

THE Markaz Review

TMR Newsletter 35 • May 15, 2021



The Markaz Review publishes its ninth issue, on [WALLS](#).

Hello Subscriber First Name,

Today, May 15, Nakba Day, marks the annual commemoration in which Palestinians remember the national calamity that befell them in 1948 upon the founding of Israel. At a time when Gaza is once again under the bombs, in “Operation Guardian of the Walls,” and Hamas is firing on Israel, many of us are in a somber mood, saddened by the climbing death toll. We join the [UN Secretary-General](#) in calling for an immediate end to hostilities. Today is also coincidentally the day we publish the 9th issue of TMR, on WALLS.

[Why WALLS?](#)

“I would like to break the walls of ignorance between East and West,” said Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and on that we agree. Walls and barriers are what we erect when we have no words, when we fail to articulate a coherent argument or defense of our beliefs — or when we unjustly persecute another people, people we demonize for lack for a more intelligent approach, when what we need is a *relationship*.

Walls and borders and *bombs* are what we use to illustrate our fear of others, but they have never *worked*, because you can’t wall in, or wall out, the truth. And you know what the truth is: we are all more alike than different, and we need each other (despite what our elected, or selected, political leaders tell us) because we’re all in this together.

Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, whether they live in Haifa, Lod, Ramallah or Gaza, are not ghastly aliens from two mutually-distant planets: they are flesh-and-blood people who share the same land, food, air, water and ecosphere. If Covid strikes in Tel Aviv, it lives in Jenin; if a drought befalls the West Bank, it also threatens the Galilee; and if (heaven help us) a nuke goes off anywhere in the region, everyone is finished.

Walls enclose and separate us, they prevent us from seeing each other when what we most need is to understand the human condition, and how we can reach peak human intelligence while saving the planet. I would argue that we will *not* be able to save the planet *unless and until* we reach peak human intelligence — which means the clock is ticking for us to end racism and colorism (perhaps the stupidest human failing of many). We’ve got to stop demonizing each other, regardless of our differing appearances, religions, history or political beliefs.

It sounds obvious and trite, but we must watch out for and take care of each other. Alas, walls are what happens when the pandemic adversely affects mostly women and people of color, as the [World Economic Forum](#) found in March — and as the [Washington Post](#) reported, the pandemic could set women back by an entire generation. The question is, what are WE going to do about it? And how will we right the imbalances faced by people of color — and when can we eliminate once and for all white supremacy?

In the ninth issue of The Markaz Review, we asked artists, writers and photographers to consider the matter of walls and borders, internal and external, literal and figurative. This month’s centerpiece features the art and words of [Tom Young](#) and critic [Ziad Suidan](#), as they describe the revival project of Saida, Lebanon’s 300-year-old Hammam Al Jadid, “a place where the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities would gather to cleanse and attend one another’s ritual wedding ceremonies before it closed in 1949.”

We also look at the worldwide mural campaign [Education is Not a Crime](#), spearheaded by the Baha’i community in an effort to speak out about Iran’s persecution of its largest religious

minority. In her essay “[Panopticon of Kashmir](#),” Ifat Gazia remembers her youth and exile from her hometown, as Kashmir remained under siege by Indian security forces. And with “[Beautiful/Ugly: Against Aestheticizing Israel’s Separation Wall](#),” Malu Halasa revisits the question of whether walls, borders and barriers should ever be dressed up to disguise their true intent. In “[The Murals of Yemen’s Haifa Subay](#),” contributor Farah Abdessamad interviews one of Yemen’s most fearless feminists, who as a street artist attempts to capture the heart and soul of people who have lived with war and famine for years. In “[Between Thorns and Thistles in Bil’in](#),” muralist Francisco Letelier recalls his sojourn in the West Bank, leading the townspeople in painting their own walls with images and words of hope and resistance. And in “[The Wall We Can’t Tell You About](#),” artist Jean Lamore briefly describes one of the world’s largest and least-known separation walls, between Morocco and the Western Sahara.

In “[Is Tel Aviv’s Neve Tzedek, Too, Occupied Territory?](#)” Taylor Miller explores the aesthetics of gentrification and the “settler colonial hydra that continually displaces, erases, and reinscribes Palestinian space.” Chef Fadi Kattan contributes with “[Magloubeh Behind the Wall in Bethlehem](#).” And with “[From Damascus to Birmingham: a Selected Glossary](#),” British writer and activist Frances Zaid describes in epistolary fashion the language barriers in her blooming relationship (leading to marriage and kids) with a three-time refugee from the Yarmouk Camp.

TMR publishes an exclusive excerpt from Todd Miller’s new book *Build Bridges, Not Walls* with the chapter, “[We Are All at the Border Now](#).” We are also pleased to publish poet Sholeh Wolpé’s “[The World Grows Blackthorn Walls](#)” and a new short story from Aida Y. Haddad, “[A Home Across the Azure Sea](#),” along with an essay entitled “[The Bathing Partition](#),” in which, in a creative exploration of identity and homelessness, Sheana Ochoa faces her own inner walls. Finally, photographer [Claudia Wiens](#) shares with us her kinetic mural and youth culture photos, shot in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia from 2012 to 2014.

