

Arab American Heritage Reading Recommendations | Libraries

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Arab American Heritage Reading Recommendations

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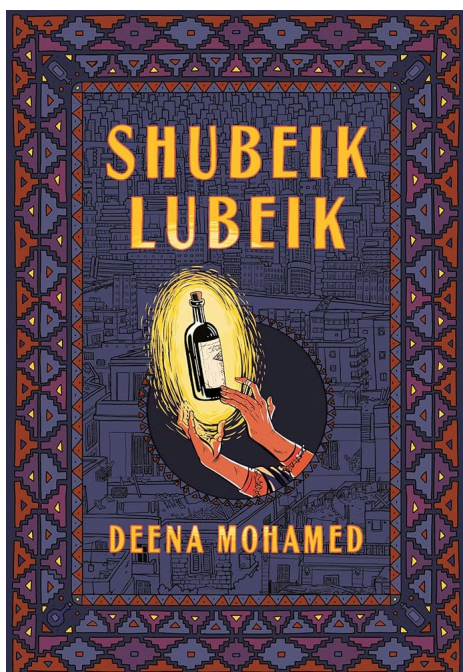
Check out USU Libraries' curated list of must-reads for Arab American Heritage Month!



As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow by Zoulfa Katouh

A love letter to Syria and its people, *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* is a speculative novel set amid the Syrian Revolution, burning with the fires of hope, love, and possibility. Perfect for fans of *The Book Thief* and *Salt to the Sea*. Salama Kassab was a pharmacy student when the cries for freedom broke out in Syria. She still had her parents and her older brother; she still had her home. She had a normal teenager's life. Now Salama volunteers at a hospital in Homs, helping the wounded who flood through the doors daily. Secretly, though, she is desperate to find a way out of her beloved country before her sister-in-law, Layla, gives birth. So desperate, that she has manifested a physical embodiment of her fear in the form of her imagined companion, Khawf, who haunts her every move in an effort to keep her safe. But even with Khawf pressing her to leave, Salama is torn between her loyalty to her country and her conviction to survive.

[Audiobook available through USU Libraries](#)



***Shubeik Lubeik* by Deena Mohamed**

A brilliantly original debut graphic novel that imagines a fantastical alternate Cairo where wishes really do come true. *Shubeik Lubeik*—a fairy tale rhyme that means "your wish is my command" in Arabic—is the story of three people who are navigating a world where wishes are literally for sale. Three wishes that are sold at an unassuming kiosk in Cairo link Aziza, Nour, and Shokry, changing their perspectives as well as their lives. Deena Mohamed brings to life a cast of characters whose struggles and triumphs are heartbreaking, inspiring, and deeply resonant. Although their stories are fantastical—featuring talking donkeys, dragons, and cars that can magically avoid traffic—each of these people grapples with the very real challenge of trying to make their most deeply held desires come true.

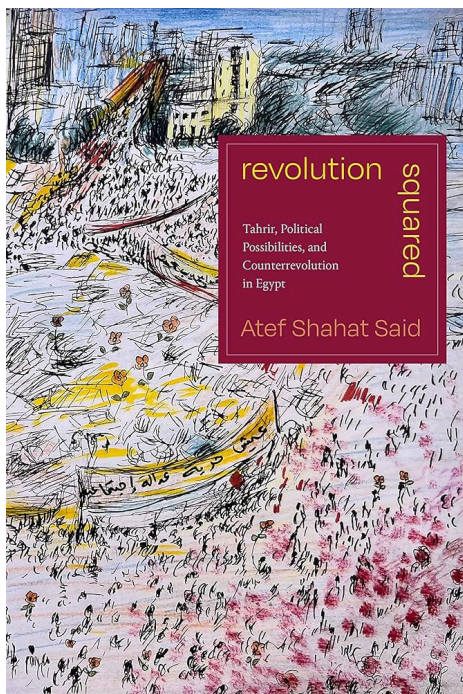
[Access through the publisher's website.](#)



***One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This* by Omar El Akkad**

On October 25, 2023, after just three weeks of the bombardment of Gaza, Omar El Akkad put out a tweet: "One day, when it's safe, when there's no personal downside to calling a thing what it is, when it's too late to hold anyone accountable, everyone will have always been against this." This tweet has been viewed more than 10 million times. As an immigrant who came to the West, El Akkad believed that it promised freedom. A place of justice for all. But in the past twenty years, reporting on the War on Terror, Ferguson, climate change, Black Lives Matter protests, and more, and watching the unmitigated slaughter in Gaza, El Akkad has come to the conclusion that much of what the West promises is a lie. *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This* is a chronicle of that painful realization, a moral grappling with what it means, as a citizen of the U.S., as a father, to carve out some sense of possibility in a time of carnage. This is El Akkad's nonfiction debut, his most raw and vulnerable work to date, a heartsick breakup letter with the West.

