



THROUGH
THE
DARKENING,
WE
GLEAN

Be alert, raven! Our resurrection will be postponed.

No night is long enough for us to dream twice.

There is only one door to our heaven.

Where will the end come from?

We are the descendents of the beginning.

We only see the beginning.

So come out of the origin of night

as a priest, and preach with your always

echoing voice the human void surrounding you!

[...]

You and I are one in words.

We belong to the same book.

The ashes upon you are mine,

and in the shadow we are

the only two witnesses, victims,

two short poems about nature

waiting for the devastation to finish its feast.

from the poem **The Raven's Ink**

by the Palestinian poet **Mahmoud Darwish**

Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems, translated and edited by **Munir Akash** and **Carolyn Forché**,

with **Sinan Antoon** and **Amira El-Zein**

University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 2003

EDITORS' NOTE

As the launch event of this publication happens on December 19th, 2025, we drew our curatorial inspiration from Shab-e Yalda – the Persian celebration of the Winter Solstice. It is the longest and darkest night of the year, dawning the rebirth of brighter days ahead. And so, we put out a wish to explore how we process darkness together – how we brace for the returning light, not through denying the dark, but by gathering around it, sharing stories, poems, images, and gestures that make the night more bearable, more meaningful.

Yalda encourages us to sit together and celebrate endurance, resilience, and hope, as an act of resistance against isolation, especially in colder seasons or in times shadowed by grief and multiple atrocities. These pages are a constellation of voices circling the same fire on the longest night of the year. This issue weaves together writings, poems, paintings, and images into a collective tapestry that seeks to bring light into darkness. We gather to read, sing, and move through shared sensations and imagery that keep us close and tend the warmth of togetherness.

Hands peel pomegranates and stories spill into the air as we wait for the sun to return. In this convergence, we share space with lions, wolves, rabbits, birds, moths, voices, and bodies whose natures and histories teach us how to listen and imagine new possibilities. We honor the cycles that transform our being, and moving through this darkening, we glean.

With warmth and compassion,
Bita Bell and **Sina Saberi**
Co-Curators and Co-Editors

OCCUPIED AIR



Photos © Felix Rabach

SHIRIN
FARSHBAF

Day 25 30-second silence

Are You ready? 45-second silence

Day 25 I'm waiting for the 13A bus. On weekdays, one comes every 7–8 minutes, and usually, it is not so crowded, so I can find a free seat. I only travel three stops on the bus and have to get off at Neubaugasse station. From there, it's around a 15-minute walk to my *home*.

Most of the time, I chose to walk from Mariahilferstrasse. It's busy there, with lots of people shopping, walking, or just sitting on benches. It's a wide street with no bike lane, lots of shops, and so many languages.

I walked then toward Westbahnhof. And from there it's a 4-minute walk and four sets of traffic lights to get to the street. I passed by taxi station, a big hotel, and a local restaurant that serves Austrian food.

I walked up the street and turned right at the first alley. When I turn to the alley, I start searching for my keys in my bag. By then I only had two keys: the old one was for the building, and the new one was for the apartment door, which had been changed recently and was new and bright. Every time I found the key, I told myself,

'This is the key to my *home*.'

I put the key in the lock and think to myself,

'I'm opening the door to my *home*.'

When I took the stairs, I would say out loud that

'I am taking the stairs to go to my *home*.'

I lived on the second floor with three other people. The apartment was old but nice and cosy, and it had been a shared flat for a long time. So many details and objects that belonged to no one and left unused. All were there to welcome me. It was no surprise that the apartment door was usually unlocked. So, I would just take the handle, step in, and think to myself, 'I arrived *home*.' Sometimes when nobody was around, I would even say out loud 'Hello' to the place I was trying to call *Home*.

I kept doing this practice for almost a month. Every time, quietly to myself – and sometimes aloud to others – that I am going *home*.

I lived in that place for quite a long time, but I never felt entirely comfortable or at home. So, every day, with all the changes towards making it a home, I kept asking myself,

'Where am I going?'

I'm going *home*.

I did it because I had lost my sense of *home* for a long time. I did it because I felt that something was missing, and that thing didn't look normal for me – and that thing has never turned out to be the same concept again.

In the end, I didn't dare to save my so-called *home* address on Google Maps as home. I chose to call it a 'room'. Whenever I looked for the best route back to the place I lived on the map, I searched for a room, I had a room, I lived in a room, I went to a room on the second floor of an old building in the 15th district, near Westbahnhof in Löhrigasse which never felt like home.

I want to share something with you. It is about the slang we use in Farsi.

