

### **Jood Althukhair**

Prompt: In light of lost cities, do you still trust the ground? If there were no birds, who is left singing? Do you trust the sky? What objects do you pull from the water?

Bio: Jood AlThukair is a writer, editor, and founding editor-in-chief of Sumou, an Arab magazine, platform, and community.

### **Momtaza Mehri**

Prompt: Enter into a conversation with your own shame. First, identify its shape, its origins, where it's felt, how it moves in your body, who shares it with you. Write a poem as a doorway out of it. Take a few tentative steps or wild leaps. Write with the confidence that you will leave your shame behind.

Bio: Momtaza Mehri is a poet, essayist and independent researcher. Her latest pamphlet, *Doing the Most with the Least*, was published by Goldsmiths Press.

### **Fatima H.**

Prompt: Send flowers to a part of your self that perhaps is no longer accessible to you. Bless it, lay it to rest with an offering

Bio: Fatima (she/they) is an Iraqi writer and public health consultant in Southern California. Their work can be found in *Rusted Radishes*, *BAHR*, and written in the sand at Belle Isle Beach.

### **Layla Feghali**

Prompt: Write about how it feels in Teta's kitchen or garden. What does it smell like? Taste like? What are the sounds? Describe the feeling inside your body. Is there a particular plant that draws your memory? Follow your senses to find a story.

Bio: Layla lives between her ancestral village on the northern coast of Lebanon and her diasporic home in Tongva-Tataviam territories (Southern California), where she was born and raised by her immigrant family. She is a cultural worker and plantcestral medicine practitioner focused on the re-membrance of baladi (land-based/folk/indigenous) lifeways and ancestral wisdoms from SWANA\*. Her dedication is to stewardship of our earth's eco-cultural integrity and the many layers of relational restoration and healing that entails. You can learn more at [www.RiverRoseRemembrance.com](http://www.RiverRoseRemembrance.com) // River Rose Remembrance on IG + FB, and visit the online

community archival project she hosts at [www.SWANAancestralHUB.org](http://www.SWANAancestralHUB.org) // @swana.ancestral on IG.

Rana Tahir

Prompt:

1. Think of an abstraction.
2. Think of an image you associate with that abstraction.
3. Come up with a list of descriptions for the image.
4. Think of a second abstraction.
5. Think of an image you associate with that abstraction.
6. Come up with a list of descriptions for the image.
7. Start the poem with the line “I want to write more poems with [abstraction 1]” but use the descriptors for abstraction 2 (do not name the image).
8. Transition to the images of abstraction 1 (do not name the image) then end with the line “I want to write more poems with [abstraction 2]”
9. Play around/revise/read poem in reverse order

Bio: Rana Tahir is a poet and educator living in Portland, Or. She earned her MFA from Pacific University. She is a Kundiman Fellow and member of RAWI. [www.rana-tahir.com](http://www.rana-tahir.com)

**Mariam Gomaa**

Prompt: Write a poem in which you alienate the reader, whether through use of another language, an innovative form, or deviation from traditional syntax.

Bio: Mariam Gomaa is a physician and writer based in Washington, DC. She is the author of *Between the Shadow & the Soul* (Backbone Press). She holds an M.D. from Wake Forest University School of Medicine and a B.A. in Creative Writing and Biological Sciences from Northwestern University. Her writing has appeared in *Time*, *NBC News*, *Doximity*, *Nimrod International Journal*, *Mizna*, *Rhino Poetry*, *Graze Literary Magazine*, *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice 4e*, and more. She is a graduate of the Tin House 2022 Winter Workshop.

**Leena Aboutaleb**

Prompt: Write on who you are in the underworld. Ask, ‘who are you in the making of love?’  
What are you naming yourself? Think in an imaginary hero’s journey—where are you?  
Who/what are you? What are you recovering/finding?

Bio: leena aboutaleb can be found resting in the sun somewhere in Amman

### **Samia Saliba**

Prompt: Consider your body as a topography. Write its depths and heights.

Bio: Samia Saliba (she/her) is an Arab-American writer & artist. She has edited for The Rachel Corrie Foundation’s Shuruq 4.5 Writing Showcase (2020) and Violet, Indigo, Blue, Etc. (2022), and has participated in workshops including RAWI Wet Hot Arab-American Summer (2019) and Tin House Winter Workshop (2022). Her work has been nominated for Best of the Net and appears in Sycamore Review, Vagabond City Lit, Kissing Dynamite, Mizna, & elsewhere. Find her on twitter @sa\_miathrmoplis or in real life petting a cat.

