

المصطفى

A TERRANEAN LOVE NOTE

MAYS ALBAIK

رسالة من
تحت القدمين

ميس البيك

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LOVE NOTE
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This publication, the exhibition it accompanies, and the direction that it informs in my practice are only possible because of the support of Sheikha Lateefa bint Maktoum. Thank you for your care, nurturing and patronage.

This line of research and its collateral body of works would not be where they are now without the guidance, patience and companionship of Ala Younis and Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Thank you for your conversations, your compassion, your generous ears and generative words.

My thanks go to Rohit Groel, without whom very few words would have been strung together.

To Nadine Khalil, whose conversations continue to spur me forward.

To Nasser Alzayani, for your steadying presence and ear for resonance.

To Reem Shadid, you were a rock when I was a drowning leaf.

To Vajinder Singh and his expertise in the metal foundry, Geoffrey in the glass cold shop, Mariam Al Dabbagh in the writing room, Isaac Sullivan with our headphones on, and to Deepak Unnikrishnan for the necessary shift in perspective.

Thank you, Kevin Jones and the first cohort of your 'Visual Literacy' workshop.

Last but certainly far from least, thank you Lisa, Tima and the whole team at Tashkeel for giving me the flint to spark these conversations and the kindling for their fire to catch.

TASHKEEL

Established in Dubai in 2008 by Lateefa bint Maktoum, Tashkeel seeks to provide a nurturing environment for the growth of contemporary art and design practice rooted in the UAE. Through multi-disciplinary studios, work spaces and galleries located in both Nad Al Sheba and Al Fahidi, it enables creative practice, experimentation and dialogue among practitioners and the wider community. Operating on an open membership model, Tashkeel's annual programme of training, residencies, workshops, talks, exhibitions, international collaborations and publications aims to further practitioner development, public engagement, lifelong learning and the creative and cultural industries.

Tashkeel's initiatives include: Critical Practice, which invites visual artists to embark on a programme of studio practice, mentorship and training, culminating in a solo presentation; Tanween, which takes a cohort of emerging UAE-based designers through a product development programme inspired by the surroundings of the UAE; MakeWorks UAE, an online platform providing access to the UAE manufacturing sector; Exhibitions & Workshops to challenge practices, capacity build and grow audiences for the arts; and Membership, a community of creatives with access to facilities and studios to refine their skills, collaborate and pursue professional careers.

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THE CRITICAL PRACTICE PROGRAMME

The Tashkeel Critical Practice Programme offers sustained studio support, critique and production of one year for practicing contemporary artists living and working in the UAE. The programme culminates in an exhibition, publication or other digital/physical outcome. Each artist's programme is carefully built around the individual's practices and/or areas of research. Tashkeel works with each artist to identify mentors to both build, challenge and guide them. A mentor can be an artist, curator, critic or arts professional with whom the artist feels both comfortable working but also, whose own area of research and/or practice ties in with the proposed areas of focus. The Critical Practice Programme alumni are:

Afra Bin Dhaher undertook research and experimentation through design and digital photography under the mentorship of Andrew Starner (NYU Abu Dhabi), resulting in a solo exhibition and catalogue 'Hymns to a Sleeper' at Tashkeel in February 2016.

Vikram Divecha explored the concept of time and money with mentor, Debra Levine (NYU Abu Dhabi), devising a formula for the value of time as it relates to art creation. His exhibition 'Portrait Sessions' at Tashkeel in October 2016 encouraged viewers to question their economic status.

Hadeyeh Badri chose to explore an intimate account of personal loss with mentors Roderick Grant and Dr. Alexandra MacGilp, resulting in the

exhibition and panel discussion 'The Body Keeps the Score' at Tashkeel in April 2017.

Raja'a Khalid explored contemporary narratives around class, luxury and consumer Gulf culture through experimentation and research with mentors Jaret Vadera and Iftikhar Dadi, resulting in 'FASTEST WITH THE MOSTEST' at Tashkeel in September 2017.

Lantian Xie convened 'Water, Gas, Electricity, Rent: A Reading Group' throughout 2017 that explored issues such as hospitality, occupancy, homeliness, precarity, exception and temporariness.

Debjani Bhardwaj examined the human condition inherent in the folktales of the Arabian Gulf through drawing, papercut and installation, supported by mentors Les Bicknell and Hassan Meer. This led to the exhibition 'Telling Tales' in September 2018.

Jalal Bin Thaneya furthered his practice as a fine art photographer, exploring contrast and detail within industrial landscapes and the notion of access. Mentored by Jassim Al Awadhi and Flounder Lee, this led to the solo exhibition 'Beyond the Fence' in May 2019.

Silvia Hernando Álvarez undertook research and experimentation in her photography practice to develop a new body of work exploring a common imaginary of Mars. Mentored by artist, academic and writer Isaac Sullivan and visual artist and writer Cristiana de Marchi, she presented her findings in 'Under The Red Light' in January 2020.

Chafa Ghaddar embarked on a year of research and experimentation, combining paper, painting, fresco and other media, mentored by arts writer Kevin Jones and artist, critic and educator Jill Magi. This led to a new body of work for her solo exhibition 'Recesses' in September 2020.

FOREWORD

Mays Albaik first collaborated with Tashkeel in 2015 through the workshop exhibition 'Found' led by Hazem Harb. Fast forward six years on and Tashkeel is pleased to present her first solo exhibition *A Terranean Love Note*.

Mays is the tenth visual arts practitioner to complete the Critical Practice Programme at Tashkeel. The milestone is particularly significant as this achievement cannot be underestimated amid such a challenging period of restriction and isolation.

During her journey of research and experimentation, Mays has expanded the application of technology within her practice while intricately exploring notions of language, geography, placehood, presence and belonging that are so core to her work. We hope that the process of exploration and the resulting exhibition of new work has given her the impetus to continue furthering her practice.

Tashkeel extends its sincere appreciation to Lawrence Abu Hamdan and Ala Younis who have mentored Mays throughout her time on the Critical Practice Programme. Their commitment and support are outstanding examples of how established practitioners can play an integral role in nurturing the next generation of emerging artists.

Lateefa bint Maktoum



A TERRANEAN LOVE NOTE

Even when our bare feet touch the earth, we are never in unmediated, intimate contact with geography. Ideology fills the space separating our skin from the ground – a sinuous mass of immigration laws, bureaucratic structures, generational attachments and a pathos of belonging tangled in nationalist narratives.

Situating language in the body, the work moves through linguistics as a tool for governing one's relationships to place; the haptic as a mediator of these relations; and utterance and gesture as alternative habitations of presence.

Ordinary language used to draw our relationship to place – resident, citizen, expatriate – is exposed to limitations and contradictions to reveal its dissonance with a growing, collective comfort in multipresence (being in multiple places at once). This para-contextual way of relating to place is common in the diasporic experience and is mirrored in our use of the digital space, our near-perpetual state of being online.

Through space interventions, sculptures and video work, the exhibition explores moments of contact between the self and placehood – constructed sites of physical residence, digital spaces or ancestral homelands. The works triangulate the body, language and place by layering a personal poetics onto the social politics that define our relationship to geography.

The catalogue is a small anthology of ideas and conversations that discuss speech and language, the body and the digital, and our constructs of placehood and belonging. The book includes contributions by the programme's mentors Ala Younis and Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Moad Musbahi, Nadine Khalil, and an interview with Deepak Unnikrishnan.

إنما استمررت كملايين من
الشظايا

BUT INSTEAD CONTINUED
IN MILLIONS AND
MILLIONS OF SHARDS

ملايين من الشظايا
ملايين من الشظايا

LETTERS OF AILMENT

MAYS ALBAIK



Mays Albaik's interdisciplinary visual practice investigates how a sense of placehood is formed, reflected and refracted by that which mediates it – the body, language, and their various intersections. Crystallizing as performance, video, sculpture and installations, her work layers a personal poetics onto the sociopolitics that define our relationship to geography; looking for moments of immediate contact between place, body and language. She holds an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design and a B.Arch from the American University of Sharjah. An alumna of Salama Emerging Artist Fellowship (SEAF), she has participated in exhibitions including 'Qala 0.8900' (Darat Al Funun, Jordan); 'Before We Were Banned' (Helix Art Gallery, Brooklyn, New York); 'Sawt 2a' (Grey Noise, Dubai); 'Mind the Gap' (Tashkeel, Dubai), and 'Change Coordinates + Someone Else' (1971 Design Space, Sharjah). Mays' early practice developed out of the oral narration of her family's history, the story of her grandfather's exile from Palestine, and the winding path through geopolitical and cultural landscapes that led to where she is now; a non-citizen resident of her country of birth.

Mays Albaik is a participant of the Tashkeel Critical Practice Programme (2020). This is her first solo exhibition.

LETTERS OF AILMENT

In Arabic, the words used for a person who lives in a country other than her documented nationality can vary, similar to how they do in English. Just as ‘expatriate’ and ‘immigrant’ have split on class grounds, the Arabic terms ‘*Ajṅabī*, *Wāfed*, and *Muqīm*¹ carry their own implicit significations. Literally, they translate into foreigner, expatriate, and resident, respectively. Growing up in the United Arab Emirates, in one of the social bubbles that was predominantly Arabic-speaking, I learned that ‘*Ajṅabī*’ was reserved for non-Arabs, usually westerners. *Wāfed* was the term delegated for non-citizen Arabs, while *muqīm* was used bureaucratically and less colloquially. For a few years now, there has been a shift in the UAE’s popular terminology, with what seems to be an intentional push to use the term *muqīm* rather than *wāfed* and applying it to non-citizens of all backgrounds.

