كلمات

Kalimat

number 19 (english), september 2004
العدد التاسع عشر (إنكليزي)، أيلول/سبتمبر 2004

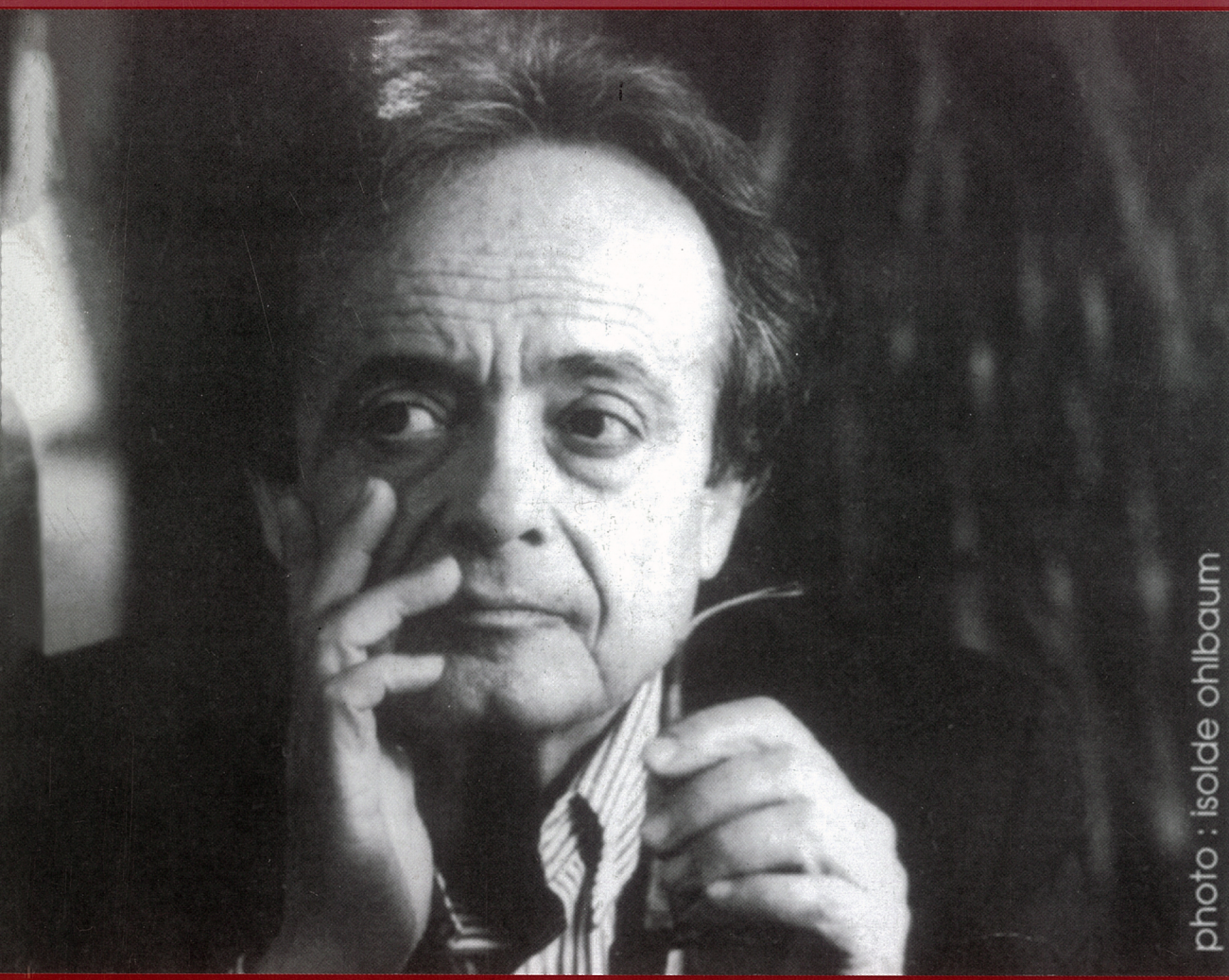

photo : isolde ohlbaum

adonis

arab poet and cultural critic

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).

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Kalimat publishes original unpublished work in English or Arabic.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 It does not accept translations of unpublished work.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 free copies of the issues in which their writings appear. Their work might also be translated into Arabic or English, and the translations published in *Kalimat* or other projects by the publisher or his contacts in the Middle East. No other payment is made.

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الكَلِمَةُ بابُ الإرثِ الحَضاري، والكِتابَة مفتاحُ دَيمُومَته

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

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Adonis by Issa Boullata

We are particularly delighted and privileged the *Landmark* article in this issue is about one of the greatest thinkers and poets in the history of the Arabs, **Adonis**, written by a distinguished writer and academic, Professor Issa Boullata.

Boullata follows his article with translations of a prose piece about the origins of Adonis along with selected love poems, all written by Adonis. Boullata reveals to us, first hand, what Adonis has to say about himself and his philosophy.

The Vote, the Intellect & The Globalisation of Democracy

This issue comes to you while the world continues to be in turmoil, morally and physically. We are in a period of confusion when it has become difficult to distinguish between the predator and the prey. Nevertheless, the continued production of a periodical such as *Kalimat* is a positive statement that we have not lost hope, that the period that would follow this world flux might instil some responsibility in our hearts and minds. Perhaps an awakening of sorts might take place, allowing us to build on a wisdom that can at last realise the futility of continued conflicts, no matter how temporarily they were inevitable— or seemed so.

We believe that this realisation can only be translated into useful action if it were built on the principles of international justice— socially, economically, politically and morally. In this age of globalisation, the democratic principles must not be restricted to the countries that boast their application. Those countries have the responsibility now of ensuring genuine help to other less fortunate nations. These other nations should no longer claim their democracy is different from the one in the west and that any questioning of their ways is interference in their internal affairs. (The *application* of democracy differs even within western nations, but they all accept that it should be there.)

Democracy, as applied in the West, is the product of a long historical struggle. The

"social contract" is the creation of an era long before the establishment of current western democracies. The essence of the democratic principles does not belong to the West, nor should it be confined to it. It is a human quest to enhance liberty and coexistence. Democracy, in its intellectual and material senses, cannot be compartmentalised— you either have democracy or you don't. There are no half solutions. Those who suggest there are, are usually the ones resisting the application of democracy, most likely because they will lose the positions they acquired by despotic or unlawful means. More recently, they are rulers of non-democratic nations who feel the pressure for the need to change, but they are still unwilling or unable to do so, mainly due to great religious and cultural influences.

Democracy is not only about free elections. It is about free thought and accountability. The West cannot be democratic whilst continuing to cooperate with dictators for strategic or economic gains. This becomes hypocrisy. This also brings about disasters similar to the ones we currently live in. Dealing with these created problems becomes very costly.

The West cannot be democratic if it believed the western way of life is the best and only way. Democracy is about acknowledging and valuing differences. In its real application, it is about making sure these differences contribute to the well being of humanity. This means utilising these differences to the enrichment of our life on earth. There is a chance for more creativity with variety. If the world were uniform, it would have died. What we should be aiming at is harmony, not uniformity. Uniformity destroys individual and group initiatives, whereas harmony capitalises on these initiatives and exploits their creative aspects.

Anyone familiar with the principles of evolution would know that the diversity of life on earth is a result of allowing changes and mutations to occur. Whilst the DNA molecule is found in every creature on earth, species diversity and interdependence are astonishing. Similarly, whilst within the same human species there are some common and uniform criteria, complications arise when we consider the influence of "consciousness" on our perception of things. Throughout history, this has led to an ability to manipulate our intellect to make us adopt certain beliefs, leading some of us to consider them "absolute truths". These people will be the fiercest in resisting democracy because they believe their way is the only correct way. In a democratic society, there can't be one "correct" way. Therefore, the administration of any democratic society must be secular by necessity.

Just because some western societies are democratic does not mean they are perfect or applying democracy as it should be applied. However, the democratic process itself, even at the basic level of free elections, is capable of bringing peaceful changes should the population wish. More importantly, whilst corruption happens in the best of democratic societies, at least there is the mechanism for accountability. Here, independent judicature is a major pillar in the democratic process.

The current international climate has not been favourable for those Arabs who left their countries to reside in the west, willingly or by necessity. Most of them are physically

on western soil, but morally they still dwell in their countries of origin. Paradoxically, some of them are happy to enjoy the material aspects of their new lives, but remain unhappy about their new social and intellectual environment. They solve their problem by being nostalgic, dreaming of a homeland that might no longer exist in the way they knew it. Despite this, some of them feel they are discriminated against. This feeling is sometimes justified but not always. For some, it can be a result of their own doing, namely choosing to isolate themselves away from a society they don't identify with.

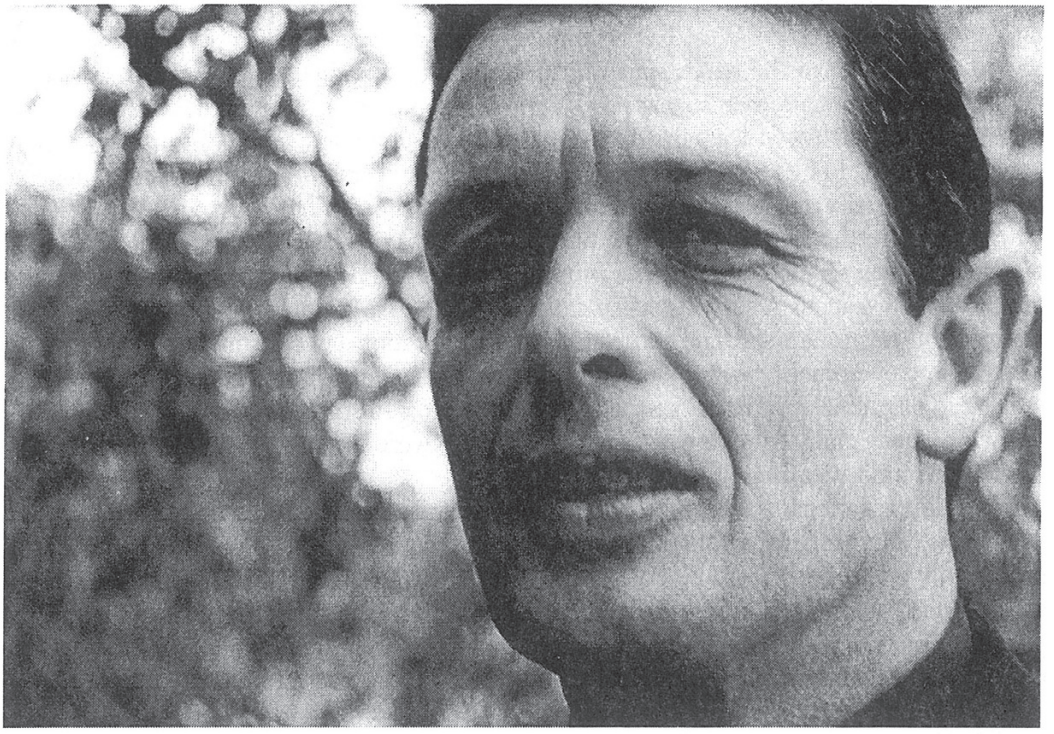
But there does not seem to be any solution to the problem of secular intellectuals who adopted the West as their alternative abode. They did this by choice, not by force. Not only have they managed to be at odds with their own communities of origin, but also with their adopted communities. It is easy to see why they are at odds with their own. They would not have left their countries of origin were they not at odds in the first place. However, why should they be at odds with their adopted community? There are two reasons that exert their effects individually or together. The first is that under the present international climate, the West has become more suspicious and distrustful of the Arabs and Moslems, due to the naïve tendency to brand all individuals equally. The second is that those intellectuals themselves have been disappointed in western double standards and the use of lies (or at least the dependence on non-tangible evidence) to justify recent western actions. For example, it is a big shock for someone who always stood against conspiracy theories and tried to rationalise with his own people to convince them that the USA cannot be the source of all evil, to be eventually confronted with the fact the USA did not have any problem using the argument about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to justify its hasty invasion. It is also a shock to try to defend the integrity of Australian soil and rationalise about migration laws to the advantage of the Australian Government, only to be confronted with incidents of poor treatment of asylum seekers in detention centres in Australia, or with the misinformation about asylum seekers throwing their children overboard the ship they were in, awaiting the decision of Australian authorities about their fate.

