

American University of Beirut

**خواتر بيروت / ODE TO BEIRUT / ODE À BEYROUTH**

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Department of Architecture and Design  
Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture  
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خواتر بيروت / ODE TO BEIRUT / ODE À BEYROUTH

by  
CHIARA ALESSANDRA ZAKHIA

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## ABSTRACT

Ode to Beirut is a trilingual artist book that acts as a celebration of Beirut through a poetic interpretation of the city. It is an exploration and immersion in the experience Beirut offers, in its intensity and essence, a love letter to the city. The publication includes bits and pieces of texts, stories, poems, and lyrics that reflect a passion for Beirut. Each text is in the original language it was written in, not translated: Arabic, English or French. Some were written by known writers, poets and singers, others by friends of mine, others by myself. "Ode to Beirut" is a limited-edition book, that can be found in special bookstores that sell artists books, fanzines, diaries and all sorts of alternative publications.

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## RESEARCH AND VISUAL INSPIRATION

HASHIM SARKIS – Dean of MIT School of Architecture and Planning, about Beirut:

“I speak about Beirut with confidence, even if I’m mistaken, even under the most expert scrutiny, I can still say what I say, because I am from Beirut. It is as if Beirut speaks through me, absolving me from my mistakes. I speak as an amateur, which, in the original sense of the word, means lover. I speak with all the biases, prejudices and desires of a lover. I would’ve liked to bring some pictures but I do not think pictures speak to the beauty of Beirut. I know you are here to make the MENA’s cities smarter, less congested, more entrepreneurial, more equitable, more resilient, and hopefully more beautiful as well. But I ask you please to make sure that you do not take away those blemishes, those beauty spots that make Beirut, Beirut. And that make me love Beirut. I tell you, Beirut has many lovers. Some of them are in this room, I am sure. Who loves Beirut?”

“Built on a rocky promontory on the east of the Mediterranean, under the shadow of Mount Lebanon, it projects out onto the sea, as a balcony onto the world.” These are not my words, but those of another more poetic lover. It has strived on the myth, that it has been destroyed seven times and seven times rebuilt itself. An earthquake during the Roman era, plagues, famines and civil wars. This image almost helps justify why Beirut is chaotic, almost always living on the brink and almost always consuming itself to the ends of hedonism because it is fated to destroy itself only to rebuild itself. The self-consumption, this image of Beirut, is best captured by Egyptian novelist Sonallah Ibrahim, who wrote an amazing portrait of the city, called, appropriately, “Beirut, Beirut”. Now, you will say, wake up. Spare us your foolish idolatry love. Beirut is ugly. Beirut is dirty, rundown, corrupt, and unjust to its citizens. We need to fix it. True, we do. But I urge you to fix it from within, by learning how it could fix itself, how it has fixed itself, for some parts, and to make the most out of the qualities that make Beirut, Beirut.”

HOUDA KASSATLY – Interview with Lebanese anthropologist and photographer. She holds a post-graduate DEA diploma in Philosophy from Université Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris) and a PhD thesis in comparative ethnology and sociology at the Université Paris X Nanterre. Her work focuses on memory and heritage in Lebanon, and Beirut is recurrent in her projects.

[Translated from French]

Can you briefly introduce yourself and explain what triggered your interest in your city and the need to photograph it?

I am an anthropologist and I am responsible of NGO Arcenciel’s culture program. I am also a researcher in anthropology in Balamand and USJ. I grew up in a city at war, where the city center quickly disappeared, therefore it is this question of absence of the center that questioned me. At that time, there was still a lot of old urban fabric, and since the city center had become a no man’s land that we couldn’t access, I got interested in the periphery, so where I could find remaining old houses. At the end of the civil war, there was a big photography project about the city center, but unfortunately, I wasn’t included. I’ve always regretted it, not because I wanted to have my work published, but simply to get the permits to get in that area. I never had the chance to access this place, and I think I would’ve offered a different look on this destroyed city. There were male photographers only, it was when they did the book with Dominique Edde, Fouad ElKoury, and the others. I would’ve liked to integrate the project to show another aspect of the city, as I had a different point of view: I photographed interiors since the beginning, while the others were more interested in the exteriors, the city at war.

How do you perceive Beirut and in what way does it inspire your work?

I’ve always felt like I belonged to this city. In my work, there is a common thread that is this city, even though in the last years I’ve worked on other anthropological or documentary projects about other cities. I am really interested in architecture. This city remained the common thread and I photograph it to this day. I have four publications on this city, I always work on it in parallel, and the other projects come around it. Lately I’ve been thinking of doing something that would be my testament of Beirut. My other city is Aleppo, which has also been destroyed. Now I have two destroyed cities in my DNA. I’ve never lived in Aleppo but I used to take refuge there during the Lebanese civil war.

Your photographs often look suspended in time, they seize an instant, something ephemeral that is about to disappear. You witnessed a metamorphosis in this city. When you first started taking pictures, what were your expectations about the way the city would evolve?

Listen, I’ve been very pessimistic since the beginning, as I saw the big destruction coming. Everybody knows that the destruction and damages in times of peace have been bigger than in times of war. Everybody focused on Solidere, but it wasn’t only them, there were several similar projects. I saw this city disappear a bit more every day. The process was very quick and I thought that in front of the steamroller of the real estate fever be able to resist for long. Therefore, I wasn’t surprised. In the beginning, it was painful, but unfortunately, you get used to this pain and it fades away little by little. It doesn’t mean that I didn’t try to revolt, but in the end, we have the city we deserve.

Do you see your work as being “documentary”, to save memory and heritage, or as something more personal that is between you and Beirut? / What do you think your photographs trigger in people who see them? Do you think they see pieces of Beirut through your eyes?

It’s think it’s more personal. Because if it had been a documentary work, I should’ve added cards and records of the buildings. There are other people who’ve done that. I am not even interested in location. I just add it because it is important for people. I think it’s a very personal thing and if you look at my work’s evolution, you’ll notice I started by working on the external city, buildings seen from outside, and then I entered the interiors. I see my work as a poem, on long poem about the city, that I keep on writing. They see me as someone who documents, I think people like to categorize artists. But that’s not how I see my work, for me it’s really an ode to the city. An ode to a city that is disappearing and doomed to disappear. There will remain few pieces of heritage, and my photographs.

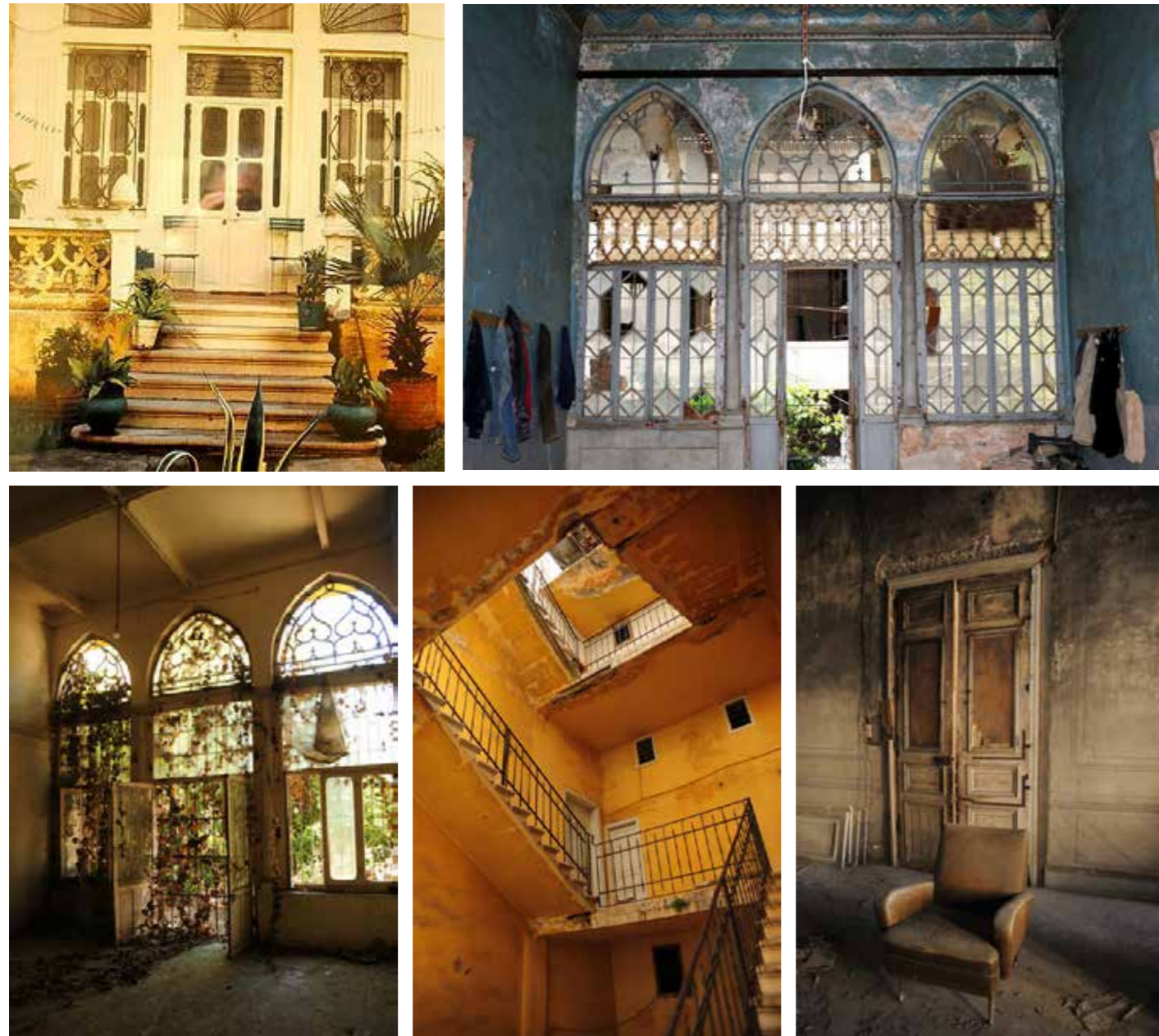
Do you see this photo? [see top left image] It’s funny because during my exhibition, it happened many times that people came and told me “this is my grandpa’s house”, and where I would ask where it was, they would give me a completely different location. Therefore, I believe there is a sort of identity, a reminiscence of what could be a Beirut house with its garden. It resonates in a lot of people’s memories, it speaks to them, it touches them. They cannot reduce it to a documentary work. I’ve met many people who told me: “so you’ve taken these photographs of Beirut? Thank you, really.” When there is a city that presents a certain beauty, a certain character, a certain harmony, you can’t but salute it, regardless if it’s your city or the neighbor’s. I mean, there was something in Beirut, those houses, but not only the house, but also the surrounding garden, the lifestyle. And this way of living disappeared. It is not nostalgia though, I’ve never liked nostalgia.

What did this city offer you? Do you perceive your works like something you give her back? A sort of ode to the city that made you the woman you are?

I don’t know, I don’t think she offered me much. I lived my teenage years in a city at war, I saw violence, I didn’t have an easy life. But there is an obvious attachment to this city, which, independently from all the horrors I’ve witnessed, made me share the way I see this city, the way I perceive it, the way I know its smallest corners. Until this day, I look up and notice things I’ve never seen before, in places where I’ve been a thousand times, so I think there are always things to discover.

And this is a question that you ask yourself, there are different ways of looking at a city, but a city can be discovered endlessly, I don't think there is an end to your relationship with a city. And of course, Beirut is my childhood's city, it's the city where I grew up, so I don't really ask myself what she offered me, because in the end I don't know. But I pay her tribute, through my work, and I celebrate the beauty she contains, that for me is found in the houses I photograph. It was an art of living.

Interviewing Houda Kassatly was really interesting because it allowed me to understand the way she approaches the city, what she tries to convey, in what way, and what inspires her, which are questions I need to ask myself in order to start my project. Beirut is a common thread in her career, but also in her life, as she defines her work as an "Ode to Beirut".