There is a phrase that says

دلَم هوای اونجا رو کرده

'I miss the air of that place.'

When I say دلَم هوای اونجا رو کرده

My heart longs for that place.

I literally include everything that relates to the place and me being in that place: this includes people, streets, neighbors, buildings, the sky, birds in the sky, voices, noises, joyful and joyless moments, ... It's a lot bigger than I can explain.

We use it when we don't know how to express the extent of our homesickness.

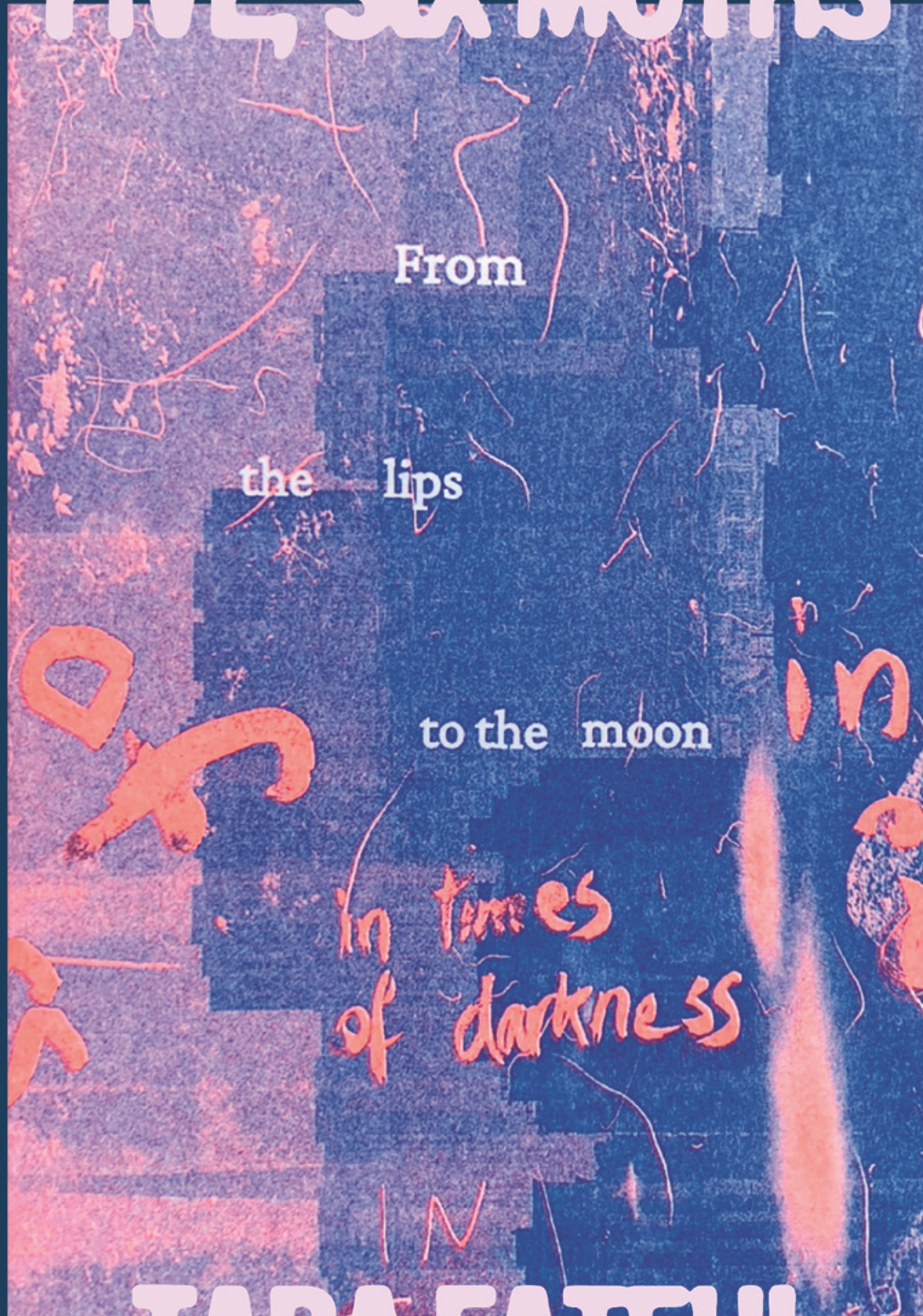
I would use it when I feel like going back to a place that life was gently holding me with all beauty and warmth and made me feel belonging.

I searched for the translation of this phrase on Google; the results were all about air quality and how it is being overlooked. But I'm mainly talking about the amount of air, of the specific air that allows me to participate in something bigger.

