



THIS HOUSE, MY BONES

poems

ELMAZ ABINADER

This House, My Bones

Elmaz Abinader a collection of poetry



Willow Books/Aquarius Press, October 2014

ARTIST STATEMENT AND BIO

Statement

The conversation with history is witnessed by the earth and etches the collisions on its body—every rock and road, riverbed and meadow hold the marks of migrations, escapes, exiles, alienations, aging and evolutions. In *This House, My Bones*, the body and the earth exchange their positions and perspectives. The memories of war are on the skin as well as on the mesa, the exile is written in dust and cells. Through mining experience of occupation, dislocation, and aging, I created poems where the body and the earth examine their bruises.

The poems were influenced by the words of Adrienne Rich, the experiences in Palestine of myself and others, and from my own meditation of the DNA of history and its shifts. They have been published along the way in different forms, now culminating in this collection. It is an honor to be the Editor's Selection at Willow Books/Aquarius Press for 2014.

These days are not remembered, no names are evoked; our
shadows slide

down the wall unnoticed (from *Arsenal*)

Bio

Elmaz Abinader is a poet, memoirist, playwright and novelist. Her first memoir, *Children of the Roojme, a Family's Journey from Lebanon*, chronicles three generations of immigrants battling dislocation and tradition. The poetry collection, *In the Country of My Dreams...* won the 2000 PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Poetry award. She was also awarded a Goldies Award for Literature, as well as two Drammies (Oregon's Drama award) for her three-act one-woman show, *Country of Origin*. Elmaz most recently performed *Country of Origin* at the Kennedy Center and has toured several countries with this play and two others: *Ramadan Moon* and *32 Mohammeds*. Elmaz's work has been widely anthologized, most recently in *The New Anthology of American Poetry, Vol. 3* and *The Colors of Nature*. Elmaz has been a Fulbright Senior Fellow to Egypt, taught for the Palestine Writing Workshop and a resident at the El Gouna Writing Residency on the Red Sea. Elmaz is one of the founders of the Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation, (VONA/Voices), now in its 15th year providing workshops for writers of color. She is also a creative writing professor at Mills College and a fitness instructor at the Oakland Y.

What Is Being Said About This House, My Bones



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Chris Abani, author of *Sanctificum* and *The Secret History of Las Vegas*:
In poems of grace and a searing fire, Elmaz Abinader negotiates love, yearning, hope, memory, resistance, injustice and death and weaves an uneasy but authentic hope that illuminates the path to a true redemption. A stunning collection.

المعـز

Ruth Forman, author of *Prayers like Shoes* and *We Are the Young Magicians*:
A somber clarity weaves this lovely work. Perhaps Abinader's lines express it best: "How many times can your heart break?/ How many times is writing a surgery?" Yes, a mourning rises from these pages. But wrapped with prayer and hymn, a tender morning rises from these pages.

المعـز

David Mura, author of *The Last Incantations* and *The Colors of Desire*:
Elmaz Abinader is a poet fiercely committed to the world's beauty, to history, to lost voices and the people she loves. Her witness is "a drawing's wisdom," her 100 year old Lebanese father's memories, connections between Pennsylvania and Abu Dis. Like the first cup of coffee, her words awaken us to cardamom and memory, to reasons to celebrate amid the world's injustice and travails. This House, My Bones: read it and be blessed.

لمـعـز

Willie Perdomo, author of *THE ESSENTIAL HITS OF SHORTY BON BON*:
Elmaz Abinader reappears with the fluid truth, a straight line to the soul, the storm in your throat. Her new collection sings deep into the bone marrow of what we fear losing: our witness vein, the maps that help us recoup what we misplace in the forgetting, and the dead who carry our names. THIS HOUSE, MY BONES blesses us with a new language for the anatomy of our silences.

المـعـز

Patricia Smith, Author of *Shoulda Been Jimi Savannah*, winner of the 2013 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize:
"This House, My Bones" is a gorgeously scripted chronicle that probes the collective heart and the countries we inhabit when we dare to speak outloud. There's an insistent rhythm in these stanzas, a lyricism of light and lineage stamped with the undeniable signature of a poet at the height of her craft. Savor these poems, and be lifted by their music.

المـعـز

*I dream up stews of poems from the lower bowels
and acid-tinged stories that burn their way
through the esophagus, a film on the tongue.*

From In the Throat III

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CONTACT:

To schedule a reading, Please contact Elmaz directly. For Review Copies, please contact the publisher.