Both these words are, in grammatical terms, active participles² or subject nouns. We get *wāfed* through the linguistic process of non-augmented derivation, through which words branch out from their three-lettered, simple-past root verb in a way that does not alter the semantic meaning of the word. The origin verb, *wafada*, means to arrive. It denotes a flow, a movement inwards. A point of departure that is outward. *Wāfid* shares its root verb with the Arabic word for delegation, for hospitality, and, curiously, for epidemic.

1 In Arabic, short vowels are denoted with diacritics and not letters. Long vowels are written as letters. In this essay, I transliterate using the “Hans Wehr” method, with a macron (a dash above a letter) over English vowels to denote a long vowel in Arabic.

2 “The active participle (اسم الفاعل) refers to a person who does the action described by the [root verb]. For example, the letters ف-ع-ل mean, “to do” and its active participle فاعل refers to “one who does. Fundamentals of Classical Arabic: Conjugating Regular Verbs and D7 erived Nouns (Islamic Books, n.d.), <https://books.google.ae/books?id=TCvF-cVgmMigC>.

3 All definitions retrieved from Hans Wehr and J M. Cowan. A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966. in Arabic Almanac.

4 For more information on the birth of the Arabic Linguistic Tradition, see Georges Bohas, Jean-patrick Guillaume, And Djamel Eddine Kouloughli, “General Introduction,” In Arabic Linguistic Tradition (Ebook: Routledge, 2018).

Muqīm, on the other hand, comes through the process of augmented derivation. It is a branch off a branch, derived from a four-lettered simple-past verb (*‘aqāma*), which itself can be traced back to the three-lettered origin verb *qāma*– to get up, to stand, to rise. The A prefix in *‘aqama* adds a semantic layer to the origin verb, denoting an objecthood, a sense of the verb being done unto the subject.

‘*Aqāma*: to abide, to stay, to remain, to dwell, to keep, to stick.³

Linguistic derivation is a very sculptural process. Additive, cumulative, and expressive of its tectonics, a word can always be stripped of its layers all the way back to its three-lettered root, no matter its complexity. This process is learned intuitively in native speakers and wasn’t broken down into parts until there was a need to teach it to non-native speakers.

The early forms of the field of Arabic linguistics⁴ illustrate this chronology – the first known writings on the topic study specific cases that deviate from implicitly understood grammatical rules. In identifying these aberrations, scholars had to define what those words deviated from.

As Arabic shifted from a mainly oral language to a language adapted to written use by bureaucrats of mixed ethnic backgrounds, its complex machinations had to be broken down, elucidated for pedagogical purposes.

One of the first aberrations used to unpack an implicit rule involved the plural of the noun *qaws* (bow.) In *Al-Muqtadab*, one of the earliest linguistic works by Al-Mubarrad, he dedicates a whole chapter explaining its aberrant plural form, *qisiyy*. The 9th century grammarian explains that *qaws* is a mutated form of *quwuws* (with its root verb *qawasa*.) This mutation (or Qalb) is a process justified for aesthetic reasons – the vowel sequence in *quwuws* is a “heavy” sound, *mustakrah*, unlikable, ugly.

This mutation is possible without deforming the word’s meaning because it occurs in a vowel sequence. In Arabic, the three vowel letters are called *hurūf al-’illa*, Letters of Illness.

’illa: illness, sickness, disease, malady; deficiency, defect, weakness, defectiveness (of a letter or a word; gram.); metrical variation or irregularity (prosody.)

In *Al-Usūl w Al-Furū’ Fī Kitāb Sibaweh*, the author explains mutation in long vowels as follows:

ينقلب بعض حروف العلة إلى بعض، و يخيل للمرء أن انقلابها من صورة إلى صورة فضلاً عما يدخلها من تغيير كتسكين وحذف هو السبب في تسميتها حروف العلة، كما فسّر ذلك الرضي الأستراباذي الذي رأى أن سبب تسمية حروف العلة بذلك لأنها لا تسلم ولا تصح، فهي كالعليل المنحرف المتغير المزاج حالاً بحال. فالعلة مرض، والمرض يلزمه شيئان: التغير، والضعف، وهذه الحروف كثيرة التغير من حال إلى حال، فضلاً عن ضعفها، إذ هي حروف خفيفة.

Some vowel letters mutate into others. One can see its mutation as the result of changes in form they undergo, such as omission or silencing, which is why they are called *hurūf al-’illa* (Letters

of Illness), [...] for they are never sound and never true, and are as a sick and mercurial deviant. For *’illa* is a disease, and a disease is accompanied by two things; change and weakness. These letters are often changing due to their weakness, therefore they are light letters.

Root verbs that include a vowel letter amongst their three are called *af’al mu’talla* – Diseased Verbs. The position of the vowel determines the type of “disease” they are afflicted with. *Qāma*, with a middle vowel surrounded by two consonants, is a “hollow” diseased verb; *’ajwaf. Wafada*, beginning with a W sound, is an “archetypical” diseased verb.

Vowels are voiced by a movement of air in the chamber of our mouths. We alter this space to shape these vowels; a higher ceiling for an ‘A’ with a wider egress, a narrow corridor for an ‘O’, a horizontal slit for an ‘E’. The space where a vowel is formed might appear empty but it is far from it. The opposite of empty is not full, it is movement.

Deepak Unnikrishnan⁵, in his text “A Memo For Quiet Beoble,” which he read as part of Columbia University’s Superheat Lecture Series, touches on silence as a tool for opacity, a protection and a preservation from presumptions. “Language outs us” he says, betrays our placehoods; where we are from, where we grew up, what class we belong to.

I asked him about this in an email.

MA: “*Language outs us,*” specifically as it prescribes the nature of our relationship to a specific place.

5 Deepak Unnikrishnan is a writer from Abu Dhabi. His book *Temporary People* won the inaugural Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing, the Hindu Prize, and the Moore Prize. Deepak’s fiction was commissioned for the written publications of the National Pavilion of the UAE at the Venice Biennale (2017) and the Oslo Architecture Triennale (2019). His voice and work can also be heard on musician Sarathy Korwar’s album *More Arriving*.

Does quietness defend against these prescriptions? Can we think of quietness beyond a mere absence of sound?

DU: What is your personal definition of the word quiet? In English, Arabic, any other language. Are you thinking about the act of saying nothing? Not talking? And if you aren't part of the hearing world, not signing?

I don't see quiet to be an absence of sound; quiet has a sound.

To speculate, quiet, in the collective sphere, could be the result of suppressed thoughts. Or acquiescence.

Quiet can also be loss, the death of a person, people, ideas.

To some, my elders for instance, quiet is a sign of respect. To accept and heal. To others, especially those who value civil disobedience, quiet is defiance, a refusal to submit.

Yet if a person is silent, by choice or otherwise, irrespective of where they are, their silence arguably carries other transmitters of noise. What about the language of dress, which we can't hide? The language of the body, which we can't hide. The language of class, which inhabits most of us. Our skin.

And if the person continues to say nothing, where is this individual? Airport? Boardroom? Restroom? Classroom? Cab? Context, I would argue, is key.

What is my definition of silence?

It is movement, when I'm optimistic.

Perhaps it is the change without the disease.
القلب بلا العلة

I think of the breath between words.

Or inhalation ahead of a declaration.

Or between kisses.

I think of the space between connecting eyes, or the miniscule air that vibrates between touching fingers.

Silence, when in movement, is the potential for music.

The almost, the prelude.

When a word is said, a language codified, a consonant uttered, its potential is fulfilled, its resonance complete. Its vibrations pass through our body and out into the world and, with entropy, absorbed away.

Back into a different silence.

It's important not to romanticise this potential of silence; its preciousness is predicated on its inherent precarity. Silence always threatens to never fulfil itself, to continue hanging in this limbo of almos to never become.

MA: *At what point does language penetrate beyond just labels/stamps on skin? Said differently: Can fiction change our reality? Can the pen truly be a sword, as the old Arabic proverb says?*

DU: As someone who writes, I use the surreal as a loupe, to negotiate, perhaps even interrogate,

the real. I suppose the surreal is an excuse, to try and turn my back on the real world. Nevertheless, the issues of the real world penetrate the other worlds I make.

If I write about a man who can fly, I will also wonder about his death, whether a drone or a plane would shoot him down because he violated some country's airspace. Which country?

Is fiction powerful enough to induce change? I am not sure. But good fiction produces noise, vibrations that may outlive some of us. And great fiction, in my opinion, influences people who are yet to be born. Policies yet to be made.

My question might have come from a bleak place in my heart – the place where a single question sits, without movement, calmly threatening calamity.

This question morphs and shapeshifts often, yet it is always the same, always derived from the same three-lettered root.

Sometimes it wonders, what would happen if our relationship to place is indeed codified into law.

I hold a travel document for Palestinian refugees. A document that attests to my tether to another place. The visas inside link me to other places.

The document was at least partly intended as a way to preserve Palestinianness, an insurance of the Right of Return, an attestation of the singularity of our belonging to a place, despite distance, despite exile. It's now over 70 years since the first Palestinian Refugee documents were issued, and while its potential is unfulfilled yet, it continues to be saturated with its early pathos.

I wonder what happens if it does fulfil its potential.

I wonder what happens if we give up on its potential.