Come to our WALLS issue with an open mind and generous spirit, and if so inspired, leave us your comments in the Disqus section at the end of each contribution. Thanks for reading and [supporting](#) The Markaz Review.

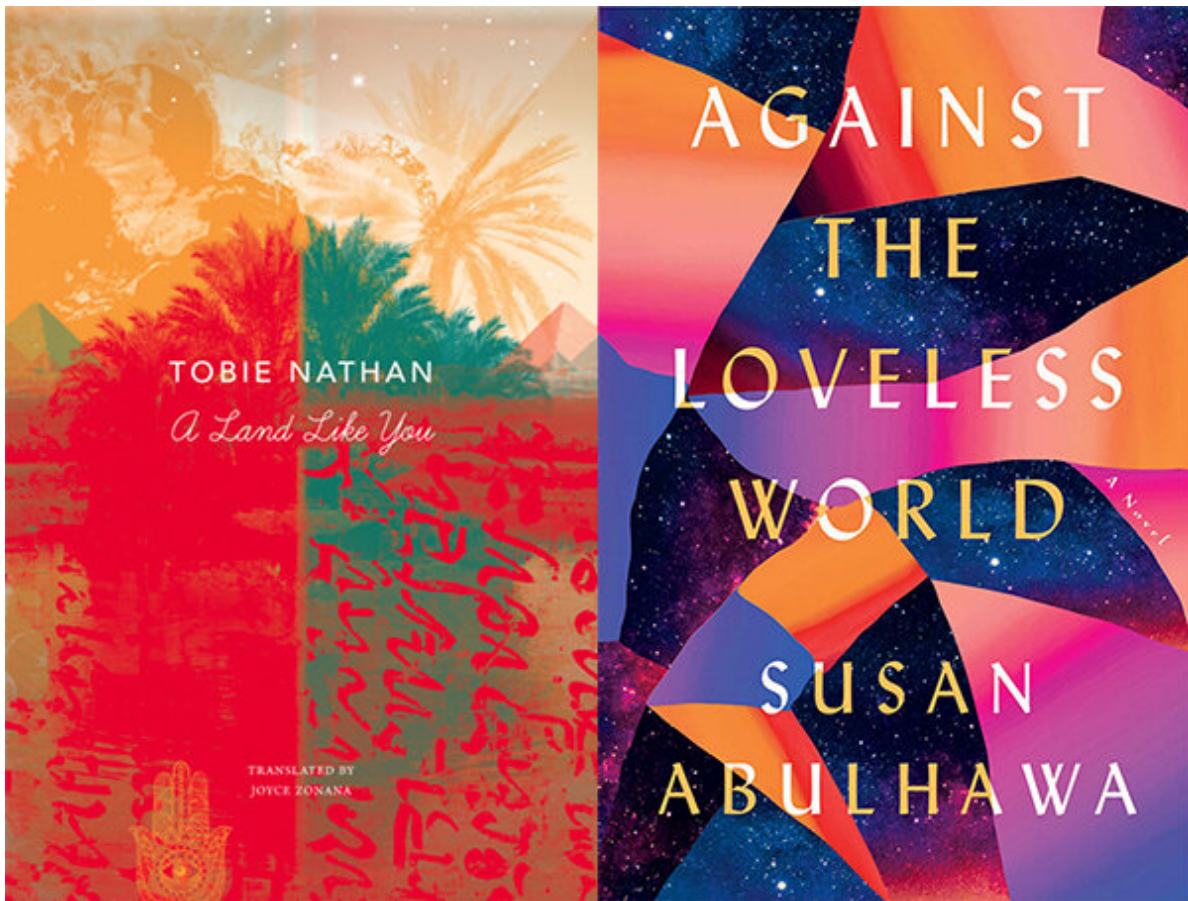
—Jordan Elgrably, Editor

p.s. TMR 10 will be devoted to “WASTA!” (nepotism/corruption) and comes out on June 15, while TMR 11 is on “GAZA” and appears July 15 — don’t forget to check out our [Call for Submissions](#) page! And please support our work...thank you!



[The Labyrinth of Memory](#), by Ziad Suidan

Thanks for reading, and as always, [supporting TMR](#). Kindly write TMR in the memo line of your check and send your tax-deductible contribution payable to MPV: MPV, 1626 Wilcox, Suite 702, Los Angeles CA 90028-6206 or [Donate to The Markaz Review Online](#). TMR is also a nonprofit association in France and contributions are tax-deductible.



TMR BookGroup May and June 2021 selections

TMR BookGroup is reading/discussing:

Our BookGroup (free & open to all), has read and talked about Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies*, Malu Halasa's *Mother of All Pigs*, Laila Lalami's *Conditional Citizens*, Hassan Blasim's novel *God 99*, and Dima Alzayat's *Alligator & Other Stories*, and Sahar Mustafah's novel, *The Beauty in Your Face*. Next up for May is Tobie Nathan's novel *A Land Like You*, set in Egypt, and our June selection is Susan Abulhawa's *Against the Loveless World*, a Palestinian story. Most bookgroup conversations are joined in the second half by the book's author.

[Go here](#) or to join the group, send an email to books@themarkaz.org.

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