



## Breaking Poems

*Suheir Hammad*

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Poetry. In BREAKING POEMS Suheir Hammad departs from her previous poetry books with a bold and explosive style to do what the best poets have always done: create a new language. Using "break" as a trigger for every poem, Hammad deconstructs, constructs, and reconstructs the English language for us to hear the sound of a breath, a woman's body, a land, a culture, falling apart, broken, and put back together again. "Suheir Hammad's BREAKING POEMS introduces English to an Arabic vernacular that startles into being an altogether new language, bridging the archipelago of a Palestine under siege to the diaspora and beyond, breaking through convention, breaking open locks on mind and heart, breaking into a music inspired by the Coltranes, Sun Ra and free jazz, Lee Scratch Perry and Ravi Shankar, a music that is at once a joyous celebration of survival and a poignant cri de Coeur that cannot be ignored and that Mahmoud Darwish should have lived to see. This is a poetry written for people who have endured the winds of hurricanes and invasions. What wisdom, energy, joy and poignancy Hammad brings to the page for all of this, and for teaching me a new speaking, I give her my thanks" Carolyn Forché."

## Breaking Poems Details

Date : Published December 1st 2008 by Cypher Books (first published 2008)

ISBN : 9780981913124

Author : Suheir Hammad

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## From Reader Review Breaking Poems for online ebook

### Angelus says

Before going off on my review I'm going to say this, this book is definitely **not** for people who aren't entirely familiar with poems. I had to use her book for my ENG102 college class and I absolutely hated it. First off, I find her stanzas to be rather incoherent and a jumbled mess. It's a headache trying to read and interpret what she is saying. Adding insult to injury, some of her stanzas contain lines in Arabic and some of which are not translated in the back part of her book.

When one wants to be a good writer, you should be able to engage in a large, widespread audience. I do not believe that Suheir Hammad's poems can do this. I find absolutely no sense of connection and absolutely nothing keeps me invested in the book. Reading it feels more like a chore than something pleasurable. Her book doesn't seem like it engages in a wide audience. Instead I think it is mostly people who are familiar with poems and English Majors who would understand her work. Me? It's just a meaningless book that I find no use for in my life.

I do not find the book to be worth the \$12 I got it for. If I were to sell it, I'd ask for twice the money, I'd want the part of my life I spent on this book and on the essay based on the book back and a free bottle of aspirin.

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### K says

A-FREAKING-MAZING -- if you only read this book once, you won't get the depth. You've gotta sit with this sistah for a while and read and read through and read under until your mind "breaks" or you have a break through. Seriously, this is not poetry for the weak. :-) LOVE IT.

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### Reginald says

Suheir is the real deal...A poet's poet...Every time I read (or hear) her words I swear the sky opens up a bit wider, and the sun shines a hell of a lot brighter...There's no darkness to or in her words...She's one of the best poets writing today....and she's only getting better & better!...She's my girl!

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### Barbara says

I just started reading Suheir Hammad's breaking poems yesterday evening, and already, it's so great to witness all of this breaking. Her syntax is broken, her lines are clipped, and her poems are bombardments of images and words, demonstrations of brokenness and piecing together of selves, of languages, histories, and geographies. I am totally loving that in her poems, it's no longer necessary to speak in argument convincing sentences; the fact of her being, speaking, the fact of her family's, her communities', the fact of women surviving in Palestine, in Iraq, in New Orleans, is argument enough.

Hammad brings into her poems words in the Arabic language in a way I've never seen her do before; such "basic" words as "I" and "and," in addition to "fire," and "war," among many others, just well-placed and punctuating the poems. I have gotten to the point in my reading that if I do not see the English words for "I"

and “and” anymore, then it is understandable, and it also corresponds to the music she’s established throughout the collection in these clipped lines, stripped of all the fat and fluff, where these English and Arabic words, infused with Hip-Hop, urban street language, are popping in your mouth as you speak them.

Really, the point of the collection thus far for me has been the reassembling of the many selves, in a continuum of war against poor people, against folks of color, against immigrants, against women, and the self is all of these things which cannot be extricated from one another.

And so for those American poets who doubt the existence or relevance of well-written political poetry in the USA, for those who think “political poetry” is just a fad, I would say to leave your comfy little academic and abstract circles and open your minds to poets coming out of communities of color, immigrant communities, multilingual communities, communities of working folk and families, these American poets’ communities, and see that “political poetry” has always existed, has always been necessary, has always been crafted and spoken and sang, has always served to educate, inspire, and mobilize its constituents.

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### **Dhiyanah says**

In a lot of ways, the collection reads as one poem as a whole - one journey inwards into memory and history and spaces/places. Romanized Arabic words weaved into the English, Suheir Hammad claims the multiplicity that makes her identity whole. Linguistically, the collection breaks borders and the sounds of words - English and Arabic - flow into each other like river streams meeting in a vast ocean. Reading these poems out loud made the music in them real.

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### **Nijla Mumin says**

these poems had an addictive affect on me...like i couldn't stop reading them, even when i tried to put the book down. it's odd because unlike fiction, i usually read poetry books in several sittings... the musicality of suheir's language, and the merging of arabic, really pulled me in.

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### **Doris Raines says**

A. Great. Poem

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### **kira says**

beautiful and powerful.

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### **secondwomn says**

hammad inspires me.

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### **Leah says**

Suheir is a genius. She wrote a new language that is like nothing you ever saw before. Go buy this shit before it sells out.

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### **Lindsay says**

I was about halfway through thinking I am just not the audience for this...then I found the glossary at the back. So I started over and the poems gelled. I do like the incorporation of the Arabic a lot, but the breadth of style and scope seemed rather limited. I continue to suffer from comparing everything to *Zaatardiva*.

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### **Daniel says**

At times, the broken aspect of these poems becomes overwhelming, as you can only look to the back so many times before you've forgotten the start of the poem. In some ways, this is a reflection of lived experience through trauma; while trying to piece together a memory, you find yourself recollecting aspects tangentially related in an effort to guard yourself from the actual reality of the past.

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### **David Garza says**

Breaking Poems is the most engaging poetry collection I have read in a long, long time. I read it all over the span of just two days (I rarely ever read poetry collections that quickly). Breaking Poems reads as one cohesive unit with a solid and meaningful theme and message. Suheir Hammad's voice is loud and clear.

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### **Madeleine says**

I love Suheir Hammad's spoken word pieces but had trouble with this until I got to a poem that I'd heard her perform (on YouTube). Then it all clicked.

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### **Fatima E. says**

'don't tell me you know this lonely...'

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