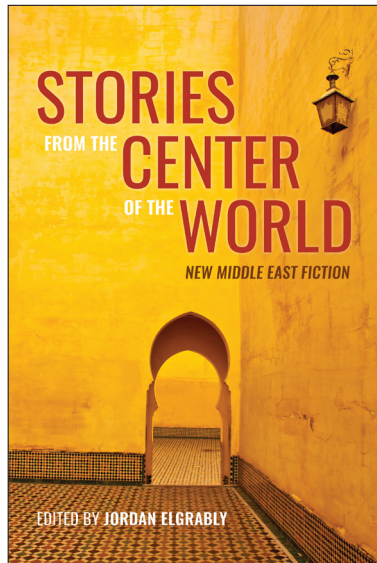


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Stories from the Center of the World

New Middle East Fiction

Edited by Jordan Elgrably

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Short stories from 25 emerging and established writers of Middle Eastern and North African origins, a unique collection of voices and viewpoints that illuminate life in the global Arab/Muslim world.

“Provocative and subtle, nuanced and surprising . . . these stories demonstrate how this complicated and rich region might best be approached—through the power of literature . . .” —**Viet Thanh Nguyen, author of *The Committed***

Stories from the Center of the World gathers new writing from the greater Middle East or SWANA — a vast region that stretches from Southwest Asia, through the Middle East and Turkey, and across Northern Africa. The 25 authors included here come from a wide range of cultures and countries, including Palestine, Syria, Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco, to name a few.

In “Asha and Haaji,” **Hanif Kureishi** takes up the cause of outsiders who become uprooted when war or disaster strikes and they flee for safe haven. In **Nektaria Anastasiadou’s** “The Location of the Soul According to Benjamin Alhadeff,” two students in Istanbul from different classes—and religions that have often been at odds with one another—believe they can overcome all obstacles. **MK Harb’s** story, “Counter Strike,” is about queer love among Beirut adolescents, and **Salar Abdoh’s** “The Long Walk of the Martyrs” invites us into the world of former militants, fighters who fought ISIS or Daesh in Iraq and Syria, and are having a hard time readjusting to civilian life. In “Eleazar,” **Karim Kattan** tells an unexpected Palestinian story in which the usual antagonists—Israeli occupation forces—are mostly absent, while another malevolent force seems to overtake an unsuspecting family. **Omar El Akkad’s** “The Icarist” is a coming-of-age story about the underworld in which illegal immigrants are forced to live, and what happens when one dares to break away.



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Contributors include: Salar Abdoh, Leila Aboulela, Farah Ahamed, Omar El Akkad, Sarah AlKahly-Mills, Nektaria Anastasiadou, Amany Kamal Eldin, Jordan Elgrably, May Haddad, Malu Halasa, Mohammed Al-Naas, MKHarb, Alireza Iranmehr, Karim Kattan, Hanif Kureishi, Sahar Mustafah, Ahmed Naji, Mai Al-Nakib, Diary Marif, Abdellah Taia, Danial Haghghi, Ahmed Salah Al-Mahdi, Natasha Tynes, Omar Foda, and Tariq Mehmood

Jordan Elgrably is a Franco-American and Moroccan writer and translator, whose stories and creative nonfiction have appeared in numerous anthologies and reviews, including *Apulée*, *Salmagundi*, and *The Paris Review*. Editor-in-chief and founder of *The Markaz Review*, he is the cofounder and former director of the Levantine Cultural Center/The Markaz in Los Angeles (2001–2020), and producer of the stand-up comedy show “The Sultans of Satire” (2005–2017) and hundreds of other public programs. He is based in Montpellier, France and California.



Praise for Stories from the Center of the World:

“A truly ambitious mix of established and emerging literary stars from a region of the world too often viewed through the lens of religion and politics. . . . serving as a reminder of our common humanity.”

—Reza Aslan, author of *An American Martyr in Persia*

“This volume is loaded with two dozen stories of exile, love, and magical realism. . . . What is impressive about this collection is how culturally informed and varied it is.”

—Zein El-Amine, author of *Is This How You Eat a Watermelon?*

“A lively and diverse set of tales from a complex region.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“. . . the anthology fulfills Elgrably's stated vision of creating 'a collective orchestra of voices and . . . the beginning of an east-west conversation.' The highlights alone are worth the price of admission.”—*Publishers Weekly*

