, have a look in the mirror and envision what you wish to see in yourself in a **realistic** and **supportive** approach. At the end of the day, if you don't believe in yourself, no wise words, research, therapy, or close person will convince you of your worth. Maturity has many aspects and only you can set the engine to start. Don't wait for a spark; light the lanterns within you. The walls will eventually (slowly) crumble one by one. I promise.



THE STRONGEST WEAPON WITHIN

When you hear the phrase “the strongest weapon”, do guns, bombs, or nuclear arms come to mind? Or is it the thoughts of the people who wield such power? In actuality, the deadliest weapon resides inside of you which you can command for either healing or destruction. It might be surprising to realize that the mightiest of weapons lies within your grasp. The reality is that this intimidating force consisting of your words, thoughts, feelings, and emotions serves as the most potent tool at your disposal, aiming them at yourself and at the world.

In the grand scheme of things, your words and thoughts may seem significantly small, insignificant blips in the universe. But do not be fooled by their size. Thoughts have momentous capabilities of molding your reality while words can shape your overall outlook and attitude towards the world around you.

Your thoughts are the mental chains that you forge with your own hands. You have the power to either let them imprison you or wield them as keys to unlock a brighter reality. Consider for a second how you think about yourself and how you talk to yourself to answer the following: are you your own biggest fan or your harshest critic? Then think about all the blame, hate, and criticism you have aimed at yourself. How did that make you feel? Defeated? Tired? Hopeless? Now reverse the script; think about talking to yourself as if talking to your biggest role model. Think about all the influential qualities you admire in others, their strength, kindness, resilience, and confidence then try directing them to yourself. How did that make you feel? It undoubtedly showed you how you are a source of strength and confidence, rather than a well of self-doubt.

A study conducted by Walden University revealed that participants who channeled their negative thoughts towards positive directions experienced significant benefits. Mayo Clinic experts observed remarkable outcomes, including a longer life span, diminished levels of stress and depression, a boost in physical and psychological health, enhanced heart health, a decrease in the risk of cardiovascular disease, and amplified resilience during challenges and hardships¹.



Changing your thoughts alters your whole reality; it bridges the gap between your current self and the future self that you aspire to be. As Buddha wisely stated, “We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves”. Indeed, when you change your inner dialogue, you can change your world. It’s not about being arrogant, it’s about being self-confident and resilient. Your thoughts, words, and emotions are all tools to help you craft a better reality instead of undermining yourself. Think of it like wielding an inner superpower that will put you on the right track to create the empowered version of yourself that you have always aspired to be. Therefore, the next time you find yourself going down the spiral of negativity, seize the moment and interrupt the descent before your world shatters into pieces. Remember, your life’s chapters aren’t only written with determination, but also with passion. Don’t let the fear of the unknown stifle your creativity and curiosity towards life. Embrace the changes and encompass the beauty of imperfection to paint your life with vibrant experiences that you’ve never had before. The pages are yours to fill with dreams and aspirations. Your masterpiece is waiting to be written.

“

Watch your thoughts, they become words,
watch your words, they become actions,
watch your actions, they become habits,
watch your habits, they become characters
watch your character, for it becomes your destiny

- FRANK OUTLAW -

”

VOICES OF REALITY

Strolling through the city slow-footed, your mind walks faster than your steps, analyzing past actions, decisions you made, wondering what went wrong, pondering about the turn you were supposed to take but missed for some reason, either that, or chose to avoid the turn for some other reason; yet, strolling around the city with your heavy bags, perhaps your heart feels even heavier, while trying to predict the consequences of the way you were willing to proceed, thoughts escalating in your mind, escalating faster than usual, passing through individuals without recognizing any, as all you can see are colors coming your way and pulling themselves out.

Colors all around you, splish-splashed on the floor, painted on the windows and the doors of the authentic city, the colors of the earrings of that girl whose smile says it all, who has massive words hidden inside of her when you look closely into her eyes, perhaps holding back all that she has to say, as humans tend to have various perceptions of a situation. We tend to create scenarios with well-written scripts in our heads, hurting ourselves with the final result or perhaps vice versa, giving ourselves feelings of overjoy as an outcome of our endless hope with a bunch of expectations.

Voices of reality urge us to implement some cliché sayings, as to “live in the moment”, as if distractions are not extant; voices of reality preach about applying it while forgetting the way the human mind and heart function. We live in the present, without feeling alive during the process, we live in the past and the future, by pretending to be mindful of what is candidly occurring around us; but if truth has to be told, voices of reality remind us of how ignorant we are of the now. Do you remember the time you did not speak and kept it all inside? As you were afraid of the hidden, of the silence which might have taken place, or perhaps the shouting, screaming, and crying which could have followed after letting out all that was carved on your heart. Do you remember the time you said all that you had to say, but the gap between you and the other being was immense, thus, your words lost their meaning? But do you remember the time when you spoke whatever popped into your mind? The time when your emotions were validated and interpreted in a mesmerizing way by the one listening, looking at your sparkling eyes and making you feel safe by simply existing.



You continue to stroll around the city, this time with your eyes wide open; you observe the elements of life which are around you, hearing the birds chirping, inadvertently eavesdropping on a random person's conversation, listening to numerous genres of music in a matter of minutes, seeing giggles and smiles at the table next to the window, catching a glimpse of the apartment adorned with balcony blooms where a birthday is being celebrated, and finally feeling light-hearted, feeling at peace with yourself, with your beautiful human self. You walk down the roads of the city with a clear mind, as you have eventually decided to pay attention to the voices of reality. Keep on walking all around, gaze up to the sky, look at the colors of the earth, express your all, live in the present, and be heedful of those voices, some voices of reality.



NOT A CHORE, READ FOR FUN

If you've been flipping through the last three issues of *The Herald*, chances are you've stumbled upon my book recommendations. It's become a real pleasure and tradition for me to share some of my favorite reads with you. I've talked a lot about why I love reading, and why I recommend it. It's not just about personal growth, although that is also important. I'm a big fan of reading for pure enjoyment, just reading for a good time, to escape a bit from work and studies, especially with what's going on in the world lately, with all the struggles and pain around us. We have the privilege to take a short break, which is a luxury not everyone has. Sometimes, we just want a comfy escape. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy dressing up for a night out, spending time with my family, chatting with my best friends, walking and playing with my dog, going to the gym... but sometimes, I love just wearing comfy clothes, having a hot cup of coffee, and reading a book that transports me to a different universe, one that I like more than the one I'm in.

There's a common misconception in our society that reading is exhausting because many associate it with studying or self-improvement, which can feel like work. But, trust me, reading can also be about having a good time and relaxing. During my time at Haigazian, I've had the opportunity to make some wonderful friends. I often share my latest reads with them. However, we don't always have the chance to connect and interact with everyone. So, for those who may not know me personally, I see these book recommendations as a way to form an indirect connection. It is a means for me to share what I enjoy, and perhaps you'll find some of these books enjoyable and relatable too. So, let's delve into my latest book recommendations- my favorites out of the works I read over the summer and fall.





"MY YEAR OF REST AND RELAXATION"
BY OTESSA MOSHFEGH (FICTION)

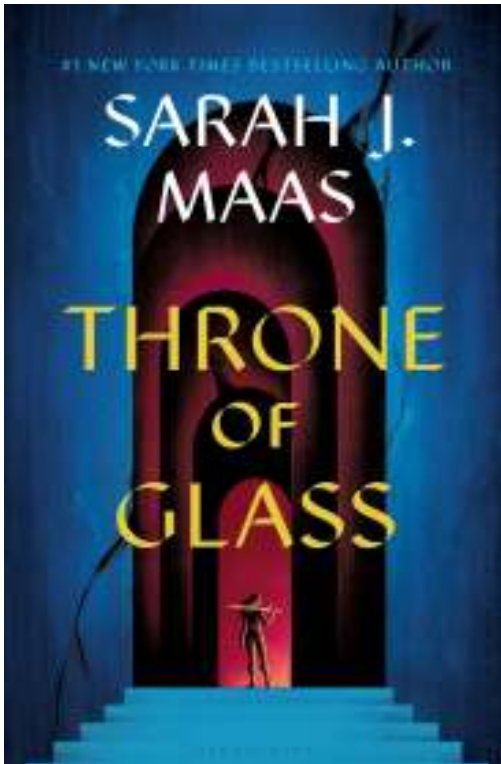
If you're looking for a thought-provoking and uniquely immersive reading experience, this novel offers a fresh and darkly humorous perspective on contemporary life. The story revolves around the life of the unnamed narrator, a woman who decides to take a year off from her existence, effectively hibernating from the world. Her journey towards self-discovery is simultaneously absurd and poignant, making this book a gripping exploration of existential themes. What sets this novel apart is Moshfegh's incredible talent for character development. The narrator's complex, often contradictory, and utterly relatable personality keeps you engaged from the very first page. Her journey to find meaning, or rather the lack thereof, in life, is both captivating, cathartic, and honestly funny. The book's examination of modern society's obsession with external appearances and consumerism is acutely observed, offering valuable insights into the pressures we often place on ourselves.

Moshfegh's prose is sharp and intriguing and she doesn't shy away from the darker aspects of the human experience. While the story may be unconventional, it raises profound questions about the pursuit of happiness, the meaning of life, and the lengths we go to escape our own realities.

If you're looking for a book that challenges your perspective on life, self-discovery, and societal expectations while maintaining a dark sense of humor, "My Year of Rest and Relaxation" is a must-read. It's a compelling and unforgettable journey into the mind of a character who will leave you reflecting on your own path and the world we live in.