## PASSING TIME BY FOUAD ELKOURY

*Passing Time* is an archive compiled by Fouad Elkoury, with the help of Manal Khader and Gregory Buchakjian, and published by Kaph Books in 2017. Born in 1952 in Paris, Fouad Elkoury first studied Architecture, before turning to Photography, documenting daily life in times of war in Lebanon. Since then, he hasn't stopped taking pictures of his city, Beirut, and its people. "Passing Time" is an anthology of his photographs of Lebanon (mostly Beirut) from the early 80's to the late 90's.

This archive is quite relevant to my research as it was compiled by a man who truly loved his city and felt the urge to capture its essence through photography. For years, he kept shooting buildings in the city, in a desperate trial to save it from oblivion, as the city scape was changing at a scary speed with Solidere's methodic demolition. For him, his obsession with photographing his city was a way to protect its memory and keep bits and pieces, places and moments that were about to disappear. He started writing as well. In fact, this archive also includes some quite personal texts he wrote about Beirut, his hopes, frustrations, memories, dreams, etc. He described his work as "an act of rebellion against those who stole Beirut from him", and insists on his capacity to always be curious about and touched by his city. It is very interesting to look at this combination of photography and writing as it resembles a very personal storytelling of a passion for Beirut, by a man who dedicated an important part of his life and work to it.



BEYROUTH BY DAY BY TANIA HADJITHOMAS MEHANNA AND GHADI SMAT

*Beyrouth by day* is a book that Tania Hadjithomas Mehanna (texts) and Ghadi Smat (photographs) collaborated on. It was published by Tamyras in 2009. Tania Hadjithomas Mehanna describes this book as “a walk through the geographical space that is my universe”, her city. Like many people, she sees her relationship with Beirut as a love-hate relationship.

The book is divided in different chapters, that feature 52 neighborhoods of Beirut. Each chapter is composed of a combination of texts and photographs. Tania Hadjithomas Mehanna captures the essence of each neighborhood in a quite poetic way, while staying grounded. She describes the different places in a personal, touching and sensitive way, with a touch of humor and some historical facts. She tells the reader about architecture, people, stories, colors, smells, sounds, that Ghadi Smat accompanies with photographs. For them, Beirut is truly alive: “in Arabic, the word for neighborhood is hay, and hay also means alive. The neighborhoods of Beirut are indeed alive. Each is distinct, with its different moods, troubles and joys.” The texts and the photographs complete each other in a natural and harmonious way and form a sort of ode to Beirut, allowing the reader to see this city through the authors’ eyes.

I believe it’s interesting to look at such a work because it explores the perception and representation of a city through different mediums (writing and photography). Each medium conveys a certain feeling, perception or aspect of the city, and sometimes they translate the same aspect in different ways or from a different angle.



The inhabitants of Ain el Mreisseh are protective of their legends, having given up on protecting the old houses of the neighborhood that once gave the area its charming feel of a small fishing village. The local families have forgotten all about the war that should have divided, displaced and separated them. Christians, Muslims and Druze cheerfully share this part of town. Neighbors call out to each other from house to house, spend evenings together on the front porches, and exchange coffee invitations on the street. Although their kindness has been somewhat dulled by the fear of seeing their island of happiness disappear, they have remained confident. The spring's, the ain's, spirit that gave this area its name is still here, even if it has physically disappeared; it will not give up on them.

Ain el Mreisseh is a source of more than just water: it is also a source of legends and brotherhood, passion and shared existence. Seeing how the inhabitants speak of, evoke and lament it, one could almost forget that the spring is now entombed under modern constructions and has long since stopped supplying the dwellers with its vital nectar of fresh water. Yet it was not so long ago when the entire neighborhood drank from this spring, miraculously bubbling forth

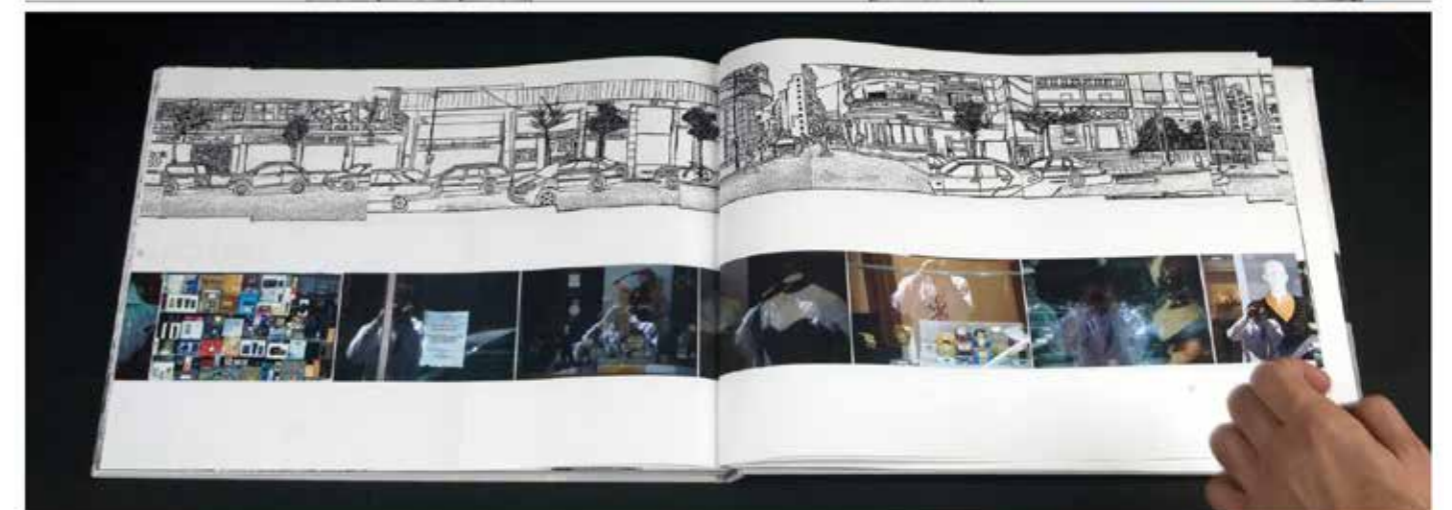


sweet water. One legend claims that, some 700 years ago, after her boat had been run aground, a nun found her way to safety by walking towards the spring, which was miraculously illuminated to guide her way. Conquered by its magic, she decided to settle in the area and founded the Deir el Reisseh Convent, where she provided education for children until the day she died. The area took on the Convent's name, becoming Deir el Mreisseh, then transforming colloquially into Ain el Mreisseh. Others claim however that the legendary nun actually died in the shipwreck, although her holy soul found its way to the freshwater spring and thereafter cured hundreds of their ailments. Beautiful as though the legend may be, historians tend to be more skeptical, claiming the name finds its origins from the fact that fishermen would use the spring's fresh water to clean their nets and thus acquired the habit of congregating in this area of Beirut. That is how the words ain, meaning spring, and marsa, which refers to a space used for accosting, came together to make up the neighborhood's current name.

2162 STEPS IN HAMRA BY OMAR MISMAR

*2162 Steps in Hamra* is an artist book that contains a series of experiments and performances conducted in Hamra street, where Omar Mismar tries to connect to the city. He becomes a reflection in the shops’ windows, a mannequin, a tourist, a prostitute, in an attempt to observe the street from different points of view.

This project is relevant to my research as it aims to capture the experience of a specific street in Beirut. By becoming someone or something else, and getting immersed in the street’s ambiance, one can thoroughly observe and grasp different facets of the same place. The process inspired me as I might do this work of immersion in different neighborhoods to capture their essence and reinterpret it in my publication. Moreover, the visual language is interesting and reflects the streets quite well: each aspect is explored in a certain way, which is also a source of inspiration.





JANA TRABOULSI

Jana Traboulsi is a Lebanese designer and illustrator. Her work's main focus is to create images that act as critical commentary on the socio-political struggles in Lebanon. Beirut is very present in her work, and she often mixes illustration and writing to convey her ideas.

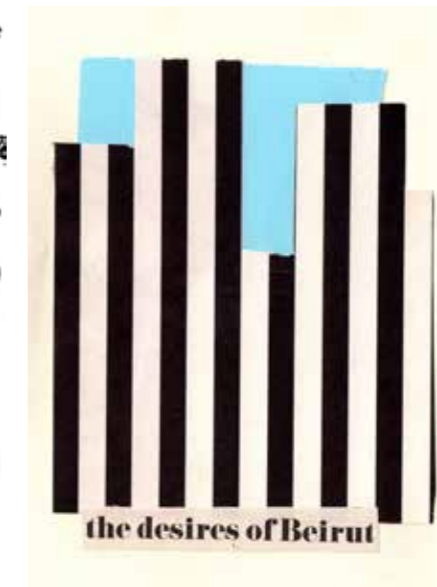
In an interview by MashaaCollective for ArteEast about reclaiming the commons in Beirut, Jana Traboulsi was asked what this city means to her, and she answered:

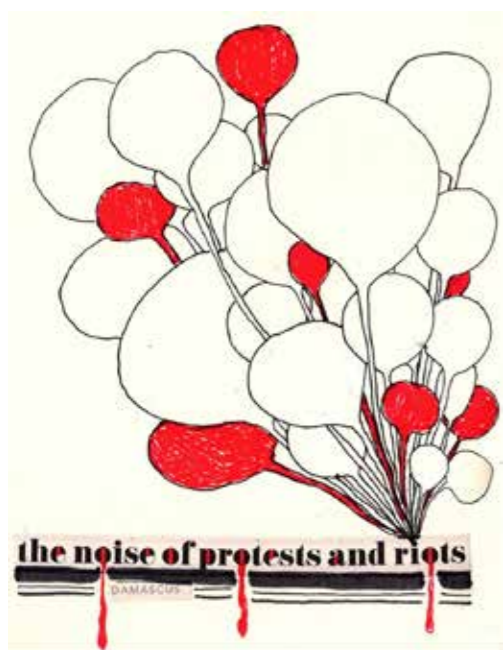
"My interest in the subject of Beirut started very spontaneously. The first drawing I published in Assafir was about the city and the war, and I noticed that both on the topical and visual level it was almost natural that I would talk and draw about this city, because it is so present. It is not a space we inhabit only; it is a space that is constantly thought about, criticized, mystified, and it naturally became a recurrent theme for me.

This drawing [see left image] has also a personal story. I spent a few years living in and out of Beirut, and every time I was far away I would feel this longing for it, and that I want to draw it. Whenever I was in Beirut then, I would feel like I was suffocating. And the weird thing is that I drew this illustration while I was away from Beirut – I think it was in 2006 – and I really wanted to draw something about my city. I think I managed to capture the relationship or feeling I have towards it. It was something totally spontaneous I had done in one of my sketchbooks, and only when it got printed and silkscreened for Mashaa's campaign did I realize how many people actually identified with this representation of Beirut. It was not drawn or thought of as part of a campaign or a comic; on the contrary, it comes from self-reflection, and only when people started wearing it or displaying it, did it take this dimension.

That's how I went on a quest looking for how to draw a single picture with a bit of text, that could express a situation or an idea. Most of the subjects I tackle are related to observations I have about the society and the city I live in, so this was the kind of investigation I was leading, which took shape finally in the format of a vignette – a picture with a sentence – that I would publish in the newspaper. I liked the medium itself – the newspaper – because it allows me to reach a wide public in a space where people are not necessarily expecting this kind of visual language."

It's insightful to look at the ways Jana Traboulsi found to express what she had to say about Beirut: she ended up finding herself in drawing, complemented with a bit of writing, and created pictures that people can relate to, which is something I should look into. How can I convey an idea, a feeling, a reflection through writing and visuals, and manage to touch people?

