

Artex

Book Club #1

A book club presented
with Maktaba bookshop

November 16, 2024

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Arab Futurism and Care Practices in the Arab World

Since the start of the genocide in Gaza, it is estimated that over 900 Palestinian families have lost entire bloodlines, completely wiped off the civil registry. The physical erasure of Arab peoples in Occupied Palestine creates ripple effects all over the world, and has its roots in the cultural erasure of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region due to the impact of colonization, occupation and war. Among the crises faced by Arab populations around the world is the homogenization of their rich diversity, their vilification and/or victimization in the media, and the loss of identity experienced by their scattered diasporas in the West.

Arab futurism, an all-encompassing artistic movement, seeks to imagine Arabs thriving in the future despite the erasure they face. Ancestral relationships, traditional practices and cultures of care come together to define a future ancient world currently only accessible in literature, art and film.

In collaboration with Maktaba Bookshop, this first Book Club will be an opportunity to discuss the powers of these alternative narratives, and the questions they raise in the light of current realities of the Arab world and its diasporas.

Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune, 2052–2072

M. E. O'Brien et Eman Abdelhadi

Common Notions Editions (2022)

256 pp.

By the middle of the twenty-first century, war, famine, economic collapse, and climate catastrophe had toppled the world's governments. In the 2050s, the insurrections reached the nerve center of global capitalism—New York City. This book, a collection of interviews with the people who made the revolution, was published to mark the twentieth anniversary of the New York Commune, a radically new social order forged in the ashes of capitalist collapse.

Here is the insurrection in the words of the people who made it, a cast as diverse as the city itself. Nurses, sex workers, antifascist militants, and survivors of all stripes recall the collapse of life as they knew it and the emergence of a collective alternative. Their stories, delivered in deeply human fashion, together outline how ordinary people's efforts to survive in the face of crisis contain the seeds of a new world.

Biographies

M. E. O'Brien writes on gender freedom and communist theory. She co-edits two magazines: *Pinko*, on gay communism, and *Parapraxis*, on psychoanalytic theory and politics. Her work on family abolition has been translated into Chinese, German, Greek, French, Spanish, and Turkish. Previously, she coordinated the New York City Trans Oral History Project, and worked in HIV and AIDS activism and services. She completed a PhD at New York University, where she wrote on how capitalism shaped New York City LGBTQ social movements. She is currently in training to be a psychoanalyst, and works as a therapist.

Eman Abdelhadi is an academic, activist, and artist based in Chicago, IL. Her research as faculty at the University of Chicago focuses on gender differences in the community trajectories of Muslim Americans. Abdelhadi has also spent many years organizing. She has been involved in the movement for Palestinian liberation, Black Lives Matter, counter-surveillance and abolitionism, marxist feminist mobilization as well as workplace struggles. She is currently co-coordinating the Muslim Alliance for Gender and Sexual Diversity, a national organization that provides support and builds community by and for Queer Muslims. Abdelhadi maintains an active creative practice that includes performance art and essay and poetry writing. Her writing has appeared in *Jacobin*, *Muftah*, and other publications.

The Land in Our Bones.

Plantcestral Herbalism and Healing Cultures from Syria to the Sinai–Earth-based pathways to ancestral stewardship and belonging in diaspora

Layla K. Feghali

North Atlantic Books (2024)

368 pp.

A profound and searching exploration of the herbs and land-based medicines of Lebanon and Cana'an—a vital invitation to re-member our roots and deepen relationship with the lands where we live in diaspora

Tying cultural survival to earth-based knowledge, Lebanese ethnobotanist, sovereignty steward, and cultural worker Layla K. Feghali offers a layered history of the healing plants of Cana'an (the Levant) and the Crossroads ("Middle East") and asks into the ways we become free from the wounds of colonization and displacement.

Feghali remaps Cana'an and its crossroads, exploring the complexities, systemic impacts, and yearnings of diaspora. She shows how ancestral healing practices connect land and kin—calling back and forth across geographies and generations and providing an embodied lifeline for regenerative healing and repair.

Anchored in a praxis she calls Plantcestral Re-Membrance, Feghali asks how we find our way home amid displacement: How do we embody what binds us together while holding the ways we've been wrested apart? What does it mean to be of a place when extraction and empire destroy its geographies? What can we restore when we reach beyond what's been lost and tend to what remains? How do we cultivate kinship with the lands where we live,

especially when migration has led us to other colonized territories?