This epic fantasy series is an exhilarating journey into a world where assassins, magic, witches, faeries, humans and destiny collide. Maas's storytelling is nothing short of captivating, with a fierce and relatable heroine, Celaena Sardothien, at the center of the tale. Celaena is not your typical assassin; she's strong, complex, and vulnerable in ways that make her feel incredibly real.

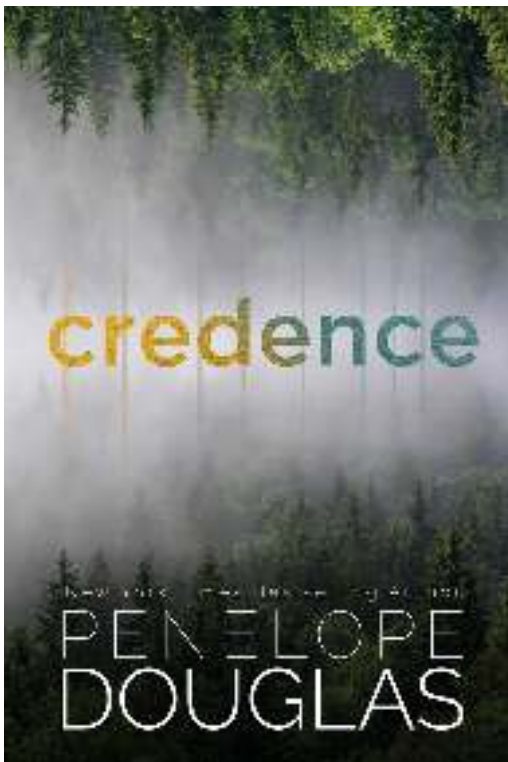
NOT A CHORE, READ FOR FUN



“THRONE OF GLASS” SERIES BY SARAH J. MAAS (HIGH FANTASY)

What makes this series exceptional is Maas’s ability to build a rich and immersive world, where every character, every twist, and every secret is woven with precision. Her writing is both vivid and lyrical, making it easy to get lost in the intricate details of the story. As the series unfolds, you’ll find yourself entangled in political intrigue, heart-pounding battles, and gripping mysteries. The character development throughout the series is remarkable. You’ll grow attached to not only Celaena but also to the diverse cast of characters who become like old friends.

“Throne of Glass” is more than just a fantasy series; it’s an exploration of themes like friendship, loyalty, and the cost of power. It delves deep into the moral complexities of its characters, making you question what you thought you knew about them.



“CREDENCE” BY PENELOPE DOUGLAS (DARK ROMANCE)

This book is a rollercoaster of emotions, with an intricate plot that keeps you on the edge of your seat from the very beginning. It’s not just a love story, but a gripping tale of secrets, redemption, and healing. The characters are flawed, authentic, and compelling, making it easy to invest in their journeys.

One of the standout features of “Credence” is the slow-burning romance. The tension between the characters is electric, and the author takes her time developing their relationships, allowing the reader to savor every moment of their connections. Douglas’s writing is evocative, daring and immersive, painting a vivid picture of the Montana setting and the characters’ inner struggles. She delves into dark themes with sensitivity, sensuality, and realism, adding depth and complexity to the story.

The author doesn't shy away from exploring the complexities of family dynamics, sex, personal growth, and the power of love in healing deep wounds. It's a novel that will keep you guessing and rooting for the characters until the very end. If you're in the mood for a passionate and sexy romance that also offers a compelling narrative, "Credence" is a must-read. However, I consider the themes of this novel quite dark; you need to have an open mind for it. It's a book that will stay with you long after you've turned the final page, leaving you with a never-ending sense of thrill.

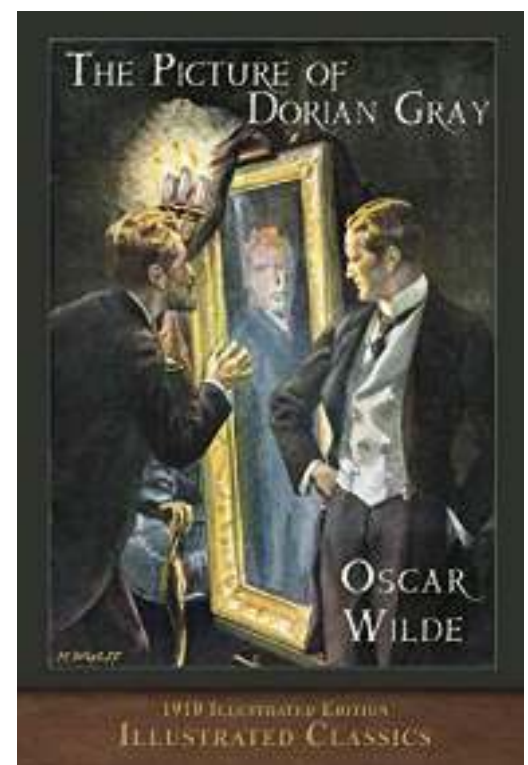
If you're looking for a classic, this is a perfect start. Wilde's novel is a masterpiece of wit, charm, and biting social commentary. The story follows the life of Dorian Gray, a young man whose portrait ages while he remains forever youthful. This seemingly magical premise serves as a metaphor for the consequences of a life lived purely for pleasure, detached from morality or accountability.

What sets this novel apart is Wilde's brilliant and often scathing dialogue. His clever one-liners and insightful observations about society, art, and the human condition add a layer of sophistication and intellectual depth to the narrative.

The characters are multi-dimensional, and Dorian Gray's descent into moral decay is both fascinating and horrifying. The book explores themes of vanity, the corrupting influence of society, and the consequences of living without a moral compass. Wilde's writing is both decadent and poignant, and his ability to blend beauty with darkness is truly captivating.

The novel's exploration of the relationship between appearance and reality remains as relevant today as it was when it was first published.

"The Picture of Dorian Gray" is a timeless classic that invites readers to reflect on the nature of sin, the pursuit of pleasure, and the consequences of a life lived without restraint. It's a book that lingers in your thoughts long after you've finished it and offers a powerful commentary on the human condition. If you're looking for a thought-provoking and beautifully written classic, this novel is for you.



"THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY" BY OSCAR WILDE (CLASSIC LITERATURE)

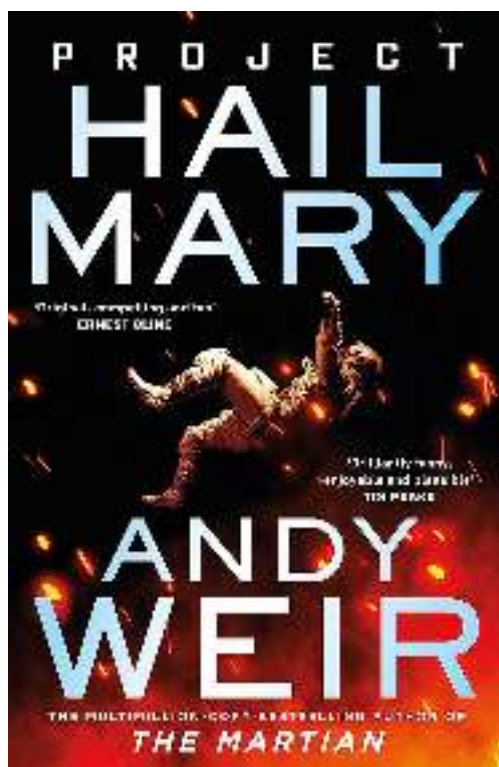
NOT A CHORE, READ FOR FUN

This book is for anyone who enjoys a thrilling, scientifically grounded, and thought-provoking adventure set against the backdrop of space exploration. In “Project Hail Mary,” we follow Ryland Grace, a witty and resourceful protagonist who finds himself on a solo mission to save humanity from extinction. The stakes are high, and the story is filled with scientific puzzles, resourcefulness, and heart-pounding suspense.

One of the standout features of this novel is Weir’s skill in making complex scientific concepts accessible and exciting. You don’t need to be a rocket scientist to appreciate the intricacies of space travel and problem-solving woven into the story. It’s a testament to Weir’s talent that he can make science so engaging and relatable for readers of all backgrounds. The characters in “Project Hail Mary” are well-developed, and the relationships that form throughout the narrative add depth and heart to the story. Ryland Grace’s journey of self-discovery, as well as his interactions with the AI companion, provide an emotional and philosophical dimension to the novel.

The pacing is impeccable, and the plot keeps you hooked from beginning to end. Weir blends moments of humor, intrigue, and scientific exploration seamlessly, creating a captivating and well-rounded narrative.

Ultimately, “Project Hail Mary” is a testament to human ingenuity and the indomitable spirit of exploration. It’s a novel that celebrates science, teamwork, and the pursuit of knowledge, all while delivering a gripping and emotionally resonant story. If you’re looking for a book that takes you on an exhilarating journey through the cosmos and leaves you with a sense of wonder and hope, “Project Hail Mary” is an absolute must-read of the science fiction genre.



**“PROJECT HAIL MARY” BY ANDY WEIR
(SCI-FI)**

بين الطفولة و الأيام

إنّها الثامنة صباحًا بتوقيت طفولتي. أفتح عيناَي المُثقلَتَيْن ببقايا النّوم على نور الشّمس المُتسلِّل ما بين نافذة الغرفة و الشّتائر. هدوء الغرفة في هذا الوقت يعني شيئًا واحدًا: إنّه يوم العطلة. شرعان ما أدرك هذا، فينتابني الفرخ و يُسيّرني من سريري كي أستيقظ و أتفقّد إن بقي المنزل على الحال الذي تركته عليه ليلاً. جولتي التّفقديّة تنتهي عند الغرفة الأكثر نورًا: غرفة والديّ.

