

Forgetting

HYBRID

INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF ART, DESIGN, AND ARCHITECTURE



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Editor: Sumbul Khan

Editorial Board:

Sumbul Khan
Maham Khurshid
Faiza Mushtaq
Zehra Nabi
Seher Naveed

Cover Design: Kiran Ahmad

Design and Layout: Kiran Ahmad

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Hybrid

Interdisciplinary Journal of Art, Design, and Architecture

Hybrid is a thematic journal aimed at fostering a culture of research and writing at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and beyond. It is transdisciplinary in nature, and focuses primarily on those practices and projects that seek to apply any combination of art, design, architectural, and related genres to issues of critical, cultural, political, and educational significance, inclusion, and social justice. It emphasises praxis by providing a forum for research into the creative practices that exist within urban, academic, developmental, and other milieus, especially in the national and regional contexts of Pakistan and South Asia. *Hybrid* offers a platform for disseminating research by established and upcoming academics and practitioners as well as students, and includes sections for lead essays, a photo-essay, interview, portfolio, and a spotlight on crafts. Its objective is to bring new and multiple perspectives, grounded in Pakistan and the region, to a local, regional, and international audience, and to further pertinent debates.

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Editorial

The relevance of forgetting hits hard this year as we watch international stakeholders take their positions on Gaza. The Israeli disinformation campaign continues to keep citizens ideologically bound to a narrative that disavows how the Israeli state was created and developed an apartheid apparatus. Repeated across multiple conduits and at different levels of power, alternate truths efface the possibility of a historically-rooted knowing. On the other side is the unfailing voice of activism protesting the negation of Palestinians' right to challenge the occupation of their lands and the indiscriminate violence that has been inflicted on them for generations. The tussle between those willing the world to forget and those fiercely trying not to forget is severely amplified in times of conflict where ideology and official history both collude with the powerful.

History has been judgmental about forgetting. The discipline's traditional preoccupation with memory is embedded in a discourse of value. Only what is valued is remembered and what is forgotten must not have been worthy of remembering. Postmodern historians contested the positivist tradition to make room for those omitted in the annals of memory. Social and oral historians pertinently asked, 'Of value to whom?' and worked to mainstream the voice of the marginalised narrator. Even as they rethought official silences though, they still privileged memory in the accounts of their disenfranchised narrators. As Alessandro Portelli wrote, recounting is 'less about *events* than about their *meaning*.' Despite re-centering the forgotten, the understanding that forgetting something implies its lack of meaning to the subject persisted. And so, a key concern in this volume has been to rethink the pervasive connotations of forgetting and to consider if forgetting could be a site of productive/generative opportunity.

Recent movements for racial justice remind us that beyond the oppressive litany of absence, erasure, and omission, forgetting can be redemptive when used as a revisionist strategy. The Black Lives Matter movement's vandalism of Confederate statues was a clear statement that in order to address systemic racism in the present, it is imperative to publicly destroy monuments that valorise those who opposed the abolition. The gesture harked back to the fallen statues of Lenin and Hitler in post-communist Soviet states and Germany where protesters insisted that the glory of certain ideas ought to be forgotten.

To forget is to not remember (involuntarily) or to unremember (deliberately). The authors in this volume explore both connotations of forgetting in personal and collective spheres.

Ahmer Naqvi considers how watching team sports allows fans to forgo individual identities and politics, and be galvanised into an inter/national fan base. Governments have capitalised on the euphoria that comes with being part of this transitory collective identity, by sponsoring mega sports events to whitewash their crimes against their own people.

Sadaf Halai turns to literature to make sense of the interplay of remembering and forgetting when coping with the profound grief of losing a parent. She questions the felt arbitrariness of some memories versus others and the sheer survivalist impulse to let go of what is too harrowing to carry.

Farrukh Addnan makes us privy to the inspiration behind his abstract drawings. His meticulous mark-making is a response to the terrain of Southern Punjab where fond, familial associations of childhood sit amidst years of civilizational history in the neglected ruins of Tulamba.

Nazneen Engineer and Veera Rustomji discuss how the diminishing Parsi minority has distanced itself over time from its cherished rituals and traditions. Moving away from a very close-knit community life in South Asia has made it challenging for younger Parsis to relate to religious knowledge and regular practice, or even speak the language of their community.

Alyssa Sakina Mumtaz explains her practice as a rumination on the dichotomy between the corporeal desire to forget the inevitability of death and the injunctions in Islamic scriptures that advise remembering death at all times in order to be a more conscious, abiding Muslim.

In a milieu where breaking news still dominates our screens, Fahad Naveed's essay laments the waning significance of print media. He examines newspaper scraps used for packaging and selling street food in Karachi to query what kinds of stories have ceased to hold relevance and been relegated to such reuse.

Aamna Motala reflects on her teaching experiences through a Foucauldian lens. She considers the extent to which an instructor must commit to self-abnegation in order to enable student learning, but must equally invest in peer relationships that nurture them intellectually.

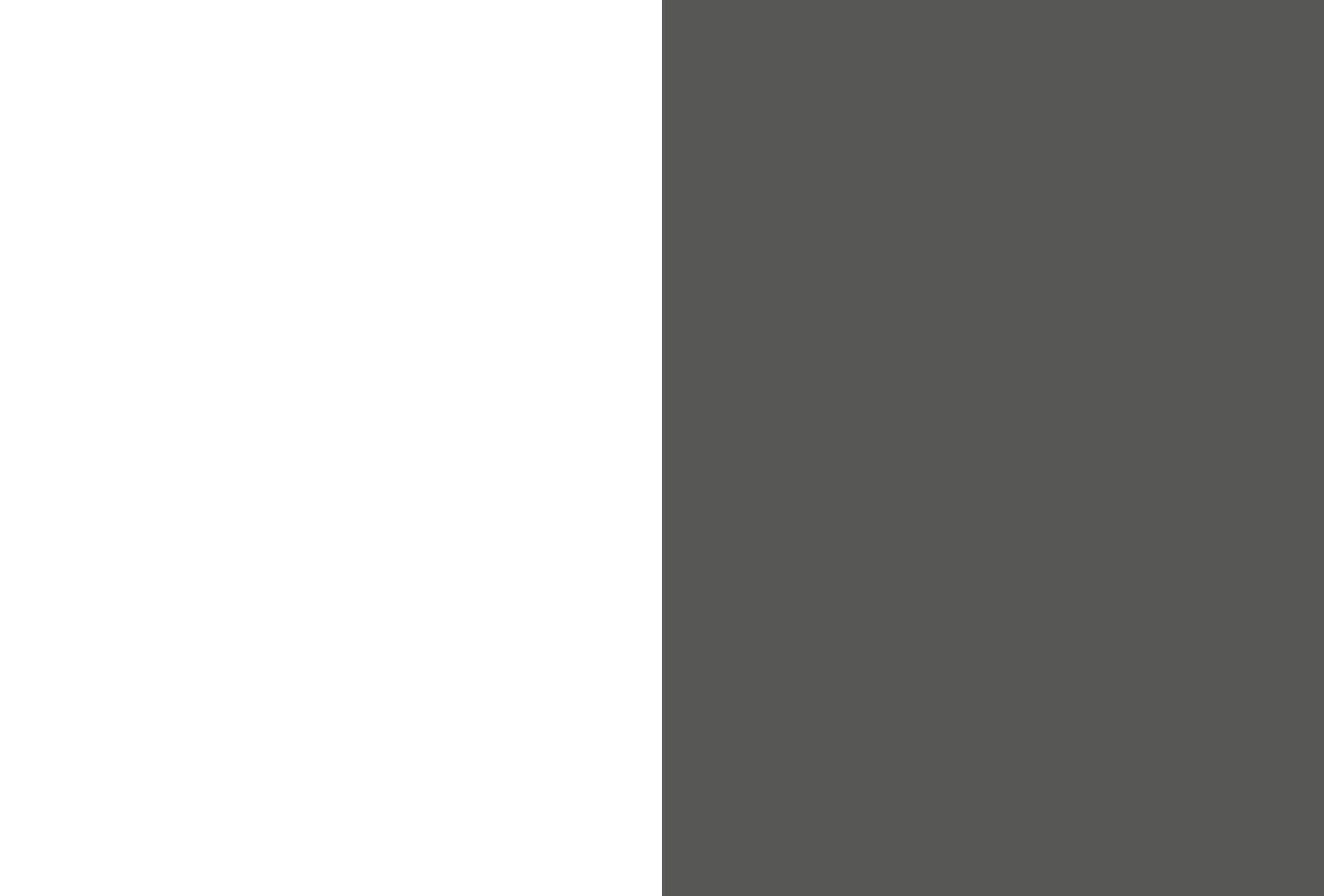
As we worked through these meditations on forgetting, we also felt its valence in the most mundane of ways—in the panic of almost missed deadlines, in the stress of forgoing commitments

to attend to family, in the escapist levity of a student performance. I am grateful to have shared this journey with a fantastic editorial team, an ever-patient designer, Kiran Ahmad, thoughtful peer reviewers who offered insightful feedback, and all the wonderful authors.

Sumbul Khan
Editor, *Hybrid 06* | Forgetting

Notes

1. Alessandro Portelli, "What makes Oral History different?" in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 67.



The I Who Becomes a We

Ahmer Naqvi

The advertisement cuts straight to the heart. A Pakistan fan takes out a box of fireworks every four years intending to celebrate a win over India at the cricket world cup—a moment that never comes as the fan ages over twenty-three winless years.

The video played on Star Sports for the 2015 World Cup, when Pakistan suffered their sixth consecutive World Cup defeat to India, and went massively viral, to the point where even Pakistan's star player Shahid Afridi referenced its catchy song '*Mauqa Mauqa*'[¶]—a reference to the long-suffering fan's neverending desire for one *mauqa* to celebrate an Indian defeat.

There is a famous cliché in British football which goes 'it's the hope that kills you.' The idea being that while it is painful to watch your favourite team lose, what hurts far more is when you have hope that they might come through.¹ Rather than resigning to certainty, you hope that this time might be different, which makes the eventual disappointment feel worse. The everyman in the Star Sports ad depicted several decades of a life millions of Pakistani fans had lived through, hoping for victory against their arch-rivals at the biggest stage. And like him, many of those fans had sat for each consecutive defeat with the hope that *this* time things might be different.

I have spent the last few years thinking about why we watch sports—a topic that I have written on when I was a younger, more naive writer. A big reason for this was that after several years of working as a journalist and consultant in cricket, I found that I had lost my ability to enjoy the sport as a fan. I began to wonder what was at the core of the experience of being a fan in the hopes of diagnosing my own malaise.

For a long time, I believed that we watch sports because it's fun to take part in the glory that comes with victory, but when supporting a team as fickle as the Pakistan men's cricket team, glory is the rarest of treasures. Far more common is absolute catastrophe, ranging from criminal scandals to jailed stars; terrorist attacks to senate hearings; doping to fixing; and an infernal habit of miraculously finding new, often hilariously tragic ways to lose. Why do any of us come back each time to watch this team?

[¶] *Mauqa* literally means a chance or opportunity. The refrain in the song speaks of the yearning for this one chance of savouring a victory over the arch-rivals.

The penny dropped for me a few years ago, when I saw the title of a sports documentary called *Maybe Next Year* (2021).[¶] The phrase 'maybe next year' is uttered by every losing fan once their team falls out of contention—and given that only one team can win an event, it's a phrase used by the majority of fans. 'Maybe next year' is the hope that maybe next year, next season, next time would be different, would give joy instead of sorrow. The more I thought about it, the more these three words seemed to betray the essence of sports fandom—the ability to forget the past, to forget the pain and the agony, to forget, for example, the taunting advertisements made by an economically dominant and rapidly fascist neighbouring country, the ability to forget all of that and somehow return to watch the team once more with the hope that this time, it might work out.

In other words, 'maybe next year' or the dream of the *mauca* represents the moment when sports fans forget all that came before, and renew their hopes for the future. While sports can give rise to many forms of forgetting, it is this forgetting that is at the heart of being a fan.

It should have been the pinnacle of Cesar Luis Menotti's career. The long-haired, flamboyantly besuited manager of Argentina's football team was more of a philosopher whose vision of an idealistic, purposefully romanticised attacking style of play had led his country to its first ever World Cup win. It was expressly referred to as a joyous, 'left-wing' style that stood in contrast to the previous decades of more defensive, violent football played by Argentina.

But the reason for Menotti's ambivalence was that '[o]n the pitch, Argentina's leader General Jorge Videla, grinning beneath his moustache, oiled hair gleaming in the floodlights, presented the World Cup trophy to...Argentina's captain. As [he] raised it to a roar of celebratory patriotism, Videla turned to one side and raised both his thumbs in glee.'² For all of Menotti's on-field politics and style, the cold, hard fact was that the World Cup win was an invaluable, peerless PR win for General Videla's ruthless junta which had ruled Argentina since 1976. The junta was most notorious for their brutal 'dirty war', which referred to the deaths of at least 30,000 people, many of whom had disappeared for years. Even during the lead-up to the World Cup and the event itself, protestors had thronged the major cities, but as the team kept winning, their glory drowned out all other noise.

[¶] The film covers the notorious fanbase of the Philadelphia Eagles, an American football team. Their fans were renowned for their rowdiness, their vitriol, and their unstinting support for a team that had not won a title in almost six decades. In a most serendipitous twist however, the year that the film was made ended up being the year that the Eagles won their first ever Super Bowl, the sport's highest prize.

In his history of Argentine football, Jonathan Wilson quotes the anthropologist Eduardo Archetti who tells stories of 'prisoners shouting, "We won! We won!" in their cells and being joined in their celebrations by Captain Jorge Acosta, "el Tigre," one of the most notorious of the torturers.'³ He then took some of the prisoners out in his car to witness the delight on the streets, so they could see that the people as a whole didn't care about the protests.[¶] Wilson also quotes Claudio Tamburrini, a lower league goalkeeper and a philosophy student imprisoned by the regime, who says that 'to support the national side of a country that is subjected to a dictatorship is an example of a costly irrationality.'⁴

Yet sport's capacity for provoking this costly irrationality, this forgetting of oppression, has long been one of its most desirable aspects for oppressors everywhere. The topic of sportswashing is currently trendy as Saudi Arabia has launched an impossibly wealthy attempt to own or acquire sporting teams and institutions. Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) is set to control international golf with its alliance with the Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) Tour. In addition, it also purchased the English football club Newcastle United, and over the last year has attracted many of European football's top players to its own domestic league using eye-watering sums of money. Their actions themselves are a belated response to the UAE and Qatar's far longer use of sportswashing,[∅] as both states had essentially purchased (through intermediaries) the football clubs Manchester City in England and Paris Saint-Germain in France.

But this is not to imply that sportswashing is a contemporary phenomenon brought about by petrostates looking to make their name on the world stage. Both Argentina and Australia provide great examples of the scale and durability of sport's ability to make us forget social sins. Both these countries became modern nation-states that catered to their dominant population of settler colonialists from Europe. Both of these countries had also largely wiped out and suppressed their native populations through war and genocide. In the early decades after their creation, these countries struggled to find an identity for their condition of being racially and culturally proximate, yet geographically distant, from Europe. In both cases, it was sport that helped shape the national identity.

[¶] In a remarkable twist, Argentina's second World Cup win came in 1986, four years after the junta's disastrous military defeat to the British over the Falkland Islands led to the end of the right-wing dictatorship. Carlos Bilardo, Argentina's manager in 1986, and his team meanwhile were the right-wing antithesis to Menotti's side, and for decades Argentina's copious football discourse was defined by a split between *menottisme* and *bilardisme*.

[∅] There is a veritable cottage industry of people from the global South calling out the hypocrisy of the global North protesting Qatar's considerable ethical and criminal crimes as it hosted the football World Cup. However, my favourite example is that literally the very previous edition, which raised very few moral concerns, was held in Russia, a few years after its annexation of Crimea, a few years before its invasion of Ukraine.

While football is followed passionately in many parts of the world, Wilson's work shines a light on a century-old history of Argentine obsession with the game, as novelists, artists, filmmakers and other intellectuals depicted their national identity through the prism of football. One of the most famous examples of these was the football editor Borocotó. In 1948, he co-scripted what is considered the defining film about Argentine football called *Pelota de trapo* (Ball of Rags) which tells the story of a street urchin called Comeuñas who learns to play with a ball of rags on a dirt field in the slums. He rises to become a top-class player, but in a key match before archrivals Brazil, doctors tell him he has a chronic heart disease and could die if he played. 'At the moment of crisis, Comeuñas gazes at the Argentinian flag and resolves to play: "There are many ways to give your life for your country," he says, "and this is one of them." He pulls on the [Argentine jersey] and scores the winner. Although Comeuñas's chest pains continue, he lives to the end of the film.'⁵

But perhaps more magical was Borocotó's article in 1928, where he described the idea of the *pibe*, an idealised figure of a diminutive street urchin who possesses both fantastic footballing skill and considerable cunning, having learnt the game on the streets. The full text is remarkable to read because it ends up being a strikingly accurate description of the Argentine great Diego Maradona, who would arrive about fifty years later and become arguably the greatest football player of all time.

Similarly in Australia, sport had a tremendous impact on shaping the national psyche of the settler colonial population. For them the sport in question was cricket, and in particular the otherworldly success of Donald Bradman[¶], who as one author described, 'enjoys a status in Australia that other countries bestow on those who lead revolutions, create immortal works of art or make great scientific breakthroughs.'⁶

Bradman arrived on the scene during the Great Depression and was a precocious talent of incredible promise. Like Maradona for Argentina, Bradman's combination of homespun technique and attacking instincts came to be seen as a stand-in for a larger national identity for the settler colonial population of Australia. For example, one politician said that Bradman's 'training technique of hitting a golf ball against a rainwater tank with a cricket stump is part of Australian folklore.'⁷ The reason it is so central to Australian identity is that it serves as a basis of a national mythology, of an idealised sense of what it means to be (a white) Australian. A young boy trains himself using limited resources and becomes the greatest batter ever seen is a story that the nation wants to tell about itself as well.

[¶] Bradman's greatest successes came against the English during the peak of their colonial might, and one result was that outside of his home country, the greatest volume of his fan mail arrived from pre-partition India.

In both Australia and Argentina, the settler colonial populations used the mythology of sport to create an identity which didn't need to contend with the violence of their presence on that land—an identity which allowed them to forget their original sin, and create a new one where they are the righteous heroes who overcame great odds.

In fact, beyond providing the basis of a national identity, some have argued that sports also serves to bring the imagined nation to life. If we turn our attention to another settler colonial state, the USA, we find the writer Brian Phillips making such an argument. Americans play their own version of football (called American football) and while the professional league is the richest in the world, the far more popular version of the sport is played at the college level. When the Covid-19 pandemic caused widespread changes to the already complicated college football season, Phillips wrote about the impact that the sport's timetable had on society:

all timetables [are] a window into the civilization that created [them]. What it makes me think about, mainly, is how much hard work goes into knitting a country together, how the enormous difficulties of physical space and regional difference can only be overcome with great...imaginative labor...[A] timetable, then, [is] among other things a powerful imaginative act. College football exists...somewhere in the...process of cultural adhesion...it's a game about taking disparate places and turning them into a place. It's an interface. Every time two teams play, every time fans caravan in from farm country [to watch a game]...every time that happens...a little span of distance is collapsed.⁸

At this point, it might well feel that the primary function of sports is to allow for terrible politics to take place. The types of forgetting described above are all in the service of oppressive political forces. Indeed, for the Roman poet Juvenal, this was precisely the problem with sports. He bemoaned that the Roman public had abdicated its political responsibilities, and instead spent their time yearning for 'bread and circuses', with circuses referring to gladiator bouts and chariot races that autocrats would organise as a way to gain political power. Yet the Roman tradition of chariot racing provides my favourite example of how this power of sports—the power to create new identities or forget old ones—can occasionally become chaotic and uncontrollable.