The quantity of that air is sometimes really low.

When the quantity of air is low, not really easy to live in the moment, how then to enjoy it?

FIVE, SIX MONTHS



Cover of *In times of darkness* by From the Lips to the Moon, designed by Nahal Marzban (lipstomoon press, 2024)

My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much I don't know what to say
They're fine
My dear, I miss you so much
They're dead
It didn't snow, again
My dear, I miss you so much
It's hard, you know I'm not one to talk
And and and it's
And and and it and it and it's and it's
hmmm difficult ... it hasn't snowed. It never snowed
It's because your eyes are brown bluish brown
My dear, I miss you so much
My dear, I miss you so much
ردپای آب، عروس، راه و همه اینجا پیداست
ردپای درخت، چمن و همیشه بهار
'I can see why she wanted that particular one, 'cos it's on the
ground floor and it's got these squidgy carpets.'

It was cold
It hasn't been easy
No, he doesn't
What work?
You are amazing
You are just what I wanted you to be
You are just what I wanted to be
You deserve this
You deserve better than this
You didn't deserve this
You did what you had to do
You didn't do all you could do
It has nothing to do with you

It's it's that particular smell of, I don't want to be cheesy, I don't want to say saffron, I don't want to say pistachio ... it's that particular smell of sweat ... matured shuttle taxi sweat ... matured bus sweat ... stale toothpaste ... withered grass. I'm not doing anything.

I think I won't ... I think you will ... I think we will ... I hope we will ... I'm sure we will ... I know we will ... I know they won't ... I know they want ... I know we can't ... I hope they go ... I wish you could ... I wish she would ... I know he did ... I said I would ... They say they know ... They say they will ... Your hazel eyes ... blue ... brown ... purple ... I'm sure they did ... I'm sure they did ... I know they did ... she said she saw ... he says she lies ... she knows their style ... we said we will ... My dear, I miss you so much ... My dear, I miss you so much ... I wish I could ... I wish they would ... I wish they left ... they say it's true ... we ran like hell ... she knows she's right ... they say they do ... I want I want I want to I'm not I'm not I'm not one to I'm not one to what what want to do ... look, your eyes black ... mould ... they say it grows ... mould ... mold ... mould ... moth ... moth ... mold ... mould ... I know I will, I won't, I say, I know I do, I'm not the kind smell of mould ... mold ... musk ... five, six moths ... I do and I can't because her eyes ... green brown black worms ... holes ... holes ... worms ... crawl ... face ... dead ... home ... left ... love ... little ... litter ... Do you remember the sound of the kettle? Do you remember the sewage system? Do you remember malaria?

♪♪ Corruption corruption it's like music to my ears.

The tone of this woman sounds like she's been dead for years. ♪♪

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THE LIONS TAIL



Photos: p9, p11 top: © Zahra Moein; p10, p11 bottom: © Laima Stasiulionyt; p12: © Nadja Voorham

AFRANG NORDLÖF MALEKIAN





Selection of photos from the performances:

- *A Lion's Tail*, Affair, Berlin, 2025. Curated by Love Landefjord, Clara von Schantz, and Julia von Schantz. Photo: Zahra Moein.
- *The Lion's Tail*, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius, 2024. Curated by Edvinas Grinkevičius. Photo: Laima Stasiulionyt.
- *The Lion's Tail*, Närheten Performance Festival, Konsthall C, Stockholm, 2025. Curated by Amanda Apetrea, Sara Bergsmark, Nadja Hjorton, and Terry Johnson. Photo: Nadja Voorham.

THE WAITING ROOM



Photos © Thomas Lenden

FOROUGH FAMI



I FOLD THE TABLE INTO A SHIP

Titles: p16 – Diary page 220225; p17 – feeling red I; p18 – Diary page 170625;
p20 – Diary pageee ii; p21 – Diary page 202225; Back cover – Biting the Sun



CHRISTIAN SLEIMAN





A GIRL CAN LEAVE IRAN, BUT CAN IRAN LEAVE A GIRL THE FUCK ALONE?

A GIRL CAN LEAVE IRAN

اما آیا ایران می تواند دست لعتیشو از سر اون دختر برداره؟



یک دختر می تواند ایران را ترک کند

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BUT CAN IRAN LEAVE A GIRL THE FUCK ALONE?

AFRANG NORDLÖF MALEKIAN

WE ARE TWO WINDOWS

Photo © Peter Orosziány / Nour, Caspian Sea, 2024



Written by **ARDALAN SARAFRAZ**
Sung by **GOOGOOSH**
Reinterpreted and Translated by **BITA BELL**

We Are Two Windows

On a wall made of stone
two windows are stuck.
Both are lonely.
Both are frayed.
One of them is you.
One of them is me.

