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Education
2018 BA Fine Art (Media), Slade School of Fine Art, UCL. London, UK.

Work Experience
Program Associate, Space Studios, London. Feb 2021-Feb 2022.
Freelance Digital Producer, M&C Saatchi World Services. London. May 2018-current.
Editor, M&C Saatchi World Services. London. Oct 2017-May 2018.

Filmography & Relevant Experience
Director & Writer. Walkout 1, short film commissioned by Jerwood/FVU Film Awards 2020.
Assistant Director. Untitled Documentary Film by Wareth Kwaish (production). 2019-current.
Director & writer. Blinking Exercise No.1, short film. 2018.
Director & Writer. Grace Period, short film. 2017.
Choreographer, The Rise of Ghosting, performance. 2017. Director & Editor. Mouthwash, film, 2015.

Awards & Bursaries
2019-2020 Jerwood FVU Film Awards, London.
2018 Ford Foundation Project Development Fund. Marrakech Film Festival, Marrakech.
2018 Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Project Development Fund. Carthage Film Festival, Carthage.
2018 Bloomberg New Contemporaries Shortlist. London.
2018 Sarabande Foundation Award Shortlist. London.
2017, 2016, 2014 Slade Print Fair Bursary. London.

Panels
2020 panelist on SKIP/INTRO Commissioning Initiative, Satellite Films, London.
2020 panelist on BEYOND Commissioning Initiative, Film Video Umbrella, London.

Exhibitions & screenings:
2021 MoMA Modern Mondays Series, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
2021 Jerwood FVU Awards, Jerwood Arts, London.
2020 Gender Utopias, Independent Iraqi Film Festival, London.
2020 Gatherings 1, Mascara Film Club, London.
2020 In A Time, Not A Time & A Place, Not A Place, San Mei Gallery, London.
2019 Soundings, Raven Row, London.
2019 Screenings, Mascara Film Club, London.
2018 Slade Degree Show, Slade School of Fine Art, London.
2018 One Night of Shorts, SET, London.
2018 Widening the Gaze, Woburn Research Centre, London.
2017 Night, The Horse Hospital Venue, London.
2016 Long Distance Song Effects, Milton Gallery, London.
2015 No Screening, IMT Gallery, London.

I would also like to share with you a text that I will be publishing in June 2021 in Art Work Magazine, in which I explore my mother's experience of migration.

On the road with my mother

The beginning of a journey is the best part. The feeling of motion yields more confidence, helping you to cross more and more distances. You stick your hand and head out of the window, feeling your body slice through space. But soon things start to blur. It begins to feel as if the surrounding space is the only thing moving, while your vehicle is completely still and unable to leave what it intended to depart from.

I come from a family that's always on the move. They're economic migrants but prefer to call themselves 'nomads' in order to conceal the chronic ache of constant relocation.

Growing up, my parents were constantly trying to improve our living conditions. Each job opportunity took us to a new city. It was hard for us to settle in one place. When I try to recall the routes of all the journeys we took, only one image appears in my mind. In this image, *my mother, two sisters and I sit in the backseat of a car behind two men, my father and a taxi driver.*

Every summer, from the late 90s to 2005, my parents took a break from their teaching positions and travelled back home to Iraq. My sisters and I were just luggage. My mother would hide her gold pendants and earrings inside our collars, while my father hid the banned camcorder from custom officers inside my sister's diapers. When the Ba'ath regime fell, our challenge at border control involved finding diplomatic ways to reject the Coke cans that American soldiers were handing out to children.

My parents preferred to travel by car. Many Iraqi taxis travelled the Jordan-Iraq route, averaging $100 per ride. During those 15-hour car journeys, my measure of time was the ice melting inside old fizzy drink bottles the drivers kept at their sides. The ice slowly melted during the journey, offering the driver much needed cold sips of water. When the ice fully melted and turned into warm and undrinkable water, I knew we were nearing our destination. Arrival wasn't necessarily my favourite part. I prefered the quiet moments when we would gaze through the side windows at the rolling landscapes. It was freeing, we forgot points A and B of the journey and postponed questions of 'home'.