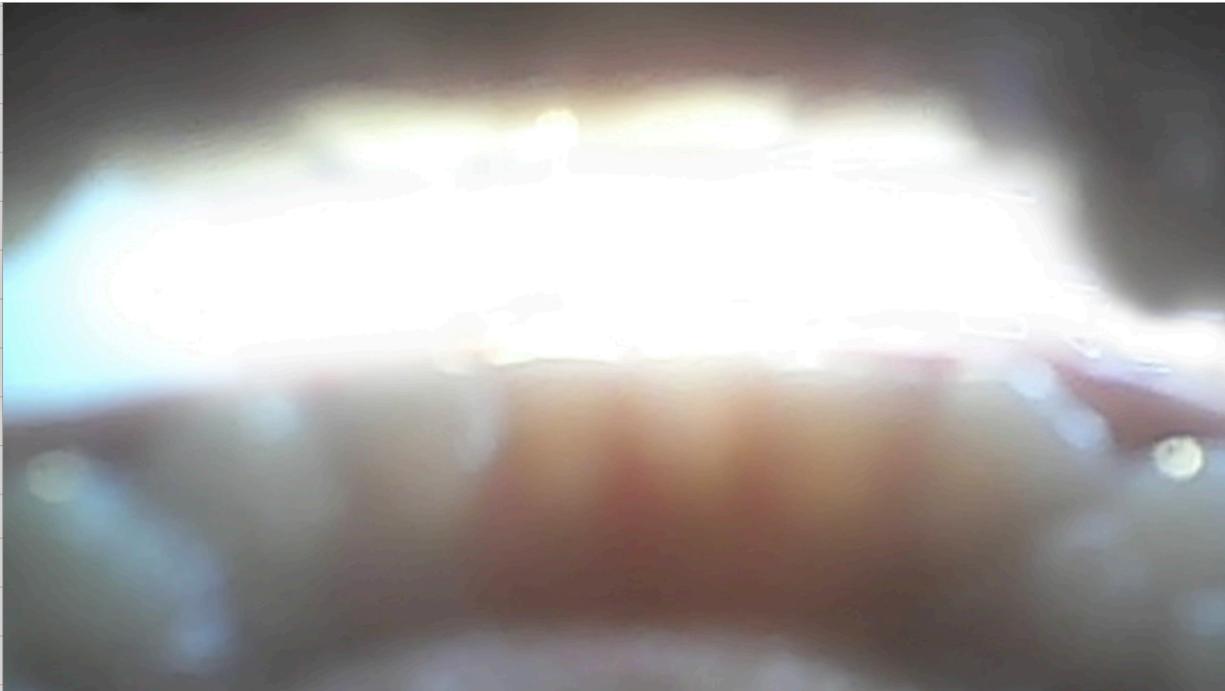
I wonder how the words we use to describe ourselves change our reality.

MA: *On your father and his relationship with place, you say, "What he loves does not love him in return" What happens if suddenly, all these years later, we are loved back?*

DU: May I respond to your question with a question? What if, after all these years, the moment to be loved back, has passed? That could happen too, right? Then what do both parties do? How does either party retreat?

IMAGES THAT LEAK

LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN



Artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan's work looks into the political effects of listening, using various kinds of audio to explore its effects on human rights and law. He received his PhD from Goldsmiths, University of London in 2017. His works are part of collections at Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and Tate Modern, London.

IMAGES THAT LEAK

Through the walls of Boris Johnson's London apartment leaked out the sounds of a domestic altercation with his partner Carrie Symonds. In a statement given to the police, his neighbour and witness to the alleged incident said:

"It became clear that the shouting was coming from a neighbour's flat. It was loud enough and angry enough that I felt frightened and concerned for the welfare of those involved. After a loud scream and banging, followed by silence, I ran upstairs, and with my wife agreed that we should check on our neighbours."¹

Johnson's defenders and employees of Rupert Murdoch accused this witness of being a "curtain twitcher". The curtain twitcher slur is specifically reserved for an eyewitness, one who intentionally peers and directs their gaze at an incident out of an unwarranted curiosity. The witness in this case however is not an eyewitness but an earwitness. Rather than violating the privacy of another, the earwitness in this case has his own private space invaded with the acoustic incidents of his neighbours. In terms of acoustic space at that moment of violent amplitude the witness and suspect occupied a shared space; they were in one space together despite the division of rooms that separate the space visually. In turning this witness from ear to eye, the press falsely assign intention and equally a debasement of the evidentiary value of his testimony. This is just

¹ Quotation taken from 'More Boris Johnson neighbours confirm 'tear-up' with partner' by Simon Murphy, The Guardian 23 June, 2019.
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jun/23/boris-johnson-more-neighbours-confirm-tear-up-with-partner-carrie-symonds>

one example of a display of vested interest in the erroneous applying of visual logic, visual space onto the sonic. All too often, especially in the realm of evidence, sound is treated as an image, to be more specific as a poor image. But rather than this configuration of sound to image what is at stake in the inverse. That is, using the sonic imagination to trouble the image. Rather than sounds being forced to behave in the logic of the image, how can an image behave like a sound. What is at stake in making and seeing images that leak through and beyond their sensory and spatial frame.

I see a proposal for what could be a sonic image in one of the works of Mays Albaik. The work is preliminary titled Negative Space and consists of a single channel projection in a blackout box room. When one enters the space of the projection they are most likely met with a blinding light. After the eyes settle, they see what looks to be endoscopic images from a surgical procedure. Yet this endoscopic camera is not looking inwards, it is not descending down the trachea but rather pointing outwards. From inside the mouth to the blinding brightness of the outside world.

To shoot this video, the artist placed a camera inside her mouth and re-enacted a conversation with her family. With each utterance the camera becomes overexposed to the light outside the mouth cavity and so white light temporarily bleeds throughout the image. As the sentence flows, the video creates an arrhythmic strobe, flashing into the eyes of its would-be viewer.

Words become light in the absence of their audibility. The work is silent, the conversation is redacted from its would-be auditors. We only know that the conversation is with family and

therefore we can assume that it contains personal information, not only about the artist but her interlocutors that we are not invited to witness. What we do witness rather is the redacted document itself. Rather than the thick black lines that cover words on an official document, here it is the thick white light that conceals each vowel to ensure its illegibility. Like many redacted documents before it, this video has leaked. Like many of the redacted documents before it, the leak was intentional. In fact, finding ways for words that cannot be heard, through clenched teeth and clogged throats, to leak out seems to be a preoccupation of the artist. She writes in her book *al-Muhit* (2019):

“The older I grew, the filthier it [the mouth] got, as though the phlegm that had chaffed my chords didn’t disappear but instead became curses that moved closer to my lips. Closer to the outside world. This dirtiness sat, behind my teeth under my tongue for years.”

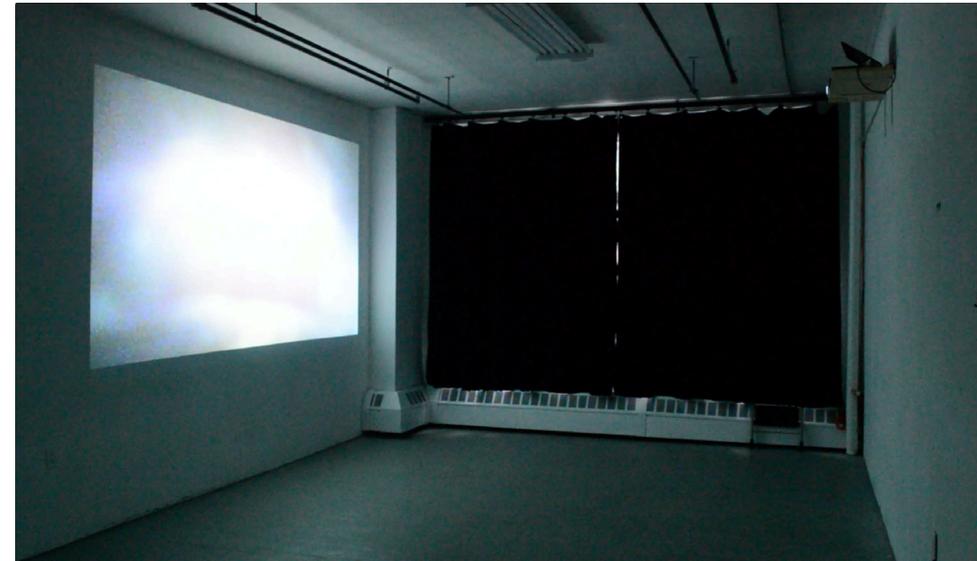
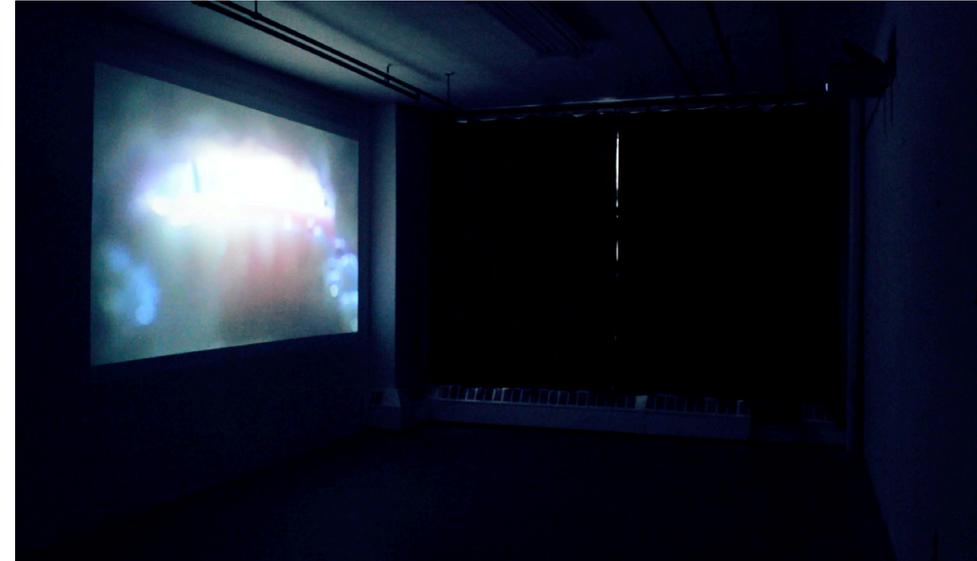
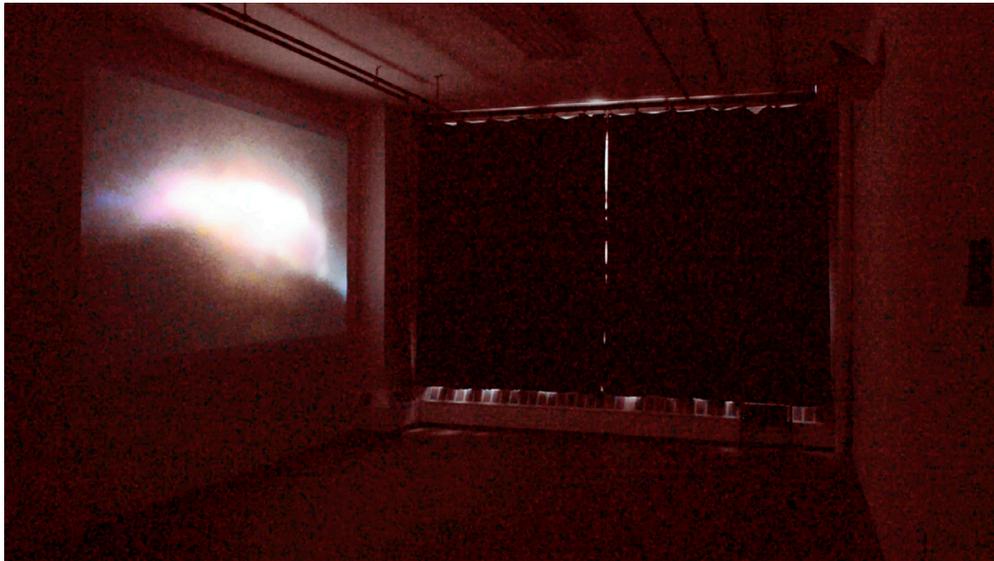
It is this dedication to the leak and the leakage of things that cannot be heard or seen otherwise that makes this work a sonic image. It is not in its inversion of word to light, not in the visualisation of sound but the spatialisation of the image that creates its sonic quality. For in this work, light does not only over-expose and overcome the image of the mouth, the light bleeds throughout the dark space of the otherwise unlit room. The words leak beyond the frame of the projected image to flood the room itself with light. Illuminating its audience, exceeding the object of art to include its audience in the space it occupies, in its image. I began this essay describing how the sound leaks through walls and therefore redraws the boundaries of what we usually consider