Remaining rational (or naïve?), the WIG (westernised intellectual gentleman) loses on both sides. But perhaps, at the end, he (being an international type of fellow, and not specifically westernised) will emerge as the winner when the inevitability of globalisation spreads itself comfortably over the planet, and the world is ready for implementing its positive elements, namely sharing the world's resources in harmony— maintained by fair moral, intellectual, social, economic, political and democratic principles and practices. We believe this will result out of necessity, not the will of the USA. Writers and readers of global events have a responsibility to ensure global democracy.

The Editor

Kalimat, Damian Boyle & Young Talents

For some time, *Kalimat* has been eager to establish a section dedicated to young writers. The importance of such a feat is obvious, but time and resource constraints have so far delayed such a decision. In addition, *Kalimat* emphasises the originality and literary merit of any work accepted. This has meant that we tread carefully before taking further steps. Recent talks with our adviser Damian Boyle resulted in his agreeing to become Associate Editor responsible for young talents. Boyle has had an enriching experience in this area, in addition to his qualifications. The following summarises some of the achievements of Boyle who has been a strong supporter of *Kalimat* and a very efficient editorial adviser. We thank him for accepting this added responsibility.



Damian Boyle holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University of Queensland, a BA in journalism and a Diploma in Education. He began his career as a journalist in Geelong and, later, Melbourne before turning to the classroom. He has since devoted a

lifetime to teaching English and Media Studies across south-eastern Australia.

In 1993, he left teaching to create a small publishing house, **Hilltop Publications**, with the aim of showcasing emerging writers in a literary journal called *Gathering Force*. The journal continued during the next four years, following Boyle on his travels through Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland. Many of those whose work appeared in this journal were first-time published.

At the time *Gathering Force* came into being, Boyle was running a beef farm in Victoria's magnificent Otway Ranges and researching his first non-fiction book - *Call me Jimmy: the life and death of Jockey Smith.* This book, published early last year, was well received throughout Australia, even in far away places like Darwin and Katherine in the NT.

In 1996 he relocated to Tasmania where he recommenced his teaching career and rekindled his love of journalism as a freelance. The following year he was accepted into the creative writing program at the University of Queensland. Here, he continued to work on his first book while meeting the demands of university life and working as a freelance journalist. He also wrote two textbooks for English teachers while working with reluctant learners from a secondary school in QLD. He freelanced as a book editor and gave significant editorial advice to many writers. It was during this hectic period he made the decision to fold *Gathering Force.* As much as he enjoyed the contact with writers and the place *Gathering Force* had forged for itself within the Australian literary community, he found the workload too heavy and, as the least profitable (and perhaps most demanding) of his activities, was forced to let the journal go.

Boyle returned to Geelong in 1998 for family reasons and took employment as a Media Studies' teacher at a local high school. He continues to promote Australian literature, particularly that of emerging writers.

The Editor

Literary Fair

There is nothing more delightful in the eyes of Kalimat than the prosperity and success of its writers and advisers. This year, we are particularly thrilled about the publication of four books by three of our advisers. We are equally delighted for the publication of a book by John Holton who has been a Kalimat writer from the very beginning.

Sophie Masson: Snow, Fire, Sword

It was a great pleasure for my wife an I to attend the launch of Sophie Masson's book *Snow, Fire, Sword* at Banjo Books,[1] on 10th June 2004. The publisher is Random House Australia. The book was launched by Masson's friend, the writer Ursula Dubosarsky who, among other things, praised the brimming energies of Masson. The venue itself was a very lovely bookshop with a manager who gave everyone a warm welcome. Masson's family and friends were there, along with other interested and interesting people.

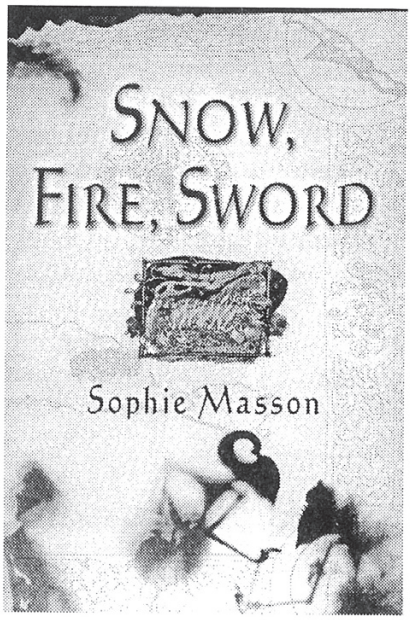
Masson had this to say about her book:

> The genesis for Snow, Fire, Sword lies way back in my very great interest in Indonesian— especially Javanese - culture, folklore and myth and legend. I've always wanted to write a fantasy adventure set within a Javanese setting, and though I've written a book set in Indonesia before—The Tiger, published by Harper Collins in 1996 - it was about different things to this book. The Tiger was very much about the experience of my parents when they'd lived in Indonesia in the late 50's and early 60's (I was born there in 1959), and my own experiences when I'd returned there in the mid-1990's. *Snow, Fire, Sword* is different— it's about the challenges that are faced by Indonesia, especially Java, both as they struggle to modernise, and with the Islamists who are attempting to change, to 'purify' as they call it, Indonesian Muslim culture but in my opinion are attempting to destroy what has taken centuries to build up.
>
> In the late 90's, I became very interested in a strange, mysterious series of happenings in East Java, when it was reported that masked, black-clad 'ninjas' on motorbikes would come into villages, select people such as 'dukuns' (Indonesian healers/shamans) whom they said were practising black magic, and kidnap or kill them. Anyone who tried to oppose them was killed. For about a year villagers lived in terror of these men, but eventually they vanished as mysteriously as they'd come. This was also accompanied by sudden outbreaks of inter-religious violence in places like the Moluccas and Ambon, in areas where Christians and Muslims had lived peaceably for a long, long time.
>
> I was puzzled by these things— why were they breaking out? Who was behind it? Now, we know these things were being done by fanatical Islamists, in collusion with some elements of the armed forces and also die-hard Suharto supporters angry that he'd been overthrown. They were attempting to create a reign of terror, both to facilitate the return of the dictator and also to reestablish the tyranny with an Islamist bent, to 'purify' Indonesia of its traditional Islam.

[1] 4/2 Oxford Street, Epping, NSW, Australia. banjo@banjobooks.com.au

People like the Bali bombers were in groups like this at that time. (They also did things like demolish shrines of saints and other pilgrimage sites.) It gave me some of the basis for my story, and certainly for the opening scenes...

I also became aware, after Sept 11, of the way in which the challenge of the Islamists is not only a challenge for the West, but also for the Muslim world itself. This is a battle for the soul of Islam as much as it's a war with the West. Knowing Java and its beautiful, syncretic, fascinating culture as I do, I was very upset to think that such people could destroy and coarsen it— rather as the Puritans did in England in the Reformation, when they vandalised churches, destroyed pictures and statues, burnt abbeys and destroyed beautiful and ancient customs. So the inspiration for the novel comes very much from those feelings.



I chose to do it laterally— not to set it directly in Java, but in an imaginary country called Jayangan - because this gave me more freedom. Like fairytale, fantasy not directly tied to our world yet closely identified with it, can tell some very deep truths, and liberate the writer's spirit— and I hope, too, the reader's. So though there are many recognisable real-world elements in the book, I've chosen to tell the story through the medium of fantasy, which is the modern inheritor of fairytale and myth.

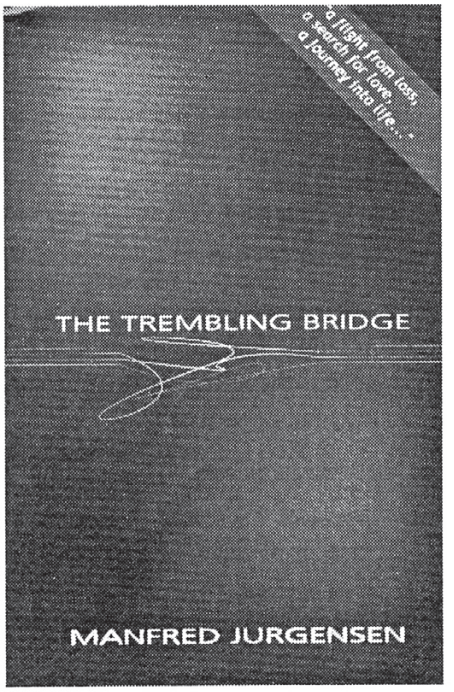
I also felt that too many people in the West see everything only in terms of impact on the West. There are no Western characters in *Snow, Fire, Sword*, because I wanted readers to be completely in the atmosphere of Jayangan. I've also used other inspirations as well as Indonesian ones for some of the characters and influences in the book— Hindi, Arabic and Chinese, to name just a few. I used elements of Arabic, Hindi and Indonesian to create various names— for instance, the three major religions in Jayangan are the 'Mujisals' , the 'Nashranees' and the 'Dharbudsus', each created by using different syllable combinations, because I did not want to use names that are actually in use in the world we know, yet still wanted to keep a flavour of their origins.

Writing *Snow, Fire, Sword* was a delight, a passion and an engrossing thing.