At a chariot race in 532 CE, during a time of considerable economic and social unrest in the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, fans of opposing teams suddenly began to chant in unison, despite their fierce rivalries. According to popular historian Mike Dash, '[t]ogether, the two [fan] factions shouted the words of encouragement they generally reserved for the charioteers—Nika! Nika! ("Win! Win!"). It became obvious that the victory they anticipated was of the factions over

the emperor, and with the races hastily abandoned, the mob poured out into the city and began to burn it down.⁹

It behoves me to add some context. At this point in the Byzantine empire, fans of chariot races were powerful political and social actors, comparable to similar fan groups in global football today, who sat at the nexus of fandom, politics, and criminality. Eventually one fan group betrayed the other, which led to mass executions.¹⁰

I love thinking about this story, particularly when ghastly political aims overwhelm the naive joys of sports, because it reminds me that the spectacle of sports can be abused by oppressors only so much. And in some extreme cases, sports offers a sense of hope and redemption that few other things in life can offer. An excellent example of this is in the unbelievable story of Iraq's triumph at the 2007 Asian Cup in football. Iraq was historically a powerhouse of Asian football, but it suffered a great decline during the height of Saddam Hussain's reign. The worst of it was called The Dark Era, as Uday Hussain, Saddam's notorious son, took control of the football federation and 'tortured players who played poorly, punishing them by sending them to prison, making them bathe in raw sewage and kick concrete balls, and shaving their heads among many other punishments'¹¹ Uday succeeded in decimating much of Iraqi football's previous success.

By 2007, Saddam and his sons were long gone and replaced by a deadly civil war in the aftermath of the American invasion. All of Iraqi society was in disarray, which is why the team's unexpected success at the tournament became a huge rallying point. Indeed, despite multiple horrifying suicide attacks on celebrating fans, the streets continued to be full of joyous fans after every win. As one fan said after the victory in the final, 'it was not a football match; it was Iraq's one chance to show the world who they truly are.'¹² It is hard to find anything that can help a society forget unending levels of violence and despair, but this is where sport's power to forget can also be a useful thing.

But talking about a war-torn country winning a major tournament is taking things to an extreme. It might end up suggesting that sport fulfils this function of forgetting only when glory is achieved, but the reality is that even the most mundane and modest of teams can provide a lot of joy by simply existing. And that goes to the heart of sports-related forgetting that I find myself most interested in.

Sidetalk is a popular social media channel that posts short videos chronicling the streets of New York. In 2021, one video documenting the fans of the local basketball team after they had won

a game broke the internet.¹³ The maniacal, unbridled emotions of the fans felt universal. One person in the video, speaking with raw emotion, asserted into the camera, 'We had De Blasio, we had Cuomo, it was rough shit. But we have the Knicks.' Later, a top-rated comment on the video repeated that line, and noted 'that's actually kind of beautiful when you think about it.' For context, Bill De Blasio and Mario Cuomo were former mayor and governor of New York who were widely despised. The prevailing sentiment was that supporting the local New York Knicks team allowed fans to get through the tough times under those political leaders. It showcased one of the best things about sport's ability to forget, and I found myself watching the video many times since it came out.

It took a while for me to realise something funny. For the entirety of De Blasio's time in office and the majority of Cuomo's, the Knicks were statistically one of the worst teams in their league. Moreover, the Knicks have always been one of the worst teams in their league, having last won a title fifty years ago, and having generally been terrible ever since. And perhaps best of all, the fans were celebrating a win in the opening game of an 82-game season. In other words, they were losing their minds, they were baring their souls, and sharing their hopes and fears on camera over what amounted to success in just the first step of many, many more. (Spoiler Alert: The Knicks did not win the title that season.) I kept thinking about that guy from the video—how exactly was supporting the worst team in a sport helping you deal with 'rough shit'?

This paradox—how being fans of a tragicomic team could somehow be soothing for people suffering real life problems—was something I had begun to wonder about with my own fandom of the Pakistan cricket team.

Over the last few years, every time the Pakistan cricket team manages to lose a match in a gut-wrenching way, people dig up an old tweet of mine. It goes, 'When I have kids I'll get them hooked to coke and heroin at a young age so they never get involved in an addiction as fkd up as Pak cricket.' At the time, I felt an addiction was the only way to describe my fandom for the team. One reason that I perhaps saw this as an addiction was that around once a decade, Pakistan would win a major title and as I understood it, that allowed me to sign up for a decade more of hurt.

But this Knicks video shattered that premise—here were fans who had spent multiple generations without any major titles and accolades, and yet they were expressing the same emotions as any other fans. This was the video that convinced me that fans were not supporting their teams for glory. Fans like those of the Knicks proved that they were not even expecting a bare level of competence in return for their obsession. Instead, they were fans because sports fandom allowed them to forget all the rational evidence about their team, all the memories of its failures, and all the heartbreaks it caused because sports offered a truly immersive, communal, almost sacred experience.

The novelist Eduardo Galeano wrote in *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, his seminal work, how attending a football match was a secular ritual.

While the pagan mass lasts, the fan is many. Along with thousands of other devotees he shares the certainty that we are the best, that all referees are crooked, that all our adversaries cheat...

Rarely does the fan say, 'My club plays today.' He says, 'We play today.' And then the sun goes down and so does the fan...The stadium is left alone and the fan too returns to his solitude: to the I who had been we.¹⁴

By writing the 'I who had been we,' Galeano describes the universal journey of every fan while alluding to that sense of community that fandom provides. This sense of community exists most powerfully inside a stadium during a match, and it also exists across time and space, connecting fans across continents and generations and lifetimes in a shared communal experience.

Ultimately, fans forget so that they can participate in this secular ritual once more and have something not in their control, like the outcome of a cricket match, feel meaningful. They wish to relive that feeling of community, where the entire fandom pulls as one in feeling hope, in feeling joy, in feeling sadness and despair, in feeling all those feelings deeply and together.

In the aftermath of the epic men's World Cup final in 2022 between Argentina and France, the writer Zito Madu called out the simplistic impulse to view the results as being solely about winners and losers. He wrote, 'it seems to me that it would be better if athletes were judged as artists as well, so that we can see their great performances and seasons as the masterpieces that they are. Performances that we should sometimes stand in front of, without debating and trying to tear each down in comparison to another, and simply enjoy.'¹⁵ This is a beautiful and elegant approach to sport's obsession with binary narratives of defeat and victory.

The more I think about this radical proposal, the more I feel that it might not be radical at all. While fans might not view athletes as artists, they certainly do move past who wins and loses. When a new season of sports comes around, it is not just fans of the previous champions, but also fans of every other team who renew their hopes for victory. It appears that when speaking about fandom in general, it is the continuity, the resetting, and renewal that keeps them hooked, keeps them returning even when their team is terrible.

Fans forget so that we can become fans again and again. They forget so that the 'I who was' becomes a 'we' once more, even for a brief while.

Notes

1. Learn English through Football. "Football Cliche: It's the Hope That Kills You."
2. Wilson, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, 388.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 575.
5. Wilson, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, 202.
6. Gemmell, "Bradman's Cultural Legacy."
7. "Hansard - ACT Legislative Assembly."
8. Phillips, "College Football's Schism Moves Us Further Apart than We Already Are."
9. Dash, "Blue versus Green: Rocking the Byzantine Empire."
10. Ibid.
11. Goldenberg, "Footballers Who Paid the Penalty for Failure."
12. Farah, "World Football's Defining Moment: Iraq Rise from Guns to Glory."
13. SidetalkNYC, "Knicks Season Opener - Sidetalk."
14. Galeano, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, 24.
15. Madu, "The World Cup Belongs to Lionel Messi."

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Staying our Troubles

Sadaf Halai

In my childhood home, taped to the wall of our living room, was a poster of a brownish sky at dusk and a bird in mid-flight above the sea, its wings a dark V against the dimming sun. In the poster's right hand corner were printed the words *Follow Your Dream* in fancy yellow italics. I'd stare at the poster for long stretches of time, despite there being nothing remarkable about it—I didn't find the image particularly beautiful. Though I was barely ten, I possessed a preternatural cynicism and a vague understanding that the poster's injunction was easier said than done. It was my father's poster, and it was the kind of thing he said. The thing is, I would never put up a picture like that in my home today, not even to be ironic. Who says things like that anymore, unless they're alluding to something akin to fable? But because I grew up in a home where the idea of following one's dream was not a truism, but one's truth, I have found it hard to forget the poster or its lesson.

With time, memory dims; the happenstance of the everyday recedes farther into the past, until it loses shape and brightness and turns shadowy, difficult to locate in chronologies real and imaginary. It might start with the small things. I began to think about forgetting in earnest when my father passed away. In the weeks after his death, I was unprepared for the mysterious ways in which my memory worked, and did not work. For instance, I began to remember things I'd long forgotten: conversations with him from childhood which were almost always 'teachable moments,' a rushed goodbye at a bus stop in Boston when he came to visit in 1998, an afternoon chat over tea in 2010, the same year my daughter was born. Where had I relegated this flotsam before his passing, and why had it rushed back now, unabated, unannounced and uninvited? It was both devastating and exhilarating that I remembered as much as I did. And if these memories could return of their own accord, seemingly autonomous, could they disappear once again just as easily? I began to read about a particular kind of grief: the grief of a child mourning the death of a parent. In essays and fiction, I looked for comfort. If I found any, it was in knowing what I already knew: that loss makes paupers of us all. But the mystery of how grief affects memory remained confounding. When grief is mentioned, it is often in the same breath as the twin prospects of not wanting to forget and not being able to forget. Grief and memory are equally intangible. We talk about grief, but so much of what it is remains indescribable. In much the same way, how does one identify what one is forgetting? What stories can we tell about a past that is no longer accessible?

The longing to return to the past is often synonymous in literature with wishing for the lost home of childhood, to keep alive in memory those sensations that first defined our place in the world. To my mind, V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) is one of the finest examples of grief interwoven with that ancient yearning for the lost, near-mythical home of childhood, where one first learns the meaning of love. Whether that love was received or not, it can be dangerous to desire a return to Ithaca, to want to return to the forgotten. What will you find when you get there?

Naipaul did not want to return to the Caribbean once he left home as a young and bitter man. The grandson of indentured servants who came to Trinidad from India, he was known to be derisive, harsh and cruel, but his prose, despite his problematic politics and personal life, is deeply resonant:

In a northern land, in a time of new separations and yearnings, in a library grown suddenly dark, the hailstones beating against the windows, the marbled endpaper of a dusty leather-bound book would disturb: and it would be the hot noisy week before Christmas in the Tulsi store: the marbled patterns of old-fashioned balloons powdered with a rubbery dust in a shallow white box that was not to be touched. So later, and very slowly, in securer times of different stresses, when the memories had lost the power to hurt, with pain or joy, they would fall into place and give back the past.¹

Arguably his finest novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas* is based on Naipaul's father who died at the age of forty-six when the author was twenty-one. This novel is an attempt by a young man to commit his father's life to memory, so that none of it would be forgotten: the trials, the small meanness and rancor, the noise, every rustle and whisper, the lull after a loud rain.

I also turned to a very different kind of book, the best-selling memoir *Crying in H Mart* (2021), written by Korean-American Michelle Zauner, a musician with the indie band Japanese Breakfast. Zauner's memoir is as much about losing her mother as it is about losing her connection to place. She is ill-prepared for how her loss unhinges her sense of identity as a Korean woman. Much to her astonishment, in the weeks after her mother's death, she finds herself weeping inconsolably in the aisles of the Asian grocery store H Mart. In deft and deliberate prose, Zauner's memoir recounts how her grief is intertwined with her childhood memories of sharing food with her mother. ('What I never seem to forget is what my mother ate.'²)

My grief comes in waves and is usually triggered by something arbitrary. I can tell you with a straight face what it was like watching my mom's hair fall out in the bathtub, or about the five weeks I spent sleeping in hospitals, but catch me at H Mart

when some kid runs up double-fisting plastic sleeves of *ppeong-twigi* and I'll just lose it. Those little rice-cake Frisbees were my childhood: a happier time, when Mom was there and we'd crunch away on the Styrofoam-like disks after school. Eating them was like splitting a packing peanut that dissolved like sugar on your tongue.³

In the aisles of H Mart, Zauner searches for the Korean flavours that once defined the vivid, muscular world of the living ('remembering the taste of my mom's soy-sauce eggs and cold radish soup').⁴ She hopes this pilgrimage to the grocery store, in addition to offering some solace, will also free her from the horror of her mother's battle with cancer. I was reminded of my own experience, of the difficulty of bearing witness to a parent's illness, though the word 'difficulty' is a misnomer for what the experience entails. I don't have a word that can sum up all the parts: the stiff, starched hospital bed sheets, a tangle of spaghetti-like tubes dangling from the IV pole, the window that looked out on a pond. The solitary white duck that circled aimlessly on the water's surface. Zauner invokes the past to remember what is desirable, and forget what isn't.

Within the past five years, I lost both my aunt and mother to cancer. So, when I go to H Mart, I'm not just on the hunt for cuttlefish and three bunches of scallions for a buck; I'm searching for their memory. I'm collecting the evidence that the Korean half of my identity didn't die when they did. In moments like this, H Mart is the bridge that guides me away from the memories that haunt me, of chemo head and skeletal bodies and logging milligrams of hydrocodone. It reminds me of who they were before: beautiful and full of life, wiggling Chang Gu honey-cracker rings on all ten of their fingers, showing me how to suck a Korean grape from its skin and spit out the seeds.⁵

'Sobbing near the dry goods,' she asks herself: 'Am I even Korean anymore if there's no one left in my life to call and ask which brand of seaweed we used to buy?'⁶ Her admission reminds us that after experiencing great loss, grief can make forgetting feel deleterious, if not unthinkable. There is an urgent, almost manic need to recount and retell.

And yet, the language of loss is inextricably tied to the language of forgetting. The memorials we fabricate for our dead; the ritual of the death anniversary, the *barsi*; the very words we use (gone but not forgotten, forever in our hearts) are all constructs in the service of not forgetting. 'My mother died on October 18, 2014, a date I'm always forgetting,' Zauner confesses. 'I don't know why exactly, if it's because I don't want to remember or if the actual date seems so unimportant in the grand scheme of what we endured.'⁷ Willing oneself to remember is essential, yet it can keep much of the grief alive, long after some forgetting should have happened.

The litany of things we forget in the day-to-day is a mundane one: a name, items on a grocery list, the shred of a silly conversation one wants to rehash into a sparkling joke. And yet, the name of the old acquaintance escapes you, and you fake your way through the encounter like an impostor. The milk goes unbought. Two commitments overlap. The joke falters. No one laughs. And that grave quasi-philosophical question, tenacious in its capacity to awaken and annoy at odd hours of the night: if you've forgotten something—a memory exiled to a region from which it may never return—did it even happen?

My father sent me aerogrammes during my college years in America. For those unfamiliar with this near-extinct object—gone the way of endangered animals and the fax machine—the aerogramme is nondescript, its colour a washed-out blue, six inches wide and twelve inches long, with gummed flaps. Once folded into threes, it becomes—voilà!—both letter and envelope. Everything has to be said succinctly. There's no space, quite literally, for wanton emotion.

His aerogrammes, chock full of advice tempered with love, arrived with a regularity that was unappreciated by my nineteen-year-old self. His lolloping handwriting so strangely measured, and the assured capital letters of my address, the initials USA always written with a red ballpoint pen: the letters were consistent and timely, like a change of season. His sentences were pithy. In spite of their brevity, when I read them now (which I don't often) I'm reminded of who he was. Alongside his great capacity for feeling, his varied moods and his impassioned speech, he was a squarely practical man. 'Be good and happy,' he writes in one of the aerogramme letters, without a trace of irony. 'Write to me about something funny, or serious,' he asks in another. Funny or serious, indeed. I wonder what half-truths I scribbled back from my East Coast college, burnished by my own fragile sense of accomplishment, my weary indictment of things that irked me.

Because I find the experience of rereading his letters unbearable, I keep them safely stashed away, along with other things (photographs, his watch, more letters) in a sturdy box with a lid. Imagine my bemusement when I discovered that the dictionary defines an aerogramme as a 'lightweight' letter. Anyone who has received an aerogramme that was dispatched across an ocean from someone who loved them knows that there's nothing lightweight about it. Abujee's letters arrived in my mailbox full of stupendous possibility. It was news from home, even if the news was always the same. Email was a newfangled thing, and the three-minute telephone calls from Pakistan always felt like the beginning of a conversation that would never be completed. We did not have the luxury of time.

The aerogramme is my Proustian madeleine. I have no power over it; I will never be able to dismiss it by relegating it to the past; it blurs the line between what is and was. There is nothing lightweight about it. It will always sit heavy in my hand.

Why do we forget some things and not others? The most grievous kind of forgetting is the inevitable kind, tinged with shame and brought on by age. We now know that from an evolutionary point of view, we forget because we must. It happens actively: what's of little use to us is overwritten by knowledge that's needed for survival.

But necessity notwithstanding, what we forget and why is inexplicable. Throw into this mix a catalogue of life-long memories, and who is to say which ones will survive? In his posthumously published essay "The Strangeness of Grief" (2019), Naipaul describes the arduous process of coming to terms with his father's death. A brass vase—a present from his father—takes on a gruesome object permanence, a totemic place-marker for his father. 'I saw on a shelf what I felt sure was my father's brass vase,' he writes. Naipaul contemplates the urn, and remarks that 'the grief of which it once spoke so directly was rubbed away, like the grief itself, though that stayed with me so completely and for so long, waiting to be recalled.'⁸ Grief waits with astonishing patience. To not forget a life is to somehow magically prolong the life itself, along with all its messy accoutrements.

So profound is his loss that he feels 'inoculated against grief' having 'drunk that bitterness to the dregs'. Thirty years go by. Naipaul is convinced he has forgotten that feeling, seemingly immune to despair. But then his younger brother Shiva dies, and the old feeling resurfaces, brand new and shameless in the force of its flagrant arrival. He cannot escape suffering; it catches him unawares when he least expects it. 'My sorrow lasted for two years,' Naipaul confesses. 'For two years I mentally dated everything, even the purchase of a book, by its distance from Shiva's death.'⁹

A House for Mr. Biswas is ostensibly about a father-son relationship, and its universal truths—the need to locate one's place in the world, to have a home and embody it—make it eminently readable. The Trinidadian characters are drawn in a voice that is often contemptuous: they are ill-tempered and unkempt, ridiculous in the exaggerated ways in which they suffer. 'History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies'¹⁰ Naipaul wrote in *The Middle Passage* (1962). It stands to reason that if you can diminish a people, and reduce them into grotesque miniature, you can forget they're

multidimensional. For one who leaves home forever, the hatred of a place necessitates an exaggeration of its flaws. It might be the only way to forget what goodness it offered, and to leave without looking back.

When Mr. Biswas moves into the titular house with his family, they are initially struck by its flaws ('the upper floor sagged'), but with surprising ease and speed they grow comfortable in it. The landscape and Biswas's various homes all possess this kind of mutability, a shoddy shape-shifting that maintains the ever-present threat to unhouse him ('Mr Biswas could never afterwards say exactly where his father's hut stood...the stream where he had watched the black fish had been dammed...the world carried no witness to Mr Biswas's birth and early years'¹¹). Without even wanting it so, a once-familiar landscape is overwritten. I have seen this to be true. One may pass by a house for years on end, but the day after it's demolished, it's hard to say what it looked like. The trees and vegetation take over, weeds sprouting where pillars once stood.

A kind of fatigue permeates Biswas's childhood: he moves from home to home and feels mostly unloved. In his halfhearted quest for knowledge, he 'read folk tales from various lands: he read, and quickly forgot, how chocolate, matches, ships, buttons and many other things were made...'¹² In the backdrop of his quixotic pastimes is the ever-lengthening shadow of his father's tragic and pointless death by drowning. It could be argued that the young Biswas is always unconsciously engaged in some form of willful forgetting:

Occasionally a nerve of memory would be touched—a puddle reflecting the blue sky after rain, a pack of thumbed cards, the fumbling of a shoelace, the smell of a new car, the sound of a stiff wind through the trees, the smells and colours of a toyshop, the taste of milk and prunes—and a fragment of forgotten experience would be dislodged, isolated, puzzling.¹³

In the Tulsi household, to which he belongs, the husbands move in with their wives' parents: 'their names were forgotten; they became Tulsis.'¹⁴ This erasure of their past identity comes easy in the milieu of communal noise. Running parallel to this is Biswas's longing for 'otherness'—a different place, a better home—and his weariness with everything oppressive, and the perpetual threat of poverty. When he 'worked late into the night by the light of a gas lamp, excitement and the light transforming the hut (he was) able then to forget that ordinary morning would come and the sign would come and the sign would hang over a cluttered little shop with its doors open on to a hot dusty road.'¹⁵ Biswas suspects that it would be easy for his sliver of an identity to disappear in a world content to carry on with its business. 'Suppose at one word; he wonders, 'I could just disappear from this room, what would remain to speak of me? A few clothes, a few books.'¹⁶

Zauner's journey comes full circle: after her mother's death she returns to Korea, a place both familiar and in large parts unknown. Her childhood visits to Korea with her mother form an indelible part of her memory. She goes back in an effort to 'find' her mother, to locate her somewhere in the language and topography that bewilder her, in the heady rush of sensation. She writes:

These were the places my mother had wanted to visit before she died, the places she'd wanted to take me to before our last trip to Korea was quarantined to a hospital ward. The last memories my mother had wanted to share with me, the source of the things she raised me to love. The tastes she wanted me to remember. The feelings she wanted me to never forget.¹⁷

There are things I cannot forget from my childhood. My father, Dr. Tufail Ahmed Qureshi, drove me to primary school in Kano, Nigeria, where we lived in the 1980s. His car was a blue Peugeot. President Babangida was in power. For me, it was a simple time. On the drive to school, and on the drive back home from school, he told me a different story, one he'd make up on the spot, every day, like a magician conjuring a deft trick. He didn't have much of a choice in the matter. I demanded the stories and each had to be unique. Now that I am a parent myself, I have great sympathy for the unwavering patience this must have required. Children demand difficult things, and their parents will find a way to make them happy.

