

GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE: ZAIN DADA

Though tyrants may command that lamps be smashed, In rooms where lovers are destined to meet, They cannot snuff out the moon, so today, Nor tomorrow, no tyranny will succeed.

This is an extract of a poem called *A Prison Evening* by Faiz Ahmed Faiz which inspired the focus of Moon Press's third issue, Lunar Latitudes. As a poet, socialist and member of Pakistan's Progressive Writer's Movement, Faiz wrote his most celebrated anthology *The Rebel's Silhouette* while in prison in the 1950s¹. *The Rebel's Silhouette* explores the moon as a symbol of something more powerful than a muse; the moon as a symbol of hope that rises every night reminding us of cycles that exist beyond our captivity to existing political systems, to prisons, to restraining capitalist timeframes. No matter the setbacks and crises of the day, the Moon will always rise at night.

Fear not of men because men must die, Mind over matter and soul before flesh, Angels hold a pen keep a record in time Which is passing and running like a caravan trader, The world is overrun with the wealthy and the wicked, But God is sufficient in disposing of affairs.

Rapper and artist, Yasiin Bey touches on similar themes in his 1999 track *Fear Not of Man*, which uses drum samples from musician and political activist Fela Kuti². The track draws powerful connections between Bed-Stuy Brooklyn and Nigeria, with two diasporic Black radicals speaking truth to power through their music.

Despite originating in different contexts, both Faiz and Bey speak to the chasm between our modern day conceptions of capitalist growth (both economic & technological) and our ever-growing alienation, spiritual void and search for meaning. Scientific and societal advancement without creativity and spirituality, lead to labour-exploitation reigning supreme in an ever increasing speed to produce. It's fitting therefore, that in this late-capitalist dystopia, many of our modern day pharaohs (from Bezos to Musk) are investing their

billions into space tourism while their workers labour in unsustainable and unfair conditions on earth. These tensions are reflected in our popular modes of timekeeping.

The solar calendar that dominates our life (like the Gregorian calendar) is useful for societies where future planning is essential but tells you nothing about the 12 phases of the moon. Dr Birth of University of Queen's College CUNY describes the shift to a Gregorian calendar as "very much a reflection of European commerce and colonialism." If this is the cycle by which we are governed, I beg the question of what our world would look like through the lens of lunar timekeeping? How would it influence our thought processes, our work cycles, how we interact with each other and perceive ourselves? Is the moon too marginal in Western Europe?

In thinking through some of these questions, I came across Cambridge Islamic scholar, Shaykh Abdul Hakim Murad, who speaks of ancient practices like 'circumambulation', which 'honoured the moon.'. 'Circumambulation' is a practice whereby a pilgrim walks anti-clockwise around a sacred site so that it always remains to the right of them. These practises extend across many faiths and pagan traditions. Similarly, Muslims from around the world today do *tawaaf* (7 circuambulations) of the *ka'ba* so that the heart is facing the sacred authority.

I see pilgrimages and rituals that honour the moon to be a welcome relief in a world of hyper individualism and relentless productivity. The rhythm, unity and declaration of connectedness that are represented by these practices can also be found in other collective gatherings - be they raves, football matches or during Hajj. The ungovernable cosmology of the moon's cycles are imbued by a sense of opposition to top-down edicts and a sincere belief in the resistance offered by hope explored by Faiz and Bey. As such Lunar Latitudes reconsiders time power, time, magic and mysticism and prompts us to reframe our relationship with the moon. I hope the following pages remind us that our sense of time and our daily cycles can be as much about the natural world, science and practicality as they can about creativity, ritual and rhythm - and inspire you to take time back from your day to honour the moon in whatever forms that might take for you.

¹Faiz Ahmed Faiz was imprisoned for his involvement in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case - a coup d'etat against the government of Pakistan¹s first prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan ²As a part of Tour de Moon's festival launch on 21st october 2021, an exclusive transmission of a new original mix of the 1980s song ITT (International Thief Thief) by Afrobeat pioneer and political activist Fela Kuti (1938-1997) was sent onto the moon through Moonbounce - an Earth-Moon-Earth (EME) technology. Bringing this track back into the present to decolonize the moon from extractive, commercial and colonial expansion, Fela Kuti's youngest son Seun Kuti (1983) weaves his saxophone into the track. Listen here: https://tourdemoon.com/moonbouncefelakutiITT

CONTRIBUTORS

MOHAMMED ZAAHIDUR RAHMAN

Mohammed Z Rahman is a British-Bengali writer, painter and illustrator based in Northeast London. His work often deals with food, migration and gender. MZR approaches art as an intimate, political and at times goofy force to celebrate his communities' dreams, depict interior worlds, disrupt violent power structures and make peace with unspeakable chaos.