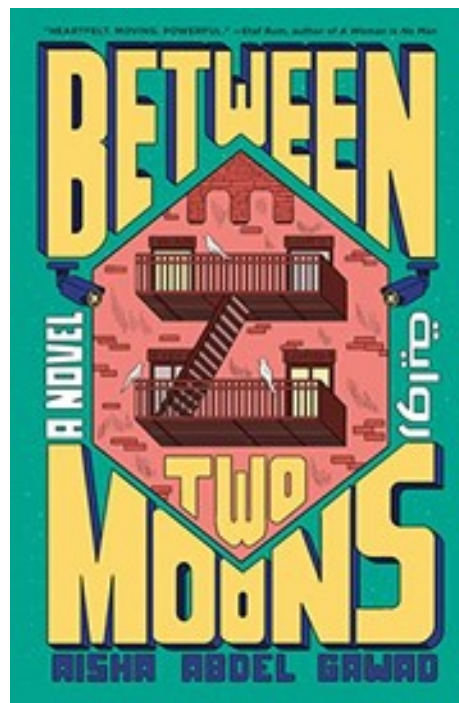
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***Revolution Squared: Tahrir, Political Possibilities, and Counterrevolution in Egypt* by Atef Shahat Said**

In *Revolution Squared* Atef Shahat Said examines the 2011 Egyptian Revolution to trace the expansive range of liberatory possibilities and containment at the heart of every revolution. Drawing on historical analysis and his own participation in the revolution, Said outlines the importance of Tahrir Square and other physical spaces as well as the role of social media and digital spaces. He develops the notion of lived contingency—the ways revolutionary actors practice and experience the revolution in terms of the actions they do or do not take—to show how Egyptians made sense of what was possible during the revolution. Said charts the lived contingencies of Egyptian revolutionaries from the decade prior to the revolution's outbreak to its peak and the so-called transition to democracy to the 2013 military coup into the present. Contrary to retrospective accounts and counterrevolutionary thought, Said argues that the Egyptian Revolution was not doomed to defeat. Rather, he demonstrates that Egyptians did not fully grasp their immense clout and that limited reformist demands reduced the revolution's potential for transformation.

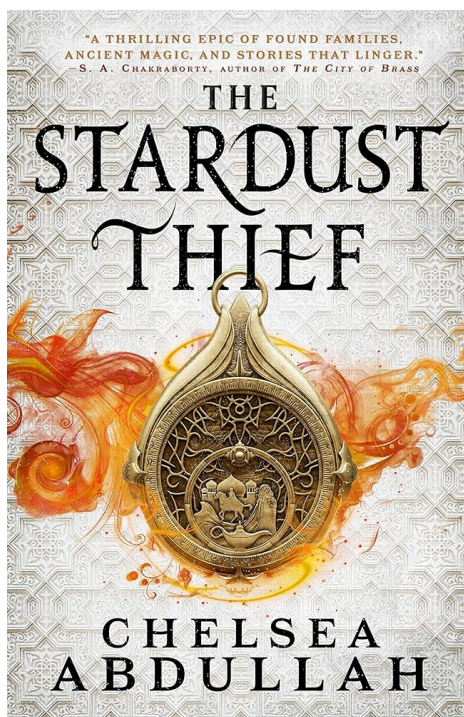
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***Between Two Moons* by Aisha Abdel Gawad**

It's the holy month of Ramadan, and twin sisters Amira and Lina are about to graduate high school in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. On the precipice of adulthood, they plan to embark on a summer of teenage revelry, trying on new identities and testing the limits of what they can get away with while still under their parents' roof. But their plans are derailed when their older brother, Sami, is released from prison and moves back into their already cramped apartment. Meanwhile, outside the family's apartment, a storm is brewing in Bay Ridge. A raid on a local business sparks a protest that brings the Arab community together, and a senseless act of violence threatens to tear them apart. Everyone's motives are called into question as an alarming sense of disquiet pervades the neighborhood. With everything spiraling out of control, how will Amira and Lina know who they can trust? A gorgeously written, intimate family story and a polyphonic portrait of life under the specter of Islamophobia, *Between Two Moons* challenges the reader to interrogate their own assumptions, asking questions of allegiance to faith, family, and community, and what it means to be a young Muslim in America.