يخرق صمتهما صوت رشفات القهوة و غناء سيّدة عذبة الصوت الّتي أدرك بعدما كبرت و وعيتُ قليلًا أنّها تدعى فيروز: السّفيرة إلى النّجوم.

سذاجتي و قلة وعيي عند صغري سمحت لي بأن أألف صوت فيروز و موسيقاها فقط. لكنّ تغيّري مع الأيام جعلني أفهم أنّ فيروز لم تكن تُعني بهدف الغناء فحسب. ففيروز كانت سيّدة الحُب فجعلته أساسًا في بعض أغانيها، فقالت "يا شمس المحبّة حكايتنا اغزلي" و "كان قلبي لعندك دليلي". كما كانت غالبًا ما تشعر بالحنين فتعبر عنه في أغانيها قائلةً "بيعر عليّ غني يا حبيبي ولأول مرة ما منكون سوا". و مع هذا، استطاعت فيروز أن تُجمّعنا على حُبّ بلادنا فغنّت للبنان و بيروت، فلسطين و القدس، و سوريا و دِمَشق. تجعلني و كلماتها متمسكةً بهويّتي و بلادي فأصبحت غالبًا ما أردّد في سِري "أنت لي، أنت لي آه عانقيني أنت لي". فما بين الشّطور و الكلمات و الأغاني، لا أستطيع إلّا أن أشعر بأنّ فيروز جزءٌ مِنّي و أنّ كلماتها متّصلة بي.

لا عجب أنّها كانت تُدعى بلقب "السّفيرة إلى النّجوم"، فهي من حَمَلَتْنَا، خصوصًا أجيال الحرب، بصوتها الرّقيق و أغانيها المعبّرة إلى عالمٍ يضاها جمال عالنا. هي من جعلتنا نشعر بالقُدرة على أن نعلو عن سطح الأرض و نلامس النّجوم.

بقيت فيروز ترافقي من صباحيّات والديّ في الصّغر إلى صباحيّاتي أيام الأحاد و العُطل عند الكِبَر. صاحبتني فيروز خلال جميع مراحل كِبَري، و مع أنّها مرتبطةً بطفولتي، فهي لا تزال صوتًا يُريحيني. في الحقيقة، أعتقد بأنّها ستبقى دائمًا عنصرًا من حياتي. فكما مرّت أيّامُ طفولتي، و كما سيشاء القدر أن يُبعدني عن أماكن و أشخاص أحبهم، ستبقى هي ثابتةٌ معي في كل هذا فأشاركها شعوري عندما قالت "أديش كان في ناس عالفرق تنظر ناس... و أنا بأيّام الصّحو ما حدا نظرتني".

و لكن من الآن حتّى أن يشاء القدر، سأردّد و إنّيها "في أمل، إيه في أمل".

BETWEEN GRIEF & HOPE



03

A BLACK HOLE IN MY HEART

On New Year's Eve, the air hung heavy with the cold. The persistent rumble of thunder outside contrasted the warm atmosphere in our living room. In sweet anticipation of the expected celebration with my friends, I found myself perched on the couch eagerly, wearing nothing more than a light sweater that offered little protection against the icy embrace of the weather outside. I attempted to make the clock tick faster by diverting my thoughts to the present. Channel-surfing became my chosen distraction until I settled upon my cherished TV-show, "Gilmore Girls". The familiar scenery of the world I was engaged in offered me a sense of comfort. Meanwhile, my father, a silent companion, reflected his own train of thoughts through unspoken tension shadowing the cosiness of our home.

At last, the overdue wait had come to an end, and it was time to detach myself from the couch that I had forced myself to remain on. For the first time that night I heard my father's voice, uttering words on the phone in a concerned manner as I was leaving our home to join my friends.

Sitting in the car, I embraced the moment enjoying the holiday music and my friends' voices chattering and laughing. I wished to remain in that moment, savouring its beauty, reluctant to accept its end just yet.

Upon reaching our initial destination for that night's celebration, my phone rang. I tried to decipher the barely audible words from my mother. The only thing she demanded was for me to go home immediately. My nerves, which had been preoccupied with excitement mere minutes ago, suddenly betrayed me and began stirring anxiety instead. The journey back home felt longer and quieter than when we had first embarked on it.

Concern gripped me as I turned the keys in the lock, uneasy about what awaited me behind the door. Swinging it open, the sounds of weeping and black attires greeted me. Amidst the collective grief, my mother delivered the inevitable news with the cliché line, "Your grandmother has gone to heaven." Throughout the night, I wrestled with time, attempting to hasten it or slow it down. Yet, in that moment, minutes seemed to stand still for me. My time had paused, but my grandmother's had stopped forever. I found myself feeling everything and nothing at once. Entering the living room, I observed my family dealing with their grief in diverse ways; some wept openly while others mourned silently. The only thing in common was the feeling of sorrow within all of us. As I gazed out the window, the once-hostile external world seemed more welcoming. Alas, the light sweater offered little protection to the internal chill and emptiness that now enveloped me.

Ten months have passed since your eternal departure from us, my beloved. While I might appear fine, I will never truly be whole again. Your absence will be my deepest wound that will accompany me throughout my life, a bitter companion to my heart's deepest yearnings.

FLOATING STARDUST

Bright lights were what we first saw. We had been lazily resting on the grass for what might have seemed like an eternity. We had never been that confused yet so excited to just be. We both glowed under the moonlight that kissed our skin. I remember now how we bid farewell to our temporary home under the warmth of the moon.

I can remember how, at even a mature age, we would still play like the happiest of toddlers. How you would chase me around the garden. You would cheat by ruining my mother's flowers, which you never failed to blame me for. I can remember how we would swim nonstop during summer vacations and how we would see who could hold their breath the longest; you would cheat even then.

Little sneak, was what my grandmother used to call you. Like a little fox, you would sneak about everywhere and anywhere, making the best out of every opportunity presented and created.

Every part, every cell, and every inch of me was left in awe at the sight of your creations. Now, no longer a little sneak but a grown and smart one, you have left us floating in the air as if weight is meaningless. I have never felt more free in my life, but still, it took me some time to navigate the proper mechanism of our floating around into nothingness of air. I still cannot comprehend the science and reality behind your creation.

You taught me how to dance and how to feel the wind and the ground that touched my new skin. You let me bask in this newly-found and overwhelming joy. It scared me, as much as it thrilled me, because of the unfamiliarity of the liberating feeling. You told me there was so much more to see and you showed it to me through life.

We flew around the world, devouring every moment and memory we shared between us. It was as if we were the only ones that existed and nothing else mattered. To be fair, you made it seem that way so that no one could notice our presence.

While floating, you told me incredible stories of all the adventures you went on. You told every story with every inch of your body and soul and with such devoted purpose, showing me exactly what these memories of yours felt like. I was somehow there with you, as if time-traveling, as you entertained me with the tales. You'd find street lamps at night and create the most ludicrous shadows. I still get a little shaken by merely remembering how real they looked. And when telling me all about the art you encountered on your journey, you'd never pass up the opportunity to sculpt the images for me to keep record in my mind, shaping into the love of lost lovers, singing me the melodies of cultures. You showed me life.

I am now in a museum full of priceless art, yet I can only see yours and only think of those bright lights. You have now completely disappeared and I have finally come back from what felt like a dream. I do not know who you are or why you take absolute control over my dreams. What I find entirely shocking is how much I trust you with them. That is why, my oldest friend, I have dedicated a gift of an exhibition to you; a show of dancing, floating silk fabric, merging and loving, as they tell the stories you fed my mind with care.

My dearest friend, I might not know who you are, but I do know you have left stardust everywhere you have stepped. It is the only way I know you are here. Until we meet again, let your floating stardust of soul guide me.



THE BEAUTY OF BEING BROKEN

I felt broken, just like the old wall about to fall down, splashing its broken pieces all around.

Dear reader, let us take a little trip through my past...

I grew up in a loving household. My mama had the sweetest smile, the most comforting hugs, and made the best food. My papa was hardworking; he brought us gifts and never failed in making us the happiest kids. My brothers were fun, and growing up with them was a blast.

Everything seemed “normal”, or as normal as it could be.

But normal is different from one person to another.

My so-called “normal” was being harassed at age 12, getting bullied throughout my school years for having a darker skin color, and being sexualized because of my mixed Latin heritage.

I saw my life as a wall, standing straight, trying to survive.

In 2020, I began my studies at Haigazian University.

Having to adapt to online classes due to the pandemic made me spend my academic year on a chair which turned into a bed, while day and night I watched my sweet mama take her last breaths.

The wall started to crumble.

Throughout the years, I have lost many friends. This year particularly, I was shaken emotionally by the earthquakes, and I felt like dying with the deaths of the ongoing wars.

I felt broken, just like the old wall about to fall down, splashing its broken pieces all around.

But what if life can be beautiful? What if this broken wall is a sign of something greater?

While walking through Hamra to attend class, I got this weird, yet life-changing thought that I still hold on to: the beauty of being broken.

Imagine a wall that once stood tall, casting a shadow of fear, doubt, and uncertainty, started cracking.