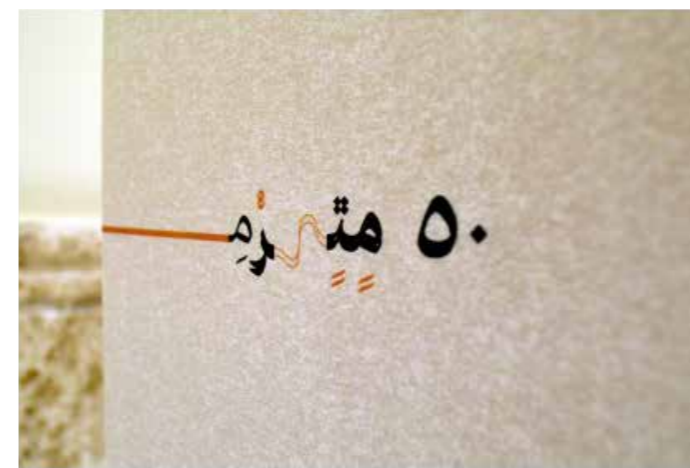




A JOURNEY FROM THE MEMORY TO THE SENSES BY RANIM AL HALAKY

A Journey from the Memory to the Senses is a book that explores storytelling and questions the way it can be shared with others. Through very expressive typography, complemented with photographs, she takes the reader through a cultural journey, with references to Syrian heritage. Her typographic interventions are coded and express things such as accent and tone, which are part of the storytelling experience, and add an extra layer to the reader's imagination.

Through this project, she raises different questions that are relevant to my topic, as it might have storytelling component: "How can this experience be shared and reached out to the audience? How can the listeners or readers get as close as possible the live experience of interacting with the storyteller, being my grandmother? What are the possible visual representations that could be used? What are the different languages involved and how can one translate from one language to another without losing any value of content and messages?"

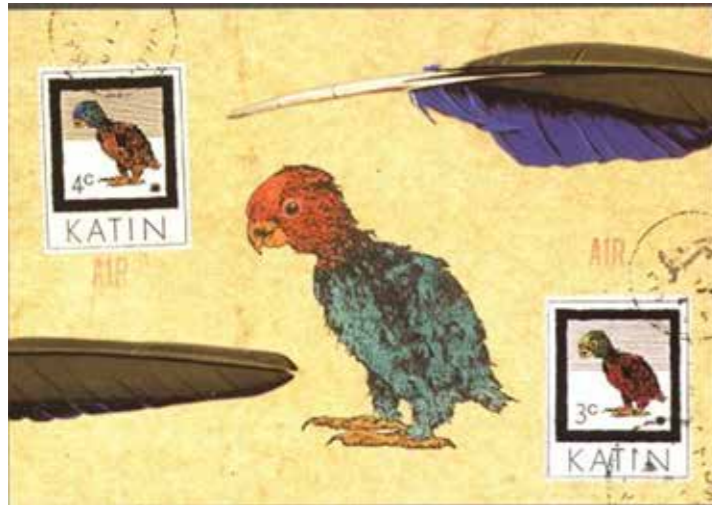




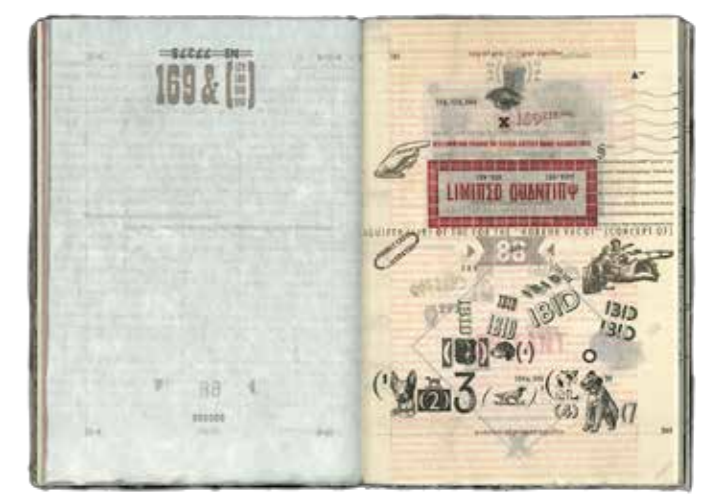
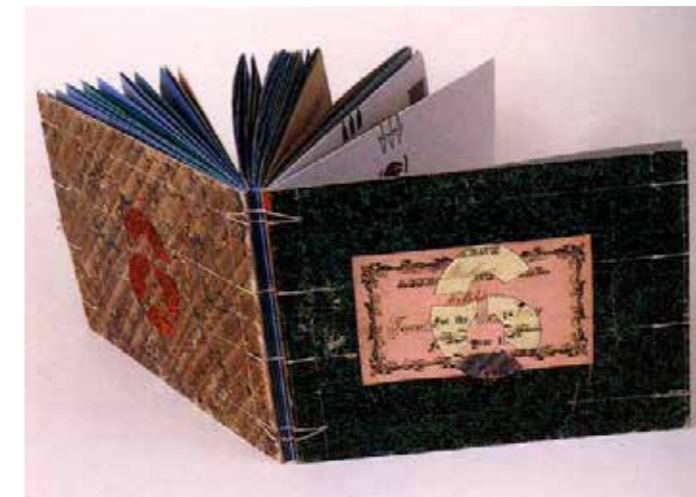
GRIFFIN AND SABINE: AN EXTRAORDINARY CORRESPONDENCE BY NICK BANTOCK

Griffin and Sabine: An Extraordinary Correspondence is an epistolary novel by Nick Bantock, published in 1991 by Chronicle Books in the USA and Raincoast Books in Canada. The books contain a series of removable letters and postcards between Griffin Moss and Sabine Strohem, two people who are in love but have never met.

The techniques Nick Bantock mixes are a good source of inspiration: collage, drawing, painting, stamps, and writing. It is also interesting to look at the storytelling tools he uses, and the way the visuals evolve with the narrative.



WALTER HAMADY



Through this research, I've come across different interpretations and ways of looking at Beirut. Some approach it through history and memory, some are more poetic and emotional, some are more socio-political such as activists. They use diverse mediums (illustration, photography, writing, collage) to translate their vision of Beirut. The research helped me raise certain questions about the way a relation to a city can be explored in a publication: **How can we move from a huge space, made out of concrete, to something as personal as a love letter, an ode to its beauty? Does the city almost become a person? What defines it, and what unifies its different and contrasting facets?**

## **ODE TO BEIRUT**

Ode to Beirut is a trilingual artist book that acts as a celebration of Beirut through a poetic interpretation of the city. It is an exploration and immersion in the experience Beirut offers, in its intensity and essence, a love letter to the city. The publication includes bits and pieces of texts, stories, poems, and lyrics that reflect a passion for Beirut. Each text is in the original language it was written in, not translated: Arabic, English or French. Some were written by known writers, poets and singers, others by friends of mine, others by myself. "Ode to Beirut" is a limited-edition book, that can be found in special bookstores that sell artists books, fanzines, diaries and all sorts of alternative publications.

## HOW IT STARTED

In the last couple of years, I developed a strong bond with Beirut. With time, my fascination for it grew bigger. In my endless walks and explorations, I found myself being constantly triggered by details, that I felt the need to express. In Spring 2019, as part of a Fanzine elective taught by Leila Musfy, I had the opportunity to experiment on this topic through writing and collage of different elements I collected from the streets (posters, flyers, wrappers...) as well as photographs. Creating a complete project, from the writing, to the visuals, to the binding, made me consider developing it further into a final year project. At that time, I was writing my final year project proposal, that was already linked to the city, but focused on the interactions and interventions on the public space. In summer, I decided to shift towards a more personal work about the city, that is what the project is today.



## CREATIVE PROCESS

Between September and December 2019, I spent a lot of time protesting on the streets. I gathered some film photographs, and some pieces of very spontaneous writing. Between December and January 2020, I started an immersive creative process, wandering for hours around the city, taking hundreds of pictures of buildings, ruins, architectural details, textures, colors, signs, calligraphy, graffiti, posters, people... I also started writing, often on the spot, trying to bring out the sensations in the most unfiltered way.



I found myself with a big number of images, and the idea of overlaps came naturally. Beirut is all about layers, on a concrete level; layers of architecture, posters, paint, and on a more conceptual level; layers of beauty and ugliness, hope and despair, that are constantly covered and uncovered, never really well defined. Each spread is a poem to the city: written, but also visual, describing, but also reimagining Beirut. During my walks, I wrote keywords about sensations I had, and I used them in the creation of my visuals: it directed my choice of image combinations, colors, mood. The collages reflect the chaotic atmosphere of Beirut, and explore the different faces it can take: the woman, the lover, the revolutionary... The visuals and the texts complement each other: they tell different stories but are associated on a theme basis.



## FORMAT AND NAVIGATION

Between September and December 2019, I spent a lot of time protesting on the streets. I gathered some film photographs, and some pieces of very spontaneous writing. Between December and January 2020, I started an immersive creative process, wandering for hours around the city, taking hundreds of pictures of buildings, ruins, architectural details, textures, colors, signs, calligraphy, graffiti, posters, people... I also started writing, often on the spot, trying to bring out the sensations in the most unfiltered way. I chose an A5 format because it is close to the size of a diary, which corresponds to what I am doing: create a personal, intimate book that reveals something raw about Beirut and those who love it. A book that is not meant to be displayed, but rather held between one's hands.

The book is divided in four chapters that start with a sentence that introduces the theme of the chapter in an implicit manner. The flow of texts and images is meant to be organic, not framed in rigid chapters, leaving the freedom to the reader to abide by the linear progression or not.

## SYSTEM

### English and French

Text: Tarzana Narrow Regular 11 pt

Title: Tarzana Wide Bold 11 pt

Author's name: Tarzana Wide Italic 11pt

Color: Black

### Arabic

Text: B Mitra Regular 11pt

Title: B Mitra Bold 12 pt

Author's name: B Mitra Regular 12 pt

Color: Black

The text's width can vary between 3 and 4 columns.

In all the languages, the text can be justified (right for Arabic, left for English and French) or not.

The images always touch one or more edges of the page, and they bleed from one page to the other of the spread. The spreads always have a colored texture as a background.

This system allows to have flexibility in terms of composition and type treatment, while still keeping a certain consistency throughout the book.

#### BEYROUTH Nadia Tuéni

Qu'elle soit **courtisane, érudite ou dévote**, péninsule **des bruits, des couleurs, et de l'or ville marchande et rose**, voguant comme une flotte, qui cherche à l'horizon la tendresse d'un port, elle est **mille fois morte, mille fois revécue**. Beyrouth des cent palais, et Béryte des pierres, où l'on vient de partout ériger ces statues, qui **font prier les hommes, et font hurler les guerres**. Ses femmes aux yeux de plages qui s'allument la nuit, et ses mendiants semblables à d'anciennes pythies.

#### عم بحكى بالسكوت ريس بيك

عم بحكى بالسكوت فى عالم بتدعى انى موت ائى  
خطير كبير صوتى على بيروت... عم بحكى بالسكوت  
فى عالم بتدعى انى موت ائى خطير كبير صوتى على،  
لائو الصوت اللى يطلع منى بدو يكسر حيطام، لائو  
زرعوا فيى كره وهل كره بعدو عطشان، لائو  
من وراهن عشنا طفوله بدون طفوله، لائو خلقنا  
وكبرنا وربينا بين الفيوله، لائو القلم اللى يكتب  
فى مرس مثل السكينه، اللى عم يتشك الورقه  
البيضة مثل ما شكوا فيى، لان المايكروفون تاغى  
ذو يكسر البساط، مش مثل مايكروفون المطرب  
اللى بحطو تحت الباط، واذا ايام بتمصخر صدقى.