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ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST: MANAL DEEB

Artist Statement

Am I who I think I am, or whom I thought I was? Did I do the things I seem to remember doing or did I come into being only a moment ago? In an attempt to find self and identity, Manal collages images, graphics, paint and even tree barks onto her highly textured surfaces and layered paintings in a similar way to peeling posters on the walls of recollection.

In some cases, words from the Qur'an are incorporated to capture the wisdom and power of the verses and to communicate their imaginative energy. Each painting follows a narrative arc in the rhythm of the brushstrokes and the overlaid elements, telling a story about how memories become reality, and how to preserve heritage through art. Pieces of tree bark evoke her childhood play time around the almond and fig trees of her homeland, Palestine. All the incorporated materials become sacred talismans in the narrative of identity.

Based on John Locke's consideration of personal identity (or the self), Manal believes that, we are the same people to the extent that we are conscious of our past and future thoughts and actions in the same way as we are conscious of our present thoughts and actions. The personal identity is only founded on the repeated act of consciousness. Therefore, self-identity is not based on the soul since one soul may have various personalities.

Elmaz on Manal's work

When I first saw the artist's work, I knew she would be my choice of cover artist (and prayed she would accept). Through photograph, art, treatment and textures, she creates layers of figures and places that hearken a historical and political moment, that tattoo on those going through dislocation, exile and combing the sand for trinkets of hope. Her images look like me, look like the characters I based my writing on. Her subjects reflect the events that echo across my lines.

This is not a collaboration as much as it is an alliance. I hope to create opportunities to exhibit Manal's work along with my readings.

Manal Deeb's website: <http://www.manaldeeb.com/index.html>

Manal Deeb on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/manal.deeb1?ref=ts&ref=br_tf



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PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

Books

This House My Bones, Willow Press, forthcoming, October 2014

In the Country of My Dreams... Sufi Warrior Publishing 1999 (Winner, PEN Oakland Award, 2000)

The Children of the Roojme, a Family's Journey from Lebanon, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997

The Children of the Roojme, a Family's Journey, New York: WW Norton & Co., 1991.

Anthologies (selected)

Line of Demarcation, "Heartwood," "Ash Wednesday," and In The Throat I, {Ex}tinguished & {Ex}tinct: An Anthology of Things That No Longer {Ex}ist, ed., John McCarthy, Twelve Winters Press 2014

The Proper Purgation, Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here, ed. Beau Beausoleil and Deema Shehabi, PM Press, 2012

Profiles of an Arab Daughter, Majlis of Others: A Reader for Writers in the Gulf, ed. Anne Shine, Pearson Publications Ltd, 2011

In the Country of My Dreams, The New Anthology of American Poetry, Volume 3. ed. Steven Gould Axelrod, Camille Roman, and Thomas Travisano Rutgers University Press, 2011

The Art Gallery, The Colors of Nature, ed. Lauret Savoy and Allison Deming, Milkweed Editions, 2011

Poetry Everyday, Yemen 1993, Weber: The Contemporary West, 2009

Living with Opposition, What we Leave Behind, This House, My Bones, The Birds, Inclined to Speak: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Poetry, ed. Hayan Charara, The University of Arkansas Press, 2008

This House, My Bones, Language for a New Century, ed. Nathalie Handal, WW Norton & Co, 2008

Shouldering the Sky, Where the Body Rests, We Begin Here: Poems for Palestine and Lebanon, ed. Kathy Engel and Sharif Elmusa, Interlink Publishing, 2007

The Silence, New Letters Anthology, ed. Robert Stewart, 2005

Performance Plays –Debuts & Performances (Selected)

Voices from the Siege, debuted 2006, La Pena Cultural Center, Berkeley

The Torture Quartet, debuted 2005, University of San Francisco

32 Mohammeds, debuted, 2004 University of North Dakota

Ramadan Moon, debuted 2000, Porter Troupe Gallery, San Diego

Country of Origin, debuted 1997, University of California, Berkeley

Imagining Peace, Southbank Centre, London UK, October 2010

Country of Origin, Arabesques Festival, Kennedy Center, Washington DC, March 2009

Lies War Discrimination, La Pena Cultural Center, Berkeley CA March 1, 2007

Cease Fire, La Pena Cultural Center, Berkeley CA, August 2006

Poetry and Music of Arab-Americans, Amazon Lounge, Fresno CA, April 20, 2006

32 Mohammeds, Martin Segal Theater, New York NY, March 3, 2005