As these cracks begin to form and light seeps through, it illuminates a path of newfound hope and possibility. With each fragment that crumbles, the brilliance of resilience and determination shines forth, breaking through the confines of limitation.

Embrace the radiance that filters through the shattered pieces, for it signifies the strength within to overcome obstacles and unveil the boundless opportunities that lie beyond.

Let this beacon of light guide you towards a future where barriers are transcended and where every step forward brings you closer to life.

So, reader, maybe there is beauty in feeling broken.

Let the light of your strength shine through!

REVIVING HOPE

The other day, my friend invited me to a “Youth Peace Festival” that she was assisting in hosting. I decided to attend the event as a show of encouragement for her and her endeavors. After all, what type of friend would I be if I missed an opportunity to support her? With that in mind, I went to this event with little to no expectations, especially since the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) was an NGO that I was unfamiliar with. As the event commenced, my friend proceeded to introduce the speakers. With each speech given, I started grasping more and more of what the event was aiming at. The speeches mainly focused on the youth and their active role in establishing peace in their communities. They emphasized how the youth’s enthusiasm, energy, and hope can turn the tables in anything they set their mind to.

Without a doubt, the energy in that auditorium was contagious. It marked the first time, post-pandemic, when I felt my role as a young person restored. This was due to the challenging years Lebanon had faced.

Any idea or aspiration I had in mind would be quickly crushed by the harsh realities. Moreover, interactions within my social circles had become demotivating, and at times, toxic. All of this discouraged me and gradually weakened my faith in our generation. But that event... it was something different! It rekindled some hope in me. I was dreaming again of all the radical changes youth can bring, the strong bonds we can form when united, and the positive change we can collectively make. It was not another day; it was a new beginning. There was hope again.

At times we do certain things without understanding their significance. This was the case when attending this IAYSP event in support of my friend. In retrospect, it became clear that this experience was a valuable reminder of the importance we have of the choices, paths, and changes that we can promote. We may be young, seen as inexperienced, and as disappointments at times, but it is the fire in our souls, the faith in our hearts, and the vision in our minds that will help us leave a remarkable difference where we go.




LETTING GO

A prolonged desire shared by all humanity, yet profoundly hard to master. To each person their definition; letting go is a process, a decision, perhaps an action, or, my personal favorite, a journey. Yet life paints a far more complex depiction, whether we are trying to let go of our old anchoring love for somebody, our longing for the past, or our lingering desires. We can never let go. Call it a pessimistic view, or an average nihilistic hue, however, it's a reality that we should all accept. People may argue using their heroic personal experiences, but when their shaky arms reach the top ceiling, the claw marks of everyone they ever loved and craved come to light aching for freedom. That's our beauty, we are marvelously sculptured of minuscule stories we couldn't leave behind.

We may lose contact with the people who once filled our dismayed cracks with golden flakes. We may forget how their warmth kissed our agonizing pain away. But our flesh will still flutter at the mere sound of their names. People do not simply enter our lives. They enter by intertwining with our souls, leaving lingered filaments of ether and spikes. Everyone we have ever encountered has had a specific purpose in our lives. And when their purpose slowly diminishes, we immediately try to make our connection follow through as if it's reversible. "It was meant...", "I sensed it from the beginning..." and "It could've ended worse...". We tediously try to rationalize the end with hollow sentences, hoping they mask our lustful lies. And then we spend an eternity later condemning our existence to punishment and strife. We are shamed, for wanting to hold their vulnerable cries and kiss their hands goodbye. Yet we are encouraged to obliterate their existence, ignore their bloodline, and demolish their shrine.





I often feel deserving of punishment when I think of my past, yet it's embedded in the tapestry of my atoms. In a few decades, the details of my past will enmesh together. I may not remember who made me tolerate spice or who called the bus ride from Zaituna Bay to Cola a "Miami ride". But I will forever stain my meals with pepper and chuckle when I see Bus 15 coming through at hour five. Some people call us wishful beings, yet we are the bravest. We are brave enough to keep diaries and write endlessly, letting love and passion raze our bones into ashes. And to cage our hearts by remembering how it felt to be full of onyx and dismay. No, being cold and calm isn't the way. I want to embrace existence with both hands, and I want them to get dirty. I want to be intense, full of nostalgia and rage. I want to experience all scales of emotions with no grace. I want to remember the details of everyone I laid eyes on. I want to remember why they hate wearing ties and what idiosyncratic behavior they learned from their guys. I want to remember their grins when their wood-musk smell fills the skies. The archer does not fear its bow, so spare me your thorny judgment and binary flaws. Letting go is the acceptance that people will forever leave their gritted teeth marks on our lives and that we will constantly battle memories and time.

And no, I won't sip red wine nor read tarot cards at bedtime. I won't run away, and I won't show counterfeit strength to my girlfriends at teatime. There is mere beauty and honor in our inability to let go. So why add it as an 8th sin? Allow yourself to feel what is sacred from within. Allow your soul to grieve the past and the future it won't have. Allow your body to feel the weight lifting and the scars annealing. Allow the reminders to taint your morning and ruin your evenings.

Only then shall your heart know peace.

A vintage globe on a stand is the central focus, with a bookshelf visible in the background. The scene is dimly lit with warm, bokeh-style light spots. A semi-transparent dark rectangle is overlaid on the globe, serving as a background for the title text.

INSIGHTS & PERSPECTIVES

04

THE AGE-OLD DILEMMA: IDEALS OF LIBERTY AND SOCIAL REALITIES

From decisive wars to technological advancements and from transitioning political systems to societal development, change has been ever occurring. However, as much as freedom has been one of the key drivers of the desires for change, there has always been an oppositional force comprised of the passively opposed and the active obstructionists. The former just simply are not convinced of the ideals of “change” and can go as far as critiquing, whereas the latter take an active part in defying the waves of change, whether in civil society, politics, or the private sector. In turn, a conflict is born.

On the surface, it might appear wrong to be opposed to “change”, let alone freedom. Why would there be an opposition to phenomena that are meant to do good? After all, don’t we all desire liberty? The answer may not be so satisfactory to some.

What many people tend to forget is that man is a social creature and has, for the majority of history, worked with and for others. We have spent centuries forming hierarchies, and forms of governance, enforcing borders, and even waging wars. Why? Some will say for money while others will say for power amongst other reasons, but the fundamental factor of every choice is one thing: security.

Security is what drives us to make many of our choices; it doesn’t always necessarily mean physical security. We work jobs, giving up our individual freedom like our free time, for economic security. We practice our religion by dressing modestly, avoiding things like alcohol and temptations of the flesh, and attempting to lead humble lives to secure our position in the afterlife. Traditionalists value religion and morals because they believe it provides security to their families and ways of life. We have formulated nationalism and formed states, recognizing the urgency of security among our own folk, regardless of being culturally or politically bound. On a macro scale, we have what is called “structural realism” in international relations where the logic of *realpolitik* is predicated around the idea of security. Even in politics in general where resources are one of the main pillars. Why is that? Security.

Resistance to change is not the evil deed that it is made out to be; it is simply reactionary. It is in response to a danger felt by a person, group, community, and even nations if they are so tightly knit together and are determined to preserve that sense of security and the elements that enforce it. To their credit, most of the freedom-loving idealists are not aware of this dynamic and see their opposition, from their angle, as obstructors to the path forward. In turn, the security-concerned realists, who see more merit in what works than what is unknown, are not only driven by their preference of what works, but also by their unease over the prospect of losing a grip over consistency, order, and stability.

In conclusion, the conflict between those who want change and those who want security – who we can also categorize as idealists and realists – will never really go away. Unlike most movies, there is no “good guy” or “bad guy” in any of this. There are only people who have differing sets of priorities, which, in turn, are characterized in ways that end up coming into conflict with one another. While this article might sound like it is ending on a pessimistic note, that is far from the case. In fact, I think exposure to this reality of differing societal dynamics could go a long way towards changing how we approach the topics of change and consistency, freedom and security, and maybe even revolution and stability.

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS AND THE CHALLENGE OF AI

With the acceleration of globalization and the development of AI (Artificial intelligence), today's students and researchers have access to tools such as Chat GPT that can provide them with immediate responses to their queries but also reduce their engagement, interactions, and research capabilities. Hence, they may become overly reliant on AI for answers, resulting in the development of passive learning skills. Such platforms, facilitated by digital globalization, may cause two major harms: hindering critical thinking and limiting personalized feedback.

AI tools provide us with quick and accurate solutions, making our lives “easy” and helping us “win sometimes”. However, when faced with challenging research or problems where AI may not help us, researchers and students will realize that they lack independent analytic thinking and problem-solving skills. Research usually needs time; it requires complex thinking, creativity, and experience. Moreover, these tools lack the personalization and depth that human beings can provide. Such feedback is crucial for the intellectual growth of the student and helps them in addressing individual weaknesses and strengths. This is why political scientists have started facing challenges in academia with the rise of such digital platforms.

Meanwhile, professors and instructors play a huge role within this context. They must enhance group discussions and debates in the class to foster a collaborative learning environment. Moreover, constructive feedback would support the student or researcher to learn and improve.

Amid all these huge digital waves, can Political Science survive as a “science”?

We usually still tend to ask, “How does Political Science resemble natural science?” Political Science, like any natural science, needs a laboratory to test certain theories which may change over time. Such as communism, an ideology that was attractive a century ago and pushed people to revolt under its flag, now no longer mobilizing the masses. Even the working class has abandoned its principles. Based on my personal experience as a researcher and instructor, I would like to argue that there are four main reasons that show Political Science has natural science components:

First, Political Science is reasoned. Hence, political scientists must always frame arguments that make sense to the public. It should be clear and straightforward. There is no need to “philosophize” and use “fancy words” to manipulate the public for their interests as their arguments must sound logical and practical.