The wall is made of black stone
cold and hard granite
it is sealing our fatigued lips.

We are deemed incapable to move
under the heaviness of this wall.
The tie between me and you
is a story weaved within this wall.

There has always been a distance
between your hands and mine.
Our days and nights
have been bitterly passing us by.
The distance is not long
but even this is still a lot to withstand.
The only thing uniting you and I
is the kind caress of the wind.

We must stay loyal,
our loyalty keeps us alive.
The path towards liberation is death,
we sacrifice ourselves for our freedom.

I hope this wall will be destroyed
so you and I can die together
and in another world
we can hold each other's hands.
Maybe in that world,
there is no pain,
no resentment left
in our hearts
and maybe in that world
there are no more walls
between our two windows.

Written by Ardalan Sarafraz, 1968
Sung by GooGooSh
Reinterpreted and Translated by Bitá Bell

دو پنجره

توی یک دیوار سنگی
دوتا پنجره اسپرین
دوتا خسته، دوتا تنها
یکیشون تو، یکیشون من

دیوار از سنگ سیاهه
سنگ سرد و سخت خارا
زده قفل بی صدایی
به لبای خسته ما

نمیتونیم که بجنبیم
زیر سنگینی دیوار
همه عشق من و تو
قصه هست، قصه دیدار

همیشه فاصله بوده
بین دستای من و تو
با همین تلخی گذشته
شب و روزای من و تو

راه دوری بین ما نیست
اما باز اینم زیاده
تنها پیوند من و تو
دست مهربون باده

ما باید اسپر بمونیم
زنده هستتیم تا اسپریم
واسه ما رهایی مرگه
تا رها بشیم می میریم

کاشکی این دیوار خراب شه
من و تو با هم بمیریم
توی یک دنیای دیگه
دستای همو بگیریم
شاید اونجا، توی دل ها
درد بیزاری نباشه
میون پنجره هاشون
دیگه دیواری نباشه

کاشکی این دیوار خراب شه
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درد بیزاری نباشه
میون پنجره هاشون
دیگه دیواری نباشه

دو پنجره
شاعر : اردلان سرفراز ۱۳۴۸
خواننده : گوگوش

THE TASTE OF POMEGRANATE



Photos © Ana Alejos

AFRANG NORDLÖF
MALEKIAN
& ILLIADA
CHARALAMBOUS

The Pomegranate's Poem

Sweet, bitter, sour
Life, death, rebirth
Stains, seeds, soil
Finite, infinite, contained
Invisible, hidden, haunted
My seeds will consume, eat, and digest you
This is my story
This is my taste
The taste of pomegranate

Supposedly, after Persephone ate six of my seeds offered by Hades, she was trapped in his underworld kingdom for six months each year. The mourning of her mother gave birth to the seasons. Every spring, Persephone reunites with her mother. Their happiness makes me blossom, but after six months, when I'm ripe, poor Persephone falls to the underworld, and her mum sees nothing but sorrow. Persephone's fall and rise repeat every year, so the people track the goddess' grief and happiness by looking at the colors of nature. Birth-death-rebirth, the people made me its symbol.

Yes my dear friends
That is how it is
That somebody dies
While someone abides
I am life, death and rebirth
I am of happiness and sorrow
No one can stop me from blooming
Or from falling to the soil
Reunited with our friend
Life, death, rebirth

Picture this: eating me isn't just a snack, it's a whole transformation. Take Esfandiyar, for instance. He swallowed my seeds, a divine gift from the prophet Zoroaster himself. Next thing you know, I'm sprouting roots in his belly. Sensing his warrior spirit, I decided to help him, giving him a boost of strength when he needed it most. And sometimes, when he fought a dragon or a giant wolf, I made him invisible.

BIOGRAPHIES

EDITORIAL TEAM

Bitá Bell is a dance artist, composer, and writer, based in Vienna. Her works focus on the concepts of the body as archive, collective memories, visceral sensations, radical softness, and playful improvisations with the aim of exposing, questioning, and subverting socio-political matters that disrupt the joy in daily life.

Sina Saberi is a choreographer, performer, and cultural manager based in Germany. His practice and research are inspired by his cultural background and revolve around the art form of dance as an alternate state of being. He is the director of Kakeshan.org, an indeterminate space for choreographic creation and movement research from Tehran and beyond.