What's strange but perhaps unsurprising, is that I have forgotten every single story my father told me on those drives to and fro: this pains me because I cannot retrieve them now. There will be no retelling of those tales. What I cannot forget, for a reason as inexplicable as the nature of memory itself, is an obscure moment from one obscure morning during school drop-off. I must have been ten years old. My father drove into the dusty school parking lot and, no doubt at the conclusion of the morning storytelling, turned off the car's ignition. It was a hot day and I had placed my hands on the car AC's vent. With glee, I turned to him, announced 'Feel this!' and placed my hands on his face. He smiled, laughed, feigned great surprise at the cold. I knew he was hamming it up for my benefit, indulging a child in a child's game. That moment has stayed with me, but there is no good reason why. Why that, and not the fantastic stories he told me on the twenty-minute drive to school and back?

He passed away in January 2021. I visit that school drop-off memory so often that it plays like a film reel when I summon it. It is as tangible as the room I sit in while I type these words, as real as the window before me and the view beyond it, a listless, unchanging landscape.

I am here but simultaneously it is 1988, in northern Nigeria, and I can feel the cold and damp draft of the air conditioner. The icy blue Peugeot. And always, my father's smile, and its shadow that lingered long after it was gone, like the refrain from Tony Bennet's 'The Shadow of Your Smile,' a song he loved to sing. I recall this incident to memorize it, the way children repeat passages of school text-books to learn them by heart. After all, writing an essay (or a story or poem) is a kind of arsenal, however poor, against time.

Ultimately, the tragedy of forgetting is that it erases even the shadow of what's already gone. Or the memory may simply become partial. You remember that your hands were cold but forget the car was blue. The autobiography frays, turns partly fictive. In *A Grief Observed* (1963), C. S. Lewis contemplates what it means to remember his dead wife. 'I cannot even see her face distinctly in my imagination,' he admits. The protagonist of the short story 'Funes the Memorious' (1942) by Jorge Luis Borges is cursed in that he cannot forget anything: 'He knew that at the hour of his death he would scarcely have finished classifying even all the memories of his childhood.'¹⁸ Borges, who started to go blind as a young man, committed long passages of literature to memory.

In thinking about my father, I can attempt a respectable facsimile on the page of what my heart harbours, but words will never do the trick. Grief is a funny thing that way. It shape-shifts and defies description. It is its own language. I am reminded of how, many years ago, I borrowed a book of Dylan Thomas's collected poems from a local recreational club where our family was out having dinner. I must have been fifteen. The book with its damaged cover intrigued me. It featured a photograph of Thomas wearing a scratchy looking jacket, slumped across a chair in a casual pose. He did not have the gaunt Romantic look of a Shelley or Keats, the poets I had to study in school. Thomas, instead, was portly and unassuming, with alarmingly round eyes, more professor than poet.

I returned with the book to the dinner table to join my parents and siblings. It was the kind of evening that constituted a family outing: we were all acutely conscious of ourselves and each other, wearing our good clothes, freed from the tedium of our home routine and the unspoken familial rules that made joyful spontaneity feel like incorrect punctuation. Abujee rifled through its pages, as if searching for something, and then, triumphant, in his quietly giddy way, having found what he was looking for, pushed the book back across the table toward me, and recited a poem he knew by heart. It was an incongruous setting: the screeching of children out with their families, liberated by the outdoor spaces of the club, our barbequed dinner growing cold on the table, the flurry of black-vested waiters who appeared both busy and unoccupied at the same time. It was the poem 'Was there a Time' (1936). Reading it felt visceral, a punch to the stomach. I could not say what its meaning was, but I felt I understood it.

Was there a time when dancers with their fiddles
In children's circuses could stay their troubles?
There was a time they could cry over books,
But time has set its maggot on their track.
Under the arc of the sky they are unsafe.
What's never known is safest in this life.
Under the skysigns they who have no arms
Have cleanest hands, and, as the heartless ghost
Alone's unhurt, so the blind man sees best.

It's hard to believe that, once, there was a time when the world was young enough for me to receive wisdom as simple and abundant as this: 'Be good, and happy.' But I remember hearing those words. They have become indelible now, freed from the constraints of tense, a talisman for both the past and the uncertain future. They will not be forgotten.

Notes

1. Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, 443.
2. Zauner, *Crying in H Mart*, 16.
3. *Ibid.*, 10.
4. *Ibid.*, 8.
5. *Ibid.*, 14.
6. *Ibid.*, 8.
7. *Ibid.*, 16.
8. Naipaul, "The Strangeness of Grief."
9. *Ibid.*
10. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*, 22.
11. Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, 40.
12. *Ibid.*, 60.
13. *Ibid.*, 556.
14. Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, 92.
15. *Ibid.*, 59.
16. *Ibid.*, 125.
17. Zauner, *Crying in H Mart*, 188.
18. Borges, "Funes," 144.

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The L-shaped House in Tulamba

Farrukh Addnan

The L-shaped house in my village, Tulamba, holds a special place in my heart. It is not just a structure but it is deeply connected with my being. It's as if the blood in my veins flows directly through its walls.

The village's name has its origins from Raja Talman and is a historic town located in the Khanewal district of Southern Punjab. Whenever I think back to the time I spent in that house, I am transported to moments of comfort and familiarity—it is like reliving the days when I felt most at ease.

Opposite the house are remains of the old city—the ruins of Tulamba. These remains carry a grand and majestic aura, even though they are generally in a state of disrepair due to neglect and exposure to rain. Despite their current state one can still see some semblance of brick formations, providing a glimpse into their past glory.

For the inhabitants of Tulamba, these ruins stand as witness to all we have undergone—a testament to our history and struggles. Affectionately referred to as *bhir*,[¶] these mounds predate us and will endure beyond us. Growing up amidst them was at times intimidating because of their sheer magnitude and their coarse, washed out presence, yet they also held the promise of exhilaration and delight. Especially on rainy days, they transformed into an impromptu playground for me and other youngsters in the village. We slid down channels carved by rainwater. The ruins became our sanctuary, a place where we discovered joy in an environment where dedicated playgrounds were scarce.

For me, the narrative of this place has been deeply influenced by many aspects of nature. I can still vividly recall the robust mud walls that encompass the city, the ancient trees that have witnessed the passage of time, and the murmur of water flowing through the nearby canal. This interaction between natural and human forces has shaped Tulamba's terrain and left a lasting mark on its identity. The weathering and erosion of man-made structures by natural elements such as wind, rain, and sunlight serve as a poignant reminder of the land's transformative

¶ mound

capabilities. Likewise, over time, these abandoned and neglected structures became seamlessly integrated with the natural landscape, overgrown with various forms of vegetation. It is not uncommon for the current inhabitants of Tulamba to stumble upon fragments of shattered pottery amidst the ruins. During one of my walks, I too encountered numerous shards of pottery adorned with intricate designs made of dashes and dots. I longed to learn more about each fragment of shattered crockery, every indication of past human activity, the myths and hidden narratives beneath layers of dirt.

Stitching Memories

As a child I was only allowed to play outside for a few hours a day and spending more time inside the house piqued my curiosity about my surroundings. This imposed confinement shifted my focus to the objects within the four surrounding walls. It made me more observant, encouraging me to seek out something new every time I looked around. As a result, even the simplest things evoked my curiosity.

My aunts and other relatives would often work on intricate embroidery projects. They would work together, skillfully bringing complex patterns to life on fabric. They embroidered using various techniques including *phulkari*, *charsuti tanka*, *shishakari* among others. I was fascinated by their artistry, so I would occasionally volunteer to help them out.

These collaborative moments introduced me to a novel way of engaging with my family. My creative energy found a home in stitching as I threaded needles and meticulously sewed with my aunts. I gained an appreciation for their perseverance and commitment to the craft, which I found truly beautiful. I was also particularly intrigued by the cultural significance that embroidery held and asked questions about the patterns, motifs, and narratives that underpinned each artistic creation. The needlework made me happy and gave me a profound sense of purpose. In the grand scheme of things, those extended days spent within the confines of the home became a fertile breeding ground for my creativity.

My earliest memories are woven around the objects in my home. In the rectangular courtyard, my mother would stretch a wire, hanging up freshly washed clothing which would flutter gently in the breeze. On the other side, my grandfather's black Sohrab bicycle stood proudly, poised for its next adventure, sheltered by the towering southern wall. The bicycle with its bold black frame held me captive. Yet, it was the small seat he had affixed to the front bar that held

special meaning for me. That seat was exclusively for me as my grandfather dropped me off and picked me from school. We rode along, the bicycle's wheels spinning beneath us, carrying us forward through time and space. Every part of that bicycle held memories. On the right side of the handlebar there was a large bell, and adjacent to it was a smaller one which belonged to me. The soft ringing of those bells became the soundtrack to our journeys, symbolising not only our travels but also the cherished connection between my grandfather and me.

During the 1990s, another treasure graced our home—a bright red Panasonic tape player. The vibrant melodies of Bollywood tunes from that era could be heard on a sizable collection of cassettes that belonged to my father. I wasn't permitted to listen to them in the presence of my father, and my grandfather's response to anyone caught enjoying the tape recorder, including me, was '*Bund karo yeh kanjar khand*' or 'Stop this vulgarity.'

Reflecting back on these memories, it is clear how these seemingly trivial articles significantly influenced my childhood. They were much more than objects because they opened a realm of imagination, adventure, and familial connections.

Imagining the Past

As time went on, thinking back to the ruins made me wonder about their historical origins. My memories of them provoked many unanswered questions about the people who used to live there, the purpose of the structures, and the reasons for different civilisations' ultimate decline. Sparse research exists around Tulamba such as a few travelogues and unreliable websites. The ruins, though worn and weathered, still hint at a fort and a tower-like structure. Unfortunately, it is hard to fathom much more than this because of their significant deterioration. The ancient city is considered to be 2500 years old. According to popular belief, Tulamba faced repeated attacks by invading armies, including those led by Alexander and Timur, due to its strategic location by the Ravi river and along the route to Multan. Coins from different civilizations have been uncovered from earlier archaeological excavations and seem to suggest that the city held religious and political importance within its region.¹ It seems clear that Tulamba was a prosperous city, being located on a busy trade route.

I am in awe every time I hear about Tulamba's historical past where various faiths coexisted in harmony. The city was believed to be a meeting point for diverse customs and beliefs, and was home to a wide range of religious and cultural influences. Here, festivals, exchanges of

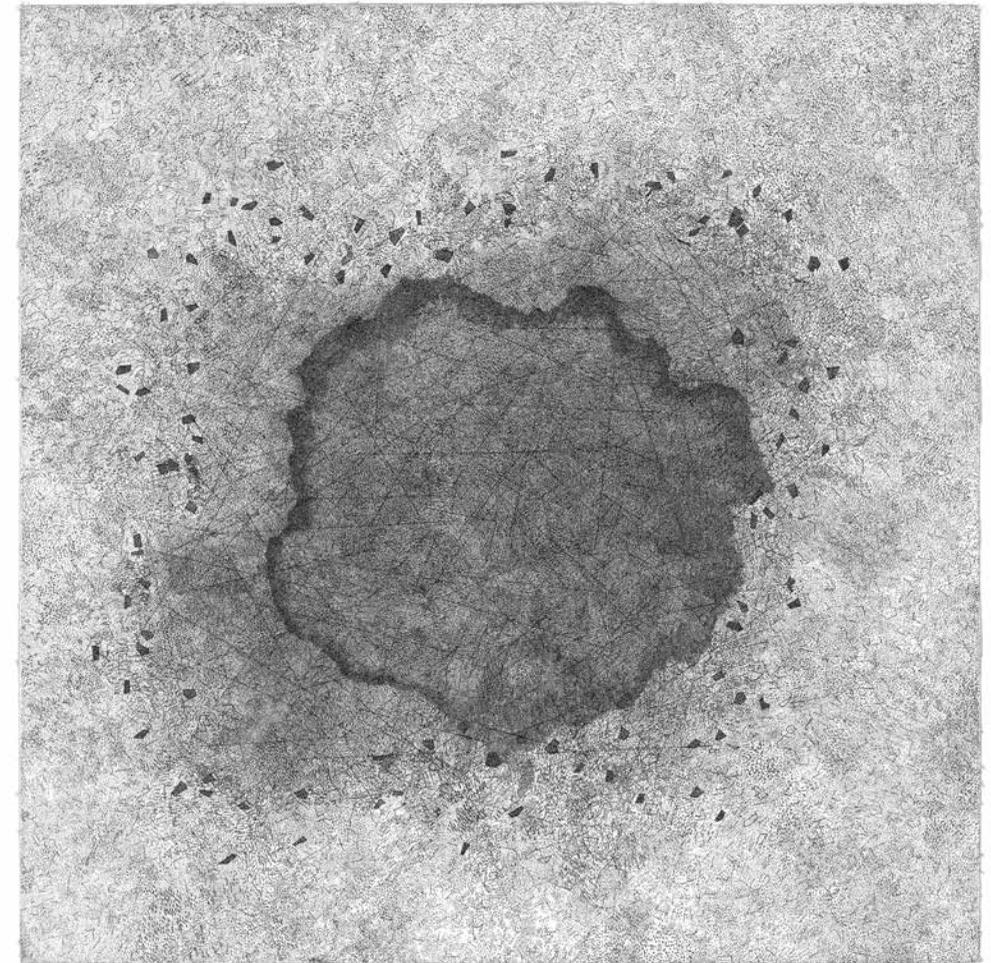
ideas, and shared values bridged religious boundaries. The present landscape paints a different picture—the dominance of a single religion that contrasts with the vibrant tapestry of the past where even until recently the long-standing coexistence of Sufi Islamic customs, Hindu rites, and other spiritual traditions was practised and celebrated. This shift makes me yearn for the inclusivity and tolerance that I believe characterised Tulamba’s history, which was perhaps once a true melting pot.

Weaving History, Folklore, and Artistry

As an artist, I took on a new approach to exploring the remains of the old town. My days were now filled with long walks and hours spent observing the ruins. I felt compelled to document my time there through photography and it became a way to capture details my eyes otherwise missed. In the photographs, the textures, interplays of light and shadow, and the often-overlooked details held my attention for hours. As I continued my documentation of the physical features of the ruins, I felt compelled to dig deeper. I wanted my work to reflect my connection to this place and this quest for a richer understanding guided me towards a new artistic direction—drawing.

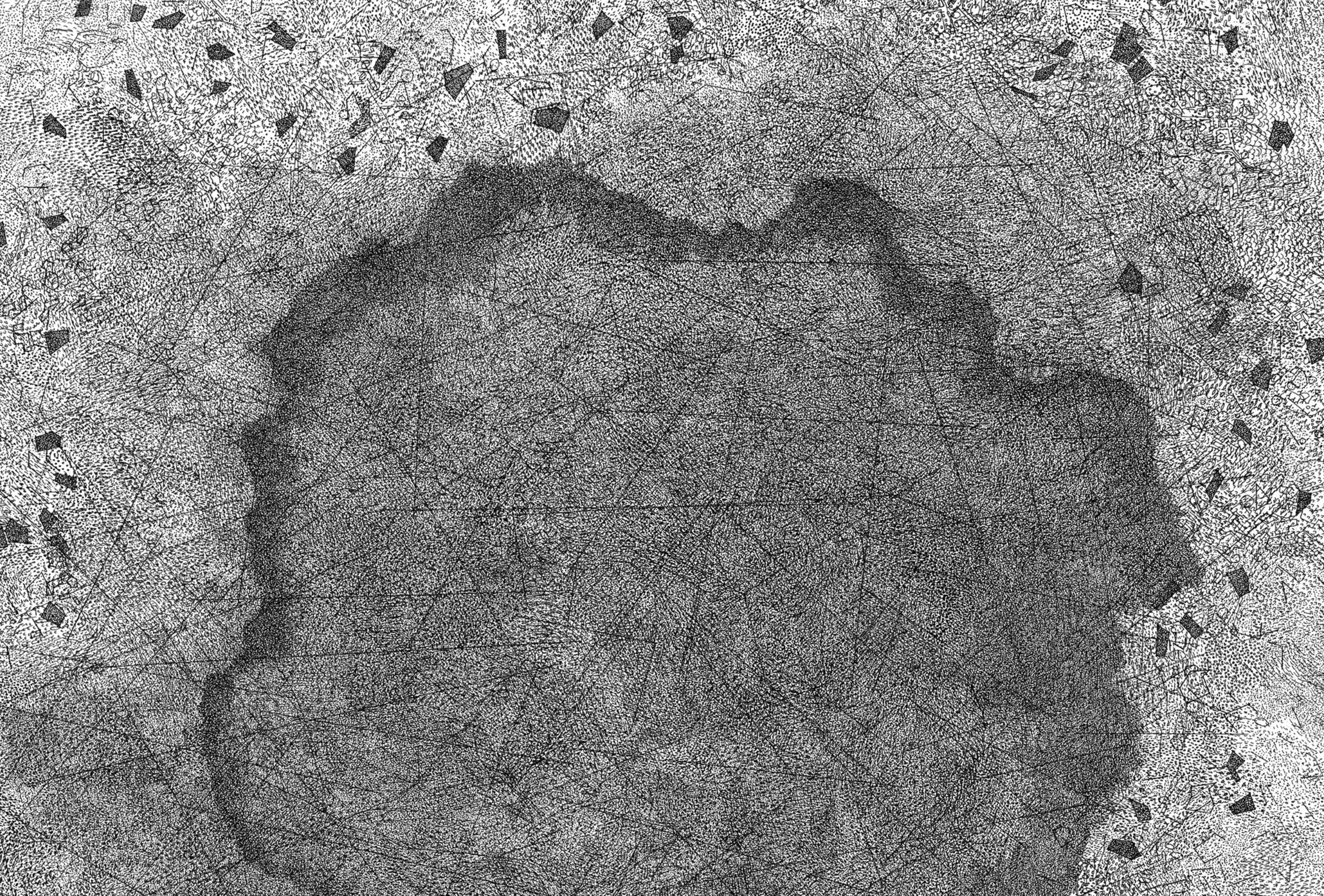
The initial inspiration for my drawings stemmed from my firsthand observations at the location: broken walls, weathered stones, and intriguing features concealed beneath the debris. However, as I diligently worked on these drawings, they transcended mere representations. They began to embody the very essence of the location, reflecting the anecdotes and stories I had collected. The drawings evolved into a celebration of the spirit of discovery and exploration, encapsulating my personal journey through the ruins, my interactions with the evolving narratives surrounding them, and my emotional attachment to the place.

