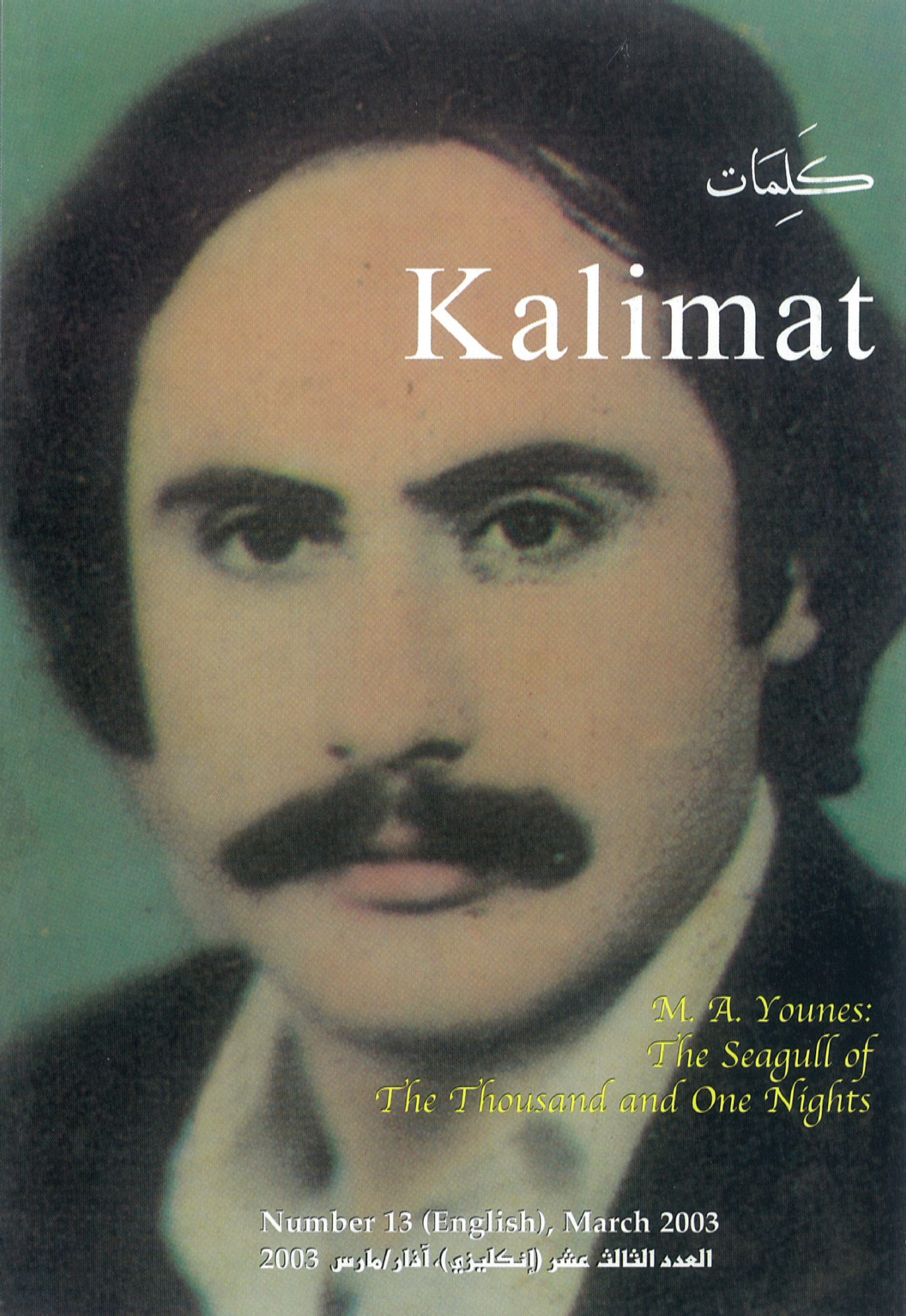

كلمات

Kalimat

M. A. Younes: The Seagull of The Thousand and One Nights

Number 13 (English), March 2003
العدد الثالث عشر (إنكليزي)، آذار/مارس 2003

كلمات

Kalimat

Kalimat is a fully independent, non-profit periodical aiming at celebrating creativity and enhancing access among English and Arabic-speaking people worldwide.

Two issues are published in English (March & September), and two in Arabic (June & December).

Deadlines: 90 days before the first day of the month of issue

Kalimat publishes original unpublished work in English or Arabic. It also publishes translations, into English or Arabic, of work that has already been published. It does not accept translations of unpublished work.

Writers contributing to *Kalimat* will receive a free one year subscription. Their work might also be translated into Arabic or English, and the translations published in *Kalimat* or other projects by the publishers or their contacts in the Middle East. No other payment is made.

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An International Periodical of English and Arabic Creative Writing

كَلِمَات

Kalimat

Number 13 (English), March 2003

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ABN 57919750443

الكلمةُ بابُ الإرثِ الحضاريّ، والكتابةُ مفتاحُ ديمُومته

Words are the gate to cultural heritage, and writing is the key to its permanence

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C O N T E N T S

Noel's Basket

Translated Poetry

Stories

Folktales

In Memoriam

Paintings

Photography

Readings

Book

Artwork

SNOWFLAKES

Harriet Ruth Barazi

During Christmas 2002 we lost Harriet Ruth Barazi who died of terminal illness. Ruth was a dear friend and a strong supporter of *Kalimat*. When she moved with her family to their new apartment in North Sydney over a year ago, the first thing that was on her mind was to hold a party in support of *Kalimat*, but disease started to overcome her. Despite that, she was always cheerful and hopeful, instilling confidence in all those around her.

Ruth was noble, elegant, hospitable, loving and caring. She had a fine taste for the arts and literature. She had a taste of the literature and culture of the Arab World and the Middle East when she lived for a few years in Saudi Arabia and travelled to Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Morocco. She became fond of the singers Fayrouz and Um Kulthoum.

It was her wish that her ashes be scattered over Lavender Bay in Sydney Harbour, and that her friends be present in a boat and be served with food and champagne. So, on the 9th February 2003, we walked along her favourite spot in Sydney, a harbour-front path between Milsons Point and Lavender Bay to take the yacht for the afternoon. Onboard, her favourite songs of Andrea Bocelli and Edith Piaf were played. We felt her presence in everyone of us. We celebrated this presence, we cried as we scattered her ashes, but got on with life with the memories of a great lady giving us much strength.

She is survived by her husband Saad, a sponsor of *Kalimat*, and their daughter Lara.

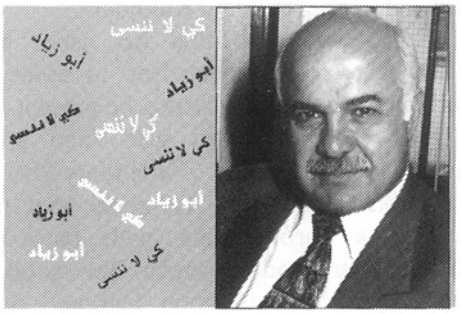
Lest we Forget

This is the title of a new book (in Arabic) by Peter Indari, a veteran of Arab journalism in Australia. It is a collection of articles written over a period of twenty-two years and published by *an-Nahar* and later by *The Orient-* two leading Arabic newspapers in Sydney.

I was invited to deliver a speech (in Arabic) during the launch of the book in Sydney, and here is an extract translation summarising my views about the book and the author.

Lest We Forget. Somehow, I do not like this title. Knowing Peter Indari makes it difficult to forget his appearance, behaviour or thought. My brief acquaintance with Indari left in my heart a deep sense of the human aspect of a journalist who has been able to entwine two issues as though by a Catholic marriage. The first is related to his professionalism as a journalist regardless of his ideological leanings that might not be all tenable to me. In my opinion, his dedication made him one of the best writers of a journalistic article about any issue in any land. The ultimate proof of this fact is the book we are celebrating today.

The second issue is an ethical one. Indari is an intellectual person who encourages and supports his fellow journalists. He understands the importance of institutional work, and knows very well that this is an area many Arabs do not recognise. In one of his articles he posed the question of which is more important: the word or the platform on which you can deliver your word? He emphasised that each has its role to play.



His professionalism and background in journalism made him recognise the importance of *Kalimat* as a quality platform to convey the power of the word, and the demanding effort behind it. He has been a strong supporter of *Kalimat*, lobbying individuals and organisations to provide moral and financial backing.

Indari's book is a series of unforgettable portraits of human social and political matters. They are of serious, sarcastic, comical and relevant nature. Reading the book, I feel that I am going through a setting of Australian, Arabic and international landscapes.

With every page I turn, I am flooded with images of people I knew, heard about or never heard of: Fuad Afram Bustani, Prince Charles, Clinton, Sadat, Naim Khoury, Zaynab, Ibrahim Tarraf, Kamal Junblat, Amre bin Kulthoom, Oum Kulthoom, Tawfic Awwad, George Bush, Saddam Hussein, Makin Marcos, Hassan Khalid, Abu Afif Kraydiyye, Paul Keating, Naom Chomsky, Yehudi Manuhin, Mari Kayrouz, Abdulbassit Abdulssamad, Ghassan Kanssou and many more. As a fact Indari never left any incident without commenting on it.

Zaynab, for example, was photographed and mentioned in an article in the Daily Telegraph newspaper in Sydney on 6/3/1984. She was a Lebanese woman who, along with her sister Sabah, worked as a labourer for Canterbury Council to earn enough to support her husband and children. A few days later, Indari wrote an article in Arabic for *an-Nahar* newspaper in Sydney pressing the need for more Zaynabs so that the Lebanese community in Australia reduces its dependence on social welfare.

Indari's comments have always interwoven the social, cultural and political dimensions in a tangle that surpassed the mere names and events. His segment in the newspaper became a platform for contemplation, criticism, analysis, education, guidance and an instrument for awakening.

He brushed his paintings with smooth, clear words despite their deep literary and intellectual implications. The subjects he dealt with were varied and addressed the deepest core of human suffering, maintaining exceptional sarcasm and humour, without losing their objectivity and focusing on the heart of matters that ranged from most important events such as world wars to least humoristic tales such as that some Arabs neglect shaving their beards.

Here are some different excerpts of what Indari stated in his articles:

- Religions are threatened by followers of the concerned faith and not by the enemies of religions.
- He is weak in his faith who is frightened by a word or and idea or a book challenging his religion, principles or ideology.
- And Jesus was seen in the faces of children, women and the elderly who were resisting artillery and bullets [of the Israeli army] by rocks and faith in their land.
- We ask how could ten thousand Jews [a community in Central America] agree to support projects of unlawful land occupation, whilst millions of Arabs around the world fail to agree on a rightful cause?
- Military battles aim at occupation, fulfilling certain greed or defending the self. Propaganda battles aim at destroying humanity, mutilating the facts and obliterating cultural values.
- How would an Iraqi youth feel when in the future his mother tells him that his elder brother died at infancy because of the lack of medicine and food banned by the American embargo?
- Serious re-examination of setbacks is the ideal way for awakening.
- We, builders and advocates of multiculturalism, must understand those who reject an

Australian multicultural society. We must freely open our hearts and minds, discuss matters and focus on the fact that the Anglo-Saxon culture is the foundation of the Australian society, and that multiculturalism is able to enrich this culture and add to it new concepts and expand its horizons.

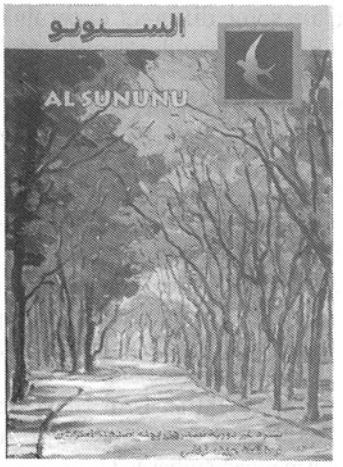
- We ask: Why did some Arabs – most of them from fundamentalist organisations – respond to Afghani and American calls and receive training by spies from USA, and have not seen any of them volunteering to fight the Zionist aggression?
- Would any Arab leader, in his capital city, dare erect a statue of Yehudi Menuhin or his father? Would the Arab league dare invite Naom Chomsky to express his views to all concerned, including of course, the elite and the educated?
- The Arab mind is a rescinding mind that does not recognise "the other".

Although the invitation to attend the launch of Indari's book described the book as a record of Arab migration in Australia, I note a difference in what Indari has been focusing on. I see the book a collection of ideas Indari has been trying to convey to the Arabic community in Australia, mainly clarifying and asking them to appreciate the meaning of a true Australian citizenship. Furthermore, his articles outline to the Arab community the principles of sharing their own heritage with Australia at large, in a secular democratic society appreciated and adorned by the Arab community so that "migration" loses grounds for "citizenship", "multicultural society" or in one word: "Australia".

Peter Indari is a bright frontline of Arab culture. His pride of his heritage, and understanding of his Australian society echoes the 21st century's ambitions of Australia.

Al Sununu

We congratulate The League of Immigrants' Friends for their new occasional publication *al Sununu* (pronounced Assuenoonoo, the Arabic word for the migratory bird the swallow). It publishes articles in Arabic, along with their translation into English and French. Nuhad Chabouh, one of our advisers in Syria, is the editor and responsible director of this work. She is assisted by an editorial board comprising a group of writers and translators.

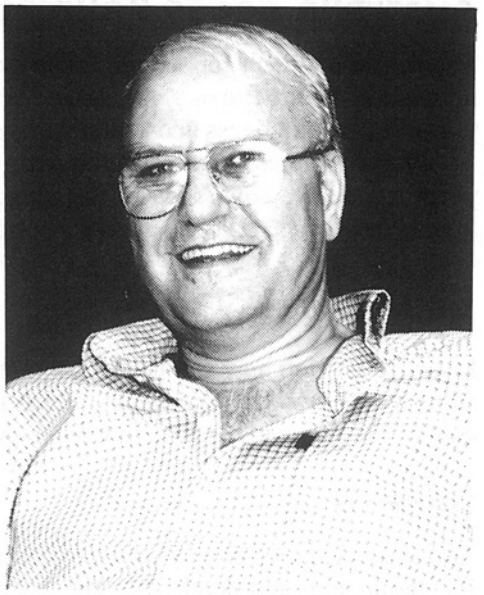


Samih Karamy in Syria

During January 2003, *Kalimat*'s adviser and sponsor Samih Karamy visited Homs, his birthplace in Syria, accompanied by his wife Claude and daughter Laila. During their visit they met several writers and supporters of *Kalimat* who conveyed to them their 'utmost admiration and respect for this important publication'. Samih also wrote:

'During my short visit to Homs, and from my encounter with several friends and people, the role Ms. Nuhad Chabouh and her League of Immigrants' Friends had been playing in promoting *Kalimat* became very clear to me. During my first visit to the League's headquarters, I learned of the launch of the first issue of *Al Sununu* whose editor Ms. Chabouh told me that the role of *Al Sununu* would be complementary to that of *Kalimat* in providing access among cultures through literature.

I sensed considerable enthusiasm and creative energies in many writers and poets I met. Everyone participated in discussions about the role of *Kalimat* and expressed a willingness to contribute some of their creative work to it.



Samih Karamy

I was interviewed by local newspapers and radio stations. I explained the role of *Kalimat* and its diverse cultural contribution through literature and exploring the beauty of creative prose and poetry in English and Arabic.

Samira Rabahia Trabulsi invited us along with some writers and journalists to her home one evening. The night before my return to Australia, my wife, daughter and I were invited to an evening at *al-Agha* Restaurant, organized by the League of Immigrants' Friends, where over one hundred people joined. Ms. Nuhad Chabouh started the evening by a speech about the roles of *Kalimat* and *al-Sununu*, and the contribution of Dr. Raghid Nahhas. Then a toast to Dr. Nahhas, the two magazines and cultural access among the people of the world, was proposed.

When we left at the early hours of the morning, I felt that part of my heart was left there among such loving and caring people in Homs, my first hometown, but I was looking forward to my return to Sydney, my present home.'

Australia Day Medal

The Australia Day Council awarded Raghid Nahhas an Australia Day (25th January) Medal for 'his work for the community especially in editing and publishing *Kalimat*, a journal designed to foster understanding between Arabic and English speakers through literature'.

Australia needs Kalimat

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of *Kalimat12* with the four translations of my poems. I am particularly honoured you have taken the trouble to do the translations yourself. Your kindness and professionalism are deeply appreciated.

What an impressive publication your journal is! (I was editor of *Outrider* for twelve years and I have some idea of the amount of work that goes into producing a quality literary magazine.) Australia needs a periodical such as *Kalimat*, now more than ever.

Professor Manfred Jurgensen A.M., Queensland, Australia

Rich & Mature

I want to tell you how wonderful Kalimat has become. It was very good indeed when it started but now it is excellent - a rich mature strong literary journal. And I want to congratulate you. I am proud to have my work in Kalimat.

Dr. Julie Leibrich, Poet, New Zealand.

Superb

The latest *Kalimat* issue [*Kalimat 9*] is truly superb for its content. I congratulate you for the breadth and depth and there's some very good poetry... I read with enjoyment and great interest your "Snowflakes". I do not consider it a sin to sing the praises of your grandfathers; in fact I fully understand it. I love the allusion to 'seven sleeping centuries revive in her eyes' (the black-eyed lady of Granada) p.8. Forgive me for saying so, but I felt many centuries 'revive' in my own eyes. This is something Jew and Arab share and it is this very thing that is both a positive and a negative insofar as working out our living arrangements. Our homes are in the same place.

Liat Kirby, Poet & Manuscript Consultant, Melbourne, Australia.

Philosophy & Ethics

Many thanks for the latest issue of Kalimat... I enjoyed reading about your journey in Lebanon and Syria. More so about the philosophy and ethics behind *Kalimat*.

Kennedy Estphan, Writer, Sydney, Australia.

NAZIH ABU AFASH

Translated by ***Raghid Nahhas***

The Citadel

The night shuts up the doors of my father's house and leaves me outside
spying through a gap in the fence, letting my spirit get loose in the thick air...
and see the ghost of my father floating upon the sky, protecting the place
and keeping its peace, while my brother swings in a frame of light,
grasping in his hands a sphere of air.
Here is the house!
I can almost measure its temperature
and smell the air of its rooms wherefrom I stand.
Here is the house!
I can almost touch its parts and eagerly recount its details.
There it is... opening up in front of my heart, to reveal its secrets:
a stone... a shoe thrown by someone... the spinning wheel
left in a corner... The bowls, the bottles, the water cask...
and my childhood bed's corner where drowsiness
warms my grandfather's heart
turning his moustaches white and elongating his arms...
An icon of the Last Supper hangs over my father's head
warding fear off from him, guarding his dreams...
Once upon an ancient time, a mysterious wedge was a peg for our garbs,
from which the odour of our bodies and the fragrance of the Sunday clothes
still flow out.
My mother's perception transformed
a crevice in the wall (just happened to be there) into
a dust trap and a moneybox for the child.
It was left in its orphaned content, counting dust particles, singing its sanctity.
The pulpit of memories: my mother's wardrobe... the mirrors...
the rustling of our bodies entangling in the fabric of the mirrors,
the instruments of life scattered around the corners.
It is the soul's orphanage,
the citadel of her past virtues and the kingdom of lovers.
Tenderness dominates, surrenders to its tranquillity,
wrapped in peace.

Kalimat 13

Amazing in its meekness, deep-rooted in its content
as if the hand of God left it so, a thousand years ago.
It is the house!
our noble guardian, and the cushion of our bewildered spirits.
Everyone sleeps, and each one's heart slumbers,
but its stones never sleep.

All of a sudden everything comes to a standstill
the night mixed the stones of our house with its trees,
its windows with the fence of our garden,
and made the sky its roof.
My brother's frame of light mystifies for a moment
then it is extinguished.
Everything seems silent
everything becomes as dark as the spirit of a bored god
amused with his thoughts pre-creation.

Ah my father!
Believe me I have not come to you after all these years
to complain or ask for money, or to bargain for a stone
or start a fight over whatever I had lost...
Believe me father, I only came to see you.

The night struck every corner of our house... It retreated
pulling behind it the bedcovers and whatever it was able to take:
the plates, the chairs, the lamps, the water cask and the shoes.
Of its thousand items, it left behind none
except my grandmother's walking stick
and a cross of thorn over the child's bed, then it left me all alone
among the ruins and signalled to me: do not come back...
A grain of yearning stormed the heart of the lad,
but when he came he found no one.

Don't stop father, the dogs recognised me and
the cats sensed the scent of my despair.
I have not come knocking at your door, or to steal.
I have only come to cry, to ask about a stone I once lost here...
about my affairs that I buried down in the crevices of the old wall
I have come to ask about a ring of tin that fell off my finger on my way home
but then I did not care.

Kalimat 13

I have come to salute the stronghold of my soul
to search for my books, for my old shoes and the year3 primary school uniform.
I have come to trail the footprints of girls and the marks of
the female students' shoes on the street dust.
I have come like God blowing in the clay to restore life to bygone days
so that I may heal wounds and revive that burning heap.
I have come to ask about that corner where
my swing was left in the long corridor,
about my torment and my wonderful love
and my heart that used to be uprooted by a breeze blow,
about my early poetry that I used to send to women,
written on paper missiles.

Don't wake up father.
Oh! don't be distressed.
Don't shout: 'Who is there?'
It is I who is here.
I have come to search for my picture among the details...
for falling childhood memories among the stones
whilst we were slumbering,
in the touch of grass under the spring sky
in the grace of the fountain water
and what the sun would leave of its gold on the roofs of houses.

In the eternal nostalgia, I have come to find my image in the details
in the temerity left behind in the crevices of our souls
in the crying that overwhelmed us for a moment and suffocated our souls
in the cheers that used to set the heart alight
in the gasp of the heart under the wings of an enflamed swallow.
I have come searching for my grandmother among the remains,
for her mysterious belongings, the fragrance of her cotton garments,
her head-wrap, the evening prayers that ward off our fears
and protect our course in life.
I have come in search of my grandmother
of the resonance of her walking-stick on the steps of the house
of the secret of her everlasting perception.
I have come from the end of the world to cleanse my soul
upon her knees and cry a little over her sleeping soul.

Don't wake up father. I am not hungry, and not quite sad or angry.

But... My spirit is burdened a little while
with the meanness of this frightful age.
My spirit is burdened a little while and so is my body,
but I can still uphold good traits and care.
My hands remain clean and no treasure has ever bent my stature.
The prayers of those permitting the prohibited never stained my mouth.
Those who stole our life are still burning fires
in my language, stirring disgust in words.
I am still a poet father!
who is able to measure the distance between
content and wallowing in wealth.
Don't sleep father, or sleep...
You are our citadel,
the fence of our remaining virtues.
You taught us to love life and earn our bread honourably.

نزيه أبو عفش

Nazih Abu Afash is a Syrian writer who lives in Damascus. He has 13 poetry collections to his credit. The above poem *Al-Qal'a* was published in his tenth collection *Hakaza Atayt, Hakaza Amdi* (This is how I came, This is how I go), Dar al-Kalima, Beirut 1989.

RAGHID NAHHAS

M. A. Younes:
The Seagull of *The Thousand and One Nights*

The air-conditioned chauffeur-driven Mercedes-Benz that took me around Syria did nothing much to reduce the discomfort of the worst summer heat I have ever experienced, or perhaps I forgot what some Middle-Eastern summer days could be like, particularly that my only other visit to the Middle East during the past fourteen years was in the winter.

This was my first visit as editor of *Kalimat*. In the short time available for me, I was keen on meeting as many writers as possible. One of those writers was Mohammad Abdulrahman Younes, known to the readers of the Arabic issues of *Kalimat* through his studies of the cities of *The Thousand and One Nights*. I became acquainted with Younes when he submitted an article titled "Cultural, Social and Political Aspects of the City of al-Bassra in *The Thousand and One Nights*." This article was published in *Kalimat 6*. It had 138 footnotes indicating the extent of Younes' research, but what characterised his style of writing were smoothness, ease and straightforwardness. What we had at hand was a researcher analysing events, characters and places in the way of the storyteller. It sounded as if Shahrazad herself was explaining her stories to our present day readers. This is exactly what *Kalimat* seeks in the studies it publishes. Since then, every Arabic issue of *Kalimat* has featured an article by Younes about *The Thousand and One Nights*. The present issue highlights, for the first time, a translation of one of his articles that deals with the "hot" issue of baths in the cities of the same legendary story. It is meant to supplement the present article about him and to provide readers of English with an insight, from Younes' perspective, into a celebrated work of fiction.