private space. Similarly, in this work, light leaks from the mouth outwards, enflames its auditor, blurring the boundary between the work and its audience. Illustrating the tension between the hushed private space of the original familial conversation and the need for the artist to exhibit it nonetheless, the light leaks, spilling out of the mouth, out of the private space. With this leak, it redraws new frontiers of private space to encompass those estranged to the artist.

In the series of spatial and sensory inversions at work in this work, Albaik reminds us that the mouth is an auditorium in and of itself; That the mouth is not only the mechanism for projecting sound outward but that the breath hitting the soft pallet activates the resonance of our skulls and creates reverberant conditions of our voice to resound before it enters the room of its audition. The room of its exhibition is therefore inverted here, as we sit not as an outside observer but on the stage floor of the mouth itself.

An image behaves like a sound when its semantic value is derived out of its relational rather than individual qualities. Bleeding between the borders of its subjects, rendering the bleed itself perceivable. The material conditions of sound make it an inherently difficult object to be scrutinised. It cannot be isolated often from the space in which it resounds. Sound waves, unlike photons of light, do not themselves move through the medium but rather cause a rippling effect that creates a rapid series of movement of the molecules around them; the object of sound is not itself moving but rather causing movement. The vibration of sound is therefore a collaboration between molecules of distinct objects. Sound and a sonic imagination therefore acts

as new propositions for producing and reading images that are continuous with the omnidirectional and uncontainable way that sound propagates both throughout the space of a building, or the resonant architecture of the mouth.





SERVERS. LIGATURES

ALA YOUNIS



Ala Younis is an artist. Research forms a large part of her practice as do curating, collaboration, film and book projects. Her work has been featured in numerous exhibitions, including solo shows in Amman, Dubai, Sharjah, New York, London and Seville. Her projects were shown at the Venice, Istanbul, Gwangju, Ural and Orleans Biennials. She is a member of the Advisory Board of Berlinale's Forum Expanded and Akademie der Kunst der Welt (Cologne) and co-founder of Kayfa ta, a non-profit publishing initiative.

SERVERS. LIGATURES

This exhibition explores the triangular relationship between language, the body, and geography. It does this through unpacking the idea of multipresense, the possibility of fully existing in more than one place. It looks at language as simultaneously a vehicle and a reflection of these multiplicities, and at the digital world as proof of our ability to be multipresent.

How to work from a state of instability.

How to live? How to dwell. To rest. To tranquil. To sustain a continuous line of thoughts? To trust. To return with confidence. To look around unconcerned. To turn a key in a door that opens to a place that you can choose not to leave from. To ground your step, to sustain a feeling of the air of your physical step on the ground.

Mays Albaik dissects these experiences against their replacement with the virtual. How worlds of intangibilities are shafted through a world of digits, digitals and documents. How a document can shape the physicality of being in a space. What type of extensions can we forge with a temporality or with a system based on replacements?

The first works that were produced for this show are a set of video footages of her bare feet on several floor/ground textures. She touches the floor with the tips of her toes. There are no

other events in these videos. The air suppressed between the flesh of her feet, the dust of the floors on which she rests these feet, and the temperatures exchanged between the flesh of her feet and the solidity of the grounds, are all crucial players, linkers, pointers, relievers, believers or residents. When Mays feet walk away, these linkers dust again in the air. They would rest on or are suppressed between other grounds and feet. It is this readability for accepting a replacement that Mays is intrigued or (de)motivated with.

Of the exciting bits of research Mays produced is a long and detailed analysis of the words *Iqāma* (residence or residence permit) and *Muqīm* (resident). She interrogates the root of the word, the verb *Aqām* or *Qām* and understands how conjugations of the word form a ligature. She returns to the early decades of Islam when larger and non-Arab communities became integral part of the Islamic society. Their limited knowledge of the language, and the language limitations at the time of allowing others to read its written formats (i.e. no special markers on letters that could be confused with other letters, and thus could also be confused as other words), resulted in upgraded systems of writing and communication. Dots were added to the letters that share the shape but differ in sound. Later *harakat* were added to words to mark whether they were about subjects, objects, places or other and so on. The change in the language was prompted not because of how the words are heard but of how they are heard after being studied/read or written. It is this residence (or pivoting) in the document, that Mays is questioning in this show: Of being Palestinian with Syrian documents; of having travel documents that are meant to limit travel; of being a resident but not a citizen; of waiting,

fearing, dreading, expectant of the termination of a document; of having these documents move and reside in a virtual world; of residing in servers. These investigations are reproduced as videos of scrolling words, or as a tree of cascading relations, between the words and their origins, origins and markers of non-originals and of originals as new modes of de-origi-ning.

However, the institutional changes to words were not made by happenings of needed/missing elements in shapes or meanings but in sub-rooting, in creating dominant words/descriptions that are dominated themselves. Interestingly, Mays finds these sub-roots happening in the use of ahruf al 'illa (vowels); how a vowel could affect a change onto a root power word to create another word that weakens the position or authority of the power given to the subject it enables/describes. While Qawm is a nation, muqīm is only a resident, a guest of this nation but not a native of it.

Mays looks down from the window of her residence. She films the ground, particularly the moving shadows of the sand particles, in what seems like desert emptiness but in fact a continuity of existing of something else; makers of a space (dust, splinters of rocks, wind that animates/moves the sand, shadows that animate too, heat that bounces off the ground, ...). In one of the rooms, a video sculpture stands solitary, its mass is made of a blue metal box that has an opening on its front, and two feet under it. The opening is a space for displaying a text to be read, as if the device speaks from its stomach.

The video onscreen scrolls between blue and green; chromas' colours that had also made most of the backgrounds of shared screens and mind

1 Deepak Unnikrishnan, Temporary People, UNAP, 5.

maps she compiled over the course of our conversations. Bits of texts, videos of feet, scribbles from press, previous projects, installation plans, COVID-19 alerts and our faces in small windows on the corner of our zoom screen.

