

New Orleans as told by an Arab American immigrant

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Bouchaib Gadir, a senior professor of practice at Tulane University, has published a collection of poetry about the experience of living in the city of New Orleans from the perspective of an Arab immigrant. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Bouchaib Gadir, a senior professor of practice at Tulane University, grew up in the rich culture of Morocco. He moved to New Orleans in 2008, and this year he published a book of poetry about the experience of living in the city of New Orleans from the perspective of an Arab American immigrant.

“The poems are a celebration of the mixture of music and arts in the city of New Orleans” said Gadir, who leads the new Arabic minor at Tulane. “The book indicates

my perception of New Orleans as an immigrant and as an outsider.”

Gadir originally wrote his poems in Arabic and had his pieces translated into French for the book titled [Les lettres de La Nouvelle-Orléans](#).

“Writing in Arabic comes naturally to me, yet having the book translated to French allowed the book to take on its own heritage of New Orleans culture,” said Gadir.

The preface to the collection is written by Gadir’s colleague in the Department of French and Italian, Fayçal Falaky. The book’s cover features a painting by New Orleans artist Randy Leo Frenchette, popularly known as “Frenchy,” depicting the Rebirth Brass Band.

“I wanted to write about New Orleans in the same way that Paul Bowles wrote about Tangier and Juan Goytisolo about Marrakech,” said Gadir. “New Orleans has the same vibe of a Mediterranean city in that it is a hub of culture filled with coffee shops, restaurants, music festivals, food festivals, and the extravagance of St. Charles Avenue lined by elaborate gated mansions. At the same time, there are some forgotten stories about ordinary people — therefore New Orleans is also a place of pain. I have tried to capture this complexity in my stories.”

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