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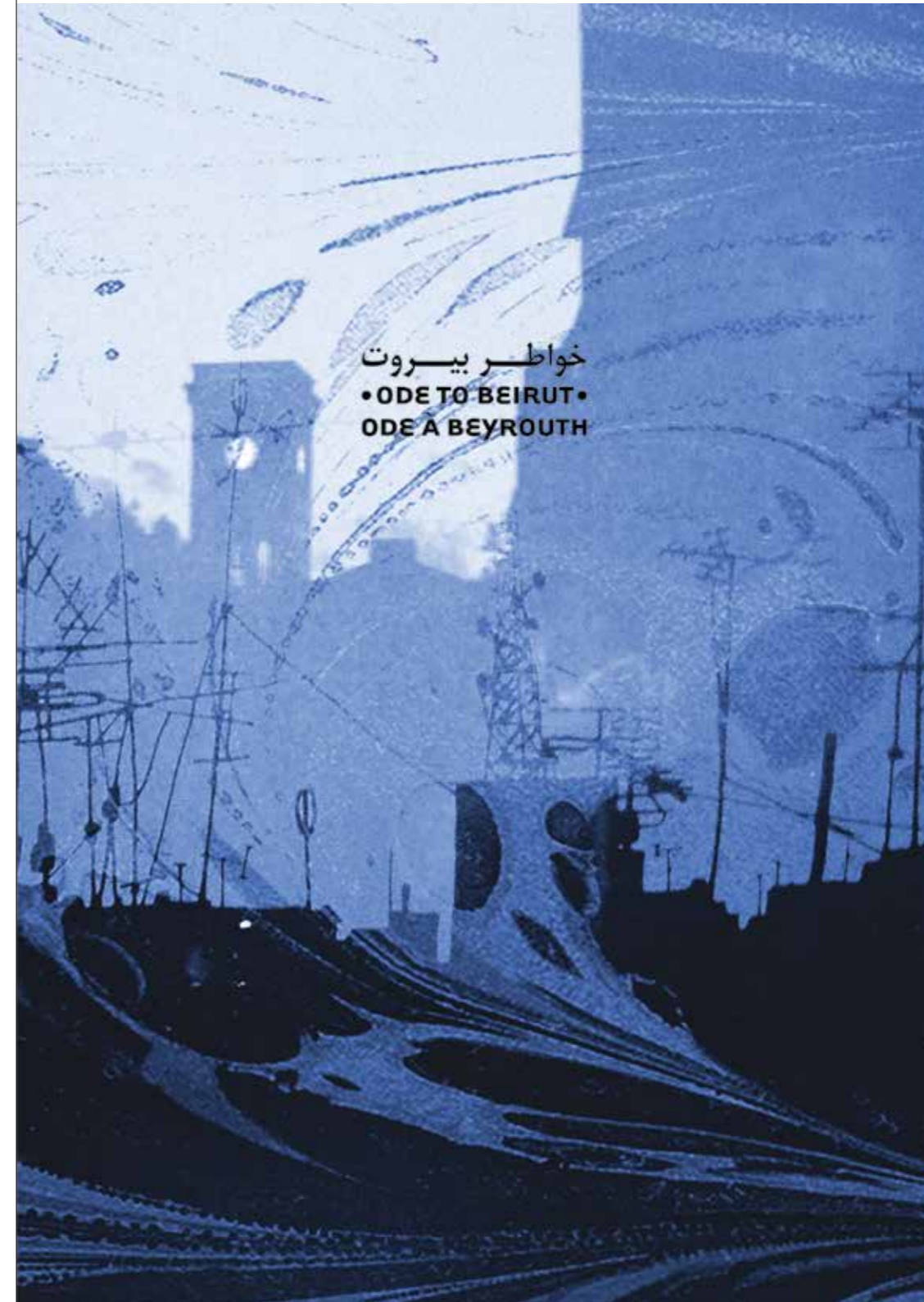
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I would like to end with the introduction of “Ode to Beirut”: In the past few months, Beirut, which has a thousand names, and many faces, has shown us new facets. Beirut the revolutionary, resplendent, dreamed of for a long time, fantasized, finally real, made of hope, strength, courage and resilience. But also, Beirut the confined, made of loneliness, growing questions, and silence punctuated by birdsong. In these moments of lockdown where we can only imagine her, dream her and hope that she will, once again, rise up from the blows struck at her, I allow myself, throughout these few stories, poems, and reflections, to offer you fragments of Beirut, a poetic journey through its streets that we all miss.

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## FLAT SPREADS



خواتر بیروت  
• ODE TO BEIRUT •  
ODE À BEYROUTH

کیارا فنشنتی زخیا  
Chiara Vincenti Zakhia



بيروت، التي لها ألف اسم، وألف وجه، قد أظهرت لنا، في الأشهر القليلة الماضية، جوانب جديدة. بيروت النائرة، المتألقة، التي لطالما حلمنا بها، وتخيّلناها، بيروت هذه غدت، أخيراً، حقيقيّة، مصنوعة من الرجاء، والقوة، والشجاعة والقدره على التكيف؛ ولكنّها أيضاً، بيروت المحصورة، المصنوعة من الوحدة، والتساؤلات المتزايدة، والصمت الذي يتخلله تعريد العصافير. في لحظات الحجر هذه، التي فيها لا يسعنا سوى أن نتصوّرنا، ونحلم بها، ونرجو لها أن تنهض، من جديد، من الضربات التي تعرّضت لها، أسمح لنفسي، من خلال هذه القصص، والقصائد، والتأملات القليلة، أن أقدم لكم شذرات من بيروت، رحله شعريّة في شوارعها التي جميعنا نفتقدها.

In the past few months, Beirut, which has a thousand names, and many faces, has shown us new facets. Beirut the revolutionary, resplendent, dreamed of for a long time, fantasized, finally real, made of hope, strength, courage and resilience. But also, Beirut the confined, made of loneliness, growing questions, and silence sometimes punctuated by birdsong. In these moments of lockdown where we can only imagine her, dream of her and hope that she will, once again, rise up from the blows struck at her, I allow myself, throughout these few stories, poems, and reflections, to offer you fragments of Beirut, a poetic walk through its streets that we all miss.

Dans les derniers mois, Beyrouth, qui porte mille noms, et de nombreux visages, nous a montré de nouvelles facettes. Beyrouth la révolutionnaire, resplendissante, longtemps rêvée, fantasmée, enfin réelle, faite d'espoir, de force, de courage, et de résilience. Mais aussi, Beyrouth la confinée, faite de solitude, de questionnements grandissants, et de silence ponctué de chants d'oiseaux. En ces moments de confinement où on ne peut que l'imaginer, la rêver et espérer qu'elle se relève encore une fois des coups qui lui sont sans cesse portés, je me permets, à travers ces quelques histoires, poèmes et réflexions, de vous offrir des fragments de Beyrouth, une promenade poétique à travers ses rues qui nous manquent.



أقدم أحرّ شكرى ل: ليلي مصفى، لأنها أمنت بي، وقَدّمت لي الدعم الدائم، كما أشكر عائلتي، من أجل حبهم لي، وتحملهم لتقلبات مزاجي، ولكونهم متواجدين دائمًا من أجلي في أي ظرف كان. وأخيرًا، أشكر الغريز، من أجل الأوقات الجميلة التي أمضيها سوّيه في السنوات الأربع المنصرمة.

My warmest thanks to: Leila Musfy, for believing in me, and for the constant support. My family, for their love, for putting up with my mood swings, and for being there for me no matter what. The Graphies, for the beautiful moments we shared in the last four years.

Mes remerciements les plus chaleureux à: Leila Musfy, pour avoir cru en moi, et pour le soutien constant. Ma famille, pour leur amour, pour avoir supporté mes sautes d'humeur, et pour avoir été là pour moi malgré tout. Les Graphies, pour les beaux moments que nous avons partagés ces quatre dernières années.

● قوم نحرّق هالمدينه ونعمر واحده أشرف قوم ننسى هالزمان ونحلم زمن ألطف مشروع ليلي ●

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**SO LONG BEIRUT**

*Pierre de Rougé*

"I'm leaving Lebanon on the 10th". Each of these words feels heavier every time I say them. Yet there is no way around it, for now. I'm leaving you, Beirut. It is probably the hardest decision I've had to make, as you are struggling with a revolution which is both daunting and absolutely soul shaking to be a part of. But rest assured, I will be back.

**I'm leaving while you and the rest of Lebanon are in the midst of an uprising against a political class so utterly disconnected from reality that they still desperately cling on to their golden castles. I'm leaving as fathers are ending their life because they aren't able to feed their family anymore, and the head of the army is foreseeing "hunger protests" within a couple of months. I'm leaving as my friends, my second family, are about to undergo striking changes in their way of life, and not for the better. I'm leaving as everyone pretty much agree that the situation is about to get frighteningly worse before it can improve.**

Since the beginning of the Thawra (revolution), I have witnessed some of the most beautiful human interactions I could have dreamed of. I also saw what brainwashing can do to some people unfortunate enough to have been born in the wrong place at the wrong time. With my friends and loved ones here, I have been a tiny part of what is by far the biggest historical event I ever lived through. A people rising up without using violent means for the most part. A political class shivering in fear, making fools of themselves and showing their true nature. A considerable part of the population that has now understood that they had more in common with their neighbors than with their leaders.

**I truly believe that within a few years the country will be back on the right track, and I fully intend to do everything I can to be a part of what will happen then. In the meantime, Beirut, I shall be away from you, in my native country, longing for the day we'll meet again while starting a new temporary chapter of my life.**

I'm painfully aware of how lucky I am to be able to make these decisions, and cannot be thankful enough for the life lessons I've learned with you. Till next time, Beirut.

## عم بحكى بالسكوت

ريس بيكا

عم بحكى بالسكوت فى عالم بتدعى انى موت انى  
خطير كبير صوتى عالى بيبيروت... عم بحكى بالسكوت  
فى عالم بتدعى انى موت انى خطير كبير صوتى عالى،  
لانو الصوت اللى يطلع منى يذو يكسر حيطام، لانو  
زرعوا فينى كره وهيل كره بعدو عطشان، لانو  
من وراهن عشنا طفوله بدون طفوله، لانو خلقنا  
وكبرنا وربينا بين الفيوله، لانو القلم اللى يكتب  
فى مزين مثل السكينه، اللى عم بتشك الورقه  
البيضة مثل ما تسكوا فينى، لان المايكروفون تاغى  
ذو يكسر البساط، مش مثل مايكروفون المطرب  
اللى يحطو تحت البساط، وادا ايام يتمصخر صدقنى  
عشان ما ابكى، تما انزل باشوارع بفضل اكتب واحكى،  
لان كل كلمه باكتبها مثل الرصاصه بسقها، وداغك  
ما يطبقها مفروض تحسك بالذنب، لان تعرف  
الحقيقه مش مكتوبه بالمقال، لانو بحكى الصراحه،  
الصراحه اللى ما تنتقال، لانو الحير اللى بينزل منى  
هو الدم تبع بيروت، فهمت ليه بحكى لوحدى فهمت  
ليه بحكى بالسكوت. عم بحكى بالسكوت فى عالم  
بتدعى انى موت، انى خطير كبير صوتى عالى بيروت.

عم بحكى بالسكوت فى عالم بتدعى انى موت انى  
خطير كبير صوتى عالى... شوفنى بس تاخكى معن  
عروف انى بسق البسم، بس تيجوبو يندونى حبرى  
ببمزل مثل الدم، خلينى وضح الامور وفشرك بشكل  
عام، انو بلعتهم الوسخه ايه بحياتى ما بتضم، للسكوت  
ما فى غيرن بيدعو انى موت، لو انا ما كنت موجود  
قولى اذيه بتكون مسوطا، ثياب الجبل الجديد ما عدن  
راى مش مظلوت، اتو خلتوهم يضعبو صبغيتو عليهم  
الظروف، لانو بيحكى كتير بس كل حكيم بلا  
طعمه، لانو من السفره طلعلنا القسقى والقضامه،  
ما فى نكله بالجيبه بفتش حتى تحت البطانه،  
الشعوب اللى جوعانه ما بتحكى بس بتعانى، لانو  
اللى معو يعيش عم يعيش بالانانيه، لانو الشعب  
مش متفق مع انا ذات العقليه، كل يوم يجربو  
يسكتونى صرتو كتار عم تسمعونى، وبعدكم  
كلكن بتسألونى ليه. عم بحكى بالسكوت فى عالم  
بتدعى انى موت، انى خطير كبير صوتى عالى بيروت.  
ريس بك من بيروت، بالسكوت بالسكوت بالسكوت  
بالسكوت بالسكوت بالسكوت، عم بحكى بالسكوت.