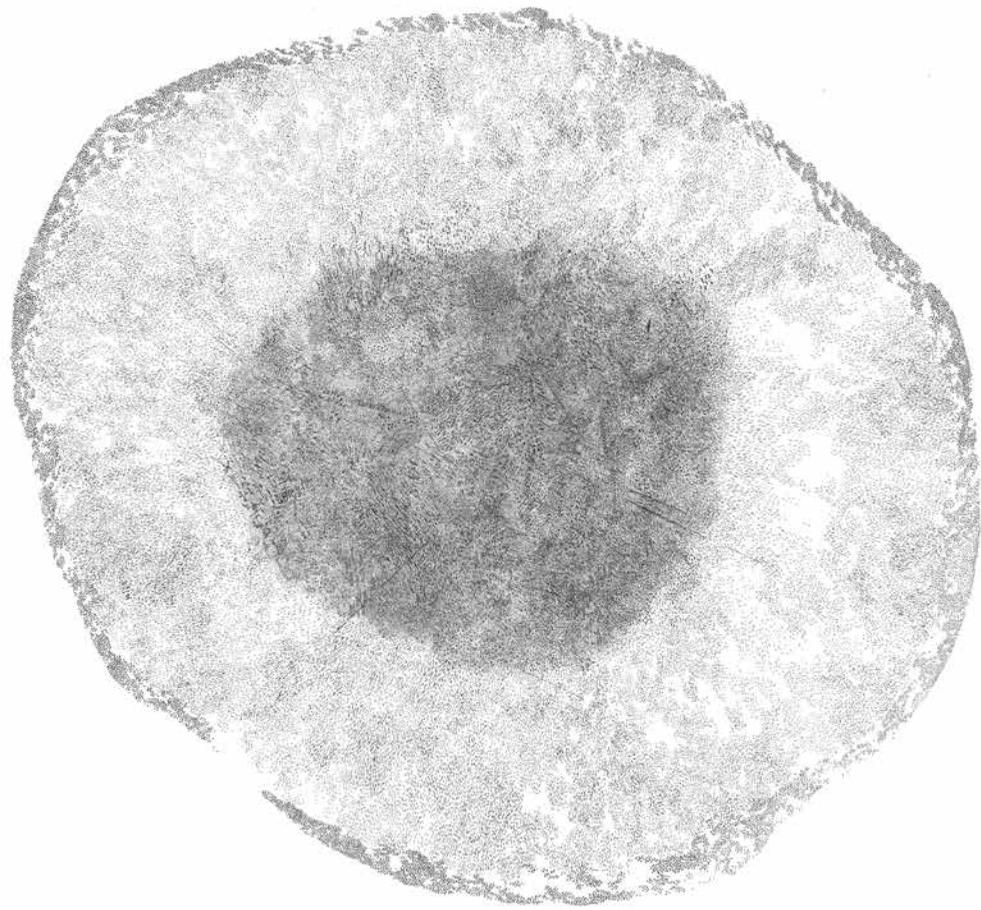
In essence, my drawings started to reference not only my visits and revisits but also my recollections of the space. On paper, I would initiate these drawings from a seemingly arbitrary point. These patterns, much like memories, started as incomplete and shifting, and gradually coalesced. Taking inspiration from linear motifs reminiscent of ancient designs, I aimed to make my drawings resemble scans and maps, as the most satisfactory way of portraying the complexity of everything that I have come to understand.



(Above) Farrukh Addnan, 2020, *Mind Map*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.

(Page 46-47) Detail of *Mind Map*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.

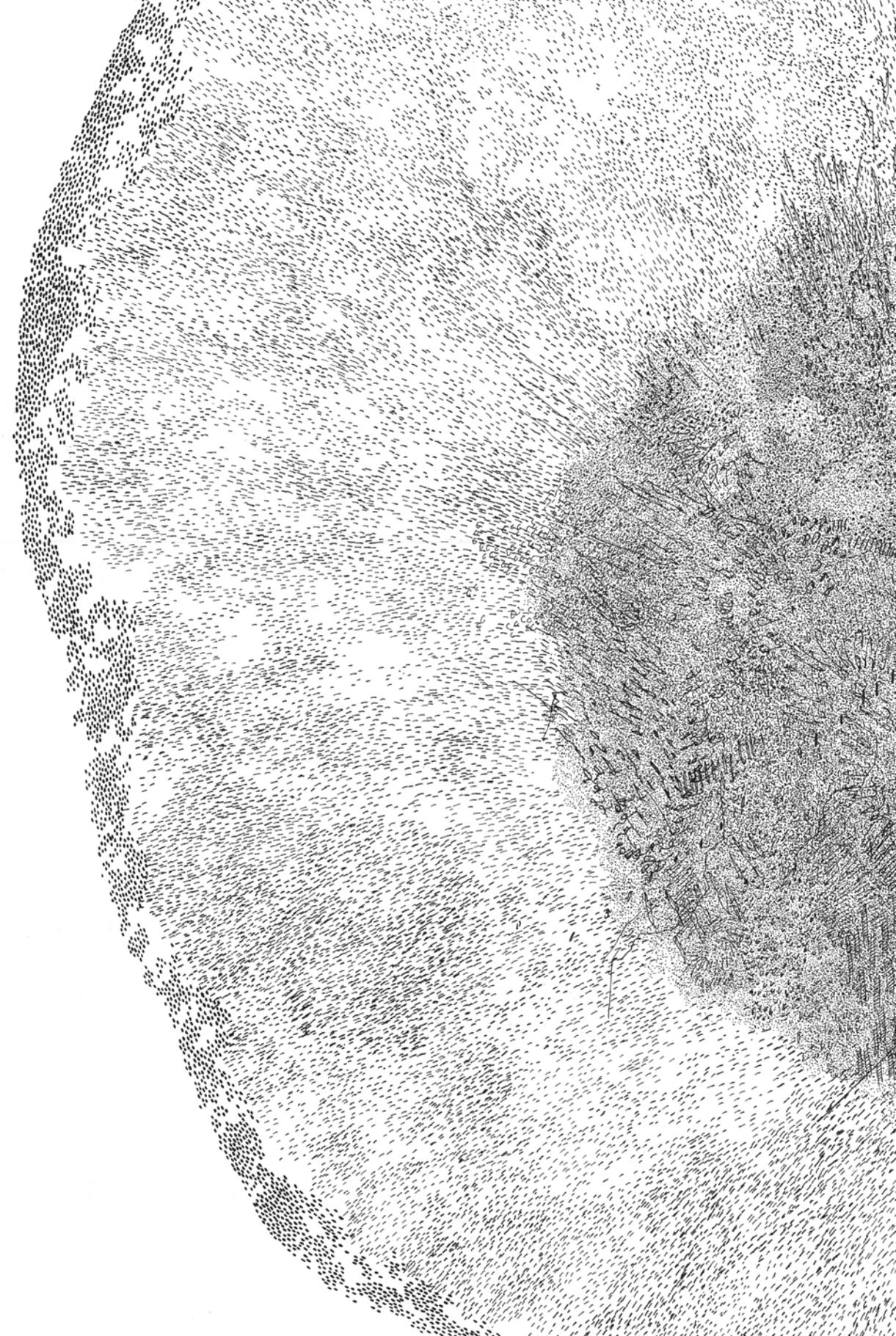




(Above) Farrukh Addnan, 2019, *Town*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.

(Right) Detail of *Town*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.

(Page 50-51) Farrukh Addnan, 2018, *Void Within II*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.







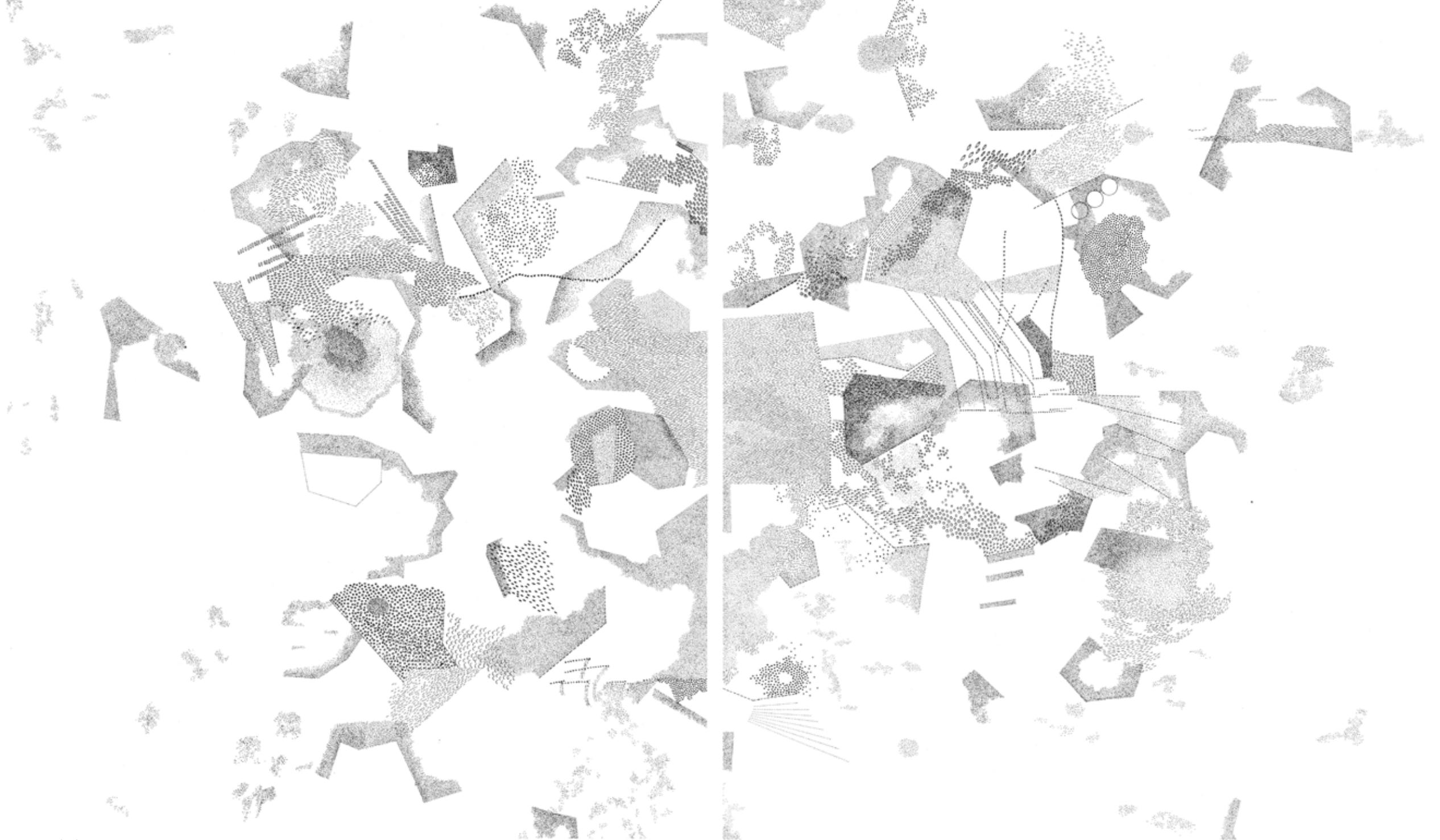
(Top) Farrukh Addnan, 2015, *Day, Night*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.

(Right) Detail of *Day, Night*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.



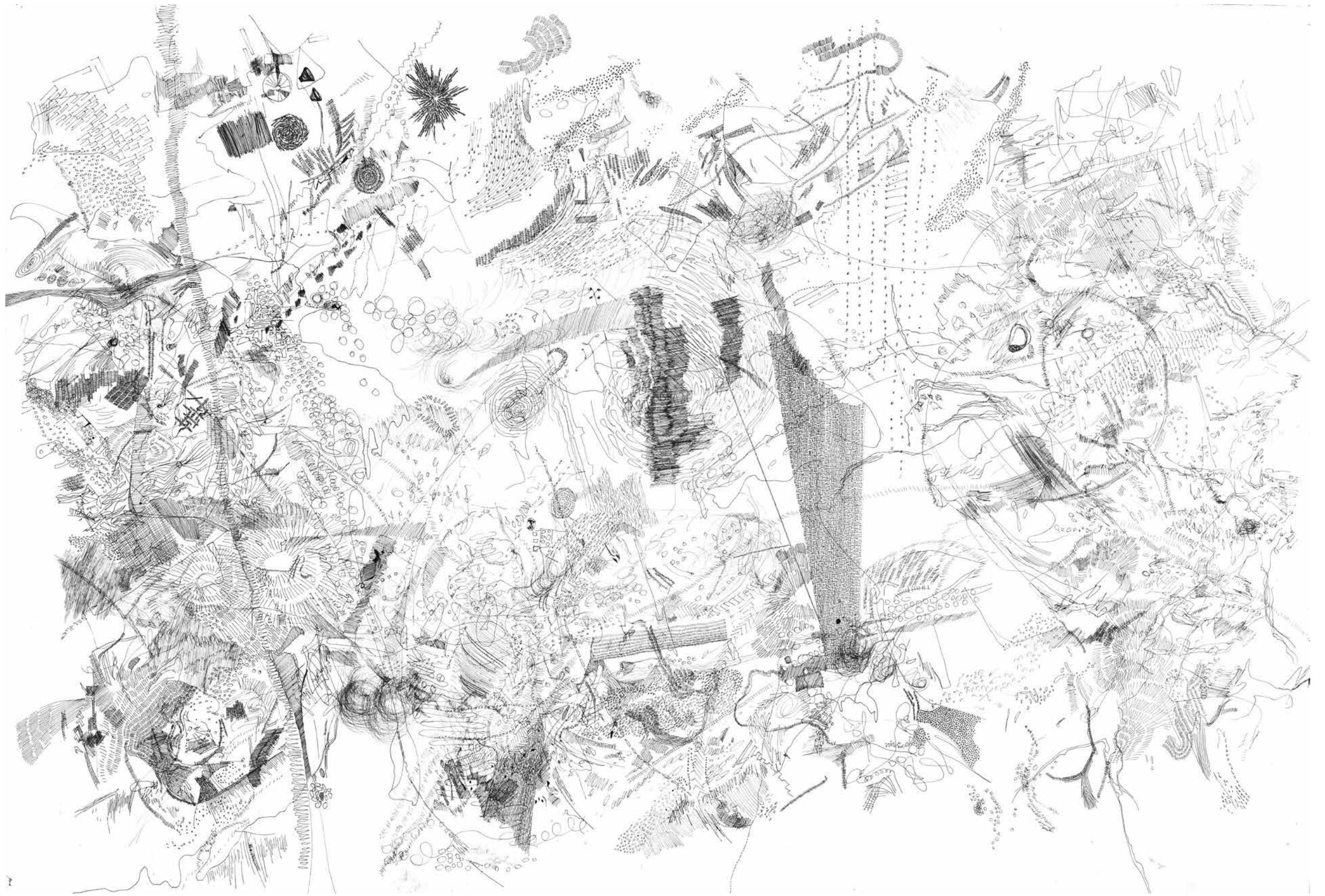


Farrukh Addnan, 2021, *Talmaan*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.



(Top) Farrukh Addnan, 2017, *Book of Memory*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.

(Page 58-59) Farrukh Addnan, 2013, *1000 narratives*, Pen and Ink on Canvas, Lahore.



Notes

1. "Important Places." District Khanewal. Accessed November 12, 2023.
<https://khanewal.punjab.gov.pk/important-places>.

Practice, Faith and Forgetting in Pakistan's Zoroastrian Community

Nazneen Engineer and Veera Rustomji

The Parsi Zoroastrian community is a small minority in the Indian subcontinent, descended from Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated to the west coast of India around the 10th century. There they cultivated a syncretic ethno-religious identity by interweaving Iranian and Indian elements and maintained it over centuries through strict adherence to endogamous marriage.¹ The Parsi Zoroastrian community is known for its successful integration into host societies, but in recent years, discourse within the community has focused on preserving its unique identity and conserving at-risk cultural heritage.[¶] This is because of a steep and possibly irreversible population decline in once-thriving communities in South Asia due to an ageing population, low birth rate, migration, intermarriage, and late or no marriage. Today, in India, the Parsi Zoroastrian population is estimated to be between 45,000 and 50,000, approximately 1,000 in Pakistan, and 45 in Sri Lanka.[∅]

The challenge of preserving tangible and intangible heritage has been taken up primarily by the Parsi-Zoroastrian (Parzor) Foundation. Established in Delhi, India in 2002, the Parzor Foundation is a UNESCO New Delhi initiative that aims to 'make known and preserve Zoroastrian culture' by 'conserving tangible heritage and places of memory, ensuring continuity of knowledge, traditions and community well-being.'² For the Parsi Zoroastrian community, cultural preservation is time-sensitive and the Parzor Foundation acknowledges that some of its most critical work—to capture and record intangible heritage from priests, artists and musicians, traditional medical practitioners and others—is a 'race against time' before knowledgeable people are lost forever.³

[¶] Cultural heritage is defined by the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as 'monuments and collections of objects' but it also includes intangible heritage such as 'traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.' See UNESCO, "What is intangible cultural heritage?"

[∅] As no national census was conducted in India in 2021, we do not have an accurate figure for the Indian Zoroastrian population. We estimated India's Zoroastrian population range by taking the 2011 population figure of 57,264 and subtracting it by 17.73% which was the rate of population decline from 2001 to 2011. Pakistan's Zoroastrian population was estimated by rounding down from 1067, the population figure in the 2020 A&T Zoroastrian Directory published by the Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal (KZBM), a women's organisation established in Karachi in 1912. Sri Lanka's Zoroastrian population statistic was noted in an article on the Parsi Zoroastrian community in Sri Lanka. See "The dwindling Parsis of Sri Lanka," NewsIn Asia.

Although demographically the community is small, there is a significant amount of tangible cultural heritage present in books, artefacts and archaeological sites, as well as intangible cultural heritage in the form of oral histories, social practices, and cultural and religious rituals. However, there is 'apathy and disinterest toward efforts to help preserve their culture' within the community which impedes the speed of preservation.⁴ As a result of the efforts of the Parzor Foundation and other concerned community organisations and people, there is a reservoir of material on various topics of interest (which are increasingly being digitised for broader accessibility), but many in the community are either unaware of the material or choose not to engage with it.[¶] Dispersal of existing knowledge has also suffered due to migration and intermarriage, fueling concerns that vital cultural heritage and knowledge is at risk of being forgotten by the community, especially the younger generation.

One recent initiative to gather statistical information from Zoroastrian communities around the world was *Gen Z and Beyond: A Survey for Every Generation* (hereafter called *Gen Z and Beyond Survey*).^θ The survey was conducted from August 2021 to January 2023 and was the first of its kind conducted within the Zoroastrian community. It was open to persons aged 18 and over with at least one Zoroastrian parent, grandparent, or spouse of Iranian, Irani, or Parsi descent.[□] The data for each category was collected, analysed, and presented in the final report separately so as to not conflate the findings. At the end, the online, globally accessible multiple-choice questionnaire yielded a total of 4893 valid responses.[‡]

The Gen Z and Beyond Survey aimed to understand all aspects of Zoroastrian life today, including the many positive aspects of belonging to a tiny global minority. The survey also provided an opportunity to quantify, verify, and examine the many challenges the community faced. The

[¶] Another unique programme of cultural dissemination and preservation is 'Return to Roots' which takes small groups of Zoroastrian youth from the diaspora to ancestral communities in India (Iran is currently not possible due to the political climate) for two weeks. Established in 2012, the programme ran its seventh program from the end of December 2023 to the beginning of January 2024 in India.

^θ The survey was led by Dr Sarah Stewart, the co-chair of the Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS, University of London. For more information about the survey and its outcomes, see the project website: www.genzandbeyond.com.

[□] In the questionnaire, Iranian Zoroastrians are defined as those who live either in Iran or have migrated to the diaspora from Iran. Irani Zoroastrians are defined as descendants of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 18th century onwards living in India or the wider diaspora. Parsi Zoroastrians are defined as descendants of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 10th century onwards, living in India or the wider diaspora.

[‡] The majority (4481 of 4893) of respondents who participated in the survey were from the first category and had two Zoroastrian parents. As this was such a large group, all analysis (apart from one chapter which covered the other four categories) in the final report was conducted on this group. Thus, all data included in this essay has been from respondents of this category with two Zoroastrian parents. The full survey report is available at www.genzandbeyond.com.

questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographics, behaviours, and attitudes. There was one open-ended qualitative question at the end of the questionnaire asking respondents for their thoughts on how the future of the community could be strengthened and most multiple-choice questions had an option for respondents to enter their own answer if they could not find the relevant answer in the options provided. The survey addressed a wide range of topics and identified instances of collective or cultural forgetting.

