



# THE Markaz Review

Literature and Arts from the Center of the World

TMR WEEKLY TMR 49 • LOVE, WAR & RESISTANCE POETRY MARKAZ BIL ARABI EVENTS SUPPORT

## TMR Weekly



11 April, 2025 • Malu Halasa

### With Brecht, Rabih Mroué & Lina Majdalanie Deconstruct Fascism

The new Lebanese performance, "Four Walls and a Roof," uses trial testimony, humor, and Eisler-Brecht songs to address the rise of the right.



11 April, 2025 • Marta Mendes

### Between Belief and Doubt: Ramzi Mallat's *Suspended Disbelief*

"Suspended Disbelief" interrogates the tension between belief and doubt in the folklore and collective psyche of the Mediterranean region.



4 April, 2025 • Souseh

### Dear Souseh: Existential Advice for Third World Problems

An advice column that tackles personal questions inflected by our greater social, cultural, political, and historical contexts.

Dear reader,

Sunday, April 13 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the start of the Lebanese civil war. Although half a century has passed since the day on which clashes between the Lebanese Phalange Party and Palestinian Fedayeen culminated in the massacre of a busload of innocent people returning from a PFLP rally, the war's ghosts remain restless, the war's conflicts never quite resolved. Warring parties fought their way to an exhausted *détente*; the battles famously concluded with a declaration that there was "no victor and no vanquished." Impossible anyway to call a war over when so many of its principal architects and murderers remain firmly in the seats of power, ruling with decree what they once ruled by gun. Impossible, too, when its fault lines remain so active, ready at any moment to collapse the shaky construct of a single nation into fragments once again.

For while the Lebanese assertion that it was "a war of others on our soil" is for the most part a lie — told to abdicate responsibility over the brutality people enacted on one another — there is nevertheless a kernel of truth at its heart. The war arguably began as a war over the character of the entire region: what sort of Middle East did its citizens, its colonists, its sponsors, its enemies and its allies want? On one side lined up the isolationists, the nation state-nationalists; on the other, the internationalists, the Arab nationalists.

And while the Lebanese civil war soon devolved into infighting so petty (and ruthless) that the manifold frontlines came to divide not just neighborhood from neighborhood and street from street but sometimes building from building, the drawing and redrawing of both alliances and divisions tells the story of a world moving from idealistic, internationalist struggles for liberation, to one subsumed in the enmities of the cold war, and finally to a world emerging into and embracing the consumerist freedoms of neo-liberalism.

The Lebanese civil war officially ended in 1990, although, for all the reasons above, there are some who contest the fact that it ended at all. Lebanon, after all, continues to be a site where the Arab region seeks to assert its independence from the West, and where greater powers jockey for position and practice fighting their bloody battles. The latest conflagration between Israel and Hezbollah is a case in point. Was Hezbollah's immediate decision to declare itself a support front for Hamas on October 8 a selfless attempt to help the Palestinian resistance in Gaza defend itself from Israel's brutal assault? Was it a proxy war between Iran and the West? Was it the inevitable result of a

Lebanon that never fully implemented the Ta'ef accord, sharing a border with an ever-expansionist Israel?

Lebanon remains important and relevant not just as a proxy site for global conflict, but for the lessons it provides, having often presaged wider global crises. (For example, what happens to ordinary people when a country's oligarchy manipulates the entire financial system for its own gain — and how easily they can get away with it).

But the most important lessons that come from Lebanon are the ones provided by the Lebanese themselves. The post-war period marked a rich and astonishing resurgence in art and culture, with Lebanese artists distinguishing themselves disproportionately on the global scene. Art collectives, art initiatives, salons, exhibitions and galleries were the first new growths to spring out of the rubble, and they continue to proliferate despite the massive upheavals the country has been subjected to of late, from the anti-government uprisings, to the economic collapse, to the catastrophic August 4 port explosion, the Israeli assault and renewed occupation of the South and beyond. Lebanese artists, from world-famous writers like the late Etel Adnan and Elias Khoury, to curators like Christine Tohme and contemporary artists like the late Huguette Caland, along with Walid Raad, Walid Sadek, Jayce Salloum, Rabih Mroueh, Lina Majdalani, Akram Zaatari and Ali Cherri, are evidence not only of Lebanon's prodigal talent on the international art scene but the ability of its artists — long-steeped in the most unexpected that the world has to offer — to anticipate what might come next.

Therefore, it is fitting that this week on TMR we bring you interviews with two different Lebanese artists/art teams, of two different generations and sensibilities, whose work addresses both the current moment and speculates about possible futures.

—Lina Mounzer, senior editor

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The Markaz Review (TMR) is a nonprofit publication and platform that focuses on Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian (MENASA) arts, literature, and culture. It publishes essays, fiction, poetry, book reviews, memoir, and cultural critique. TMR exists to amplify diverse voices from the region and the diaspora, engaging with themes of

identity, migration, and contemporary issues.

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The next issue of TMR, our 50th, due out in May, is [RETURNING HOME](#), followed by June's [OUT OF OUR MINDS](#), a mental health issue. For more info, visit our [Submissions](#) page.

**"The Markaz Review is a source of energy, awareness, and inspiration that is that much more important to sustain at this appalling moment of brutality and degradation." —Edwin Frank, New York Review of Books**

In these increasingly difficult times, as our part of the world continues to endure some of the worst conflicts and outcomes, the need for artistic expression and freedom has never been more urgent. We would like to sincerely request your financial support. The Markaz Review is a nonprofit, reader-supported publication. Help us keep TMR strong by making a donation or taking out a membership (see below for details). Thank you for reading, sharing & [supporting](#) The Markaz Review.

—The Editors

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