



## beach dreams / seeking paradise<sup>1</sup>

SHAH NOOR HUSSEIN

i dreamt about mama on the beach again  
about floating off to see  
/ sea  
and looking back to sea  
/ see  
her out there  
lounging  
or was she standing at the shoreline  
hand to brow and eyes squinting into the horizon  
making sure she saw me bobbing  
out there somewhere i still don't know  
if it was real  
but it was felt

what does it mean to seek paradise?  
to desire its embrace & know its touch  
in the warmth sun on your neck  
to meet it gently in the push of breeze  
with the sounds of home vibrating around you

what does it mean to return to a paradise knowing it is lost?  
to show up on the Nile's shores and find it has been destroyed

piles of burning rubber  
where your memories once lived  
closed fences around *hosh abuk*  
and a strange sense that the porch would never be open to the street again

what does it mean to recover paradise?  
trusting that home and paradise don't have locations fixed in space  
but rather are moving parts in this diaspora puzzle

what does it mean to make paradise, wherever you are  
knowing that it, too, will be lost in time?  
to not cling to this outcome  
but wrestle with the process  
collaborate on its creation  
and maybe  
    – maybe –  
        have some fun along the way?

what does it mean to seek joy,  
        and rest,  
                and paradise  
                for Black people in the end of times?  
                how will it feel? what will it look like?

i imagine moments of freedom  
strung together like the prayer beads i offer to the ocean

i imagine no prisons or police or military  
just vibes

i imagine everyone i love in one place even briefly  
i imagine rest and creativity and growing with every season  
i imagine running water and loud birds and a dry breeze  
i imagine self care sunday everyday  
and angels at my bedside  
and you.

i imagine you.

---

**SHAH NOOR HUSSEIN** (they / them) is a writer, visual artist, and doctoral pre-candidate at UCSC in the Department of Anthropology, with a designated emphasis in Critical Race & Ethnic Studies. Their poetry has been featured in Foglifter Press (2022), the LA Review of Books (2020), Umber (2019), and CUNJUH (2017) as well as performed at the Museum of the African Diaspora (2020), Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive (2018), and the African American Arts & Culture Complex (2018). Currently, shah is serving as the Managing Editor for *The Arrow Journal* while teaching graduate and undergraduate students at UCSC. shah's creative work and next book project aims to (re)center marginalized voices in dialogues on alternative epistemologies and cultural reproduction through a multimedia study of women's music in Sudan. When they are not writing, sleeping, or dreaming of abolition futures, you can find shah talking to their plants, practicing embodied movement, and finding the best mocha lattes in Oakland. <https://www.shahnoorhusein.com/>.

## NOTES

1. In response to and inspired by South African and Malawian visual artist Billie Zangewa's silk tapestries and quilted pieces, *Angel at my Bedside* (2020), *Self-Care Sunday* (2020), and *Return to Paradise* (2017), on exhibit in the *Thread for a Web Begun* solo show curated by Dexter Wimberly at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, California from October 2021 to February 2022: <https://www.moadsf.org/exhibitions/thread-for-a-web-begun>.

# THE ARROW

A JOURNAL OF WAKEFUL SOCIETY, CULTURE & POLITICS

## Subscription Information

To subscribe to *The Arrow Journal*, please visit <https://arrow-journal.org/subscribe/>.

## Account Management

To manage your subscription account, please visit <https://arrow-journal.org/account/>.

## Submissions

For information about our submission guidelines, please visit <https://arrow-journal.org/submissions/>.

## Content

To view past issues, of the journal please visit <https://arrow-journal.org/issues/>.

To view open access articles and essays, please visit <https://arrow-journal.org/open-access/>.

## Donate

To make a donation to support our publishing, please visit <https://arrow-journal.org/donate/>.

*The Arrow Journal* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. EIN 46-4728561. Donations are tax-deductible.

...

## Vision

At *The Arrow Journal*, we envision an awake society in which humans create political, economic, and cultural practices and institutions that support all people in discovering their innate worth, wisdom, and compassion; in living meaningful and fulfilling lives; in celebrating and respecting human diversity; and in promoting the health, resilience, and flourishing of the more-than-human world.

## Mission

*The Arrow Journal* fosters thoughtful, nuanced, and scholarly investigation of the applications of contemplative wisdom traditions to addressing global challenges. We aim to be a tool of compassionate disruption of habitual cultural, political, and economic norms that wreak havoc on people and planet. In this way, we encourage contemplative practitioners to sharpen their understanding of how dharma calls on them to show up for suffering and injustice in the world. Simultaneously, we invite policymakers, scholars, and activists to consider alternative ways of knowing that fall outside the western mainstream as necessary and useful perspectives for meaningfully confronting the challenges we face as a global community.

## What's in a name?

In many cultures, the arrow is a traditional image of bravery and precision. Within the speed and chaos of our present world, the arrow symbolizes the courage to define a clear direction for how we might benefit others and society.

Subscribe to  
*The Arrow Journal*



# THE ARROW

*A Journal of Wakeful Society, Culture & Politics*

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2022

Online ISSN 2768-055X | Print ISSN 2768-0568