So much so that half-way through it I decided I wanted to write a whole series based in the world of the Mujisals, the Dawtarn el Jisal, as I called it. The next one, The Curse of Zohreh, will be set in the Principality of Ameerat, a small but very wealthy oil-rich country on the peninsula of Al Aksara. It is based of course on the Gulf States, and principally the United Arab Emirates, where my brother lives and where we've visited him recently. Future books in the series will include "The Tyrant's Nephew" set in "Mesomia", and "Soldier of Fortune", set in "Alhind", and "Pirates of Kassar", set in the islands of Kassar, famous for their pirates! It is, I believe, a unique series and I hope will find many readers! As well as having very serious things to say about the state of the world, and of various countries, it is also a series that has a lot of fun, humour, action, magic and mystery!

Sophie Masson has been a great friend and adviser to *Kalimat*. We wish her a continuation of brilliant achievements.

Manfred Jurgensen: The Trembling Bridge



We are glad that another good friend and adviser to *Kalimat* had also launched a book this year. Professor Manfred Jurgensen added to his many publications a new novel: *The Trembling Bridge*. The novel is described as one that 'deals with the turmoils of adolescence in post-war Europe and a young man's coming of age in Melbourne. Offering an "outside" look at Australia in the sixties, it tells, above all, a moving story of self-discovery and love.'

Bruce Dawe, the renowned Australian poet, said of the book: '...But this is a novel of two worlds, linked by the mind and spirit of the narrator as he takes up life again— in Australia.

The Trembling Bridge spans the oceans of history and the individual consciousness, as does Joyce's central figure in *Portrait of the artist as a Young Man*. In reading

Jurgensen's novel we experience the widening understanding of the person who undertakes that migration from adolescence to adulthood. Manfred Jurgensen is is a sympathetic dramatist of what it can mean to cross that bridge. In doing so, he adds considerably to our appreciation of the journey, Australians, like others being necessarily world-travellers, too.'

Dawe also comments on one of Jurgensen's distinguished attributes: '...It is one of the many attractions of Jurgensen's narrative style that that the poetic does not dominate to the exclusion of the realistic. One hardly needs to be reminded that the author is also a fine poet whose collection, A Brisbane kind of Love, illustrates a similar conjunction of the lyrical and particular...'

The book has been receiving excellent reviews. Our very sincere wishes go to Manfred, along with our gratitude for his friendship, support and encouragement.

Eva Sallis: *Dark Dreams*

Dark Dreams: Australian Refugee Stories is a book edited by Sonja Dechian, Heather Millar and Eva Sallis. It is published by Wakefield Press in 2004.

Eva wrote the forward to the book and here how it starts:

> *Dark Dreams: Australian Refugee Stories* is both an extraordinary record of young people's literary talent and a collection of important and controversial Australian stories that need to be heard and read now. It also represents a far-reaching, quirky and unique view of Australia's social history. It is a collection of stories in which young writers remind their elders what Australia has been to displaced people in the past, and reminds graphically what it means, in many different variations, to be a refugee. It is a bleak collection, yes, but rich in idealism, energy and optimism. Throughout this book there is the recurrent theme of friendship—friendships lost, broken, remembered and found, now in Australia.

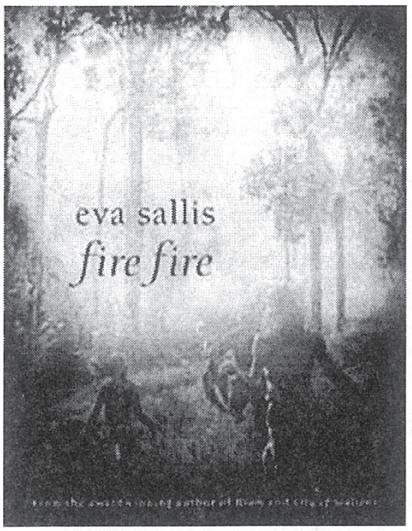
Eva Sallis, an academic and writer of fiction, is no stranger to the advocacy of the

plight of refugees. She is the president of "Australians Against Racism", and has been for the past few years devoting a lot of her time and energies to this cause.

Eva has been a strong supporter of *Kalimat*, an adviser and more recently a sponsor. She has an amazing ability to integrate various aspects of life into a meaningful delivery of outcomes. This is why our Landmark article about her in *Kalimat 18* (in Arabic) presented her as a person having "creativity in literature and politics". She is much more than that, and a valued friend.

Eva Sallis: *fire fire*

Eva's most recent fiction has just been published by Allen & Unwin. The following is taken from the publisher's website.



'Musicians, artists and poets,' Acantia says. 'That's what you'll be. Just like Pa and me.' She sighs happily. 'No contaminants here! You'll be as pure as the Aborigines.'

The Houdinis have escaped the great world to Whispers, a dilapidated and isolated farm in the heart of the Australian bush. Acantia Houdini the painter has grand plans. Her seven children and famous violist husband are to become self-sufficient, and creativity will rule.

All is not, however, home-grown spinach and classical music. The family is under threat from the outside and from within.

Ursula watches her brothers and sisters adapt, thrive and then wither as they experience a bewildering mix of love, neglect and cruelty. Ursula grows slowly to a full awareness of her skewed world and is driven ultimately to escape. But it will cost her more than she can guess. Family is everything. She has everything to lose.

Fire Fire is shocking, absurd, tender and grotesque. In language spun with masterly control and much humour, Sallis captures the resilience and confusion of growing up. A completely surprising story of love and damage.

John Holton: The Affairs of Men

The Affairs of Men is John Holton's new collection of short stories, published by Burren Publications, Victoria, Australia 2004. We thank Holton for sending us a copy and accepting that we translate some of his stories for future Arabic issues of *Kalimat*.

Holton's stories read very smoothly with a richness in imagery deriving from the very mundane in life, casting a remarkable "dynamics' to the narratives of his characters.

In *The Path to Enlightenment*, we read: 'The tram stops at the Toorak Road traffic lights and a battered, lime green Falcon station wagon pulls alongside with a screech of brakes. The man is surprised to see its occupants are six orange-robed Buddhist monks. Even above the noise of the street he can hear the resonating hum and rumble of Tibetan chants booming from the car stereo…'

In *Nearest the Pin* we read: 'We are flying along the river road. I know it well; it is the road that leads to the golf club. I must have traveled it four or five times a week for the past eight years. Why? Another incriminating admission — I am a member. My parents are members too, as were my father's parents. Our family name is recorded for all time in gold lettering on the clubhouse honour board. Of course Tatiana knows none of this. Ah, Tatiana. a name fit for a princess, and she is, with her deep brown eyes and Russian parentage. A Russian princess right here in Geelong.'

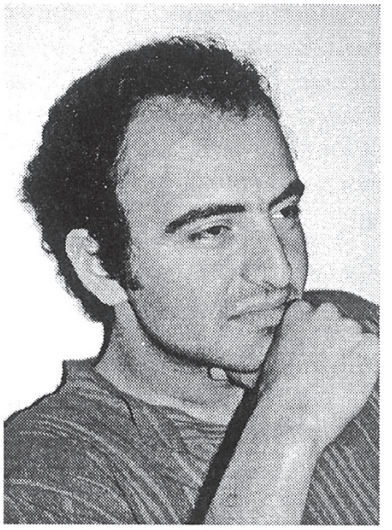
Syria & Lebanon

My wife and I have recently visited Syria and Lebanon. We were given a very warm reception by the Immigrants' Friends League in the city of Homs in Syria. We were treated to lunch and dinner invitations, and we had the pleasure and privilege of visiting the writer/poet Daad Taweel-Kanawaty and her husband Gibran in their home.

The League, unique in Syria, is in reality an association of writers, professionals and educated people who have a great passion for literature. One of their major practices is to keep channels of understanding and communication between migrants and their original birthplaces. To this end, the association started publishing *al-Sununu* (The Swallow) in 2003, an occasional multi-lingual literary magazine. The association, headed by Ms. Nuhad Chabbouh continues to celebrate the arrival of migrants or visiting foreigners, officials and dignitaries from countries with large Syrian and Lebanese communities.

Our visit coincided with the opening, in Damascus, of *Dar al-Assad for Arts & Culture*— an architecturally impressive modern building that hosts the National Symphony Orchestra. Thanks to our friends Housney and Ilham Azmeh, we had the pleasure of spending an evening there, witnessing the rise of this symphony orchestra that presented works by Bizet, Strauss, Beethoven, Tschaikovsky and by Arab composers such as Kassabji, Jabri and Shalghin. The soprano of the evening was Lubana al-Quntar, who had an enchanting voice. The Choir of the High Institute of Music participated in the event and had a breathtaking presence by its performance and elegant uniforms. Kinan Azmeh was the clarinet player for a clarinet concerto specially written for the occasion. The orchestra was conducted by Missak Baghboudarian, its main conductor since 2003. In addition, he is a conductor of a few orchestras in Italy and Hungary.

Missak Baghboudarian



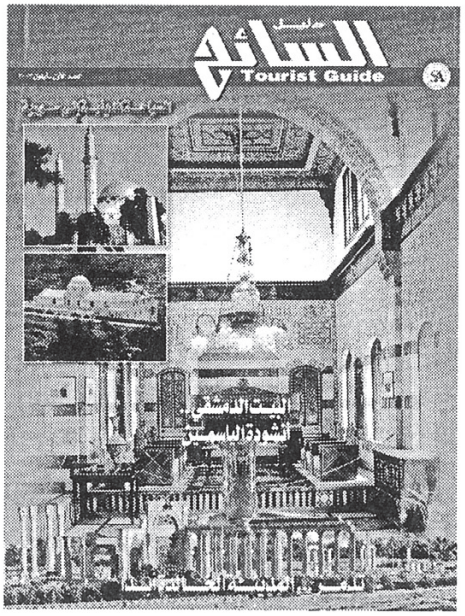
Kinan Azmeh

The next day, I spent a few hours talking to Missak and Kinan, despite on the same evening they were both due to leave the country for other musical missions. I was impressed with the caliber of these two young men who are among those leading the modern musical movement in Syria.

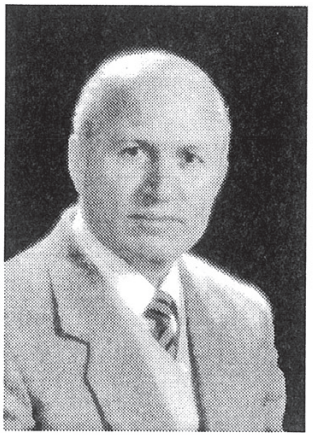
I was fortunate to meet His Excellency the Syrian Minister for Culture, Dr. Mahmoud Assayyed who had previously been introduced to *Kalimat* by Dr. Ali Jourieh, the Director of Public Relations at the Ministry of Industry, who accompanied me on this visit. On our way, Dr. Jourieh casually mentioned to me that Assayyed is married to the daughter of Abdullatif Younis, a veteran Syrian parliamentarian and a migrant who spent many years in South America before eventually returning to Syria. This was a beautiful surprise for me. Whilst I knew about Mahmoud Assayyed when he was Minister of Education, and the name had a strange familiarity to me, it was only then that I could piece things together. The familiarity must have come from my family's connections, namely that my maternal grandfather and my father were friends with Abdullatif Younis. As a young boy, I clearly remember Younis's visits to our home and to my father's shop. I remember his distinguished voice and elegant attire. But I left Syria at a young age, and my knowledge and connection with family friends stagnated.