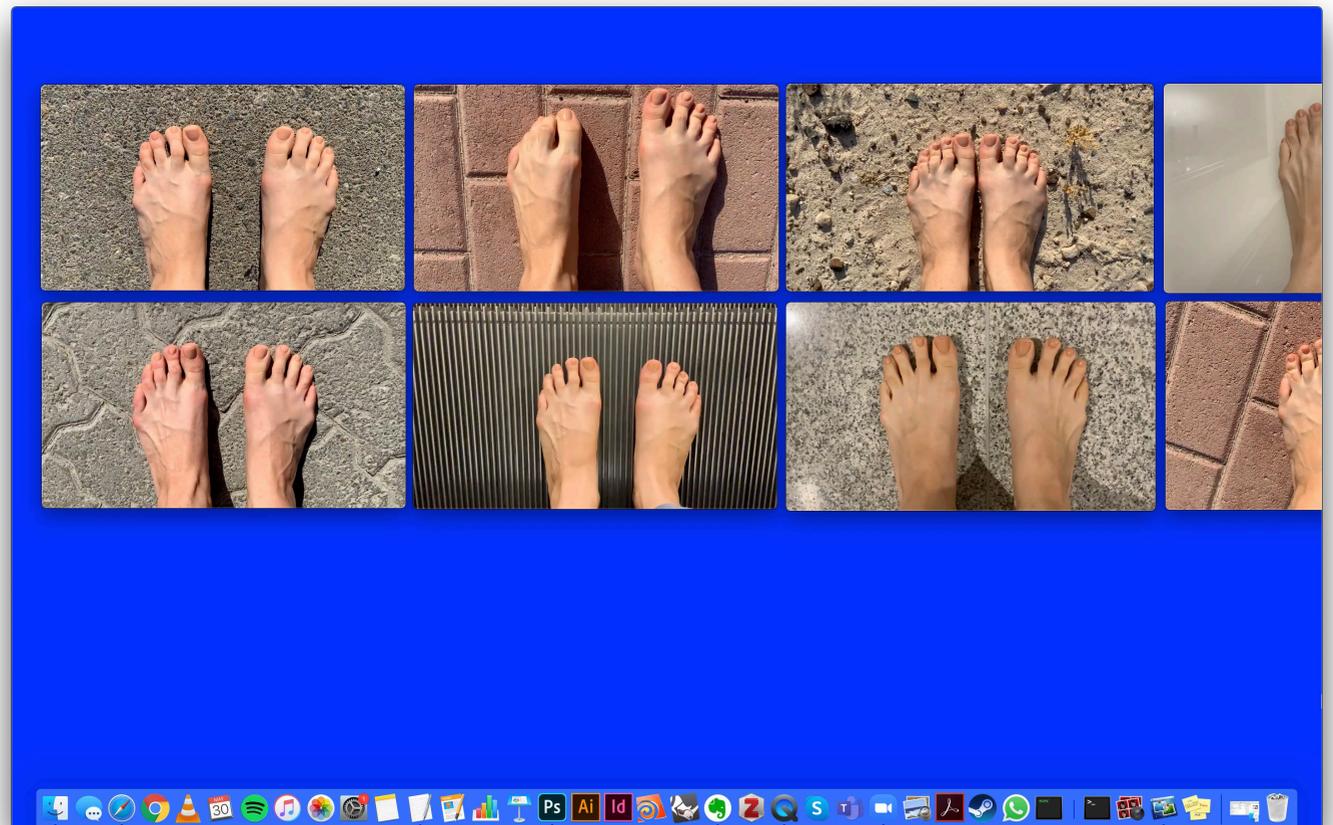
A labourer swallowed his passport and turned into a passport. His roommate swallowed a suitcase and turned into a little suitcase. When the third roommate, privy and vital to the master plan, ran away the next morning with the new suitcase and passport, he made it past the guard on night duty, onto the morning bus to the airport, past the bored ticket agent at check-in, past security, [...] until he found an empty chair in the departures lounge, where he sat and held his future in his hands.¹

In a dark room in the exhibition, is *Huna Huna*, a video piece that explores the digital as geography. "In a fabulated bureaucratic structure, the constructed leadership of the digital as a geography is announcing a new strategy for using language that defines its political subject. Here, Mariam Al Dabbagh and I will give a news report 'on the ground' in the digital, as officials of this bureaucratic structure."

The act of speech. The device of speech. Its cast into a sculpture. A shiny object that is too textured not to speak itself of the story of its cast. A set of cast mouths aligned next to each other like road lanterns. On similar roads, tracks for Corona tests were installed at the border between Dubai and Abu Dhabi as we continued to meet and discuss Mays's projects in 2020. Further bodily markers, so tiny and highly contagious, surfaced or perhaps limited itself to nationalist solutions of (the virus) containment. As thousands of residents found themselves unable

to practice residing due to being stuck abroad, or visitors unable to practice their movement due to being stuck inside, unwilling to leave to times that promised nothing. As these questions of instability, unpredictability and interruption continued to be the dominant.

Our first conversations started by Mays situating herself as a daughter of Palestinians with Syrian travel documents from Aleppo; not able to imagine going to settle in Aleppo, not only because of the war raging there but also because of the way Mays grew up in a place like the UAE. The lifestyle, the jobs, the ability to move, the sounds and accents change massively with a decision to return to a place where one carries its documents but not a memory or an experience of living in it. At the same time, Mays' existence in the UAE is a practical matter based on her securing a commitment to a job. Her stay is increasingly administered by digital governments that turns her existence into a piece of data in a constellation of servers. This show attempts to deal with these conversions, using materials, textures, touches and surfaces that are derived from the medium of these existences.





ABOVE GROUND: TOWARDS A DIGITAL CORPOREALITY

NADINE KHALIL



Nadine Khalil is an independent arts writer, researcher, curator and content specialist. After a decade-long stint in art publishing, she is currently consulting for art institutions such as the Ishara Art Foundation, the NYUAD Arts Center and Art Dubai in editorial strategy and content development. Recently she was the deputy editor of Dubai-based contemporary art magazine, Canvas (2017-2020) and has previously held editorial positions at Beirut-based magazines A mag and Bespoke, covering urban culture, visual and performing arts, and design, bridging her academic background in the social sciences

ABOVE GROUND: TOWARDS A DIGITAL CORPOREALITY

“Postmodern hyperspace finally succeeds in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.”

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*

In *A Terranean Love Note* at Tashkeel, parts of Mays Albaik’s body are present and projected: the filmed insides of her mouth, 3D laser frontal scans, casts of her feet. As digital ghosts, they enact a severance between figure and ground, body and built environment. Throughout Albaik’s practice there is a sense of the real approaching the ethereal but never entirely converging. In the various occupations of machine-bodies, the digital is not just an extension of the corporeal; it gestures towards its amplification.

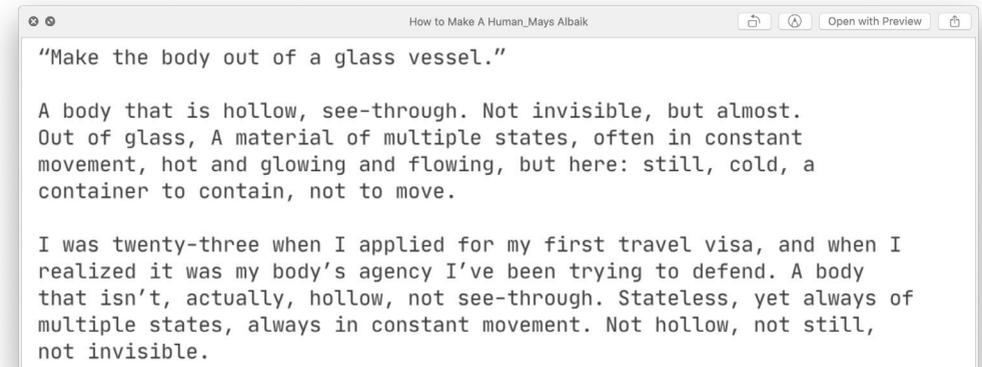
Screens configure and mediate nodes of access to bodies that voice text(s), forming a digital corpus. As hybrid, fluid architectures, they display a web of embedded connections between structure and script. Albaik attempts to situate and map her screens as spaces with their own networked geographies. Rather than transitory repositories of data, they are reference points to the great outside.

The mouth – an aperture to an internal world –

is what draws the viewer inside. This vehicle of utterance, with its visceral and aural qualities, is an entry point to Albaik’s work, and also a source of abstraction. The open mouth lends itself to technological probing, which light infiltrates and at times obliterates. Gums, teeth, bile reflect diseases of the body, and of language. ‘Diseased’ verbs are Arabic words with vowels in their roots, Albaik tells us.

1 The work was commissioned by Tashkeel, 2016, for the exhibition *Mind The Gap*

The mouth is a reflection of things that I cannot articulate. We develop relationships with places through our bodies; but through language, stories, and dialects we also develop strong relationships with places our bodies have never been to.

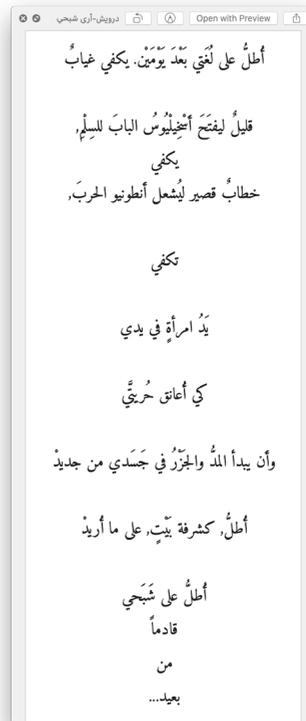


The back of the throat, from which words are mouthed, performs that painful long-distance relationship to place that so occupies her practice (like that lump that won’t go away). With tethers to places far removed that are textual in nature, Place-ness becomes a linguistic register, a collective sense of longing, however amorphous. For Albaik, the site is intertextual and multiply located. Assessing the notion of site-specificity

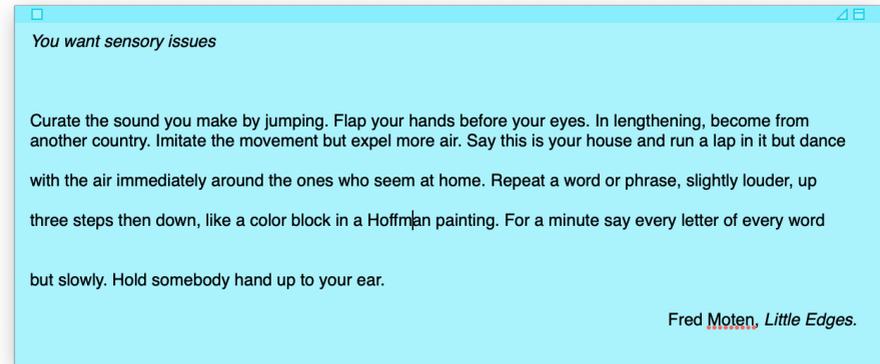
through movement and cyberspace and as transitive structures, “one thing after another, and not as synchronic simultaneity, this transformation of the site textualizes spaces and spatializes discourses,” Miwon Kwon surmises in her 2008 book, *One Place After Another*.