During my correspondence with Younes, and from our telephone conversations, I could sense the passion in him for his work and for an ideal world. He came through to me as a kind person, but a person who harbours some bitterness about this unfair world. My feelings about him were confirmed as time went by and when I eventually met him for the first time in Syria.

We reached the market place of Jable, a small coastal town south of Latakia, the main Syrian port. I asked the driver to park in the shade whilst I found the bookshop where Younes had told me he would be waiting. The streets were busy and chaotic, shared by humans, beasts and vehicles. Vegetable and fruit hawkers dominated the pavements. The shops looked old and disorganised, possibly with no face-lift since they

were established many years ago. Amidst the clatter of everything that moved, I made my way to the bookshop after seeking directions from another bookshop that I found as soon as I ventured into the street.

I recognised Younes from photos he had already sent me, but I had to introduce myself to a man who was obviously pleased to meet me. He was very courteous and made me feel that I had known him forever. He wanted to take me to his parents' home where he and his family were spending the summer in al-Karamah, a village 18 kilometres from Jable.

We drove east towards the countryside. I could feel my heart energise as we crossed green fields of areas akin to the ones I loved around Latakia during my six-year stay there between 1982 and 1988. The Syrian coastal hills, their villages and many of their inhabitants made our stay in that area worthwhile.

His parents, wearing their traditional village costumes, and his wife received us well. Younes took me straight to a large room where his book collection and computer equipment were. He showed me many books, including several he authored. We had coffee. Younes had many things to tell me. As he spoke, a stream of passion accompanied his words and expressions. He was sincere in both his anger and satisfaction. He seemed most happy when he spoke about his writings. His story, adventures and what he has been through are enough material for another *Thousand and One Nights*. I listened. We moved to the terrace overlooking part of the village and its fields. Meanwhile his wife and mother were preparing lunch. The wife, Raja Ibrahim Sulaiman, is a schoolteacher of French. She has a Diploma of Higher Eduaction in French Literature and a Diploma in Translation. His two baby girls, Alzahra (two years old at the time) and Norulhuda (less than a year) were resting on a mattress in one side of the terrace. His father, with his deep blue eyes, sat on a straw chair resting his feet on the edge of the terrace, looking thoughtfully at the horizon. My driver poured drinks for everyone. Younes continued his stories, and I listened.

Younes, born in al-Karamah, was brought up in Jable where he finished his schooling. His first high-school certificate was "scientific" as it is called in Syria to distinguish it from the "literary" certificate. He was supposed to continue his university education in areas such as mathematics or physics, but he ended up teaching these subjects to secondary school students. He discovered in himself a strong tendency for reading poetry, stories and novels. 'My first teacher was my father. He taught me the Koran and how to calculate. As soon as I finished my secondary school, I started reading his collection of "yellow" books. There were many folk and historical epics. My mother also had a great influence on my love for literature and poetry. She used to recite folk and religious poetry for me. I used to accompany her to our orchard where she narrated to me epic and legendary stories as we picked oranges. I accompanied her everywhere she travelled and I used to sleep on the sound of her narration.'

This fondness with tales, and Younes' wide imagination, encouraged him to sit the

"literary" high-school certificate, particularly as he had started writing short stories. After obtaining this certificate, he left his teaching career and enrolled with the Faculty of Arts at the University of Tishreen in Latakia. After a year there, Younes left Syria for Algeria to continue his studies while teaching Arabic to secondary school students. At that time in 1978, Younes comments:

Algeria was a peaceful heaven, with no violence or Islamic extremism. Algeria provided me with all I needed. Its libraries were full af books of all branches of human knowledge. Its natural beauty was breathtaking. I received immaculate treatment by my lecturers at the University of Algiers. They showed interest in me and encouraged me. I did not feel that I was a stranger there. The influence of lecturers such as Jouhar Khater, Alsaid Boutajin, Abdulhamid Bourayo, Abduljasim Assaidi, Mizab Nassir and Boutin Mukhtar remains till this day. They taught me the principles and methodology of scientific investigation, so that I started to remove my ideological bias from the material I studied. I started reconsidering many of my ideas and ideologies, equipped by my new objective method. My reading of translated foreign literature started to develop further: Belzac, Albert Camus, Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, André Gide, Gabriel García Márquez, Rimbaud, Nazim Hikmet, Louis Aragon, Lorca, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gorky and several others. I paused at length at Moravia's work. My teacher Alsaid Boutajin told me that if I wanted to learn critique, I should read Roland Bart, Lucian Goldman, Mikhael Bakhtin and others. I admit that these scholars have had a great positive influence on me.

Younes started writing short stories and critical studies whilst at the University of Algiers, but did not dare publish any.

One day I showed one of my short stories to my teacher Abdulhamid Bourayo who encouraged me and asked me to read it in front of the students. A week later he invited me to a literary seminar. I then developed my short story writing. I used to avoid attending lectures on Islamic Literature because the lecturer was an extremist Algerian who hated non-Algerians, and he would accuse whoever opposed his opinion of being a heretic or a communist. He respected veiled women and discriminated against unveiled ones accusing them of corruption. This teacher wanted us to read the Koranic text under his despotic attitude. Whenever one made a mistake, he would accuse him of heresy or stupidity. Our love of these texts changed to fear. Once he failed all the students in an exam. Our protest to the Dean did not get us anywhere.

Younes graduated with a B.A. in literature, ranking second in his class. He then went to Morocco where he obtained a diploma in higher education, specialising in modern literature.

I remember Dr. Ahmad Alyabouri, a distinguished scholar who lectured us on the theory of fiction. He treated me well, particularly that I was the only foreign student in the Modern Literature section. Fate had it that later we were bath imprisoned in the same cell in Rabat's Central Prison in Hassan Street. We were, along with others, accused of opposing the policies and directives of King Hassan II. We were tortured and interrogated in a despotic

manner. There was a directive to round up all Syrians during a visit by the Israeli Prime Minister ta Morocco. Men and women were put in the same prison, an action unheard of in the history of Islam, except for a similar action by Alhajjaj bin Youssuf Athaqafi hundreds of years before.

After we went to prison, our possessions disappeared. They confiscated (actually stole) all my 1500 books, my private car, my research documents, manuscripts, the cards on which I documented my research material for my Ph.D., my watch, university degrees, bed-spreads, electrical equipment, my clothes and my shoes. We were crammed in small, dark, humid cells. We lost track of time. Moroccan soldiers used to rape women prisoners in the neighbouring cells. One university student later told me that twenty officers raped her, in addition to all the prison guards. We were subjected to at least five interrogation sessions per day. Under torture, we were forced to shout at the top of our voice some cheers for the King. They forced us to kneel handcuffed and kiss his picture. They wanted us to admit that we were socialists and anti-monarchists, even though we were not dealing with politics.

It took Younes a full year to recover from the physical damage inflicted on him by his jailors, but 'my moral wounds are still savagely bleeding.' Younes never got back his possessions. He left Morocco a 'destroyed man', and headed to Yemen where he spent four years lecturing at the University of Sana'a. After Yemen, he went to Beirut to prepare for his doctorate at the Lebanese University. During that period he was also an editor in "an-Nafiza" literary magazine. His experience at the Lebanese University was rewarding, and he spoke favourably of his teachers who contributed to widening the scope of his knowledge: Rafik Khalil Atawi, Ghazi Yammout, Issam Norruddine, Ahmad Abohaka and Khalil Ahmad Khalil.

Younes spent fifteen years outside his native Syria. He feels that those years were years of alienation and estrangement. Even in other Arab countries, he felt that he was treated like a foreigner and, in some cases, was discriminated against. His consolation was the elite group of thinkers and writers who were free of hatred or sensitivity towards strangers. Those people, in addition to the whole adventure of travel assisted Younes in constructing his creative texts, with their elements of time, place, artform and aesthetics. The experience also assisted him in familiarising himself with new sets of moral values, some of them contrasted with his own. It made him refuse to be partial to any particular ideology, or

literary theory.

His alienation is clear in his writings. His short story collection *Samah Dance to the Music of Zeriab* contains many texts expressing the estrangement of characters in an environment of desolation and gloom. For example he begins his story *An Exiled Face in the City Crowd* by what Hasna, a beautiful woman was telling the narrator of the story:

> *Don't be deceived by a bright optimistic face during wakefulness. This is only a dream that travels in this jungle of bleeding loneliness and exile, trying to tickle the memory without exploring its depth... and when the night starts weaving its threads, disasters and calamities, you stand all alone, face to face with your deep-rooted misery, chasing emptiness, bitterness and unemployment in the times of our lords the pasha, the wali, the emir and the imam. Under you, the bed of your blessed fathers and grandfathers always moves in disgust of your presence on it, but you continue to turn, stealing the same dream one thousand times in every hour, minute and second.*

Later in the story, Hasna asks the narrator whether he would invite her for a glass of beer. The narrator then says:

> *A feeling of happiness moved inside me. A lawn of green grass grew in me, where pelicans and white deer roamed. It is nice for an exile who lost his boat to drink beer with a beauty like Hasna. I slipped my hands inside my pockets to check on the few coins that I knew I still had, but I wasn't sure that it would be enough to pay for the beer in an ordinary café, let alone Café Amrawa where Hasna usually went. I remembered that my mother hadn't sent me a single dollar this month. O mother! O the dream! The Seagull! I am bloated with poverty, gas and the junk from tenth-grade restaurants. Would you, mother, stretch your white hand to me? ...and I remembered my mother's latest letter to me: 'I sold my jewels for the sake of your silly studies. The sheikh of our tribe wants to divorce me. Either you return on the next boat, or you can have your vagrancy and your god.'*

Poverty in the above text adds to the intensity of alienation Younes is trying to depict, but the same story sketches some comic scenes from the market place augmented by the author's sarcasm:

> *The women gather. The dress [exhibited in the shop] becomes a dream. It is nice for abandoned dreams to announce their presence suddenly! How splendid this dress is! Oh, mon dieu! When would the end of the month come so that we get our wages? You look like the moon in this dress. Believe me, I am not flattering. The material is the best from London, specially imported for our shop. Voices and clatter faint a little then become loud again until they are absorbed in the music when the shopkeeper changes records. He puts on one of Hulio's. Hulio Iglesis who charmed Arab women with his blue eyes and soft hair. A young woman turns her back to her friends. God bless, she is a bride.*

In *The Departure to the Cities of Timurlank*, he uses some contrasting elements to strongly emphasise the feeling of estrangement:

He closed his eyes, drawing white and red circles in the vacuum that surrounds him all over. Despite his bitterness, he thought that he was immune. His life became a sea crocodile, and pain is no longer addicted to his days and nights. Yet, he has never been able to resist the tears that choked his mornings, and when sadness revelled spreading its permanence, the moon would shine. He has never loved poetry, nevertheless he adored the moon passionately. In his spare moments, he would form the moon on his dust-eaten papers... Outside the wind howled sporadically. Wild dogs fought over corpses that were used to death or assassination whenever the bitter Khamsin winds blew. The city looked derelict, uprooted by ghosts day and night. He could not believe that such an ancient city that celebrated history, glory and false bravery was able to slay the crowns of cypress trees. All things were colourless and tasteless. The streets learned how to wail on the sounds of tambourines, hoops, horns of Buick and B.M.W. cars, the shriek of the hawkers and Nina Ricci perfumes. The beggars were watching the crowds entering and leaving the Riviera Centre Tavern. Their hands were empty. Their eyes and hearts were decorated by seaweeds. What city is this? He asked himself.

Almost in every one of his texts dealing with exile and estrangement we find the narrator yearning for some warmth of emotions, be it in the heat of a burner or the cosiness of a home. In the same story he says:

When somewhere far away in this world I exposed my frozen heart to the warmth of electric lamps, my heart and the light of the lamps were extinguished. The scent of young ladies and my countryside spread uprooting the remaining buried memories. The fields echoed with their best folk songs for a maiden who was dreaming with bread and damask roses. I have all my life dreamt of a modest country home, away from boisterous city basements and their dampness, but my father distributed his wealth among his women. I stood facing the blowing winds, surrendering to betrayed passions, and to the earrings of my stepmother and her golden brocelets worth thirty acres. There is a dormant volcano inside me, but it has never thought of reviving its activity. There are many reasons in my life that can make me cry, but I rarely did. My girlfriend who left me for the richest entrepreneur in town, used to urge me to cry: be beautiful and cry...

When a rich lady sitting next to the narrator on a flight asks him whether someone was waiting for him at the airport, he ponders:

I am not used to anyone waiting for me... I used to arrive in ports and cities feeling tightness in my chest. I felt as if I was approaching desolate deserts whose life was locusts covering hills and valleys, and whose people were eyeless. I used to see people hugging in airport halls and women whose hair is let loose for the wind, the free duty shops and the police officers. Alone I went through airports: no stature, no whisper, no confession. Clouds, emptiness and a feeling of bitter disappointment hang on my horizon, while people embraced exchanging dreams, large villas and their long nights of entertainment... Exiled, I find myself and a whore is gambling with my last wishes. I fall with a drop of water from an eye of a needle. The city looks like a thread, and the needle becomes history. I hold the thread and twist it over the drop of water. The drop of water grows larger... The water of the spring

overflows. I feel a groove is cracking the needle, the thread, history, the cities and the airports.

One part of the book is titled "Mirrors" and subtitled "very short stories". Each of these very short stories is in reality a sketch depicting a certain situation in life. Whilst the writer's alienation is still felt in these stories, we have here sharp, sarcastic and witty comments on life, particularly social hypocrisy.

In *The Mother*, the narrator says in his answer to his mother's repeated request that he should marry:

...I insisted that the one I would marry must have warm eyes, friendly, loves poetry and music, has friendships and human relationships and not necessarily a virgin... but I was not able to marry, because the women of my town are cocoons of corals, frogs which only open their thighs to real estate agents or those driving Buicks... Their honour is centred in their lower half, and the trouble is that I only want a whore as my mother would say.

In *My Sister*, we read:

I once entered the bathroom and saw my sister bending washing her hair... Her little rounded breast appeared shivering alone with pearls and dew... When she saw me, she shook like music lights and described me as her soulmate and told me to go and gouge out my eyes... I gave my sister with the holy mantle a glass of whisky. She drank it and asked for another one and closed her eyes... She went to the bathroom, perfumed herself, masturbated and slept for one thousand centuries. In her dream, she saw men, fields and lanterns.

His wit is not any less in another of his short story collections, titled *The Lotus*. Women continue to dominate his writings, and his main male characters seem to be possessed with the type of women no other man of that particular culture is interested in except as an object of sex. In the story that gave its title to the book, we read:

...and I asked myself: what is the secret of the relationship that binds me to Malika, despite that all students accuse her of being an indifferent bitchy whore? They often use these terms to describe any woman who reveals her secret or known love, but is it Malika's tall smooth white body, her loose long her that reaches her buttocks or her pearly eyes that glow with depth and sadness that made the students think of her in this way?

In *City Sweets*, most events take place inside sweet shops, but women are the actual sweets. They are everywhere and in every shape and condition. The story begins by describing busy city streets where people, carts and whisky bottles compete for space on the pavement, in front of the shops and cinemas.

In front of the nightclub... a tall woman stands in an attempt to catch the richest man and invite him to her home. Another woman who seems sad, roams the streets. She lets her hair loose to receive the December rain. Her buttocks shake in harmony with the pain and suffering of her back pain... A third woman decided to look beautiful and different to all the women of Mohammad V Street. She had made a cut along the back of her dress, from the

neck to the buttocks. She connected the buttons of the right side to the buttonholes of the left side by extended silk threads revealing her body...

The story continues with social and economic contrasts, but focuses on the hypocrisy of most people. In a sweet shop, a rich man is willing to pay thousands to a young shop assistant to take her to bed, whilst he wouldn't part with the price of a single piece of sweet for a little girl whose mother was begging in the streets. The young shop assistant was engaged and, after expressing her reservation at the proposal of the rich married man, she seems to soften when he increased the price he was willing to pay. The mother beggar watches and wishes she was pretty enough to be sought after by such a rich man.

Younes includes local North African expressions in his stories, even if this meant the use of slang language. He does this craftily and enriches the power of his images, particularly that they take the reader to an entirely new environment. Whether from Algeria or Morocco, these expressions add magic to his stories, particularly to Arab readers outside North Africa.

Every single short story is dedicated to a person, mostly Younes' teachers or other academics or writers. At the end of every story he puts the date and place it was written and sometimes includes a comment such as "a cheap hotel in Casablanca", as he did at the end of his story *Aspects of a Woman who Hates Literature and the Sea*, in his collection *The Lotus*.

This story addresses the subject of marriage and the tendency of families to favour the rich over the educated. This is a recurring theme in his short stories. Whilst this theme is not new, Younes' writing about it is more confronting than the norm. As is the case for all his stories, not only that he blatantly exposes the mind of people, but he also uses frank expressions to do so. After a sexual encounter with her rich fiancé, the girl who was watching western movies on TV at the same time and refuses to stop watching, asks him coldly: 'Have you finished my dear so that I can wash and put on my clothes?'

There is an element of imparting moral standards in Younes' stories, but this is done in a subtle way that does not limit his creative ability in producing remarkable prose. What limits this ability, I believe, is his apparent bitterness about a society that lacks justice, particularly economically. In his writings you can clearly feel his passion to stand for the deprived. This becomes very repetitive, but not boring due to the many

comic situations Younes is able to interweave into his sketches.

Almost every short story comprises a number of sketches. He even divides some of them into different sections. These sketches remind me of Charlie Chaplin's movies. The hero (the narrator in most cases) is always a tramp vying other richer men when it comes to gaining the heart of women. His story *Sadness in the Wilderness of the City* is an example. We read:

What desolate sadness sets camp in the streets of the city, its taverns and cafés? To whom should you reveal your concern O stranger seagull? Who would remove the blades of time from your chest? Who would wipe away the pain of poverty and deprivation off you?

And I thanked God... for his many blessings... He gave me more than I deserve. He gave me a bored shoe, torn trousers, two university degrees, the price of a falafel sandwich and a glass of cognac.

... and all the religious scholars emphasised that ours is a passing world, and heaven will in the end be for the poor. They will have the most beautiful houris in compensation for their deprivation... and my friend's wife who owned twenty supermarkets and twenty saluki dogs said: You are the winner Abdullah Barefoot. You are deprived here on earth, but in heaven king thou shall be. I probed for my maiden-inlaid crown and the many bottles of aged camphor-mixed wine. Thank God... for his abundant blessings.

One of his telling stories is *University Memoirs of Hamdan Alali*. The strength of the story comes from Younes' real experience at the universities of North Africa. His sympathy with women causes is clear in most of his stories, and the present one is no exception. When someone opens the subject of marriage with the girl he desires, her answer is: 'I do not want to get married. I do not trust men, but I love you. Let the language of body and passion take its course between us without any scrutiny. I am your friend any time you desire, but I cannot grant you the deed of my slavery...'

When the man emphasises his love to her, she answers: 'You all say the same in the beginning... You only know love at the moment of your quiver... If a woman gives you her body sincerely, you accuse her of being a slut. If she refuses, you accuse her of being backward, stupid and strict... You know that I am not a virgin, and you – may God bless you – raise the flags of honour and the vanity of the East.'

There is no doubt that the events in Algeria made Younes bleed deeply in the heart. His stories address the problem of religious extremism and expose the hypocrisy of the religious establishment. In *City and Taverns* we read:

The sociologist - may god rest his soul - said before the Islamic fundamentalists assassinated him at al-Quba in Algiers that the long historical, social and political suppression of the Islamic and Arab nations over centuries, created societies that are morally and humanely deformed...

And the imam of al-Qassaba mosque in Algiers said that straying away from the route of God... and having mixed education should be avoided if reform were to take place. He also threatened to destroy all of Algeria if this continued. And he kept his word, this pious holy

man, and frightened Algeria, bereaved her, tarnished her perfumes and ornaments with the pure dirt of his shoe and he feared no blame for his right-doing.

And Shahrazad said: O Shahryar, my master, if a woman decides to commit adultery, she would be able to do it even if she was locked up in a box...

The use of historical characters is not uncommon in Younes' stories, however his novel *Wallada bint al-Mustakfi fi Fass* (Wallada bint al-Mustakfi in Fez) is a masterpiece in this regard. Wallada is the daughter of the ruler of Andalus. She was a daring poet who opened her home for literary meetings. She was renowned for verses of poetry embroidered on the hem of her dress stating that she walked elegantly and was ready to give her kiss to whoever desired it. Her choice as the main character of the novel is another announcement by Younes of his liberal attitude and admiration for all those who bravely confront the established system, particularly women.

Wallada, the Andalusian princess, enters the story when Sheikh Omari (a main character in the novel, representing present day Moroccan men) spots her walking with her lover, the poet Ibn Zaydoun (another true historical figure), at the entrance to one lane in Fez. They came from Granada on a trip to Morocco. Omari invites the couple to a tavern where the patrons give Wallada, the princess, a great reception. Many incidents inside the tavern follow. Younes skilfully entwines history with the present. Here we have Wallada of the olden times sipping modern day alcoholic drinks, criticizing modern day music, the taste of the inhabitants and the fact that the town has no public toilets.

When Ibn Zaydoun is advised that the only good sword in town is that of the wali, he starts thinking of stealing it, even if it meant sexually deploying Wallada on such a mission. Omari advises him to lower his voice as the tavern is full of the wali spies:

... and you won't find a tree free to reveal the secrets of our holy town. We are surrounded by castles and walls and frocks and turbans and women's thighs and French and American neckties... We are the drums and the tambourines that do not know when and why they beat... A woman might reveal to you a deep secret, but you must grant her all your sperms, and when you pass out at the climax and rest against her virginity, losing your sword and spear, she will roll you inside her garment and throw you into the depth of the Atlantic, then she will collect your rings and your poetry to be sacrificed on the altar.

Younes uses the tavern setting to depict a despotic regime dominating the cities of Morocco, and the resulting economic and social problems. Patrons crowd around the beautiful Wallada. This is the first time ever they see a princess. Many characters, such as Abbas bin Fernas, appear and discussions take place. The past mingles with the present and the real with the imaginary. The tavern scene reaches a climax both literary and literally:

> *Men surround her... Wallada feels their bodies touch her back and press her joints... She feels his hands around her waist, quivering like a seagull wet with rain. She knew that these hands were those of a drunkard who could not help himself... He is after the milk that quenches his Fez desert thirst, and she is the milk and the dates and the palm tree. Should she provide him with the milk or reject him? Or should she carefully ask him to loosen his grip, and in this case reveal his secret to the others? She is perplexed. She feels the hands increase their quivering and squeezing of her waist. She wishes this nomad who is stuck to her back had privately spoken to her away from all those drunken men. She might have spoken to him, looked at him carefully, sung a song for him and given him a kiss. She might even have loosened her caftan and let him suckle her pure milk... [after he left] Wallada felt her waist that was oozing with silent sweat. She felt a warm liquid stealthily dripping over her back. She wiped it with her hand and felt the warmth of the Atlantic waters. Remnants of sperms were singing their last folk songs, dying on the body of this princess.*

Younes' sarcasm and his attempts to expose the hypocrisy of the people and their values never stop. Zanouba, one estranged wife of Omari's, reminds him:

> *...In the beginning of the year, the man of Fez get introduced to a woman. He chases her raising his frock catching his thigh... He makes her smoke hashish and opium and drink wine. He presents her with French perfume and asks her whether she is a virgin. She replies yes and scolds him for doubting her honour. He heads towards Marakish and requests the judge to solemnise their marriage. The next night he discovers that she is not a virgin. He calmly smiles. In the third month he discovers that she previously had four intentional abortions. He smiles calmly: the past belongs to those who lived in it. For a full year he continues to pick from her palms, milk and honey, but suddenly, in the start of the new year, he hunts for a new woman. He shouts at the old woman: you bitch, daughter of a whore - when did you lose your virginity?*

Despite the title, the story is not only about Wallada. Other characters such as Omari and Fatima al-Idrissi constitute an equally important part of the novel. Other events and scenes are skilfully introduced whilst the reader is still at the tavern. Later, Younes takes us back to the tavern to continue with the eventful trip of Wallada and her friends.