### بالشارع هاني السواح الدرويش

بدو المدينة غزوا الشوارع عازين في خيم،  
فلا تسألني عشيرتي وين مضربا. هالرقبه اشطبا متل  
بايرو «التجمه» بتضوي لما يقطعوا الكهريا، ما  
بيشطلها غير اللي ركبا. أنا بتتمى للمناح اللي يحافظوا  
على ضبط أعضاين وقت زعرائك بتنزل لتجربا، قلوب  
أنصف من حسابي بالينك، وعقول بتنهض بالبلد  
لهيك كان بدك تغربا. بلعتونا بسورية بس اخواتي  
بكل البلاد عم يقوموا لتصير كل البلاد أوطان...  
عم تفهم؟ أعمى القلب تابع أعمى، والتابع شبيخ،  
والشبيخ خاروف لو طار... عم تفهم؟ فلا تستصعبوا  
طريق الحق لأنه ما عاد تربط، عطريق الحق صرنا  
كتار... كتار عم تفهم؟ وأنا بيتي هنيك، تحت،  
هنيك بالشارع، تحت مجلس العرصات بالشارع،  
جوا التكتك ببغداد بالشارع، بخص بالشارع، بالقاهرة  
بماسبيرو بالشارع، وأنا بيتي هنيك، تحت، هنيك  
بالشارع، تحت مجلس العرصات بالشارع، جوا التكتك  
ببغداد بالشارع، بالسودان بالشام بخص، بالشارع.  
قلبي مين أقوى، الطايفه ولا الجوع؟ طرق  
طايفه أو طريق مقطوع؟ نشوه السكره ولا الصوت  
المسموع؟ ضرب كفوف... ستان ثابتة والرئيس مخلوع.  
هي لساحه التحرير وشهدا العراق وحسين العطار، لني  
تبتوا بالساحات. هي ثوره على الذات، عالعرصات،  
هي مو ثوره لا ثورات. هي للي ماتوا قبل لنقلن  
تعين ما مات. وهي صفحه جديده وهي كل ما يقولوا  
الرقص مانه ثوره رقصه جديده هي، ثوره عالبارانويا،  
ثوره عالانكرايتي، نفس لناسي اللي أنردتلها الروح شوي.  
وهي رقصه جديده صفحه جديده هي كل ما يقولوا  
الرقص مانه ثوره رقصه جديده هي... لو ما يندق عالطناجر.  
أنا طنجره الحى. هنيك، تحت، بالشارع، تحت  
مجلس العرصات بالشارع، جوا التكتك ببغداد بالشارع،  
بخص بالشارع، بالقاهرة، بماسبيرو بالشارع، بيتي تحت،

**TU HABITES**  
Chiara Zakhia

Tu habites les volets bleus et verts, les triples arcades, les balcons en fer forgé, les toits en tuiles rouges, les vieilles pierres, et **la nostalgie d'un temps qui n'est plus**. Tu habites les tours immenses, les immeubles hors de prix, les chantiers, et **l'oubli d'un temps qui n'est plus**.

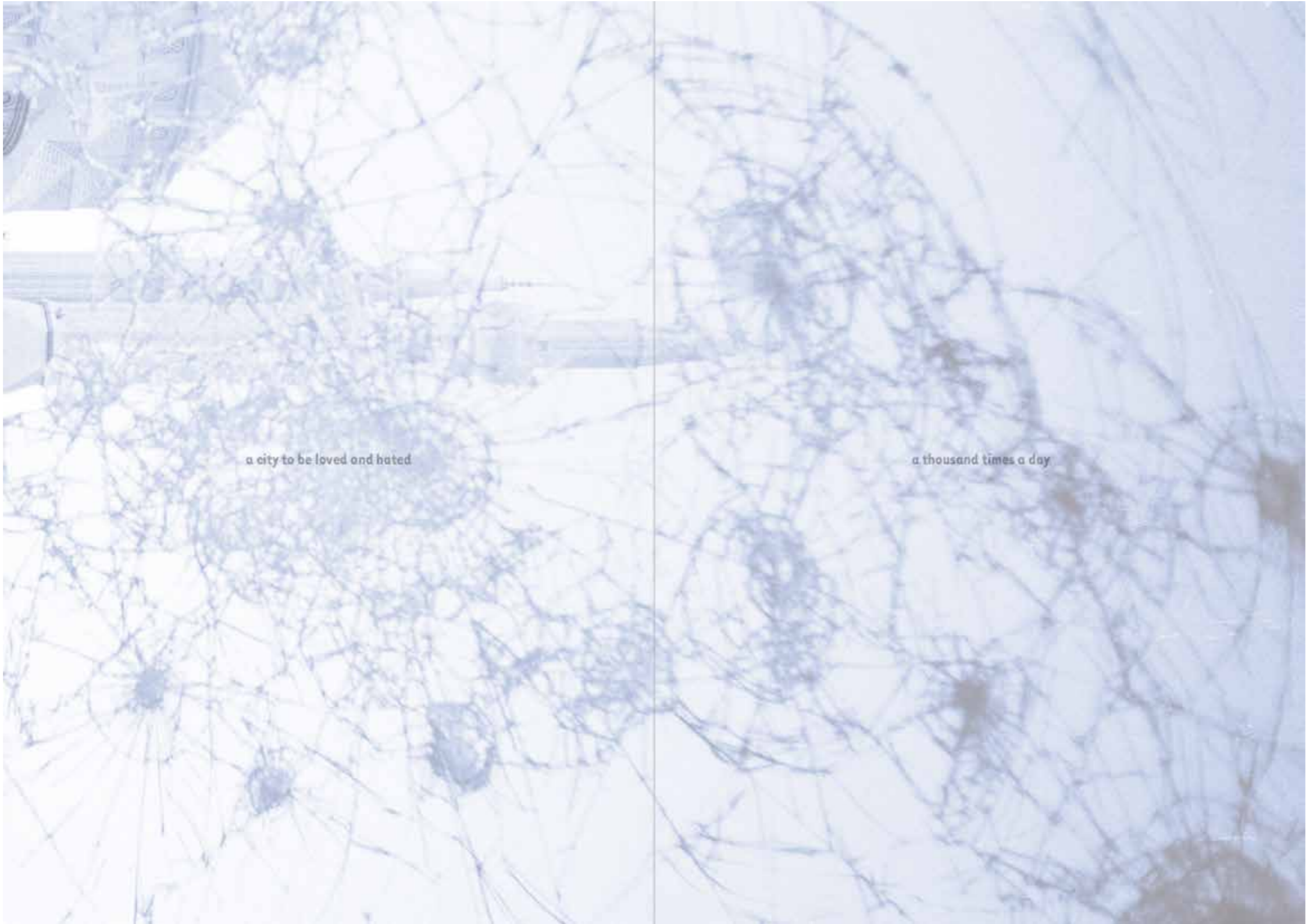
Tu habites les couleurs de toutes les heures du jour et de la nuit. Tu habites les fils électriques entremêlés qui défient la gravité. Tu habites **le paradoxe, le changement, et les contradictions**. Tu habites **l'éphémère**. Tu habites tellement de langues que parfois tu ne sais plus parler.

Tu habites **le bruit et le chaos**, mais aussi **l'harmonie et la douceur**. Tu habites un visage défiguré, mais magnifique. Tu habites le corps d'une femme et la passion brûlante d'une amante. Tu habites parfois l'amour, parfois la haine, et souvent les deux en même temps. Tu habites **le rêve, la réalité, et tous les instants où ils se croisent**.

Tu habites la corruption, la violence, l'injustice, la saleté, mais surtout la rue qui se soulève contre ça, et **le cri silencieux d'un peuple qui en a assez**.

Tu habites un labyrinthe, et la poésie urbaine. Tu habites **le désespoir, mais aussi le courage, la résilience, et l'espoir**. Tu habites tout ce qui est vivant, et tentes de faire vivre tout ce qui ne l'est pas. **Et tant d'autres choses encore**.

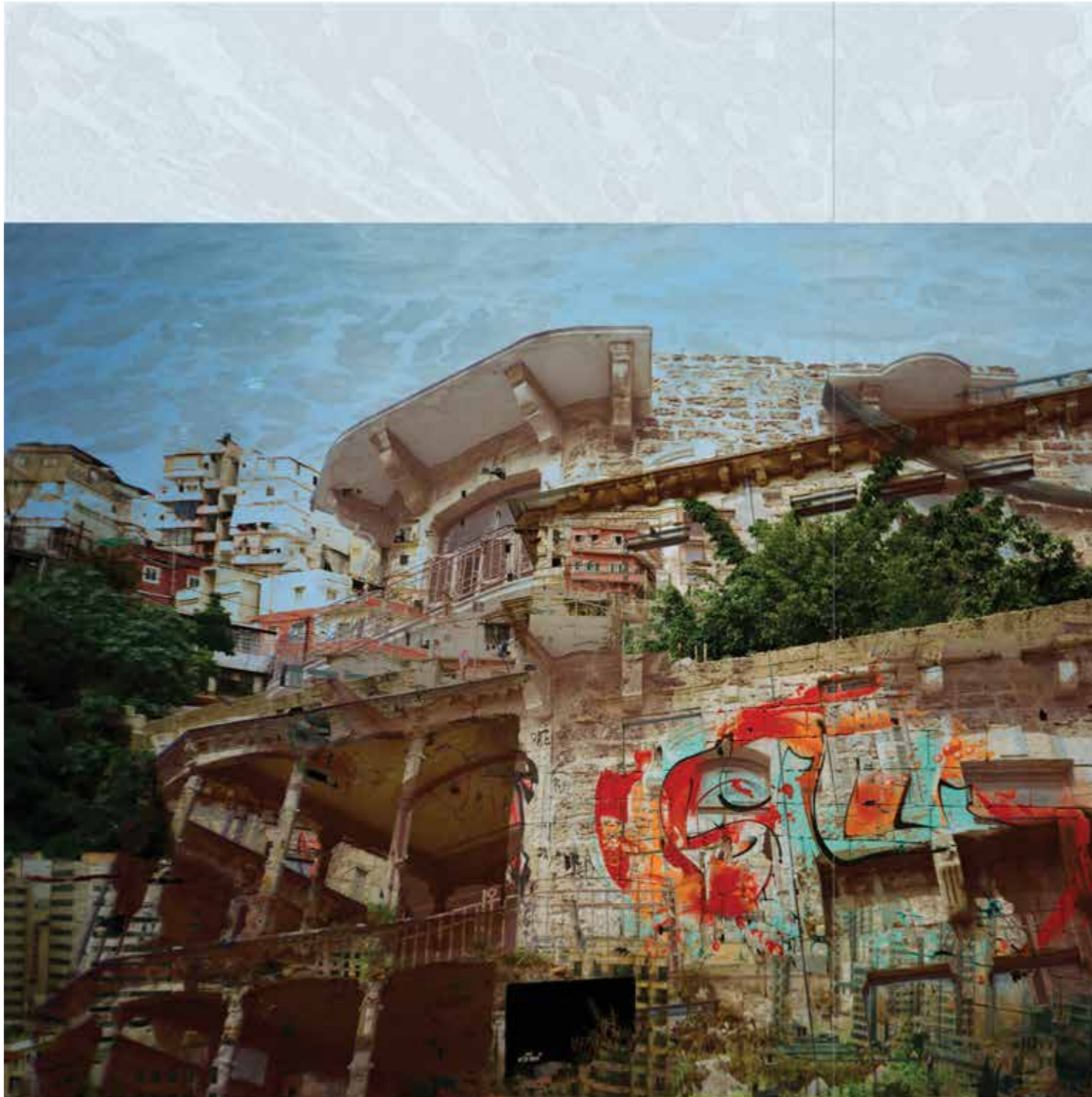




a city to be loved and hated

a thousand times a day





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## BEYROUTH

Nadia Tuéni

Qu'elle soit **courtisane, érudite ou dévote**, péninsule **des bruits, des couleurs, et de l'or ville marchande et rose**, voguant comme une flotte, qui cherche à l'horizon la tendresse d'un port, elle est **mille fois morte, mille fois revécue**. Beyrouth des cent palais, et Béryte des pierres, où l'on vient de partout ériger ces statues, qui **font prier les hommes, et font hurler les guerres**. Ses femmes aux yeux de plages qui s'allument la nuit, et ses mendiants semblables à d'anciennes pythies.