Second, political scientists' thoughts must be balanced. Being balanced does not mean someone has to be “neutral” as neutrality is not balanced. However, looking at two sides of the same coin is important to come up with conclusions. Balancing is also associated with objectivity. Unfortunately, in our society due to many factors, objective or balanced analyses are not often welcomed and are sometimes ignored by decision-makers because of the painful nature of the truth, with people preferring to hear “sweet lies” over the harsh truth or reality. Hence, political scientists must minimize bias by acknowledging other ways of looking at a certain topic.

Third, political scientists must support their argument with evidence, always asking the “why” and “how” questions. Why did the escalation happen? How have the conflicting parties prepared the ground for it? Was there a way to de-escalate the tension? These are some of the questions they have to raise when engaging in conflict analysis to pave the way for conflict resolution. All scholarly studies require evidence, both quantitative and qualitative being important with Political Science utilizing both. Any statement made by researchers and political scientists should be supported with evidence.

Finally, political scientists are practical alongside not avoiding theories. The evidence provided must confirm or refute existing data. A political scientist must relate the description to some factors supported by empirical evidence where its central feature involves verifying or falsifying hypotheses by testing them against empirical evidence, preferably using repeatable experiments. However, theories are not absolute. A theory adopted in a certain culture will not necessarily be adopted in different cultures. This is why practicality is needed. Political scientists must always take into consideration the cultural and social context of their cases. Until now, Western-centric analysts tend to forget that Western-centric democracy promotion in Western civilization differs from that of other cultures. We have tangible cases in the Middle East and South Caucasus that prove that imposing top-down theories may provide negative backlash.

Therefore, in Political Science, we, as political scientists and researchers, will always be students in a cycle of constant learning and experimenting, no matter how many degrees we possess. It is up to us to teach future political scientists to engage in critical thinking and teamwork no matter how much AI develops. Eventually, the role of these digital platforms cannot be sidelined, we must co-opt them into our teaching and learning skills as both sides can fill the gap of the other.

YEGHIA TASHJIAN IS THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS CLUSTER COORDINATOR AT THE ISSAM FARES INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT AND AN INSTRUCTOR IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (BEIRUT CAMPUS).



LEBANON & THE MIDDLE EAST

05

LEBANON'S ARMENIAN FACE

One Among Many...

Lebanon is well known for the multitude of communities that inhabit the country and the confessional system of governance that, albeit flawed and prone to paralysis, tries to cater to these communities by giving them a voice in decision making, and ultimately the freedom for each group to govern its own internal and personal affairs; this has created a melting pot of ideas and visions that characterize, and oftentimes, clash between the different communities. Amidst the hodgepodge that are Lebanon's sectarian and socio-political communities, there's one community that's unlike the rest in many ways: the Armenian community of Lebanon.

This article shines light on the Armenians in Lebanon, not as an isolated minor community from the rest of Lebanon due to their 'different' culture, traditions, and language, but as a community that is so well integrated within Lebanon, as an inalienable part and parcel of this country. This emphasizes the significant role Lebanon has and continues to play as a center of Armenian culture and the Armenian world.

After the Armenian Genocide, the Armenians went through a period of recovery throughout their newfound homelands in the Middle East; nowhere else has this been more evident than in Lebanon. The Armenians constitute Lebanon's primary non-Arab community and are well integrated within the economic, political, and social fabric of the country. The high degree of autonomy that the Lebanese confessional system has offered to the Armenians created fertile ground for them to relocate and create institutions that cater to the unique needs of the community: namely the preservation of their language, culture, and identity. At a time when the fervor of Arab nationalism and a nascent Lebanese nationalism had mounted opposition to colonial powers and were rejecting foreign influences, the 'foreign' Armenian community, that shared little with their Lebanese counterparts in terms of language, culture, tradition, and history, were uniquely experiencing sharp growth and flourishing, reaching their zenith right before the Lebanese Civil War. By some estimates, they numbered 250,000, representing around 7-10% of the Lebanese demographics at the time: the highest number of Armenians outside of Soviet Armenia in terms of percentage of population. It is this success of integration that gave Lebanon an important role in the affairs of Armenians all over the world. No Armenian in the world - whether they were from Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Paris, Istanbul, Tehran, or anywhere else in the world - could ignore Lebanon.

Lebanon's Systemic Boon

The system of governance that Lebanon is known for, albeit criticized, was a boon for Armenians; it allowed them the ability to govern their educational and religious life. The Armenian community's period of growth and adaptation after settling in Lebanon encompassed the establishment of Armenian schools, providing the impetus for educating new generations of Armenians in their native language: this was particularly crucial as many Armenians who ended up in Lebanon after the Genocide spoke Turkish instead of Armenian. The student body of Armenians had grown well into tens of thousands and scattered around multiple Armenian schools; the academic growth of the community eventually necessitated a higher level of education, culminating in the founding of Haigazian University in 1955 (then known as Haigazian College), becoming the only Armenian university in the world outside of Armenia.


LEBANON'S ARMENIAN FACE

These schools and colleges are affiliated with the different Armenian religious denominations: the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, and the Armenian Evangelical Church, that have also made Lebanon the home of their executive branches. One of the most significant transitions in Armenian history was when one of two Armenian Sees in the world – The Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, after 637 years (1293-1930), relocated its seat from Sis, Cilicia (modern-day Turkey) to Antelias, Lebanon. This move cemented Lebanon's leading role in the religious affairs of a big portion of the global Armenian community, as they turned to Lebanon for religious leadership and affiliation. Lebanon's importance as a center for Armenian religious organization takes an even more interesting turn with the Armenian Catholic Church. In the 1700s, Catholic Armenians forged strong ties with the Maronite feudal lords, who gave them a patch of land to establish the main headquarters for the Armenian Catholic Church. Additionally, the Armenian Evangelical Church, which contrasts the other Armenian churches in its dispersed structure, has one of its most important bodies, the 'Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East', headquartered in Beirut. The congregation of headquarters of the three major Armenian Churches within Lebanon elevates the country's importance on par with that of Armenia, and in some respects even more so, as a center of Armenian faith and religion.

Lebanese Armenians' Political and Literary Pluralism

The exponential growth of the Armenian community in Lebanon also led to the settlement of the Armenian political establishment in Beirut; a pluralistic Armenian political elite made their foray into Lebanon, such as the ARF, Hunchak, and Ramgavar, where they vied for control and influence, with each establishing a Lebanese branch. Their publications and affiliations also made great strides in Armenian education, literature, culture, and more. Lebanon remains unique in the world in providing Armenians with a level of political expression and representation that cannot be found anywhere else in the world, save for Armenia.

As the Armenian community settled and began to build their institutions, Beirut naturally became a focal point for Armenian literature; a fitting addition to a city already known for being a refuge for expression and dissent. In 1924, "Nor Piunik" was established, becoming the first Armenian newspaper in an Arabic country; moreover, Armenian political parties and religious institutions all had their own publications and dailies; there even being an Armenian edition of the popular 'Al Nidaa' newspaper affiliated with the Lebanese Communist Party. All in all, there were dozens of Armenian publications, newspapers, and dailies, that served the Armenian community in Lebanon and Armenian diaspora communities around the world, with Lebanon fulfilling its role as a literary hub for Armenians as it had for the Arab World.



Lebanon was also a center for Armenian arts and culture during and after the Genocide; a number of brave Armenian monks and clergymen managed to save timeless Armenian artifacts and treasures from Sis (modern-day Kozan, Turkey) and preserved them in the 'Cilicia Museum', located within the premise of the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias. This museum houses what is probably one of the biggest and most important collections of Armenian artifacts in the world outside of Armenia. Lebanon has also given rise to prominent Armenian artists who have made significant contributions to the country's regional and international recognition. These artists are featured in exhibitions around the country and the world, including the musicians whose work has been played on our radio stations, the photographers who have captured Lebanese history, and the sculptors who solidified national heroes, and many others.

Stagnation and Resilience

The Armenians in Lebanon, like every community in Lebanon, were greatly affected by the Civil War, yet arguably speaking, the Armenians' casualties were far more mitigated than the rest due to the 'positive neutrality' stance taken by Armenian political parties and representatives, conducting a delicate balancing act between the warring sides. However, by the end of the war, the number of Armenians had diminished from its peak of 250,000 around the eve of the Civil War to 150,000 by some estimates. Post-Civil War Beirut brought a sense of long-awaited stability after 15 years of warfare; however, the damage was already done from which the Armenian community never truly recovered from. With the seemingly endless and successive economic, financial, political, and security crises that Lebanon is going through, the number of Armenians migrating outside of the country has escalated. Despite the stagnation that the Armenian community continues to face, they remain visible and influential, commending a respectable position within the Lebanese society and the Armenian diaspora communities.

The Lebanese Armenian community within the Lebanese context and part of the confessional system, is an ethno-religious community that, in many ways, are different from peer communities not just in its denomination, but in language, culture, traditions, and more. Yet, their integration in Lebanon was smooth, providing a unique face to a country known for its diversity, as well as becoming one of the most important communities of the Armenian diaspora. Lebanon housed the executive branches of Armenian religious, political, social, cultural, educational, and philanthropic organizations and institutions that spearheaded and led the affairs of the Armenian diaspora as a whole. At a time when Armenian nationalism and expression of identity was being severely restricted in Soviet Armenia due to Stalinist repressions, Beirut was leading an Armenian renaissance.