Nadia Khatib wrote the introduction to the novel:

> *The woman in the novel is not an abstract world, or a corporeal structure subject to conditions of emotional upheavals that restrict concentration and contemplation, or subdue the horizons of dreams. Hers, is not a lower world, or mere desires emerging from the depth of sub-consciousness... The body is not a wish, desire or even a reality,*

but rather a bridge for human expansion... The woman in the novel is a supreme symbol of the accumulation of the trifling of the patriarchal law.

Symbolism, combined with invoking real historical characters to cast a light on our modern world and the vivid scenery employed by a very skilful "camera" of the mind gather forces and reveal themselves in smooth, elegant and powerful narration using the first person. Younes is the writer and narrator. He is the symbol of his ultimate heroes. His passion in his transmigration into every individual character is the source of the strength of his narrative because, if events depend on his personal experience, they certainly did not appear personal despite the "bitterness" I spoke about earlier. Younes narrates with confidence and no defensiveness at all.

In his narration, he invokes simple but very effective techniques such as the use of "and" whenever he introduces what some character wants to say in the beginning in a new paragraph, 'And Wallada said...' In Arabic, this has a pleasant soothing effect on the reader because it makes him a listener, as if to Shahrazad telling her fables.

Although the effect of the Koran and *The Thousand and One Nights* is clear on the literary and narrative aspects of Younese ' writing, his magnificence is that his stories reach you as very modern both in style and content.

In the above I concentrated on Younes' creative writing, but his other forms of writing, such as his studies and literary critique, testify to a master researcher, linguist and writer. He researches his material well and he is always careful about acknowledging his sources. He utilizes his academic training to enhance the value of his studies, but always presents his work smoothly and elegantly, avoiding jargon. He does not stretch the muscle of his knowledge to make exhibition; rather, he invokes his knowledge to enhance his creativity. This is of great value to the reader who is provided with direct access to what Younes intends to say.

In his important book *Sex and Power in The Thousand and One Nights*, Younes comments by saying:

The tales of The Nights in their general structure are about the flight of the narrator – Shahrazad – from the sword's edge to the bed of pleasure. It is not the mission of The Nights to build a utopia, or to emphasise the role of such a utopia or the need to build it. The Nights has nothing to do with human concerns of the poor and the underprivileged. The environment of The Nights is that of indignity and moral and physical despotism...

The book analyses the psychological and social aspects of power and sex by projecting the implications of the stories onto the prevailing system of the time such as the rule of the Abassid dynasty: '...The body of the slave to the Abassid political authorities is more important than the country itself, its people, fields, rivers, crops and culture...,' but also it addresses the finest details associated with the exercise of power and sex, including:

...Spices, incense and perfumes imported from India, Sind, Yemen and Persia, played a clear role in exploding Arab excitement at the sexual level. Perfume shops proliferated, and created a class of new rich people who joined the upper echelons of society... Perfumers, according to The Nights, became experts in sex and Arab excitement. Their shops became meeting places where sexual deals were concluded. Perfumers played the role of the pimps and contributed to the deterioration of Arab and Islamic societies...

Younes has over 130 studies, articles and research papers published in sixty-five magazines, periodicals and newspapers all around the Arab world and in Europe, China and Australia. These magazines include some of the most prominent in the Arab world. About twenty of these studies deal directly with issues related to *The Thousand and One Nights*.

He authored several books. Two of them deal directly with *The Thousand and One Nights*, the one mentioned above and another about its influence on modern Arabic theatre.

At the moment he is working on six manuscripts, again two of them are about *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Between 1991 and 1994, Younes obtained five prizes for his short stories and novels, and one prize for his literary critique.

Since his return to Syria, Younes lectured at the Foreign Studies University in Beijin, China. He is currently lecturing at the internet University of *Ahlil Bayt* (The Family of the Prophet).

It is rather unfortunate that this resourceful scholar is still unable to find an academic position in his own country. Perhaps this is part of the price one pays for being a restless seagull trying to explore the geographical space of this earth in all its historical, social, psychological and political dimensions.

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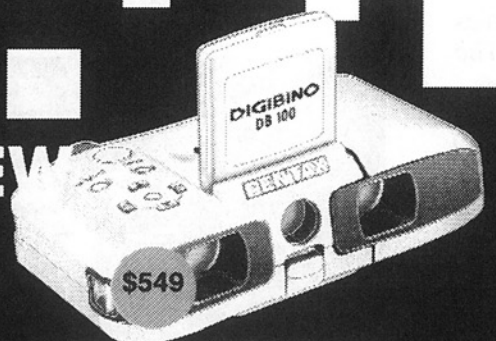

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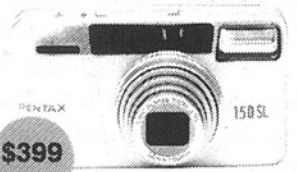

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M. A. YOUNES

Translated by ***Raghid Nahhas***

Bathhouses in the Cities of *The Thousand and One Nights*

The bathhouse is considered one of the most important architectural structures in Arab Islamic cities due to its function in providing the means for a Moslem to be clean and pure in preparation for prayer, a religious duty of utmost importance practised five times a day. Furthermore, Moslems are instructed to bathe regularly and also after certain acts such as sexual intercourse or washing the dead.

Bathhouses spread in Islamic cities. Authorities encouraged their establishment and supervised their construction and associated requirements such as water provision and drainage.[1] In some cities such as Basra, permission from the *wali* (governor) was necessary before building a bathhouse.[2] Most were built next to mosques in Basra,[3] as they were in other cities.

Architecturally, a touch of grandeur and elegance characterised these buildings: great entrances, elegant ornaments and the most modern techniques applied. The architecture, however, was not purely Islamic. As in other constructions such as palaces, houses and the domes of mosques, the influence of other cultures, particularly the Roman design with respect to baths, was very clear.[4]

Islamic architects took care in creating an aesthetic space inside bathhouses. They filled them with light and made their ceilings high, their waters fresh and their scent pleasant. The high ceilings helped ease the heat from the vapours. Abul Hussein Mohammed bin Jubair describes in "The Journey of bin Jubair" (circa 1217) that the baths of Baghdad were painted with tar, giving them the look of polished black marble.[5]

A bathhouse generally comprised three chambers: cold, warm and hot. The cold chamber opened to the outer courtyard. The warm chamber was provided with warm water and located between the cold and hot chambers. Bathing took place in the hot

[1] Abdussatar, M. 1988. The Islamic City. (in Arabic), Alam al-Marifa 128. The National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature, Kuwait.
[2] Abu Khalil, S. (Ed.) 1997. Al-Balaziri (in Arabic, from the book *Futuh al-Buldan*). Ministry for Cuture, Damascus, Syria.
[3] Almusawi, M.A. 1982. Historical Factors for the Creation and Development of Arab Islamic Cities (in Arabic). Dar ar-Rashid, Ministry for Culture and Information, Baghdad, Iraq.
[4] Encyclopaedia of the Pleasure of Knowledge 1982. Cultural Development (in Arabic), Volume 1, p. 368.
[5] The Travels of Ibn Jubair (in Arabic). Sader Printing House/Beirut Publishing and Printing House 1964.

chamber, provided with hot water. The hot chamber had a dome of medium height with many holes fixed with stained glass that let in the sun's rays to provide a radiantly colourful atmosphere. Hot water flowed from jars to the water basins in the chamber. The hot chamber in some bathhouses contained four basins, a *jirn* (mortar) and a marble *mightass* (tub).[6]

Islamic cities had two categories of baths: private and public. The rich and those in authority used private baths or even constructed their own baths inside their palaces. The general public, on the other hand, were not used to bathing in private baths, even if their homes were large enough to contain one.[7]

Islamic town authorities ensured the construction of public baths because of their religious function and because not every house could contain a bath, particularly in arid areas. The large number of bathers meant that public baths brought a fortune to their owners. One owner in Basra boasted: 'My bathhouse earns me one thousand *dirhams* and much food every day.'[8]

Many bathhouses were denominational. For example, during the Fatimid era (909-1171), some bathhouses were restricted to Moslems, others to Jews and some to Christians.[9] Reports of the number of bathhouses in a city might sometimes have been exaggerated. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (circa 1071) mentioned that Baghdad had sixty-five thousand baths during the reign of al-Ma'moon. Other figures for Baghdad indicate that the number could actually have been about two thousand.[10] Damascus had fifty-seven bathhouses around 1175 and two hundred[11] around 1503. Egypt had eighty bathhouses in 1286 and 1170 in the year 1441.

Islamic literature contains a number of descriptions of bathhouses. Al-Fadl al-Raqqashi said: 'The bathhouse is a lovely home. It rids you of shabbiness, provides you with cleanliness, aids in the digestion of your food, assists you in sleep, eliminates your anger and helps you reach your desires.'[12]

Someone described a private bathhouse owned by the son of a wazir in Baghdad thus: 'The guide showed me around the bathhouse. I saw its water, windows and silver pipes. Some of the pipes were gold-plated, some took the shape of birds and when water poured out of them, they produced pleasant sounds. Fountains of water poured into

[6] Ashour, S. 1994. Women and Social Institution in Arab Culture (in Arabic). Dar al-Maaref for Printing and Publishing, Susa, Tunisia.
[7] Ashour, S. 1980. Social Life in the Islamic City (in Arabic). *Alam al-Fikr* 1
[8] See reference 2 above.
[9] Hassan, H. I. Political History of Islam. (in Arabic)
[10] See 7.
[11] Ziade, K. 1990. Book review of Ibn al-Mubarid (in Arabic). *Al-Ijtihad* 2(6): 297.
[12] Darwish, M. A. (Ed.) 1990. Alisfahani: Selected Lectures and Seninars. Ministry for Cnlture, Damascus, Syria.

marble basins and from the basins into a well-designed pool, and from the pool to a garden. Then he showed me about ten retreats, each one better designed than the last.'[13]

The bathhouse in "The Thousand and One Nights" seems to be a small heaven, a space full of joy. This is why it was a mecca for the characters of the story, including kings, ministers, princes, traders, the rich and society's upper hierarchy. It was a place that seemed to compete for prominence with the palace itself, and surpassed it in some cases. Initially, some strict Moslems abstained from frequenting the bathhouse due to its lavish ornament and the presence of pictures and statues. But the bathhouse in "The Nights" is a place for bodily refreshment and relaxation. It is closely associated with daily life, particularly its aspects of joy. Many tales include the bath, which is pictured as both a necessary and an embellishing component of the town.[14] The bathhouse depicted in "The Nights" has many functions. Perhaps the most important is the beautification of males and females in preparation for the first night of sexual rituals. Every bride must enter the bath before her wedding night. In "The Nights" we read: 'Lady Zubaida [wife of Haroun ar-Rashid] sent for the judge and witnesses. They consecrated my marriage to her [the slave], and after that they cooked sweets and good food, and stayed as such for a further ten days, and at the conclusion of twenty days, they took the slave to the bath in preparation for us to go to bed.'

The bath had magical powers to make a woman beautiful, radiant and sexually attractive. This is why servants in "The Nights" took a slave to the bath before taking her as a present to the Sultan in their attempts to gain his favour and avoid his wrath. We read in "The Nights" the words of one slave-owner to a wazir: '"Leave her [the slave] in your palace for ten days so that she may rest and get more beautiful. Then let her go to the bath and get washed thoroughly, put on her the best of clothes and take her to the Sultan so that you do not miss your chance." The wazir contemplated the words of the slave-owner and found that he uttered the truth.'

This was also the practice of slave-traders before they exhibited their female slaves for auction. We read in many places how wonderful those women looked after being bathed and dressed in the finest clothes and jewellery, and how everyone who looked at them envied the men who would have them in their beds.

Throughout their long history, bathhouses in Islamic cities gradually developed into specialised beauty centres. A woman would take her clothes off in a chamber next to the bath, then go to the steam room where she was massaged all over. The masseuse then removed unwanted hair using a cream made of yellow arsenic and wax, or sometimes sugar and lemon paste.[15] That women were naked in front of the masseuse

[13] Almiqri, Ahamad bin Mohammad al-Talmasani. *Nfhul Teeb min Ghosnil Andalus al-Ratib*. Reviewed by M. M. Abdulhamid. Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut.

[14] Hammouda, H. 1994. The City of Geography, the City of imagination: Readings in *The Thousand and One Nights* (in Arabic). *Fussoul* 13 (4):179.

[15] Bou Hudayba, A. 1987. Islam and Sex (in Arabic, translated by Hala Ouri). Madboli, Cairo.

(despite the fact that the masseuse was herself a woman) led many Islamic scholars to consider the bath a centre of corruption. For example, Jaluldin Abdulrahman as-Soyoti (born 1505) stated that baths were not recommended for women. Others quoted sayings attributed to the prophet Muhammad in which he urged people to cover themselves when they entered the bath.[16]

Sexual rituals meant that men also had to use the bath. In the tales of "The Nights", women of influence ordered their servants to take their lovers to the bath before making love. We read about Zumurud, an ex-slave who became a queen by some magical coincidence, when she met her lover Ali Shar again after many years: 'Then she ordered the chamberlain to take him to the bath, then put on him the best of the royal clothes, put him on a horse and bring him to the palace.'

Indeed, baths were centres of beauty for men as well. Massaging, cleaning and hair removal were dominant in the male bathing rituals. As with the women, the nudity associated with these activities provoked controversy. Despite this, there was a consensus in Islamic opinion about the importance of "preparing" lovers for the act of love. An obedient loving wife must satisfy her husband's sexual ambitions and prepare herself and her body for him immaculately. A man must reciprocate in order to be emotionally and physically accepted by his wife so that she loves him and will never betray him.

The bathhouse in "The Nights" played an important role in sexual arousal for both men and women. It was a place full of the necessary ingredients for such arousal: refreshing warm water, perfumes and the masseurs who brought life into all parts of the body. "The Nights" indicates that women coming out of the bath appeared elegant and sexually attractive to waiting lustful men who rushed willingly to oblige the eager bodies of those women.

"The Nights" recounts many cases of "rape" as a result of men sighting beautiful women coming out of the bathhouse. In one tale, a slave called Bakhit saw his master's daughter coming out of the bath looking like a full moon exuding the loveliest of scents. The beast of his sexual hunger was unleashed and he jumped on the woman and raped her.

The description of the face as a 'full moon' is not strange, given the skill of the bath beauticians. They would carefully rub the face of the woman, remove the unwanted hair then start the make-up by whitening the teeth with eggshells or carbon powder. The woman would then chew walnut skin, which smells pleasant, helps to firm the lips and jaws due to its astringent nature, and imparts a crimson colour to the gums. The beautician would then spread the woman's face with rice powder mixed with eggwhite, remove it then apply a crimson powder to make the cheeks rosy. A powder of incense, tar and yellow arsenic was then applied to the eyebrows and the eyes were lined with

[16] As we read in Ibn al-Jawzi's *Women's Jurisdiction*. (circa 1201).

Isfahani kohl. The final touches were made with a scented powder used to make special lines or spots on the eyelids, the side or middle of the nose, and often also scattered over the cheeks.[17]

The design of the bathhouse brought to the minds of the bathers, both women and men, erotic images and dreams. As soon as one enters, 'one floats through its inclined passage towards the increased warmth of the rooms, which awakens a world of dreams as one is gradually isolated from the outside world and receives bouts of cold and hot steam.'

People of influence added more sexual incentives to this serene place with the aim of augmenting the sexual appetite of bathers. These could include naked figures elegantly engraved on the floor and walls of the bath. Altalmasani[18] describes one retreat in a bath that belonged to the son of a wazir in Baghdad: 'One of the wonders of this private chamber is that its four walls are finely polished as if they are mirrors. One can see the reflection of one's body in any of these walls. And I saw a floor adorned with mosaics made from red, yellow, green and golden glass stones forming breathtaking erotic pictures of different shape and colour combinations. The guide told me that these formations were made for his master to excite his sexual urges, making him hurry to make love to the one he desires. He usually brings his favourite women to this private chamber so that his act of love is enhanced by the surrounding images of intercourse, kissing and touching between lovers.'

Bathhouses in "The Nights" served as an important forum for the beautiful women who frequented them, because they were places where women could freely exhibit their beauty to other women. News of a beautiful woman in the bath was quickly spread through the town, making every important woman want to see her. A woman called Manarussana (the light of the sublime) and wife of the jeweller Hassan al-Basri was once spotted in a bathhouse: '...when she entered, she took off her clothes and all the women looked at her in amazement at her beauty and sang the praises of Allah for such an immaculate creation. All the women coming to bathe entered to have a look. Her fame spread in the city and women crowded around her, making the bathhouse diffieult to enter due to the large number of women gathered there.' Such was the excitement, the news arrived in the palace of Haroun ar-Rashid via Tuhfa al-Awwada, the slave of Lady Zubaida (wife of ar-Rashid), who sent after the lady. When Lady Zubaida saw Manarussana, she could not help but take her in her arms and express her supreme admiration, an unusual stand by the wife of the supreme ruler, who does not normally greet commoners or even important people in this manner.

The political authorities in "The Nights" spread their spies through all the bathhouses to get information about what was going on inside and to search for wanted

[17] See 15.
[18] See 13.

people who might have distinguishing body features. In one story, a king is inflicted with a dangerous disease and not one of the kingdom's doctors is able to cure him. Astrologers affirm that the only one who can cure him is a man with a black belly who can only be found in the bathhouse.

The bathhouse plays an important role in the plot and narration of "The Nights". For example, the story about Manarussana moves from the scenes in the bathhouse to scenes in the palace in Baghdad, and later we see Manarussana travel to her country of origin, the Islands of *Waq Waq*. Her husband then follows in search of her, opening the door to many adventures, including tales of wars among magicians and fairies in those strange islands.

In some stories, the bathhouse is a place of celebration after recovery from a long illness. It is also a place where people go to forget their problems and regain their psychological and social balance. It is entered after the loss of a loved one or to celebrate a reunion with friends once separated by evil spirits or circumstances. Traders struck by disaster relax in the bathhouse after strong winds have torn the sails of their ships and sunk their goods. To them it is a space of contemplation where they try to forget about financial catastrophes.

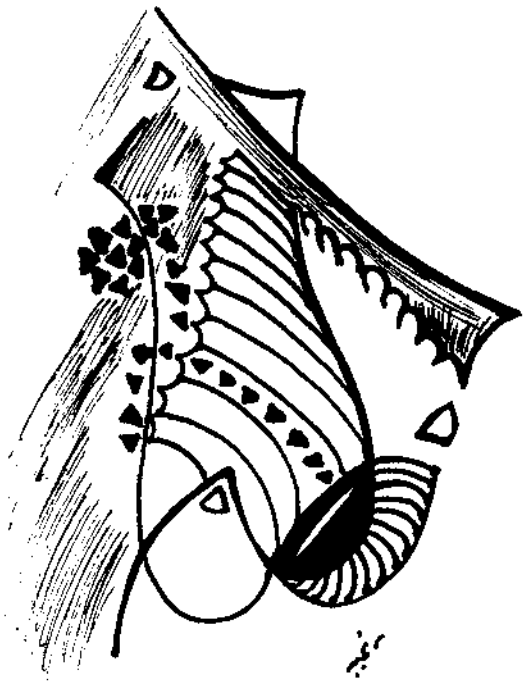
During his seventh journey, Sindbad is thrown into a great city after his ship is wrecked. The inhabitants pick him up and take him to the bathhouse. Sindbad says: 'I fell in their hands like a dead man because of fear, hunger and lack of sleep. A grand old man received me, welcomed me and put on me some beautiful clothes that covered my nakedness. He then led me to the bath and brought me drinks and pleasant perfumes.'

For women, the bathhouse was a free and beautiful place because it released them from the strains of their husband's houses, routines, rules and norms and gave them access to the market place with its commercial clatter, social noise and openness. Women had to pass by different markets on their way to the bathhouses, which were located in the middle of the souks, often next to mosques. Women felt freer inside the bathhouse and let their hair loose and relaxed, indulging in a multitude of dreams. Some men considered even this limited freedom dangerous and forbade their women to frequent the bathhouses.

A good bath met certain conditions. A doctor in the presence of Haroun ar-Rashid examined a slave about which bath was best. She replied: 'A bath with fresh water, large space and pleasant air…' There is also mention of the danger of entering the bath too soon after a heavy meal, or leaving the bathhouse suddenly without the gradual movement through chambers to temperatures nearer to the outside temperature.

Many historians believe that it was the bathhouses that enabled the citizens of Islamic cities to find pleasure and joy despite the misery of their lives and the tyranny of their rulers.[19]

محمد عبد الرحمن يونس



[19] Such as al-Tijani (circa 1309) in his book *Tuhfat al-Arous wa Mutaatu an-Nufouss*, (in Arabic) edited by J. Attieh, Dar Riad Reiss, London 1992.

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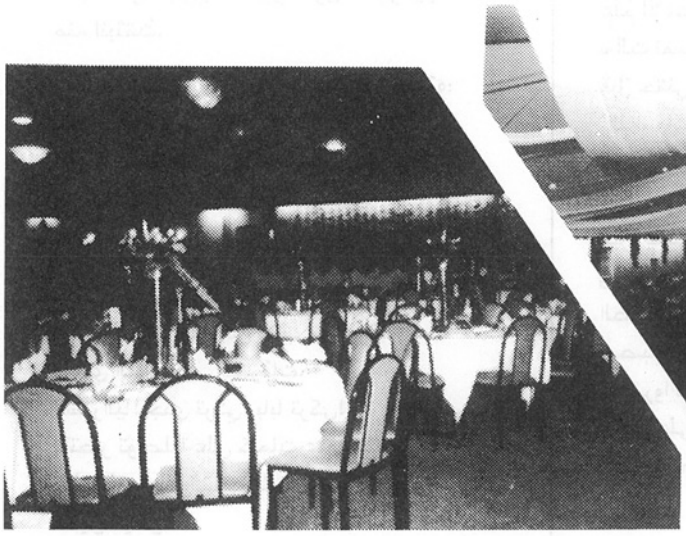

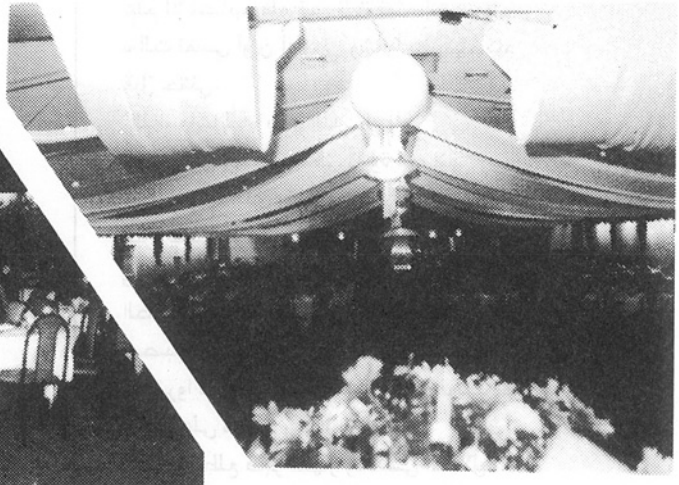

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MARIO GRANDE

A Map for "Writer's Country"

Today follows yesterday without a truce, always indefatigable. Writers can realise this fact or ignore it; but in the end it seems that the "yesterday" and "today" are no more than points of view for encapsulating time in a net of words. I believe, however, that writers are in a better position to employ "words" in some other things. As an example, they can draft a map that would guide them to travel and meet with writers of the olden times as well as writers of the past century and contemporary writers, who manifest the same necessity to talk about life besides living it. This is a country of its own space and time: the writer's country.