ASHTON ATTZS

Ashton Attzs is a 23 year old UK based painter and illustrator. Ashton's work is colourful, fun, bold and joyful. It's unapologetic in both style and message; celebrating moments of everyday life and what makes us who we are. Ashton's distinctive and charming characterful people that populate the majority of their paintings and illustrations are representative and inclusive of the endless identities and diverse expressions of the everyday person. Their unique world-building in popping bright hues creates a utopia, where everyone and anyone can step inside to dreamy landscapes and cheerful situations. Ashton's art covers a range of topics from LGBTQ+ advocacy, visibility, unity, positivity, music and mental health. Their art seeks to empower LGBTQ+ people and people of colour on a global scale where they share their artworks publically in a variety of ways.

Ashton is an experienced creator and has worked for clients such as Adidas, Instagram, Universal Music, Tottenham Hotspurs FC, Disney, Footlocker, Lucy and Yak, Stylist Magazine and more. They have designed t-shirts, prints, billboards, murals, stickers as well as creating bespoke canvas paintings. They also have taught several workshops at The National Gallery and Tate Modern London; including a joy focused painting class for LGBTQ+ people of colour.

Ashton won The Evening Standard Art Prize in 2018 for their painting of transgender swimmers: "Don't Stay In Ya Lane". In 2020, Ashton collaborated with Universal Music for the BRIT Awards; creating an exclusive collection of illustrations for the design of the after party invitations, special-edition prints gifted to Universal Music's nominees and the immersive installation and designs featuring at the event. Ashton is also known for their Community Hearts and Dalmation pride stickers that they created for Instagram in 2020 and are used by people all around the world.

CONTRIBUTORS

HALIMA HASSAN

Halima is a writer and editor based in London. She loves film, theatre, comics and video games. Currently, Halima is working on a collection of surreal, fantastical stories inspired by her life in the city and growing up between cultures. https://halimahassan.contently.com/

AADAM SHEIKH

Aadam Sheikh is a mixed-media artist, focusing his work on the act of embracing ones self in a moment to then gain power and love for ones self in everyday life. "I like to use my work as a wake up call so they realise that the world can be their oyster too. The sooner we stop suppressing ourselves and embrace one another, the sooner we will be able to take control over our lives and fantasies. I want my work to give people that moment and then let that carry into their daily lives."

ZIA AHMED

Zia Ahmed is a writer from North-West London. He is a former Roundhouse Slam Champion and in 2019 Zia's stage debut I WANNA BE YOURS premiered at The Bush. He is a recipient of the Royal Court Theatre Jerwood New Playwrights programme 2021.

NUR HANNAH WAN

Nur Hannah Wan is a fine artist and documentary filmmaker. She divides her time between writing, painting and film making, weaving together narratives surrounding local culture and organic, homegrown community. Her work has taken her to places including Sudan, Gambia, and the Turkey-Syria border, and has been exhibited and published by The Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour, BBC and the British Library.

CONTRIBUTORS

NADIA DADA

Nadia Dada is a visual artist with a passion for printmaking, living and teaching in Doha, Qatar. She is interested in expressing thoughts and perspectives through different artistic experiences. Nature is one of her greatest inspirations that reflects her deeper vision of the world and its creations.

DIONNE SCOUGEL

Dionne Scougul is a 19-year-old radio presenter/producer, environmental activist and university student. In her spare time she likes to write poetry and fiction stories, and have been featured in poetry magazines such as Tether's End. She has particular interests in human rights, international politics and environmental issues which she highlights each week on the Spotlight Show at Revive FM 94.0FM. Dionne has also been a part of environmental podcasts, documentaries and actions over the past couple of years. Dionne is also on Tour de Moon's Youth Reporters Board.

