

pas se poser trop de questions. Les réponses nous sont fournies d'avance: *tout se passe dans le meilleur intérêt des femmes*. Jusqu'où serons-nous prêtes à aller? Sommes-nous prêtes à risquer notre santé? Jusqu'où ira notre intérêt?

*Ginette Bastien est collaboratrice à la Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissance et au Centre de santé des femmes de Montréal.*

<sup>1</sup>Maria De Koninck et Marie-Hélène Parizeau, *Réflexions sur les techno-sciences et l'instrumentalisation dans la procréation humaine*, Mémoire présenté à la Commission

Royale d'enquête sur les nouvelles technologies de la reproduction, février 1991.

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## NADIA HABIB

### Always

This question always follows  
the naming of my homeland—*Egypt*.  
Have you ever read Durrell?

some hocus-pocus *Justine* and a world  
dripping with genteel perversions.

That Alexandria is not mine.  
Mine has a boundary between sand  
and foam line imprinted with  
crayfish and laughter and bile.

1962

*My swimsuit is tarred at the bum  
I pick at it but it's stuck the  
Stella beer vendor ambles by  
behind him the woman with the  
plate of limp cucumbers—they  
drink warm beer I eat warm  
cucumbers on the scalding  
sand and know we can cross the  
line into the water where it's  
cool but our heads much like  
Alexandria's only get licked.*

It's always hot here and you're always  
delirious, that much is predictable  
in August.

At night  
the men play backgammon,  
the women listen to the radio and  
drink tea from tiny gold-rimmed glasses.  
The lovers walk side by side  
at the edge of the corniche,  
no hand holding—this is *Egypt*.  
No one goes onto the sand.  
No one goes near the water.

1977

*The night-sand is cool and doesn't burn  
familiar but now an outlander, I've lost  
remembrance.*

The water is mooring another Durrell.

*The water is mooring another Durrell.*

1992

*Women only occupy the sand, men the water.  
We can only swim fully clothed, they make  
concessions—we may wear white, if those  
who own us are progressive. Two men  
dressed in shorts, t-shirts, sandals, and  
the trace of prostration, guide their wives  
through the gardens at*

It's hot

Once the site of  
Farouk's summer  
palace.

*Montaza.  
The women are covered in black from head  
to toe, no concessions. I wonder, but  
don't ask, if they can really see through  
their black veils. We are all here to see  
the sights. I think of  
Farouk.*

Durrell.

And the water is mooring another

*And the water is mooring another*

*Nadia Habib lives in Toronto with her son Alexander.*

*Our apologies to Nadia Habib for errors in this poem which originally  
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