### **Sally Badawi**

Prompt: Write a poem in which the speaker is the month of April responding to the line "April is the cruellest month" from T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. The poem does not necessarily have to engage with the same themes as Eliot's poem but, for reference, here are the opening lines:

#### I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.

Bio: Sally Badawi is an Egyptian American writer and teacher whose words appear in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Diode*, *Orange Blossom Review*, and elsewhere. A BOTN and Pushcart Prize nominee, she currently serves as associate editor at *Typehouse Magazine* in the pacific northwest where she resides with her family.

### **Noam Klein**

Prompt: Where does grief live in your body? If your grief could talk what would it say?

Bio: Noam Keim is a trans Jewish Arab who grew up in France and currently lives on Lenape land known as Philadelphia. They spend their days working to heal the trauma of prisons with people impacted by the legal system. They are a transformative justice practitioner, a student of somatic, a medicine maker, and they spend most of their time thinking about the in-betweens and interconnectedness of it all. They write a zine called *The Land is Holy*, and you can learn more about their work @thelandisholy (IG) or thelandisholy.com.

### **Threa Almontaser**

Prompt: "Take out an old family photo and address the people in it or have them speak. Write about what's not in the frame. What happened before or after this picture was taken? What does the writer know now that the people in the photograph did not know then? Or try comparing two photographs--one past, one present. Consider what happened in the time between the two."

Bio: Threa Almontaser is the author of the poetry collection *The Wild Fox of Yemen* (Graywolf Press 2021), winner of the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American poets and nominated for the National Book Awards.

### **Dania Ayah Alkhoul**

Prompt: "Write a ghazal poem that reflects the power of overlapping identities and expressions, considering its inspiration on your spirit."

Bio: Dania Ayah Alkhoul is a Southern California born & bred Syrian writer, poet, author, and real estate business manager. She holds a B.A. in Sociology, an M.P.A. in Public Policy & Administration, and is currently pursuing a Masters in Business Administration. In 2012, Alkhoul and her mother co-founded the nonprofit A COUNTRY CALLED SYRIA (@acountrycalledsyria), a traveling arts exhibition and set of events on the history, culture, and stories of their homeland, Syria. With over 500 artifacts directly from Syria, their goal is to establish a permanent exhibition in California. Alkhoul has authored three poetry books, with a fourth pending. Her latest release, *CONTORTIONIST TONGUE*, was published by Moon Tide Press in early 2020. Alkhoul's written work centers on domestic violence/sexual assault, feminism, death & grief, religion, culture, and her homeland, Syria.

### **Zeina Azzam**

Prompt: In her poem “Sanctuary,” Sholeh Wolpe writes that “Home is a missing tooth.” Consider what “home” means to you. Is it missing or present? If missing, is it retrievable? Are you creating or reimagining home? Is home on a map? Is your body your home? How else can you construct "home"? Write a poem about your perception of what home is/can be.

Bio: Zeina Azzam is a Palestinian American poet, editor, and community activist. Her poems appear in literary publications including Mizna, Sukoon, Pleiades, Cordite, Barzakh, and Gyroscope, and in anthologies such as Bettering American Poetry and Making Mirrors: Writing/Righting by Refugees. Zeina's chapbook, Bayna Bayna, In-Between, was published in 2021.

### **Lauren Camp**

Prompt: Begin by deeply inhaling a favorite spice (for me, it was zaatar). Let it lead back into memory—of a particular holiday, an earlier time, a ritual, the people who were around you—or maybe, a certain food, who made it and how.

Bio: Lauren Camp is the author of five volumes of poetry, most recently Took House (Tupelo Press, 2020). Winner of the Dorset Prize, Lauren has also received fellowships from The Black Earth Institute and The Taft-Nicholson Center, and finalist citations for the Arab American Book Award, the Housatonic Book Award and the New Mexico-Arizona Book Award. Her work has been translated into Mandarin, Turkish, Spanish and Arabic. She lives in New Mexico.

To learn more: [www.laurencamp.com](http://www.laurencamp.com)

### **Joumana Altallal**

Prompt: Call a loved one and have a conversation, write down a phrase they used during the call. Use their phrase as the title of your next poem.

Bio: Joumana Altallal is an Iraqi-Lebanese poet, researcher, and artist who was born in Baghdad and grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia. She received her M.F.A in Poetry at the University of Michigan's Helen Zell Writers' Program. Her recent work has appeared in The Rumpus, Muzzle Magazine, Michigan Quarterly Review, and Glass: A Journal of Poetry. You can find Joumana on Twitter @joualt, or by visiting [www.joumanaaltallal.com](http://www.joumanaaltallal.com)

### **Lena Khalaf Tuffaha**

Prompt: Write a poem to carry with you or to hang above your door. A poem that protects and intercedes. This poem is an amulet you can take with you for the journey. It can be any length or form you choose but should include:

- A word you love to say out loud
- An acknowledgement of something broken
- One rhyme (any kind) that sings to you
- The name of a place where you feel safe
- The poem should end on hope (broadly defined)