HIBA SHAHTOOT

Hiba Shahtoot is a Palestinian Illustrator \ Graphic Designer born in Nazareth in 1997 where she currently lives and works. Hiba has completed her B.Des in Visual Communication in 2020 from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem. Hiba uses the medium of illustration as her main instrument of self-expression due to its ability to be incorporated into various visual mediums such as painting, print, animation, and more. Currently but not permanently, her works experiment with dissecting collective and personal experiences of raw and unprocessed emotions in order to render them into visual interpretations. Hiba's works were exhibited at several exhibitions in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Haifa, Cairo and Taybeh, and her short film "Mirroring" won Best Directing at The Animatex Festival in 2020.

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CONTRIBUTORS

ALAA ALSARAJI

Alaa is a London-based visual artist, designer and creative facilitator. Through her creative practice she aims to explore themes such as belonging, reimagining space and community and the impacts of Islamophobia in British society, predominantly using the medium of digital illustration. She also works with various creative and educational organisations and collectives as a facilitator, delivering creative workshops with children and women's groups. In her work she always seeks to emphasise the value of using creativity as a pedagogical process to address and explore structural issues and their impact on individuals and communities. Alaa is also the arts editor of Khidr Collective, a multidisciplinary artist collective creating platforms and spaces for young Muslim creatives through the annual Khidr Zine and online platform.

ZAIN DADA

Zain Dada is a writer and cultural producer. He is the co-founder of Khidr Collective Zine – a zine platforming the work of British Muslims. Zain's directing credits include 2019 Outspoken Prize winning short visual poem, 'The Moon is a Meme', and 2020 Outspoken Prize-nominated animation short, 'Otherstani.' Zain is a Winston Churchill Fellow after publishing his research on 'The Future of Community Arts.' Zain wrote his first play, 'Blue Mist' as part of Soho Theatre Writers Lab 19/20 and Royal Court's Introduction to playwriting 19/20. His first writing credit, 'Emily (GLITCHED) in Paris' was for The Royal Court Theatre's Living Newspaper series in March 2021.

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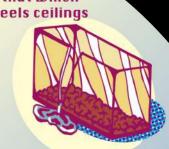
REST a duty to before and after



FLOW the mind's eye glued to a periscope



FREEDOM that which peels ceilings



PAIN

one reason to ditch the body

JOY the milk and honey at stake



Suckers for the moon are nightly coaxed out of capital hours Where do they go?





LABOUR



FEAR a function of impossible





ASHTON ATTZS

An illustration inspired by the film Moonlight

HALIMA A HASSAN

Halima Hassan of Khidr Collective meets Imad Ahmed of the New crescent society at their monthly event on astronomy and Islam at the Royal Observatory of Greenwich.

CRESCENT-SPOTTING/REVERING THE MOON

While most of the world relies completely on the solar Gregorian calendar for day-to-day living, Islamic practice requires additional attention to the moon and its phases for guidance through the Islamic calendar.

"It is He who made the sun a shining radiance and the moon a light, determining phases for it so that you might know the number of years and how to calculate time. God did not create all these without a true purpose; He explains His signs to those who understand."

(Chapter 10: Verse:5)

The new crescent moon marks the beginning of a new month. Moon-sighting is sunnah, or a prophetic tradition, and watching for its dawn at the end of a month is encouraged – a specific dua (supplication) exists for this occasion. But the practice of moon-sighting, and generally, of studying the universe within which we reside, is not as common among modern Muslims as it once was. The advancement of technology and the instant availability of information has made the act of stepping outdoors to confirm the new moon redundant.

Every month, the Royal Observatory of Greenwich, the home of time, hosts an event on Islam and astronomy. The event takes place in the planetarium and always sells out within a week of being announced. Ideally, it takes place on the Saturday before the predicted date of the new moon sighting – the goal of the event is to educate the audience about the integral role of Islam in early astronomy while equipping visitors with practical skills to spot the crescent themselves. Imad Ahmed, teacher and founder of the New Crescent Society

(NCS), wants to revive the practice of moon-sighting in Muslim communities across the UK and is the person behind this initiative. I spoke to him after attending one of these events. He told me: "I wanted an event where Muslims could learn about our scientific history and shared culture, and be able to go home and look out for the moon and stars themselves."

