

“Julia le Duc’s photograph might provide one framework for an encounter with this book, because as one reads of displacement—through time, through locale, through the violences of history—you may feel you can neither look nor look away. The bodies pass through borders, seek safe haven, to find homes of their own.”

● KAZIM ALI

AUTHOR OF *THE VOICE OF SHEILA CHANDRA*

There’s a language for the space between worlds, and Issam Zineh’s stunning *Unceded Land* is it. It’s rare to encounter such a boundless lyrical voice that deftly leaps from the Nakba and colonialism—“how the wind whispers *liberate*”—to divorce and desire, but Zineh is part magician that way, never losing the thread. He undertakes the intricate work of naming the beautiful and the brutal around us, and what a lush music he’s made: “This coast will never say / ‘You have moved me.’ Children will be born. / Oranges will still grow without us.” Inventive, propelled by both the divine and the impossibly human, these poems are a profound and breathless truth.

● RUTH AWAD

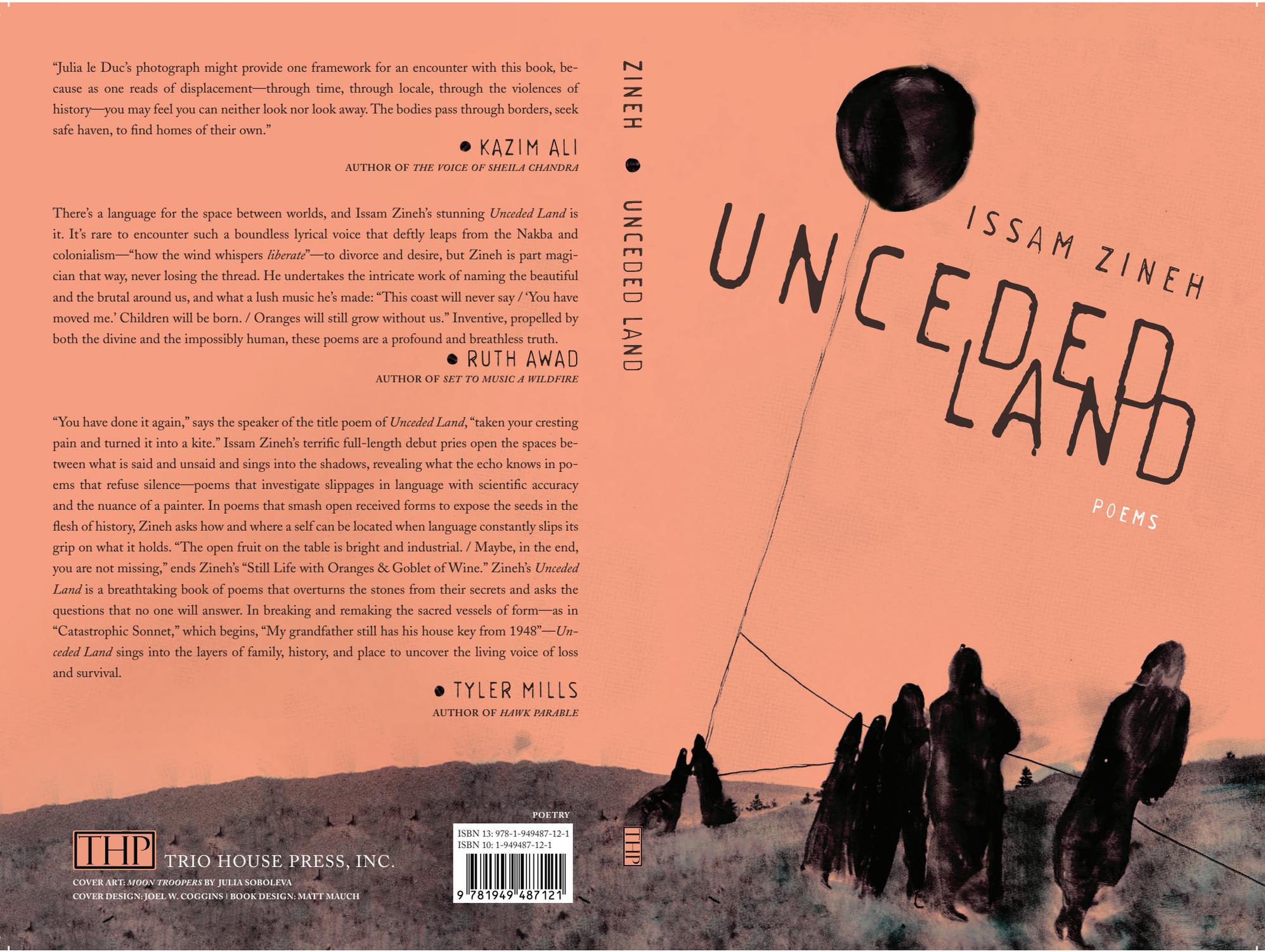
AUTHOR OF *SET TO MUSIC A WILDFIRE*

“You have done it again,” says the speaker of the title poem of *Unceded Land*, “taken your cresting pain and turned it into a kite.” Issam Zineh’s terrific full-length debut pries open the spaces between what is said and unsaid and sings into the shadows, revealing what the echo knows in poems that refuse silence—poems that investigate slippages in language with scientific accuracy and the nuance of a painter. In poems that smash open received forms to expose the seeds in the flesh of history, Zineh asks how and where a self can be located when language constantly slips its grip on what it holds. “The open fruit on the table is bright and industrial. / Maybe, in the end, you are not missing,” ends Zineh’s “Still Life with Oranges & Goblet of Wine.” Zineh’s *Unceded Land* is a breathtaking book of poems that overturns the stones from their secrets and asks the questions that no one will answer. In breaking and remaking the sacred vessels of form—as in “Catastrophic Sonnet,” which begins, “My grandfather still has his house key from 1948”—*Unceded Land* sings into the layers of family, history, and place to uncover the living voice of loss and survival.