According to Italo Calvino, 'Literature is a method of knowledge'[1] or according to Adonis, 'It is a prime way of reading and listening to the world'.[2] Literature is a country made from time. Focusing on Arabic literature, one may ask: 'How can one explore the country? And how to draft a map for the trip?'

The object of my theme in the present article is the "writer"- any contemporary writer. In the country he lives in, the writer may have frequently visited some palaces, forts, temples and museums, but his visits were clouded by his lack of knowledge of some vital details about these places. It is of vital importance for the writer to understand the writings inscribed on the lintels, on the freezes, on the skirting of the boards and on banners.

The writer may also have crossed villages with names incomprehensible to him much like are they to the tourist or the foreigner who is puzzled by these blurry images until he catches sight of them. When he speaks, he makes use of words that reached his country from the other side of the sea, in an attempt to make them readily available for everyone. The writer might have penetrated caves and climbed mountains, attended conferences and participated in ceremonies, as if all of these actions are no more than puddles after the rain; mere fragments from the past that clouded the absent-minded and the forgetful as if the footprints of history have nothing to do with one's country or oneself, apart from that which was magnificent, beautiful and amazing.

The wording of al-Kindi: 'We should not be ashamed of recognising the truth

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[1] Calvino, Italo 1989. *Six Memos for the New Millennium*, (Spanish edition), Siruela, Madrid.

[2] Adonis 1995. *Ihtifaan bil ashuya l-gamidat al wahidat*, (Spanish edition), Libertarias, Madrid.

wherever was its source, even if it emerged from the olden generations and/or foreign sources,'[3] seems to be so truthful and modern.

One may ask what does a writer know about the mountains, the rivers, or the cities in his country? The trip is as long as a wheel, but the writer may have a stop at a few points along the way to draft a map for his trip that would spare him of being lost. For sure he intends to relate to the reader what he has read and what he thinks.

Our first stop is at the book *Calila and Dymna.*[4] We still consider it a modern book despite the fact that it was written many many years ago. As a fact, the writer believes that modernism is not a trendy appearance, but it rather deals with all that is humane. The characters of *Calila and Dymna* tell us stories through the mouths of others. The topics are modern because they effectively tackle subjects such as freedom, justice and values of society; particularly values changeable by time, that could bring reactionary and pessimistic answers to those in Huntington's *The Clash of Civilisations,*[5] but one can also read on the map, modern characters that oppose desperation, as is clearly seen in the works of Abdullah Laroui, Hichem Djait, Edward Said, Sami Nair or Juan Goytisolo.

Dealing with space and time is also a modern theme. Even the incongruities are modern, like those in Chapter 16, where a young person who does not have enough to eat, buys all of the cargo from a ship. This is a reminiscent to the episode with Sancho Panza's mule in *Quixote* by Cervantes or some puizzling passages from Shakespeare's *King Lear* Asking whether the teachings of the book are modern, the writer responds: 'Teaching and learning are different things, but whatever the case might be, one needs to read...'

Which literature? A never-ending story like *The Thousand and One Nights.*[6] Many affairs emerge as the ones recreated by John Barth in his novel *Chimera.*[7]

I would like to discuss herein two of these affairs. The first concerns the birth of Al-Andalus, manifested on the 272 night in *The Thousand and One Nights.* It is like masses of people knocking at the door of Toledo. The writer would not cease thinking about this book, without opening it. He waits in some place like Toledo where he lives, with its endless stories, and whoever finds it, picks up a pen and goes on writing and tearing page after page.

The other affair that faces the writer is the story of Sindbad who retails his triumphs and failures to a poor man visiting him. He is what al-Bayati calls him, somewhere, *the*

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[3] Al-Kindy. Rasa'il al-Kindi al falsafiyya, El Cairo, 1950.

[4] *Calila y Dymna,* (Spanish edition), Emiliano Escolar Editor, Msdrid, 1981.

[5] Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. *The Clash of Civilizations,* Foreign Affairs.

[6] *The Thousand and One Nights,* (Spanish edition), Planeta, Barcelona, 1990.

[7] Barth, John 1976. *Chimera,* (Spanish edition), Fundamentos, Madrid.

messenger- the person who searches. Perhaps he knows or does not know the meaning of things; yet always defines them, and depends on the writer to reveal the striking beauty of things and the flow of incessant life, besides deciding how to string them into words.

Nowadays Sindbad is enmeshed with words such as Camp David, Schengen and Dayton or ethnic cleansing, Desert Storm and boat people. Such words and phrases represent islands of death; and the modern writer cannot ignore them.

The Thousand and One Nights is more than 'one story within another'. It is a guidebook with a major question: How can one be reborn?

Going back to al-Andalus; both Ibn Arabi and Ibn Rushd gave different responses than that of Ibn Tufayl, whose response was almost in tune with the point of view of Algazali and Ibn Sina.

In his book *The Self-taught Philosopher,*[8] Ibn Tufayl, gives us a feeling of loneliness, similar to living alone on an island. Perhaps in a small part this is what makes it attractive. Some readers might be blinded by the phrase *Illumination of Mecca,*[9] and others inspired by the ideas of *Destruction of the Destruction*[10] or *The Healing.*[11] The writer might think that Ibn Tufayl's determination offers the reader a touch of what is really human. On one side we exercise our willpower and try effortlessly to discover the winding road to the truth and any betrayal of this fact justifies dealing with the inner journey as in the novel by *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*.

On the other side arises the crucial topic of writing down the "language". The protagonist remains silent until he is taught how to speak, a feat that never leaves him even in his advanced years. Perhaps in his fifties he starts an amazing process of reasoning things that drives him into an ineffable state.

What is he meditating about? Words! It cannot be "words", due to the fact that Absal knows only how to articulate sounds not heard sounded by other animals, voices that reveal emotions. The protagonist emits only sounds learnt from animals: 'he admired the words not knowing what they meant and only feeling happiness and kindness in them.' His intuition guided him to knowledge and wisdom. After learning how to speak or better name them, he was amazed to note that allegories were used to express the knowledge that he acquired by other means. He even apologised for wanting to reveal the secrets of wisdom directly. The narrator of this novel is even more drastic in this respect: 'words always meant something different to reality... It could be dangerous to express with words what is ineffable by nature... It makes comparison as to the colour he likes most, or tries to say as an example that black is sweet or bitter...' and asks the

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[8] Ibn Tufayl. *Risala Hayy ibn Yaqzan,*(Spanish edition), Trotta, Madrid, 1995.

[9] Ibn Arabi. *Futuhat al-Makkiyya,* (Spanish edition), Siruela, Msadrid, 1996.

[10] Ibn Rushd. *Tahafut al-tahafut,* UNESCO, Oxford, 1954.

[11] Ibn Sina. *Kitab al-Shifá,* El Cairo, 1960.

reader to respect these bounds. He can only try to tell the story through allegories. For Ibn Tufayl the topic does not have to do with a game or an office trick. The writer asks himself: What are the possibilities and limits of a language as a means of expression? Is there a space between reality and fiction? What is it made of?

Approaching the nature of love, the writer thinks good examples of these answers are found in *The Ring of the Dove*[12] by Ibn Hazm of Cordoba. He must have been without a doubt a passionate man, educated and totally independent.

The writer thinks about the original point of view and how natural for Ibn Hazm to reveal the crowd and the many lovers that crowd the pages of the book, and the lines that recall the lost Ommiad Caliphate. We witness the intertwining of verse and prose, description, narration, and philosophic speculation, autobiographic references, and this petition of reiterated apologies in order to express himself within the established rules. Ibn Hazm perfected and surpassed conventionalism, artificiality and rigidness in all perspectives. The writer thinks he accomplishes it through beautiful images ('things get entangled like cherries'), metaphors ('Me, her, the glass, the white wine and the darkness/ we look like the earth, rain, pearls, gold and jets') and techniques that make the weight of the story lighter, like the encounter between Ramadi and Jalwa. In whatever case the writer thinks, loneliness, the creator of freedom and his own contradictions are what make Ibn Hazm's style of will. This author compromises in his work and his time, the tension between the old and the new and dares to express beauty, opens the road to the ambiguity and the quicksand inherent in authentic literary work, where all judgements end. Adonis wrote beautiful verse in this respect: 'I know you're absent in order to remain a question.'

The writer carries on with his journey through the country of literature and decides to discover, without forgetting lucid words like those by Robert Coover: 'We have also been driven by critics and analysts to a dead end. We are also victims of the strain on literature.'[13]

The writer wants to raise six flags to show the way, to adopt new ways to perceive reality and new ways of narrating to spark the imagination and render life to be more bearable.

The first flag is universalism against individualism. The writer finds it – among other works - in *The Birth of Dawn*[14] by the Moroccan Driss Chraibi. There is one moment in the book where Qais Abu Imram, the governor of Cordoba says: 'And we have only one book: *The Koran*. It is the basis of our power, the limits and exits of our world. But I ask myself very humbly, very deeply: Do you know what made us triumphant on all people east to west? Our ignorance. Yes our ignorance against the

[12] Ibn Hazm. *Tawq al Hamâma*,(Spanish edition), Alianza, Madrid, 1971.

[13] Coover, R. 1969. *Prick Songs & Descants*, Dutton, New York.

[14] Chraibi, Driss. 1986. *Naissance à l'aube*, Ed. du Seuil, Paris.

organised nations, the cultural and knowledgeable. This is how we all of a sudden discovered the meaning of history. This prompted us to inquire who we are and what goes around us. Our archives contain only poetry. Now we are up against humanity. We need to know how to do everything precisely, perfectly without losing an iota of our natural origin; the children of the desert that we are. This is difficult, is it not?'

The writer apologises for a quote perhaps too long, but it has the nostalgia, aroma and the agony of a man of our times: how can we live together without allowing for arrogance or desperation to defeat us? Our world is complex; we still do not know all the questions.

The second flag of the writer's country is freedom. It is found in *The Feathers*,[15] a novel by the Kurdish writer Salim Barakat. Freedom is depicted in three types: three narrators, a scene that does not obey the laws of space and time, a lot of retrospect, little action. There, freedom in the treatment of subjects like you would treat a secret, as in *Corazón tan blanco*[16] by the Spaniard Javier Marías. And above all there is freedom in the relationship that the author establishes between myth and history, in the formulation of questions without answers like: What is reality made of? And in the daring story of Faqih Tayrán: Why did the owl say it was the gold of Buraq? Salim Barakat gives the reader a gift of enigmatic and ironic freedom: Can one choose between freedom and the truth?

The third flag of the writer's country deals with beauty; with an effort to make 'this universe less disgusting and render these shortly-lived moments less serious,' as per Baudelaire.

In addition to what I have cited above about the two arab poets; the writer calls attention to other poets and in particular Tawfiq Zayyad and Badr Shakir as-Sayyab. Perhaps the sense of beauty is best found in *What Abu Hurayra Narrated to Us*[17] authored by the Tunisian Mahmud al Massadi when he recounts: 'He left; but what the world did bring for me, later, was distress that I became resentful and could find no charm whatsoever, in it. Dawn took him to eternity. And though I always craved the sun, I was frightened of what it might appear to tell me: you can weave your life a dawn.'

What can one add more to this quotation?

The fourth flag of the writer's country is of diversity. The writer thinks that he can find it between the pages of *The Dance of Passions*[18] by Edward al Jarrat who blends reasoning with the heart's passion. The analysis of the poem and the concoction of

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[15] Barakat, Salim 1990. *Ar-Rish*, Bissan Press, Nicosia, Cyprus.

[16] Marias, Javier 1997. *Corazón tan blanco*, Anagrama, Barcelona.

[17] Massadi, Mahmud al 1996. *Haddaza Abu Hurayra Qala* (Spanish edition), Huerga y Fierro, Madrid.

[18] Jarrat, Edward al 1997. *La danse des passions*, Actes Sud, Arles.

literary genres go way beyond the Egyptian urban or social novel, though the world is seen here through one person: 'When you talk about me, I talk about you.' The same thing happens in the novel *Epic of Emigration to the North*[19] by the Sudanese Tayyeb Saleh, in which the relationship between the north and the south is clearly depicted: 'I am a thirsty desert, a panorama of wishes from the south.'

Diversity: 'we have made you peoples and tribes so that you can recognise one another.' (Koran)

The fifth flag of the writer's country is the aspiration of the ideal human, betrayed many a time. This could be traced when reading about the bitter pleasure of ideals of independence, lost in *The Forgotten Game*[20] by Mohammed Berrada, as well as in *The Egg of the Cock*[21] by Muhammad Zafzaf, or in *A Time of Errors*[22] by Mohamed Chukri. But perhaps nothing could match the character of the Sheikh Abu Saud in Gamal el-Guitani's novel *Zaini Barakat*:[23] 'It is always the same question, clouded with perplexity: why is there so much death in vain? What is the purpose of coming into life, and live, feel pain and in the end have no hope of any gain? Why is it so easy to depart life?'

There are some books that one cannot just leave aside, because they always deal in fundamental matters.

The sixth flag marks the path of the writer's country set up in the map: the opposition of oppression in all forms; particularly the oppression imposed on women to the point of sufferage. Who is going to give time back Firdaus, the protagonist *Woman at Point Zero*[24] by Nawal al-Sa'dawi? She says: 'How many years of my life went by before my body and mind really became mine, to do with them what I like? How many years my life has lost before I was able to snatch my body and mind away from the control of people who kept me tied up since birth?' Who is going to give back this time to the protagonist of the story *Thirty-one Beautiful Trees*[25] by Salwa Bakr? Or that what you may read in *Mesauda*[26] by Abdelhak Serhane, 'the black androgen, the consciousness suffocation of social inequality, the insult made by God's words and the irony of an unhappy life, determined by fate.' And as far as children are concerned,

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[19] Saleh, Tayyeb 1986. *Mausim al-hichra ila-sh-shimel* (Spanish edition), Martíne Roca, Barcelona.

[20] Berrada, Mohammed 1986. *Lu'bat al nisyan*, Casablanca.

[21] Zafzaf, M. 1984. *Baydat al-dik*, Mansurat al Yami-a, Casablanca.

[22] Chukri, Mohammed 1995. *Zaman al Akhtaa* (Spanish edition), Debate, Madrid.

[23] Guitani, Gamal el *1994. Zaini Barakat* (Spanish edition), Ed. du Seuil, Paris.

[24] Sa'dawi, Nawal al 1994. *Firdaus*, (Spanish edition), Horas y Horas, Madrid.

[25] Bakr, Salwa 1992. Las artimañas de los hombres y otras historias, El Cairo.

[26] Serhane, Abdelhak 1983. *Messaouda*, Ed. du Seuil, Paris.

reading *The Enchanted Look*[27] is enough. It is a story by the Algerian writer Mohammed Dib about the mutilation of the children of the poor in Latin America performed to satiate the demand for organs by the rich. Then the endless stories about wars' catastrophes. For example, *Arbil's Yoghurt*[28] by the Iraqi Muhisin Al-Ramli about love in times of war, or *Memory to Forget*[29] by Mahmud Darwish, or *Sins*[30] by Emil Habibi or *The Road of Ordeals*[31] by Abdelatif Laabi and so many others.

These are six flags that define a vigorous map of literature, of an extensive country full of life: Writer's Country.

ماریو غرانده

Mario Grande is a Spanish writer and translator. He is the author of *Holidays in Jadara* (Arabic version, Dar Al-Wah, 1998), and *Broken Characters in Universal Literature*, and *Carfax* (a novel, Bilbao, 1990).

[27] Dib, Mohammed 1993. *Paquita ou le regard ravi*, Le Monde Diplomatique, Paris, Mars.

[28] Al-Ramli, Muhsin 1998. *Auraq bayda an digla*, Azmina, Amman.

[29] Darwish, Mahmud 1986. *Zakira li'lnisyan*, Al Karmel.

[30] Habibi, Emile 1993. *Ijtayya*, (Spanish edition) Muchnik, Barcelona.

[31] Laatif, Abdelatif 1982. *Le chemin des ordalies*, Ed. Denöel, Paris.

ASTRA WARREN

The Long Journey

Peter Dawson!

On a rain-swept winter afternoon in Western Australia, the name heard on a radio programme bridges a gap of sixty years back to a rain-swept afternoon in England.

A child crouches, ear pressed to the loudspeaker bars of grandmother's gramophone cabinet, hand poised ready to wind, lest one precious note be lost of this golden voice from another world; a world glimpsed in geography primers of sheep under limitless skies and a burning sun; a world peppered with strange names like verbal exclamation marks. Windows opened in a child's mind, glimpses of a magic land of wattle, kangaroos, gum trees, strange birds...

Sixty years later, I live that childhood dream, but the magic remains. I marvel how it can be possible that many "new" Australians have come so far, physically and mentally, in one lifetime: so far, that the long-ago world is now the one that seems like a dream.

That world existed on the fringe of coal-mining developments, places where the necessity of finding fuel for industrial monsters was slowly swallowing the rural peace of England.

This was a strange half-world, a generation of children born into grimy houses regimented as terraces or squares, but escaping at every precious moment into the surrounding woods and hushed lanes, penetrating nature's deep silences until clattering pitheads were hidden behind rustling treetops and sulphurous chimneys were veiled by the sharp, clean earth smell. There were bluebells and elderberry flowering in Spring, blackberries and nuts in Autumn, and enough adventure in twining tendrils and tearing thorns to satisfy the hardiest.

Driven by hunger or lengthening shadows, children emerged from their secret world, still gripped by its mystery, to where teacups clattered, mothers scolded and fretted in stone-flagged kitchens, where hot water was ladled from the boiler beside the black-leaded range. There was no shortage of fuel while the man worked at the pit, his free coal allowance fuelling the ever-burning grate.

This fire was the focal point of the house, the only source of water heating, airing clothes on the line strung under the mantelpiece, cooking food in the adjacent oven big enough for a goose or four loaves of bread, a kettle forever simmering on the hob to "mash" endless pots of tea. Thick slices of crusty bread were impaled on a trident to be toasted against the bars of the grate. At bedtime, hot bricks were taken from the oven's bottom shelf, wrapped in flannel and hugged, close and warm, up the dark enclosed staircase to lavender-and-mothball-scented bedrooms. Put into chilly beds, soft with feather mattresses and eiderdowns, the bricks made a pool of warmth for young bodies to curl into, like the wild things curled up in the now dark and rustling woods.

Women were expert at assessing the quality of coal; bright coal heated the oven quickly for baking, slack (gravel-sized bits) was good for banking the fire to smoulder all night, inferior grade with veins of fool's gold burned to thick feathery ash and puffed out of the grate on windy nights. Most hated was the rubbish, which exploded and spat bits of hot slate to burn holes in the pegged hearth rug. The danger of fire was ever-present.

The house routine worked round its pivot, the man, and his three-weekly cycle of shift work. Women lay wakeful during night shift, thankful to hear steel-capped boots clattering home over the cobbles, another safe return. Then the banked fire was stirred to boil a kettle for the first of gallons of hot, sweet tea to wash down the dust, while he sat, grime encrusted.

Shadows of damp underground spaces still hung over him, only eyes and lips pale in a black mask. When the boiler steamed, a tin bath was put in front of the fire and hot water ladled into it, his wife gathering up grimy clothes to put in the scullery copper.

Drinking at the pub was not a large part of life. There might be an occasional pint with mates, but more often, an older child was sent with cloth-covered jug to the off-licence window, hurrying back with the strong brew foaming and slopping. This was the reward for long hours crouched underground, shuffling forward as the pick swung, a sub-human progress which wore out a pair of leather kneepads in a week. It took sober courage to face being clanged fast each day in an iron cage and dropped into the dark earth. The wives understood very well the dusty terrors and daily danger of that plunge down the shaft.

For the children, mornings began with the sound of shunting engines in the marshalling yards. No need to peep between stiff-starched lace curtains to see which was passing; each had its signature noise; all had military names, Sergeant, Captain, Colonel. They puffed backwards and forwards, over the bridge down to the pithead, chivvying empty trucks in and full ones out, lined up to wait for General, the "big engine", to fetch them each afternoon. A hundred or more would go clanking away to feed the factories and turn the wheels of industry. The pit watchman kept a flock of geese which roamed free between the dumps, outstretched necks menacing better than any watchdogs, hissing tongues blending with the pit whistle and steam-wreathed driving pistons on the engines.

Grown-ups existed only on the periphery of a child's world. Real life was in the gangs, a word that had a less terrifying connotation then than it has acquired now. A gang was a union, a mateship group, a cross-section of the world. There were big boys, bullies or protectors as occasion demanded; big girls with secret knowing smiles; middle sized apprentices of both sexes, eager pupils learning to be streetwise, and littlies, the reluctant responsibility of older siblings, to be abandoned or left behind when authority threatened. In the long twilights, gangs played games like hide and seek, tin lurky and hot potato. There were adventures for the daring, metal dustbins positioned outside dark back doors, overflow pipes in outside toilets to be blocked, huddling breathless in dark corners waiting for the outraged bellow of a dripping sitter.

The ultimate test was to scramble up an embankment and place halfpennies on the line for the next train to flatten to the size of a penny - pocket money instantly doubled.

November 5th was the crown of the year. The approach of Guy Fawkes Night set off weeks of planning and teamwork. Bigger boys raided railway sleeper stockpiles, while girls and the young dragged branches and even fallen trees home from the woods. As the pile grew, guards had to be posted against marauding raids from other gangs. It became a concerted, mind-consuming effort, school time an agony spent away from the project. It was the first conscious breath of morning and the last thought before drifting off to sleep in the flickering candlelight. Adults regarded the efforts with amused indulgence. Perhaps they were secretly proud of the initiative displayed by these fierce ragamuffins. The preparation was all; in an hour on Bonfire Night the pile was consumed by flames in an inevitable November miasma of drizzle and dampness.

The advent of war had little apparent impact on children in these communities. Gas masks were a bravado, and it was licence to be allowed to lick brown paper strips to stick over carefully cleaned window panes. Uncles and cousins were called up and departed, reappearing at intervals in smart uniforms. But miners were exempt from military service; coal was top priority in the war effort.

Their coal allowance continued while others were rationed. Despite austerity, women who had been through hardship before still managed to produce appetising and nourishing meals.

However, one day, a large parcel from Australia was delivered to my grandmother. On that social level, mail of any kind was rare, and usually brought bad news. However, Australian generosity in sending food parcels to England had been widely publicized. So the parcel

was kept for a ceremonial opening on Sunday afternoon when most of the family came for tea.

It was placed on the green plush cloth and everybody gathered round. Every knot was picked apart to save the precious string, and the brown paper carefully unwrapped. In a hush of expectation, the carton was opened and grandmother took out tins of ham, cream and butter, packets of sultanas and custard powder, treasures we had not seen for years, and all more valuable than gold. But most marvellous to me was a tin of sliced peaches. "Produce of Australia", said the label, with gum trees and a kangaroo.

Grandmother got out her best cut-glass fruit set and we shared the contents right down to the last drop of juice. I licked my spoon until no flavour was left. Peter Dawson was right to sing of a country where such miracles existed. What must it be like to live there?

Sixty years later, I know the answer.

And I am not disappointed.

The long journey was worthwhile.

أسترا وارِن

Astra Warren is an Australian writer who lives in Western Australia.

MARGARET BRADSTOCK

Three Poems

For Dorothy Hewett

'Oh, I've had some good times...But no, I'm
not happy now because life didn't turn out to be
as marvellous as I thought it would.'

You were the wild card
the wild-girl-in-the-heart,
your yellow hair a rampart,
the windmills cranking up
above the wheat,
those years when all you need
is face and body,
as though youth was the deal.

Later on, you play it with charisma,
raw talent, Queen of Hearts
to your novitiates: the windy churchyard
of "The Chapel Perilous" whispering
of forbidden love, the wounds
that never leave off bleeding;
the tenements of Moncur Street,
bonds of the Forsaken Mermaid
all changed, *gone under Bondi's hills.*

The last part is the hardest.
No one pulls off this hat-trick
and lives to tell the tale.
I see you ride into your future,
Lady Godiva, with her cascading hair
hiding and revealing
the self gone free.