Albaik’s carving out of these architectural spaces of desire recalls a previous work, which unmakes spatial hierarchies of the inside and outside (*I overlook like the balcony of a house*)⁷. Her constructed balcony, the ‘outstretched tongue of the interior,’ could not be entered. In *A Terranean Love Note*, a door is left slightly ajar and affixed, through which amputated foot sculptures mirror cropped texts elsewhere. Nearby, a pile of earth brings in the city-as-construction site.

It’s bright beyond the opening, though darkness is what you’d expect from interment. I was thinking of the reception of light by both utterer and receiver. This is where it gets funny for me: I am the word being uttered into the ground but the ground is so bright. That’s my small, inside joke. The two ways of thinking (speaking) and feeling (grounding) the world are presented as juxtapositions. Where Albaik has previously given form to the before-speech in calcified sculptures evoking bile – and here in moving fleshy vibrations - her sense of ground bears no upward movement or regurgitation. Her stance is a mute one; the foot casts stand with gravity, an index of presence, trying to merge with what she considers the artificial boundary of negative space leading to the earth. If she is asking where words take

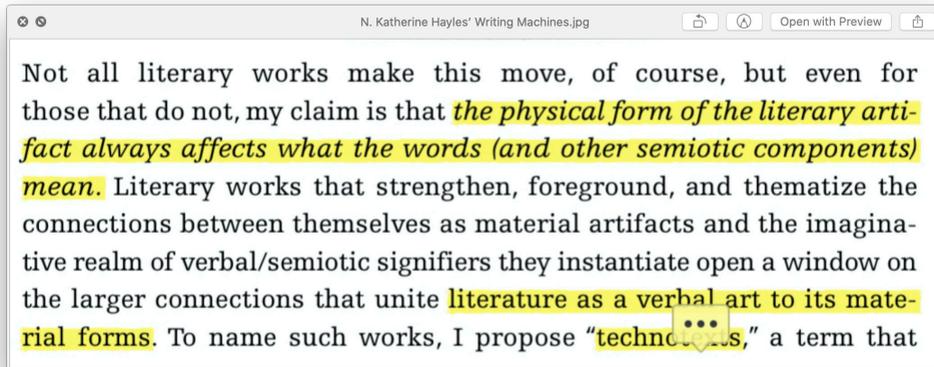


shape in the body, she is also wondering where the ground exists in the body.

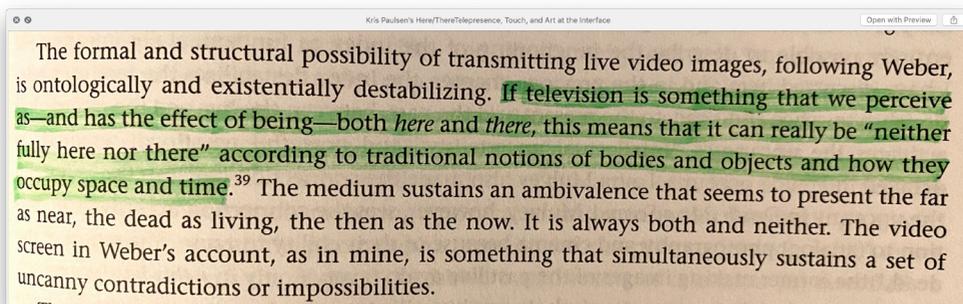


Vilém Flusser writes that it is impossible to pinpoint the gesture of speech, in that moment before utterance. It’s not an abstract or cognitive condition. For him, gesture isn’t like mime. It’s about communication or utility. It’s not a gasp but a thing that the body needs to do, and it gets ascribed meaning by social conventions. I thought I could find it by recording the gesture as free utterance... What interests me about the teleprompter is that it is the tool that asks the viewer to utter something. If the internet is the space in which you can have no body, then Albaik’s teleprompter is a confrontational figure. It questions the bodily occupation of virtual space. The corporeal and the terrestrial are seen as two poles of anchorage and text forms a moving corpus accumulated over time – literary fragments as aggregates of existence. Resonating with notions of reader-response theory; the text isn’t complete until the reader activates it. In this framework, Albaik is both reader and narrator, breaking down language’s hidden structures

in various degrees of translation; sculpting the gaps before words arrive, moments before speech is encoded. Flusser says this space can be likened to cybernetic memory, yet it has an ungraspable quality that cannot be pinned down to computers – ‘the word speaks’.



Propped sideways or upright, Albaik’s screens can be read like open books. The triangle, circumscribed or not, is a recurring motif. It brackets a work like closed quotes, mirroring moving text-image. The scripts, which are performative and polyvocal, reference the politics of state-speak and bureaucracy, prose and dictionaries, and the authorial non-human voice that surfaces in her humorous ‘Display Help’ instructions.



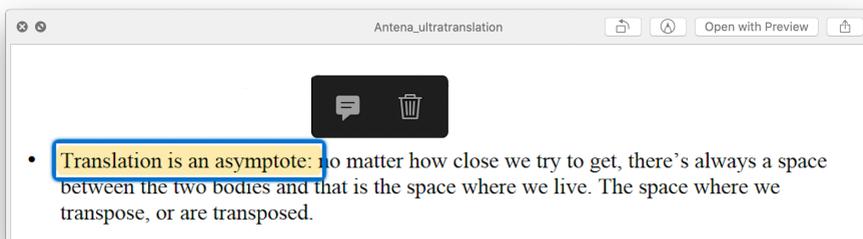
We should talk about the colours... they aren’t just digital. I wanted to start thinking about other colours, so, for example, the magenta comes up a lot. When it gets very purple in a way that’s visceral, I feel like it was the beginning of thinking about the magenta inside the body. The colours are not constant; they are as replaceable as chroma key green. Green is the colour of the transparent plastic sheet that Albaik places on textured surfaces beneath her feet in a sardonic attempt at getting closer to whatever is underneath.

If green brings the promise of being anywhere that actually exists, blue is the promise of the infinite everywhere, because it’s when the projector isn’t connected and also, it’s the blue screen of death. Blue feels like when we were optimistic about the internet. It’s not the anywhere, it’s the infinite space of the digital. The blue also came up when I was looking at my passport, which is the opposite of infinite.

A Terranean Love Note is not a quiet exhibition. Neither is it dissonant, the polyvalent voices fill the space in a sonic palimpsest. But it does carry moments of pause, between sounds and breaths, precursors to the before-becoming. Rolling syllables pulsate, and tectonic derivations alter semantics. Albaik orates and enunciates devotionally, whether this is mediated via the state’s official pronouncements or the dictionary’s deconstructionist definitions. Languages - material and semiotic - are loved. When visible in full(er) form, she exposes dual selves: Technicolor’s globular figure morphing to a depth-measuring LIDAR camera, and the symbol of ardent, nationalised youth. The latter announces the legal framework for an Arabized digital citizenry

against a backdrop of national insignia intersecting with Star Wars iconography. These are not indicative of fragmented presence or plurality; they are multi-referential and assert existence in multitude. Collapsing the humanized and computerized, technological ways of being in the world, the virtual locates itself in a place of power. It expresses political desires and subjects.

Resident and expatriate: I wouldn't call them opposites. We use them to describe the same person but at different times. In the case of the UAE, the term 'resident' does the opposite of what it intends to do by emphasizing guesthood. With a nuanced awareness of the neoliberal ethos that problematizes the distinctions between the expat condition and long-time residency in the UAE, Albaik proposes a nationhood outside the binaries of resident and non-resident. In *Here is Here*, Albaik's "manifesto of manifestoes" reminiscent of Saddam-era announcements, she proclaims: "This is where the expatriates immigrate, and this is where the immigrants reside." She argues for a borderless place that lies beyond the diasporic imagination of migratory flows. Home is ether, entry guaranteed, permanence perpetual and online presence governable: "...today we are all here. Having flowed here to stay here, and to work together from here." As such, she articulates new digital denizens from the bones of language, from her dictionary definitions that pick words apart to add another semantic layers and derivations.



Resistance has nothing to do with or residing in English, but in Arabic, these are attached to one another because of a semantic link in meaning that persists throughout. Here, the woman is the resistor of the old order and upholder of a new status quo, couched within retro-futuristic cultural signifiers. Albaik collaborated with Maryam Al Dabbagh for the manifesto that posits strategies for a digital citizenship, a text that evolved from a distance. It interrogates words that seem contrary but don't negate one another. They form parallel streams of thought.

What does it mean to remain at the threshold of inhabiting several languages? What is love untethered to land or screen? Can it be left behind in a note?

I think, sometimes, that my body formed around my mouth.

With every cough, a secret tried to escape. The belt of three stars, sea-salt drying on the shore, the taste of waves lapping against stones. My secrets, saffron kisses, like warm winter tea, and words whispered, like thin summer clouds.

But they were inside, pressed together, calcifying, not clouds anymore, but slow rock. Odorless in their immobility, in their imprisonment, tasteless.

Around them, my tongue morphed. My teeth, the teeth I ground to keep the clouds in, bled then broke then, around their debris, regrew anew. My lips flayed, then regenerated, and now they sit, my words' sore and swollen gates to the world.