A HARMONIOUS LEBANON

What does the word “harmony” make you think of? Perhaps ideas of balance, symmetry, coordination, unity, or even the magic of a symphony? Does it remind you of music, the synchronicity of sound waves creating blissful tunes?

For a group of people living in Lebanon and coming from completely different regions, religions, and sectors, harmony is found in “Fayha”, the National Choir of Lebanon, which combines all of the elements mentioned above.

Fayha Choir is the first national fully acapella choir in Lebanon. It was founded on January 11, 2003, by Maestro Barkev Taslakian. A little background on the Maestro: He was born and raised in Anjar, a small Armenian town in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. Growing up in a poor family, he had the biggest dream of conducting choirs. Little did he know his dreams were hidden in his future, waiting for them to be uncovered. He took on various conducting responsibilities in the town, leading the marching band as well as directing multiple choirs, including those at the church and the Armenian cultural institution, “Hamazkayin”. Eventually, his passion led him to Tripoli, where he was given the chance to establish a choir—an opportunity he took that impacted and continues to change the lives of many. Initially, the choir started with eight members and was able to quickly gain recognition. People were curious about what was happening; for the first time in the Arab world, a choir had emerged that relied solely on the voices of its members, creating beautiful melodies and harmonies, without any musical instruments.

In its early days, the choir went on “Arabs Got Talent”, and came out as finalists, leaving everyone astonished. Some of its greatest accomplishments so far have been winning the second prize in the “International Warsaw Choir Festival 2005”, just two years after its foundation. Later in 2007, at the same festival, the choir won first prize in “Best Choir” as well as “Best Conductor”. In 2016, it won the first prize at Choir Fest Middle East Dubai and later secured the second prize in 2018. It also won the first prize at the “Music and the Sea Festival 2016” in Greece. Afterwards, they received the first prize in the “Music Rights Award” from the International Music Council in the same year. Moreover, the choir has toured most countries of the world and performed its repertoire containing songs in Lebanese, Syrian, Armenian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Latin, Egyptian, and other languages and dialects. But the greatest accomplishment of the choir for now is considered to be the album they released in 2019. The choir produced its first original album called “SAWT”, in collaboration with Oumeima Khalil and Marcel Khalife. The whole goal of the album was for history to be made in the name of Fayha.



In addition to all of these achievements, the choir has participated in social projects all around the country, collaborating with different international organizations to work with refugees, Palestinian and Syrian children, and even Lebanese citizens, with the belief that it is only through the power of music that relief and joy can be shared amongst those suffering. Social projects started from the UNESCO choir and Lebanese Palestinian Choir in 2009 and have continued onward up until this day, where they are currently partnered with UNDP, creating the “Angham Wa Salam” choir, whose goal is uniting Lebanon from North to South. In 2015, the choir received a certificate for its social projects from the International Music Council during the “Music Rights Award”.

Even though the choir was established in Tripoli, it formed its second branch in Beirut in 2016 and a third one in Chouf later in 2018. Aside from social projects, Maestro Barkev works with assistant conductors and music composers who take birth from within the choir. Notably, from Tripoli, Mahmoud Mawass, Oussama Charafeddine, and Fatma Racha Shehadeh have attained significant levels of professionalism as assistant conductors. Oussama, in particular, has arranged many songs for the choir. Presently, two new conductors; one in the Beirut branch, Amir Chehayeb, and one in Chouf, Nancy Daou are being trained and taught. The Maestro has big hopes for them and sees a bright future waiting for both assistant conductors, both in the choir and in life. In addition, a new composer from the Beirut branch, Adam Salha, is embracing his musical talent and arranging music while keeping the beautiful Arabic quarter tone in the songs as he experiences and expands his knowledge in this field. This highlights the choir’s role in embracing and developing the members’ hidden talents.

Fayha is perceived by its members not as “just a choir” but as a lifestyle. Hearing each person’s story is a unique perspective of how each of them joined the choir and how it has changed the course of their lives. The choir also helps people come together and build long-lasting friendships and relationships. For example, a couple who met through the choir got married during the summer of 2023.

Moreover, the choir shapes a person’s morals and ethics to fit what benefits society. The maestro always says everyone must break down their ego, so everyone can learn to live in harmony while also benefiting from each other’s knowledge.

The choir’s goal is clear: to spread Arabic music around the world in the form of acapella, without westernizing the Arabic feel of songs. In April 2023, the “International Federation of Choral Music” (IFCM) picked and chose Fayha and 9 other choirs from a total of 72 global choirs to perform in one of the greatest GALA concerts in Turkey, where they got to introduce the world to Arabic songs outside of competitions in a more informative and professional way. In addition, the choir has become an official member of the IFCM, as well as a member of the “European Choral Association-Europa Cantat” and the “Arab Choral Network”.

The “Fayha” family is one where everyone shares the same purpose of uniting and creating a harmonious society in a country where there are political and societal differences. What unites them? The love of music. Fayha is the first ever intercultural choir in the world, where people from 17 different geopolitical and religious sects come together and form a small Lebanon. Who would’ve thought that a choir could be the one to accomplish what the government has been trying to do for years?

THE JOURNEY OF MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN

Thinking about women in the Middle East, oppression, sexism, misogyny, and objectification come to mind, in addition to stereotypes that limit women to being housewives and nothing more. But there was a time when women thrived in this region.

The Egyptian feminist movement began in the late 19th century and was the first organized feminist organization in the Arab world. It achieved significant milestones during its first wave, such as forming the first feminist union in 1923 and passing a law setting a minimum marriage age. Egypt also allowed women to remove headscarves in 1923, making it unique in the region. Prominent figures like Nawal El Saadawi emerged from this movement, positively impacting the lives of Arab women. However, the movement did not foresee the subsequent regression in Arab and Middle Eastern countries.

Today, Egypt, where feminism in the Arab world started, is ironically one of the region's most prominent figures of misogyny and sexism after the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood. Ever since, women have been suffering in obtaining child custody and divorcing their husbands. Egyptian authorities have been stripping women's right to freedom of speech under claims of "immorality". In 2020, 17 girls were arrested for "indecent" and "undermining family values" despite being fully clothed. No official statistics have been published; however, it is estimated that 20,000 rapes are reported in Egypt each year, 90% of Egyptian women report some type of sexual harassment, and 3 in 10 ever-married women report marital violence, including sexual assault. Additionally, the country has one of the highest rates of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the world.

Another Arab country, which is arguably the worst place to be a woman, is Saudi Arabia. While the Kingdom has seen recent changes, this progress remains limited to the bare minimum such as allowing women to drive. The male guardian law restricts women's independence, with females requiring a male guardian's permission for various activities. Employment opportunities are scarce for women due to gender segregation, with only 22% of women being employed, earning significantly less than men who overwhelmingly hold senior positions. Divorce rights are unbalanced, as men can easily divorce while women face a costly and complex process, and in all cases, child custody favors fathers. Some women attempt to escape such oppression, as seen in cases like Rahaf Mohammed who escaped from her family during their visit to Turkey and managed to get protection from the UN. Saudi women also face strict dress codes, specifically the Burka mandate. Despite that, activists striving for women's rights face severe consequences like the example of Loujain al-Hathloul.

Eleven women activists faced trial in Riyadh for charges like contacting foreign media and advocating for women's rights. Loujain al-Hathloul was convicted in 2020 but released in 2021. As of February 2021, three activists were still imprisoned and receiving severe treatment. These women have made significant sacrifices for women's rights in Saudi Arabia and will be remembered as heroes by women throughout the Middle East, yet problems remain, and they are still viewed as second-class citizens.

Now for an example outside of the Arab world; Iran. During the Pahlavi era (1925-1979), significant advancements were made for women's rights. Education became free for both girls and boys and Tehran University, opened in 1936, was the first university to admit both men and women. In 1963, women gained the right to vote and run for parliament. The "Family Protection Law" granted women the ability to seek divorce and child custody, ending unilateral male divorce and automatic custody for husbands. The minimum marriage age for girls was raised from 13 to 18. To say the least, women were thriving, but that didn't last long..

After the 1979 Iranian revolution, the new theocratic government systematically reversed five decades of women's rights' progress. Women were removed from government positions, Islamic dress codes were enforced on all females, including young girls, and family laws were revoked. The Iranian government created the "Morality Police" to strictly implement the Hijab sharia law. After years of this force breathing down women's necks, Mahsa Amini was killed on September 16, 2022. Three days earlier, Iran's so-called morality police arrested her for not wearing her hijab, which sparked long overdue widespread protests across the nation, demanding to revoke said law with many women defying the compulsory hijab law. Unfortunately, these protests were handled violently and led to the deaths and arrests of hundreds. However, this ended up spreading around the Middle East as women were inspired by the courage of Iranian women.

Women in the Middle East, and Arab countries specifically, have long been suffering from objectification by men and oppressive laws. The Middle East has the highest rates of sexual assault, female genital mutilation, honor killings, and domestic abuse. Women are more than baby-making machines and dishwashers. However, women shouldn't back down, anyone who has respect for women needs to keep their heads up and fight for equality, and freedom from men's control over them. So, ladies, it's time to know our worth and demand the respect we deserve. Always remember: No one has authority over her, because behind every strong woman, is an even stronger woman.



