

# THE Markaz Review

TMR Newsletter 23 • March 15, 2021



For our [TRUTH? حقيقة](#) issue this month, our featured artist is the Beirut-based [Tom Young](#): “Ascent” (Holiday Inn), oil on canvas, 140cm x 200cm, 2016 (courtesy of the artist).

## Hello Subscriber First Name!

Why an issue on [TRUTH? حقيقة](#), falling as it does on the 10th anniversary of Syria’s uprising, today—the 15th of March, 2021?

Discerning the truth is one thing for a news junkie and another for a flaneur reading a novel. That is to say, the search for truth can be literal — imagine a reporter chasing after facts, stats, quotes and “balance” — while a poet is after something else altogether, something more elusive, but nevertheless precious, like a pearl in an oyster. As consumers

of information, news, entertainment and literature, we certainly have our work cut out for us. One almost wishes there were a magic pill one could take to enhance our powers of discernment.

I would venture that we tend to know truth when we find it; but in these times, like adventurers in the selva who have to hack our way through with machetes, we're faced with conspiracy theories, thick as lianas; with fake news peddled by the very snake oil salesmen on TV we know to be big fat liars; and with corporations and governments that spy on us in the name of capitalism or national security, and that have no compunction about lying to us—none. Moreover, while we may enjoy our social media, and even read it to get the latest news, we've got to proceed with caution, hoping to avoid the trolls and the bots while being rewarded with some semblance of the truth.

In The Markaz Review's 7th monthly issue, we've asked contributors to address several of the almost endless truth varieties — in fact, we might wonder whether there are more varieties of tomatoes (over 3,000) than versions of the truth. In any event, American sociologist [Lisa Hajjar](#), who has visited Guantánamo prison in Cuba no less than 13 times, turns in this month's centerpiece on torture and US government secrecy, while [Andy Lee Roth](#) from Project Censored warns us about the new algorithmic gatekeepers, the Big Tech villains who do not have our best interests at heart. There are also contributions on endangered literacy ([Marcus Gilroy-Ware](#)), natural-born liars ([Preeti Samarasan](#)), and the truth about Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, where assassinations of journalists are the new form of national censorship. TMR is also delighted to present recent poems from [Ammiel Alcalay](#), [Hala Alyan](#) and [Mohja Kahf](#), and a deeply-moving personal essay from artist-writer [Francisco Letelier](#) on the assassination of his father Orlando Letelier, in what was “perhaps the only clear case of state-supported terrorism that has occurred in Washington DC,” according to the late secretary of state George Schultz. Rounding out the issue are new book reviews by [Rayyan Al-Shawaf](#), [Stephen Rohde](#), and [Farah Abdessamad](#), who looks at a risqué new translation of Al-Hariri's *Impostures*, and a luxurious, often funny biographical essay from [Marian Janssen](#) about the “Amazon sex goddess” and Pulitzer-prize winning poet, Carolyn Kizer, in Pakistan. Finally, [Malu Halasa](#) reviews the new graphic novel by Mana Neyestani, and provides an audio rendition of “Chewing Viagra Gum” with its send-up of conspiracy theories.

Our featured artist this month is UK-Beirut painter [Tom Young](#), with additional art from [Salma Arastu](#), [Ali Banisadr](#), [Paul Batou](#) and [Hayv Kahraman](#).

Thanks for reading, and as always, [supporting TMR](#).

—Jordan Elgrably, Editor

p.s. Next month's issue on MARSEILLE, publishing April 15th, is guest-edited by Jenine Abboushi.

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**WE'RE HONORED.** TMR has received a generous grant in the amount of **\$25,000 – equivalent to half of our Winter Fund Drive goal of 50K.** Please help us match it to reach our goal by making a contribution in any amount by March 31, 2021.

[Donate by March 31st to the Winter Fund Drive](#) and we'll add your name into a mystery drawing. **ONE lucky winner** will have a chance to meet some very special people and receive several unique GIFTS, and now, **TWO** additional winners will also be rewarded. Yes, 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes, whee!

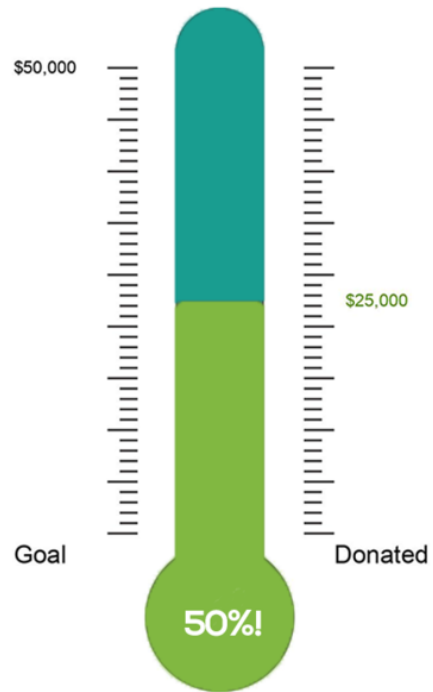
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## The Markaz Review Winter Fund drive

The Markaz Review thanks the  
Violet Jabara Charitable Trust  
for their generous 25K donation.