Bio: Lena Khalaf Tuffaha is a poet, essayist, and translator. Her first book of poems, *Water & Salt*, won the 2018 Washington State Book Award. She is also the author of two chapbooks, *Arab in Newland*, winner of the 2016 Two Sylvia's Prize, and *Letters from the Interior*, finalist for the 2020 Jean Pedrick Prize. To learn more about her work, visit [www.lenakhalaftuffaha.com](http://www.lenakhalaftuffaha.com)

### **Sara Elkamel**

Prompt: a) Choose an image that interests you. This could be a painting, a photograph, a childhood drawing, etc.

b) Write an interview [Q&A] with the creator of the image.

c) Use language from your interview to write an ekphrastic poem.

Bio: Sara Elkamel is a poet and journalist living between Cairo and NYC. She holds an MA in arts journalism from Columbia University and an MFA in poetry from New York University. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, *The Yale Review*, *MQR*, *Four Way Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Adroit Journal*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry London*, *Best New Poets 2020*, *Best of the Net 2020*, among others. She is the author of the chapbook *Field of No Justice* (African Poetry Book Fund & Akashic Books, 2021).

### **Yasmine Nasser Diaz**

Prompt: Write an ekphrastic poem interacting with the following images:

Lost, 2016 collage on paper 15 x 11"

Found, 2016 collage on paper 15 x 11"

Bio: Yasmine Nasser Diaz is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice draws from nuanced, discordant, and evolving concepts of culture, class, gender, religion, and family. She uses mixed media collage, photo-based fiber etching, immersive installation, and video to explore connections between personal experience and larger social and political structures. Diaz is interested in complex narratives of third-culture identity, their precarious invisibility/hyper-visibility, and the friction often experienced between the individual and the collective. Yasmine is a recipient of the Harpo Visual Artists Grant and the California Community Foundation Visual Artist Fellowship and has works included in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Arab American National Museum, and the University of California, Los Angeles. Her work has been featured in HyperAllergic, PBS Newshour, Artnet, and Artillery Magazine. She lives and works in Los Angeles.



### **Ruth Awad**

Prompt: Write a poem that's cyclical in nature. For example, a word reappears with different meanings or in different forms, elements of the poem repeat, or each stanza represents one part of a particular cycle (some example cycles to get your wheels turning: seasons, musical intervals, the water cycle, harvests, planetary cycles, economic cycles, etc.). The poem must have one interruption. Make sure the poem is not a form that already exists (e.g., ghazal, sestina, etc.), though you can borrow elements that suit your purposes.

Bio: Ruth Awad is a 2021 NEA Poetry Fellow and the author of *Set to Music a Wildfire* (Southern Indiana Review Press, 2017), winner of the 2016 Michael Waters Poetry Prize and the 2018 Ohioana Book Award for Poetry. Alongside Rachel Mennies, she is the co-editor of *The*

Familiar Wild: On Dogs & Poetry (Sundress Publications, 2020). She is the recipient of a 2020 and 2016 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award. Her work appears in Poetry, Poem-a-Day, The Believer, The New Republic, Kenyon Review, Pleiades, The Missouri Review, The Rumpus, and elsewhere.

### **Sundus Abdulhadi**

Prompt: 1. An exercise: How can we define ourselves outside of the limits of the colonial construct while using the English language? (See example below)\*

2. Tell me a story about deep roots.
3. Imagine a world where colonialism never happened.

\*Deeply-rooted is an empowered word I have coined to describe any person or community rooted in an ancient culture steeped in traditional and Indigenous knowledge that colonization attempted to erase. It is a word that attempts to describe the multiplicity of ethnicities and experiences related to the international Indigenous, Black, Pan-African, Afro-descendent, Arab, Brown, Latinx, South American, and Asian communities.

Bio: Sundus Abdul Hadi is an artist and writer. Born to Iraqi parents, 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. Sundus' transmedia work is a sensitive reflection on trauma, struggle, and care. She is the author/illustrator of "Shams", a children's book about trauma, transformation and healing. Her book titled "Take Care of Your Self: The Art and Cultures of Care and Liberation" (Common Notions, Fall 2020) is about care, curation and community. She is the cofounder of We Are The Medium and the founder of Maktaba Bookshop opening in Spring 2022 in Montreal.

### **Micaela Kaibni Raen**

Prompt: Your aunt walks into the room where you write, where you currently sit—fast. she smiles, puts a card in your hand. the card is a letter—what do you do? write your response.

Bio: Micaela Kaibni Raen is a Palestinian-American poet and non/fiction writer. She has over 35 years of experience being a community organizer and international LGBT+ activist. Her work appears in *Bint el Nas*, *Yellow Medicine Review*, *The Poetry of Arab Women*, and more.