SPECTRA



06

WAR'S UNENDING ECHO: THE FLAME OF HOPE

*The past was a war,
Fighting for hope,
To find a cure.
After years of fighting,
All in vain,
Many lives passed away.*

*Always believing there's someone out there,
To be aware and help.
But nothing...
No one...
Who cares?*

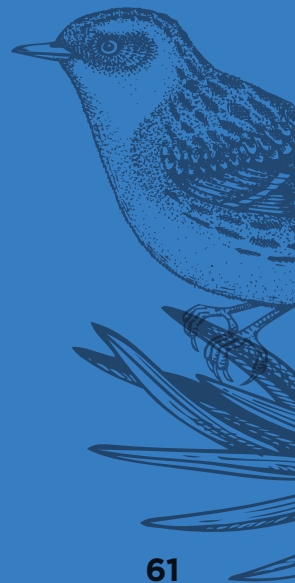
*The in-between had arrived,
Giving birth to peace.
Restoring hope.
Living happily,
Hearing whispers of serenity,
Unfortunately, to certain extremities.*

*Then the present came abruptly,
Leaving us trapped in the same position as the past.
Flashbacks and worse flooding back,
Realizing that the war had never even left.*

*Unfortunately, nothing's changing anytime soon,
No light at the end of the tunnel is seen,
I guess hope is no more.*

*Yet holding on is a must,
For in the darkest moments,
Hope can reappear.
Though the past and present may be shrouded in gloom,
The resilience endures, in the face of the room.*

*In this never-ending battle,
Strength will be found,
For hope though tested, forever persists unbound.*



EMBRACING IT, ALL OF IT...

*As I stand there with my bare soul,
Gazing into the structure of my being,
I hold on to the moment as if it will disintegrate...
And it does...*

*My exposed soul slips from my fingertips
As I reach the dimensional figure.
I run after myself and realize I must stop,
Since I lost my own vision.*

*I kneel wondering what had just happened,
Something reaches out to me, gently yet swiftly caressing my
shoulder, and then chin.
As my senses come back to me,
Aimlessly, yet with precise aim I extend myself to it...*

*I see myself once again, another distant part of my soul,
We make contact through our visions and touch,
We collide.
Yet somehow, I outgrow this weight that my own being places on
me...*

*And I start falling, waiting to reach the lowest of lows,
Still trying to find a way to halt...I see a vision.
Once I reach my landing on this unknown surface, they simply
come to me,
Grab me with force and pull me down next to them as we
intertwine...*

*With furious expressions - I expect my own imprints on the side of
my face*

*Yet I receive no wave of heat; but instead, warm embraces into
oblivion...*

*And as I breathe in its scent of pain and hope through all these
stages,*

I claim back to my existence in the present and embrace myself.

*I embrace myself fully, with my arms wrapped around me as much
as possible,*

*I discern the realm of being engulfed by my dimensional selves
that have reached me,*

They have all embraced me, through it all,

And I must allow all their embraces to pass through me and live...

*Because they have been there and held me completely,
unconditionally.*

*A rush of relief passes through the present and the in-betweens,
Of which will be lingering to the future, always embracing.*



AS THE LEAVES FALL

*The story begins with a young man going to work.
He spots a tree that makes him jerk:
Magnificent, glorious, and full of life he thinks
The beauty of existence, showing its perks.
The man moves forward to greet the tree,
And proclaims that his name is Stanley
He looks at the time and moves along with his day
Envisioning the tree on the pathway
As the years pass, Stanley grows and ponders
What could have happened to the tree he was so fond of
Going to work, Stanley spots the tree
Magnificent, glorious, and full of life he sees
He steps forward, asking "remember me"?
For next to the tree, Stanley was in ecstasy
Stanley looks down seeing a few leaves
Excited and ready, he grabs a bucket
He puts the leaves in with nothing but glee
Thanking the tree Stanley heads on the road.
In his house, the bucket would be stowed
A few years pass, Stanley grows old and ponders
What could have come from the tree he was so fond of?
He visits the tree, bucket in hand,
Ready to collect more leaves, or so he had planned
A sight so gruesome for one to condone
The tree had been withered down to the bone
The man, his soul, his being had to atone
For the man's old friend was no more.*





*The sight, horrifying, as though it was gore
A tree so beautiful, how could it wither?
The man's joy was no longer hither
Looking into the bucket the man reminisces
The leaves, the tree, would be found in no other places
The man returns home with regret and thoughts
Thinking of how he could have avoided this loss
As the leaves fall from within the man's grasp
He stands up relieved with a great gasp
No more would Stanley think of the past
For this conflict, he would contrast
Stanley grabs the leaf, for the past he had to remember,
But for the present, he was not ready to surrender
The tree had shown Stanley a parable
Although he knew the present was terrible
He had no doubt that pain could be bearable
Stanley would go back to his friend
For he accepted this is the end
He surrounded the tree with leaves of its past
The tree was one friend Stanley would outlast
As the leaves fall from Stanley's grip
A leaf he would take to ease the trip
Thus the moment at hand had become the past
The bright present, for Stanley, was beginning at last.*



BRING ME A SHOVEL

*Bring me a shovel,
I need to bury the arrogance of might.
Bring me a shovel,
I need to bury the 'Might makes right'.
Bring me humanity, I need to show it how there is a heist,
A heist of humanity and truth,
A heist of beauty and the pure,
A heist of land and the peace,
A heist of nature and the green,
A heist by those who think they control,
All the planet and its role.
Tell me please, can you make the planet roll?
Can you make it spin,
You, whose arrogance is but a sin,
A sin against your own people,
A sin for all your upheaval,
A sin that you will surely pay,
If not in this lifetime, then surely one day,
For Karma is there around the corner,
It will feed you back what you foster.
In abundance it will mirror you back,
The good you have paid and the bad.*

*Bring me the shovel, I need to bury,
The arrogance and the might of the countries that have many
Decisions to control, lives and the many.
Greed and hatred and partition is their seed,
A seed that grows and kills and bleeds,
A seed that is blind to Goodness's breed,
A breed so strong that eventually,
All the teeming evil it will bury,
If not in this lifetime, then sometime soon,
A planet of ripeness that shall bloom,
Ripeness of soul and that of beauty,
Ripeness of brotherhood and all its duty,
A brotherhood of nations of all humanity,
All humanity is but one heartbeat and soul
Living and sharing, having one goal,
That of truth, peace and glory
To help and guide to one destiny,
A destiny of oneness and the Eternal,
Where anything else is truly ephemeral...*

Give me a shovel, I need to bury...



TO THE OLD WE HOLD

*The world was pretty.
Growing in the city
Not knowing pity.
We thought our parents gritty.
We thought them witty.
Seeing the birds sing, the world was our own.
Hearing cartoons, everything at us was thrown.
From ads to propaganda, all was shown;
All what mattered was to make each one a clone.
Buying, eating, playing, sleeping, all abide by the same tone.
Yet, all we saw was joy, unaware of what we hadn't known.
Everything seemed okay, okay in spite of a growing loan.
For years we had dreams. No longer can we afford to dream.*

*All we do is sit and cry alone,
Wishing we can afford a life more than rotten stone.
We laughed in bliss, while others turned skin on bone
We ate, wanted to stay up late; we haven't much grown.
For if we had, people wouldn't be shot and blown.
A life we had when problems didn't have to do with money,
When every day is remembered as sunny,
Even if it rained, something made us laugh that wasn't even funny.
It was joy from some useless toy,
What many couldn't enjoy.
Millions never held such toys.
Millions grew up in wars with guns;
Not the ones with sponges, the ones that destroy.*

*We hold dear those days.
The time upon which we could gaze,
With hopes and dreams we were raised.
For that, the past we praise
Yet not hearing a tree falling doesn't mean it never fell,
For our dreams, as we grew, were razed
Down to rubble, with all we knew, set ablaze.
Burning, as the flame takes all to hell
Growing old, yet to that, that is old we hold.
As we learn of what rots and decays;
We learn what pays and betrays.
We learn that nothing stays,
Except He Who made our maze,
As we walk, run, fall, then rise to see the sun.
Many had fallen, yet not to hell
As they fell from a man-made spell
With all hope they have, they grow a shell:
A shell of faith that helps protect from living hell.
To see a day when all is swell,
May we upon the past not dwell.
As all we need is some help
To pass these days good and well.
For one day to all we shall say farewell.*



THE DEMON'S REIGN

*It rained today
But not of water rain
As skies above were filled with planes
Shooting down ballistic flames
Burning down the cities' fame
As lights of homes faded away
Yet lights of bombs and fire stay.
Some men came from the seas out there,
To take my land and home away
They came with tanks from every way,
Surrounding our shores and our bay
We tried to fight
We tried to say
"Our land is here, so go away!".*

*They never heard our words of peace,
They forced us out and killed who stayed
Saying they deserved our homes
Taking all we've known away,
Treating men as they were none,
Women raped and killed like none.
Hearing the children crying out,
Screaming because of pain in heart
Screaming: their arms were torn apart.
Blood was a river stream
As blood of those who fought with dreams
Had flooded my town in a crimson scene
And the smell of corpses, a rotting smell,
For those who died are all that stayed.
We moved from town to town a day
Fleeing from bombs in disarray.
Looking back, I see a light
Rending skies with fiery might*





*Killing all that was once there
And a sound so dreadful it made men cry
As they witnessed their own demise
By the hands of a foe who lived a side
Once friends, we thought we were.*