Harbour Lights

1

Max Gillies at the Opera House,
or John Bell's *Richard III.*
Secured in the undercover
car-park, we reject the lift,
scale concrete steps
lapped by the slosh of water.
Lights on Slessor's harbour
winking out, the bridge
like a Ken Done original,
towers of glass and metal, neon-lit,
line the foreshores.
"Astonishing," say tourists.

What I'm hearing is the bush
long gone, after-image jackhammering
at the back of my brain,
light/dark, red/green,
wondering how Cook
could have coasted
serenely past.

2

Massive, pink-barked angophoras
grow straight from the stone;
a brook runs through
ferns and rock-orchids,
the Port Jackson fig-trees,
membranous fruit dropping,
splitting, and the flying-foxes
homing in with fierce cry.
Called Werrong by the Eora people,
Phillip names it Sydney Cove,
gifts of beads and red baize
the bride-price.

Lake Jindabyne

Drowned Jindabyne rises still,
somewhere beneath the waves.
For me it recalls
a submerged childhood,
fishing trips to the river, picnics,
swimming under the willows
in summer's burnt stillness,
my own past flooded, changed,
sometimes too bitter to salvage
but pushing upwards
like the old church spires
or the ghost gums treading softly
round the edges of memory.

When the army moved in
with gelignite and fuse,
and the smoke cleared,
the old bailey bridge, last link
with their heritage, was gone.
Water filled the gourd of the valley,
shrouding the farms.
Two stunned platypuses
floated listlessly by,
revived, then swam away.

The lake has its speed-boats now,
water-skiers, Kosciusko tours,
park rangers instead of horsemen.
The heart of the past lies sunken,
sometimes calling across the valley
and the filtered colours of sky.

مارغريت برادستوك

Dr. **Margaret Bradstock** has been awarded an Asialink literature residency in Beijing in 2003, supported by the NSW Ministry for the Arts and the Australia Council. She will be writer-in-residence at Peking University.

J. K. MURPHY

A Type of Share-Farming

My pencil pine is a wind-smacked yardarm
Swaying close to my window facing east.
I wait for a furrowing hand, light's long arm,
To touch its finger-tips to mine, and warm
Tillable reaches of the room, not least,

With penciling in margins, novels in the stack,
Their hearts, as they have touched me, bookmarked.
I share a writer's toil, dig his plot, buy his book,
Wear his jacket, listen dog-eared to his knock.
But he is his own man. I am mine, crease-marked.

ج. ك. ميرفي

J. K. Murphy lives in Melbourne, Australia.

CHARLES D'ANASTASI

Three Poems

maps

late at night
on the radio
a plaintive stretch
of palestinian voice
alongside the oud
with maps

faces on loan
to a passing world
roads of story -
a shared placenta
with the conch
of the heart

The last river nocturne

It's not hard to feel the pull of the waters,
how the hours give way to the river
why the remains float past, beyond our reach.
We know what we are left with :
shadows and husks of shadows -
... but the distances ... the voicelessness -
the slow movements of the night,
words that started the leaving,

the repeating, the stains appearing
on the walls of our room,
the unreachable sound of a foghorn inside our heads -
...for which part of our lives

has not been spent
like two open boats, drifting on a lake
as the mist sets in, while

we call across the water
to keen our abandonment,
allowing ourselves 'How misshapen of me'
'How misshapen ...' ... voices barely connecting,
understanding little of tides or true visibility
the ebbs and flows
the sighs of the currents
the hidden channels
the neglected grotto of the heart.

Tulips and fireworks

After a few days on her desk
the stalks bearing
the red and yellow tulip flowers
rainbow down in slow descent -
crisscrossing, falling,
over each other
no less a feat
than last year's fireworks
splintering in a fiesta
of colours and curves -
their fine hunger for
the last days of summer
the night and the sky.

تشارلز دَنستازي

Charles D'Anastasi was born in Malta, and lives in Melbourne. Has had poems published in various journals (including *Kalimat*) and anthologies.

JULIE LEIBRICH

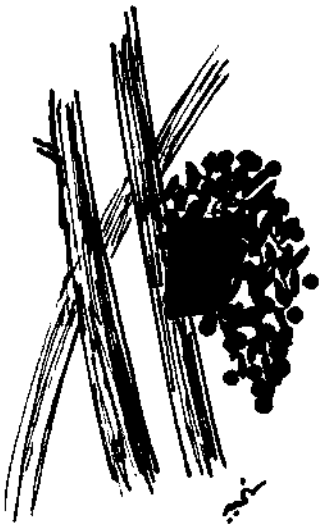
Six Poems

Questions for an Indian Pen Friend

Who is stranger, you in your delta park
counting the last tiger, or me
sitting here in mud pools?

I cannot imagine an Indian childhood.
Am embarrassed to see bare feet
white robes, gold bangle.

Did you time your tables in Urdu
gather twigs for your Nana's fire
steal your first kiss at a market?



I did. But then, are there twigs
on banyan trees?

Is yours a kindly god?
Whose face do you look on at night?
Does silk mean the same to you as to me?

Do we think of blue differently
you in your inexplicable sky
weeping monsoons?

And what of the nature of love?
You enticed by Tagore, me
ravished early by Donne.

I am too shy to ask a stranger.

Home Again

Home again, I give thanks
for small things.
The curling cats who follow me
round the desk reminding
me I write. Easing myself
between the wedge of sheets
I even welcome mustiness
as some kind of personal history.
Idly, I notice the sea is still
coming in and am amazed
I do not drown in distance.

All I Know

There is no journey
I can pinpoint from there to here.
No 'I took this road and not another'.
All I know is this is a station
a place to rest, refresh.

I no longer wait for the awakening.
It happens every day.
In the scent of a daphne bush
the pattern of rain on the roof
someone taking my hand.

Sometimes I sit on the edge
of the track and watch the trains
go by. They are not *my* trains,
Too fast perhaps, too shiny
too much steam.

And it's not as if I think
that someone's waiting
or even there's an end to the line.
All I know is I'm alone but not alone
frightened, secure, full of grief
and hope.

The Place of no Shadows

I like being here
somewhere between
my eyes and the horizon.

Above the derelict church
I see a fine line of cloud
ethereal.

Closer, the rust which clings
onto life while ancient
bell towers crumble.

Closer, the window
where someone has pressed
his face, too eager for day.

Closer, I see that I see beyond
the glass, the wall
the church, the light.

This is the place of no shadows
no sound, where you do not
know you are alone.

I slip here from time to time
without meaning to - into the arms
of this old familiar lover.

At One in the Morning

In the eye of the storm
in a storm in a teacup
in tea for one not two.

At one in the morning
in morning oneness
sad to not hold you.

Holding your image
in my eye, imagining
my eye to see.

You beside me.
Beside myself with
wanting you with me.

Holes in Snow

When the deaf man listens
he expects to hear something
of significance.

News of peace – or war.
A birth, death, marriage.

But all I wanted to say
was see the sun?
That light in branches.

A red roof which caught my eye
and held it long after
we were gone.

Like holes in snow,
the fleeting rain.

جولي لايبرخ

Dr. **Julie Leibrich** is a former commissioner of mental health in New Zealand. She has qualifications in Psychology and English Literature. In addition to poetry, she writes stories for children. Her first poetry collection, *The Paper Road*, was published in 1998.

THOMAS SHAPCOTT

The Unwanted

I

In the other room
television eagerly played
the film shots
of the latest disaster
sometimes in bleached colour
sometimes shaky
but always in for the angle
and the unspeakable
anguish
but he preferred
to sit outside
and note
how the Rose-of-Sharon
completed its one day
deeply pink
when at dawn, white
seemed the only possible colour.

II

In the room with the others
the shots had moved to
that earthquake in the Andes to
faces, blank, uncomprehending
and to
the voice-over that calmly
notified the statistics
and the economic consequences
but he stayed where he was
until the last of the light
faded into grey
without any gaudy sunset
and he wrote
to a friend:
'The years have been good,
it is hard to imagine
we have lived through
all these decades without
the horrors of warfare
in our land.'

III

In the darkened room with the television
the news had turned to local matters -
illegal immigrants
went berserk last night
some claim to have been in detention
over two years
they have been told
we do not want them here
they must not expect
anything,
it is naive to offer them
sympathy
the Minister says.

In the darkened garden
he knows the snails are coming out
and the spider will build
its nightly web.
It is not possible
to avoid everything.
'Warfare is different now', he writes.
'Language has become the battlefield
and the harvest is ripe
where bigotry has been planted
and deceit cultivated.'
He hears
the plop plop of
the last flowers fallen
from the Rose-of-Sharon.

When he goes inside
nothing will have changed
except an immediate anger
and a sense he has become irrelevant.

IV

At midnight he is called
by a friend. 'Watch the television.'
In live footage from across the world
and in his pyjamas he sees
the crude cartoons re-enacted
with an initial simplicity
then with unutterable mess.
He has a friend whose office
was in the World Trade Centre.
His vision is sheeted over
and the replays will numb him
with their greedy irony.
He is not only irrelevant
he is as safe as houses
on a sudden faultline.

توماس شابكوت

Professor **Thomas Shapcott** is with the University of Adelaide, Australia.

MAGGIE SHAPLEY

Three Poems

Choice

Here, the ocean where all is shift and change,
there, the charted shore, and in between
bright corridor of choice, where questions
niggle at fact, you plant your feet and let
each sucking wave draw you in – what once
so firmly held, sharply-defined, flooded smooth.

That night by water's edge, it wasn't me –
I had swum out beyond the sheltering shore,
knew then what was offered, chose instead
this rough healing, slow drowning, in saltwater.

Survival Strategy

Death has stolen my address book,
scores through names, uncouples,
tears out the page where
gilt edges spread open
and I rang to say I'd gone.

Now I reconstruct:
hide my precious ones
in crisp pages crammed
with every brief acquaintance,
each one living dangerously.

Lake House

There's no nostalgia here, no hint of it,
except the message whispered by the wind
through the shredded bark of the single gum,
towering over the terrace, shedding leaves
into the pool all year long.

Near the new jacuzzi, by new palms
transplanted from the north, a girl once sat,
knees bent to fit the window seat, reading
of other worlds, far from the Lake house,
waiting for the southerly.

Behind the newly laid brick, the swaying
house of memory remains, its deceptive planks
and warped weatherboard reminding you
that nothing keeps – life's uncertain journey:
racing canoes ahead of the storm.

ماغي شابلي

Maggie Shapley is the Director of Publishing at the National Archives of Australia, and editor of *Archives and Manuscripts*, the journal of the Australian Society of Archives. She has a Master of Arts degree in early English literature form the University of Sydney. She lives in Canberra.

TALA FAKHOURY

Three Poems

Perfect Blue

Behind the truth
The self walks naked
And the eyes kneel with grace

Shadows leave their traces across multiple journeys
The lack of time brings out fright
And the bells are just the sight of a prayer

No attachment between the soul and the body
The blue moves until it becomes a ship or a mariner

I was asked about my original clarity
But the answer sank into the depth of my blue hair

The moment is the swiftness of tides
The cornflower is my soul
The rainbow fulfills my glances
Speechless storms visit the mind
But the heart is always the friend of the wind

Delusion along the dark

I noticed you in the dark
There I was swept by the tenderness in your eyes
Obscurity was a fade shadow in my memory
I looked for you between the darkest shade and the lightest breath
But neither your smile nor your words flashed into my existence

The night could not speak
Even the stars sounded gloomy preferring to betray my light
I heard the patience of the sea but I could not be a wave

I chose to be the wind
Then you could be my storm

Imagine the storm and the wind in their dance
The violence of such intimate chaos
The snow in the whirlwind

I lie beside myself as if you were me
My hand falls lonely and my fingers grip my flooding heart
I saw you once by the darkest light
Thus I chose to die in the dark

Dying

She is back, why did I think that she left?
The falling leaves of my eyes blame her fury
And the whispers of her hands crawl beneath the fall
Light is a fade combination that dries behind the walls
It carries the silky flowers and the lilies in a vicious touch

She comes back without a face but with a night
So she could catch all the winds in the tree then whistle to break free
She claps with her eyes after hearing the serenade of the dawn
Her hair is a waterfall that changes her face
From a crystal glance to a firing sight

Flowers become a part of every touch
We come to life again and rise in the morning
Despite nature and despite our will

Our roots were built by the same hand
Through the sounds of the ground and the laughter of the mountains
It is like catching the last broken glass
Now I believe in flying elephants ...

تالة فاخوري

Tala Fakhoury is an eighteen-year-old Lebanese who started writing poetry in English several years ago. She lives in Lebanon.

CHAWKI MOSLEMANI

Eleven Poems

Translated by ***Noel Abdulahad***

Deficiency

It is the weather...
It walks on two crutches
breathes oxygen
and carbon dioxide
through two nostrils.

Twins

The night and the day
under one roof
sometimes they play
sometimes they run
or hide and rave:
a stone
a flower

a moon
a snake.

A Dance

A painting
drips tears and swords

A witch
stuffs a toy with life's lust

A statue
strikes the air
with a pickaxe

And this damsel
draws her face a smile
and dances with the idol.

Hope

Sleeping, he hopes
the wounded around him
calm down,
the wind eases
the dead depart

For so long some ships sailed
in his head and now
he wants to rest.

Void

An echo
  inherits the scream
A void
  inherits the wind

The wind
  erases the footsteps
no path is seen.

Among You

A coppersmith
  hammers in my head
A painter
  colours at my sight
A madman
emerges from me
another, knocks on
        to get in

So, I ask you O judges:
  do not call me "you..."
I am a multi-man
and do not know all my clan
including the criminal

But once you sentence me
the criminal shows up
            amongst you...

Where the Wolf is

So far my bird didn't return
from its flying trip

Silently I search for a star that
lit once, and vanished

I witnessed
the slaughtering of the butterflies,
quivering muddy dreams in strange
lanes,
ants pushing carriages and
the night watchmen running away
with the cargo.
Recklessly I mend the holes

Anyone obsessed by the passion of
the sun
is my friend
The finger-crippled hungry tiger
is my friend
Those injected with forgetfulness
are my friends

And the desert is mine

The green rain is pouring over the
slopes where
the wolf awaits a bird that has not
returned

I come out of the dust
and draw forth my blind men.

The Night

Rising up,
he glanced at the dreariness
dangling from his eyes
He realised it was
the night...

Novelty

The novelty is
a paper
that falls down.

Vision

I smash the mirror
to see you.

The Reason Why

He talks about sweetness
no one listens to him

That's why
he dies out.

شوقي مسلماني نويل عبد الأحد

Chawki Moslemani is a poet and editor of Lebanese origins. He lives in Sydney. The above poems are from his recent collection *Where the Wolf is*. Multi Publications, Sydney 2002. They are translated by **Noel Abdulahad** who is *Kalimat*'s adviser in USA.

FADWA TOUKAN

Translated by ***Noel Abdulahad***

Loneliness

Inspired by the Law of Gravity

Time flew away
leaving me all alone at home
together with my shadow
The law of the Universe vanished,
It was destroyed by destiny's absurdity
No gravity holds my luggage
or pulls it down to the floor
Everything flew away:
the seat, the dinning table, the revolving chair
They became a hold-up
in the hands of the aggressors

I am all alone at home
together with my shadow
no father, no mother, no brothers
no sisters to flood the house with their mirthful laughter
Nothing is here save loneliness
save gloom
The stack of the days and the years
bends down my back
burdens my steps
extinguishes the lights in the horizon
I miss the coffee's aroma
suffused all around the place
drowning me day and night
in a sea of ecstasy
Time took a wing
leaving me all alone at home

together with my shadow
I miss my books –
my only amusement
in a crisis or delight
I miss my mother's antique clock
and the commemorative photographs
hanging on the wall
I miss the music of my lute...
its chords were torn
its tunes silenced
Time took a wing
leaving me all alone at home
afflicted by curfews that torture me
What crushes me is
the massacring of children in my homeland
I fear tomorrow,
I fear the unknown coming from destiny's furrow
O my God...
let me not be a burden on other generations,
while waiting to reach the land of silence
waiting for death to wear my face
O my God...
I have had a long road
make it short and curtail my journey

فدوى طوقان

Fadwa Toukan is a Palestinian poet living in Nablus. The above poem was published in *Alkarmel*, a literary magazine edited by Mahmoud Darwish, Issue 72-73, 2002.

نويل عبد الأحد

Noel Abdulahad is a writer, critic and translator, living in USA. He is renowned for his translation of Gibran's *The Prophet*, considered the best. He is an adviser to *Kalimat*.

GHADA SAMMAN

Translated by ***Noel Abdulahad***

The Bricks of Lebanon are My Heart's Roof

I shall not forgive those who thrived on Lebanon and enjoyed the taste of its honey, its waters and freedom, only to bite the hand that fed them almonds and sugar. I shall not forgive those who drank from Lebanon's well, then poisoned its water.

I leave strapping a bag on my shoulder, and on my other shoulder surfaces the yelling of the custom's men in the airports of three continents: what do you hide in your bag?

My bag is like a magician's hat, full of rabbits and coloured handkerchiefs for farewells, for hidden tears, for flowers and for sighs.

In my bag I hide an amulet: a handful of the earth of Lebanon and some of its bricks to shelter my heart that no longer resembles its pictures in medical books. It now takes the shape of the map of Lebanon.

You who betrayed this enchanted home, look at yourselves! Without Lebanon you are bare-boned and deserve history's commiseration.

غادة السمّان

Ghada Samman is a prominent Syrian writer and poet who lives in Paris. The original Arabic of the above piece appeared in al-Hawadeth, No. 78, 08/02/2002.

SAADIA MUFRIH

Four Poems

Translated by ***Noel Abdulahad***

Colours

O Night!
Do you wish for more darkness?
Here I am,
dip your feathers in my heart.
O Sea!
Has your blueness ever faded?
Here I am, drink me.
O trees of the world!
Suck my blood until your leaves turn greener
O Universe!
Extract your colours out of my skin,
but leave for me my transparency.

No Comment

She wrote in her diary:
when a man bashes a woman,
the eye of the sun swells
the memory of the stars bleed
the Earth discards her femininity
in the abyss of the Universe
and commits suicide.
But what can a man write in his diary?

Together

A sad river kept going
and I strolled along...
Whenever our footsteps met,
I thought the river stood still.
Whenever our footsteps met,
the river thought I never left my place.
The river drank a mirage. This was my sorrow.
I drank sweet tears. These were his sorrow.
Walking together, we suddenly came across the sea
where we poured our sorrows into its dense waters
and drifted swiftly into the deep ocean!

Our Only Means

Together
we are birds with spreading wings
our only means to soar
high in the sky
carefree
and embrace each other

سعديّة مفرح

Saadia Mufrih is a Kuwaiti poet who lives in Kuwait where she is in charge of the cultural section of the leading *al-Qabas* Newspaper. She has many poetry collections to her credit. The above poems are from her collection *al-Aatham* (The Sins), *Alhi'a Almissria Ala'ma Lilkitab* 1997 (The General Egyptian Book Institute).

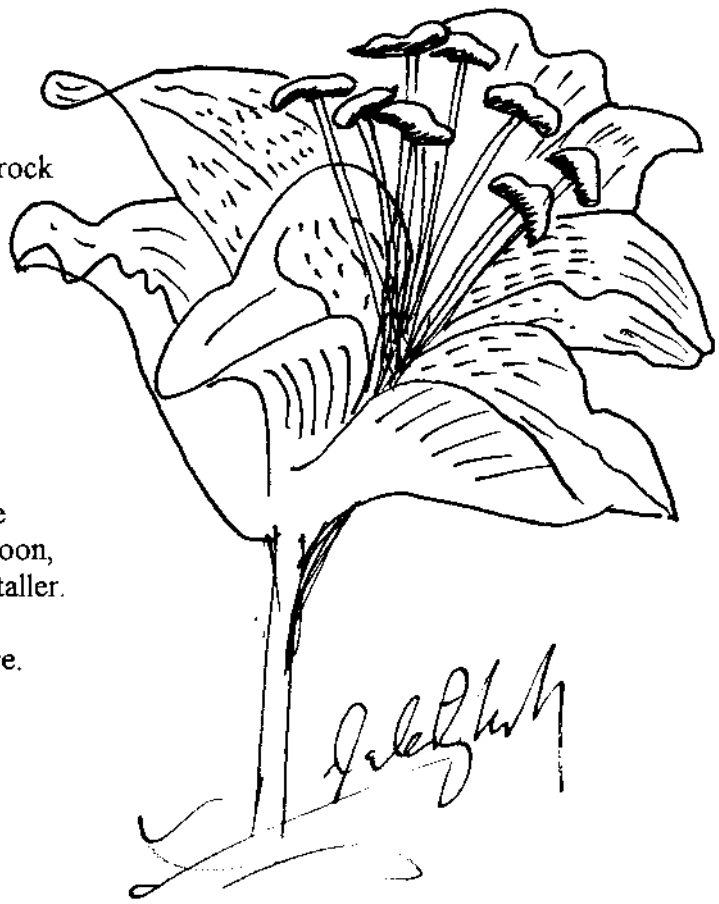
SALWA AS-SAID

Four Poems

Translated by ***Noel Abdulahad***

Silence

All things around me chatter:
the winds
the seas
the trees
and the people
I am an ember ingrained in the rock
I chatter all alone
I implore the walls' memory
until "Canaan" neighs.



Revelation

When you reveal yourself to me
the whole sky becomes a full moon,
the grass greener and the trees taller.
This is Eve for you my darling:
obsessed by men who fill the eye.

Mirage

He slowed down
so that his life draws nearer to its end
He slowed down

so that he may be...
He stared at the sun
till his eyes were extinguished
At last he said:
for give me for keeping myself busy
constructing houses
like the webs of spiders.

Craving

I crave for the apples of a cypress tree
for a cluster of songs
and a pulse that beats
I crave to be gravid like Mary
and lay my offspring in a sacred river
I crave for two extinguished eyes
or a heart that perceives me...
I crave for God to crave my inundating flood.

سلوى السعيد

Salwa as-Said is a Palestinian poet who lives in Los Angeles. She has six poetry collections to her credit. *Silence* and *Revelation* are from her collection *Lilhabib alathi fi Rida'i* (To the Lover inside my Gown), The Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing 1999. *Mirage* and *Craving* are from her collection *Nawaris bila Ajniha* (Wingless Seagulls), The Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing 1992.

ONSI AL-HAJJ

Three Poems
Translated by ***Raghid Nahhas***

Aspects of Paradise

The lady yearned and pined for something
soon the gardener
went to her, the moment he saw her.

Then he came back to his flowers
and she to her dreams...
She took hold of them
passionately
with zeal and love
in rage and fury
She took hold of them
as though they were
an oar and a plough...

Before He Dies

He marred with time
until time killed him
but before time died
it left him love.

From now on
do not laugh
if anyone errs and thinks
that his lover
is in reality his lover!

Autumn Leaves the Virgin Mary

The depression that dwelled in me died
it was replaced by Time, with its winds and rain.

Poetry turned strange to me:
I said about children, they were children
the knee of a woman, a knee of a woman
a broken poplar branch, a broken poplar branch.
In my pledge to the weeping clouds, never
adopted the use of common names,
not out of arrogance, but because
I was a poet
for when I was grievous
I named the autumn leaves, the Virgin Mary.
I felt that wholeheartedly!
As I said, I did not name these things
rather I saw them...
Ah how rich I was!
Bewitched by everything that touched me
bewitching everything I touched
I was not without knowledge
but I did not know how!
When one morning I thought
I was immortal,
until my grief diffused
and I did not know how
It died like musk.

أنسي الحاج

Onsi al-Hajj is a prominent Lebanese poet and journalist. The above poems are from his collection *Matha Sana'ta bil Thahab, Matha Faalta bil Wardah* (What have you done with the gold, what have you done to the rose), 2nd Edition, Dar al-Jadid, Beirut 1994.