Please help us reach our goal of  
50K by March 31st with a  
contribution in any amount!



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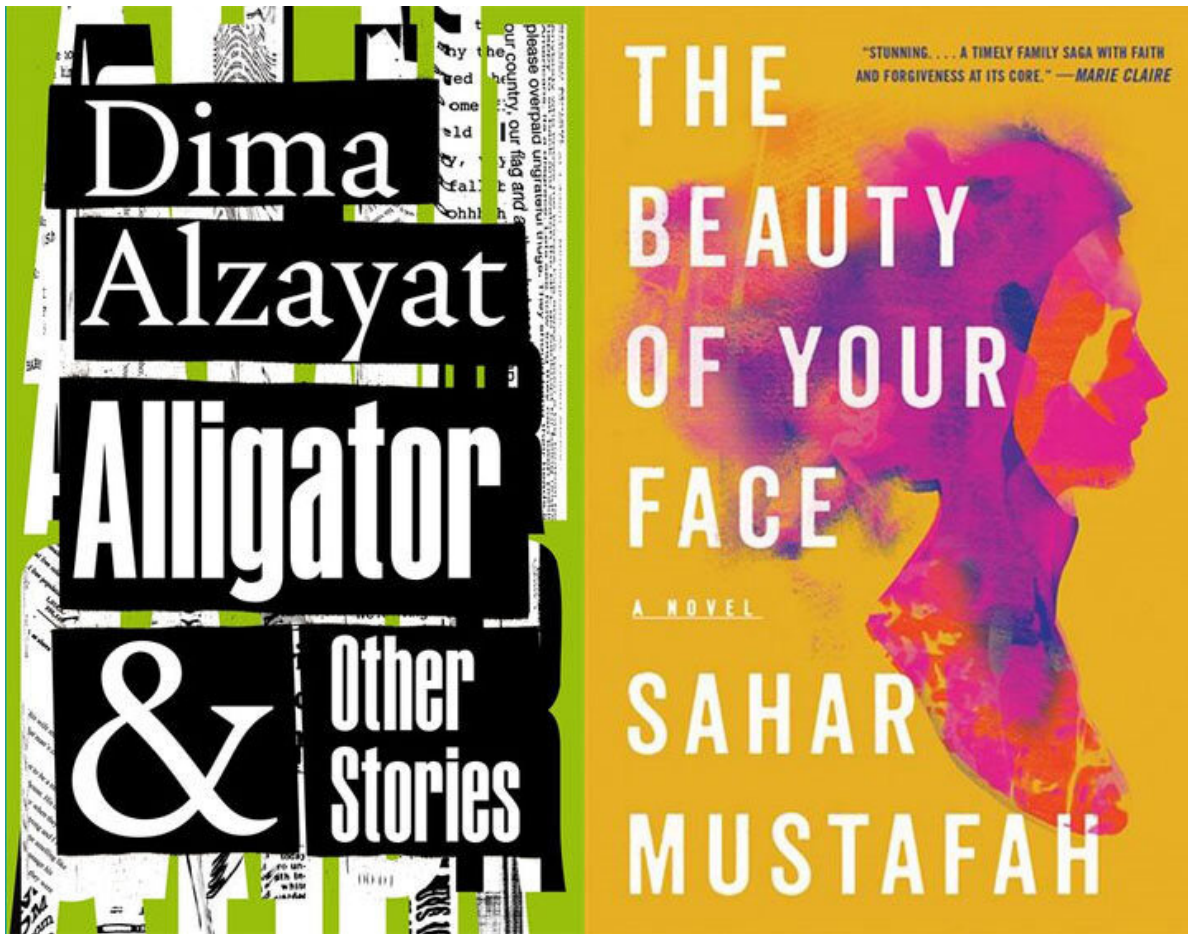


See our World Picks for Feb/March [here](#).

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You can also choose to support with either a one-time or monthly contribution [online](#). Thanks for reading, sharing and [supporting TMR](#).



TMR BookGroup March and April 2021 selections

[TMR BookGroup](#) is reading:

Recently the BookGroup (free & open to all), read and discussed Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies*, Malu Halasa's *Mother of All Pigs*, Laila Lalami's *Conditional Citizens* and Hassan Blasim's novel *God 99*. Next up are Dima Alzayat's stories in *Alligator & Other Stories*, and Sahar Mustafah's novel, *The Beauty in Your Face*.

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

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