À Beyrouth chaque idée habite une maison, À Beyrouth chaque mot est une ostentation. À Beyrouth l'on décharge **pensées et caravanes, fibustiers de l'esprit, prêtresses ou bien sultanes**. Qu'elle soit **religieuse**, ou qu'elle soit **sorcière**, ou qu'elle soit les deux, ou qu'elle soit **charnière**, du portail de la mer ou des grilles du levant, Qu'elle soit **adorée** ou qu'elle soit **maudite**, qu'elle soit **sanguinaire**, ou qu'elle soit d'**eau bénite**, Qu'elle soit **innocente**, ou qu'elle soit **meurtrière**, en étant **phénicienne, arabe ou roturière**, en étant **levantine** aux multiples vertiges, comme ces **fleurs étranges fragiles** sur leurs tiges, Beyrouth est en Orient le **dernier sanctuaire**, où l'homme peut toujours s'**habiller de lumière**.

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قصه حب  
محمد مشنوق

لا أدري كم تجل بيروت مساحه في القلب والوجدان. ولا أدري كم هو تعلقى بمدينتي، بهوانتها، بناستها، بعمارتها، بشوارعها، بأزقتها، بأسراب الحمام فوقها، بابتسامات العجائز في أحيائها، بأينيتها العتيقه، بألوانها الحمراء، الصفراء، وبعض الاخضر، وكثير من أزرق سمانها.

لا أعالي إذا قلت إن نضى بيروت يرافق كل أحاسيسي، فلا أملك عند مقارنه مدينتي مع أي مكان في الدنيا من رمي العقل والتعقل وكل المقاربات العلميه، فأخذ إلى عواطفى، أتشقق منها المزيد من العشق ترفدني كلها بما يعزز حجتى وما يساعدي على القول: هذى مدينتي.

ومنذ طقولتي نضج بي بيروت، وكان أول ما قمت به عندما هداني والذي أله تصوير صغيره هو التقاط صور الأحياء والمنازل القديمه وجوانب من الشاطئ والكثير من صخره الروشه التي كنت اعتبرها رمز بيروت.

وكبرت، وكبرت معي المدينه، وكنت كلما أصابها صميم شعرت بانتي لا أقوى على فراقها فكنت أتصق بها... من الداخل أحاول أن أعوض لها بعض الحنان، وأحاول أن ألبس بعض الجراح، حتى توحدت مشاعري وتحولت إلى علاقته ذاتيه تملكينه، وأصبحت مع الوقت صاحب المدينه مع كل ما في هذا التعبير من أذعاء.





## AN ODE TO BEIRUT

Hashim Sarkis

I speak about Beirut with confidence, even if I'm mistaken, even under the most expert scrutiny, I can still say what I say, because I am from Beirut. It is as if Beirut speaks through me, absolving me from my mistakes. **I speak as an amateur, which, in the original sense of the word, means lover. I speak with all the biases, prejudices and desires of a lover.** I would've liked to bring some pictures but I do not think pictures speak to the beauty of Beirut. I know you are here to make the MENA's cities smarter, less congested, more entrepreneurial, more equitable, more resilient, and hopefully more beautiful as well. **But I ask you please to make sure that you do not take away those blemishes, those beauty spots that make Beirut, Beirut. And that make me love Beirut. I tell you, Beirut has many lovers.**

"Built on a rocky promontory on the east of the Mediterranean, under the shadow of Mount Lebanon, it projects out onto the sea, as a balcony onto the world." These are not my words, but those of another more poetic lover. It has strived on the myth, that it has been destroyed seven times and seven times rebuilt itself. An earthquake during the Roman era, plagues, famines and civil wars. **This image almost helps justify why Beirut is chaotic, almost always living on the brink and almost always consuming itself to the ends of hedonism because it is fated to destroy itself only to rebuild itself.** The self-consumption, this image of Beirut, if best captured by Egyptian novelist Sonallah Ibrahim, who wrote an amazing portrait of the city, called, appropriately, "Beirut, Beirut". **Now, you will say, wake up. Spare us your foolish idolatry love. Beirut is ugly. Beirut is dirty, rundown, corrupt, and unjust to its citizens. We need to fix it. True, we do. But I urge you to fix it from within, by learning how it could fix itself, how it has fixed itself, for some parts, and to make the most out of the qualities that make Beirut, Beirut.**

## ENTRE LE JOUR ET LA NUIT

Chiara Zakhia

**Mes pas m'ont menée dans une rue familière, un lieu qui me ressemble.** C'est une ruelle discrète, une parallèle entre deux rues plus actives. Elle surplombe la ville. **Je ne savais pas si je voulais commencer par le jour ou la nuit, alors j'ai décidé d'arpenter cette rue à l'heure où les deux se croisent, à cette heure magique où le ciel s'embrase et le soleil lance un dernier regard brûlant à tout ce qui l'entoure.**

À droite, du haut des escaliers, je vois la ville qui, tel un miroir, prend les teintes rose-orangées du ciel. **Elle s'étend jusqu'à la mer, que le soleil frôle déjà et ne va pas tarder à rejoindre.** Cette vision est entrecoupée par les bâtiments qui me cachent la vue quand je marche.

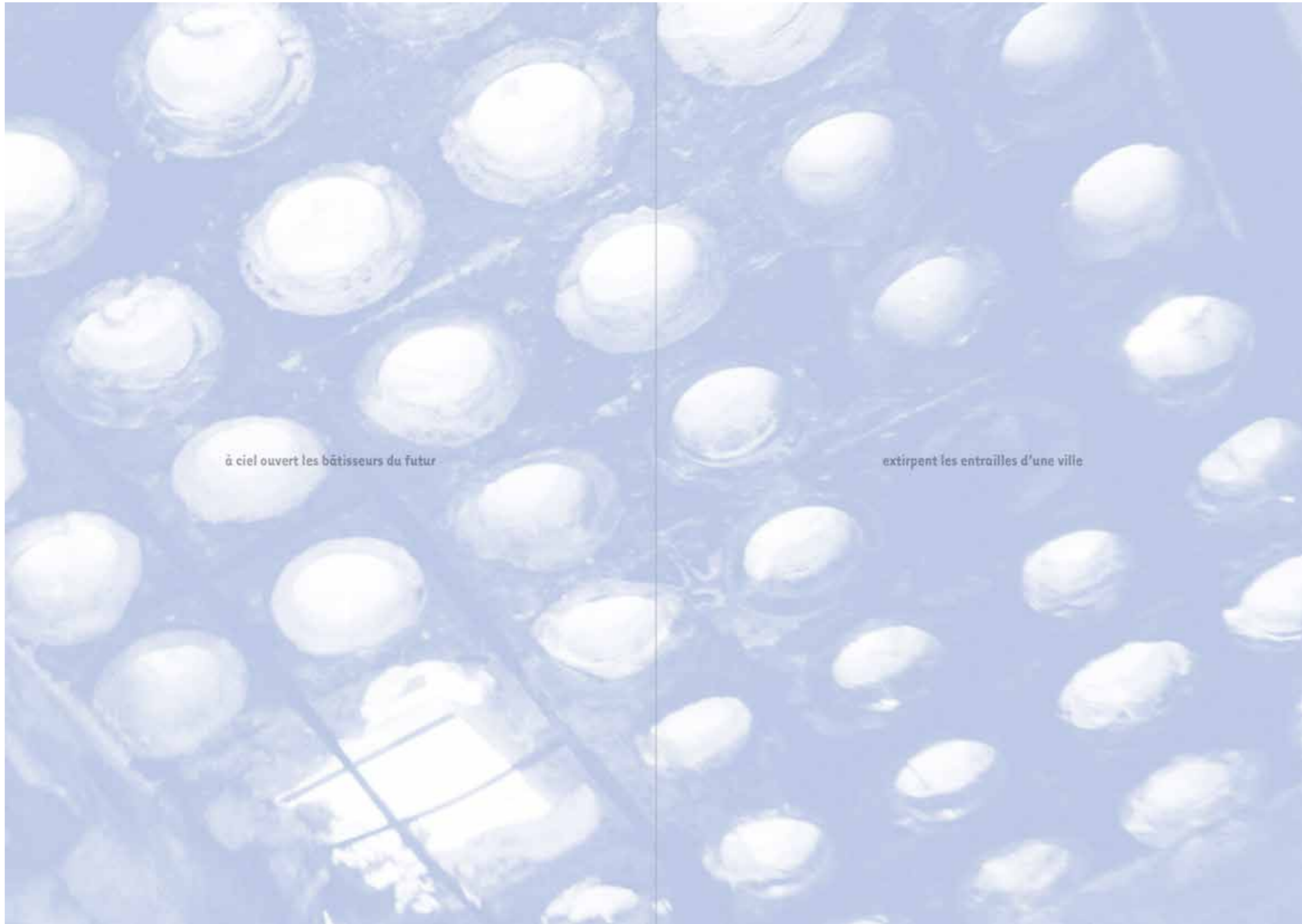
À gauche, je vois la lumière chaude sur les façades des immeubles, les volets bleus, les volets verts, et les rideaux rayés que le soleil caresse une dernière fois. **Je croise quelques regards de gens aux balcons ou aux fenêtres. Ils sont toujours plus beaux à cette heure-ci, parce que toute les couleurs sont plus vivantes.**

Tout semble figé pendant un moment, et puis soudain, quand le soleil termine ses au revoir, la nuit enveloppe la ville à une vitesse désarmante. **Un autre type de lumière prend le relai: la ville devient tâches lumineuses.** Les fenêtres s'allument, et je capture quelques instants de vies.

Comme il devient plus difficile de voir, c'est mon ouïe qui se réveille. **Tout devient petit à petit plus silencieux, plus doux.** C'est plus simple d'identifier les sons quand un lieu est calme. J'entends la ville qui gronde au loin, et dans la ruelle, quelques bruits de cuisine, de télé, des voix étouffées. **Je ferme les yeux et je respire profondément la nuit, qui dans cette rue a l'odeur du jasmin.**

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### POÉSIE URBAINE

Chiara Zakhia

**Beyrouth a quelque chose de très humain, de très vivant.** Peut-être que cela vient de ses contrastes, du paradoxe qu'elle incarne, et qui, d'une certaine manière, ressemble à la nature humaine, contradictoire, versatile.

Ses visages sont multiples. Ses rues portent son histoire tourmentée à nu, sur ses murs, alternant les couches de laideur et de beauté. Laideur d'une reconstruction, ou plutôt une 'déconstruction', violente, méthodique, progressive, de son patrimoine, une déconstruction qui arrache son visage d'antan pour le remplacer par le masque froid du béton et de la ferraille. Beauté d'un visage authentique qui se laisse mourir à la vitesse tourbillonnante qui caractérise cette ville.

**Et pourtant Beyrouth subsiste, son essence ne pourra jamais s'éteindre complètement.** Elle existe dans ses petites rues secrètes que l'on savoure comme des îlots de paix provisoire, elle existe dans ses couleurs vives, dans ses arômes chaleureux, dans sa cacophonie rassurante, elle existe dans les histoires de ceux qui l'aiment encore.

Elle est peuplée d'innombrables rêves oubliés, qui n'attendent que des rêveurs pour leur redonner vie. **On la consume un peu plus à chaque instant, on oscille constamment entre haine et amour pour elle.**

Se perdre dans le dédale chaotique des rues de Beyrouth. Capturer des fragments de la ville. Se laisser transporter par son intensité et sa beauté. S'émerveiller sans cesse de ses contrastes. **Révéler la poésie latente de la ville.**

## IVRE DE VILLE

Chiara Zakhia

J'arrive essoufflée en haut des escaliers. Le silence de la rue contraste avec le rap craché dans les enceintes que j'entendais encore il y a quelques minutes. Ce soir j'ai pris bien plus qu'un verre, et pourtant je me sens plus ivre de musique que d'alcool. **Mon cœur cogne dans ma poitrine, j'ai l'impression que toute la rue l'entend.** Je me retourne et regarde vers le bas des escaliers. Les lumières sont floues, et les sons se perdent au loin. **Je lève les yeux vers le ciel. Les étoiles sont invisibles, mais je sais qu'elles sont là alors je ferme les yeux et je les imagine.** Je commence à marcher. Il fait froid. Le vent mordant contraste avec la chaleur de l'alcool dont je suis imprégnée, et provoque une douce brûlure sur mon visage.