EILEEN MARSHALL

In Scarlet Letters[1]

I'm an old woman now and the memories are flooding through me. They say everyone has one novel in them, I've enough memories for a dozen, all real blockbusters.

But where to start?

I was christened Ruby; Mum told me I was called Ruby after the precious stone, but I don't think that's true. I think I was called Ruby after my father's favourite barmaid. I heard them quarrelling about her one night and the next morning my mother started calling me Rubina.

My full name is Rubina Lilian Teresa. Teresa was my confirmation name, I was named after a saint.

Mum was crazy about funerals and I am pretty sure I was called Lilian after that stiff lily with the large white trumpet and the long golden rod, the one you used to see at funerals. Either that or I was named after Mum's friend, Lilian, who from all accounts, was little short of being a saint. Not that Mum was a bad woman, just, as my daughter says, a bit adventurous for those days. Perhaps Mum thought her friend would be a good example to me - perhaps she thought I'd become a nun, or at the very least, a dedicated doer of good works and a spinster virgin like Lilian.

I often think you can't help yourself in life. If Mum had looked like Lilian and Lilian had looked like Mum, I'm sure their stories would have been reversed. It's pretty easy to be holy if you look like Lilian, it's much harder to be saintly if you have a heart-shaped face with dimples when you smile and huge green eyes that dance with fun.

Mum was so entrancing you could forgive her anything. I did. Most people did.

I told you Mum liked funerals. I've lost count of the times I was dragged to see a funeral. They made my flesh creep. I think my claustrophobia goes back to the first day I watched the long, dark, wooden box covered with wreaths of flowers being lowered into a hole in the ground. The fragrance of carnations and tuberoses still makes me sad.

I fretted about the flowers being suffocated under the heavy soil. I imagined being in that box and still alive and not able to breathe and the darkness and the mildewy smell of being closed in, and the dead bodies in the ground all around me.

Don't bury me, and whatever you do, don't bring flowers to my funeral when they cremate me - I hate the thought of their little faces shrivelling in the fire.

My daughter often laughs at me, she says 'Flowers can't feel Mum, you'd make a good Jain.' That's some Indian sect who some say have weird ideas, but I don't I think

[1] The title is based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

they're weird. I know flowers *can feel*. It's no good you saying to me that I'm being irrational; I know blossoms are grateful when I pick them up off the footpath and put them out of the way of tramping feet and I always try to find a bit of water to put them in to quench their thirst.

I like flowers at weddings and birthdays and other happy occasions, but I like them in bunches. I hate it when they're skewered with wire so they can't drink. They die in pain.

Mum used to love weddings almost as much as she loved funerals and I didn't mind so much when she took me to weddings. Everyone was smiling and laughing and that made Mum happy, for a while. Then she'd cry as much as she did at someone's death.

The more beautiful the bride, the more demurely virginal her white dress, the more Mum would cry. Mum definitely seemed to enjoy crying.

'Ruby,' she'd say to me, 'the poor little mite. How young and pure she looks in her white dress, like the Blessed Virgin Teresa. Little does she know what's in store for her.'

I still get sad at weddings because it was my parents' wedding that broke them up.

I don't know much about the actual wedding - my sister and I weren't allowed to go. Lilian persuaded Mum to leave us with a neighbour. I'd have given anything to have seen them. I know they married at St Michael's Catholic church; I'd been there quite often with Mum so I can imagine the ceremony.

Dad was tall with golden hair and blue eyes and long golden moustaches. When he dressed up he looked so handsome, I felt so proud. That day he wore his dark blue suit and his black patent shoes and his gold watch and chain. Mum had a lovely pale cream frock with sprigs of mauve flowers embroidered on it and her hair, 'blue black with the sheen of a raven's wing' as Dad used to say, was piled on top of her head with little bouncing curls hanging down and her eyes laughing up at him.

I can still remember the tiny emeralds she always wore in her ears to match her eyes. They bobbed and glowed like green fire when she moved her head.

Once they'd gone to a ball and Mum wore a pale pink dress embroidered with deep pink and mauve sweet peas and bright green leaves; she was the belle of the ball, so people said. I'm sure she was, she looked like a fairy princess out of a book when she kissed me that night, before she left.

The saddest day in my life was when they broke up and I've had my fair share of sad times. It was a few days before my eighth birthday, not long after their wedding. They used to fight often before that day. Dad would shout and Mum would throw things but afterwards they would hug and kiss and we would all be happy, for a while.

The day they broke up was different. Their voices were cold and their faces looked serious. I can remember Mum saying, 'Well William, if it's to be that, it's to be that'.

I never saw my father again after that day, but for quite a few years I used to get a postcard on my birthday and I think it was from him.

Life was different after Dad left. Mum took a job at the Royal Hotel and the O'Grady's, the proprietors, let my sister and I live there with her. They were nice to us but I was angry as a hornet at leaving our little cottage down by the river flats with all the birds and the animals.

I was a bit of a handful and caused Mum a lot of problems - I'd be rude to her visitors and I'd stay away from school and go fishing at the creek near our old house. But I was never that bad. Why did she keep Mary with her and send me to stay with her sisters? Looking back on it, I suppose it was because Mary was younger and didn't understand about Mum's boyfriends.

The first I knew about them was the day I came home from school and found Mum and a strange man sitting on her bed with their arms locked around each other and his mouth eating her mouth. He looked as though he was hurting her so I flew at him and fastened my teeth in his hand. The man got up, grabbed his hat and coat and went.

I thought Mum would be pleased but she was angry. Her eyes were glittering-cold like a witch's.

'Mr Williams was just being nice to your mother and now he's gone away. You're a bad lot Rubina, you're just like your father.'

Even now I can feel the injustice of Mum's anger: she'd turned on me and sided with a stranger.

I suppose I realised that day that what Mum was doing was not right. I adored my mother but the girls at school worried me. They used to make funny remarks I couldn't understand and giggle behind their hands when I tried to look nonchalant.

They weren't going to make me notice!

One day the giggling and sniggering got too much for me and I told them they were dimwits. I was top of the class, so I suppose it was a cheap remark; anyway I riled them. Susan James who had small piggy eyes and was always at the bottom in everything, except handwriting, called out to me, 'We were just saying whether we were born under or over the blanket. What about you Ruby, were you born under or over it?'

I'd heard this saying before and I never knew quite what it meant. I'd thought it might mean that summer babies were born on top of the blanket because it would be too hot under it and winter babies needed to be kept warm, so they stayed under the blanket. I had a sneaking suspicion this wasn't what Susan James and the others meant. Her face was nasty when she said it, her eyes almost disappeared and her voice sounded sarcastic.

Allie Smith told me later what Susan James had meant. Allie Smith was not mean but she was very 'common'. Mum didn't like me mixing with her because Allie's whole family was 'foul-mouthed' and Mum had been brought up to be refined and ladylike. Anyway, Allie told me that being born 'over the blanket' meant you were a bastard because your parents weren't married.

'But my Mum and Dad are married Allie, he'll be back soon, he's just gone away to

find work. They were married in St Michael's, everyone knows that.'

'That doesn't count Ruby, they have to be married before their kids are born, or the kids are illel, the kids are bastards.'

From that moment on I knew why I always felt uncomfortable about my mother. They thought she was bad because she lived in sin with my father before they married, so when they married it didn't really count as being married. That's why I started to be a handful when Dad left and Mum had boyfriends.

Mum, why did you like men so much? They always came first. I would have done anything for you, but you sent me away to live with your sisters, not all three at once but one after the other.

The first one I stayed with was Aunt Rose. Then she was slim and pretty like Mum. Years later when I took my baby daughter to stay, Rose was huge. I can remember my daughter calling out 'Look Mummy an ephelant!' Rose was bending over; she was dressed in storm-grey flannel pyjamas that hung in folds over her giant rump. She did resemble an elephant.

Rose, as good-natured as ever, just laughed.

She was never mean to me like Aunt Violet, she was kind. Trouble is Rose was sloppy and forgetful. She'd give me jobs to do that were impossible, like wash the dishes when I couldn't even reach the sink. I had to use a wooden box to stand on

Aunt Violet didn't like me and always called me 'girl' instead of by my name. She was very religious and used to make me pray every morning and every night before I went to bed. She made me pray for 'God's forgiveness' because of my mother's sin with my father. Being born in sin was the worst thing you could do, probably worse than murder. Even if you didn't personally do the sin it was your fault to be born out of it.

Uncle Fred, her husband, was always talking about 'the lusts of the flesh'. He'd read from a big, black Bible with gold edges on the pages. His favourite bits were always about things like 'concupiscence'. I soon knew what it meant because his face got a sort of leer and went bright red as he said it. Uncle Fred was friendly to me; he was always wanting me to come and sit beside him and to read bits of the Bible to me.

One day he was sitting on the sofa. The buttons of his fly were all undone; he looked at me in a strange way and patted the space beside him for me to sit with him.

Aunt Violet came in, her face was so annoyed it looked very ugly.

She said, 'Get about your duties sweeping the yard, girl'.

That night I could hear them yelling at each other, then it went all quiet and I could hear the bed squeaking. Even then I knew what squeaking beds meant.

Next morning she made me pack my case and we walked across the paddock to Mum's youngest sister, Auntie May. On the way, she was nice as pie to me and asked me not to say anything about Uncle Fred's Bible reading. You see, Aunt Violet had converted to the Baptists from the Catholics and Uncle Fred was always reading the Bible in church.

My aunts told me to go and feed the chooks and collect the eggs while they had a cup of tea, Aunt May gave me a big slice of jam tart to eat so I sat outside under the window and listened to what they were saying. It was about my taking after my mother, that I was 'developing her wanton ways'; I was a temptress and poor Uncle Fred was 'only human'.

I was only 10 years old! I wanted to go in and throw the jam tart at them. Instead I gave what was left to the chooks.

I've been thinking of all these things since my daughter came to do "my life story". It seemed to please her that I was born out of wedlock. She told me she'd seen photos of the family and that one of Auntie Rose's sons looked as though he had an 'aboriginal ancestor.' It could have been, Aunt Rose had a lot of boyfriends.

My daughter means well and I'm very proud of her; she went to University, the first in my family to go. She's very kind to me, but she thinks that I am backward. I had to know more at 10 than she does at forty, just to survive, so I humour her when she tries to 'educate' me.

She did one big thing for me, she stopped me from feeling ashamed about my parents not being married. 'It's romantic, Mum, the way they ran off and set up house, they were ahead of their time. You are a love child.'

In my day there was nothing worse than 'falling pregnant' before marriage and it was always the girl's fault for 'getting in the family way'.

There are many changes in the world I don't like, but this is a change for the better. No longer is an innocent baby marked for life. Some employers wouldn't take you on unless they saw your birth certificate. I didn't see mine until my daughter got me a copy from the Registry office, a few years back.

I am an old woman now and my life has been full and some of it has been joyful. But my birth was a real blight on me. How much happier might I have been if I'd known there was no stamp on my birth certificate, in scarlet letters, ILLEGITIMATE.

آيلين مارشال

Eileen Marshall writes essays, novels, short stories and poetry. Her work has been commended on several occasions. She lives in Newcastle, Australia.

MANFRED JURGENSEN

From a Novel Pending Publication

The Beautiful Enemy

'Where, then, are we going? –
Always home.'

Novalis

In the beginning was the camp.

Mark had read and heard about field camps, school camps, scout camps, holiday camps, military camps, prisoner camps, training camps, refugee camps and concentration camps. Sometimes, during summer vacations, he and his school friends had gone camping along the shores of the outer harbour. *Campus*, he recalled from Latin class, meant 'open country, field or battlefield', leading to German *Kampf*, 'struggle, combat, battle'. The camp was in the early stages of transformation from rural peace to military conflict.

Although he had never been inside a place where troops had been lodged, Mark instantly recognised at Bonegilla signs of their prior occupation. During the war, would his father have been kept in such confinement? Was that where the Enemy had hidden their prisoners, some never to be released?

Mark had himself become a refugee, a displaced person, a prisoner even. How could that be? The war was long over. He had come to this country to leave the rule of death behind. Yet on his arrival he was put in a military camp, thinly disguised as a migrant reception centre. Did freedom always begin with imprisonment? What a role reversal from having been a native resident all his life! He would never be a native again. From now on his closest relatives would be refugees like Herr Kirsch and that strange young woman he had accompanied to the Church of the Holy Ghost.

He remembered the resentment and suspicion with which the locals had reacted to the arrival of refugees from the East. It seemed he was now put in the very same position.

An official in army-like uniform directed him past a manned barrier to long rows of crude wooden barracks looking like oversized chicken pens. Following a zigzag of dusty tracks they stopped in front of an unpainted hut marked '17'. Mark entered it by way of a couple of half-broken wooden steps. The heat inside was so intense he instantly felt nauseous. Exhausted and close to fainting, he dropped the two suitcases, his only luggage. An instant cloud of dust was raised. Squatting on the floor crowded with empty beer bottles and self-rolled cigarette butts, an unshaven, uncombed stupefied threesome, dressed in what appeared to be identical shorts and singlets, eyed him coolly.

Yawning, then smacking his lips with relish, one finally grunted, 'Don't worry, you'll get used to it. The door doesn't shut. We leave it open day and night.' Mark recognised the voice of a fellow-prisoner.

'Ja,' another added in a thick accent as he threw a bottle top past Mark. 'Australia's committed to an open door policy.' The drunk, down-at-heel residents cackled and howled, intoxicated as much by the oppressive heat as by alcohol.

'There's nothing here. Make yourself at home!' Another slurred voice came from the corner of the room. It wasn't clear whether it was mocking him or bidding him a sardonic welcome.

How did he end up here? At school he had read some works by the French Existentialists. Camus' *L'Étranger*, for example. 'There's nothing here.' How incongruous! That scathing piece of sarcasm mumbled by a drunk inmate could have come from the novel his teachers had praised for its 'insight into the human condition'. Even Gerson had praised the Existentialists in his philosophy class. Had he been allocated the role of the imprisoned stranger? Was this 'nothing' going to be his new home?

Anxious to escape the heat inside, he stood near the door as they exchanged their names like passwords into indifference. Mark was deeply disturbed by his room-mates' morale. They were burnt-out people in a burnt-out landscape, defeated by the rigours and boredom of the camp. He turned down their offer of cigarettes and left the shack. 'You can't escape!' they called after him in bitter despair.

He retraced his path from 'Hut 17' to the entrance of the camp, alarmed by the realisation that he, too, was trapped. The huts he passed were overflowing with people. Children played in the dust. Women had hung out their washing to dry. There was no shade anywhere. The camp had been bared of all trees.

As he approached the manned barrier he took a closer look at the dead landscape. Behind the barbed wire fence the grass had turned yellow-brown. On arrival only a few hours earlier, they'd been told it had not rained in Bonegilla for over a year and that during the months of January and February temperatures regularly reached 'one hundred'. According to Mark's arithmetic that equalled about 38 degrees Celsius. Back home it rarely rose above the mid-twenties. (Why was he still using that expression – 'back home'?) Although it was only early morning, the heat had already become unbearable. In the distance Mark could see what looked like a lagoon surrounded by a couple of dead trees. A flock of large white birds had settled on their bare branches. Their animated screeches sounded like that of parrots. Despite the heat he did not move. His first confrontation with the open Australian landscape fascinated and horrified him. It seemed appropriate that he was looking at it through a fence. What he saw was not 'nothing', but he had no words to describe it. It was a *L'Étranger* scenery, a composition of death, a painting of absence, a vision of hell. The sight of forlorn nature matched Mark's despair perfectly.

Next to the camp's entrance was a general store. Mark sauntered over to it, attracted more by the promise of shade than the desire to buy anything. Above its entrance hung a sign *Welcome to Australia!* Inside, the first thing he recognised were endless rows of the brand of cigarettes his room-mates had offered him. *Capstan*. In this hot, humid, dry inland the brand name seemed like a mirage. The only possible mooring would have been in the small lagoon outside the camp local staff referred to as a *billabong*. None of the inmates knew what it meant.

Most of the migrant customers bought washing powder, toiletries, soft drinks, ice-cream, fly-spray and tobacco products. The camp appeared not to provide any but the most basic of its residents' personal needs. Mark wondered how much money they were given.

The answer came to him the following morning when he witnessed dozens of men stripped to the waist climb into open trucks. He was told they were being driven to farms to work as day labourers. Others were transported to distant orchards to pick fruit. They returned to the camp in the late afternoon, anxious to buy enough cigarettes and beer to see them through the night. The tired men were welcomed back by groups of women who made sure that at least some of the daily earnings would be left for family expenses. Some of these men had been working on the land, Mark learned, for more than six months.

As he slowly returned to 'Hut 17' the subdued activities in the camp were interrupted by a loudspeaker announcement. Incredibly, it was in the language most residents would have come to know in previous European internment and POW camps as the enemy's tongue. There was going to be a film night under stars, a crackling disembodied voice declared, and everyone was welcome. Parents were encouraged to bring their children. After some high-pitched sounds the message was repeated in English. Listening to the announcement Mark was reminded of the precarious nature of his position – to many of his fellow-inmates he was a representative of the hated enemy whose deadliness they had come to escape, while he had been sent to this camp because he wanted to live with the Beautiful Enemy. Would he ever be able to speak to the others?

مانفريد يورغنسن

Professor **Manfred Jurgensen** is a writer of German-Danish extraction who lives in Brisbane, Australia. He has eleven collections of poetry, two novels, a play and various studies in literary criticism. He is the editor of Outrider and the Penguin anthology Australian Writing Now.

The above is part of Chapter Two of Part II ("The Call") of the novel *The Trembling Bridge*, currently under publication by Indra Publishing (Melbourne). The book is expected to appear around August 2003.

SOPHIE MASSON

A story based on an old folktale from Brittany

The Boy with no Name

There was once an orphan boy who lived deep in an ancient forest in Brittany. His parents had died when he was a tiny baby, and had not had the time to even give him a name. The old woman who had brought him up in the forest, though she was a kind and cheerful soul who loved him dearly, was deaf and dumb and could not read or write either. His companions, the birds and animals of the forest, called him by their own sounds, each one different: and so he stayed without a name, a real name of his own given to him, through all his childhood. Indeed, his speech itself was strange, for he had not learnt to talk like everyone else. If he had not occasionally come across hunters and woodcutters in the forest, and learnt human speech from them, he might even have supposed that there was no other human apart from him and the old woman in all of the wide world--which to him, to be sure, was the forest.

Now this state of affairs did not greatly bother the boy as a child, but as he grew older, a strange restlessness began to grow in him. He began to wonder who he might be, and what his fate was. Sometimes, when he was fishing for supper, he would stop and look at his face in a forest stream, and look there for such a long time that sometimes the shadows had all lengthened and the air grown chilly before he thought to move. He could not explain how he was feeling to the birds and animals who were his friends, for they knew who they were, to be sure. And he could not explain to the old woman either, for she could not tell him who he was.

One day, he was fishing in one of the bigger streams, and had already caught a couple of trout, when all at once his line tightened--and there, struggling on the end of it, was the biggest fish the boy had ever seen. A big shiny fish, with silver scales shining like the moon, and big goggle eyes. Those eyes fixed on the boy, and the fish cried out, in a strange, high, whistling sort of voice: 'Please, my friend, let me go! Let me go, and I will give you a gift beyond price!'

The boy looked hard at the fish for a moment. He did not say a word, but slowly and gently unhooked the line from the fish's mouth, and put it back into the stream. No fish had ever spoken to him before, you see.

The fish flicked its tail, and two bright, shiny scales, light and irridescent as mother-of-pearl, flew through the air and landed at the boy's feet. Then the fish cried out, in its high voice, 'These scales will grant you two wishes; two important wishes. Use them

wisely, my friend, and you will prosper.' And so saying, it gave another flick of its tail, and in an instant, it had disappeared.

The boy picked up the scales, and held them in his hand. Strangely, they did not feel cold and wet, as you might expect, but warm and dry. The boy shook his head in wonder, picked up his fishing rod and line, and went home.

He showed the scales to the old woman, who shook her head in wonder, too. Then the boy put them away carefully, and all through his meal, kept thinking of what he might wish for. And the thing that kept coming back to his mind, time and time again, was this: the wish to have a name.

So, that night, when the old woman had gone to bed, he picked up one of the scales, held it in his hand and whispered, 'I wish I could have a name..Scale, bright shiny scale, give me a name..'

And from the scale, strangely, came the high whistling voice of the fish. 'Go south, my friend, always south, directly south, until you find your name, the name that's meant for you, that will be given to you..'

'South?' said the boy quickly. 'Where south?' But the scale was silent; and as the boy watched, in his palm the scale changed shape and colour, shrinking and shrinking further and further till it was at last like a dew-drop--and then not there at all.

'South,' said the boy to himself, 'I must go south.' And shaking his head in wonder, he went to bed, but found it hard to sleep, on account of what had happened. In the morning, he went to tell the old woman that he must leave to go south in search of his name. But he found that she had already packed his bag for him, with his few things, and a lunch of bread and cheese and drink, and some money, and the stout staff he used for walking in the woods, that in Breton is called a *pennbazh*. Somehow, he thought, she must have known. He hugged her, and said goodbye to her, and then put his bag on his back, and took his *pennbazh* in his hand, and set off for the south.

Well, he walked and he walked and he walked. He saw many strange places and beautiful places; he met many people, men, women and children, some of whom were kind to him, and others not. And to those who looked kind and helpful, he asked if they knew his name; but none did, and many looked at him strangely. He walked till he came to the sea, and took sail on a ship, and still he was going south, and south, and further south. But no name did he find.

He came ashore in a harsh desert land, and kept walking. Following the south, in the path of the hot sun, he walked. The dunes soon grew tall as ocean waves, the sand burning hot, and still he walked. But he was getting tired, and more and more thirsty, and the sun beat down on him so that he could hardly see, or move. And there was no end in sight to the desert; no relief for his aching feet or his parched throat or aching head. And no name...

At last, driven to despair, the boy pulled the other scale from his pocket, and holding it in his hand, whispered thickly, 'Water...water, I need water...Bright scale, shiny scale,

give me water...'

'Strike the sand with your *pennbazh*,' immediately came the high thin voice of the fish. 'Strike it hard, and you will see what you will see!'

So the boy struck hard at the sand with his *pennbazh*, and there, suddenly bubbling out from the sand, was a stream, small at first, but growing, growing, till in moments it began a great broad silver river which rushed the boy off his feet, and tumbled him into its cool waters. He drank and drank, getting wetter and wetter, and the water deeper and deeper, till in a great roaring rush, it pulled him from the bank and into its middle. But the boy did not panic. He held on tight to his *pennbazh*, which floated, of course, and let himself drift down the river, quite gently and peacefully.

Soon the dunes were left far behind, and the river ran past some lovely green meadows, where grew almond trees covered in clouds of blossom. And under the biggest of these almond trees sat the most beautiful girl the boy had ever seen. Her skin was the ivory colour of fresh almonds, her hair as dark as night, her eyes as deeply black as the deepest lake. She was dressed all in red and gold, and had a veil on her head, and was reading a gold-edged book. She looked up at that moment and saw him; then gave an exclamation, and ran to the water's edge to help him out.

When he stood on the bank, dripping, but suddenly so happy that he was tonguetied, the girl said, 'You are the boy from Brittany! I knew you would come! I read about you in my book. Look...' She handed him her book, and her eyes were like stars.

Though he could not read the words written there, the boy saw that there were pictures in that book, telling his story, how he had found the fish in the forest stream, and the magic scales, and the desert, even how he came here, to the river, and the maiden sitting under the almond tree. He looked up at her, his eyes full of joy, and wonder, and she said, happily, 'Come with me, to the palace, and meet my father, the King of the Desert. For you are my Beloved, and one day you will be King of the Desert.'

'Beloved,' said the boy, quietly. 'Beloved. That is my name.' And he turned to the girl and hugged her, all wet as he was, and she didn't seem to mind.

And that was how a simple boy from the Breton forest learnt his true name, and his true destiny as King of the Desert.