20 years have passed. My mother, my two younger sisters, and I travel alone now. There is no ice to measure the length of our journey, only condensed droplets of water sliding down the inside of empty plastic bottles. I am unsure whether we missed our stop. It seems that none of us can describe our destination anymore.

The mirror

I reach out to the rearview mirror and tilt it in my mother's direction. I ask her '*what do you see in it?*' to search in her memory for where we are today.

The exit

In the summer of 1990, my mother, Angham, was preparing for her Masters degree in English Literature at the University of Mosul. Her first puzzle to solve was to find a thesis supervisor that could replace Dr Izzat, who, after a summer holiday in Egypt, sent her an apology letter saying he won't be returning to Iraq. That summer marked the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi troops, fast-tracking the country's deterioration. What followed was thirteen years of coalition-led strikes, trade sanctions and a dysfunctional infrastructure.

Not much improved in my mother's life, even after she completed her studies and found a job. The 750 Iraqi dinars she earned monthly were barely enough to buy desserts or pay for a taxi ride. The ban on oil exports devastated the economy. She tells me that people saw the situation as a punishment from God.

As the situation worsened, my mother's friends started inviting her to Islamic Fiqh lessons in mosques, while her parents grew more impatient with her refusal to wear a headscarf, which she eventually had to do against her will.

Saddam Hussein himself made an appeal to God when he added *allahu akbar* to the Iraqi flag in his own handwriting. He placed the two words between the three green stars that represented the Ba'ath party motto, to remind the public that 'God is Greater' than any hurdle.

Despite Saddam's intentions, the alteration of the Iraqi flag perfectly aligned itself with the shift in the regime rhetoric from a secular to a religious one. Saddam needed to strengthen local intermediaries who had influence over local communities. Religious clerics and tribal leaders were his perfect bet to consolidate power and maintain security.

Meanwhile, my mother saw similar desperate measures in her brother's life, he lost his nut roasting shop due to the economic crisis. To distract himself, he transformed the cellar of the family house into a bookbinding workshop and invited friends to bind old Islamic books that his great grandfather had written. They worked for hours into the night and distributed the books to charity the next morning. When my uncle realised that he could no longer provide for his wife or pay the rent, his eyes settled on my mother's room in the family house. Every encounter between my mother and him was marked by 'when are you getting married? We need the room'.

Once my mother hit the age of twenty-nine, eyes turned to the clock to see if she would find a partner, before she ‘missed the train of marriage’. She laughs, and tells me that many of the male friends she knew had either fled, died, or disappeared. The ones left were planning to leave the country.

Travel became a dream for many. Men started faking their occupation as ‘businessmen’ on their passports for easier mobility. For the same reason, women chose to be ‘housewives’, disguising their real professions. When Saddam Hussein became aware that he was losing a lot of local expertise due to migration, he tightened the travel laws. Anyone leaving the country had to pay around 400’000 Iraqi dinars (equivalent to $133 in the 90s), and single women were only allowed to travel with a *mahram*, a male guardian. However, many single women managed to cross the border through temporary marriage deals.

During the peak of the migration wave, my father appeared in my mother’s life, as if out of nowhere. In his marriage proposal, he told her of his intentions to travel to Arab countries for work, explaining that the job market in the region needed people with postgraduate degrees. ‘I needed an exit' my mother tells me. She accepted the proposal and left the country to Yemen in 1994.

To look back

I asked my mother if she ever looked back after she left. She replied, ‘I needed home the most when I gave birth to you’. During my mother’s pregnancy, we lived in Hajjah, a town 1800 meters above sea level in the western highlands of Yemen. My mother spent the early hours of labour in a minibus travelling down the mountainous road to Al-Om Children’s Hospital in the capital city Sana’a. Afraid of giving birth in the middle of the road, she cried silently and clutched her lips to control the pain. She wished my father could wrap his arms around her, but he didn’t want to show physical affection in a minibus full of strangers.