● TYLER MILLS

AUTHOR OF *HAWK PARABLE*

ZINEH
●
UNCEDDED LAND



ISSAM ZINEH
UNCEDDED LAND
POEMS

THP

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poems by Issam Zineh

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For Joseph DeRoche, lovingly

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Notes

Page 13. *Catastrophic Sonnet*: The title alludes to the *Nakba* (“catastrophe”)—the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs from their homes and lands in and around 1948. The poem modifies a line from Waleed Sayf’s “Death at Night’s End” translated by Elmusa and Heath-Stubbs (see Salma Khadra Jayyusi’s *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, Columbia University Press, 1992).

Page 16. *Adagio*: Lines 8-10 are a composite of titles from musical compositions by Bach, Barber, Copland, and Schnittke.

Page 19. *Citrine* modifies a line from Sinan Antoon’s *The Book of Collateral Damage* translated by Jonathan Wright (Yale University Press, 2019).

Page 21. *Peacock, Egg Harbor City, New Jersey*: Egg Harbor City, NJ was originally established by Americans of German descent fleeing religious persecution and anti-immigrant violence from the far right, nativist “Know Nothing” movement. The last stanza alludes to Brueghel the Elder’s painting *Allegory of Taste, Hearing and Touch* (ca. 1620), the Yazidi’s Melek Taus (Peacock Angel), and the peacock vehicle used by the Hindu God of War (Kartikeya).

Page 29. *Capricorn*: The epigraph comes from Linda Gregg’s “Christ Loved Being Housed.”

Pages 34–40. *What If a Love Like This*: This sonnet crown is a cento. The poetry of Wanda Coleman serves as the source material.

Pages 45–48. *Backstory* and *Liriope Gives Narcissus The Talk* borrow from and reimagine the myth of Echo & Narcissus as I have come to it through Edith Hamilton’s *Mythology* (Warner Books, 1999) and Ovid’s *The Metamorphoses: A Complete New Version* translated by Horace Gregory (Penguin Books, 1960).

Page 49. *Lexicon*: The Arabic word for towel (بشكير) is pronounced “bashkeer.”