In this conversation, Nazneen Engineer and Veera Rustomji discuss some key findings from the *Gen Z and Beyond Survey* that highlight aspects of cultural heritage with an emphasis on Zoroastrians based in South Asia, focusing on Pakistan. To add more contextual detail, Veera interviewed community leaders and priests of the Karachi Zoroastrian community to understand their current predicament with regard to preserving cultural heritage. She wanted to examine their awareness of and interaction with artefacts associated with the Zoroastrian religion such as Sasanian-era coins, which were excavated at a site an hour outside Karachi and are on display at two public museums within the city, the State Bank Museum and National Museum of Pakistan. Archeological assessments of these artefacts, as discussed below, attest to a Zoroastrian presence in the province of Sindh—a presence that is neither widely known nor integrated in the culture of the Zoroastrians living in Pakistan today. Artefacts physically preserve and transmit cultural traditions, and the coins are highlighted here because they provide evidence of Zoroastrianism in Pakistan that predates the 10th-century migration of the Iranian Zoroastrians to Gujarat, India.[§] While there is little reliable data about the migration of Iranian Zoroastrians to and their subsequent settlement in India, this is a foundational story that is at the core of a Parsi Zoroastrian identity, especially in South Asia.[¶] Archeological discoveries that precede this story are important because they offer tangible evidence of an alternative way of looking at Zoroastrian expansion from Persia into South Asia.

One of the main purposes, therefore, of the *Gen Z and Beyond Survey* was to discover what community members perceived about their history, cultural identity, religious beliefs and traditional practices. Multiple strategies were used to collect as many survey responses as possible, including sharing the survey's purpose, potential benefits, and updates on social media. Ambassadors and volunteers from communities around the world publicised the survey and collected responses within their regions. They assisted those who were not tech-savvy to take the survey online and addressed queries about privacy, research outcomes, eligibility criteria, and so on. The volunteers' presence was especially important in communities such

[¶] It is believed that Iranian Zoroastrians landed in India in around the 10th century, working as artisans and agriculturists in villages and settlements along the western coast of Gujarat.

as India and Pakistan where there is a large, ageing population. We prioritised this because responses from the older generation were an integral part of the survey and enabled thought-provoking generational comparisons. Veera was one such volunteer, based in Karachi, Pakistan and experienced first-hand the complexity of conducting community-based research.

Veera: It quickly became clear to me that the real task at hand was getting Pakistani Zoroastrians to sit down and take the survey. We had plenty of neighbourhood volunteers to reach out to the community of around 1000 members in Karachi and publicise the survey. The challenge was guaranteeing that busy Karachi Zoroastrians would fill out the 20-minute online survey. My first experience with this was at a community tombola event at the Karachi Parsi Institute in November 2021. The annual event featured *curry chawal* (rice served with Parsi-style curry), *jhinga kavabs* (prawn kebabs) and lucky dip, which led us to think that a crowd of about 70 Zoroastrians with full bellies would be merry enough on tombola night to engage with us volunteers. Even after being presented with a detailed presentation on why the *Gen Z and Beyond Survey* was important, the majority declined to sign up without giving concrete reasons for their non-participation and showed significant apathy towards the project.

Nazneen: Many community leaders joked with us that to gain the maximum number of respondents we should have organised a *gahambar* or community feast! Your volunteer experience and our data suggest it wouldn't have worked to raise participation numbers. We realised that there was a dichotomy within the Zoroastrian community, whereby most people were enthused about academic research taking place within the community but few wanted to engage with it, and this showed up in the survey findings. If we consider participating in the survey as a form of volunteering time for a community cause, then we can understand the challenge better as people were much less likely to volunteer time than donate money or in kind. For example, the survey showed that respondents in Pakistan were twice as likely to say they never volunteered time (21.3%) compared to never donating money (11.7%) and four times more likely than never donating in kind (4.6%).

When we embarked on the project, it was important for us, as researchers, to understand what information the community needed from the survey. Thus, while working on the questionnaire design, we interviewed several community leaders about specific findings that would interest them and their constituents. One issue that was repeatedly mentioned was why people, especially the youth, were reluctant to attend community activities and events. This was important to know, as intangible cultural heritage is passed down through active learning and cultural osmosis—being present for rituals, ceremonies, and community-based activities. As families migrate and community members disperse or disengage, learning from each other diminishes, and young people risk forgetting their cultural heritage. To get as much detail as possible about this issue, we first asked respondents if they participated in activities and events organised by

their local Zoroastrian community, community association, or community centre. Half of the respondents said they participated 'always' or 'often', and an almost equal percentage said they 'seldom', 'rarely', or 'never' participated.

When we analysed this participation by age, we found that younger respondents were indeed more likely than older respondents to say they 'seldom', 'rarely', or 'never' participated. However, the likelihood of their engagement also depended on the type of activity: we found that younger respondents were less likely than older respondents to attend general community get-togethers, outreach activities, inter-faith events, or educational lectures on Zoroastrian history and culture, but much more likely than older respondents to attend a sporting event, a meet-and-greet meant for young people, or camps and classes for children. When it came to musicals, dramas, art performances, and business events, younger respondents were as likely to attend as older ones. This showed us that the youth were interested in social interactions with other community members, but they needed a more focused, activity-based purpose for attending.

When we analysed participation by region, we noted another point of interest. We found that in South Asia, respondents' participation was less frequent compared to those in North America, the other significant region in terms of large respondent numbers.[¶] For India it could be because community members often live close to each other in colonies and *baugs* (compounds), and social interactions take place within that setting rather than being organised by a community association. In the diaspora where the community was more scattered, the community association played a more active role and the community centre, if there was one, became a religious and social hub to which members travelled for more formally organised classes, ceremonies, and events. Pakistan, however, looks more like Australia, in that both are small, close-knit communities with many communal facilities and active associations, and participation rates tend to be higher in both. This is possibly due to the efforts of community spaces such as the Karachi Parsi Institute, the Cyrus Minwalla Hall and the dedicated Entertainment Committee of the Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal, offering ample amenities, activities, and events throughout the year.

Before the *Gen Z and Beyond Survey*, we had no information about the kinds of events that were popular and most likely to engage community members. It was not surprising to learn that celebratory occasions like Navroze were the most popular not just in South Asia but around the world. However, only 30.2% of respondents globally said they attended lectures on Zoroastrian

[¶] Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to always participate (18.0% vs 12.5%). Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to rarely (18.5% vs 14.0%) and never (10.7% vs 7.7%) participate.

history and culture, and this figure was even lower amongst young and middle-aged ones. Respondents in South Asia were significantly less likely to attend educational lectures on Zoroastrian history and culture compared to North Americans. For the successful dissemination of knowledge, the community must debate the usefulness of educational lectures and how they are delivered, while also exploring alternative modes of teaching and learning. This is one instance where cultural heritage and collective knowledge are at risk of being lost. As Anh Hua (2005) states, 'forgetting is an act, a creative invention, a performance, a selective loss.'⁶

Veera: The difficulty of getting community members to sign up often made me think about why they weren't participating. It seems that most Pakistani Zoroastrians avoid activities that involve learning about religious history or challenging their foundational childhood knowledge because they are comfortable with what they already know. This issue constantly came up at our volunteer meetings as Karachi Zoroastrians didn't seem to want to provide any reason at all for not signing up. Perhaps the survey was a very new activity or the value of the research did not resonate with them. Having said that, due to the dedication and the persistence of volunteers and the KZBM, we got a total of 141 respondents from Pakistan—14.1% of the total estimated population.

While the survey was open, I had simultaneously joined the Maritime Archaeology Heritage Institute (MAHI) which was an organisation dedicated to research and investigation into Pakistan's maritime archaeology and heritage. My first field visit was in July 2021 to Banbhore, a coastal site in the province of Sindh. Before the visit, I read through archaeologist Dr. Fazal Ahmed Khan's 'A Preliminary Report on the Recent Archaeological Excavations at Banbhore' which analysed findings from eight excavation sessions from the years 1958–1965.⁷ His comparison of varied artefacts, structural material, and skeletons were both fascinating and bizarre. How was it possible that a site which stratigraphically dated all the way back to the first century BC was just an hour and half drive east from the concrete jungle of Karachi?

The site is strategically located at the edge of the Indus River Delta and is a citadel with a prominent southern gate opening up to the northern bank of Gharo Creek. Scholars have drawn connections between Banbhore and the port of Daybul,⁸ which is mentioned in the *Chachnama*⁹ as well as many other stories around the River Indus.

Among Khan's Banbhore findings, the ones that made me think most about my relationship with the site were related to the presence of Sasanian-era coins, which Khan used to support his argument of Zoroastrianism having links with Sindh. We know that Karachi's Zoroastrian population is primarily culturally Parsi, hailing from Gujarat. However, the Sasanian coins from Banbhore/Daybul connect the coastline of Sindh to the geographic origins of Zoroastrianism

in the northeast of Iran and present-day Central Asia. Daybul might have been brought into the realm of the Sasanian kings through King Bahram V (420–438 AD), who is said to have taken an Indian bride and received Daybul and the littoral regions of Sindh and the Makran as part of her dowry.¹⁰ Daybul was clearly a prosperous Sasanian port that was later taken over by the Umayyads. This can be seen through one of Khan's Banbhore coins where the Pahlavi verse transcribed around King Yazdegerd's side-profile is superscribed with a Kufic style 'Bismilliah' or 'Allah', marking Arab suzerainty over the Persian Empire.¹¹

The Sasanian-era coins are indexed under the 'Kushano Indo-Sasanian' and 'Arab Sasanian' eras in numismatic studies found in Pakistan Archaeology journals.¹² Original hemidrachm coins from Peroz I, Khusraw II, and Yazdegerd III's reigns, collectively ranging from 457 AD to 652 AD, are part of the State Bank Museum's collection. Replicas of coins dating from the reign of Khusraw Parvez II (591–628 AD) are on display at the National Museum of Pakistan. The design on the obverse of Sasanian coins features the side profile of the ruler with a full coiffure of abundant curls, thick beard, and an elaborate crown bespoke to the king, making identification of rulers and their regnal periods easier for archaeologists.¹³ An inscription in Pahlavi (Middle Persian) venerates the Sasanian ruler by name and describes him as a worshipper of Ahura Mazda and King of Kings of the Iranians and non-Iranians, thereby cementing Zoroastrianism as the state religion. Most Sasanian-era coins on the reverse depict the Zoroastrian fire altar (*atash*) flanked by two attendees. After seeing images of the coins and tracking them down in the museums, I wondered how as a Parsi having lived her whole life in Karachi, with a genuine interest in matters of religion and research, I had never heard of Sasanian and Zoroastrian artefacts in Sindh.

Nazneen: This highlights the importance of disseminating relevant academic scholarship widely within a community, especially a tiny religious minority like the Zoroastrians. Unfortunately, this does not happen. If we think about religious education, what and how is taught in childhood plays a crucial role in determining what knowledge is retained or lost going into adulthood. In the survey, only 0.5% of respondents said that they were never taught the religion as children. This suggests a high level of religious and ritual literacy, but most religious learning was informal with respondents most likely to have been taught by members of their family, particularly by their mother for 75.2% of the respondents.[¶]

A more structured, community-wide educational system might provide a more accurate transmission of knowledge than one might get at home. We noted in the survey that the

[¶] Respondents were able to select multiple responses and only 31.4% (32.4% in India and 28.4% in Pakistan) of respondents said they were also taught by priests and 28.6% (23.6% in India and 41.8% in Pakistan) said they were also taught by teachers at a group community religion class.

youngest respondents (18–25 year olds) were the likeliest of all age groups to say they liked participating in community activities and events because they liked 'learning new things,' and were in fact more likely to be interested in attending educational lectures on Zoroastrian history and culture than 26–45 year-old respondents. This is a positive sign.

Veera: This issue is very much at the forefront of community leaders' minds. I spoke to Burjis Bhada, a *mobed* or Zoroastrian priest originally from Mumbai who has been serving the Karachi community since 2003. He emphasised that Sanjan, Gujarat, as a geographic location played an important role in anchoring and continuing Zoroastrian traditions in South Asia. Bhada underwent rigorous priestly training at the Dadar Athornan Institute in Mumbai—the only Zoroastrian priestly school remaining in the world where young boys receive secular and religious education while boarding on campus. He explained that historically, in Iran, the priests inhabited the uppermost echelons of society, imparting education as well as conducting prayers. In fact, Iranian priests of Yazd and Kerman were consulted by the Parsis in India during the 15th–18th centuries through a series of letters called the *Rivayats* (questions and answers) in navigating ritualistic practice and maintaining knowledge of traditions which were integral to their survival in their new homes in India.¹⁴ However, according to Bhada, Zoroastrian priests in South Asia are now in a financially weakened position and have to prioritise officiating religious ceremonies over education and pastoral care. The formation of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) in the last quarter of the 17th century contributed to this change in the priests' status.¹⁵ The BPP was created to address Parsi Zoroastrian community affairs and welfare, but with the rise of mercantile and industrial wealth amongst the Parsi Zoroastrians in the 18th century, power and authority shifted sharply from priests to wealthy businessmen. Soon, members of the mercantile class sitting on the BPP outnumbered the priests.¹⁵ The fire temples in South Asia to which the priests devote their lives are also sponsored, built by, and named after wealthy Zoroastrian families and run by laymen trustees. When it comes to paying the *mobeds* a salary for their dedication towards keeping the *atash* aflame, most Parsi Zoroastrians today struggle to justify why someone officiating religious services should be paid the same as an employee in a profitable business.

Currently, one of the few organised forums for religious education for children in Karachi is the Child Chapter's Saturday class conducted by KZBM. Committee members Meher Cawasji and Farahnaz Marker explained that their curriculum focuses on prayers while providing a framework to help understand Ahura Mazda's significance in Zoroastrianism. The classes also

¹⁴ A traditional *panchayat* is a council of five (*panch* in Hindi) members, but today, the BPP has seven members after reaching a peak of eighteen members (twelve merchants and six priests) in 1818.

cover the story of migration, the importance of *sudreh kusti* garments[¶], *navjote* customs[∅], and stories which have Persian origins aligning with the *Shahnameh*. A substantial goal of the classes is to provide 'prayer refreshers' as most children fall out of practice after their *navjote* ceremony. While Bhada isn't affiliated with the Child Chapter classes, he believes that it is the lack of consistency and engagement with reciting prayers after the *navjote* that has led to a growing disconnect with religion. Similar to the findings of the *Gen Z and Beyond Survey*, Bhada and the KZBM committee members emphasised that the main source of religious information for Zoroastrians globally is through a treasured family member. Once that individual passes away or has limited time to share, the scope and practice of prayers and rituals in the home, in particular, are adversely affected. To address this issue, KZBM has shortlisted textual resources for children and has to date conducted 23 sessions with around 13–18 children attending each class. Bhada, Cawasji, and Marker hope that if these children continue praying and engaging with religious texts, they'll help preserve religious knowledge for future generations. There is a plethora of resources in and around Karachi; in addition to the aforementioned museums, the site of Banbhore, and the two consecrated fire temples of Karachi, there are many publications in the Dastur Dhalla Library that are accessible to Pakistani Zoroastrians.

Nazneen: I agree. Literature also plays an important role in illustrating where collective or cultural memory loss has already taken place. Teachers at community religious classes such as KZBM's Child Chapter would be familiar with hallmark texts such as the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* and the *Shahnameh*, which are often viewed as foundational or origin stories for the community. The *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan*, or *Story of Sanjan*, is a Persian epic poem written in 1599 by Bahman Kaikobad Sanjana, a Parsi Zoroastrian high priest. It narrates the obstacles faced by Iranian Zoroastrians during their journey from the shores of Iran to the time of their settlement in their adopted homeland in India. An even older text, the *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings*, is an epic poem written by Iranian poet Abul-Qasem Ferdowsi Tusi in 1010. It describes the mythical and historical reigns of Persian kings during the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic periods. We believed these texts to be an integral part of the community's cultural consciousness, and indeed South Asian respondents were more likely than their North American counterparts to view them as both historically accurate and important to their cultural and religious identity. However, the survey found that nearly a fifth of Pakistani respondents had never heard of the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* and 27.8% stated it was not important to their cultural and religious identity. In addition, almost a quarter of the respondents in Pakistan had never heard of the *Shahnameh* and 40.2% said it was not important to their religious and cultural identity.

[¶] *Sudreh Kusti* is ritual clothing.

[∅] *Navjote* is the Zoroastrian initiation ceremony.

Globally, the youngest respondents (18–25 year olds) were more likely never to have heard of the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* and *Shahnameh* compared to respondents over the age of 45. And respondents who stated they or their parents were migrants were more likely to say the texts were not important to them. This lack of knowledge of foundation texts might be putting the collective identity of the global Zoroastrian community at risk. Like many stories, the importance of these texts does not lie in their factual accuracy, but in the lessons they teach, the understanding they foster, and the sense of collective identity they confer upon the community.

Veera: While the Karachi interviewees did acknowledge and talk about the migration from Iran to Gujarat as a narrative that binds the historical identity for Karachi Zoroastrians, none of them categorically referred to the text by its name *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan*. Nor were the interviewees aware that artefacts related to Zoroastrianism such as the Sasanian-era coins were on display in local museums.

Pakistan's Zoroastrian population includes a handful of first-generation migrants from Iran. Sohrab Henghami arrived in 2021 from Tehran to counter the critical shortage of *mobeds* in Karachi. Henghami speaks minimal English and Gujarati so our conversation was limited. However, upon seeing images of the Sasanian coins from the State Bank Museum, Henghami immediately recognised them; the evident stylisation employed to depict the hair and angular features of the Sasanian kings is synonymous with contemporaneous Iranian visual imagery. Henghami identified the script around an enlarged photograph of the coin as Pahlavi (a Middle Persian dialect) which is not in common use. Today's Iranian Zoroastrians routinely speak Farsi which differentiates them culturally from the Gujarati-speaking Parsi Zoroastrians. In my interview with Henghami, it became clear to me that his Iranian identity helped him to recognise the Sasanian-era coins that the Parsi interviewees could not. For Bhada and the KZBM committee members, the Parsi Gujarati language is the anchor for collective memory and cultural preservation.

Nazneen: It is interesting they said this because John Hinnells, an eminent scholar on Zoroastrian studies, observed that for the Parsi Zoroastrian community the Parsi Gujarati language is:

a language acquired after migration to India and was not part of their [Parsis'] ancient heritage. But in losing this linguistic facility, some parents fear that the young are missing out on an important part of their culture, from the fun of *nataks* (theatre plays) on the history of the religion and other cultural features of their history in Gujarat.¹⁶

The survey found that language proficiency was declining globally. Overall, only 30.2% of respondents were able to speak, read, and write Gujarati fluently. Respondents in the diaspora

were much more likely to be able to only understand the language (not speak, read or write it) compared to respondents in South Asia. Even though language proficiency was very high in India and 95.7% of respondents could speak Parsi Gujarati, it was surprising to us that only 65.5% stated that Parsi Gujarati was the main language spoken at home. Similarly, in Pakistan 99.3% of respondents stated they could speak Parsi Gujarati, but only 75.2% said it was the main language spoken at home.

Migration impacted the use of traditional language in interesting ways. Among those respondents who stated they have migrated at some point in their lives, 28.4% shared that they spoke Gujarati at home. This was 21.6% for respondents whose parents had migrated, but 27.9% for respondents whose grandparents had also migrated. The impact of grandparents on the use of traditional language by their grandchildren was also noted by Hinnells: 'few Parsis use Gujarati extensively in their home, except when conversing with grandparents.'¹⁷ I can relate to this statistic because my parents and I migrated to the Middle East when I was a child, and although they made an effort to speak Parsi Gujarati at home, our conversations were (and still are) in 'Gujlish', a combination of English and Parsi Gujarati. However, my Parsi Gujarati language skills improved after spending the summer holidays with my grandparents and other elderly relatives who did not speak any English. I also came to understand and appreciate Parsi Gujarati's many unique, irreverent, and witty words and phrases.

Parsi Gujarati is a quirky language and if we are not speaking it at home on a regular basis, we are at risk of losing quintessentially Parsi Gujarati words and phrases including endearments and insults. This crucial intangible heritage has been memorialised in two (often hilarious) books, *Parsi Bol* and *Parsi Bol 2* by filmmaker Soonil Taraporevala and journalist Meher Marfatia. The loss of traditional language should not be underestimated by the community, as it could have a knock-on effect on other aspects of cultural knowledge and feelings of community belonging. It was not surprising that the survey found a connection between use of traditional language and better engagement with the community, as we noted that respondents who spoke Parsi Gujarati at home were also more likely to 'always' participate in activities and events organised by the Zoroastrian community.