I handed the Minister the latest issue of *Kalimat* and he immediately called upon his secretary and asked her to let the Ministry subscribe. Then I mentioned to the minister my delight at discovering that Abdullatif Younis is still alive and well in his hometown of Safita, and that he was a good friend of the family. He said that despite Younis was now ninety years old, he was still sharp. The minister used his mobile phone to call Younis and tell him that someone who knew him would like to speak to him. He introduced me and mentioned the names of my grandfather and father to Younis who immediately recognized who I was and spoke to me for over twenty minutes with his unmistakable accent and tone that brought me back some forty years. He referred to incidents and situations that made me feel happy and humble at the praise he hailed upon the association he had with my family. I mentioned to him that I was due to leave Syria in two days, and next time I visit I will surely visit him in Safita.

Dr. Jourieh later introduced me to Dr. Rizk Elias who is the publisher and editor of "Tourist Guide", a monthly magazine aiming at promoting tourism in Syria. The magazine is distinguished by two main aspects. First, the title does not give it justice, as it is actually more than just a guide. The articles are of a very high standard, and some of them are written by distinguished scholars and widely published Syrian authors such as Dr. Koutaiba Shihabi. Some of the articles are translated into English and published in the same issue. The magazine is elegant, with first class paper and print. It is a cultural magazine. Second, Dr. Elias mainly single-handedly edits, finances and publishes the magazine. I was amazed how no organization or government department took this opportunity and went in partnership with Dr. Elias, or at least sponsored him, given the enormous educational and promotional value this magazine is undertaking.



The first issue of "Tourist Guide"



Dr. Rizk Elias

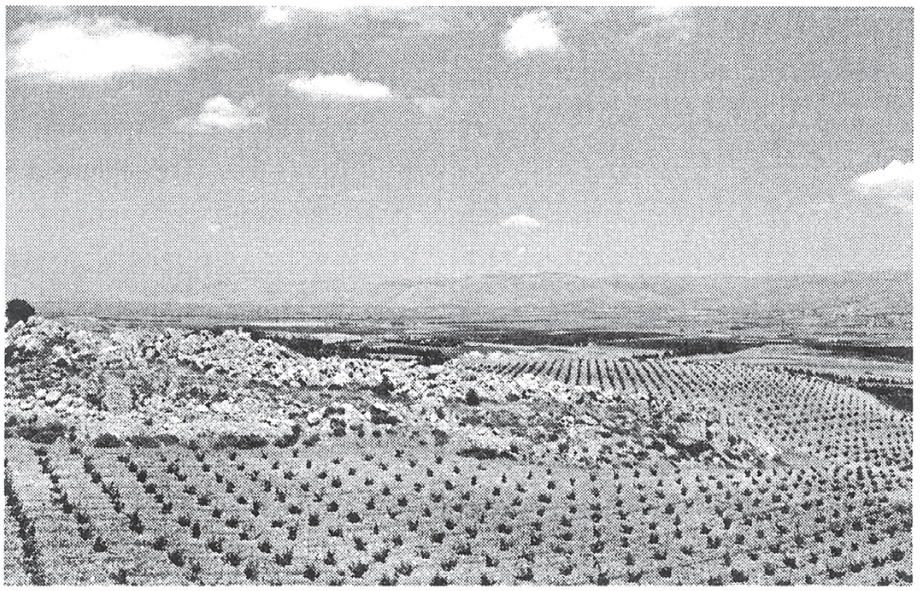
I went for a walk in Old Damascus, my birthplace and the place of my childhood and early youth. This is something I do every time I am in Damascus. I revisited places that were once my grandparents Arabic home in Narjis Lane, my parents' first home at the end of Ameen Street, my father's shop in Khan Elharir and my father's factory off Medhat Pasha Street. I traced the routes I used to take between these different places that were located in an area that boosted large numbers of certain minority groups in Syria, mainly Chiites, Christians, Palestinians and Jews.

I spent my school life at al-Mohsinyya High-school located in Medhat Pasha Street. I headed to the school and found its doors open. I entered to see many tables in its yard with teachers clearly checking examination papers. It was one of their working sessions in open air. I was looking for faces I might recognise after over thirty-five years of leaving school and twenty years of not setting a foot in it. I immediately recognised the younger brother of a friend of mine, who became a teacher at the school. Fawwaz Sandouk rushed to me as soon as I greeted him. The handshake was one of the warmest during my visit. Fawwaz immediately asked me, 'Have you seen Burhan?' I was flabbergasted! Does he still work here? Yes, he does. I could recognise him from the shape of his shoulders, as Fawwaz indicated the direction where Master Burhan Quzwini was sitting. Still unaware of my presence, I touched the back of his shoulder telling Fawwaz, 'Absolutely Burhan, you can even recognise him from behind after all

these years.' When he turned to see who I was, he jumped off his chair to give me a very warm welcome.

Burhan Quzwini was one of the most influential teachers at the school during my primary school life. A highly disciplined professional, he left his marks on all those students of my generation, and I am sure of later ones.

Another lucky encounter was my meeting with Yussuf Nouriddeen who was our physical education teacher and the head of our boy scouts division. Master Nouriddeen helped introduce modern exercise techniques to the school, and was very active in involving students and the community in the boy scouts movement of the time. He is still active at the school, but now he takes care of its stores, books and stationary. He showed me his collection of photographs depicting school and boy-scouts life from the times I was there.



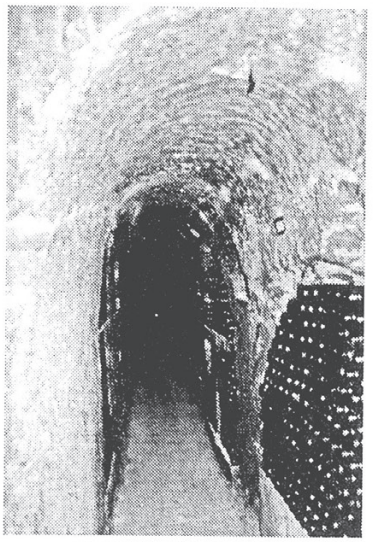
New vine plantations at Kifrayya, Lebanon

Our visit was mainly to see family and friends, and we were delighted that it was a success in this regard, thanks to the hospitality of many people, particularly Aida Nahhas (at whose home we stayed), and Akram and Nihad Shehadé. We spent four days in Lebanon, starting in Chtaura where Nadim and Samar Ghazaleh took us on a

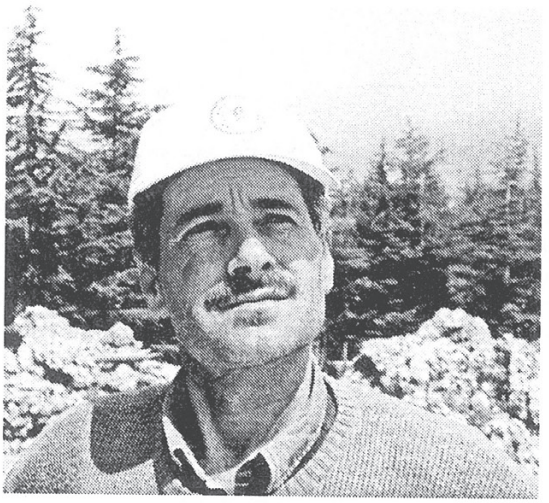
day tour of the expanding Lebanese wineries at Ksara and Kifrayya.

Then we spent the rest of the time with Raghda and Jihad Elzein between Beirut, the Northern Coast, the Cedars and Chbanieh. We visited several places that we hadn't seen for many years. Jbail (Byblos), on the coast, was particularly impressive, taking us back in history thousands of years.

An encouraging thing at the Cedars was the establishment of reserves. Individual initiative seems to be at play there. We met a "ranger" Malik Antonious Tauk whose father Antonious Tauk planted a number of cedar trees that became a reserve. Now, Malik takes care of the reserve and of a souvenir shop selling items made from cedar wood.



The cellars at Ksara



Malik Antonious Tauk in front of the cedars his father planted

A good friend of mine presented me with a book by the Lebanese writer and academic Nada Mughayzel Nassr. The book is a collection of Arabic prose titled *Ashia' Bassita* (Simple Things), published by Dar an-Nahar, Beirut 2003. This is the first time I read for Dr. Nassr, and I am very impressed with the quality of both the content and style of her prose pieces. The pieces are short, and address basic life issues. The title is "Simple Things", but there is nothing simple about this highly creative, confronting and concise book. Translations of some pieces are presented in the present issue.

The Editor

Liat Kirby on Jeni Allenby's Article

I am writing regarding the article by Jeni Allenby *'...an act of courage': Contemporary Palestinian Art* published in *Kalimat 17*, March 2004.

When I read her opening lines - *Exile. Dispossession.* Diaspora. *Loss. Resistance. Politics. Nationalism. Identity. Return. Hope.* - I thought, she's talking about the Jewish experience. Of course, she is not, but every one of these words can be identified with and aligned to the history of the Jews.

I am well aware of the brief of *Kalimat*, whose pronounced aim is to celebrate creativity and enhance access among English and Arabic speaking people worldwide. I believe the magazine is also considered a 'bridge' between countries. This article of Allenby's does nothing to further these aims. Art, whether painting, words or music, if it is good art, transcends political rhetoric and propaganda and in so doing offers insight, hope and possibilities. It can depict perceived tragedy, cruelty and all manner of man's evil doings, but is most effective doing so without the embellishment of misused and distorted historical 'facts' accompanying it, which is what Allenby's article is guilty of.

The word 'Palestine' is used time and again by Allenby as a misnomer, as has been the case in much media and academic discussion of Palestinian issues (putting a lie to the sub-title of this article '...an act of courage', as 'established views', at least in the Western world, appear to favour Allenby's assertions rather than the contrary).

A mythology, politically based and emotionally charged, has grown to the point of becoming 'fact' in the minds of many, overriding to the point of oblivion the documented past of the land spoken of as 'Palestine'. Some facts to note: contemporarily we have Israel and the Palestinian Territories, not Palestine. Israel does not exist as a country in the educational text books of the Palestinians and Syrians (examination of these text books will show those who wish to look that the text vilifies Jews and teaches

students to hate them). The word 'Palestine' does not occur in the Old Testament, nor does it occur in the New Testament (Christian Gospels).