Peter Oroszlány is a graphic designer based in Vienna, working within the fields of cultural communication, editorial design, and visual identity. His practice focuses on developing precise and conceptually-driven visual languages that interweave content and form.

Kenneth Constance Loe is an artist, writer, performer, and proofreader from Singapore and currently based in Vienna. Their work engages with desire, body memory, and queer ecologies.

CONTRIBUTORS

Shirin Farshbaf is a dance/performance artist from Iran currently living in Austria. Her performative works reflect the state of society and transform the body through different possibilities of movement. The core of her conceptual works is always the body in correlation and connection with different materials or situations.

Tara Fatehi is a performance artist, writer, and performer based in London. Her works explore the cracks in archives and the joys of multivocality, mishandling, unfinishedness, and ambiguity through dance, voice, and text.

Afrang Nordlöf Malekian is an Iranian-Swedish artist based in Berlin and Stockholm. Through installations and performances, Nordlöf Malekian explores how precolonial, colonial, and migratory practices in hand-colored photography, Iranian social dance, and food can hybridize into evasive forces that – unexpectedly – advance collective endeavors.

Forough Fami is a dance artist based in Berlin. Her works move between choreography, performing, writing, and teaching, allowing each form to inform the others. Her practice listens closely to the body, its sensations, its thresholds, and its shifting perceptions, while approaching choreography as an experimental space of inquiry where critical reflection and artistic imagination grow into ever-changing forms.

Christian Sleiman is a visual artist based in Amsterdam. He paints, works on publications, and organizes culinary experiences.

Iliada Charalambous is a visual artist who works with the idea of citizen assemblies as a form of counter-action against the fractured environment shaped by state politics. She works collaboratively to create spaces for gathering and sharing ideas, methods, and tools for collective organizing and potential forms of resistance.

FEATURED

Ardalan Sarfaraz is an Iranian lyricist and one of the most celebrated figures in Iranian music, with his work touching multiple generations since the 1960s.

PROJECTS

Occupied Air is a solo performance by Shirin Farshbaf concerned with finding new movements in new and unfamiliar air conditions. The piece was performed at Red Carpet showroom Karlsplatz in 2020, at WUK during the International Women's Day 2020, and Berlin's Tanzpol Festival 2022. ● p 3–5

From the Lips to the Moon is a recurring performance night project mostly based in London bringing together various poets and musicians. It is as surreal, absurd, and futuristic as it is current, urgent, and political. The nights are curated and hosted by electronic music wizard and composer Pouya Ehsaei and performance maker, performer, and writer of crazy texts Tara Fatehi. ● p 6–8

The Lion's Tail is a mural and a lecture performance by Afrang Nordlöf Malekian exploring manipulation of passport photography through his own passport photos, alongside archival findings at the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut. ● p 9–12

The Waiting Room is an immersive space in which Forough Fami invites her audience to spend time. It's an uncanny playground in a non-linearity of time. An invitation to the space of the artist's mind and studio, and an invitation to wait as the room is under construction. ● p 13–15

I fold the table into a ship are selected paintings and drawings by Christian Sleiman exhibited at No Chef in the Kitchen, Beirut, Lebanon, 2024. ● p 16–21, back cover

The work *A girl can leave Iran, but can Iran leave a girl the fuck alone?* depicts the singer Giti from her vinyl album cover "Yeh del daram" (I Have a Heart), 1969, and "Beh man nakhand" (Don't Laugh at Me) from the same year, as well as Googosh from the vinyl cover of

"Jomjomak Barge Khazoon" (The Shaky-Shaky of the Autumn Leaves) from 1970, collected and documented by artist Afrang Nordlöf Malekian and writer and researcher Nour Helou. ● p 22

The Sun Is Gone is a dance performance by Bitá Bell inspired by the Iranian iconic singer Googoosh: her 21-year forced silence post-1979 revolution and her return to the stage in exile in 2000. ● p 23–25

The Taste of Pomegranate is a collaboration between Afrang Nordlöf Malekian and Iliada Charalambous. Participants are invited to peel and deseed pomegranates on top of a pomegranate-illustrated tablecloth with printed stories of myths and migration about this precious fruit, spanning from Cyprus to an airport in Tehran, en route to Scandinavia. ● p 26–27



IMPRESSUM

Curators and Editors
Bitá Bell & Sina Saberi

Editorial Design
Peter Oroszlány

Contributors
Shirin Farshbaf
Tara Fatehi
Afrang Nordlöf Malekian
Forough Fami
Christian Sleiman
Bitá Bell
Iliada Charalambous

Proofreading
Kenneth Constance Loe

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