Page 50. *Swipe Left to View the Same Image in Visible Light*: The poem’s title comes from a NASA Instagram post in which two Hubble telescope images of the Eagle Nebula’s Pillars of Creation are shown side by side (one in infrared and one in visible light). The poem’s first and last lines are after Jenny Molberg’s “Epistle from the Funambulist Hospital for Invisibility” (from *Refusal*, LSU Press, 2020).

Page 52. *Plastic Bag* hopes to memorialize Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his 23-month-old daughter, Valeria, who drowned in June 2019 trying to cross the Rio Grande. Their story garnered worldwide attention in large part due to a

photo by Julia Le Duc/Associated Press.

Page 54. *Still Life with Oranges & Goblet of Wine*: The title comes from a painting by John Frederick Peto (1854-1907).

Page 59. *Trigger Warning*: The quoted text on the term *Middle Eastern* comes from the SWANA Alliance website (swanaalliance.com).

Pages 60–61. *Mass*: An early draft of this poem took formal inspiration from Sun Yung Shin’s “Valley, Uncanny.” Simon Mitton’s article appeared in 2001. The poem alludes to war crimes perpetrated against Abeer Qassim Hamza al-Janabi and her family in Al-Mahmoudiyah, Iraq in 2006. The line that begins “For our own needs and intentions...” comes from an online repository of petition prayers to be offered up during Catholic Mass (prayerist.com).

The title of the *Parable to Keep You Safe, Defy Aging, & Banish Evil* series was inspired by a tabloid newspaper cover from 2002. The concepts of *determinacy/indeterminacy, rhetoric, gender, and desire* in *Avoiding Literary Study as a Substitute* (page 56) are chapters in Frank Lentricchia’s and Thomas McLaughlin’s *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

The quoted texts from Mahmoud Darwish, Wanda Coleman, and James Baldwin that begin each section are from “Poem of the Land,” “About God & Things,” and *Giovanni’s Room*, respectively.

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Grateful acknowledgment is made to the editors of the following for first publishing some of these poems, sometimes in earlier forms and under different titles:

BAHR: “Mass”

Bear Review: “Swipe Left to View the Same Image in Visible Light”

Clockhouse: “Sappho in California”

EcoTheo Review: “Psalm”

Ethel: elements of “Liriope Gives Narcissus *The Talk*”

FERAL: “Adagio,” “In,” “Metaphor is the Momentum Between Gestures”

Fjords Review: “Black Breakfast”

FRiGG Magazine: “Ars Poetica,” “Saturday in Four Parts, with Distance & Equivocation,” “Still Life with Oranges & Goblet of Wine,” “Zion”

Glass: A Journal of Poetry (Poets Resist): “Plastic Bag”

Guesthouse: “Asking for a Friend,” “Backstory,” elements of “Liriope Gives Narcissus *The Talk*”

Lunch Ticket: “Catastrophic Sonnet,” “Peacock, Egg Harbor City, New Jersey”

Poet Lore: “Lexicon”

Psalterly & Lyre: “Parable to Keep You Safe, Defy Aging, & Banish Evil,” “There are New Names for God,” “Word Comes Back”

Spectrum Magazine: “Coefficients of Friction”

Sporklet: “What If a Love Like This”

Tahoma Literary Review: “Unceded Land”

The Rumpus: “You Ask If I’m Ready to Die for a Metaphor”

Tinderbox Poetry Journal: “Rare Bird”

The Moment of Greatest Alienation, a chapbook containing some of these poems, was published by Ethel Zine & Micropress (2021).

ABOUT THE BOOK

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ABOUT THE PRESS

Trio House Press is an independent literary press publishing three or more collections of poems annually. Our mission is to promote poetry as a literary art enhancing culture and the human experience. We offer two annual poetry awards: the Trio Award for First of Second Book for emerging poets, and the Louise Bogan Award for Artistic Merit and Excellence for a book of poems contributing in an innovative and distinct way to American poetry. All manuscripts submitted to the annual contests are considered for publication.

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