### **Ashley Haar**

Prompt: Were you ever truly a child? did you run barefoot? if you could restore your right to a childhood, what would it look like?

Bio: Ashley is the great granddaughter of Armenian refugees who were migrant farm workers, eventually settling into rows of their own grape vines in the San Joaquin Valley of California. She now lives with her cat on the unceded territory of the Clackamas and Multnomah Chinookan people in what is known as Portland OR in the settler system. Ashley fell in love with writing at an early age, taking refuge in words to help process the world around her. Tracing her family tree back to its roots is a life long and healing passion that helps bring clarity to life in the diaspora. In her free time Ashley likes to knit and go on roadtrips.

### **Kamelya Omayma Youssef**

Prompt: Revisit your diary or a journal entry on a subject, for you, that hasn't yet been resolved. Transcribe the entry. In it: read, dig, erase, sculpt away, and find the poem. That is to say: conduct an erasure of your own journals. Even amidst "the surpassing disaster"\* , there is a volta, a seed, a turn. Find it. It's possible that the answers you need are already there, in your own words. No need to adhere to rules of grammar. Fragments, we know, can tell us much. Optional: Keep the words exactly as they appear, and in their order of appearance. \* The surpassing disaster is a formulation from Jalal Toufic's foundational essay, *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*.

Bio: Kamelya Omayma Youssef is a writer from Dearborn, Michigan, with roots in Jibbayn and Shmistar, Lebanon. She is the author of *A book with a hole in it (Wendy's Subway, 2022)*. With an MA in English from Wayne State University and an MFA in Poetry from New York University, she currently teaches poetry at the City College of New York, and co-facilitates *Habibi Futurism*, a generative workshop for collective futurist imaginings.

### **Marlin M. Jenkins**

Prompt: Solmaz Sharif ends the second poem in her book *Customs*, "Dear Aleph," with these lines: "David, / they tell me, is the one / one should aspire to, but ever since / I first heard them

say Philistine / I've known I am Goliath if I am anything."

With this ending as a model for inspiration: Draft a poem in which you identify with or as someone considered a villain. It could be that you are (re)claiming the identity and re-shaping the narrative, or that you are sympathizing with the "villain", or using some aspect of the "villain" to tell your own story or own truth.

Exploring this connection to such a character: Do you--the speaker--feel guilty? Powerful? Resentful? Something else? Some combination?

Bonus round!: write the poem as a letter to someone.

Bio: Marlin M. Jenkins was born and raised in Detroit. The author of the poetry chapbook *Capable Monsters* (Bull City Press, 2020) and a graduate of University of Michigan's MFA program, his work has found homes with *Indiana Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Waxwing*, and *Kenyon Review Online*, among others. He currently lives and teaches in Minnesota.

### **Michelle Zamanian**

Prompt: You are an island with a sandy shore and palm trees. A human washes ashore. Describe what living with this new human is like. What do you provide for each other?

Bio: Michelle Zamanian is an Iranian American writer living in Minnesota. She is the editor for *We Are More* at *The Rumpus*. Find her on Twitter @mezamanian.

### **feras hilal**

Prompt 1: Turn your bitter (or sorrow) into anger into action into joy.

Prompt 2: Give yourself permission to be out of character, behave poorly, spew any negativity bottling inside, etc. on the page—what shows up?

Bio: Feras Hilal is a brown queer muslim Palestinian writer/performer living on Cahuilla land

### **Priscilla Wathington**

Prompt: Forage in the wild fields of your future. What is germinating in that lush soil, fed only by the sky?

Bio: Priscilla Wathington is a Palestinian American writer, editor and RAWI board member. Her

debut poetry chapbook, *PAPER AND STICK* (Tram Editions / 2021), scrutinizes Israel's militarized attempts to constrict Palestinian bodies and breath. Her poems have appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Salamander*, and elsewhere.

### **Jess Rizkallah**

Prompt: Hit shuffle in your music library, then write a poem duetting or responding to the song that plays

Bio: Jess Rizkallah is a Lebanese-American writer and illustrator. Her full-length collection *THE MAGIC MY BODY BECOMES* was a finalist for The Believer Poetry Award and won the 2017 Etel Adnan poetry prize. She is a 2022 Mass Cultural Council Fellow.

### **Summer Farah**

Prompt: "Soft-resetting" a video game involves hitting a specific combination of buttons in order to restart the game from your last save, often to fix a mistake. Write a poem in which you perform a "soft-reset." What do you have to do to get there? What are you doing over?

Bio: Summer Farah is a poet and editor who currently acts as the outreach coordinator for the Radius of Arab American Writers. In 2021, she served as the poetry editor for the FIYAH LIT Palestine Solidarity issue.