Le silence est brisé par mes pas qui frappent l'asphalte en rythme. Je suis seule dans la rue. **Sentiment de puissance, sentiment brut, enivrant, que de sentir que la rue est à moi.** Je ne discerne pas grand-chose, je me sens comme happée par l'obscurité. **Les détails se perdent, il n'y a que les ombres qui sont tranchantes. Il n'y a qu'un seul lampadaire allumé, dont la lumière jaune se brise dans chaque goutte de pluie fine qui tombe sur la ville.** Je passe devant deux bâtiments en ruine : l'un dont il ne reste que la façade, et l'autre dont il ne reste qu'un mur interne, avec des étagères. À chaque fois que je passe par cette rue, je regarde les étagères avec curiosité : il y a une rotation permanente d'objets. Des bières vides, des bocaux, des chaussures, une bombe de peinture. **On dirait une sorte d'échange mystérieux et incompréhensible, qui se fait toujours à l'abri des regards. Je ne cesse de découvrir des détails. Les villes sont infinies.**



## يا ست الدنيا يا بيروت نزار قباني

يا ست الدنيا يا بيروت، من باع أسوارك المشغولة بالياقوت؟  
من صاد خاتمك السحري، وقصص صفايرك الذهبية؟ من  
ذبح الفرح النائم في عينيك الخضراوين؟ من شطب  
وجهك بالسكين، وألقى ماء النار على شفقتك الراضية؟  
من سخم ماء البحر، ورش الحقد على الشيطان الوردية؟  
ها نحن أتينا... معتذرين...  
ومعتريين، أنا أطلقنا النار  
عليك بروح قبليه، فقتلنا  
امرأة... كانت تدعى (الحرية).

ماذا نتكلم يا بيروت، وفي عينيك خلاصة حزن  
البشريه، وعلى يهديك المحترقين... رماد الحرب  
الأهليه، ماذا نتكلم يا مروحة الصيف، ويا وردته  
الجوريه؟ من كان يفكر أن نلتاق، يا بيروت، وأنت  
خراب؟ من كان يفكر أن تنمو للوردة آلاف الأتياب؟  
من كان يفكر أن العين تقاتل في يوم ضد الأهداب؟

ماذا نتكلم يا لؤلؤتي؟ يا  
سنبليتي... يا أقلامتي... يا  
أحلامتي، يا أوراقتي الشعريه،  
من أين أتتك القسوة يا  
بيروت، وكنت برقه جوريه؟

لا أفهم كيف انقلب العصفور الدوري، لقطه ليل  
وحشيه، لا أفهم أبدا يا بيروت، لا أفهم كيف نسيت  
الله، وعدت لعصر الوثنيه، قومي من تحت الموج الأزرق،  
يا عشتار، قومي كقصيده ورد، أو قومي كقصيده نار،  
لا يوجد قلبك شيء... بعدك شيء... مثلك شيء،  
أنت خلاصات الأعمار، يا حقل اللؤلؤ، يا ميناء العشق،  
ويا طاووس الماء، قومي من أجل الحب، ومن أجل  
الشعراء، قومي من أجل الخبز، ومن أجل الفقراء،  
الحب يريدك... يا أحلى الملكات، والرب يريدك، يا  
أحلى الملكات، ها أنت دفعت ضربه حينك مثل  
جميع الحسنات، ودفعت الجزيه عن كل الكلمات.

قومي من نومك، يا  
سلطانة، يا نواره، يا قنديلا  
مشتعلا في القلب قومي  
كي يبقى العالم يا بيروت،  
ونبقى نحن، ويبقى الحب.

قومي، يا أحلى لؤلؤه أهياها البحر، الآن عرفنا  
ما معنى، أن تقتل عصفورا في الفجر، الآن عرفنا  
ما معنى، أن ندلق فوق سماء الصيف زجاجه  
حبر، الآن عرفنا، أننا كنا ضد الله، وضد الشعر.







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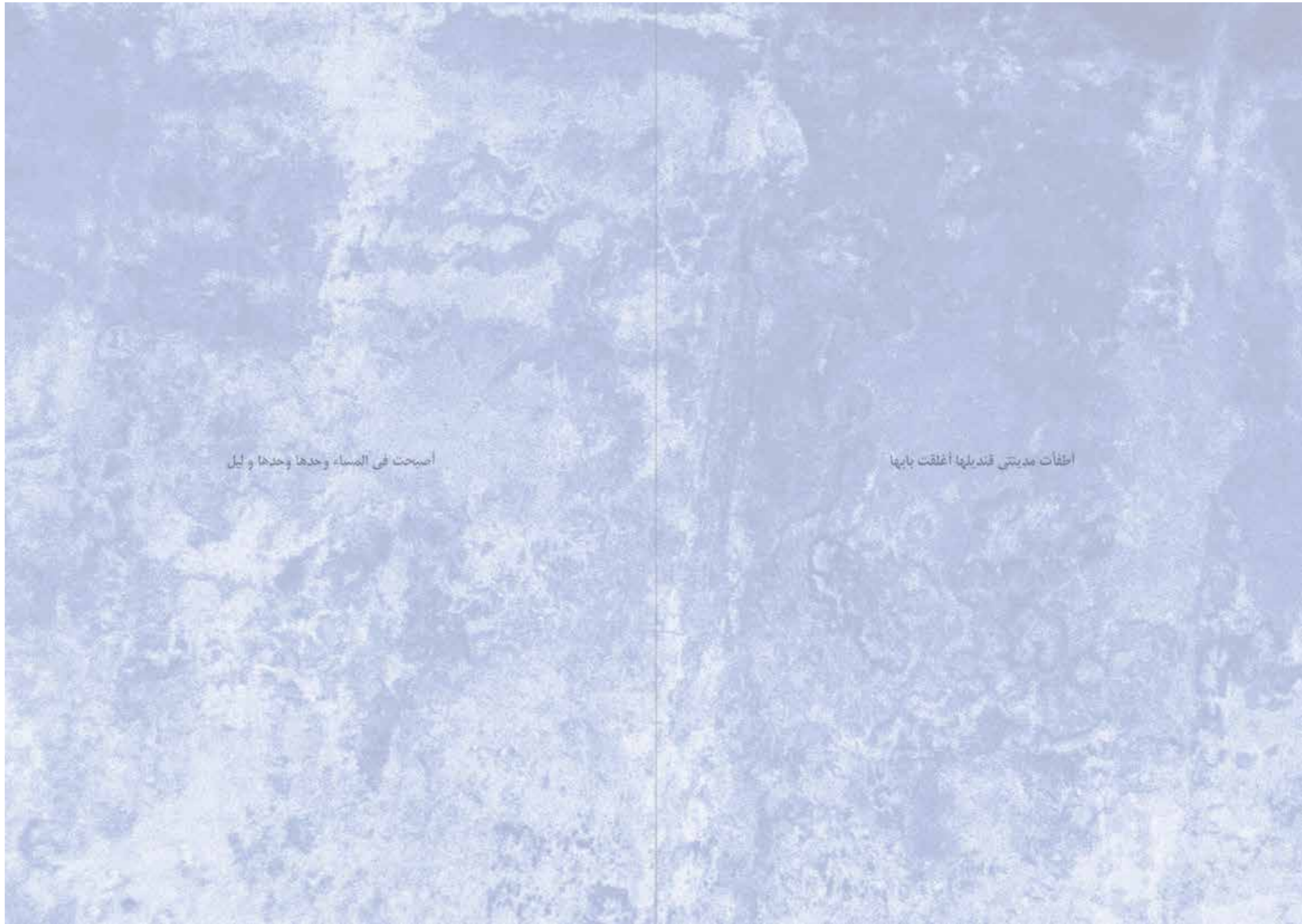
### BEYROUTH BY DAY

Tania H. Mehanna

Sometimes I do not recognize my city. And sometimes at the corner of a street, in someone's face, I stumble on thee, Beirut, so generous and unique. Sweet and bitter Beirut. **Many of us entertain a love-hate relationship with this city. I love you, I hate leaving, I'm coming back.** There are so many things to be said about Beirut. But I'm tired of myths and clichés, tired of nodding agreeably when spoken to of the phoenix, of the city that is reborn from its ashes. **I want my city to be saved. I no longer wish for it to die and be reborn. I no longer wish to see it labeled, walled in by harmful denominations.**

Living in Beirut isn't enough. You have to live Beirut, to walk its streets, travel its highways, speak to its inhabitants, remember its history, hold on to what is left of it in your arms and shed light on its monuments, bring out its soul. **In Arabic, the word for neighborhood is hay, and hay also means alive. The neighborhoods of Beirut are indeed alive. Each is distinct, with its different moods, troubles and joys.** The constitutive other lives just a few paces away and the other is a little bit of ourselves. **Traveling through my city's neighborhoods has left a strong mark on my Beirut identity. I belong to no other city. Beirut isn't an idea. It is not impossible. Beirut is not a challenge. Beirut is a being that wakes up every morning and rushes through the day.**

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## NUITS ET SOLITUDE

Chiara Zakhia

Ce qui fait la ville, ce sont aussi les gens. Quel que soit leur ressenti par rapport à Beyrouth, amour, haine, indifférence, rancune, mépris, passion, ils portent en eux des fragments de cette ville. Ils constituent le caractère de Beyrouth, qui en retour forge une partie de leur identité. **Les gens sont le reflet de la ville qu'ils habitent, et la ville les habite en retour, même s'ils décident de la quitter. Il y a un lien invisible, et pourtant palpable, qui lie la ville à ceux qui y vivent. Je m'identifie souvent à Beyrouth. Si elle se retrouvait face à un miroir, est-ce qu'elle se détesterait, est-ce qu'elle s'aimerait?** Mais peut-elle seulement être capturée dans un reflet, dans une image? Elle est faite de multiples facettes, elle est vivante, changeante. **Je me reconnais dans ses pulsions, ses contradictions, ses peurs, ses forces, son ivresse, son intensité, ses vices, son innocence...** J'ai l'impression de penser à Beyrouth comme on penserait à une personne. Je me demande ce qu'elle ressent en ces moments de confinement, de solitude.

Il est tard, très tard la nuit. Je devrais probablement être déjà plongée dans un sommeil profond, mais ce soir j'ai envie de profiter du calme. **On pourrait penser qu'il n'y a rien à dire puisqu'en apparence il ne se passe rien, mais en réalité le silence parle, crie même. Le silence, l'absence et le vide sont aussi présents, aussi bruyants que leurs contraires.** On associe souvent les bruits de la ville à la vie, mais ce ne sont en réalité que des traces de la vie humaine, et non pas de la vie en général, et sont souvent un obstacle aux autres manifestations de la vie, comme un chant d'oiseau, un battement d'aile, du vent dans les feuilles... **Le silence, ou plutôt, l'absence des bruits à travers lesquels on reconnaît notre existence, est vivant aussi. Mes nuits sont faites de pensées assourdissantes, et de silence.**

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### REMIND ME NOT TO FORGET

Nur Turkmani

I'm scared and I want to control the situation and our safety as much as I can, but I do it again. I remove myself from the scene for the purpose of serving my memory repository, and **step on the edge for a minute, my keffiyeh mask wrapped tightly over my nose.**

This time, I want to remember not because the scene fills me with awe and reminds me of limitless solidarity, but because I am brimming with anger and dread. **Remember, I tell myself, how the smoke from teargas fills the night like low-lying clouds. How the shards are strewn everywhere as though someone has ripped a huge studded necklace.**

The groups of protesters moving towards the security forces who respond, every couple of minutes, by firing back. The protesters tripping, running, shouting. Remember a woman carrying a protester suffocating from teargas. The onions everywhere. Until the last hit by security forces makes us all reel back and **there is no room for remembering. No room for anything other than running.**

At this point, as the security forces move in on us with batons, **we genuinely fear for our lives. We run and run, holding each other's hands**, until we find a way out, a corner to jump through. Knocked out of breath and coughing, we are finally safe in a street on Gemmayze. All around us, protesters take off their masks and check in on each other. **Remember the anger, the fear, the dread.**



## AT THE CORNER OF A DREAM

Bahia Shehab

From my reading of Mahmoud Darwish I felt that he had been conflicted in the same way we all are about his relationship with place. **When do we leave and when do we stay? How can we accept the concept of nationhood and still claim to belong to humanity at large?** I was visiting my mother in Beirut in September 2016 and wanted to leave a gift outside her window, so I painted Darwish's line "My country is not a suitcase" on an illegal concrete structure, the property of a prominent politician that had been erected to stop people accessing the street that led to his palace. **My choice of poem was related to the duality of displacement.** Darwish wrote this line in two different ways in two different poems at different points in his career. **'My country is not a suitcase'** was the first version he wrote in 1969 in his "Diary of a Palestinian Wound". In 1983 after the Israeli invasion of Beirut he wrote in "In Praise of the High Shadow", **'My country is a suitcase'**. So I sprayed the words 'My country' and 'suitcase' in black and I sprayed the word 'not' in red. This way the message could be read in both of Darwish's variations.