The name *Palestine* was officially adopted by the Romans around 135 C.E. (after the suppression of the great Jewish revolt of Bar-Kokhba) to replace what had been the former Jewish principality of Judea. The country was renamed Palestine or Syria Palestina, with the intention of obliterating its Jewish identity. However, to this day in Israel we still refer to the Judean hills. The name Judea did not disappear and there have always been Jews living in the area, despite the Jewish diaspora and the terrible events linked to that. As is commonly known, Jews, throughout the long 2,000 years dispersion, have constantly returned to the land to rebuild and attempt resettlement. The official declaration of modern Israel in 1948 is an important and celebratory chapter in the land's long history of existence. If the UN sanctioned partition of Palestine had been accepted at the time by the Arab peoples, Palestine would have existed as an autonomous State from thereon. However, on May 15, immediately after Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon invaded and, Israel, such a short time into its new, reinstated existence had to fight the War of Independence.

Professor Bernard Lewis, among others, has pointed out, 'From the end of the Jewish state in antiquity to the beginning of British rule, the area now designated by the name Palestine was not a country and had no frontiers, only administrative boundaries; it was a group of provincial subdivisions, by no means always the same, within a larger entity.' (see *The Palestinians and the PLO, a Historical Approach*, Bernard Lewis). 'Palestine' has never been a nation and the Arabs did not name the land to which they are claiming rights and adhering a historical consciousness.

After the Roman conquest many Jews fled to Arabia, settling in communities in various countries; these Judeans were the *first* 'Palestinian' refugees and since 1948 hundreds of thousands of them fled Arab lands to settle in Israel due to oppressive and murderous pogroms. Their particular plight has been largely ignored in any discussion of the Arab/Israeli conflict.

Jewish nationalism and the Jewish religion never died during the long period of dispersion to Arab and European lands, not in the new lands nor in Judea/Palestine. It was an uninterrupted continuum for what would take place nearly twenty centuries later in the reclaiming of the land. Zionism as a word had its origins in 1890 and the word 'Zion' has always been used in important Jewish prayers. In its meaning it has existed as long as the Jewish people have and must not be seen as purely political. It is not a dirty word, as some would insist, it simply means a Jewish homeland for the Jewish people and that place is Israel.

Jewish classical poet, Judah Halevi (1075-1114), wrote the famous line from Spain 'My heart is in the East and I am at the uttermost West'. During the current Intifida an Israeli soldier wrote on the outside wall of an Arab house in Jenin, 'It's our home too'.

You can see the latter as a simple cry for understanding or a claim on territory, depending on your propensity, although the words 'our' and 'too' are inclusive rather than exclusive.

Beliefs and hopes and aspirations of both the Jews and the Arabs rest equally in ancient history. Although the actual period of genuine Arab empire is remarkably short - the Omayyad Caliphate to the Damascus period and that's all. For a workable answer to the present dilemma between Arab and Israeli contemporary situations must be taken into account, however it serves no useful purpose to wilfully change history by replacing it with mythology to stake a claim.

Zuheir Muhsin, late Military Department head of the PLO and member of its Executive Council, said, *Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity serves only tactical purposes. The founding of a Palestinian state is a new tool in the continuing battle against Israel* ... (Dutch daily, *Trouw*, March 1977). In 1969 Abdel Razak Kader said, *The Palestinians who are today's refugees in the neighboring countries ... know this ... that their present nationalist exploiters are the worthy sons of their feudal exploiters of yesterday, and that the thorns of their life are of Arab, not Jewish origin.*

By inciting intolerance towards Jews as 'infidels' and turning it into violence against Israel as 'the enemy', the PLO, or 'Palestinian revolutionaries', have taught their brethren, especially the young, that the oppressor is Israel. There is no word of the thousands of Arabs who, in the years prior to 1948, "as 'landless' peasants", streamed into the newly reclaimed wastelands of the Jewish-settled areas from countries where some are still in camps (see *From Time Immemorial: the origins of the Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine* by Joan Peters). There is no word of Britain's systematic exclusion of Jews to the area prior to the Second World War due to consideration of Arab thinking (see details of British Immigration policy of the time, which is in direct contradiction of the Balfour Declaration) - at the same time the British were importing 'illegal' Arab immigrants by the tens of thousands for work purposes.

There are many historical happenings and contemporary situations I could discuss, many examples of the double standards of the British in the 1930s/40s, the manipulation and dishonesty of the early immigration policy (1939 British White Paper) prior to recognition of the modern State of Israel, the Palestinian National Charter, the 'Peace' agreements such as Oslo which have ended in travesty and abrogation of responsibility, et al. However, my comments will hopefully stand as evidence of my aim in writing this, which is twofold: to expose the destructive nature of rhetoric and the infinite possibilities of art.

Jeni Allenby does the discussion of contemporary Palestinian art a great disservice with her misplaced rhetoric, despite the pictorial representation of the art in *Kalimat* appearing to be graphically aggressive. Rather that she present it in such a way that the reader/viewer can draw their own conclusions or at least find space to feel the genuine place it comes from. I admire the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish but abhor his politics.

As much as you might say one informs the other, it's the ability to write as a poet, not a political orator, that transcends futility and causes one to stop and think. Therein lies the hope.

I would like to think bridges still possible out of chasms, voids and chaos, which is why art in its various forms is so important. 'Facts' can be used positively and negatively. In the case of Allenby's citing of the El Al hostesses at one time wearing 'embroidered dresses *appropriated* from Palestinian traditional styles', it should be considered that the craft and cultural output of peoples of the area is actually valued by Israel, whether they be Jew or Arab. *The Jerusalem Post* sub-title to the picture displayed of the model in the dress actually says 'This is one of the designs being *considered* for the wardrobe of El Al's first class air hostesses.', as does the side caption. It's sad that an acknowledgement of worth and/or beauty can so easily be turned into an aggressive act.

Another area discussed by Allenby is the history of the *kaffiya* and its current status as a symbol of 'Palestinian resistance... a symbol [that] is part of the global peace movement'. I would have thought that a more true and comprehensive discussion of the *kaffiya* would take into account the fact that it is also a symbol of terror and death exemplified in the suicide bombings perpetrated on the Israeli people as the garb worn by those terrorists training to kill in this way.

Allenby quotes a reviewer of the *Made in Palestine* exhibition as saying... 'the road to peace begins with understanding the suffering and point of view of the other. Art can help.' Yes. However, for peace you need partners, not combatants. The understanding of suffering and points of view needs to extend two ways, in two different directions, to be able to ultimately come together.

Liat Kirby
A Melbourne poet

Interactive Globalisation Between Two Covers

I was so much thrilled to receive the new English Issue of *Kalimat* [Kalimat 17]. As usual, the content is far beyond expectation: Ghalia Khoja is really a promising poet who is more than qualified to bring forward a modern view of Arabic poetry, despite some sort of mysticism that may make her poetry less popular for an average Arab reader...

Of course, the profile reading of Munif comes to highlight the importance of this novelist, though I would have expected to find a deeper reading of his writing,

particularly the construction of his characters, those simple but signifying figures of the ever trodden man of the street.

Bogaerts is one of the writers that you would read easily and have a good feel for the plot. He is really a well-gifted writer.

There is a lot to speak about *Kalimat*, most importantly, I suppose, is that *Kalimat* has survived the initial challenging period of trying to establish itself, when many other comparable attempts have failed. Furthermore, *Kalimat*, has succeeded, so far, to bring the real interactive form of globalization in between two covers.

Ouday Jouni
A Syrian Journalist residing in Iran

Fabulous Compilation

Congratulations on the most recent *Kalimat* [Kalimat 17]. Once again, it is a fabulous compilation. I admire and applaud your determination as a publisher and your skill as an editor. I find myself wanting to know more about the culture of our cousins from across the seas. Would it be appropriate to include an article or two about the culture and traditions of your homeland? Certainly, it comes through in your Landmark articles and poetry but I wonder if a journalistic article or two might be useful. Just a thought. We Aussies have a great deal to learn.

You have my every encouragement for what that is worth. Keep on keeping on.

Damian Boyle
A writer/journalist from Victoria, Australia

A souk in Byblos, Lebanon

One of the oldest continuously inhabited towns on Earth, this seaport (modern name: Jubayl) north of Beirut was once a great trading centre exporting cedar wood to ancient Egypt. The old Greeks had given *papyrus* its earlier name *byblos* because it was exported to the Aegean through Byblos.

Early Phoenician inscriptions dating from the 10th century BC were mostly obtained from Byblos. The English word "Bible" (the papyrus book) is also derived from Byblos. Byblos lost its supremacy when the Sidonian kingdom with its capital Tyre became dominant in Phoenicia.

Photography: Raghid Nahhas

NADA MUGHAYZEL NASSR

Simple Things
Translated by ***Raghid Nahhas***

Who Steals Books?

She left her book on the table at the café while she made a phone call from a nearby booth. When she returned, the book was gone. Someone had stolen it.

She was upset, but not angry. No doubt the thief was desperately in need of reading— in a state of deprivation. She understood that perfectly. In addition, the thief shared her literary taste!

She wished she could meet him. They both shared the love of the same author and the same persisting desire for reading— a feeling of loss in the absence of books. They had so many things to talk about. She was eager to indicate some exciting sections of the book so that both shared in their understanding of it.

She also wanted to apologise to him because she felt she was imposing her reading on him— all those sentences she had liked and underlined. He did not only steal her book, but also her reading.

She had many questions to put to him: Who are the writers whose books he steals? What places provide him with a good reading environment?

She loved that person who took risks in order to read.

Despite that, she wondered how could he read a copy that was not his. A book is a very personal thing. An intimate thing that accompanies us in our bed and carries the fingerprints of our flesh— almost like a toothbrush.

A Terrorist in a Suit and a Necktie

Terrorism happens to be the subject about which the world is truly preoccupied today.

A committee was organising an economics conference when an influential businessman contacted this committee and demanded his name be listed with the speakers; otherwise, he would use his special means of jeopardizing the conference. He

is a terrorist in a suit and a necktie, occupying a fine position in an important organisation. You might even encounter him on television denouncing terrorism around the world.

It is possible that terrorism is a state of mind, first and foremost. A mentality translated in daily personal relationships— professional, amorous and familial. It is a kind of interaction silently practised every moment, by elegant ladies, or men wearing suits with appropriate neckties.

The Hero of the Story Does not Want to Exist

She has a beautiful voice, and a beautiful presence. She is a true story. There are ripples in her voice and on her face. She transforms her joy in telling a story into a joy of listening to it. It is obvious that the playful, story-loving, little girl that she was, is still alive in her. Her name resembles her: "Starlet".