Veera: I have been thinking about arranging tours to the State Bank Museum or Banbhore as a community event, but from my experience and research I suspect that the Karachi Zoroastrian community would not be interested. I often wonder if the steadfast belief in hailing from Gujarat has led the Parsi community in Karachi to disparage sites and antiquities that directly connect Sindh with Zoroastrianism and Iran's imperial history. Are Pakistani Zoroastrians deliberately not considering the possibility that their current homeland was part of an extended Zoroastrian empire? After I learnt about the Sasanian coins, I have become interested in the opportunity to include Pakistan in the larger landscape of scholarship on Zoroastrian heritage.

Since that very first visit to Banbhore, my concern has been how the pendulum on Zoroastrian evidence swings between Iran and India but doesn't pause at Pakistan. Karachi's Zoroastrian community is miniscule, but its contributions to the city are immense. Karachi's development into an all-weather port by 1873 in British India brought more Parsis to the coast of Sindh for entrepreneurship and trade.¹⁸ In terms of their historical identity, Parsis are well known for their adaptability to new environments, with migration being a part of their past and very much a route to their future as they continue to exit Pakistan. However, is the community's trepidation of learning about Zoroastrianism through unfamiliar resources and physically venturing beyond their comfort zone going to define them?

Nazneen: Tours of the State Bank Museum and to Banbhore are a great idea and I would love to join you one day! Keeping abreast of new research that pertains to the community and religion are crucial for expanding knowledge and understanding one's identity, which could enhance feelings of belonging. For that reason, I believe that the community has a worthy resource in the *Gen Z and Beyond Survey*. As it was the first of its kind, the team wanted to provide a substantial amount of data to Zoroastrian communities so they could learn about themselves and each other with reference to changing family structures, personal identity, communal interaction, contemporary religious beliefs and levels of practice, and future aspirations for the community. In this conversation, I have touched upon the areas in which I believe cultural forgetting is ongoing or has already taken place. The survey report and accompanying data provide community leaders in Pakistan and around the world with easily accessible information to engage meaningfully with communities and brainstorm ways to reduce the risk of forgetting and loss of heritage.[¶]

Veera: Thanks to the generosity and commitment of local trusts such as the KZBM, not a single member of the community in Pakistan is left without access to education or a home. It is safe to say that there is a commitment to preserving the religion and the community. For me, the main issue is the interpretation of the region's religious history. Archaeological studies on the Sasanian-era coins from the Banbhore citadel and data from the *Gen Z and Beyond Survey* may not carry the emotional resonance of the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* connecting the Indian and Pakistani Parsis to each other, but they do highlight the expansiveness of Zoroastrianism. The linkages between Sindh's coastline and the Sasanian Zoroastrian dynasty is definitely something that Pakistan's Zoroastrian community can and should explore further.

[¶] The survey's raw dataset is held by the UK Data Archive, the UK's 'largest collection of social, economic and population data for over 50 years' which can be accessed and utilised for a more in-depth analysis on certain topics or specific regions. For those interested in submitting an application to access the raw dataset from the survey, please visit <https://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>.

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2. Parzor Foundation, "About Us."
3. Parzor Foundation, "Heritage and Cultural Studies."
4. Patel, "Saving Parsi Heritage."
5. de Jong, "The Zoroastrians of Iran," 46.
6. Hua, "Diaspora and Cultural Memory," 198.
7. Khan, *Banbhore: A Preliminary Report on the Recent Archaeological Excavations at Banbhore*, 9.
8. Piacentini, "The Site of Banbhore on the Indus Delta: A Major Stage along the Silk Route of the Past Mansurah and its Outlet to the Sea, Daybul (8th - 10th Centuries CE)," 18; Ghafur, "Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions," 65-66.
9. Ahmed, *A Book of Conquest*, 34-38.
10. Hasan, *History of Persian Navigation*, 65.
11. Nasir, "Coins of the Early Muslim Period"; Khan, *Banbhore*, 42.
12. Nasir, "Coins of the Early Muslim Period", 118-119; Khan, *Banbhore*, 42.
13. Porada, *Art of Ancient Iran. Pre-Islamic Cultures*, 122-123.
14. Stewart et al., *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, 170.; Godrej and Mistree, *A Zoroastrian Tapestry, Art Religion and Culture*, 242.
15. Wadia, "Bombay Parsi Merchants in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", 128-129.
16. Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration*, 727.
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18. Bhavani, "Kalachi, Kurrachee, Karachi: Biography of a Metropolis", 138-139.

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Creation and Mortality—The Eyes of Azrael

Alyssa Sakina Mumtaz

Remembering death—the one thing most of us desperately want to forget—is a pivotal spiritual practice in Muslim life. It has been so since the earliest days of Islam, following the Prophetic example and the Quran's abundant warnings about 'the fleeting life of this world.' If one is to objectively reckon with the purpose of life, death is always in the room. Engaging with this dichotomy has become a major feature of how I conceptualise my artistic practice.

As a contemporary artist and as an American-born Muslim who chose her path consciously, I am acutely aware of being stranded between epistemologies. The individualistic philosophy of the global contemporary art world (a modern colonialist construct) is abnormal when viewed from the theocentric perspective of Islamic thought and Muslim praxis. Bearing this in mind, a Muslim artist who is sincerely concerned with the expression of her own intellectual tradition must paddle hard against prevailing winds to unstrand her ways of thinking and working.

Following the birth of my children and the harrowing experiences of the pandemic, I started to think much more seriously about the fragility of the boundary between life and death. This awareness grows more and more visceral with time, especially within the unfolding of our global present, in which so many innocent lives are being ploughed under by racist imperialist governments and the endgame of global capitalism. Remembering death is now an urgent daily practice for me: in a world that is constantly rebelling against truth, it is a way of focusing on one absolute and incontrovertible reality.

Facing the imminence of death also raises speculative questions about the value of what will be left behind. From a spiritual perspective, the material archive of a life in art is a burdensome storehouse of attachments. When I think about my personal carbon footprint, the work I made before my religious conversion feels especially unwieldy. What will my children do with unmoored aesthetic objects that came into existence through a precarious cultural system that deserves interrogation? Will they be discerning enough to let go of the things that I could not let go of myself?

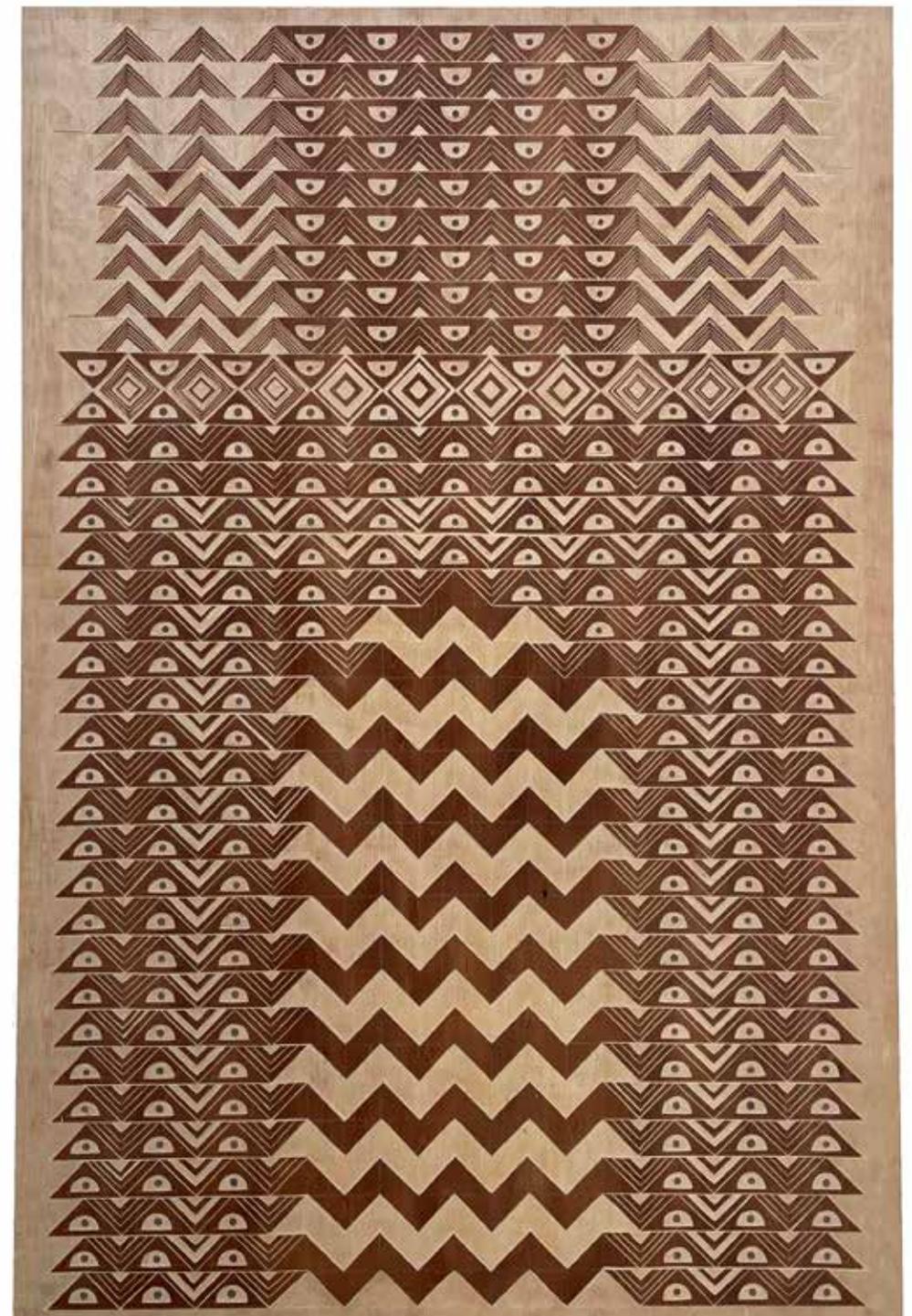
When my eldest, Hadi, was about six months old, I started hand-sewing a quilt for him—not a baby quilt, but a man-sized *razai* that I hope he will eventually use in daily life. There have been moments when making the *razai* has felt like an impossible task: to craft a fully functional textile that could reflect my son's layered heritage, I had to teach myself American and *desi*

quilt-making techniques simultaneously. The handwork that is holding the quilt together is improvised and eccentric, but it gives form to love. Taking this deep dive into the embodied reality of craft—forms of knowledge that are tactile, physical, structural, and functional, but also speculative, poetic, intuitive, and emotional—has helped me reimagine my creative vocation as a form of devotional practice.

The struggles and rewards of making the *razai* have also unlocked new ways for me to bear witness to religious experience. In 2022, I completed my first, hand-quilted *janamaz*, a textile prayer mat that is simultaneously a useful object, a conceptual artwork, and a family heirloom for the future. I think of this *janamaz* as a kind of manifesto for my practice and way of life as a maker: I am now trying to make things that jump over the perceived divide between so-called 'art' and 'craft'. In this spirit, I resist the outmoded yet persistently invasive idea that 'craft' is an unintelligent automatic process inferior to the intellectual space of 'art'. Knowledge and creativity are fully embodied and ensouled; in all forms of making, they are expressed physically while also being animated by intuitions, spiritual insights, and quasi-miraculous inspirations, to varying degrees.

In my creative practice I move fluidly amidst material inquiries that constellate many different forms of handwork in a search for larger narratives. I draw and paint using handmade papers and pigments; I weave with hand-spun woollen yarns and traditional wooden hand tools; I sew quilts completely by hand using woven and block-printed textiles; and print from my own hand-carved woodblocks. I owe a special debt to the generative out-of-control-ness of printmaking, in which every impression records a unique encounter and moment in time. There is a leap of faith that occurs in the germination stage of my print projects: as I set things in motion, I welcome the unseen Collaborator.

The Eyes of Azrael is one such project. Conceived and set in motion over a six-month period in 2023, it is a series of woodblock prints that meditates on the symbolic embodiment of *Malik-ul-Maut*, the Angel of Death. The concept of the Angel of Death in Islam is vast and multifaceted. While there is no mention of Azrael by name in the Quran or the Hadith, exegetists, philosophers, speculative metaphysicians, and theologians have expanded on his form and meaning through the centuries. Some have viewed Azrael as a cosmological symbol, while others have imagined and explained the reality of death through minutely described anthropomorphic imagery. For instance, according to one Islamic tradition, the Archangel chosen to be God's procurer of souls possesses a physical form that is beautiful or fearsome according to the soul of the person he visits.¹ In one of his most harrowing manifestations, he is covered in a multitude of eyes. Each eye represents the life of a created being and as creatures die, eyes close.² Another tradition holds that the Angel of Death visits each person multiple times a day.³ In this corner of the pious imagination, he is quite literally in the room, ever vigilant, watching us. He is hidden in plain view, inhabiting a liminal space between inner consciousness and outward life.



Work in progress view of the woodblock for *The Eyes of Azrael*, 2023. Woodcuts are a subset of the practice of relief printmaking, in which a block is carved or altered to create a low-relief surface that holds ink selectively. In this state, the block has been stained with walnut ink and carved in preparation for printing. The light-coloured marks in the image are places where material has been removed from the surface of the block through carving. Photo by author.

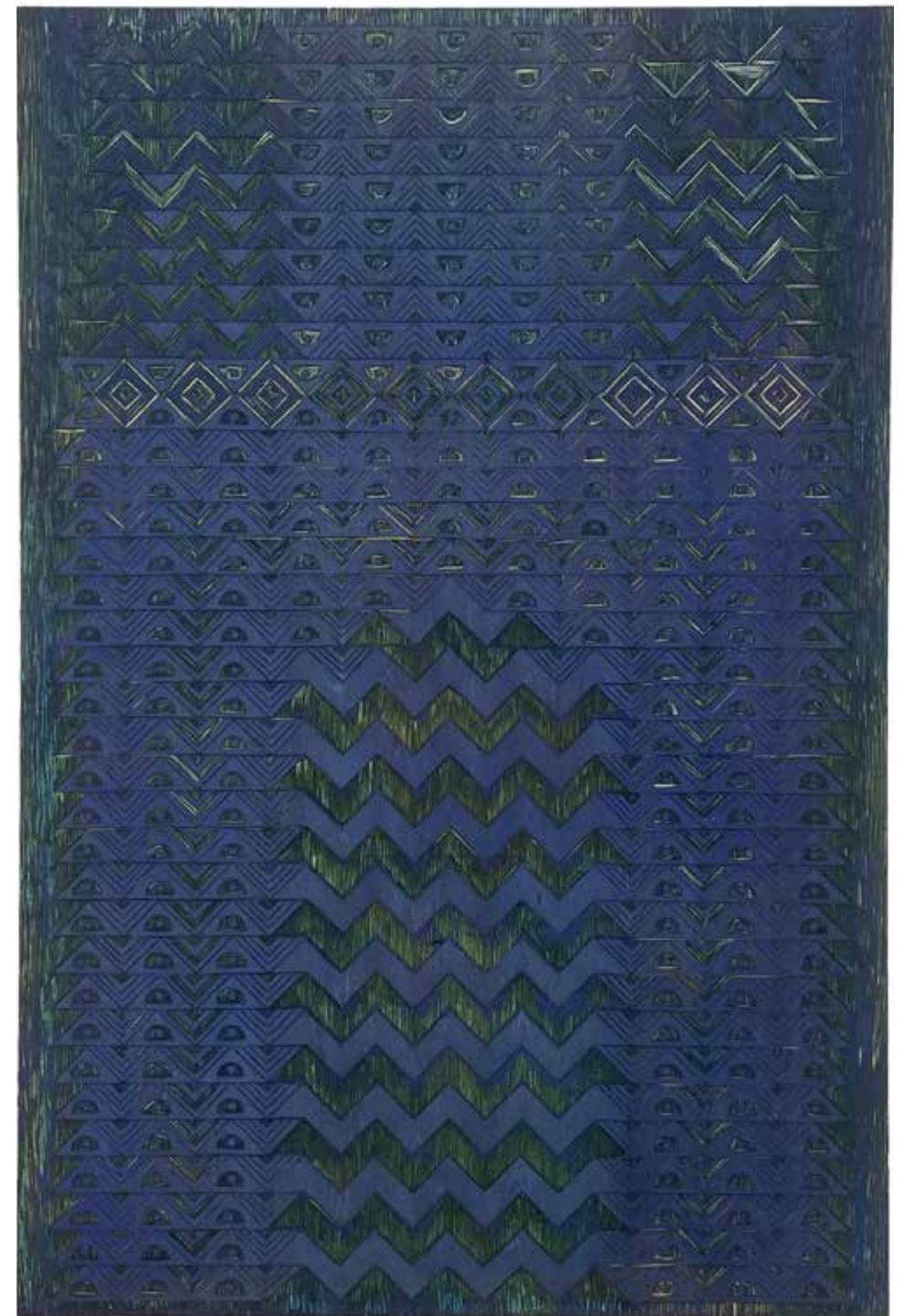
Derived from a single, hand-carved 24x36-inch *shina* woodblock, the images that comprise *The Eyes of Azrael* are printed in transparent Prussian blue ink on handmade *mitsumata* paper and hand-stencilled in gold.[¶] When presented as a complete group, the images visualise the gradual extinguishing of the many eyes. Reflecting light against a sombre blue ground, the gold irises that punctuate the eyes suggest flickering lights that will be snuffed out, one by one.

I imagine that the Angel of Death is in the room when I pray, and this body of images is a way of reckoning with that presence. I also remember him in interstitial moments that unfold outside of ritual life. Any act can be animated by a spiritual intention if we offer it to God sincerely. As an example of this kind of offering, the activity of making woodblock prints has become one of many contemplative exercises that I practise daily. *The Eyes of Azrael* was made using a simple craft methodology derived from the oldest form of printmaking known to history—printing an image by hand from a carved wooden block. The oldest surviving printing blocks were produced in China as early as 220 AD and were most likely carved for the purpose of printing textiles.⁴ From Asia to Europe and beyond, woodblock prints have been associated with sacred texts, arts of the book, and the preservation of knowledge. I embrace this history and the diversity of its forms but participate in it humbly, knowing that my engagement with it is, at best, a patchwork of experiments with occasional moments of insight.

During the process of making *The Eyes of Azrael*, I became aware of a hidden dialogue between creation and sacrifice. The woodblock on which the image was carved was once living matter harvested from Japanese linden trees. The *mitsumata* fibre and indigo pigment used to make the blue handmade paper on which the images are printed was harvested from other once-living plants. The home-brewed ink that I used to stain the block before carving it was distilled from desiccated black walnut shells that became ink instead of helping to fulfil the life cycle of the walnut tree.

The traditional Japanese tools that I used to carve the block are tiny gouges and knives sharp enough to draw blood. And yet, these carefully hand-forged blades are also fragile and changeable, requiring constant honing and care as they undergo their own process of erosion over time. The art of carving consists of many minutely controlled acts of violence that go both ways: the tools reduce the block irreversibly, and the block reduces the tools. There is no going back on either account—only subtraction and maintenance.

[¶] The woodblocks that I work with are made of *shina* plywood—a five-layer composite block made from *tilia japonica* trees that are grown sustainably in the colder regions of Japan. This wood is favoured for its fine, almost imperceptible grain pattern, and the quality of being structurally strong yet easy to carve. Also of Japanese origin, *mitsumata* paper is a fine-surfaced traditional paper made from the bark of the shrub *edgeworthia papyrifera*. I utilise Japanese tools and materials primarily because they are the most refined resources readily available to contemporary artisans.



Work in progress view of the woodblock for *The Eyes of Azrael*, 2023. This image shows the block's surface after it was inked by hand using a large roller. The areas of the block that appear strongly blue in colour are the uncarved portion of the image. Following this inking, the block was printed on an etching press using minimum pressure. Photo by author.