*Brother killing brother in utter vain,
With money they bought the souls of men,
Taking away the humanity in them
Reduced to bots and nothing more
Being replaced as they will all
We fought the wars for their selfish gain
To lose all, to their restraints.*

*So please don't kill your brothers here,
As I can't stand to lose my land
As my home is where I roam.
As life is wondrous, so greatly placed
A wonder it is, don't be a fool
So come and see the beauty's heart
Pulsing life through every part
As beauty rests in one's own heart.
But that of flesh and blood is dead
Turned to stones and bones instead,
To be as hard as one will know
So carry on and kill me now
For a coward lies behind those guns
That face you put on is just for show
You are weak with weapons not like swords,
Killing those who rise and stand
To stop the plague of the demon's reign.*

A LETTER TO MY YELLOW

To my طلة,

*Without you, I do not know who I would be:
A different life, a different dream,
a different reality.*

*Hopeless, lifeless, and stuck: this would be me.
A reality I do not wish upon my worst enemy.
Light, love, and hope: all traits you gave me.
You showed me who I can be and how my life
should be.*

*Your love is golden. You are my yellow,
my sunshine.
You changed my mentality. Life without you
would be a tragedy;
A life not worth living.*

*You are my constant source of encouragement;
you lift me up when I am down.
I hope you never slip through my fingers and
always give me your special good morning and
good night hugs and kisses.
I hope you are always my safe space, my love,
and my light.*

*My love, my life, thank you for being
unapologetically yourself.
My dear baby brother, I love you,
always and forever.
I hope you are my brother in every universe.*



XOXO,
Your bgh.

PETRICHOR

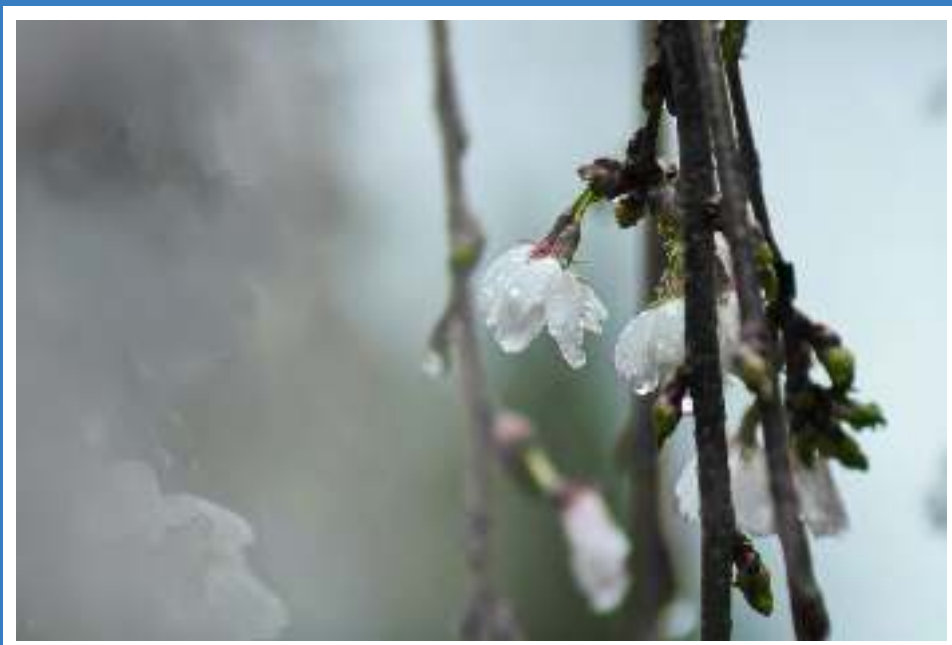
*A celestial offering in the guise of a lullaby,
A symphony of droplets, pattering melodies,
Raindrops rushing to give kisses to petals,
Bringing life to the aroma of this earth, oh so heavenly!*

*In its embrace, comfort comes over me:
A sound so tranquil, muffling the cacophony,
Aromatically ethereal, a blessing to the senses
Stirring memories so dear, fragrantly transcending.*

*In the realm where clouds release their tears,
Hums of solace transcend earthly fears.*

*Underneath the silver veil, with every gust comes a tale,
Yearning for memories that reside beyond my existence,
Within the chambers of my heart, a surplus of emotions is persistent.*

*Petrichor: the scent of ground kissed by rain,
Beneath teary clouds, petrichor danced, a fragrant refrain.*



QUICKSAND

*There is a beating sound
Yet I cannot accurately pinpoint its location.
As I attempt to rush after it,
I find myself glued.*

*It is as if my mind is glowing green.
However, my feet are entangled in what once were arteries.
And slowly, these poisonous and lifeless threads are tying me into the
soil of an abandoned heart.
Pulling me down just like quicksand:
Wanting to absorb me completely*

*At the end of the illuminating horizon is where the refurbished heart
lies
And it extends its vines to prevent me from sinking into the rotten
one.
Therefore, how can I go forward when I am frozen between the then
and the now?*



THE SOUNDLES SOUND

The step has been taken.

*However, the destination of the next one appears to be vague.
I have been left questioning the frail signals that have been emitted.
It is similar to the rhythmic movements being done in a somber room,
Where uncertainty is left prevalent.*

*The past echoes the choices that have been made.
The present is left with these faint whispers of undecided decisions.*

*And here I am, in the midst of it all:
Where they call the soundless sound.*



THE TALE OF A CAGED SOUL

The following is an excerpt from my book

"White Scars" published on Amazon.com

*Nature smiled.
The moonlight shone in the night sky.
But the gifted soul remained caged in its mind.
Troubled by all its fears.
It was unable to set itself free.
The cage contained the shadows it ignored to face.
The key was within the heart which it refused to break.
Until one day, it gained the courage to accept all there was and will be.
No thought remained unhinged.
No emotion was left unexpressed.
Sooner or later the cage disappeared.
Its heart was unchained at last.
And the soul was able to fly higher than its darkest past.*

أزمة إغتراب

إِلَى أَيْنَ أُغَادِرُ وَلَا بَوَابَةٌ لِلانْتِظَارِ
فَهَلْ أَسَافِرُ وَالْقَلْبُ فِي حَالَةٍ حِصَارِ
مَا يَرْبِطُنِي وَأَنَا لَسْتُ مَأْشُورًا بَيْنَ الْأَشْوَارِ؟
عَقْلِي ثَائِتٌ وَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَا هُوَ خِيَارِ
حُقُوقِ مَسْلُوبَةٍ وَجُنُودِ بَحْمَالِ الْأَرْزِ وَالْبَحَارِ
فَيَا بِلَادًا كُفِّي عَنْ تَغْذِييَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ
سَأَلْتُ نَفْسِي سُؤَالَ: هَلْ مَسَاكِلُنَا نَقُصُّ حُبًّا وَجَوَارِ؟
أُعْتَقِدُ أَنَّ الْأَعْلِيَّةَ هَاجَرَتْ لَكِنْ مُعَلِّقَةٌ بِالتَّفَاصِيلِ كَالصَّغَارِ
إِغْتَدْنَا عَلَى التَّأْفُلِ وَعَلَى ظُرُوفٍ فُرِضَتْ بِالْإِجْتِبَارِ
فَيَا اللَّهَ إِرْحَمْ عِبَادَكَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ قُلُوبَهُمْ كَالْحِجَارِ
رُبَّمَا وَلَدْنَا لِنَعِيشَ فِي الْخَارِجِ وَنُدْفِنُ فِي بِلَادِنَا تَحْتَ الْأَرْهَارِ



A MOSAIC OF SELF

*Glass, reflective and see-through
That is my skin to you.
So fragile that if you touch me, I'd break.
But isn't that true with anything that aches?*

*In a world of fragments, shattered and torn,
I'm a person in a thousand pieces, reborn.
But fear not, for I heard there's hope in the air,
A process, a journey, to heal and repair.*

*Piece by piece, I gather my mess,
A puzzle of life, a challenging quest.
Slowly, steadily, I pick them up with care,
Assembling a mirror, reflecting myself bare.*

*With each fragment placed, a glimmer appears,
A glimpse of myself, banishing my fears.
The more I connect, the clearer it shows,
A portrait emerging, as my true self grows.*

*Every broken shard: a tale to be told,
The joys, the sorrows, the lessons they hold.
Through this mosaic, I find my grace,
A reflection of strength, in every trace.*

*The mirror takes shape, revealing my soul,
A portrait complete, making me whole.
For in this process, I truly perceive,
The beauty in fragments, the power to believe.*

*So, embrace your pieces, scattered and free,
The journey of healing, a chance to decree.
In every fragment, a story in depth
As you build your mirror, reflecting your true self.*



SHADOWS OF YESTERDAY

*The past is the past.
Live in the present.
Live it till it lasts.*

*The past raised us
To be who we are now.
The past gave us
An eternal childhood with a vow.*

*Always coming back to difficult times,
Remembering good old times.*

*Good old days,
Made gold memories.
Now we're in a maze,
Though we still make stories.*

*Old tales and new adventures, they're all treasures to hold,
In happiness or sorrow, together, we're bold.
Looking back, we realize nothing's the same as before,
But the beauty of our story, we continue to explore.*



Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to our dedicated writers, who continue to share their words and creativity, and to our readers, who support our endeavors and place their trust in us. Thank you for being part of our writing journey.

The Herald

THE HERALD



Haigazian University Rue Mexique, Kantari, Beirut-Lebanon

Tel: 961 1 349230/1 961 1 353010/1

theherald@haigazian.edu.lb

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