

No greater burden than writing these entries. No lighter feeling than living these days.

Particles that dissipate quickly like diffusion, like confessions, like the glimmer of light shining at the bottom of a well. If days are so weightless, but then why are they independently capable of leaving behind all this weight that settles in the corner? They sit accumulating dust and echoes, pictures and images. Tiny particles. Days make their way back to bond together and coalesce themselves into the mind. They take shape. And like a heavy rock, they sit ensconced yet bursting with life. They emit silence brimming with speech.

Here now. I stand behind a layer of glass that holds the city back from me. It holds it quietly in a bundle inside the frame. I feel some kind of end getting closer. Although there are many endings. This is one. Here is another. How could I possibly prepare for them all? How am I supposed to arrange them with proper beginnings?

Why do I always go back to piece together endings that continue to stretch and conjoin? I feel an ending on its way, but I can't tell if what I'm feeling is satisfaction or sorrow. But who cares? They're both one of the many faces worn by loss.

[...]

Another day. I find the weather in this country strange. Conditions change independent of my involvement. With a gesture, I could make the sun rise and set in Beirut. In this country, the rain is silly. It pours without purpose. Nobody pays attention to the colors of the clouds here. No one listens to what the rain has to say.

[...]

I didn't find the "East" in the Middle East Department. I never found poetry in its dusky rooms. Only shadows. Files. Research methods. Curricula. Programs guaranteeing to turn the Arabic language into multiplication tables and Arabic poetry into an indistinct murmur. Abu Tammam squeezes through narrow offices in search of a bashful moonlit day. Only to find garish colors and hollow voices filling the space. No expanse here. No rhythm. Only mirage.

[...]

I teach them Arabic. Every morning I wake up to a letter or two from its alphabet. I get appropriately dressed and walk down this city's streets that all look the same, accompanied by scattered words and echoes. My students are strangers to Arabic. Some are drawn to it because they were separated from some unknown country ever-present in their memory. No matter how hard they try to look away, it's always there, present in their minds like a dream. Others are driven entirely by curiosity. They want to study the melody that traces sand dunes and weaves verses of poetry. Curious to understand the abundant sounds that melt into wine and the deep darkness that fills the eyes with light and holds the moon in a tight embrace. They really try to pronounce the *daads*, *'ayns*, and *qaafs*. They grip their pencils and wander along *al-kasra*, *al-damma*, and *al-fatha*, the case endings of Arabic grammar. They're perplexed by the *alif*. The *hamza* in all its shapes and positions fires their anxiety. But they never succumb to despair. There's always something pushing them. However, it's not merely curiosity or captivation.

No. They're not the ones held captive. I am. They came to my classroom searching for prey. So, here I am every morning, rising to prepare a letter in Arabic for them to sink their teeth into.