She is as good as grandmothers in telling stories, and as good as children in listening to them. She decided to turn this joy into a profession.

She wandered all around the country and collected tales from the experts: the grandmothers.

She put the stories in books so that future grandmothers can, in turn, tell these stories so both the stories and the grannies remain alive. All know that their futures are connected.

She then started telling stories and providing backgrounds for creating them, that is organising "writing workshops".

One day, children gathered around her in one of these workshops. She started telling them a strange story using her beautiful voice. She took the necessary time to bring them into the imagery and rhythm of the story. Then she asked them to choose a subject for their own story. They voted and decided: the subject shall be the Palestinian cause. They started listing the characters they wanted to appear in the story: a clown, a shoemaker, a goalkeeper... but they decided that the hero would be an embryo. A person refusing to be born.

We are Hasty and Slow

We are simultaneously hasty and slow.

Being in a hurry means that we are ignoring the necessary time needed for anything to mature. We are unaware that time is necessary for making creatures, projects and relationships. We are unaware that "burning" stages leads to burning subjects that matter, and that respecting the rhythm of issues is a condition for success. We are hasty, so we don't probe deeply. We prohibit experience and stop our children from building up their personalities. We do not utilize mistakes as a source of learning and do not allow changes to be conceived by those who are supposed to implement them. We are hasty, so we "push" what cannot be done without invoking time.

We are hasty, but we are not fast.

We are slow, neither able to master the proper employment of time nor to divide it into organized stages. We do not draw an agenda for our projects, or specify our steps. We would like to arrive without taking to the road. We are slow, thinking that unemployed time can solve our problems, while in fact it complicates them.

We are hasty and slow. This is what makes us simultaneously infected with amnesia and nostalgia. The association of slowness with fastness also affects the relationship with the past.

We do not know how to "take" our time, so we "kill" it.

Clothes, Books and Friends

She saw a relationship among these matters: clothes, reading and making friends.

A choice of any book required identifying with the writer, with the rhythm of his writing. This is why she often repeated reading the same books, in order to remain within her comfort zone, feeling relaxed and happy. She does not choose a book by chance or easily, rather she exerts an effort and spends a long time choosing it, because books become a presence that accompanies her for a period of her life, lives with her, talks to her. Her choice was not a commonplace matter.

Critics do not help her in this feat at all. She believes the best way to introduce a book is to directly present some of its text, instead of talking about it and analyzing it. The book should introduce itself by itself, and let the reader discover whether this writing suits him.

Is it possible to describe a tune, a touch, a scent or a taste? Books are made of all of that. It is difficult to talk about them, and it is better to taste them— exactly like wine.

So is the choice of a dress, never to be taken for granted. A dress is a type of text. A

silent text, speaking about us, introducing us to the others, expressing the type of relationship we would like to have with them. The flesh should possess the dress, dwell in it as if it invented it. As if it was designed for it. Exactly like a book.

Maybe shops should allow customers to borrow clothes for a few days, so that their bodies make sure of the appropriateness of such a scope, and that this text is the one intended to be spoken.

She chose clothes' designers in the same way she chose writers. She used shop shelves in the same way as she used library shelves. There is a section for Japanese clothes in her wardrobe, and a section for Japanese literature on her bookshelf.

As time went by, she used to clear her wardrobe and bookshelves from whatever she considered inessential. She does not tolerate chitchat.

She did not have many books and dresses.

Friends too.

ندى مغيزل نصر

Dr. **Nada Mughayzel Nassr** is a Lebanese writer and educator. She is an academic with the University of St. Joseph, Beirut. The above prose pieces, are from her book *Ashia Bassita* (Simple Things), published by Dar an-Nahar, Beirut 2003. This book is in Arabic, but Dr. Nassr's other four books are in French and they deal with social and political issues.

ISSA BOULLATA

Richard F. Salisbury Lecture,[1]
McGill University, Montreal, 29th of March, 2004.

Adonis:
Arab Poet and Cultural Critic

In modern Arabic literature, Adonis may be considered to be the most impressive and the most influential poet that the Arab world has known in the past fifty years. As a poet but also as a thinker and as a critic of Arab culture, Adonis (whose real name is 'Ali Ahmad Sa'id Esber) has aroused a lot of literary and intellectual controversy. His detractors may be as numerous as his admirers, yet there is no doubt that he has influenced the direction and quality of Arabic poetry in this period and has awakened a lively discussion about the nature and essence of modernity and modernism in the thinking of Arab intellectuals.

To see him in Paris today, where he now lives and where from 1986 to1989 he was the permanent representative of the League of Arab States at UNESCO, one may not immediately associate this elegantly dressed and debonair man, who has an urbane manner about him, with the young peasant boy that he was who wore a belted *qunbaz* (traditional robe) in his little 'Alawi village of Qassabin in the north-western part of Syria, where he was born in 1930. And to hear him speak French, one may not know that this man who, as a professor in the 1980s, lectured on Arabic literature at the Sorbonne Nouvelle and at the College de France in Paris, then from 1989 to 1995 at the Universite de Geneve had no formal study of French other than one year and a half at the Lycee Francais Laique in Tartus from 1944 until it closed in 1946. As a boy, he used to walk one hour daily from his home to reach this coeducational school and then he walked one hour more back to his village, where from 1935 to 1944 he had

[1]Richard F. Salisbury was a famous professor of anthropology at McGill interested in the arts. An annual lectureship in his name was instituted at the university many years ago to honour distinguished professors and scholars in the arts. Also, the Association of Anthropologists has an annual award in his name to honour the best anthropological research of the year in an open contest.

frequented an open-air *kuttab* (traditional school) at which he learned writing and reading under the trees. However, learning French at the Lycee Francais Laique, with the help of a schoolgirl whom he taught Arabic, opened for him the new horizons he was looking for, even at that tender age. The first book in French he read as a boy following this rudimentary study of French was Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* given to him by someone, but he had to look up almost every word of it in a French-Arabic dictionary. Later, as a youth serving the army of the newly independent Syria, he read, with gradually less difficulty, other leading French poets and other important European writers and thinkers in French translation.

This early literary formation in Western literature came to support what Arabic poetry Adonis had learned at home from his father, a simple and respected Muslim peasant who was knowledgeable about Arabic poetry and the Arabic language. Adonis tells us that, at the hands of his father, he particularly read the collections of the great classical Arab poets, notably the 'Abbasid ones such as al-Mutanabbi, Abu Tammam, al-Sharif al-Radi, al-Buhturi, and al-Ma'arri and that he studied with him several classical anthologies, especially Abu Tammam's *al-Hamasa* (Adonis, *Ha Anta Ayyuha -l-Waqt*, Beirut: 1993, pp. 26-27). He joined a Syrian middle school in Tartus and obtained his *Brevet* in 1947 and went on to a Syrian high school in Ladhiqiyya, where he graduated in 1949. His father died in 1951[2] and that was the year Adonis left for the Syrian capital to study at the University of Damascus, where he graduated with a *Licence* in 1954. Philosophy was his main subject of study there because, as he tells us, he did not desire to read again at the university what he had read with his father and because he found that the university, where he took a couple of courses on poetry, was a place that killed poetry and poetic sensibility. But on his own, Adonis read the popular poets of the day: the Syrian poets Nizar Qabbani, Badawi al-Jabal, and 'Umar Abu-Risha and the Lebanese poet Sa'id 'Aql. It was only after graduating from the university that he came to read Ahmad Shawqi of Egypt and al-Jawahiri of Iraq, as he tells us, and—later still— the Arab-American Gibran. And that was only because, having begun to write and publish poetry, he says he found himself at a decisive crossroads in the life of modern Arabic poetry, and needed to know more about it, especially after moving to Lebanon in 1956 to live in Beirut, where he co-founded and co-edited with Yusuf al-Khal in 1957 the influential poetry quarterly *Shi'r*, which lasted until 1964 and brought to light many new and young Arab poets, especially innovative ones who wrote mainly in free verse and the prose poem form, and who introduced modernism and a new vision of poetry to the Arab world. Meanwhile, on his own, Adonis read the Sufi poets and prose writers Ibn 'Arabi, al-Niffari, and others to nourish his innate mystical

[2]Adonis's mother is still alive. She is 96 and in good health. She is illiterate but cultured by life and suffering. She visited Paris to see her son, who admits he was influenced by her. (See Adonis, *Identite inachevee*, Monaco: 2004, p. 57.)

understanding of the world. In 1968 he founded and edited the literary and cultural quarterly *Mawaqif* which, following the devastating Arab defeat by Israel of 1967, fostered rebellion against inherited traditional values in Arab culture and supported the adoption of new values of change and of progress toward modernity. To further his formal knowledge of Arab-Islamic culture and thought, Adonis joined the Jesuit University of St. Joseph in Beirut in 1970 and graduated in 1973 with a doctoral degree, having written a dissertation that was in 1974 published in Arabic in two volumes as *al-Thabit wa-l-Mutahawwil: Bahth fi al-Ittiba' wa-l-Ibda' 'inda al-'Arab*, later expanded to four volumes in 2001. The title may be translated as "The Static and the Dynamic: A Study of Imitative Tradition and Creative Innovation in Arab Culture." In this book, Adonis reviewed Arab intellectual history and examined trends in Arab culture that tended to be static and others that changed, and he showed in analytical detail the function of creativity and innovation as factors of transformation often opposed by Arab cultural conventionalism and religious dogmatism. He also showed that Arab culture did not necessarily have to be conceived as one of a unilinear development, and that it really embraced possibilities of genuine pluralism.

Between 1971 and 1985, Adonis was professor of Arabic literature at the Lebanese University in Beirut and served as doctoral adviser at his alma mater, the University of St. Joseph. But in January of 1986, he moved to Paris with his wife, writer Khalida Sa'id, and his two daughters, Arwad and Ninar. He continued among other things to edit his avant-garde journal *Mawaqif* until he decided to stop its publication in 1995. To date, he has published in Arabic 17 books of his own poetry, 10 books of essays on literary theory and cultural criticism, 9 anthologies of single modern Arab poets and thinkers, and a three-volume anthology of classical Arab poetry; he translated from French into Arabic the poetic works of Saint-John Perse and Yves Bonnefoy, in addition to 10 other French classics including plays by Jean Racine; he rendered into Arabic the French dramatic works of Georges Schehade in 6 volumes, and rendered into French selections from al-Ma'arri's philosophical poems *al-Luzumiyyat* and Gibran's long poem *al-Mawakib*, both in collaboration with Anne Wade Minkowski. Almost all of his poetry books and selections from them were translated into French, mainly by Anne Wade Minkowski but some by Jacques Berque and others, and translations of his poetry were also published in English, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish. His book on Arab poetics was translated into French as well as English, and his book of essays on the criticism of Arab culture was translated into French. Critical studies on his works were published in many languages and he received a dozen literary awards in Lebanon, France, Belgium, Italy, Turkey, Macedonia, and USA. In March 2004, he was granted his latest award—namely, the Al-'Uways Award of US $100,000—in the UAE. He was inducted in Paris as member of the Academie Stephane Mallarme (1983) and as member of the Academie Universelle des Cultures (1990), and he was appointed Officier des Arts et des Lettres (1983) by the

French Ministry of Culture. Furthermore, he was twice a finalist to the Nobel Prize for literature in the 1990s. He was honoured as guest speaker and poet at several institutions of learning and literary activity in the world including the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1971), Georgetown University in Washington, DC (1985), the Pen Club Week in New York (1986), the Harbourfront International Festival of Authors in Toronto (1987), McGill University's Institute of Islamic Studies in Montreal (1987); and as a researcher, lecturer, and poet in residence at the Center for International Studies at Princeton University (1996-97) and at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin (1998-99).