Inside the planetarium, we were asked to take one of the many seats, arranged under the dome of the building. The seats stretched back like lounge chairs, allowing us to be comfortable while getting the best view of the domed ceiling, which turned into a projector screen. The lights dimmed and the dome lit up. What followed was an incredible (and accessible) lesson on the moon and its phases, prominent Muslim astronomers and a showcase of the stars and constellations they discovered which retain their Arabic names. Those 45 minutes in the planetarium went by quickly. At times I felt overwhelmed. It's easy to forget how vast space truly is and what a remarkably small part of it we occupy. At one point we were shown how to spot the Andromeda galaxy, the galaxy closest to ours, visible on moonless nights, first described by Persian astronomer Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi (d. 986).

After the presentation, we left the planetarium to gather just outside, where Imad delivered a short talk and taught us, practically, how to sight a new moon: where to look for it (using our hands to measure approximately where in the sky we can expect to see the new moon), what time to expect it and the dua that exists specifically for this occasion:

"Allah is the greatest. O Allah, let the crescent loom above us in safety, faith, peace and Islam, and in agreement with all that You love and pleases You. Our Lord and your Lord is Allah."

It all began when Imad reached out to the Greenwich Observatory to work on an event to host a gathering to spot the new moon marking the end of Ramadan. He had been inspired by his travels to Morocco and South Africa when he decided to plan this event. "For over 100 years, on the 29th of Ramadan, the Muslim community [in Cape Town, South Africa] descends on to the beach, looks at the moon and declares, as a community, whether Eid will be observed the next day," he recollects. Back in the UK, Imad found himself

wondering why similar events weren't happening here: "I've been doing moon-sighting for a decade, beginning from the time I was a student in 2009. [It was] when I returned from that experience [in South Africa] that I thought to myself: how can we replicate this in the UK?" This initial event at the end of Ramadan was live-streamed to the largest audience the Observatory had ever seen. Clearly, there was an interest and demand for live moon-sightings in the UK to mark the end of the holy month. Most UK Muslim communities rely on announcements from the Middle East to declare the start and end of all Islamic months.

We're in an era of religious skepticism, where science is considered the rule and incompatible with faith. Having a regular event, titled "Islam and Astronomy", scheduled into the programming at a world-renowned scientific institute is no small feat. "Every astronomer knows the debt they owe to ancient Muslim civilisations," Imad notes. Data tables and calendars created by early Muslims astronomers are still referenced and used today, something the scientists at the Observatory recognise and appreciate. In the 11th century, Muslim mathematician and astronomer Omar Khayyam calculated the length of a solar year, establishing a solar calendar which is more accurate than the widely used Gregorian solar calendar. I can't begin to fathom the skill required to take this measurement in an era without the technology we have today.

"Astronomy isn't a live issue for most people; it's a scientific, historic interest," Imad remarks. "With Islamic practices, astronomy and astronomers become contemporary and relevant in a way that they haven't been with other communities."

The New Crescent Society (NCS), established in 2016, wants to educate people about the contributions of Muslims to astronomy, and for this education to be accessible and applicable. Having now attended one of their events, I can confidently say that they've succeeded in these goals. I shared this experience at the Observatory with children and adults, many of whom had travelled across London to attend. The majority of the attendees were Muslim and, it appeared to me, may have been part of different community groups. After the talk and demonstration, Imad was flooded with compliments and questions from the attendees, which he patiently and graciously answered. He apologised for holding me up – we had planned to begin the interview as soon as the event ended – but, as

I mentioned to him later, it was heartwarming to see how the event resonated with so many and from his popularity after the event I could only guess at how admired, probably beloved, he is to them.

A long-term goal of the NCS is to campaign for a "UK Moon for UK Muslims" initiative, where instead of relying on announcements of moon-sightings from countries elsewhere, we observe the skies for ourselves, here in the UK, and practise accordingly. "[I'd like for us to] set up sightings posts every month, up and down the country. I want an organisational body where all the data from the sightings are collated and a calendar assembled for the UK. For Ramadan and Eid, these can be communal events. [UK moon] visibility is very different from other countries so it doesn't make sense for us to be following anybody else," Imad explains.

