

Pessoptimist



By Muna Nassar

I have always been a pessimistic or realistic person; or rather I would say that I am a pessoptimist. Pessoptimism is a term coined by one of the greatest personalities of Palestine, the author Emile Habibi. It indicates a philosophy that encourages forward thinking; a dash of optimism with a slight, educated acceptance of a basic level of pessimism. Being born and raised in Palestine does incline you to adopt such a philosophy. It equips you with a trait that accompanies you for your entire life and remains part of the person you will someday become. Some people manage to escape succumbing to that trait and the effect it tends to have. Others (but not all) discover a source of joy in their early upbringing. These fortunate, hedonistic creatures find meaning in their lives from an early age.

Growing up in Palestine tends to make you resentful. You resent yourself, your willingness to live in this country, and your ability to tolerate it. I have always been amazed by the fact that a country as small as Palestine could be the source of so many overwhelming feelings. But when you reach that *cul de sac*, both metaphorically and literally speaking, when you discover the ugly truth about living in Palestine, then you begin to actually become the person you want to be. It is then that you start to burgeon and flourish.

To be or not to be has always been the question, one of the biggest tugs of war. You have to choose, either/or. Live here and suffer, so that you



may deserve happiness one day and, hopefully and eventually, appreciate this life a bit more. Or leave, be selfish, and acquire happiness as part of your everyday and as your *raison d'être* – and feel guilty about it.

I have always liked a good challenge, and what better way to have a challenging life than to live and remain in Palestine. Palestine and I go way back, we have been in quite a complicated relationship for a while. We have this hate-love relationship that has enabled us to grow accustomed to each other, comfortable with each other. I try to ignore all her negativity and focus on the positivity that I have gained from her. (I happen to think of Palestine as a female because I am sure that only a female can be irresistible enough to make everyone fall for her.) I have decided that I will not allow small and trivial things to cloud my judgment and blind me from seeing all the great things about Palestine and about her ability to turn you into a unique person. I have decided not to allow the seduction of the tantalizing comfort, ease, and rest that is possible elsewhere to enter my system. To pay attention to this seduction would be the Trojan horse, my Achilles heel, my downfall.

Muna Nassar is a freelancer translator, writer, and enthusiastic bookworm. She spends her free time reading, enjoying classical music, and dreaming of a better future. She is involved in the cultural domain in Bethlehem, has worked in the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP), and is currently working with Kairos Palestine.