She was in the first stages of her labour when she arrived at the hospital, doctors asked her to stay overnight. My father decided to go to a motel to rest, leaving my mother alone among two other women waiting for birth. I wasn’t his first child. He anticipated labour to take long. He overslept and didn’t show up the next morning when my mother gave birth. She describes birth as an otherworldly moment that she wanted to share its pain and joy with someone.

She tells me that after birth, a nurse pushed us in a wheelchair down the busy hospital corridors. My mother looked right and left in search of a familiar face, and when she found no one waiting for us, she held me closer to her chest, burying her head in our embrace. The sight of families gathering around other mothers who had given birth made her feel alone.

To find Iraq

I try to imitate my mother and look into the rearview mirror, but it's not easy for me to 'remember'. I associate the past with an infectious nostalgia, and an older generation of Iraqis who are stuck in ahistorical memories that no one can access or reproduce. I grew up fearing that if I thought of the past too much, I would end up like them - writing poems about 'the empty wine glasses of exile' and the 'homeland'. I never understood why 'homeland' in their poems appears as a beautiful woman. Perhaps it helps them make sense of their defeats.

Interestingly, when they describe Baghdad as a woman with big breasts feeding the two rivers of Iraq, the only images of Baghdad I see are the ones I found in 2003. A televised image of a dark city under attack, and the image of my parents sitting on the floor to cry in silence while the news reporter utters the words; *Laylat Suqoot Baghdad*, the Night of the Fall of Baghdad.

I remember that, a month after the invasion, my parents proposed to my primary school in Jordan that I perform a poem in response to the events in Iraq. I'm not sure why I agreed, but I ended up memorising the lyrics of a song by Kathem Al Saher called *Baghdad La Tata'lami* (Baghdad, Don't Suffer), to perform as a poem.

To create the background music to my performance, my mother took a recording of the original song to a tape shop in the neighbourhood, removing all the vocals. We also made regular visits to a local tailor to make a dress which had the Iraqi flag plastered across it. The obsession with the performance and its endless rehearsals were perfect distractions for my mother and her guilt of watching the war unfold from afar.

On the night of my solo show, my legs trembled as I walked on the stage. I cried throughout the performance. People thought I was upset at the state of Iraq, but I just feared the crowd. I saw my parents struggle to hold their tears while they read every line of the poem with me; '*Baghdad, don't suffer. Baghdad, you're in my blood*'. I mourned for them a country I did not know. I felt angry at them and humiliated by my own fragility on the stage. How can an eight year old speak of homeland and pain?

To return

My family never called themselves migrants. Although we never spoke about it, we knew that the return to Iraq was always a possibility, bound to the hope that the country would one day recover. The feeling that 'this is all temporary, and soon I will go home' sometimes motivated our journey. Yet as we travelled further and further away, the image of 'return' haunted every arrival and horizon our eyes met, to the point that we could no longer make a decision on where our car could turn next.

When my mother left Iraq in 1994, she wanted to free herself from all the forces battling over her body and life. But she didn't manage to make a full exit. A ghost followed her trail. It was born out of the tragedy of departure, that moment of walking away, leaving something behind, closing doors, wiping tears, and looking away while the image of the family waving goodbye lingers in the back window of the car.

The conditions of displacement are perfect for the nurturing of ghosts. My mother's ghost became part of her life, as well as ours. Appearing in moments of loneliness and threat to remind her, and us, of what had been left behind.

When my sisters and I were born, we demanded a lot of answers from my mother. We came to life having already inherited an identity, which framed each of us in relation to a national state whose fate and systems of power weighed heavily on my mother's life. To help us, she concealed the marks of the social and political violence she suffered. She adorned Iraq with her own happy memories and hopes, weaving with us an identity and an emotional bond to a faraway homeland. Yet what she created in our minds was an aspirational homeland- not an existing place to which we can return.

To arrive

I look at my mother's hands as she holds the steering wheel. *Our car is at an intersection. We could go left, right, backwards or forwards. My mother spins the car on its axis until the four directions can no longer be distinguished from one another. We continue to spin and spin in a field of melting colours, until all that doesn't belong to the journey is flung out of the windows. Once we're ready, we bring the car to a halt, and choose any direction we want.*