Recounting vivid stories of people and places across Cana'an, Feghali shares lineages of folk healing and eco-cultural stewardship: those passed down by matriarchs; plants and practices of prenatal and postpartum care; mystical traditions for spiritual healing; earth-based practices for emotional wellness; plant tending for bioregional regeneration; medicinal plants and herbal protocols; cultural remedies and recipes; and more.

The Land in Our Bones asks us to reclaim the integrity of our worlds, interrogating colonization and defying its "cultures of severance" through the guidance of land, lineage, and love. It is an urgent companion for our times, a beckoning call towards belonging, healing, and freedom through tending the land in your own bones.

Biography

Layla K. Feghali is a cultural worker and folk herbalist who lives between her ancestral village in Lebanon, and California, where she was raised. Feghali's work is about restoring relationships to earth-based ancestral wisdom as an avenue towards eco-cultural stewardship, healing, and liberation. Feghali's methods emphasize plants of place and lineage. Her company, River Rose Re-membrance, features a line of plantcestral medicine, education, and other culturally-rooted offerings. It also hosts the Ancestral HUB, an online space for the cross-pollination of ancestral knowledge across diasporic and home communities from Southwest Asia and North Africa.

Feghali has formal certifications and colloquial training in numerous herbal, therapeutic, cultural, and traditional practices for over a decade. Amongst which, she also supports birth-tending processes, and is a certified teacher of EmbodyBirth™/BellydanceBirth®. Feghali builds on a background in movement building, and a MSW, in which she specialized in cultural interventions for addressing trauma and grief.

Take Care of Your Self.

The Art and Cultures of Care and Liberation

Sundus Abdul Hadi

Common Notions Editions (2020)

168 pp.

Artist Sundus Abdul Hadi's reflections on self-care as a community act depict care as crucial to creating a just society.

"Take care of yourself. How many times a week do we hear or say these words? If we all took the time to care for ourselves, how much stronger would we be? More importantly, how much stronger would our communities be?"

In *Take Care of Your Self*, Sundus Abdul Hadi turns a critical and inventive eye to the notion of care and how it relates to social justice. In contrast to the billion-dollar industry of self-care, Abdul Hadi identifies care as a necessary practice—rooted in self, community, and the world—in the collective process of decolonization, empowerment, and liberation.

Abdul Hadi explores the role of art in building regenerative narratives to confront and undo systemic oppression and trauma. Weaving in the work of visionary transcultural artists who engage the liberatory intersections of struggle and care, Abdul Hadi centers the voices of those most-often relegated to the margins and emphasizes the importance of creating brave spaces for their stories and art. The transformative power of care exists in these spaces, building a foundation for a world in desperate need of healing and change.

Biography

Sundus Abdul Hadi is an artist and writer of Iraqi origin. She was raised and educated in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal, where she earned a BFA in Studio Arts and Art History and a MA in Media Studies. Articulated through her artistic practice, writing, and curation, Abdul Hadi's work is a sensitive reflection on trauma, struggles, and care. She is the author-illustrator of *Shams*, a children's book about trauma, transformation, and healing. She is the cofounder of We are The Medium, an artist collective and cultural point.

Abdul Hadi's work has been exhibited in Palestine, Canada, United States, United Arab Emirates, France, United Kingdom, and New Zealand. She has given workshops in Australia and Iraq, and has been a speaker at Nuqat (Kuwait); the Nobel Peace Prize Forum; Telfaire Museums in Savannah, Georgia; the Aga Khan Museum, and multiple universities in Canada and the US. Abdul Hadi is a two-time recipient of the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec (CALQ) Vivacite grant and received the Makers Muse award from Kindle Project. Her works are part of the Barjeel Art Foundation collection.

Collaborating Bookshop

Maktaba is an independent bookstore and versatile cultural space located in a heritage building in Montreal's vibrant Old Port area. Maktaba is a concept bookshop, carrying a curated selection of English-language books by diverse authors on a variety of subjects, for readers of all ages. Our purpose is to cultivate and share knowledge, inspiration and imagination to the greater Montreal community, with a global virtual reach. Meaning both "library" and "bookshop" in Arabic, Maktaba is an artist-run, deeply-rooted space invested in representation and culture.

As part of this educational programming, Artexte supports artists, researchers, curators, and authors in a collective effort that involves our entire team, including external collaborators who participate in the success of each project.

Artexte would like to thank the team at the Maktaba bookshop, especially Sundus Abdul Hadi and Darine Tahan, for their collaboration and expertise. We would also like to thank the Ville-Marie borough of the City of Montreal for its financial support.



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