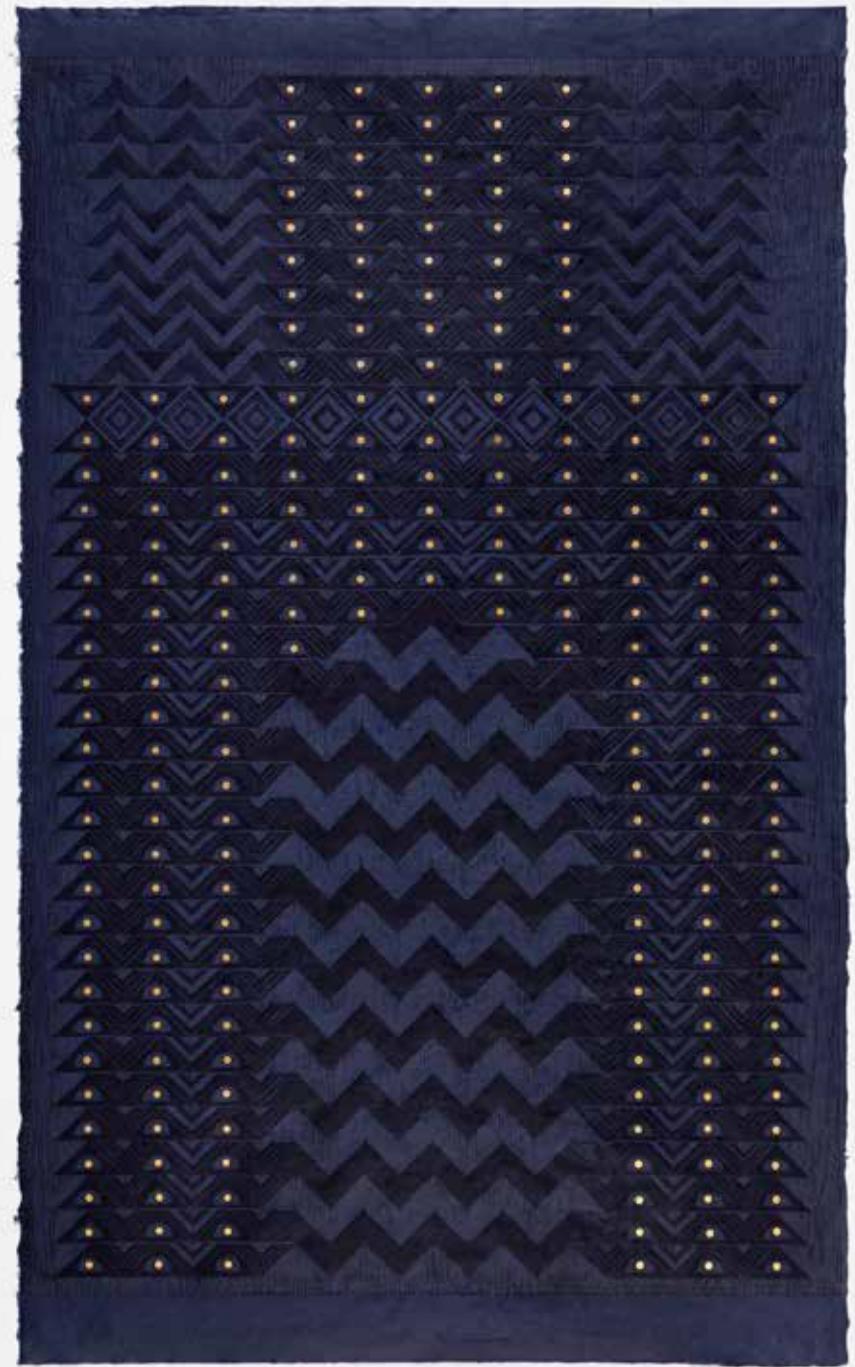
From a certain point of view, drawing is also a subtractive process. Whether one is carving directly and spontaneously into the wood's surface, or following a sketch that serves as a map, the act of drawing, be it emergent or choreographed, delimits the field of possibility mark by mark. As an image and the meanings that crystallise around it come into focus, other paths disappear, at least temporarily. In this sense, drawing can be a kind of winnowing process that separates the grain from the chaff, both visually and conceptually. Before I began carving the block for *The Eyes of Azrael*, I drafted its imagery onto the surface of the wood using a simple geometric framework with the grid as a compositional scaffolding. The revealed science of geometry, even in its most rudimentary forms, offers a window into the creative intelligence of God.⁵ Human beings are incapable of engaging with all of it all at once, and yet, mercifully, these limitations allow us to participate in our individual capacities.

The carving that eventually articulates the block is like a form of ritual scarification. After carving, it is tempting to allow the transformed block to remain as it is, un-inked and unprinted, with its blonde wounds on full display. However, to fulfil its purpose, the block must be inked beyond recognition, its contents obscured in the process. No amount of oil cleaning will fully remove the stain that is left behind in the wood grain. To make their impressions, most woodblocks will travel through a printing press or be rubbed vigorously by hand. The mechanics of transmission can erode a block, impression by impression, as can heavy hands and human error. But when the block prints, it becomes a mother—a new version of itself with offspring.

All of this takes tremendous physical exertion, concentration, and persistence. It is a hungry process that consumes matter, energy, and life. And for what? A delicate object, a tissue-thin membrane, bits of paper that will disappear in a gust of wind or dissolve in water.



Work in progress view of the woodblock for *The Eyes of Azrael*, 2023. After printing, the block was oil cleaned, leaving residual colour from the ink. In this final state, the block has been stained bluish green through the sequential processes of inking, printing, and cleaning. Photo by author.



Alyssa Sakina Mumtaz, 2023, *The Eyes of Azrael*, variable edition of 30 woodblock prints on handmade *mitsumata* paper, each 37 x 25 inches, published by the artist at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA. Photo by Jon Verney.



Notes

1. Al Ghazali, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, 43-45.
2. Ibn Ahmad Qadi, *Islamic Book of the Dead*, 32. For a detailed study of the Angel of Death in Islamic tradition, see MacDonald, "The Angel of Death in Late Islamic Tradition."
3. Al Ghazali, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, 54. In some traditions, Azrael visits each house three times.
4. Weiji, *History of Textile Technology of Ancient China*, 323-26.
5. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 11. For a detailed survey of *Ikhwan al-Safa's* understanding of geometry as a divinely revealed science, see El-Bizri, "Epistles of the Brethren of Purity."

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Baasi Khabar: Breaking, Consuming, Forgetting, and Remembering the News

Fahad Naveed

'Aaj ki taaza khabar, aaj ki taaza khabar' (Today's fresh news, today's fresh news).

I can almost hear the newspaper hawkers as I recreate the scene in my mind. A notorious Karachi traffic jam. A captive audience, trapped without the handy distraction of cellphones. And newspaper hawkers moving quickly from one potential customer to the next, repeating aloud the most *taaza*¹ news updates, often with added sensationalism and commentary for impact.

This was a common scenario when I was growing up in the 1990s, but more than two decades later it feels like a distant memory. There are fewer and fewer newspaper hawkers at traffic signals. Newspaper circulations continue to plummet, as do advertising revenues. Newsrooms are getting smaller, while the journalists working in these shrinking newsrooms face censorship, self-censorship, targeted attacks, pay cuts, layoffs, and little room for career growth. Despite these conditions, print journalists continue to report but their work reaches fewer and fewer eyeballs. News is often broken on television, news websites, and social media before it appears in print the following day. By the time a newspaper reaches the precious few who still have subscriptions, most of the news items it carries are not exactly *taaza*. The medium that once brought us the freshest news has gone stale itself.

What purpose does the newspaper serve now? And what purpose can it serve? I have been exploring these questions in *Taaza Naan, Baasi Khabar* (Fresh Naan, Stale News), an ongoing series since 2019 in which I work with found newspaper scraps. These old newspaper fragments, which came to me repurposed as wrappers for food items such as *naans*, *samosas*, and *parathas*, serve as entry points into thinking about how news is broken, consumed, remembered, and forgotten. They also allow me to reflect on the value of newspapers and the limitations of print news coverage in Pakistan.

Like most found objects, the recontextualised fragments of paper I work with have a history. These objects have outlived their initial utility and crossed their sell-by dates. They are now living a second life and hold many different stories in addition to the ones originally printed on them.

¹ *Taaza* literally means fresh but in this context it suggests 'latest'



Image 1. Fahad Naveed, 2022, Photograph of Found Newspaper, Karachi.



Image 2. Screenshot: Translation of the Korean newspaper scrap provided by Google Lens

Lost in Translation: Language, Consumption, Access, and the Written Word

I was given this Korean newspaper scrap (Image 1) by a food vendor in Karachi as a small paper bag holding my order of *bhutta*[¶]. The story originally published on the paper is likely an advertorial about a company that produces water purifiers. I say likely because this is mostly guesswork on my part. I cannot read the news story, and the little I can understand is thanks to a simple Google Lens search and translation (Image 2).

I am not the intended audience for this newspaper. No one in Karachi is. Here the news item originally printed on the newspaper becomes completely irrelevant. That story is lost in translation but the object takes on a new life and meaning. I wonder what journeys the newspaper must have embarked upon before ending up in the hands of a street food vendor in Karachi and, finally, coming to me. As Igor Kopytoff argues, the biographies of things can be very revealing and may make the obscure salient.¹ Looking at an object in the present can only tell us so much—its history, journey, utilities, and travels must also be considered.

While thinking about object biographies, consumption, and meaning in the context of newspaper scraps found in Karachi, language becomes a salient issue. It must be acknowledged here that, at least to some of the street food vendors who have handed me these newspaper scraps, the English language newspapers may be as inaccessible as the Korean ones. And written Urdu may still pose similar challenges for others. The written word limits the potential audience, making newspapers difficult to access for many. At small roadside hotels one often sees televisions blasting the news, while newspaper scraps are quickly wrapped around naans and handed off to customers. In this context, the television is a news source while the newspaper has a completely different utility.

This also brings up a limitation of the methodology I use for *Taaza Naan, Baasi Khabar*. I work with newspaper scraps that come to me by chance. The initial idea was that, much like a subscriber receives a newspaper with *taaza* news every morning, I would receive a newspaper scrap carrying *baasi* news with my naan every night. My newspaper collection process has evolved over time, but still, I rarely go out seeking newspaper scraps for this project. Initially, as my collection of old newspapers started growing, it became very clear that a vast majority of these were from English language newspapers, mostly *Dawn*² and sometimes the *Express Tribune*. This is not to suggest that Urdu newspapers are never reused or recirculated as food wrappers but that I have not received them.

[¶] Corn on the cob.

A few years ago, I collaborated with Dhaka-based filmmaker Rezwan Shahriar Sumit for *Baasi News* (Stale News), an online publication of forgotten news, which remained live till January 2023. Sumit collected many Bengali language newspaper scraps in Dhaka, but most of my collection remained restricted to English. When I asked a *naan* vendor why this is, he told me that he did not want to use Urdu newspapers as they often had 'Allah *ka naam* (Allah's name)' on them. He did not want to be disrespectful or cause offence.

Since this conversation, I have been mindful of this fact and have rarely spotted Allah's name in the newspaper scraps I have received. The only exceptions are advertisements which sometimes say *InshaAllah* and *MashAllah*. Advertisements are exceptions in other ways too. English newspapers, for example, also carry Urdu advertisements. On multiple occasions, I have gotten excited thinking I have received an Urdu newspaper with my naan, only to discover that it is an Urdu advertisement printed in an English newspaper.

Regardless of the reason, looking primarily at English language newspapers limits the kind of stories featured in this project. These are stories originally written for a specific readership and people have particular perceptions of who these might be. In a page from *Dawn* that is full of matrimonial advertisements (Image 3), one from the matchmaker Mrs. Masood stands out. Her clients include graduates from MIT, Cardiff, and LUMS; multiple PhDs from Canada; and at least one 'elite family' based in the US. Presumably, what would be a better space to advertise than Pakistan's English language newspaper of choice when looking for *rishtas*[¶] for these premium candidates? While not everyone who reads the paper actually belongs to this social strata, the advertisements do indicate that the English language is widely associated with the 'elite' in Pakistan.

English newspaper readership in Pakistan has always been comparatively small. Lately, Urdu newspapers have also been struggling. According to one survey conducted in 2019, only 19 percent of Pakistanis said that they read newspapers.³ As per a November 2022 poll, when asked if they had read a newspaper in the past few days, 90 percent of respondents replied in the negative.⁴ While all forms of journalism, including digital and electronic, are plagued with concerns about freedom, fairness, and independence, print journalism is in an overall state of decline. Soon newspapers as physical objects that one can hold and store may not be around. The value of newspapers as public records remains unmatched, particularly in Pakistan where television archives are few and inaccessible, and news websites routinely lose old articles when their design is updated. I have experienced this myself. Multiple stories that I have worked on over the years are no longer available online or have broken links. But their print versions are stored safely.

[¶] Matrimonial matches

PAGE 5

UPCLOSE & PERSONAL

GETTING MARRIED



MARRIAGE BUREAU

CONTINUED

ISLAMABAD

WE CAN HELP YOU IN FINDING GOOD PROPOSALS FOR YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS. CONTACT:- MRS FARZANA SAHER ASSOCIATES, 051-2211100, 0321-2211100. (37434108240)

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BOY 27, doctor Eye Specialist, settled in UK, father busi-

DAUGHTER 22, BBA Mughal, Army family. **Daughter 23**, Graduate, Rajput, USA Citizen. **Daughter 27**, Jat, USA Citizen. **MRS. KHAWAJA: 0315-5185705, 051-5856437. (37514107974)**

DAUGHTER 22, BDS, Rajput, Army family. **Lady doctor 27**, Rajput, Lady doctor 25, Jat, Canadian Citizen. **MRS. KHAWAJA: 0336-0518518, 051-5856437. (37514107971)**

DAUGHTER 23, MBA Mughal, father Federal, Secretary. **Daughter 33**, CSS, Section Officer. **Daughter 23**, BS (FAST). **MRS. KHAWAJA: 0336-0518518, 051-5856437. (37514107975)**

DAUGHTER 26, 5'8", MBBS BMC, UK Citizen. **Daughter 25**, 5'7", BDS. **MRS SARDAR: 051-2306003, 0301-5713980. (37164105977)**

DAUGHTER, USA national, Masters in Accounting from University of Michigan in GPA 4. Currently pursuing for CPA. 27 years old, height 5.6. Seeking proposals from well educated decent families from USA. Contact: **Raja Sakhawat 0300-6913786. (25733347585)**

DOCTOR 28, Rajput, residency USA. **Son**, BDS, handsome, Rajput, USA Citizen. **Doctor 26**, Jat, residency USA. **MRS. KHAWAJA: 0336-0518518, 051-5856437. (37514107979)**

GIRL 24, doctor, tall, very pretty, pursuing house job, father IG. **Girl 25**, Telecom Engineer. **NUST**, tall, pretty, Pathan family, father Army officer. **MRS. COL ATHAR: 051-9270134, 0300-9544554. (37264108321)**

GIRL 26, Chartered Accountant, tall, decent, father Director General, mother doctor, settled in posh sector Islamabad. **Girl 22**, LUMS graduate, settled in Karachi, father advocate. **MRS. COL ATHAR: 051-9270134, 0300-9544554. (37264108323)**

GIRL 26, Master degree, American national, father civil servant. **Girl 25**, Master, pretty, LUMS MS from Sussex University, American national, father businessman. **MRS. COL ATHAR: 051-9270134, 0300-9544554. (37264108320)**

Son, 30, BDS doctor, MSc from MOU University, tall, pretty, working there, father senior officer, family settled in Karachi. **MRS. COL ATHAR: 051-9270134, 0300-9544554. (37264108322)**

LADY 38, 5'7", beautiful, Master, educated, USA Citizen. **Daughter**

26 years, male, CA, 5 feet, 30 years boy, 5'10", PFD from Canada, working on executive post. **Male**, CA, 24 years in England required girl should be British national. **Bro in Army**, 25 years, 6 feet, Boy Kashmir, 30 years, Masters from LUMS, working in Multinational. **Boy**, 30 years, 5'11", Telecom Engineer. **Boy**, Electrical Engineer, 25 years, 5'10", Bureaucrat family. **Boy**, 27 years, 5'8", Electrical Engineer from Cardiff University (UK). **Boy**, Doctor, Kashmir, 28 years, in America. **Boy**, 28 years, 5'11", Doctor, Jutt, required girl should be Doctor. **Boy**, Doctor, tall, Jutt, required Doctor. **Girl**, Male, 25 years, Sheikh, 5'7", Businessman. **Boy**, 27 years, 6 feet, electrical engineer, Master from London. **Boy** (in America), 28 years, 6 feet, MBA from America top university. **Male**, 34 years, elite family (in America), MBA from England. **Male**, doctor, 24 years, 5'10" in America. **Male**, 30, 5'6", MBA from Indiana University (business family). **Male**, 31, 6'2", Master from MIT University from America. **Boy**, 28, 5'8", graduation from America (business family). **Boy**, 28 years, 6 feet, MBA from LUMS working in multinational. **Boy**, 29, 5'11", CA working in multinational in Dubai. **Boy**, 27, 6 feet, Rajput, electrical engineer, Assistant Director CSS qualified. **Male**, 28 years, 6'2", CA, 26 years, engineer. **Male**, 26 years, engineer. **Male**, 30 years, 5'11" (America), Master and PhD from Canada (on good job). **Male**, 32 years, 5'8" doctor in (Australia). **Male**, 27 years doctor in (England). **Male**, 28 years, 5'10" in (America). Contact: **MRS. MASOOD 0345-4479974. (25723348912)**

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BOY 29 years, CIA Levels from Aitchison College, medical from Agha University, residency from America (MBBS). Contact: **MRS. MASOOD 0345-4479974. (25723348912)**

GIRL, Doctor Agha Khan Medical College, age 23 years, 5'4", **Girl**, 25 years, Syed, in England, Graduate from LUMS. **Girl**, 27 years, 5'5", Masters in Computer Sciences from LUMS. **Girl**, 24 years, Rajput, BSc Honors from FAST (well known business family). **Kashmiri Girl**, Doctor, 30 in America. **Boy** should be Doctor. **Dr. Rajput**, 29 years, 5'8", Kashmiri, 25 years, 5'6", Doctor, required boy Doctor or Engineer. **Girl**, 22 years, 5'8", (architect). **Girl**, 30 years, 5'6", very pretty girl, MBA from LSE. **Girl**, 25 year 5'6" (ACCA). **Girl**, doctor, age 32, 5'6", very pretty, from elite family. **Girl**, Kashmiri, 25 years, 5'8", father (Businessman). **Girl**, 32 year, 5'4", graduate, very pretty. **Girl**, 35 year, 5'6", in (Saudi Arabia). **Girl**, 24 years, 5'6", very pretty, CA. Contact: **MRS. MASOOD 0345-4479974. (25723348911)**

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LOOKING for Educated Match (Single / Khuliyata Doctor) for our younger brother, Sunni, Sheikh, MBA, Executive Job Regional Head brother owned residence (posh), Age 43 (Never Married) Fit N Smart. Parents died. s parveen2016@outlook.com (10973280083)

PARENTS looking forward to proposal for their son of 24 years having Graduate in BCS (Bachelors of Computer Science). We are Urdu speaking and looking for a girl who should be US citizen or Canadian acceptable. Email: **muhammad.khan1958@gmail.com (11112340900)**

SON 30 years, tall, handsome, employed as PPE Engineer in USA, Sunni, Urdu speaking, looking for girl upto 25 years, smart, pretty, fit, tall, should be educated family, MBBS, BDS, Engineer, ACCA from reputable university institution. Contact: **mavia.saitan.kazi@gmail.com (10482439807)**

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SON 30 years, tall, handsome, employed as PPE Engineer in USA, Sunni, Urdu speaking, looking for girl upto 25 years, smart, pretty, fit, tall, should be educated family, MBBS, BDS, Engineer, ACCA from reputable university institution. Contact: **mavia.saitan.kazi@gmail.com (10482439807)**

SON 34 MBA working Saudi, divorced first wife, no child, required under 30 educated, religious girl, Doabandi, preferable m r a | 5 6 @ hotmail . com (11102423957)

SON 36, 5'7", visiting Pakistan, second marriage, well settled US citizen, slim and smart, decent mannered, moderate practicing Muslim, Masters Electrical Engineering Austin and MBA Berkeley USA after A-Level from Pakistan, well established, belongs to well educated Urdu speaking Sunni family. Parents of moderate practicing Muslimah, 5'2" to 5'6" not over 31 years, slim, smart and intelligent, of decent manners, good looking with Masters level education in professional discipline, educated family may contact at: **naseem3140@yahoo.com. (3704106256)**

SON 38, Sunni Muslim, Graduate own business, Defence resident job from Urdu, Speaking Sunni Family's Daughter of 25-28 Years. Preferably MBA / BDS upto 5.3 Height. Son visiting Karachi next week. Kindly contact with Latest Photos for son. **3026@gmail.com. (1005428991)**

SON MBBS fair 5'10", 29 years, UP, Urdu, looking very fair, beautiful, unmarried, upto 23 years girl, parent of middle class, educated family. Please contact **kshamsa@hotmail.com (10302429837)**

ISLAMABAD

DAUGHTER 29, 5'2", unmarried, pretty and well mannered, MBA, Sunni, parents retired federal government officers, well educated and settled family, looking for compatible match from Karachi/Islamabad. Contact: **arehadi@ata@gmail.com. (37684025082)**

DAUGHTER 30, FGPS Doctor, looking for a suitable match, educated, having a job, between 35-40 years, interested persons (preferable parags) may contact: **fordoctor187526@gmail.com (37424108042)**

BOOKS & READING

Celebrating Jane Austen

The year 2017 marks the 200th death anniversary of the much beloved British author Jane Austen, whose popularity has not waned with time. The bicentenary of her death has been marked by several events and tributes, because she passed away at the age of 41. Each object brings to life a different aspect of her life and works they include her desk where which she wrote *Emma*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* (which also turned 200 this year), and possibly revised drafts of *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*.