Adonis began writing poetry in the 1940s. As a boy of fourteen in 1944, he composed a poem in praise of the first president of independent Syria, Shukri al-Quwwatli, and recited it to him in person as the president was visiting the nearby village of Jabla, despite attempts by a local leader to prevent him from reciting it. The president was impressed by the young poet wearing a *qunbaz*, wanted to reward him, and asked what he needed. The boy said, 'To be educated.' His wish was granted and he joined the Lycee Francais Laique, where his fees were paid by the office of the Syrian presidency. Adonis continued to write poetry and, at the Ladhiqiyya high school, he later distinguished himself by poetry that reflected his growing political consciousness. He had leanings toward communism but finally joined the Syrian Social National Party in 1948, whose founder and leader, Anton Sa'adeh, he met twice—in 1947 and 1949. Adonis published a long poem, "Qalat al-Ard," after Sa'adeh was summarily put to death in Beirut by the Lebanese authorities in 1949, on being accused of planning a coup d'etat. Adonis's poem raised a great public and political furor in Damascus and Beirut, but he continued to be active in the Party until he left it in 1958 when, as chief editor of its magazine *al-Bina'*, he expressed leftist tendencies unwanted by the general membership.

Among his many achievements, I will now concentrate on Adonis's poetry and his criticism of Arab culture.

Although many of Adonis's early poems were political, he also wrote love poems as well as meditative poems—and he published them in his first collection, entitled *First Poems* (Beirut, 1957), much of which still retained the old, classical rhythms, meters, and rhyme rules. However, it was his poem "al-Faragh" (The Void), first published in 1954 and later in his second collection *Leaves in the Wind* (Beirut, 1958), that catapulted him to the frontline of young Arab poets. It was an angry poem that refused the current vacuous reality of the Arabs and opened horizons for a new Arab life; its new rhythm, breaking with the two-hemistich classical meter and rhyme schemes, did not abide by one pattern of uniform and equal feet in each verse but flowed freely in order to parallel the flames of anger and the waves of thought in the poem.

Henceforth, whether Adonis wrote political poems, love poems, or meditative

poems, his poetry had a new ring to it. It has been partly his language and rhythm, and partly his view of himself, his society, and the world that have given his poetry its special flavour and influence. Collection after collection, his poetry has grown with him and his continuing life experiences in the context of world events.

Poetry for Adonis is a vision and, as such, it is a 'leap outside of established concepts, and therefore a change in the order of things and in the way of looking at them,' as he says in his book *Zaman al-Shi'r* (Time for Poetry, 1972, p.9). His poetry does not stay on the surface of things; it rather plunges deep into them to uncover their mysteries. Image and thought are unified in it, and words are no longer sounds with lexical meanings but rather functions with infinite connotations and unlimited radiations. The Arabic language in Adonis's hands explodes by being recreated as he gives expression to his vision. In his book *Time for Poetry*, he says that the function of language in poetry is to capture what it has never been accustomed to capture, for the poet has to extract words from their ancient darkness and flood them with sudden lights, changing their relationships and enlarging their dimensions (ibid., pp.19-21). For Adonis, every poem he writes is a new structure in which the human condition is projected, and his vision of himself, his society, and the world is transmitted—his purpose always being, not merely to describe life, but to change it.

Let me read to you my translation of a short poem of his, entitled *Watan* (Homeland), from his third collection *Songs of Mihyar, the Damascene* (Beirut, 1961):

To the faces that have hardened
Under the mask of melancholy
I bow;
To the paths along which
I forgot my tears,
To a father who died green
Like a cloud
With a sail on his face
I bow;
To a child who is sold
So that he may pray
And shine shoes
(In my country we all pray,
We all shine shoes),
To rocks on which I engraved
With my hunger
That they are rain
Running under my eyelids
And that they are lightning,

And to a home whose soil
I have carried with me in my straying
I bow—
All these are my homeland,
Not Damascus.

Please note that this poem is free from the loud tone and the declamatory manner that are usual in patriotic poems of modern Arabic literature. Its quiet, soft voice is that of conscious thought that controls emotion and directs it, but does not banish it; it rather unifies itself with it. To portray his attitude to the homeland, Adonis uses the idea of bowing. His bowing is out of appreciation, respect, and reverence above all; but it also contains great love in which there is compassion with all that is weak and downtrodden in the Arab homeland, there is sympathy with all that is melancholy and oppressed, and there is implied rebellion in support of all that is exploited and deprived in it.

He chooses aspects of the homeland that are powerfully symbolic, beginning with 'the faces that have hardened/ Under the mask of melancholy,' for the homeland is not a territory as much as it is the human beings who live in it, who—in the case of the Arab homeland—have been exploited in it by others from inside and outside, and whose melancholy has become like a thick mask under which their facial features have hardened.

The poet then bows 'To the paths along which/ I forgot my tears,' for he—like his compatriots—has experienced those paths of the homeland along which many tears were shed, paths of life in poverty, in social repression and political tyranny, in hopeless attempts at change; the poet forgot his tears, not because the causes of shedding them ended, but rather because their abundance and constant flowing became an unconscious custom naturally forgotten but still practiced spontaneously.

The poet then bows 'To a father who died green/ Like a cloud/ With a sail on his face.' From generalization, the poet now moves to particularization. He bowed earlier to "the faces" and to "the paths" in general and in the plural form; he now bows "to a father" in particular and in the singular form. The father in the Arab family is its strong paterfamilias who protects it; he is the provider upon whom it depends and upon whom it puts its hope. He is a possibility of self-realization and a potential for fertility and growth. But melancholy pursues him and hardens his face; the paths are an attrition of his blood and his tears; and he dies young, or "green," as the poet says, before the realization of hope. Greenness is thus dissipated, very much as the promising cloud brimful of rain, that the winds dissipate, causing the loss of rain and the loss of the potential greenness. The Arab father passes away without realizing the expectations hoped of him, he dies 'With a sail on his face,' as the poet says. He dies while his heart is full of eagerness to sail to new, unknown worlds of experience, in which he can realize himself; he dies while his soul teems with wishes, capabilities, and possibilities

dissipated by his Arab society and by those in it and outside it who exploit him and suppress his aspirations.

Then the poet bows 'To a child who is sold/ So that he may pray/ And shine shoes.' Reaching now the new Arab generation hoping to live a full, dignified life, the poet says the child representing it is callously sold by those in power inside and outside his country, he is sold like a commodity in the market of regional and international designs. Like his father, the child is a possibility of realization and achievement. But his humanness is trodden underfoot, and he prays to his Lord without ever seeing improvement in his lot, and he shines shoes for a living. Adonis digresses here and says in parentheses, '(In my country we all pray,/ We all shine shoes).' From the particular, he now returns to the general: All the Arabs pray but see no improvement in their conditions, they all shine shoes or do other jobs for a living under tyrannical rulers and international exploitation, and they are all equally humiliated; but they do not rebel and they rather continue to pray patiently. The poet is about to break here into a paroxysm of emotion but restrains his anger and bows reverently to the unyielding solid character of the child and his nation.

He now bows 'To rocks on which I engraved/ With my hunger/ That they are rain/ Running under my eyelids/ And that they are lightning.' Adonis is still the poet of vision, the poet of hope for a better Arab future. With the sharp pains of his nation's hunger digging in his body like chisels, he engraves words on the rocks which are his solid people, saying they are not dry dead rocks but rather rain and lightning. He fully believes in this rain: he sees it with his eyes as it runs under his own eyelids—as tears forgotten along the paths, as greenery sprouting and growing after the abundant rain of the clouds, as oceans on which the Arab father sets sail. Adonis sees the rocks as abundant water; nay, he does not only make the rocks gush with running water, but he also makes language burst forth with new ideas, he makes words burst forth with new meanings, he makes them say what they have never learnt to say before.

Finally, the poet bows '... to a home whose soil/ I have carried with me in my straying.' The home is that of the Arab family, in which the melancholy faces meet and from which the paths of the homeland and the paths of life branch out. It is the home from which the father sets out whose heart is replete with eagerness and hope, and to which the broken-hearted child repairs seeking refuge after the father's death and after praying and shining shoes. It is the home of the boy Adonis himself in Qassabin, Syria, from which, after his father's death, he set out on the paths of the homeland and of life, leading him to Damascus, and hence to the wide world beyond, searching for an identity in which there is dignity, freedom, and creativity for himself and his people. Yet wherever he goes in his straying abroad, he carries with him the soil of the home which cries out to him and appeals for help, like millions of other homes in the Arab homeland.

Adonis ends the poem saying, 'All these are my homeland, / Not Damascus.' His

homeland, then, is the homeland of wasted possibilities, eager for self-realization; it is the homeland of lost human potentials, thirsty for fulfillment of their promise. It is the homeland of creative capabilities condemned to melancholy and endurance, it is the homeland of fertility and greenery sentenced to hunger and deprivation and to forces of exploitation within and without. Adonis sees what is beyond the surface when he plunges deep into things. He feels the pulse of life beyond present realities, anticipates events, and creates a vision of an Arab homeland with greenery, fertility, and abundance; an Arab homeland of dignity, freedom, and creativity. All these are his homeland and not a geographical country—'**Not Damascus.**'

As you see, Adonis's poetry portrays the human condition in a new linguistic structure, in which words transcend their lexical meanings and become functions with infinite connotations, symbols with unlimited radiations, in which thought and sensibility are unified. An image is not merely a decorative simile or metaphor or a rhetorical trope to embellish the style and create rhapsody of imagination. It is rather itself the thought, and without it there is no meaning. For example, the rocks in the poem are the Arab people with their unyielding solidity and endurance; the rocks are also the Arab people in their poverty, deprivation and arid living. But likewise, the rocks are the Arab people in that they are also rain, they are clouds, fertility, greenness, and mellow life. Consequently, the Arab people to him are possibilities to be realized, promises to be fulfilled, capabilities to be embodied, and potentials to burst forth in creativity and action. The mode of expression here is not a mere comparison of one thing with another or a mere metaphorical use of one thing in place of another. It is rather an illumination of every thing, it is a vision which reveals the depths of every thing, destroys the bridges extended between all things, and shows them all in a new and surprising light that removes from them the ancient darkness, changes their old relationships, and fills them with new charges of meaning that reveal a new vision, its language capturing what it has never been accustomed to capture.