Why haven't we been relying on data from our home to determine the start and end of Islamic months? Part of the reason, Imad speculates, is the reluctance to be out of sync with the majority of the Muslim world, who do rely heavily on announcements from the Middle East. Imad adds, "there is historic evidence that, even between Mecca and Medina, Eid [had been] celebrated on different days". Furthermore, moon spotting in the UK is often more difficult. "This is an industrial smoggy, foggy country where it's difficult to sight the moon. So historically, the first Muslim communities would rely on word from other countries."

What the NCS are proposing and working towards is the creation of new communities, across the country, where people come together to witness the new moon, pray and share knowledge. The ultimate goal, God willing, is a future where we can celebrate the dawn of a new Islamic month with a certainty that's true for our place on earth.

The work involved in running the NCS, though a serious pursuit of Imad, is in addition to his primary career in education – although the two overlap in many ways. In one of the schools Imad has worked in, there exists an intervention for students at risk of expulsion. These students are "taken out of the city, out of the narrow alleyways of their neighbourhoods

and to the countryside for a week or two." This time spent in nature, away from the claustrophobic city, is therapeutic for the students: "The positive impact I observed that this had on the children exceeded what I had seen other interventions achieve," Imad recalls.

Perhaps this comment about nature as therapy shouldn't have surprised and warmed my heart like it did – after all, there are many studies confirming the positive impact of experiencing and appreciating the natural world on our mental and physical health. Nature is frequently mentioned in the Quran: "Allah is always telling us to look; turn to nature and His creation," Imad tells me, "We are directed by Allah to observe nature and understand it as a metaphor for spirituality." All around us we witness the grandeur of our home planet and so the grandeur of our Creator. Imad wants to remind us to direct our gaze upwards too, and not forget about our ever-expanding universe, and the celestial bodies that guide our transitions through the years and our prayer times.

"He makes the dawn break; He makes the night for rest; and He made the sun and the moon to a precise measure. That is the design of the Almighty, the All-Knowing."

(6:96)

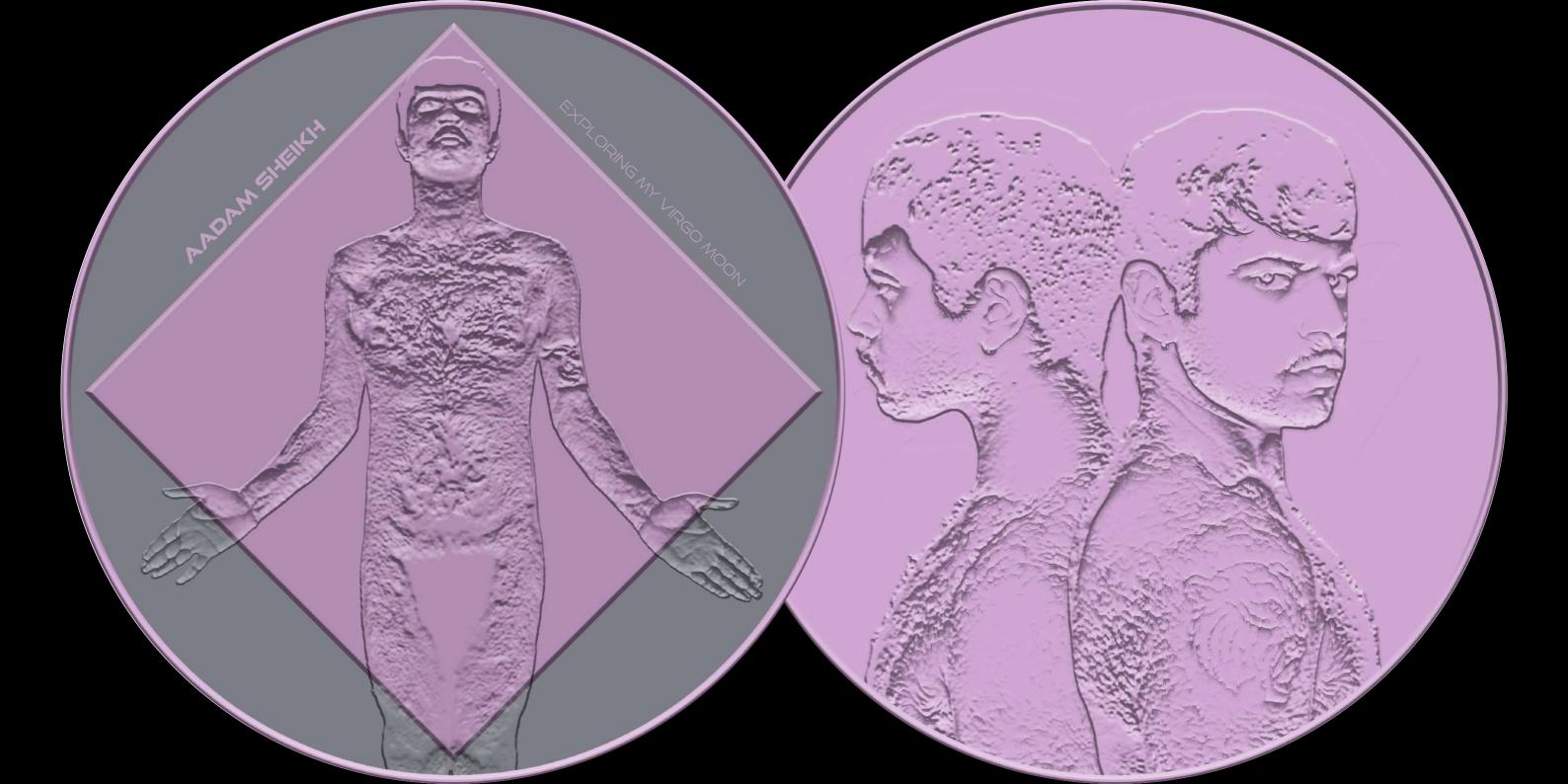
"Our prayer times are based on the positions of the sun and our calendar is dependent on the phases of the moon," Imad asserts. "We perform wudhu with water; [when] without water, we use earth. The shape of the Ka'ba is based on the winds. [Islam is] connected to nature; if you can access and tune in to the creation you can connect with the Creator"

