

This is the sky, then, this huge suspension, presiding over these sulphurous landscapes we ponder upon. A high mountain; a burning flame; a smouldering sun. A liquid glance over our shoulder; only a moving picture of silk, not real but still substantial. Crushing and waxing makes the silk shimmer and dance in harmony with the alchemical Baba Gurgur; swirling in silk and fabric create shapes and patterns that defy the loose stones of the mountainside. Euphoria emerges out of darkness; orange light darkens and the outline of the world is obscured and fills with uncertainty.

It's in the darkest of times that the cause for celebration seems greatest. In the face of death and struggle, dancing becomes a political act. "A spirit dancing up, a thigh pulled taut, singeing the silty air, bending its knee, sighing low, crushing rock weighing heavy. We enact that kind of love that comes from facing danger together – the legs of the living dancing with billowing thighs of the dead.

"Right foot forward, rock pushing down, step the foot back, crushing silt, foot to the right, rock gives way, left foot follows, core melts silt, puff of shoulders bouncing upward, syncopated in halparkeh, turn hip sideways with rising heat, thigh relaxes but rock insists.

"Right foot forward, repeat the footwork, resigned to the duelling rock and core, dancing in defiance of death and gravity, born from and buried in Baba Gurgur. To be Kurdish, is to be made of oil and mountains: singing and dancing to the thrum of a rock or bullet."¹

The friction: cold, hard rocks underfoot; muscles contort; blood flows furnace-like through your veins. This is not death. Lip gloss and eyeshadow gleam as though crystallised in the moment you bite into a ripe fig; a heady mix of oranges and pinks revealed in the inwardly-turned flower.

Music is the most seductive of all drugs; the tendrils of the fiery father like shadows pursuing you through the city. Pervasive unease; constant thrum; out of the shadows comes light; we halt and glow. An acerbic vapour; subtly repeating on these fallible bodies, weightier than chiseled marble; aware of time passing, of people moving.

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1 Jala Wahid, Baba Gurgur, 2018

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