**The words reflect the detachment we feel as displaced Arabs in different cities around the world. We long for our homeland and feel like aliens even when we begin to achieve a sense of belonging in a new place. We are strangers both in our homes and in other lands. We live with the loneliness of being a group of citizens belonging nowhere and always existing somewhere else.** An optimist would embrace the humanity, freedom and new opportunities that displacement provides. A pessimist would feel like a tree without roots, always looking back at what they have lost rather than what has been gained. **Optimist or pessimist, sometimes it's easy to feel homesick even at home.** The poem was erased a week later by the same people who hung huge pictures of the politician during election time.

## ذاكره للنسيان

محمود درويش

ومنذ عشر سنين، أقيم في بيروت. في مؤقت من اسمنت،  
أحاول أن أفهم بيروت فأزداد جهلاً بنفسي. أهي مدينة أم  
قناع؟ منفي أم تشيد؟ سرعان ما ينتهي، وسرعان ما بدأ،  
والعكس أيضاً صحيح. في المدن الأخرى ستند الذاكه  
إلى ورقه. جلس في ساعه انتظار، في فراغ أبيض،  
فتهبط عليك فكره زائره، اصطادها لثلا هرب منك،  
وحين مضى الأيام وتراها تعرف إلى مصدرها، فتشكر  
المدينة التي وهبتك لك الهديه، أما في بيروت فإنك  
سيل وتبعتير. الإتهاء الوحيد هو الماء. أخذ الذاكه شكل  
فوضى المدينة، وتدخل في كلام ينسبك الكلام السابق...

ونادرا ما لاحظ أن بيروت جميله...

ونادرا ما احتاج فيها إلى

التمييز بين المبني والمعنى...

ولا كون جديده، ولا كون قديمه...

وحين يسألونك: هل تحبها؟ يفاجئك السؤال  
فتسأل: لماذا لم أنتبه؟ أحيها؟ ثم بحث عن  
عاطفه محدده لها، فتصاب بدوار أو خدر. ونادرا ما  
احتاج إلى التأكد من أنك في بيروت، لأنك موجود  
فيها بلا دليل، وهي موجوده فيك بلا برهان.

هل هي مدينة، أم مخيم

شوارع عربيه وضعت بلا

رتيب، أم هي شيء آخر: حاله،

فكره، إخاله، زهره خارجيه

من نص، فتاه ربك المخيله؟

لهذا السبب لا يستطيع أحد أن يؤلف أغنيه  
ليروت؟ كم بدو سهله! وكم بدو مستعصيه  
على جانس المفردات المتجانسه الايقاع والقافيه:  
بيروت، ياقوت، تابوت... أم لأنها قدم نفسها لمابر  
السييل الذي، وحسده، يشعر بأنها بهجتة الخاصه.

ووجدتهم أصحابها وأصحاب

الاسماء المنسيه هم المحرومون

من دهش يدهش الآخرين.

أنا لا أعرف بيروت، ولا أعرف

إن كنت أحيها أم لا أحيها.

[...] لكل قادم إلى بيروت بيروته الخاصه به. ولا  
تعرف، ولا أحد يعرف، إلى أي حد يُشكل مجموع  
هذه المدن مدينة بيروت التي لا يبكي عليها الباكون،  
ولكنهم على ذكرياتهم أو مصالحهم الخاصه يكون...



**التصوير**  
كيارا فنشنتي زخيا

**النصوص**  
مشروع ليلى، بيار دي روجي، ريس بيك، هاني السواح الدرويش، كيارا فنشنتي  
زخيا، نصرى عطالله، نادية تويني، محمد مشنوق، هاشم سر كيس، ميشال قصير،  
نزار قباني، تانية ه. مهنا، فيروز، نور تركماني، بهيه شهاب، محمود درويش.

**التصميم**  
كيارا فنشنتي زخيا

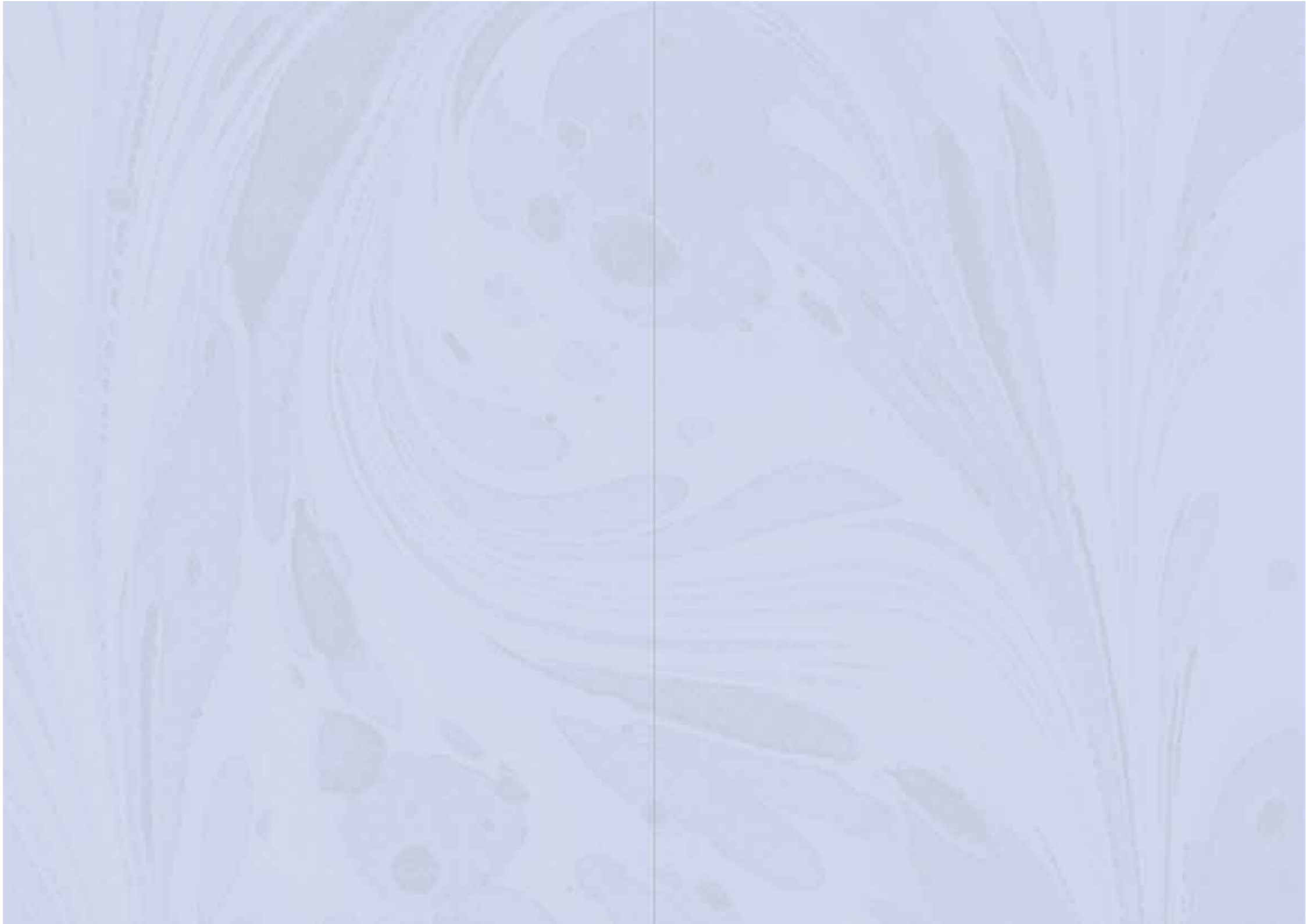
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**Photography / Photographie**  
Chiara Vincenti Zakhia

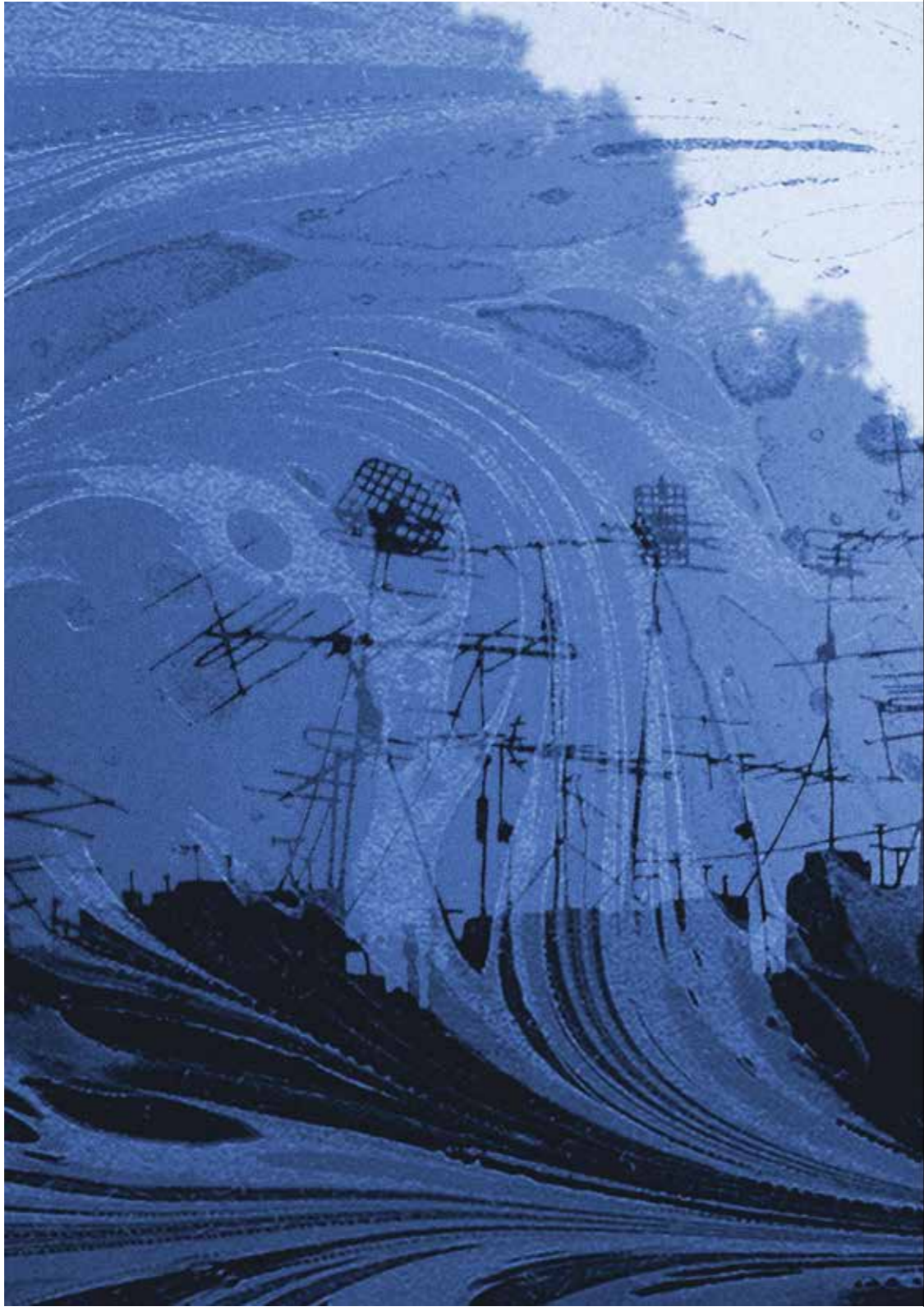
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DOCUMENTATION

I printed and bound the following copy at home, to get an idea of what it would look like and document it, but it is not the final product.