I think bodies form around their negative spaces.

Mays Albaik (2018)

The artist Trevor Paglen writes, "...there can be no outside to the production of space (and the production of space is ipso facto political). Moreover, experimental geography is a call to take seriously, but ultimately move beyond, cultural theories that equate new enunciations and new subjectivities as political ends in themselves. When decoupled from the production of new spaces, they are far too easily assimilated into the endless cycle of destruction and reconstitution characterizing cultural neoliberalism, a repetition Benjamin dubbed 'Hell.'" Albaik understands this space of inquiry. It's an electronic textuality of self-reflexiveness that performs fractured words.

PHONATORY FUTURES IN CLOUDS OF HISTORICAL SILENCE

MOAD MUSBAHI



Moad Musbahi is an artist and curator living between Tripoli and London. His work investigates migration as a method for cultural production and political expression, focusing on the social practices and forms of knowledge that it engenders. He recently curated 'In Pursuit of Images' at the Architectural Association, (2020) and was part of the curatorial team for the inaugural Sharjah Architecture Triennial, (2019). Moad is a recipient of the Sharjah Art Foundation's Production Programme Grant (2020) and has worked as a visiting lecturer at the Royal College of Art, London.

PHONATORY FUTURES IN CLOUDS OF HISTORICAL SILENCE

"I sent out the verses crooked so that the can transmitters straighten them out for their delivery" ¹

"I pray to the trees and language migrates down my legs like mute cattle. I pray to the wooden meat that never left its roots." ²

Verse migrates. The speed and pace of poetic delivery are carefully regulated into a set of styles. One falls evenly on each word as one does on their feet, measured in an iambus, a metrical foot. It moves across the page, line by line. It presses against the larynx. It travels across border and place. The fleshy body of the text made audible in its muscular choreography. The gesture of the tongue, connected to the gesticulating arm, to the hand on that tunnel of carpal denotation. A cadence of the joints in orchestral harmony, a symphonic score of biological norms. Propped up by the voice box through the twitch of the knuckle. The synovial fluid lubricates the tendon in its flexing, flexing in that ever so careful indigitation. Each poetic line measured as a breath-unit, the exact volume of the lungs, through the throat, out as harassed by the tongue. Wet and irritable through this most flexible muscle's posturing, a lame agitation. The tremor of the finger, the wobble of the metatarsal, an operation at the scale of the vowel producing a lexicality of poetic proportions.

¹ Ibn Muqbil (d. after 35/656 or 70/690)

² Mort, Valzhyna, Music for the Dead and Resurrected: Poems, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020. pp38.

A meter in verse, the length of each vocal attempt in the steady revolution between exhalation and inhalation. The rhythmic reopening of the vocal cords, as they quiver and shake. Regulating and conditioning the gaseous mobility, arresting it into a careful relational valence, controlling its sudden rise at a given tune. A regular movement pressurised into a syntactical set of bodily possibilities. Yet, some poets subverted with this normalised rhythmic functioning, sought to break its harmony. The Ancient Greek poet Hipponax created 'lame or limp' iambic poetry, a choliamb. A stuttering across the stanza. An experiment in how corporeal variance provides difference in form. A hop and hobble. The verse skips. Misses the beat, broken. Falls heavily on its last bearing. A trill, a break, an off-key slap. This poetic style was met with much hostility against the ways it was used to speak satirically. It caused a rupture in the harmonics of policed proportions.

Satire as a genre creaks, a rapport of impeachable speech. Nestling in the annals of the literary tradition, in misaligned content and disruptive flow. It suppresses decorum to allow the cacophony of low-lying rowdiness to rise aplomb. A discrepant means to give animation to one's base morals and transgressions. When coaxed too far, intoned too loudly, remedial inoculates are induced. Rationing the dispensation of its corruptive character. A transgression in the correct order of things, causing a destabilised break, necessitating a need for adjudication, so that civility is maintained and resumed. To transgress, from the classical Latin of 'going over, or across', of a movement too far from the proper path. A disorientation of the marked off and given route

requiring a pause to reassess. A verdict is required in this momentary stoppage, to determine which direction the traveller takes, or whose journey may have to come to an end. Oral arguments are spoken to achieve such a verdict, they are made to break a moral impasse, to arrive at a favourable destination. The legal case as a crossroad, and the performance that is prompted by it, has given occasion to differentiated and distinct style of speech, of that which seeks to be heard over it.

As the Empire grew, it lost faith in paper and their silent existence. Upon reaching new geographic extents, and Ancient Rome's subjects were ever more apart and mobile, they sought to define trust through the spoken word. The history of oral contracts is one whose arc follows the history of migration. The evident echo of this fact can be heard across the written record, from the Institutes of Gaius published in 170 A.D., to the Institutes of Justinian in the year 533 A.D, the two founding tomes that originated modern legal regimes. A history of people speaking as they travelled to different climates, a weather carried in its vocal precipitation. *The contracts verbis and its most common form epitomised by the stipulatio had superseded the contract litteris or written contract in practically all exchanges.*³ Many commentators argue that the stipulatio was the most important type in Ancient Roman Law. It necessitated a communication in person between the two contracting parties. It rehearsed a refrain, a call and a response. Auditioned in a setting of theatrical action, displayed speech for its witnessing. For the arrangement was considered void without numerous voluble onlookers, and if not performed in a single continuous act. With demands on the sensorial capacity of the parties and their audience, in their ability to

³ Leung, Kal, Revisiting Roman Contracts: Emperor Justinian and the Contracts Verbis and Litteris (August 24, 2017). St. Anne's Academic Review, 2018, Volume 7, Pages 85-90

⁴ In Gaius at §3.105 and §3.106 while in Justinian at §3.19.7

⁵ In Gaius at §3.113 while in Justinian at §3.19.5

⁶ White, James Boyd. *Living Speech: Resisting the Empire of Force*. Princeton University Press, 2006. pp153

speak and be spoken to by an interlocutor⁴. Gaius goes further in his legal codex, limiting their silence, considering such a contract void if not met with enough vocalisation, or if there was not enough amplitude at the wrong moments.⁵

This 'obligation by words', a judicial attitude that Rome's provinces inherited, was a privilege for a prerogative few. In the greater expanse that prompted its use, the possibility of such audible legalism was defined by gendered citizenship. The speech of those that stood on its jurisdiction, that uttered its executive influence, became a mediated emblem of a homogenous patriarchal norm. Such singular colouring and determinations curtailed the use of speech, in a positive correlation to the areas that were then folded under dominion. A form of identity defined by one's vocal origin. It is from this foundational phonotrauma that the First Amendment of the United States constitution can be listened to more carefully. The provision turned defining democratic paradigm, protecting the 'freedom of speech', for it can be said that, "democracy is a world of people talking to each other", and not much more⁶. But whose speech? And speech for which purpose? A set of prompts for many cases to be heard and rebutted across the echoic chambers of the nation's courtrooms.

Thomas v. Collins reached the United States Supreme Court in 1944. Rising above the proclamatory appeals of the lower circuits to the high crescendo at the exosphere of constitutional power. It is considered a pivotal case and widely cited in contemporary proceedings concerning freedom of expression. It revolved around a law issued in the state of Texas that required labour union organisers to obtain permission to speak

to prospective members. Roland Jay Thomas, president of the United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implements Works (UAW), and vice president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, was due to give a speech at the Humble Oil & Refining Company plant, in Bay Town, Texas on 21 September 1943⁷. Six hours before he was due to talk, he was served with a restraining order to prevent him from doing so, a lettered act of pinpoint silencing. Upon consultation, he decided to proceed regardless, confident in his democratic right to 'speak freely', to stand and announce his views insistently. The temperature that day was due to hit a high of 24 degrees Celsius, with no chance of rainfall, the crowd congregated at the open yard adjacent to Decker Drive. A moderate breeze blowing from Trinity Bay, rolling with it a low-profile mist that lightly addressed the feet of the congregation.⁸ No sooner had he taken the makeshift stage that the sound of the plant's crude fractal mechanisations bellowed. Tenuously Thomas talked all the same. Stepping down from ledge, to the mist below, he was arrested for his violation, a compacted response to his audible audacity. "When *The Liberator* and the *Cincinnati* Daily Commercial covered this, they did not report on the weather."⁹

The faint fog that carpeted the floor, that was oddly underfoot during the occasion on the yard that day, had given rise to an expectant sub-tropical downpour in the proceeding days. The Texas Supreme Court upheld the law he had skirted, ruling it was a "valid exercise of the State's police power, taken 'for protection of the general welfare of the public, and particularly the laboring class.'" The call to unionise was perceived as a destabilising force, from which such uttered gestures and words prompted the need for carceral protection. Taking this argu-

⁷ Thomas v. Collins, 323 U.S. 516 (1945)

⁸ [weather based on <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/KEFD/date/1943-9-21>, accessed December 2020,]

⁹ Sharpe, Christina, *In the Wake, On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press, 2016. pp105

ment, at its most simple conclusion, that being subject to Thomas' speech in this moment, was a 'threat' to the welfare of the audience. His mouth a harmful projection to this 'glib' class, an elegy of lapsed eligibility. Talking as a toxic atmospheric jolt. But phonatory futurity stood its ground. A multiply-pinned message ostensibly cleared the mist on which they had previously stood, mist as missed mark. Upon appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, the ruling was reversed, albeit with a slim majority of five to four. The dissented judges held the view that the vocalisation of a unioniser was no different from the regulation imposed on that of a doctor, lawyer or stockbroker in their place of work. There was a legal leak in the definition surrounding the realm of a 'business activity'. A phantom foot on bumptious ground, allotting differential constitutional protections as those seemingly afforded to the everyday weather of practical parlance.