During those early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Imad made arrangements to "bring the moon into homes" by moving his classes and the sessions at Greenwich observatory online. "Rather than teaching people how to sight the moon from large public spaces, I found ways of helping them enjoy astronomy from their own homes," Imad tells me. The virtual teaching space allowed many more people from all over the country to participate and as a result the number of moon sighting reports Imad received increased considerably. The NCS now has around 40 moon sighting locations nationally, and is always looking to expand.

As Muslims, we believe every single creation worships Allah. The dua for sighting the new moon ends with an address directly to the moon: "Our Lord and your Lord is Allah." With the NCS, Imad wants to revive a sunnah practice here in the UK. His initiative has the potential to create new communities and strengthen existing ones, by encouraging people to come together to observe one facet of nature's beauty – the dawn of a new moon – simultaneously a reminder of our small place in this universe and of the Majesty of our Creator. Imad's sincere efforts are to be admired – I highly recommend spending a Saturday morning at the Observatory for one of the NCS events; for Muslims, it is an opportunity to learn more about our shared history, and for everyone, it is a chance to marvel at our natural world, which does not only encompass our Earth, but also the moon and beyond.

"He created the sun, moon, and stars to be subservient to His command; all creation and command belong to Him. Exalted be God, Lord of all the worlds!" (7:54)

Instagram: @ NewCrescentSociety https://newcrescentsociety.blogspot.com







THE MOON IS A MEME

the moon is a meme change settings what is this life if full of care? we have no time to stop + search a pop up copper what you got here? looks like weed smell like weed it's a bag of my dad's ashes who are you? i'm a magician i can turn invisible + hyper-visible at the same time i tell the officer how to spell my name but he keeps spelling it wrong he keeps writing down ic4 male

the moon is a meme change settings
this country opens its browser it will remember history never remember history use custom settings for history mi casa es su casa says the man

ZIA AHMED

The Moon Is A Meme is an award-winning poetry short film written by Zia Ahmed and directed by Zain Dada. Follow the QR code to watch it.