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Television news archives are in an even worse shape than news websites. The sheer volume of data produced by news channels that run 24/7 is immense, and it requires a considerable amount of memory and resources to store it. As a result, many news channel archives in Pakistan are neglected. And so, we turn to newspapers. For the most part, newspapers are no longer the first ones to break the news. But they are still the most reliable way to store, archive, and remember the news, whether that news is good or bad. Newspaper archives have an undeniable transportive quality. I often find myself revisiting, reliving, and remembering the past through *baasi* news.

Newspapers as Public Records and National Memory

I clearly remember the day it happened. I was in my office at Haroon House. Between editing stories, I called the canteen extension and ordered *chai* and a *samosa*, which I ate while mostly looking at my computer. After finishing editing, I picked up the oil-soaked newspaper on which I had been served the *samosa*. I was horrified to see a photograph of a memorial for the children who had been killed in the 2014 Peshawar school massacre (Image 4).

As I held the newspaper, many questions rushed through my mind. How did this newspaper scrap exchange multiple sets of hands without someone noticing the photographs of these smiling children, one with the word *shaheed*[¶] written on it? How did the newspaper travel back to the *Dawn* office? Or did it never leave?

The newspaper scrap was from *Dawn's* December 17, 2018 front page with a special report published on the anniversary of the massacre. The country was shaken when the school was first attacked. Nearly a decade has passed, but every year there is news coverage to mark the anniversaries. The families will always carry this loss with them and it is important that we as a people also continue to remember this incident. Through repetition and remembrances in the public domain, newspapers remind us of what was lost. To see coverage of this tragedy reduced to a *samosa* wrapper was jarring.

Newspapers of record[⊙] that report, contextualise, and archive major developments are important. These leaves of history are not always looking back at national tragedies. They also

[¶] Martyr

[⊙] The term, first used by the *New York Times*, is used to describe reputable, major national newspapers.



Image 4. Fahad Naveed, 2019, *Photograph of Found Newspaper*, Karachi.

report achievements and reasons to celebrate. When a young sportsperson breaks a record, the previous reporting helps contextualise that milestone. When a film makes history at a prestigious film festival, bringing that information to local audiences ensures that this achievement will be remembered in the years to come. And when an article (Image 5) celebrates a 'remarkable treatise on 150 years' of the Urdu novel,⁵ it also reminds us of the importance of documenting the country's cultural history.

While newspapers remind us of what happened before, their silences must also be taken into consideration. Even with newspapers of record, the coverage is not without omissions, censorship, and bias. These records only hold what was considered newsworthy by some and, in the process, other stories must have been deemed not worth sharing and recording.

Breaking the News: Newsworthiness and the News Cycle

Much has been said about the insensitivity of breaking news reporting in Pakistan. Unfortunately, deciding the newsworthiness of stories often comes down to ranking tragedies and assigning value to them. With *Taaza Naan, Baasi Khabar*, I attempt to unsettle these hierarchies. This was part of the intention from the project's inception. When I framed and placed old newspaper scraps in a gallery space, it was an invitation for visitors to interact with discarded, often forgotten, stories that were no longer newsworthy. It was an invitation to experience an alternative archive and record of history.

Accompanying the framed newspaper scraps was *Taaza Naan, Baasi Khabar-1*, a video I displayed at the aforementioned show. In the video, I am sitting on a chair, holding printouts of my previous news stories. A cup of chai is on a table next to me, along with a *naan* placed on a newspaper scrap. I read the news stories out loud from the printouts, as if I am reading a news bulletin. While reading, I drink *chai* and eat *naan* off the old newspaper (Image 6).

When I recently revisited the video, I spotted the beginnings of many of the arguments I have made in this essay. The news read out loud in English seemed stilted and out of place. I was reminded of the English news bulletins on *Dawn News*, which started out as Pakistan's first English-language news channel before pivoting to full-time Urdu news programming. Questions of language and access have always been of importance to *Taaza Naan, Baasi Khabar*. The video also offers a sharp contrast to the sensationalist way breaking news is typically delivered. I read the news deliberately slowly, and by the end of the 14-minute video, I am visibly tired and fumbling my lines.



Image 5. Fahad Naveed, 2020, *Photograph of Found Newspaper*, Karachi.

'You're not tired, are you?' I ask my friend who is off-screen, filming the video with a handheld camera. The question is also directed at the viewers. 'I am,' she responds. I tell her that she can stop filming. In the next shot, I am no longer in the frame. The pretend news bulletin has ended. All that remains is the crumpled newspaper scrap, with crumbs of *naan* and *baasi* news.

It all comes back to the physical presence of the newspaper. The fact that you can hold it, that you can store it. Even after being discarded as *raddi* paper, newspapers continue to resurface. And even after this *baasi* news has lost its newsworthiness, it makes its way back to our homes and into our hands, refusing to be forgotten or letting us forget.



Image 6. Fahad Naveed, 2019, *Taaza Naan, Baasi Khabar-1*, Single Channel Video, Karachi.

Scrap

Notes

1. Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," 67.
2. Disclosure: I was an editorial staffer at *Dawn* when the project *Taaza Naan, Baasi Khabar* started.
3. Gallup and Gilani Pakistan, "Despite Rise in Literacy in Pakistan, Only 1 in 5 (19%) Pakistanis Claim They Read Newspaper."
4. Gallup and Gilani Pakistan, "90% of People Did Not Spend Any Time Reading the Newspaper in the Past Few Days."
5. Rauf Parekh, "Literary Notes: A Remarkable Treatise on 150 Years of Urdu Novel," *Dawn*, July 21, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1570194>.

Gallup and Gilani Pakistan. "Despite Rise in Literacy in Pakistan, Only 1 in 5 (19%) Pakistanis Claim They Read Newspaper."
Gallup Pakistan, December 9, 2019.

<https://gallup.com.pk/post/27921>.

Gallup and Gilani Pakistan. "90% of People Did Not Spend Any Time Reading the Newspaper in the Past Few Days."
Gallup Pakistan, November 24, 2022.

<https://gallup.com.pk/post/33848>.

Kopytoff, Igor. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 64–92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
doi:10.1017/CBO9780511819582.004.

Parekh, Rauf. "Literary Notes: A Remarkable Treatise on 150 Years of Urdu Novel." *Dawn*, July 21, 2020.
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1570194>.

Decentering the Self in Academia

Aamna Motala

In the second year of my Bachelor's degree in English Literature, I was taking a course titled 'Literary Theory and Criticism' which consisted of a basic introduction to theories like feminism, Marxism, and postcolonialism. Bite-sized, digestible introductions aren't very inspiring, but the course outline is dense and time is always short in a 16-week semester. As we work through postcolonial theory, the professor brings up terms like hybridity and dual identity, and as Pakistani students majoring in English, there are many casual, personal connections that we're able to make. In one class while the professor lectures on the colonial underpinnings of English departments in developing countries, I blurt out, 'So technically we shouldn't be studying here right now. But if we weren't, we wouldn't ever come to know we shouldn't be studying here. It's paradoxical! I say this without knowing I'm echoing a critical concern amongst postcolonial theorists: that postcolonialism in fact perpetuates colonialism through its own work.'¹

A week later, the professor catches me outside class and hands me a copy of *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Inside, there is a note:

*To Aamna Motala,
For her keen interest in the subject.*

I went down the rabbit hole of postcolonial theory and ended up doing a final research paper analysing Pakistani Anglophone writing from a postcolonial lens. As I think back to that incidental classroom encounter, I realise it taught me two vital lessons about pedagogy: one, listen keenly to student contributions in the classroom; personal reflections are part and parcel of theoretical discourse. Two, intellectual exchange can be possible outside the classroom if the instructor is willing to engage with students beyond the requirements of the course outline. However, once I started teaching at university, I also quickly learnt how easy it is to forget both of these lessons and how numbingly difficult it is to move beyond the rigid constraints of course outlines and a hierarchical teacher-student divide. At the same time, it is difficult to remember one's role as facilitator and mentor. Hence my task as an instructor

¹This contention was foregrounded in a roundtable forum involving many self-proclaimed ex-postcolonial critics, published in 2007 in the PMLA titled, "The End of Postcolonial Theory?"

became to develop a pedagogical praxis which repeatedly evaluates what makes teaching and learning valuable. Many strands within Foucauldian philosophy helped construct such an ethics.

Learning is not imitation but an exercise in freedom, and this is echoed in Foucault's notion of desubjectivation. Foucault describes desubjectivation as a mode of thinking that is informed by embodied experience and can transform the subject.¹ This transformation is essential to honest intellectual pursuit and is only made possible by 'wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself.'² Maarten Simons explains it as a project that 'disrupts or destroys the "I" and "me"' and hence removes needless attachment to one's own ideas.³ With this idea of transformation of the self in mind, I strive to be someone who is open to questions and critique, regardless of who challenges my ideas. Entertaining the possibility of such a rupture or discontinuity can lead to newer modes of thinking.⁴ Particularly as an educator, desubjectivation requires that I decenter my role as a source of knowledge and engage with the subjectivity of the student Other.

I did not construct this pedagogical understanding overnight, but came to it after a gradual process of learning. The first time I taught Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to second-year undergraduate students at the University of Karachi, my lectures drew on Chinua Achebe's critique of it as a text that reinforces racist, imperialist views of Africa. At one point a student objected that I was promoting just one ideological perspective on the novel and it only took a moment's reflection to realize she was right. In the next class, I introduced J. Hillis Miller's "Should We Read *Heart of Darkness*?" which goes against postcolonial criticisms of the novel and this move prompted many interesting debates in the classroom. The student's comment made me rethink how and what I teach. I learnt that my task is to introduce students to various positions that can inform their own stance, as the ethics of desubjectivation suggest.

The task of desubjectivation is complex and fraught with challenges. For instance, when I taught Shakespearean sonnets in an upper-level undergraduate poetry course at the same university, I had students from various educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many of them could hardly make sense of the sonnets due to their limited facility with the English language. How could I privilege their voices and perspectives without first ensuring that they had at least some basic understanding of the sonnets? Once literal meanings became clear, it seemed that students related most to Shakespeare's procreation sonnets for their parallels with

¹ In an interview titled 'Power, Moral Values and the Intellectual,' Foucault identifies the role of discontinuity in one's thought: 'One must consider all the points of fixity, of immobilization...as part of an effort to bring things back into their original mobility, their openness to change.'

Pakistani society's insistence on having children. An in-depth analysis needed to go beyond this comparison though. Students had no prior knowledge of the traditional Petrarchan sonnet form and Shakespeare's deliberate subversion of its themes and tropes, nor did they understand the cultural and historical contexts in which these were written—both of which are essential to critically appreciating the poems. Here, Foucauldian wisdom was put to the test. But where the adage of decentering proved inadequate, the one about discontinuity held true. Every unique context in the educational setting brings its own set of challenges, which is why an instructor must be forever agile, open to discontinuity and reinventing strategy. In this situation, I realized that before completely decentering my role, students' subjectivity had to be cultivated and their ability to make relevant connections had to be nurtured.

While teaching an introductory academic writing course more recently at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, I encountered a different type of problem. I had taught this material many times before and yet never had I found students to be this quiet and unresponsive. During one class session in the middle of the semester, I just had to stop. I closed the book, sat down, and directly asked the students why they were finding it difficult to engage. The conversation that followed had nothing to do with the course, but everything to do with academia: students feeling burnt out, unmet expectations, the demands of university life, etc. For the first time in that semester I was speaking to students not just as students but as individuals who have lives outside this classroom. Students' interest and engagement in the latter half of the semester improved significantly. Sometimes spontaneously abandoning the lesson plan can help destabilise the strictures of hierarchy and allow for decentering of authority.

To be so actively engaged in constant reevaluation requires effort. Anyone involved in teaching knows how frustrating, challenging, and demotivating it can be at times. It is all too easy to simply not take an added step or go the extra mile. Over time, the initial excitement of teaching may wane. Decentering and discontinuity require consistent effort in the cultivation of one's self, or what Foucault calls, the care of the self. Although some critics have interpreted the care of the self as individualistic⁵, Foucault describes it as a 'social practice'⁶ that is contingent on reciprocal relations with others.⁷ Being involved in exchanges with others can be a mutually enriching experience. Such an exchange of ideas and reflections can enable both to learn and

⁵ For instance, Ella Myers's essay 'Resisting Foucauldian Ethics' critiques the notion of the care of the self for its excessive focus on individualism.

⁶ While Foucault remarks that one's relation to the self is 'ontologically prior', at the same time it is contingent on reciprocal relations to others. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, he points to the fact that the self is not an individual subject but is instead a 'subject of' action, relationships and attitudes.

grow. The increasing move towards interdisciplinarity in the humanities and social sciences is a promising and exciting development: it reflects this recognition that exchange and dialogue can be immensely invaluable.

The mutuality of relations from such a notion of care of the self aims to destabilise what Rosalind Gill terms 'the hidden injuries' of the neoliberal university. Gill calls academics 'knowledge workers' and uses her own experience as an academic to critique the capitalist setup of the academy. One crucial aspect she underlines is how secrecy and individualism are growing in the university and are precisely what we need to resist.⁵ Her essay exemplifies the kind of research and insight that can develop from collaboration with the community around us as it 'break[s] the silence' about the neoliberal university and allows for sharing of experiences. Gill notes in a subsequent piece that six years later she continues to receive emails and letters from people who were moved by her essay.⁶

Individualism is difficult to resist because it is an inherent part of how the neoliberal university is set up and run. This becomes very evident when one is not employed as a full-time faculty member. During the Fall semester of 2021, I taught a total of nine courses at three different universities as an adjunct. I had to take on all those courses because most institutions only allow contractual faculty to teach a limited number of courses and the hourly pay from teaching at any one university cannot adequately cover living expenses. I would rush from one place to another throughout the week which left very little room for any sort of socialising or exchange with other colleagues. Adjunct faculty are essentially alienated from other faculty members which impedes the development of productive relationships that contribute to one's growth and learning. Their labour only carries economic value for the neoliberal institution, yet the non-monetary benefits of these relationships are far more significant.

Collectives and unions are formed and strengthened via dialogue within the academic community. Gill highlights the difficulty of achieving solidarity despite its importance in resisting the neoliberal university's competitive and divisive nature.⁷ A lot of the adjunct faculty's concerns at the University of Karachi, including crucial ones like salaries not being released for over six months, were not taken up by the Karachi University Teachers Society (KUTS). This led to the formation of an alternative teachers' union, the Karachi University Temporary Teachers' Society (KUTTS Sangat), in early 2022 to put forth the needs and demands of contractual faculty. However, the main union members carried more influence with higher administrative authorities and contractual faculty strikes could often not materialise because getting full-time faculty on board proved difficult. An integrated union could have been more effective but it is the culture of demarcation between the contractual and permanent faculty that resists such a proposition. Without strong alliances and friendships, any resistance to individualism is not possible.

Structurally, the neoliberal university encourages individualism. It is not difficult to work in isolation and tend to only one's own requirements. As adjunct faculty, I am not obliged to be available on campus beyond my teaching hours, which is what makes an hourly wage system possible. My presence is thus limited to the temporal and spatial scope of the classroom. However, in order to make teaching a rewarding experience instead of just an effective one, transformation of the self and productive relationships remain central to my own growth as an instructor and an academic.

Notes

1. Foucault and Rabinow, *Essential Works of Foucault*, 240.
2. Ibid.
3. Simons, "Michel Foucault: Educational Philosopher?", 168.
4. Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, 45.
5. Gill, *Breaking the Silence*, 53.
6. Gill, *Beyond Individualism*, 2.
7. Masschelein, *Pedagogue and/or Philosopher?*, 208.

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Ahmer Naqvi is a freelance writer and broadcaster based in Karachi. He has been writing and talking about popular culture in Pakistan for over a decade, covering cricket, music, and food. These days he runs a cricket podcast called *Batta Fast* and does food tours of Karachi called *Khanay Mei Kya Hai*. He can be found on social media as @karachikhatmal.

Sadaf Halai is a poet and educator. She has a BA from Bennington College, a BEd from York University, and an MA in Creative Writing from Boston University. Her poems have been published in *Salmagundi*, *Ploughshares*, *Granta*, *Vallum*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and *The Aleph Review*. Her writing has also appeared in various anthologies, including *The Life's Too Short Literary Review*, *Voices and Visions*, and a forthcoming anthology from Alhamra Publishing. She has won awards from The Academy of American Poets and was a finalist for the Glimmer Train Short Story Award for New Writers. She has taught at Boston University and the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, and is currently a faculty member at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

Farrukh Addnan is a visual artist based in Lahore. He holds a BDes in Visual Communication Design from the National College of Arts (NCA), and an MA in Art and Design from Beaconhouse National University. His work has been showcased in solo and group exhibitions locally and internationally, including at the Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh. He has participated in various residencies, with a recent one being *Ecologies of Displacement* which was a collaboration between Summerhall, Edinburgh and Koel Gallery, Karachi. Addnan teaches drawing and design at the NCA.

Nazneen Engineer is the inaugural Postdoctoral Researcher at the Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies based at SOAS, University of London. She has previously worked at the Worldchildren Welfare Trust India (WWTI). For her PhD in Religious Studies at SOAS, Nazneen produced an annotated translation of a 19th century Parsi Gujarati text and explored conversion and intermarriage in the history of the Parsi Zoroastrian community. Her next research project assessed pathways to an ethnic and religious identity for offspring of mixed marriages, specifically between Parsi Zoroastrian and non-Parsi non-Zoroastrian parents. Most recently, she was Project Manager of *Gen Z and Beyond: A Survey for Every Generation* that collected and analysed over 5000 responses from the global Zoroastrian community.

Veera Rustomji is an artist based in Karachi. She has a BFA from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS) and an MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Arts at the University of the Arts London, where she was a recipient of the Postgraduate International Scholarship Award. Her practice takes references from stories and archives and deals with gender, geographical power structures, and religious iconography. She is adjunct faculty in the Fine Art Department at IVS.

Alyssa Sakina Mumtaz is an interdisciplinary visual artist and educator working at the intersections of abstraction, contemplative practice, and craft. Her work is exhibited and collected internationally and has been supported by grants and fellowships from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Center for Craft, the Mass Cultural Council, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. She lives and works in Williamstown, Massachusetts, with her family.

Fahad Naveed is a visual artist, filmmaker, and interdisciplinary researcher. He is currently a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia where his research focuses on transnational cinema and bordering practices. Fahad holds a BDes from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and an MA from New York University. He has worked with the Dawn Group of Newspapers, including the publications *Eos*, *Dawn.com*, and the *Herald*. Fahad is a founding member of the Documentary Association of Pakistan. He also runs the Mandarjazail Collective, and is a co-editor of *Separation's Geography*, an ongoing Pakistan-India collaborative project.

Aamna Motala is an MPhil candidate at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS). She holds an MA in English Literature from the University of Karachi. Aamna is also a poet and her work has been published in the *Global Poetry in English 2022* anthology published by Authorspress in India. She was a participating poet and Assistant Editor in the poetry anthology *Sometimes a Greenness Grows*, published by The Little Book Company in Pakistan. She teaches as adjunct faculty at IVS, the Institute of Business Administration, and Greenwich University in Karachi.

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