صوفي ماسون

Sophie Masson's latest book, *The Road to Camelot*, which she edited and to which she contributed a story about Lancelot, was published by Random House Australia in 2002. Masson is a founding member and the president of the Arthurian Association of Australia. She authored thirty novels for adults, young adults and children. She is presently working on a series of novels on Lancelot's life.

HYACINTH AILWOOD

Arthur's Pilgrimage

In praise of Australian suburbia, Hugh Streetton claims that if a man has a backyard with a shed, he can practice most of the hobbies known to man, so more powerful are those who, in an unhappy world seek nourishment for the spirit in this way.

On the 12th October 1920 Arthur Hugh Ailwood was born in Rochester Kent, England. His father, Arthur Ernest Ailwood worked as a shipwright at the Chatham dockyard. After the First World War the need for ships and munitions diminished and in a world of peace many became unemployed.

The family migrated to Australia in 1927 and found accommodation on Stockton peninsula where the Pacific Ocean washed the shores on one side, and the Hunter River bordered the other. Across the busy harbour was the industrial town of Newcastle.

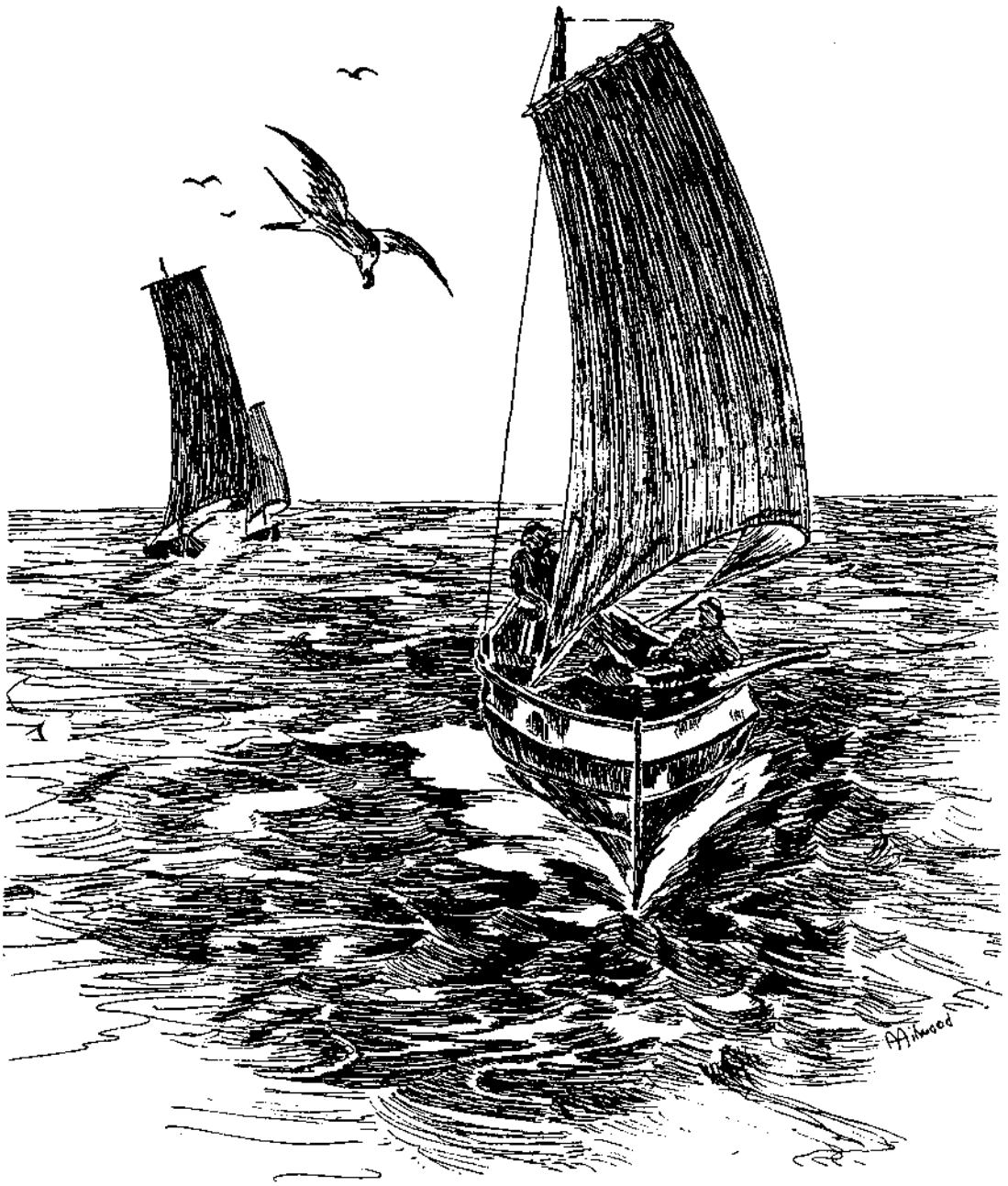
After passing his Intermediate Certificate at Newcastle Boys High, Arthur Hugh became an apprentice at the BHP steelworks, and his meagre wages helped to support the family. His father had been unemployed for seven years. They were seven years of struggle for a family with three sons.

I met my husband Arthur Hugh at a Christmas party in 1939. At my age, I do not dare mention it was love at first sight. I had no idea that love meant seeing into what motivated a genius. For him, marriage added to the trap. It was a tender trap, as custom had it that a man supported his family and felt it a duty to do so. It was obvious that he needed to fly free, but had no wings. The only encouragement came from me, his wife.

He started to draw a few pictures and write a few stories of his early life. Did I say a few? We had no typewriter, so we shopped around for a second hand one, a beast of a thing to be tamed. Yes, he tamed it, and himself, and became a writer, and the writer now knew himself by the stories that earned him release.

Later, he used the skill of his apprenticeship to become a sculptor in metal. Tiny figures in molten bronze formed the shape of the cross. It was exhibited at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Marin Place, Sydney, for the Blake Religious Art Prize in 1976.

Sometimes he worked to landscape the garden and before long all the "cement" faces of humanity appeared amongst the foliage of the garden borders. The tips of his fingers bled and cutlery disappeared from the kitchen drawer to be used as tools in the shaping. He had to work fast to beat the setting time. For me this is the stuff of memories. Friends and neighbours gasp at their beauty and so do I.



I N M E M O R I A M

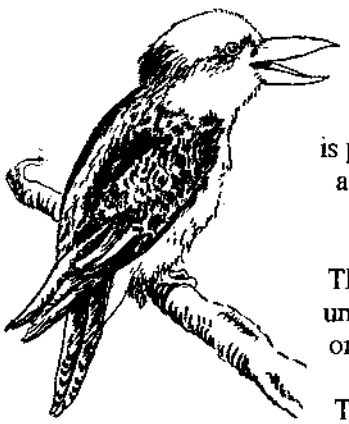
His father spent his time in the School of Arts Library to assist the librarian while trying to find employment. From his father, Arthur developed a life-long passion for books. He was a prodigious reader, who almost read his way through whole libraries.

The School of Arts was a wonderful centre for the working class of those days- many left wing unionists and labour party people studied history, literature and a variety of topics. It was possible to be self-educated then. From childhood Arthur had an immense hunger for knowledge and beauty; he even sent to the Mitchell library for books which I can still remember coming by train from Sydney. He was a left-wing radical and very focussed and directed. He read Marx's *Das Capita*, Richard Burchitt's *I See a New China* and other books of that genre. But he also read widely in literature, philosophy, and all manner of subjects. He found Jean Paul Sartre's work particularly congruent with his way of thinking about life.

In one of his stories, the thirteen-year old narrator says: 'I like it when my dad and his mates lay on the beach in the sun and talk about overthrowing the Government and the capitalists (they are the same as the industrialists, I think.) They say that if they can throw this mob out, everyone would get a fair go.'

Arthur left behind a large body of work, poetry, short stories, essays, as well as "Echoes from Old Utopias".

In one of his poems he wrote:

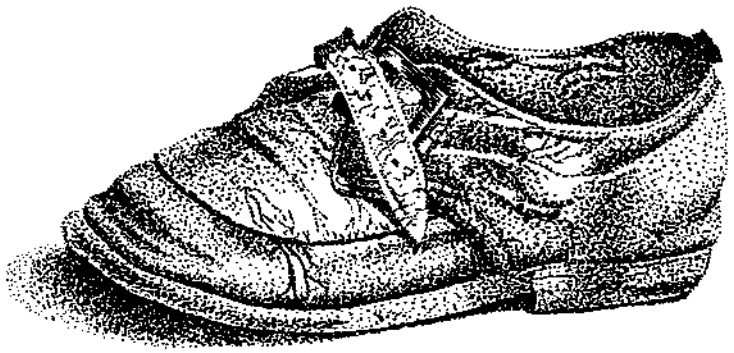


He knew that the silent couriers
of despair, were never going to withdraw
And a tantrum of waves flounced
beside the breakwater.

After each summer day had ended,
every square metre of the beach
is pocked with the imprint of human feet:
as though a deliberate plan to leave no
smooth sand had been carried out.

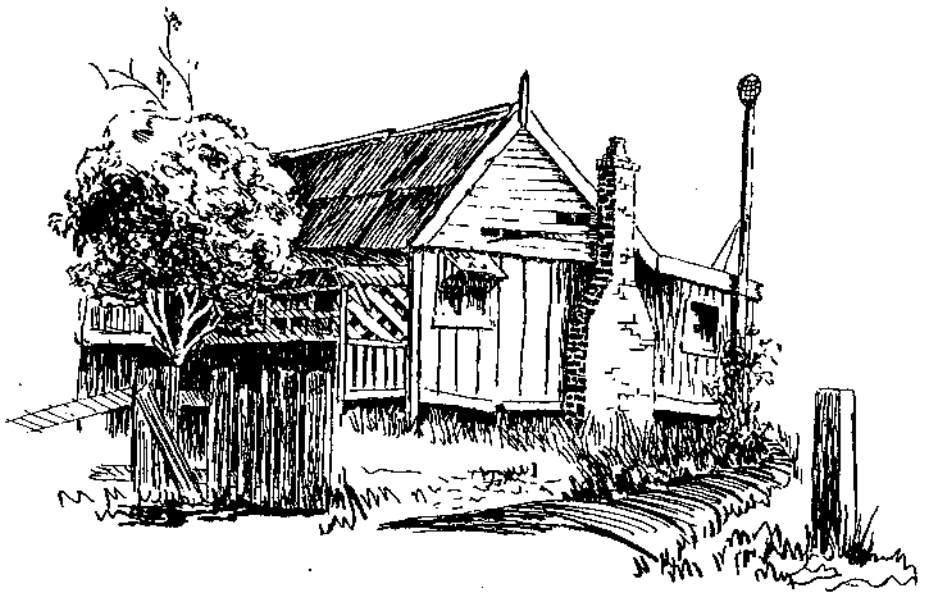
The shadows of night fill the footprints,
until the thin black tide reaches and with
one lick elimimates all the effort of each
day.
The virgin sand ghistens for a moment,
then waits for tomorrow.

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS.



A WORN OUT SHOE.

From Ailwood's drawings, showing how he used to arrange them in his collection.



AN OLD HOUSE THAT USED TO BE ON THE CORNER OF REGENT STREET AND QUEENS ROAD. ON THE HILL: A GOOD STARTING POINT FOR A BILLY CART RIDE.

I N M E M O R I A M

Some of his work was published but he was generally indifferent to publication, being more concerned with the process than the result - he would prefer to move on to the next work than try to launch a work he had completed. However, he did enter a humour competition for the Newcastle Herald, which he won.

Arthur had a sardonic sense of humour. He was invited to write a column but he declined. He felt he did not want to be funny on demand.

Even though, he lived until he was seventy-three, he still could savour what he called the "noxious weed". Along with the pain were the cigarettes with tobacco and papers to roll for satisfaction. He wrote about that too in little snippets of print scattered in the lines of memories to remember in my dreams, they reach out to ask, was it worth the comforts of nicotine?

In his poem *Addiction*, he wrote:

Since the birth of virgin atmospheres,
I exist without taint, but fretfully;
Inhaling rich and regular distress.
Gone, the holy breath impure:
Those vapours rising from the weed,
This substance, this charm I lusted for,
These wreathes of coiled enchantment,
Was like to kill me,
But gave me content.

One day he carved a statue of a pilgrim out of a pine branch. It now stands on my mantle piece, elongated and emaciated in a never-ending search for meaning, always seeking, knowing there must be more but never quite finding it. This wooden figure is a symbol of Arthur seeking for a meaning of a life that was indeed a pilgrimage.

These days, I wonder alone in the garden and see the faces of humanity peeping through the foliage. Sometimes they wink at me and I can smile as this is another day.

هياسينث أيلوود

Hyacinth Ailwood is a writer from Newcstle, Australia.

LEONORA HOWLETT

Rhinoceros Tell me Your Story

A rhinoceros stands on a tomb in a ruined classical temple.

He mourns the passing of rhinoceros culture
of rhinoceros songs
of rhinoceros consciousness

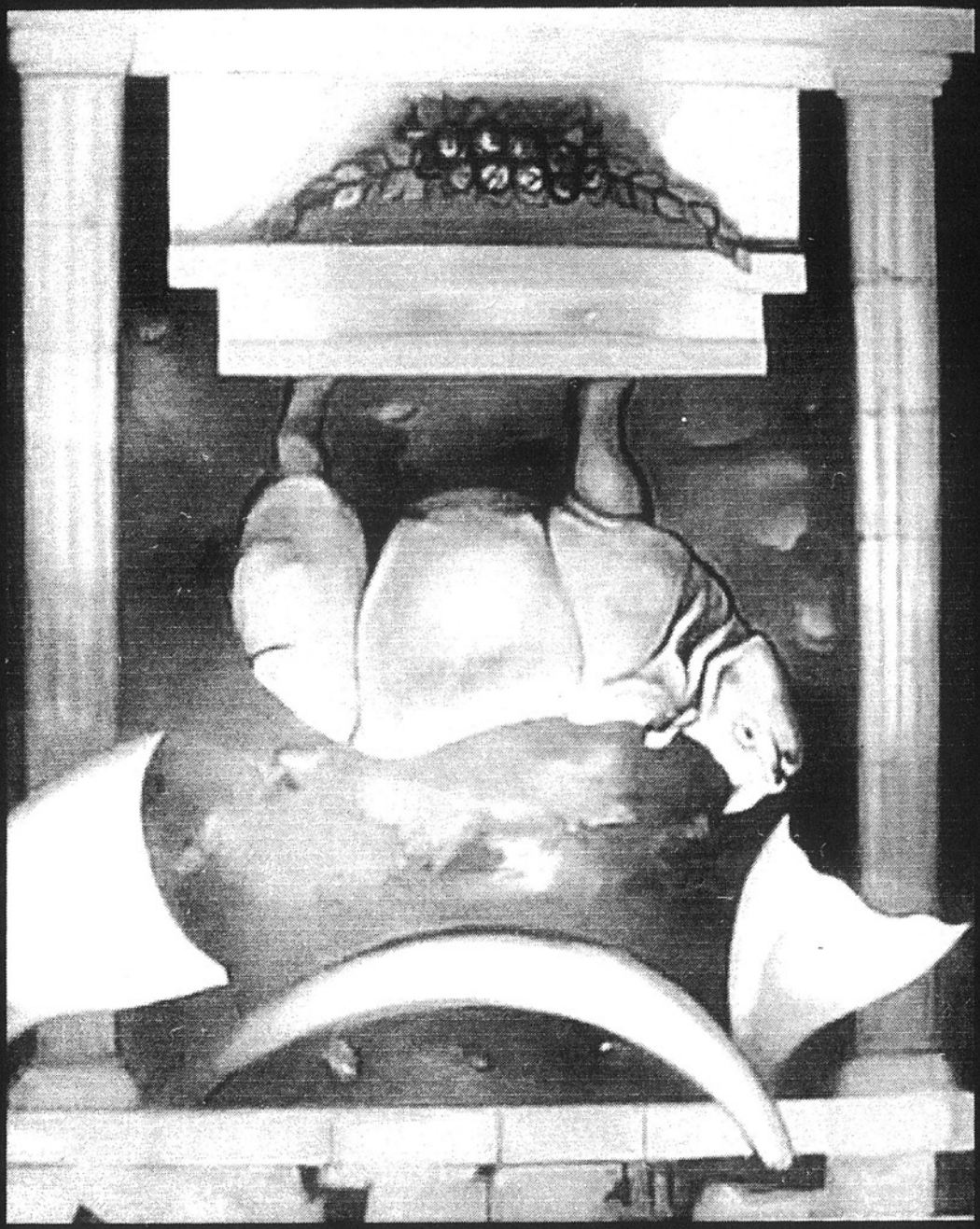
indeed of rhinocerosness
from the earth.

He grows cold and turns to stone and
becomes an edifice on his own tomb.

For all the wild creatures of this earth...

ليونورا هاوليت

Leonora Howlett is an Australian artist who lives in Sydney. She was the subject of the Landmark article for *Kalimat 10* (Arabic), written by Raghid Nahhas. The same article was translated to English for *Kalimat 11*.



JOHN INNES

Lakeside Sequence

Walking by the lakeside, there was a persistence of images that kept appearing in our frame of mind as brilliant master paintings- yet only real life was around us.

(Two of several shots taken at Tuggerah Lakes, north of Sydney in New South Wales, Australia.)

جون إنيس

John Innes is a graphic designer who lives in Sydney.

L. E. SCOTT

The Black Star

By

Albert Wendt

Publisher: Auckland University Press (RRP: NZ$34.95)

Albert Wendt's DNA: He was born in Tauese, Apia, Western Samoa in 1939. His early schooling was in Samoa, but he went to New Zealand in 1953 for secondary schooling and stayed to attend Ardmore Teachers' College and Victoria University of Wellington, where he gained an MA in history. He has taught in his own country and also in Fiji and is currently Professor of English specialising in New Zealand and Pacific Literatures and Creative Writing at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

Since his return to live permanently in New Zealand in 1988, Wendt has been a major force in the developments in New Zealand and Pacific literature. His novels include: Sons for the Return Home, Pouliuli, Leaves of the Banyan Tree, and Ola. Among his poetry collections: Inside Us the Dead, Shaman of Visions, and Photographs. He has received a number of literary awards for his work.

When Albert Wendt's new work, *The Book of the Black Star*, arrived for review, it felt like an old family friend had come to visit. But you know how sometimes you get a feeling that something's not quite the same about an old friend you haven't seen for a while?

Well, the first thing that struck me was how he was dressed – pretty much all in black, wearing a big star that gave the impression of moving through the cosmos with great speed and purpose, as if on some sort of godly mission. Then the "glossary and notes" gave a bit more information about his dress: "le lumana'i, le po, le ao [the future, the night, the day]".

So just from eye contact with this old friend and the manner of his dress, I know that he's been on a spiritual journey of spirals and black holes. And what Albert Wendt has produced from this journey is what is described on his book's back cover as 'imagetext' and explained thus: "*The Book of the Black Star* boldly combines words and images in short poems with extraordinary power...the words took shape on the page and expanded into drawings. Their rolling black lines recall the worlds of tattoo, of siapo (tapa) and of graffiti."

But words blending into black holes and being defined as powerful imagetexts take the reader where? Well, readers who have little knowledge of Samoan mythology or language may find it difficult to reach the core of this Black Star and may even be tempted to dismiss the book as no more than adolescent doodling, something produced

while the author waited for a greater inspiration to take hold.

Certainly, it is not an 'easy read'. The concept of 'imagetext' and the persistent use of 'illustrated' lettering can sometimes feel a little contrived and unnecessarily obstructive. And it requires going back and forth and literally turning the book upside-down before the meaning held within the spirals and swirling shapes becomes clear.

But what gives this book its life is that the components of word and image feed off each other. It is safe to say that without one or the other, the book would indeed be a black hole. As it is, there are moments that will intrigue and reward those who persevere:

Birth

In that other dream before dawn
I watched the Black Star cutting
thru' Its birthsac into a universe
that has never known the Mana
of Black Light
I watched & for the first time
understood why Tagaloa-a-lagi
gifted us pain & wonder

Creatures

Every night just before Dawn
the dark faceless creatures seep
into his dreams
circle squat & watch him
watching them
Black Light cauled in the language
of Birth
they smell of ancient quests across
the Vanimonimo
of ancestral veins that connect Bone
to Flesh to Star to Atua

So back to the question: where might *The Book of the Black Star* take the reader? Well, some journeys take you back to where you started from, but you may end up being enriched and informed and affected by the experience nonetheless. For some, the book will be an affirmation: something they recognise, something that comes from that which forms who they are and from what they see and sense around them. For others, it will be a path to some understanding of an unknown, parallel universe.

As readers, we can become so conditioned in our view of what art is and how it should breathe and be laid out on the page or the canvas. Albert Wendt has challenged us with this book to look beyond how we think art and mythology and tradition should dress themselves.

لويس إي. سْكُت

Lewis E. Scott is an African-American writer, poet and editor who made New Zealand his home. He is *Kalimat*'s adviser for New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

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KHALID ZIADÉ

Friday, Sunday – Chapters from a Biography of a City on the Mediterranean

Translated by ***Raghid Nahhas***

Friday and Sunday

In my early school days, Thursday afternoon was the happiest of all times when at four o'clock we left school after four days of study. We prepared ourselves to receive a day off on Friday, return to school on Saturday and then have Sunday off. Thus was our weekly routine, which started sluggishly and then accelerated towards its end. Our daily routine started at six in the morning when we would wake up, finish what had been left over from our homework and make sure that we were at school ten minutes before eight. We had four classes between 7:50 and 12:20, with a half-hour break at 9:50. The break allowed us to have our sandwiches, purchase whatever we needed from the school shop, play or review our lessons. I did not eat anything during the break and wondered why my friends took their breakfast at school, particularly as we went home for lunch at midday, returning at two and then finishing the school day at four in the afternoon. It was a boring school routine and often extended by the time spent by teachers and caretakers in aggressively rebuking us.

Time passed slowly and rigidly. We wore uniforms as dark as coal, with white buttons. Our uniform was actually an apron or *maryool*. We carried plain leather bags with no ornament on either side. No school buses and no parents waited outside the school gates for their children. It was a safe and secure era when children were left to go to school on their own. Children knew all the shop owners on their route to school. and there was no sense of fear or isolation.

Getting out of the school gates was a noisy affair. Three to four hundred students, whose ages ranged from six to fifteen, trying to leave at the same time. Older pupils from the higher classes were fewer in number, but their departure on Thursday afternoons was much noisier, indicating their inability to disguise their feelings of joy.

Schools were segregated; boys had their schools and girls had theirs. The reckless world of boys did not have any room for girls. As a matter of fact, girls played no part in our early youth. They were not part of our games, studies, conversations or dreams. Recklessness and sports were our two major aims, interrupted only by the toughness of our teachers, who disturbed our lives and annoyed us.

At four in the afternoon every Thursday, we went out of the school gate located at the foot of *Rifahia* Hill in the middle of the *souk*. We could either go southward to our homes, or northward to the heart of the market place, which consisted of groups of shops forming distinct markets, such as the shoe market or the perfume market. Some

markets retained their Ottoman names, such as the *Bazirkan*. During spring, when the days started biting off part of the evening, we pursued colourful beetles and light-emitting insects near the fort overlooking the river. Often, I headed slowly towards home, passing by the *Tahham* and *Muallaq* mosques. *Al-Muallaq* mosque was situated above the market place. We used to pass under its unique building where some shops were located, including that of the plumber, who was the father of one of our classmates.

We could either play before reaching home or walk slowly. We preferred to take our bags home and return to the *hara* to play before sunset. We often neglected our homework until the next day, or did it hurriedly so as to enjoy the weekend without being bothered by school duties. I did not like the school, its classes or homework, but fearing to be punished forced me to do my best.