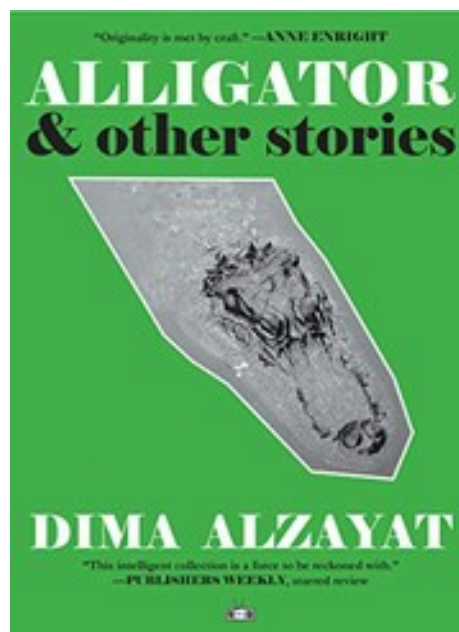
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***The Stardust Thief* by Chelsea Abdullah**

Inspired by stories from *One Thousand and One Nights*, this book weaves together the gripping tale of a legendary smuggler, a cowardly prince, and a dangerous quest across the desert to find a legendary, magical lamp. Neither here nor there, but long ago . . . Loulie al-Nazari is the Midnight Merchant: a criminal who, with the help of her jinn bodyguard, hunts and sells illegal magic. When she saves the life of a cowardly prince, she draws the attention of his powerful father, the sultan, who blackmails her into finding an ancient lamp that has the power to revive the barren land—at the cost of sacrificing all jinn. With no choice but to obey or be executed, Loulie journeys with the sultan's oldest son to find the artifact. Aided by her bodyguard, who has secrets of his own, they must survive ghouls, outwit a vengeful jinn queen, and confront a malicious killer from Loulie's past. And, in a world where story is reality and illusion is truth, Loulie will discover that everything—her enemy, her magic, even her own past—is not what it seems, and she must decide who she will become in this new reality.

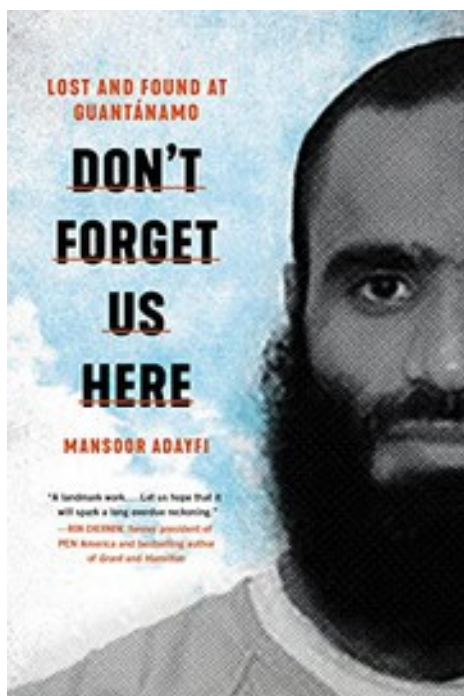
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***Alligator & Other Stories* by Dima Alzayat**

The award-winning stories in Dima Alzayat's collection are luminous and tender, whether dealing with a woman performing burial rites for her brother in "Ghusl," or a great-aunt struggling to explain cultural identity to her niece in "Once We Were Syrians." Alzayat's stories are rich and relatable, chronicling a sense of displacement through everyday scenarios. There is the intern in pre-#MeToo Hollywood of "Only Those Who Struggle Succeed," the New York City children on the lookout for a place to play on the heels of Etan Patz's kidnapping in "Disappearance," and the "dangerous" women of "Daughters of Man#" who struggle to assert their independence. The title story, "Alligator," is a masterpiece of historical reconstruction and intergenerational trauma, told in an epistolary format through social media posts, newspaper clippings, and testimonials, that starts with the true story of the lynching of a Syrian immigrant couple by law officers in small-town Florida. Placed in a wider context of U.S. racial violence, the extrajudicial deaths, and what happens to the couple's children and their children's children in the years after, challenges the demands of American assimilation and its limits. *Alligator and Other Stories* is haunting, spellbinding, and unforgettable, while marking Dima Alzayat's arrival as a tremendously gifted new talent.

