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**LIVERPOOL ARAB ARTS FESTIVAL PRESENTS AUTHOR SAMANTHA HERRON - ON LIVING WITH A FAMILY OF FORMER NOMADS IN MOROCCO AND HER NEW BOOK 'THE DJINN IN THE SKULL: STORIES FROM HIDDEN MOROCCO'**

London UK – May 12th 2016 - Following on from the success of her appearances at the 2015 Gibraltar International Literary Festival and the 2016 Oxford Literary Festival, Soul Bay Press is pleased to announce that author Samantha Herron will be appearing at the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival in July 2016. Samantha will be speaking about her experiences living with a family of former nomads in Morocco's Draa Valley and reading from her debut collection 'The Djinn in the Skull: Stories from hidden Morocco'.

The event will take place on Sunday 17th July at 3.30pm at the Bluecoat Gallery. Tickets are free but must be reserved via the festival website:

<http://www.arabartsfestival.com/liverpool-arab-arts-festival-2016/whats-on/the-djinn-in-the-skull-stories-from-hidden-morocco>

When Samantha visited Morocco for the first time it changed the course of her life. On her return to London she abandoned her successful art career. Knowing that language is the key which opens the door into another culture, she devoted herself to studying Arabic. She went on to spend time living with a Berber family of former nomads, living in a small village in Morocco's Draa Valley on the edge of the Sahara Desert. Here she immersed herself in the language, traditions and culture of the family and the community in which she was living.

Samantha comments: 'I studied classical Arabic and the Quran with the women of the village, travelled in the desert, learned how to take care of camels and sheep, how to ablute and pray, and helped the other women in the family with the day-to-day running of the home. I fell in love with storytelling and stories, which are at the heart of everyday life in Morocco. I was particularly drawn to the stories which were shared between the women of the village and began to document the stories I was hearing. I then found myself imagining and composing my own.'

This debut collection of her stories, all set in contemporary Morocco, takes the reader on a journey into the hearts and minds of ordinary Moroccans and offers a glimpse into life in this magical and ancient land. This is her first work of fiction.

Tahir Shah, author of 'The Caliph's House' and 'In Arabian Nights', comments: 'Samantha Herron has succeeded triumphantly in doing what many Occidental

writers have failed in for centuries - showing Morocco from the inside out. The stories she has so eloquently told are part of the 'real' Morocco, a kingdom that is so often invisible to visitors. This magical realm has traditionally been received orally, and not through written text. It exists, not in the grand touristic sites, but in the ancient fabric of places like the Draa Valley, from where her stories come. A wonderful collection, highly recommended.'

Tim Mackintosh-Smith, Arabist and author of 'Travels with a Tangerine: A Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah', comments: 'Samantha Herron found some of her Moroccan stories ready-made. Others she imagined or dreamed. In size they are miniatures; but they all express big things on a small scale. Reading them is like peering through a series of keyholes – and, each time, glimpsing something momentary but momentous, instants with life-long consequences. They will make you smile, and shiver. And they will tell you as much truth about their Moroccan setting as a shelf-full of ethnologies.'

Samantha Herron's previous work includes the English and Arabic publication 'Dardasha: Testimonies of Migration by Moroccan Women' (Soul Bay Press 2011) which was produced in association with the Al Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre in London and featured at London's Nour Festival of Arts 2013. Samantha presented some of the stories from 'The Djinn in the Skull: Stories from hidden Morocco' at Nour Festival of Arts 2014. She appeared at the 2015 Gibraltar International Literary Festival and the 2016 Oxford Literary Festival. In 2016 she also gave talks for the British Moroccan Society in London, at the Arabic Language Institute in Fez and at various American Language Centres in Morocco.

'The Djinn in the Skull: Stories from hidden Morocco' was published on 23rd October 2015. Author and book cover photos can be downloaded from the publisher's website. Samantha is available for interviews, readings and signings and can be contacted via the publisher. Samantha will be speaking and giving readings of her stories in London and Morocco throughout 2016.

Author website: <https://samanthaherron.wordpress.com/>

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