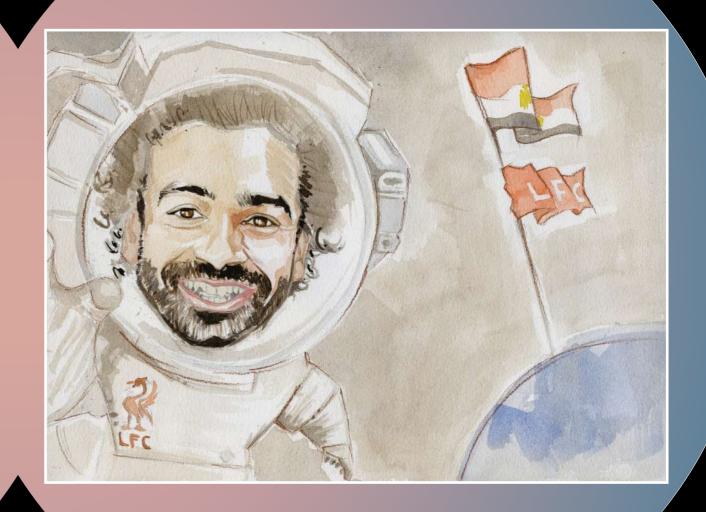
who stole your land all the things he took are missing from the school books + now it feels like he's stolen twice assimilation was to cut yourself until you fit in until you realise there's something missing + it's the things you cut off i hid things + now i can't find them forgotten your language? type in your email address + we will send you an email with instructions on how to reset your language

chand ek meme hai
change settings.
all the world's a stage
the cameras spectate
are you not entertained?
this tech gaze shaped
by whose gaze?
white gaze induces a migraine
self portrait as security footage
i'm losing weight
my hands are becoming

more + more pixelated gaze into the abyss the abyss gazes back + starts taking the piss the cctv cameras are drunk they're vomiting rubiks cubes the drone is a discoball stars flicker like gifs streetlights shine like laptops in dark rooms where you type your name into google translate to see how it looked in dad's brain he had insider knowledge of displacement i'm trying to unlearn the art of levitation some nights over the high road there's a bunch of us floating lighting up the sky like lanterns we can't get stopped by police up here us ic4s + ic3s + i see trees of green red roses too i see them bloom over security screens

the moon is a meme

NUR HANNAH WAN MO SALAH IN SPACE



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NADIA DADA





DIONNE SCOUGUL UNPHOTOGENIC

Have you ever looked at the moon and just thought it looked absolutely terrible?

And I'm not talking about some incredibly pixelated picture taken on a 2000's flip phone,
I'm talking about an angle of the moon that was so ugly you actually winced,
A picture that showed off so many craters and dusty imperfections,
That it changed your perspective on the moon forever.

I'm talking about one photo, just one, overshadowing every time you have looked up in awe. Or perhaps you've never felt that way, maybe you've taken hundreds of pictures of the moon.

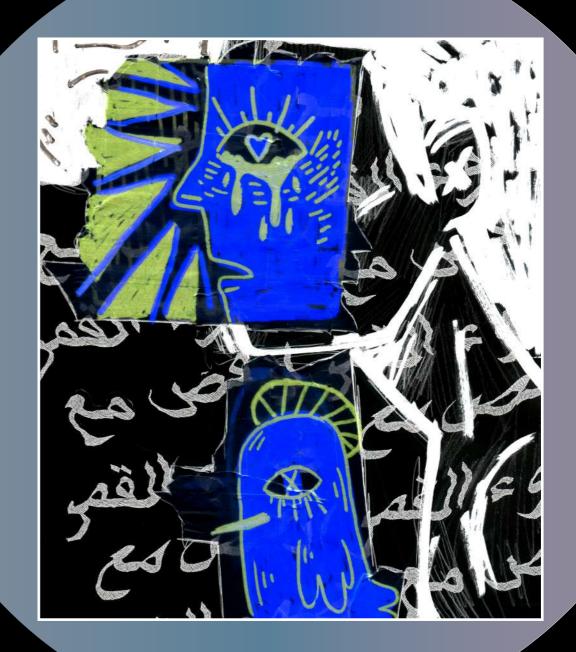
You have one where its red, one where its yellow, and one where you can barely see it through clouds of cotton candy, Each one different, but always as perfect as the last.

Honestly, I hope you never have to see the moon as anything less, Or try to remove all the things that make the moon *the moon*, Don't blur out its craters or shadows, those perfect imperfections. Show them to the masses if you wish, Or be content keeping everything to yourself.

Whatever your feelings towards the moon,
Just know that although it doesn't have eyes,
It has a face that looks back at you too.
A face that sees all your craters and shadows,
And appreciates you all the more for them.

HIBA SHAHTOOT

A visual exploration of a dreamlike state



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