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## Who are you?

Luma Balaa

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## Who are you?

By Luma Balaa<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

On August 4, 2020, Lebanon witnessed a second Hiroshima-like explosion of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate. It killed and injured thousands of people, destroying most of Beirut. Compounding Lebanon's misery, the coronavirus has taken its toll, as in the rest of the world, with thousands of deaths. There are no more vacant hospital beds and not enough medical supplies. For the last two years, Lebanon has been experiencing economic and political instability. The country is badly in debt and the banks have gone bankrupt and confiscated people's life savings. The Lebanese Lira is pegged to the dollar and two years ago, every dollar was worth 1500 Lebanese Lira; recently, it reached 15000 Lebanese Lira. Half of the population is suffering from poverty and the price of basic food supplies is the highest in the MENA region. The government has resigned but the politicians cannot decide on who to form a new government. Domestic violence has been on the rise because of patriarchy but spouses are mainly fighting over insufficient salaries. Many Lebanese are immigrating, in search of a better living. The poet is dismayed at all this suffering and she resorted to sublimating her anger into writing fiction, memoirs and poetry, playing the piano, singing and drawing. She attended a drawing lesson online. The teacher showed the students how to draw a certain image of a woman. However, the woman who the poet actually drew turned out totally different. When she showed it to her friends, everybody was wondering who it was. So, she was inspired to write a poem answering their questions.

*Keywords:* Lebanon, Poetry, Arab women, Suffering, August 2020 Beirut explosion, Lebanese economic crisis, Patriarchy, Catharsis, Hope



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Who is this figure?  
Friends ask me when they see your picture.  
You are a product of my imagination.  
You look like many women's faces in combination.  
Women who have suffered.  
Women who were battered.  
Are you a reflection of me?  
The pain that is haunting my body.  
You are my Lebanese Mona Lisa.  
You are my savior, and I am going to call you Layla  
Do you miss a mother, friend, or a soul mate?  
Are you angry at fate?  
Have you suffered from illness, domestic violence, patriarchy?  
Greed, hypocrisy, corruption, inflation, economic collapse, or bankruptcy?  
Has your country and banks betrayed your trust  
and stolen all your life savings and now it is hard to adjust?  
Has the August 2020 port explosion  
injured you, killed your loved ones, burnt your house and emitted poison?  
You are not really frowning!  
But also you are not grinning!  
Your pictured countenance  
shows deep passion, resilience and obstinance.  
I drew you from scratch.  
and you are from the first batch.  
You were an experiment.  
A lesson on you tube which I wanted to implement.  
I am sorry I brought you and your emotions to life.  
To such a misery, battle and strife.  
Your face is chubby.  
Do you find eating food an escape or a hobby?  
Your eyes are big and wide.  
It is difficult to tell their color because of the black and white.  
Staring at life and wondering how to survive.  
Trying to channel your negative energy into drawing life.  
You have lines under your eyes.  
Gazing at the moon and skies.  
Have you been losing sleep  
and counting sheep?  
You look like you have lost a bit of hair  
Is it the stress, making you feel life is hard to bear?  
Despite that I can see the red wild lipstick  
that covers your big sexy lips as part of the aesthetic.  
To hide your deep sorrow  
And hope that there will be a better tomorrow.