

## When we begin with us

A conversation on the joys, traumas, radical hopes and meaning in collective struggle

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Edward Said voiced that, “*There has been no major revolution in modern history without intellectuals; conversely there has been no major counterrevolutionary movement without intellectuals*”. For Said, “*Intellectuals have been the fathers and mothers of revolutions, and of course sons and daughters, even nephews and nieces*” (1993).

More recently, in “Writing with the Horror”, Hisham Matar wrote:

*“I don’t think people realise how hard things are for Arabs now. And how hard they have been for a long time. I don’t, for example, think people truly understand how horrible it has been to grow up watching Palestine being eaten away with each passing day. I don’t think even we Arabs understand the full psychological effects it has had on us as a people, the despair and anger, the self-loathing... And I don’t think we realise to what extent that long and drawn-out corrosion has distorted our politics”* (2017).

Weaving in the words of Edward Said, Toni Morrison, Hisham Matar and Ta’hanesi Coates— ‘When we begin with us’ is a conversation between myself and Dr. Yara Hawari that chooses to begin from within a particular community of resistance, and explores what it means to be a scholar-activist involved in an on-going collective struggle for liberation today. Reflecting upon what happens to the political when a conversation shifts its point of beginning to the world-views and lived experiences of a particular collective struggle — it explores what it means to live and write with its on-going joys, horrors, hopes and radical imaginings of the future. In doing so, it also reflects on what it means to be part of a community of solidarity, inspiration and friendship in this context; the meaning of this community in times of despair; and how the world is experienced when your body itself is a site of violence and struggle.

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Invited Guest and Speaker: Yara Hawari is a Palestinian writer and political commentator, and currently works as a Senior Analyst at Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network. She completed her PhD in Middle East Politics at the University of Exeter, where her research focused on oral history and Indigenous Studies. In addition to her academic work, she is also a frequent political commentator writing for various media outlets including The Guardian, Foreign Policy and Al Jazeera English. Her first book, *The Stone House*, is forthcoming with Hajar Press.

Host: Cherine Hussein is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of International Relations in Prague. She completed her PhD in International Relations at the University of Sussex. Her research focuses on the politics of social transformation in the Arab World, with a particular interest in the writings of Antonio Gramsci and Edward Said; and the role of intellectuals in building movements of resistance. She is the author of, *The Re-Emergence of the Single State Solution in Palestine/Israel: Countering an Illusion* (London, Routledge: March 2015).