الجمعة والأحد

On Thursday evenings we brothers and sisters stayed up late chatting, until we were subdued by sleep. There was no television or any special programme for children. Despite the late night, we used to wake up earlier than usual on Friday mornings, perhaps to enjoy every moment of the weekend, but more likely it was the early clattering inside the house that woke us up. To my mother, Friday was a day of work, possibly because she wanted to utilise the services of my sisters in household chores. Friday mixed pleasure with business, but we went to the *hara* to play with our mates, adding to the clatter of the market place already buzzing with business.

When I was about ten years old, I used to accompany my father to the midday Friday prayer. I don't know why my father chose me from amongst all my brothers to take to the *al-Tahham* mosque, near the school. He might have taken them when they were my age in order to train them to participate in prayer. We took the same route I took to school, but walking with my father, who held my hand in his, gave me a sense of security that I did not feel on other days. He would often stop to shake hands and chat with a shop owner.

The steps that took us up to the mosque allowed me to glance at the *souk* and its shops, some of which were laid directly below the mosque. In the mosque I would sit near my father, positioned in a way that enabled me to watch, through a window, the

shops, the vendors and passers-by in the *souk*. The clatter of the *souk* subsided when the muezzin announced the prayer and the Imam started his Friday sermon.

On our way home a quietness engulfed the *souk*, though the shops still received customers. My father was the last customer to stop and buy a few things before the shops closed until the next morning.

Friday afternoon was different from the morning. A certain depression and boredom infiltrated our home and even the *hara*. We had to start preparing for the next day at school. Our elder brother was the one who usually took the initiative of reminding us of our obligations.

In the subsequent years my father ceased to accompany me to the Friday prayer. I started going on my own, accompanied by a few of my classmates. I did not go to the same mosque, but started frequenting the *Tarbiha* mosque where one of our teachers preached. In following years we frequented the Grand Mosque, not to pray but to meet other students, professionals, shopkeepers and leaders of local political parties in preparation for a demonstration. Our numbers varied according to the occasion: patriotic, educational or a protest against the standard of living. We, the students of public schools, were at the core of all demonstrations. Demonstrators always gathered in the interior yard of the Grand Mosque until the Friday sermon was over. When worshipers came out, student and party leaders engaged in fiery (*hamassyia*) speeches, in contrast to the Friday sermon. In the morning we were busy organising matters and recruiting demonstrators. Then we would meet at the entrance or in the yard of the Grand Mosque, depending on our number. From there we headed to the inner lanes of the market place to attract more participants, whether they were passers-by or shop owners on the verge of closing their shops for the day. Some of these recruits would accompany us for only a short distance. Others came with us in the demonstration from outside the market place to the main square of the modern city, then to the local Government House where we presented our varied demands. Then we would start for home, but often our zeal would be high and we would not return home directly, but would go to our meeting places to evaluate our small victories.

One such place was *al-Tal al-Aali* Café, a small garden café with tall trees situated on a hill in the area of the modern city. The café had witnessed many eras and received men of consecutive generations who spent their time playing cards, smoking the hookah and drinking coffee. Different party supporters occupied different sections of that spacious café, which became the semi-official quarters for the group I belonged to during that time. We mixed together, talking politics, studying and playing cards, particularly during the days preceding examinations. The café was an ideal place for many students to prepare for exams.

We grew up on Fridays. Friday was no longer a day of sport, holiday or boredom. It became a day of meetings and struggle, particularly after the 1967 Arab defeat by

Israel. We no longer followed parental instructions or paid much attention to our studies.

During my childhood, when I went out early on Friday mornings to play in the *hara* and when I went with my father to the mosque, Sunday seemed not to be significant in my life. It existed only as a day when the *hara* was quiet and I was home reviewing my lessons for the next day. On some Sundays my father took, along with my elder brother, to the barber's shop. Barbers used to open on Sundays like any other shop, but were closed on Monday, not on Friday.

I discovered Sunday at the age of ten, when we moved to our new neighbourhood, where Christians mixed with Moslems. In our old *hara*, Sunday, before 1960, was a day of work like any other day except that it was a school break for children. In our new street, my mother did not cease her habits and her home duties disregarded the quietness of the early Sunday morning.

But gradually the new Sunday atmosphere did infiltrate into our domestic life, at the same pace as it did into the life and style of the city. Our new street awoke late and slowly on Sunday. The only shop in the street, owned by the Greek, closed all that day. The Greek man himself used to put on his navy blue suit and go to church with his daughters. I contemplated the rituals of Sundays and they seemed to me to resemble the rituals of a feast. We, however, did not participate in those rituals. Sunday for us was an opportunity to study and prepare for the next school day, but in later years, in the mid nineteen sixties, I devoted Sunday to watching the movies. I would meet with friends for the morning show at ten, then return home at lunchtime. The afternoon was boring and depressing as we contemplated the long days of school to follow.

Sunday eventually became accepted in our lives and in the mood of the city as a holiday. Our school excursions and official celebrations were conducted on Sundays. Shops followed institutions in closing on Sundays. Cinemas scheduled their movies to start on Sundays. These changes had explicit and implicit implications. Friday remained part of the old city, of the *souk* and the mosque, whilst the modern city was the stage for Sunday.

Time is meaningless outside space. Time takes its place in space, as if it runs in the streets, in the lanes and in the *souk*s. It then flows down into the homes, tinting them with its colours or casting its shadow over them. Friday morning flourished in the *souk* surrounded by mosques. Everyone rushed there, despite most of the shops being closed. Then the *souk* turned empty in the afternoon, when families went on picnics or visited other families.

Sunday was associated with other places, mainly centred around the modern city square with its cinemas, cafés, deli shops and Armenian photographers who waited for their customers opposite the old Government House. The square attracted the youth of the inner suburbs of the old town who went in search of petty enjoyments. The streets of

the modern city became theirs for a while, and then restored their normality the next day.

Time and days acquired new meanings. Friday was a national holiday and Sunday was a public holiday. Our city did not accede to Sunday until it acceded to the type of society created by the Government.

Friday lives in my mind with many meanings: work, prayer and entertainment all at the same time. It is a sequence of various and varied activities, unlike Sunday, which takes one meaning, that of rest and holiday. We are confronted with two systems, each with a particularity that embodies both the present and the past inheritance.

City and State

Despite its unfamiliarity, party politics had already invaded our locality during our first brush with "awareness". It was a double-edged issue: on the one hand, being a member of a political party was something to be proud of, and on the other it was a sin.

The first community and family impression of a relative joining a party was mixed with sympathy, due to his actions that bewildered others. He becomes entrapped in a dilemma that gives him the status of a victim, such as the imprisonment to which my brother was subjected during the first days of the revolt, where he was caught carrying political flyers by an army checkpoint. We waited three months before he was eventually released. This contradicts another scenario in which the inhabitants of our quarter burned the house of a party member because they considered him their enemy. This was a horrible scene that wounded the heart of our memory: men and boys brought out furniture from the house, poured petrol on it and allowed it to burn while locals watched silently. There was no place for empathy.

المدينة والدولة

In general, belonging to a party was not acceptable both at the family and social levels. It was like a disability that you avoid mentioning, or a defect you try to hide, or a

catastrophe that befalls you and you are unable to avoid. Party members on the other hand took pride in their belonging and adoption of certain ideologies. They felt pity upon non-partisans and their inability to discover the "truth" that became clear to them. They became sick and tired of those who argued against what they considered common sense, and they commiserated with themselves by the fact that they discovered what others could not discover, and that victory was theirs at the end.

In truth, partisans were not large in number. They were a few scattered in this party or that, but they were very active and effective, attracting some admiration and a lot of suspicion. This made a partisan an entity that should be avoided, and a subject that should not be explored.

The first impression was that partisanship divided fathers and sons. The fathers were pious and religious, while the partisan sons adhered to party ideologies and had none of the parents' faith. This was in part impious and unorthodox, and in part a revolution of one generation against the other. A partisan abandons his family, tribe and religion, and becomes identified with his party's name. He becomes known in his quarters as "the communist", "the Nationalist" or "the Ba'thist". He is no longer the son of that family or the follower of that religion. This was the world of partisanship in its prime. In its early days, partisanship tore family relationships and created hatred among brothers in the same family. Party brotherhood became more important and replaced natural brotherhood.

The rivalry between partisanship and the state posed quite a danger. The state haunted partisans during trouble times without the ability of the people to protect or defend them. Public sympathy with partisans increased with the emergence of Arab nationalistic parties in the middle of the nineteen fifties. When the time of confrontation between the state and the people of the city arrived, partisans were ready and carried arms and led part of the revolt.

I was in my first year at school when in May 1958 the revolution erupted. Schools closed and pupils marched in the streets along with partisans and street youths. Shops were destroyed and burned. The army spread and closed the streets of the modern city. We were trapped in the old quarters that became as one. The city split in two. Barricades were erected to protect inhabitants of the old town from snipers. Arms became common in the hands of partisans who were mostly students in their graduation year, in addition to some youths and professionals. They carried machine guns, including the one given the brand name "Port Said" in commemoration of the tri-country (Britain, France & Israel) aggression against Egypt. "Popular Resistance" emerged, and within three months armed people were in charge of the inner quarters. The situation did not lack revolutionary ideology, but the traditions of "*qabadayat*", or "thugs" the city had almost forgotten surfaced again. The *qabadayat* were the traditional enemies of the state or any authority. In bygone times they used to impose their minor influences in the inner quarters of the old town, living on smuggling and kickbacks. The

revolution refreshed their memories and their style of living for some time. They wedged themselves in the slogans of the revolution and its aims.

We were trapped in the inner quarters of the city due to imposed curfews or the danger associated with venturing in the streets. Our leisure times became limited to inside the house, or near it. We made wooden weapons that became more abundant than actual ones. We used lemons as hand grenades. Some boys used considerable skills in creating weapons as near as possible to the real ones. They mesmerised us, but the revolution took place in the summer, and being on holidays added to our boredom and fear, particularly that the long hot summer nights were riddled by real exchange of fire.

Our city had its reasons for revolt. It was about a final show down with the government who only recently reconciled with its people after they kept their hostility towards it during the mandate, and became disappointed with it during independence. Arab nationalistic partisanship, along with local leaders, youths and thugs were in some aspects the city's way of antagonising the state.

The summer ended and the revolt approached its final stages. Barricades were removed and the streets were opened again. The state returned wearing new attire and slogans, with the national anthem and pictures of the President of the Republic. We returned to school in the beginning of autumn when the city reconciled with the state.

The school principal, administrators and teachers did not take seriously the matter of students lining up at 7:50 every morning to sing the national anthem. The students also did not take it seriously either. We felt we were artificially doing something that was not born out of our conviction. This was why we, the students, were all smiles while the principal and his superintendent, who assumed the appearance of "leaders", frowned as they stood firm and upright looking into space.

The directive regarding the national anthem must had come from the Ministry of Education, which was at that time of the late nineteen fifties and early sixties active in representing the leanings of the state to build a "strong nation for all citizens". As a matter of fact, public schools were in their prime at the time, a condition that would last a decade before they fell into the same fate as that of the government leading them.

We sang the national anthem several times, then we all forgot about it: students, principal and superintendent. Our Grade 4 teacher, however, was in charge of the boy scout branch affiliated with the Ministry of Education. He was determined at activating national feelings among the youths. Our teacher sang all scout songs in all classes without exception. He urged his students to pay membership fees and buy scout uniforms in preparation for participation in camps. I personally did not pay any membership fees, wear uniform or go to any camp. But I did sing songs and learn about the noble mission of scouts. The scout movement seemed to me rather naive compared to what we were learning, at that early age, a patriotic vocabulary that infiltrated us from the partisan activities on never-ending occasions. By the time I moved to another school after my Grade 4, the rituals related to the national anthem became forgotten.

The state promoted its national symbols: the flag, the anthem and the picture of the president, in public departments and during special occasions, particularly during Independence Day. The state entered our city with its glory on Independence Day in 1962. The President himself attended, and I could see him from a distance occupying his prominent place inside a large marquee erected in the centre of the city, then unveiling a memorial in the middle of a big square. Grand celebrations were conducted in the stadium built only a few years before to testify to the interest of the state in its people. Schools sent their students to participate in these festivities. An ambulance, fire engines and a chopper acted a rescue mission, with some students cooperating with members of the civil defense force and the fire brigade. There was some admiration and bewilderment that prompted loud applause and cheering, filling all corners of the stadium. All of this, however, did not charm us.

The state was planning something beyond celebrations. Some projects were planned. They started chopping trees in preparation for constructing the buildings for the international fair. Roads were built and some old quarters were demolished for the sake of widening the streets. Some thought that the government was deliberately doing this to allow tanks to enter the old quarters which were difficult to penetrate during the revolt.

There was some admiration for the work done by the government on the one hand, but on the other there was suspicion about its intentions. In the eyes of those who were older than us, the state was expanding and modernising its administration, but this was nothing to us compared with the slogans and ideas we believed in. The patriotic Arab nationalistic songs broadcast from other Arab stations were what captured our imagination and invoked our zeal.

The state was not absent from our minds, but its presence took a negative form. It is, however, ironic that this same state was the one we went to with our complaints when we participated in demonstrations starting from the inner suburbs out to modern ones until we reached Government House where the Mayor or his deputy addressed us.

Things went on as such for some time, with the confrontation between city and state, started during the days of our fathers and continued during our time, polarising many elements and taking different forms. We were very proud of our city of deep-rooted history, combining the essence of both culture and religion. It was not only a question of ancient mythical history, but this civil feeling was a common heritage among all similar cities. In the shadow of changes occurring in a whole previous century, the children of the city continued their deep belonging to their city that was for them a vast space where they found their religion, language and home. This space was also a world drawn to its traditions, customs and particular history. It was difficult for the children of the city to accept the state to impose a belonging beyond their own. To them the city was equal to the state and even more. It was without doubt a conservative feeling, but it embodied a deep historical dialectics in which the feeling of belonging to an historical

model was superior to the present. The city refused to substitute its identity by belonging to the idea of an "artificial" abstract state. This is why moving from the city, where society was one with its ideals, to a state which was at a layer above, had a price we paid for in a lot of metaphors, invoking contradicting values and many slogans and sacrifices.

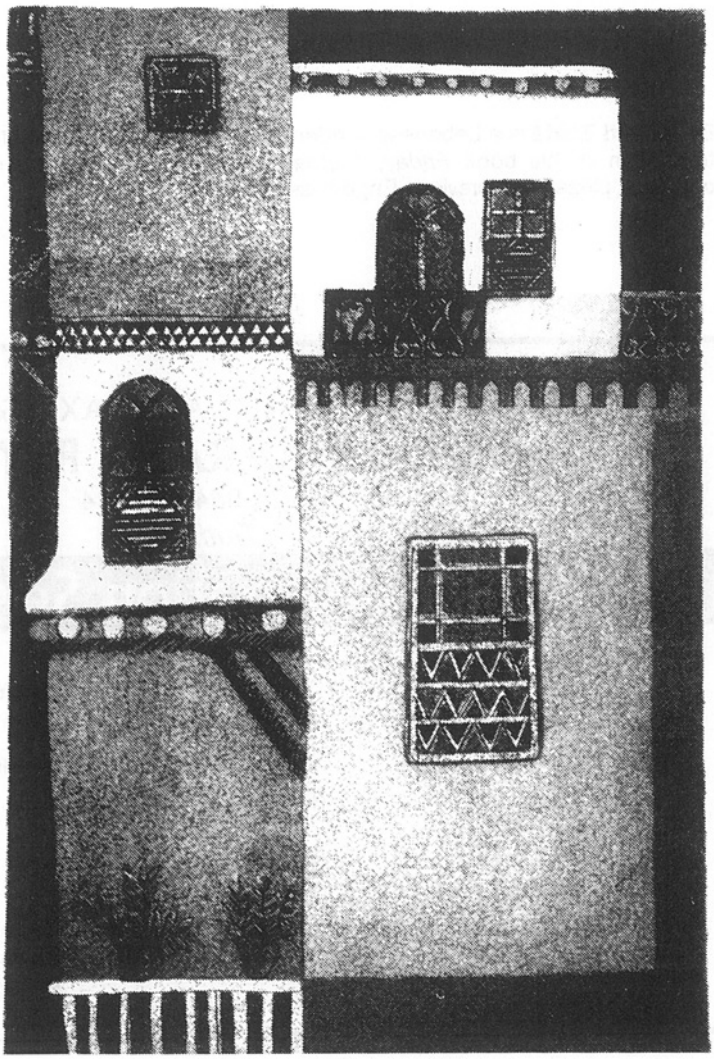
خالد زيادة

Dr. Khalid Ziadé is a Lebanese academic and author. These chapters are a continuation of our translation of his book *Friday, Sunday* into English. For more information, or for previous chapters, please see previous English issues of *Kalimat*.

NABIL RAZOUK

Oriental Formation

Engraving and printing on zinc



ARTWORK

Formation from *Ma'lula*

Engraving
and printing
using silk
screen

نبيل رزّوق

Dr. Nabil Razouk is a Syrian artist who lives in Damascus.

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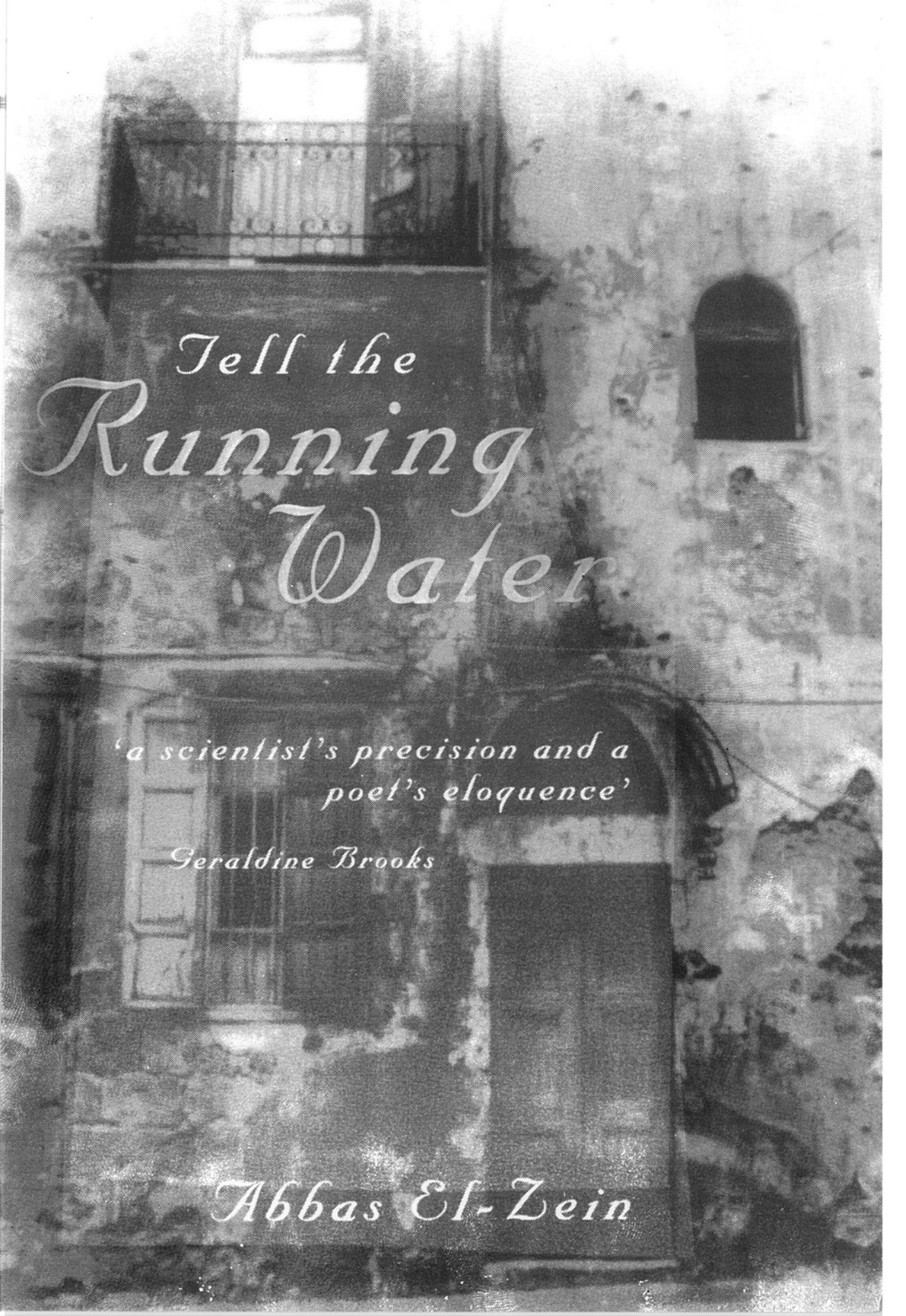
كَلِمَات

Kalimat

Words are the gate to cultural heritage, and writing is the key to its permanence

- are a support to literature and cultural variety
- a celebration of the beauty we see in the diversity and creativity of words
- a promotion of writers of English in the Arabic-speaking world, and Arab writers in the English-speaking world

الكَلِمَةُ بابُ الإرثِ الحَضَاريِّ، والكتابَة مفتاحُ دَيمُومَته


Tell the
Running
Water
'a scientist's precision and a
poet's eloquence'
Geraldine Brooks
Abbas El-Zein

كَلِمَات

Kalimat

تهدف كَلِمَات إلى الاحتفاء بالإبداع وتعزيز التواصل الثقافي بين الناطقين بالإنكليزية والناطقين بالعربية، وهي مجلة ذات نفع عام، ولا تسعى إلى الربح. يصدر منها عددان باللغة الإنكليزية كل عام (مارس/آذار وسبتمبر/أيلول)، وعددان بالعربية (يونيو/حزيران وديسمبر/كانون الأول).

ترحب كَلِمَات بكل المساهمات الخلاّقة، وترجو المساهمين إرسال أعمالهم **قبل أربعة أشهر** على الأقل من موعد صدور العدد الذي يمكن لموادهم أن تنشر فيه، مع إرفاقها بالعناوين ووسائل الاتصال كاملة، **بما في ذلك أرقام الهواتف**، ونسخة عن السيرة الذاتية للمؤلف/المؤلفة، أو بضعة أسطر تلخص منجزاته/منجزاتها.

تنشر كَلِمَات النثر والشعر والدراسات والقصة والفنون باللغة العربية أو الإنكليزية وفق طريقتين أساسين:

أولاً - **المواد الأصيلة** التي لم يسبق نشرها مطلقاً بأية لغة.

ثانياً - **المواد المترجمة**، أو التي يتقدم بها المؤلف لتقوم كَلِمَات بترجمتها. وهذه يجب أن تكون منشورة سابقاً بلغتها الأصلية، ولم تسبق ترجمتها. وتقدم كَلِمَات خدمة الترجمة مجّاناً للذين تقبل أعمالهم. (الأعمال التي تأتي مترجمة سلفاً قد يتوفر لها حظّ أكبر بالنشر نظراً لضغط العمل لدينا.) يجب تزويدنا بالمرجع الذي تم النشر فيه، بما في ذلك اسم الناشر، والسنة، ورقم المجلد، والعدد في حال الدوريّات. جميع المواد المقدمة للنشر تخضع لتقييم قبل قبولها.

يحصل المتقدمون بأعمالهم الأصيلة إلى كَلِمَات على الأفضلية في إمكانية ترجمة أعمالهم لاحقاً ونشرها في كَلِمَات أو مشاريع أخرى يتبناها الناشر. ونحن نعتبر هذا مكافأة عينية على جهودهم. كما يتلقى من نشر في كَلِمَات اشتراكاً لمدة سنة واحدة مجّاناً. وتعتذر كَلِمَات عن تقديم أية تعويضات أخرى في الوقت الحاضر.

المؤازرة (الرعاية المادية)

مفتوحة للمنظمات والأفراد الذين يؤمنون بأهمية الرسالة الحضارية والجمالية للمجلة، مع العلم أنها لا تخوّل من يقدمها وضع أية شروط كَلِمَات، أو الحصول على أية حقوق أو مزايا، بما في ذلك أفضلية النشر.

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(نصف القيمة للاشتراك بإحدى اللغتين فقط.)

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