Speech as status is intimately tied to the status ascribed to a person, as their judicial ability to stand on firm ground and project their sound views. The multiplicity of moving limbs, earthly inscriptions and vibratory tones, seeding a sensorial atmosphere as a moment of communication as climatic communion. A material weathering of the acquiescent grunt from each of our throats, as the permissive splint from which the seismic sound of individual expression evaporates. An ironic irrelationality, from the overbearing paper requirements of a certain class to cross thresholds, papers that seek to sublimate their actions, that grant them the 'right' to hear and be heard by others. Determined in their phantasmality, as endlessly labouring workers, as the continuous sublimation of icy deafness to showers of muted incapacity. Speak when spoken to, of an impos-

sible intonation of personalised perspective. The right to a phonatory future foreclosed or rather, made into a conditional forecast of a certain social class' provision of labour.

The sound status of a body, its laboured potential for musicality finds a perfect example in the field of 'organology'. Derived from the Ancient Greek organon, the word for both body and instrument, as those objects that produce sound. Defined by the spectrum of their reproduction. One organ of perception, defining another organ's sonorous range. A range teased and tested in the virtuosity of its performance, and by the body's ability to host the score. A hospitality conditioned by the body-housing's elasticity and volume. To twang before the string snaps. To blow through a tube without blowing it off. Excessive and sudden excitations can weaponize the sonic into a lethal device. A mechanism that inflicts damage within its own interior. An outburst that ruptures the cords. Acts of unsound auto-mutilation. A cry that sweeps over and alters the face. A stress on its fleshy chamber, made audible as an emotional sign of distress. Crying is an example of such acts, yet the plethora of distinctions, between a tremorous whimpering phonation to a more continuous pitch, points to its melodic signature.

Crying is announced by increased subglottic pressure, a strained voice quality and an irregular pattern of breathing. It is the exterior sign of an interiorised case of acute phonotrauma¹⁰. The glottis that witnesses such an onslaught is the empty gap between the two vocal folds, and the crucial component in the production of vowels and voiced consonants. During the watery act of shedding tears, there is an increased glottic closure time, accompanied on occasion, by

¹⁰ Murry, Thomas & Rosen, Clark. Phonotrauma associated with crying. *Journal of Voice: official journal of the Voice Foundation*. V14. 2001. pp575-80.

rapid vocal fold closure. In instances, this leads to a vocal fold haemorrhage, or inflammation. Producing dysphonia or diplophonia as the state of having an abnormal voice. The former characterised by the hoarseness of its audition. A vocal deceit, sounding unlike oneself. The latter is a phenomenon of the voice's bifurcation, as seemingly producing two concurrent pitches. A split subject. Diplophonia is a result of vocal fold vibrations that are quasi-periodic in nature. A human state of self-estrangement. Yet, the original act of crying that causes such disarray had evolved to illicit the opposite effect. A sonic event to engender a response of compassion, of authentic connection. The new-born's pre-linguistic solicitation of those capable of providing necessary care for their survival or in the desperate plea of a traveller for shelter.

Sound can host and be hosted, in its structural enactment to create and carry across action. The ease with which sounds travel is the energised production of its emission. Certain frequencies reach further. Pierce through deeper. The presentation of sound as speech at great distances is determined by the performative dimension of its delivery. Encoded within memory, as enhanced by the possibility of augmentation. Stories of what was said are contagious, they become infectious in their viral dissemination.

In the Arabo-Islamic tradition, the need to transport and transmit this knowledge prompted the mass migration of a class of itinerant scholarly pilgrims, and the circulation of epistles on paper, and anthologies of lecture notes. In these many mediums in Arabic, sophisticated processes of data compression were utilised. Skilled poets and orators employ rhythmic tactics. They accentuate

communication with a set of mnemonic linguistic devices. Some poetic forms travel further than others, as a type of lubricated speech. Its power and potency lie by looping and resampling the vibrations of the sound as it hits the eardrum. To catch and reinforce the meanings through a shared set of structural attributes. Employing a technique known as vocalic assonance, as vowels are repeated rhythmically across a chain of words. And utilising what is referred to as syntactical parallelism, as the identical syntax is carried across from sentence to sentence, prompting the inference of what was said if only retaining a portion.

This compression finds its most efficient form in the practice of polysemy. Here, a single word carries with it a multiplicity, a weight of many meanings. The same word can refer to an act, a place, an individual, divine providence and the use of the word in another context, all at once. The amalgamation of this device, at the syntactical scale of the sentence, results in what is defined as intertextuality. The condition in which entire phrases, which are used in their semantic meaning yet are taken from elsewhere, and point to that place, without explicitly declaring this origin. A form of speech built on the known fragments of prior speech in the compression that renders the representation adequate to its infrastructure.

A condition that places a demand for a certain awareness from the audience, attuned for the necessary decryption required. A prerequisite knowledge that synchronises and binds the community with the frequency of its orations, through its verbal interplay. A community continually remade in their listening and shared refer-

11 Authored by Purandara Das, see also various renditions by TM Krishna for comparable examples.

ences. Yet these references and poetic motifs find new homes in distant locations, a transport across prevailing winds and oceanic currents. They script a hospitality in contrasting cosmologies and theological doctrines. Sufi Qawwali poems sung devotion to the beloved, transubstantiated into a model of Hindu divinity. Exemplified by the metaphoric morphology of the Carnatic musical score of Venkatala Nilayam in its hosting of otherly motifs¹¹. Here, sounds accommodated freely produce distinctly different effects across each respective ear. The loud amplitude of one's permissible speech masking deafening muteness in the chatter of alternative bureaucracies. A resonant resistant practice, as violent violation in the kinship between linguistic performance and its sign. Tearing down the ascendancy of multi-vocal meaning, a climatic demand for a binaural and dimensional listening and, an education of the sound-making medium within us, into those of historical silence.



Image by Eyes on Display,
courtesy of Reed Ghunaim

HERE IS HERE

THIS IS THE STATEMENT OF STATEMENTS

ISSUED FROM HERE.

THIS IS THE MANIFESTO OF MANIFESTOS

FROM A RESIDING RESIDENT OF A NATION HERE,

WE DECLARE THAT WE PASSED THE STAGE OF DIASPORA AND MIGRATION

TO FLOW INTO HERE AND TO STAY HERE.

AND AS FOR THE PAST HOMES OF THE IMMIGRANTS, WE HAVE NOW PLANTED THEM HERE.

FROM HERE THE STATEMENT OF STATEMENTS WAS ISSUED,

ITS WORDS ARE FORGED IN GOLDEN LETTERS,

AND THE RESIDENT PUBLIC HERE WELCOMED IT WITH JOY

FORGETTING ALL ITS PAST MISERY.

THIS IS WHERE THE EXPATRIATES EMIGRATE, AND THIS IS WHERE THE IMMIGRANTS RESIDE.

HERE, AND AS A BEGINNING, WE, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RESIDENT DELEGATIONS AND EXPATRIATE RESIDENTS, EXTEND OUR SINCERE THANKS TO THEIR MAJESTIES FOR THEIR SUPPORT FOR OUR VISION.

AND THUS: WE PRESENT HERE THE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WE PROPOSE UPON OUR PERMANENT ENTRY HERE.

**FIRSTLY:
BOTH EXPATRIATES AND RESIDENTS CAN BOOST THIS ECONOMY OF THE DIGITAL THROUGH THE ETHER OF HOME MORE THAN A TRILLION IN GDP GROWTH.
THIS IS WHY ADOPTING THEIR EFFORTS IN THIS NEW DIGITAL ARAB VISION IS ESSENTIAL WITH THE GROWTH OF THIS DEMOGRAPHIC WHICH CANNOT BE STOPPED BY THE CLOSING OF THE BORDERS OR A PERPETUAL ABSENCE OF PERMANENCE.**

SECONDLY:

**THE CREATION OF LAWS THAT
REGULATE THESE DEMOGRAPHICS
POLICIES GOVERNING THEIR ONLINE
PRESENCE
ATTESTING THEM AS DIGITAL CITIZENS
IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE REGION.**

THIRDLY:

**THE FORMULATION OF FLEXIBLE
MERIT-BASED
POLICIES AND LEGISLATION
MEASURING NATIONAL SKILLS**

FOURTHLY:

**A FOCUS ON THE AXES THAT
CONSOLIDATE THE PRESENCE OF
DELEGATIONS
BY STRENGTHENING THE DIGITAL
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND DIGITAL COMMERCE
AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP
AND DIGITAL LOYALTY**

FIFTHLY:

**HARNESSING ALL EFFORTS TO ENSURE
TOLERANCE, LOVE AND COOPERATION
BETWEEN DELEGATIONS AND OTHERS,
LAUNCHING AWARENESS PROGRAMS
OF THEIR CIVIC ROLES
TO BE HELPFUL AND TO SHARE OUR
SUCCESSFUL MODEL
WITH OTHER COUNTRIES**

MAY GOD GRANT US SUCCESS

**AND WE REPEAT AND REPEAT,
THAT WE ARE HERE,
AND IN THE SHADE OF PALM TREES
THAT EMIGRATED BEFORE US,
WE INVITE ALL RESIDENTS TO BE
REASSURED,
AND WE ASSURE THE REST OF THE
PERMANENCE OF OUR GRATITUDE.
WE ASSURE THEM THAT TODAY WE
ARE ALL HERE,
HAVING FLOWED HERE
TO STAY HERE,
AND TO WORK TOGETHER
FROM HERE.**

***HUNA HUNA (HERE IS HERE)
MARIAM W. AL DABBAGH***



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courtesy of Reed Ghunaim