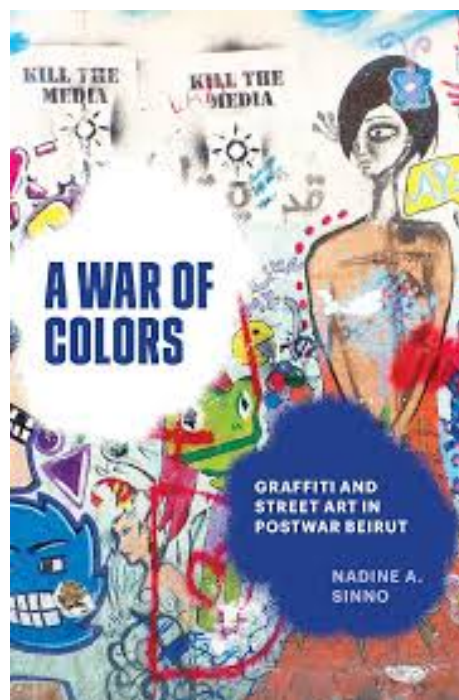
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***Don't Forget Us Here: Lost and Found at Guantánamo* by Mansoor Adayfi**

At the age of 18, Mansoor Adayfi left his home in Yemen for a cultural mission to Afghanistan. He never returned. Kidnapped by warlords and then sold to the US after 9/11, he was disappeared to Guantánamo Bay, where he spent the next 14 years as Detainee #441. *Don't Forget Us Here* tells two coming-of-age stories in parallel: a makeshift island outpost becoming the world's most notorious prison and an innocent young man emerging from its darkness. Arriving as a stubborn teenager, Mansoor survived the camp's infamous interrogation program and became a feared and hardened resistance fighter leading prison riots and hunger strikes. With time though, he grew into the man nicknamed "Smiley Troublemaker": a student, writer, advocate, and historian. While at Guantánamo, he wrote a series of manuscripts he sent as letters to his attorneys, which he then transformed into this vital chronicle, in collaboration with award-winning writer Antonio Aiello. With unexpected warmth and empathy, Mansoor unwinds a narrative of fighting for hope and survival in unimaginable circumstances, illuminating the limitlessness of the human spirit. And through his own story, he also tells Guantánamo's story, offering an unprecedented window into one of the most secretive places on earth and the people—detainees and guards alike—who lived there with him.

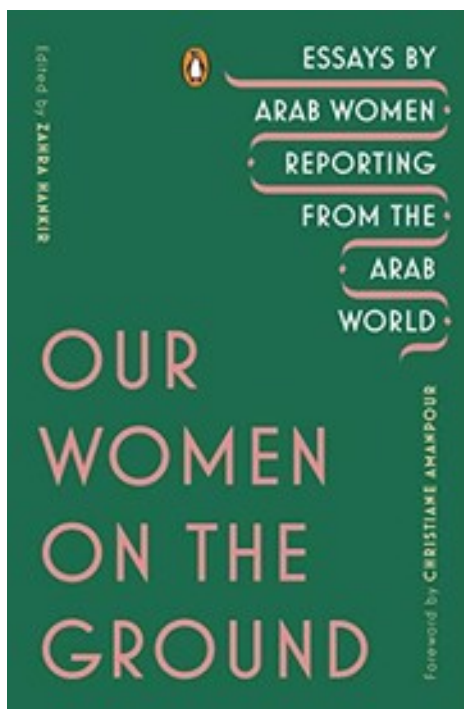
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***A War of Colors: Graffiti and Street Art in Postwar Beirut* by Nadine A. Sinno**

Over the last two decades in Beirut, graffiti makers have engaged in a fierce "war of colors," seeking to disrupt and transform the city's physical and social spaces. In *A War of Colors*, Nadine Sinno examines how graffiti and street art have been used in postwar Beirut to comment on the rapidly changing social dynamics of the country and region. Analyzing how graffiti makers can reclaim and transform cityscapes that were damaged or monopolized by militias during the war, Sinno explores graffiti's other roles, including forging civic engagement, commemorating cultural icons, protesting political corruption and environmental violence, and animating resistance. In addition, she argues that graffiti making can offer voices to those who are often marginalized, especially women and LGBTQ people. Copiously illustrated with images of graffiti and street art, *A War of Colors* is a visually captivating and thought-provoking journey through Beirut, where local and global discourses intersect on both scarred and polished walls in the city.

[Print available through USU Libraries](#)



***Our Women on the Ground: Essays by Arab Women Reporting from the Arab World* > edited by Zahra Hankir**

Nineteen Arab women journalists speak out about what it's like to report on their changing homelands in this first-of-its-kind essay collection, with a foreword by CNN chief international correspondent Christiane Amanpour. A growing number of intrepid Arab and Middle Eastern sahafiyat—female journalists—are working tirelessly to shape nuanced narratives about their changing homelands, often risking their lives on the front lines of war. From sexual harassment on the streets of Cairo to the difficulty of traveling without a male relative in Yemen, their challenges are unique—as are their advantages, such as being able to speak candidly with other women at a Syrian medical clinic or getting permission to enter places that male reporters are not allowed to go.

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