



## Through and Through: Toledo Stories, Second Edition (Arab American Writing)

By Joseph Geha

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### Through and Through: Toledo Stories, Second Edition (Arab American Writing) By Joseph Geha

Treasured in the Arab-American literary community, *Through and Through* is a collection of ten broadly interrelated stories originally published in 1990. One of the first books of modern Arab American fiction, Geha's stories offer a warm, inspired portrait of an extended Arab family in a Lebanese and Syrian community in Toledo, Ohio, spanning the decades between the 1930s and the present.

In a series of vignettes, Geha follows three generations of an Arab-American family as they create a new community and way of life, struggling to keep their Arab roots vital while adapting their culture to new conditions. In "Holy Toledo," Nadia, "a tomboy in her dungarees," watches American women come into her town to shop. Although she calls them silly, she "wished that she were one of them, returning with them into that huge strangeness, America, luring her despite the threat it seemed to hold of loss and vicious sickness." Portraying both the anguish and the humor of negotiating between the old world and the new, these stories offer a passionate, unvarnished glimpse into the lives of an immigrant community.

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### **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

His characterizations and storytelling skills are often underdeveloped, but in his first book Geha nevertheless opens an intriguing window onto the Lebanese- and Syrian-Christian emigre communities of Toledo and Detroit, from the 1920s to the present. Men import brides sight unseen from the old country; porcelain painted to look like miniature eyeballs serve as charms against the evil eye; and picnics are occasions for the playing of lutes and the dizzying stampede of feet in a debkee dance. Cultural displacement is Geha's overriding theme: Uhdrah's fiance is appalled when she, the newest greenhorn fresh from shepherding her father's goats, strokes the corpse of a mentally ill man, thinking to revive him; meeting a blond American in the laundromat, Barbara is ashamed of her dark hairiness and large breasts, her legacy from an intrusive old-fashioned mother; Tonia's marriage to blond American Wayne makes her tense; and tomboy Nadia thinks American women shopping in her neighborhood are "silly," yet she wishes "she were one of them, returning with them into that huge strangeness, America, luring her despite the threat it seemed to hold."88 Geha reinforces stereotypes through women who cling to children, husbands, religion and superstitions, and Jews who are savvy in business and physically sickly.

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### **Review**

"Opens an intriguing window onto the Lebanese - and Syrian - Christian emigre communities of Toledo and Detroit." - Publisher's Weekly "These stories have a lot to say about the life of Arab Americans and the cultural conflicts of the immigrant. But the humanistic side of the Toledo neighborhood Geha explores teaches us important lessons about the nature of this country and the promise of Ellis Island." - The San Francisco Chronicle"

### **About the Author**

Born in Lebanon, Joseph Geha grew up in a Lebanese-American community in Toledo, Ohio. His short stories, poems, essays, and plays have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies, including the New York Times, Northwest Review, Epoch, Iowa Review, Dinazard's Children, and Post Gibran. He has received a Pushcart Prize and a National Endowment for the Arts Award. Geha is professor emeritus at Iowa State University.

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