All this gives the poem an artistic organic unity, fusing thought and feeling. It is not by accident, for example, that the poet used the green colour for the premature death of the young father, that he compared his untimely death to a cloud, and that he ascribed the unlikely sail to his face to indicate eagerness for the unknown. All these things have age-old relations with water: greenness is caused by water, the cloud is water in its initial formation and its final downpour, the sail is the device of navigation on water. And all are referentially related to the water gushing from the rocks mentioned by the poet later in the poem. It is the incandescence of the vision that unifies all these things and gives them new relationships issuing from the imagination and the human psyche—and basically, for Adonis, from his innate mystical understanding of the universe as a unity of being.

At times, Adonis resorts to the use of myth as a unifying factor wrapping up the poem and presenting his vision. One example is his long poem in four cantos entitled

"Resurrection and Ashes" (*Leaves in the Wind,* Beirut: 1958, pp.-249-272), in which he uses the myth of the phoenix, the legendary bird which lives 500 years, burns itself on a pyre, then rises alive from its ashes to live again. Adonis invokes the phoenix and seeks to burn with it along with his nation, so that a new life may rise from the accumulated ashes of the past, the darkness of obscurantism, and the void. He says in part in my translation:

Phoenix, O phoenix,
O bird of yearning and burning,
O little feather going without companion,
Pulling darkness and lightning behind it,
You travel in steps of a flower's lifespan,
Your glance is a rapture, your look is a mine,
Your time is the morrow you create.
Eternal presence is in the morrow
The morrow is the promise:
In which you become a creator, a clay
In which heaven and earth unite.
Phoenix, turn toward us on your way.
Phoenix, yearn and proceed slowly.
Phoenix, die. Phoenix, die.
Phoenix, let fires begin with you,
Let red anemones sprout,
Let life begin.
Phoenix, O ashes, O prayer.
Our fires are blazing for a hero, for a new city
To be born in us.

Because of the novelty of his language, the strangeness of his imagery, and the untraditional thrust of his thought and vision, Adonis's poetry has not been equally welcome in all literary circles of the Arab world, although he has been admired and imitated by many. Yet he has persisted in writing in this poetic style. In the last ten or fifteen years, he has even gone further in pursuing ever-fresh ways of expressing himself. His work has undergone profound transformations as he observed the fragmentation of the idea of national unity in the Arab world and the shifts and ruptures of world culture moving toward a postmodern age. Like other great poets of the world today, his most recent poetry exhibits indications of deconstruction in language, imagery, and thought. Analyzing it with admiration for its truth about the world and Adonis's self / selves, Kamal Abu-Deeb, a Syrian scholar who is a professor of Arabic at SOAS at the University of London and who has studied Adonis at length, says in an

article on the Internet, '...while it [Adonis's poetry] clearly promulgates a singular vision of harmony, unity, oneness between man and the universe, it also embodies processes of discord, division, splitting, and destruction of harmony and unity on so many levels of existence' (www.jehat.com/english/studies-1.htm accessed 27/01/2004, "Contradictory Sel<f / ves"). I do not fully share my friend Professor Abu-Deeb's analysis and I believe Adonis's deconstruction still retains a deep core of unified vision of the world, of Arab culture, and of the future as well as of himself, despite the criticism that he directs at them all.

Adonis's major book of recent poetry may be evidence of that. It is a three-volume work that has taken him seven years to write between 1994 and 2001, even as he moved from Paris to Princeton to Berlin to teach, do research, and be a poet in residence. I am referring to his three large tomes in about 1,500 pages, entitled ***Al-Kitab: Ams, al-Makan, al-Ăn*** (Beirut, 1995-2002)— this title may be translated as *The Book: Yesterday, the Place, Now*, and its subtitle is: "A manuscript ascribed to al-Mutanabbi, edited and published by Adonis." This work is a tour de force in which Adonis has created a manuscript in free verse and prose poetry that he attributes to one of the greatest classical Arab poets, al-Mutanabbi, who lived in the Golden Age of Arab history, namely, the Abbasid Period, and who was murdered at the age of fifty in 965 AD / 354 H. Adonis has always been fascinated by the powerful poetry and strong personality of al-Mutanabbi. He anthologized him, wrote a monograph and other shorter studies on him, and perhaps found his own personal ideal in him. He once wrote of him, 'Al-Mutanabbi projects himself as a vast universe of certainty, self-confidence, and exaltedness in relation to the others and against them... His poetry is a book on the human greatness of the individual, driven by the dialectic between the infinite and the finite, between the ambition that knows no bounds and the decrepit world that is unable to move and keep up with this ambition.' *(Diwan al-Shi'r al-'Arabi* , Beirut: 1986, vol. II, pp.19-21). This unique work on al-Mutanabbi, which Adonis entitled simply and perhaps presumptuously ***The Book,*** is difficult to classify with regard to genre. Even the typographic presentation of the average page in it is untraditional: for there is first the presumed text of al-Mutanabbi, framed within an oblong rectangle, often including at its bottom a brief poetic comment as a footnote; in the wide margin on the right of the rectangle, is the text of the supposed unnamed narrator giving a running poetic commentary on al-Mutanabbi's life and times, and on Islamic history from the death of Prophet Muhammad to the death of al-Mutanabbi; and in the margin on the left of the rectangle there are scholarly notes of a historical or explanatory nature referring by numbers or asterisks to the poetic text in the rectangle or the poetic text of the narrator and written by Adonis himself, in his capacity as the real editor of the created manuscript that pretends to be authentic. The book grows in a succession of chapters, each of which consists of 28 oblong rectangles numbered by the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet. These chapters often intermingle irregularly with others in free verse, prose

poetry, or simple prose, which are entitled "Margins", or "Anticipation Interludes", or "Lapses", or "Papers", or—toward the end of Volume III—"Diaries of al-Mutanabbi". The book's Epilogue, consists of two chapters: one entitled "The Book of Blackness", containing the supposedly posthumous papers of the black regent of Egypt for the Ikhshids named Kafur, whom al-Mutanabbi praised insincerely for personal interest then lampooned on leaving him, and the second is entitled "The Ashes of al-Mutanabbi", which is a poetic text, voiced by Adonis and dealing mostly with al-Mutanabbi's legacy for modern times.

This is a very complex and imaginative book. It is partly invented autobiographical reflections and musings in free verse or prose poetry by al-Mutanabbi on his life and experiences, on his times from childhood onwards, on his family, his teachers, his friends and rivals, on his ambitions and disappointments, and his views on Arab writers and poets of earlier ages and on real historical personalities he came across—all contained in successive oblong rectangles, often with invented poetic footnotes by him offering his comments on life. The book is partly also a parallel, running narrative in free verse by an invented narrator who gives his own account of Islamic history, in which al-Mutanabbi's life is firmly embedded; the narration often includes real historical quotations on al-Mutanabbi and by him, and quotations on other real figures of Islamic history and by them. Scholarly documentation is also part of this complex book, and it is offered as notes by the so-called editor in the left-hand margins. The chapters, intermingling with all this, offer a variety of poetic views, sometimes as premonitions of what will happen, sometimes as marginal asides on what has happened, and sometimes as invented documents, papers, diaries, and memories.

As for the text in the oblong rectangles representing the poetry ascribed to al-Mutanabbi, it offers Adonis's vision, not only of the ambitious and rebellious personality of the great Abbasid poet and his times, but also truths about the human condition. While it follows the successive stages of al-Mutanabbi's life and his struggles for self-fulfillment, it dramatizes his experiences in monologues that give his own view of these experiences and of himself, as he tries to reach for the stars but continues to be pulled down to earth by unworthy persons or events, his text often containing undertones of Adonis's own life experiences. Meanwhile, he comments on the meaning of life and the attempts of human beings to achieve understanding and knowledge of the world.

Although the text in the oblong rectangles may seem to the reader to be the book's intellectual and artistic nucleus, it should be read in light of what the narrator says, along with all the intermingling chapters, documentary references, and footnotes. However, I don't think that the invented narrator is objective or neutral, for his narration concentrates on Islamic events of discord, conflict, and killing, and on despotic acts of those in authority since the death of Prophet Muhammad in the year 11 H, starting with the Arab's tribal discord over the leadership of the nascent Islamic

community in the meeting at the Saqifa of Banu Sa'ida in Medina, and ending with the killing of al-Mutanabbi and his son and servant in Iraq on the 28th of Ramadan in the year 354 H by Fatik al-Asadi and his band in revenge for an old personal feud. The narrator's aim is to give a dark picture of the chaos of political life in Islamic history, the misery of the weak in it, and the despotic behaviour of those in authority toward all who demanded justice and equality in Islamic society; his aim is to prepare the reader for an understanding of al-Mutanabbi's spirit of rebellion against autocratic authority and his call for an equitable society, in which the individual is not constantly threatened, frustrated, and thwarted but is rather fulfilled and can achieve self-realization. Yet it must not be forgotten that it is in reality Adonis who is selecting those past events in Islamic history to present them to contemporary Arabs in order to mirror contemporary Arab society and polity, which he considers to be fraught with discord, disunity, and autocratic principles and acts; his aim is to encourage Arabs to learn lessons from the past and improve themselves in the modern age. Early on in Volume I, the narrator says:

> We don't know who we are
> Today, and who we will be,
> If we don't know who we were. That's why
> I will tell you
> Who we were. (***Al-Kitab*** ,Vol.1, p.10)

It must be remembered that the subtitle of Adonis's book is: "Yesterday, the Place, Now". Therefore, "The Book" is not meant to speak only about yesterday and the place, but also about now. Adonis who is critical of modern Arab society and culture, makes the invented narrator critical of the Islamic past and lets him narrate selected but real historical events of discord and killing, of conflict over power, of violence, treachery, and plotting to acquire power, events often taking the guise of theological differences between Sunnis, Shi'is, Kharijis, Qarmatis and others, but events that are in reality political acts, similar to ones in the modern Arab world, aiming at suppressing difference of opinion and enforcing unity, uniformity, and the political supremacy of one view. At one point in Volume I, the narrator says:

> To think is [a cause] to kill or be killed:
> That is the dining table of the past.
> Will it be the dining table of the future? (***Al-Kitab***, Vol.I, p.107)

And in "The Ashes of al-Mutanabbi," the last chapter of Volume III, we hear Adonis's voice saying:

I sing
Of the rebels' blood
So that tyrants may not shed
Any more blood. (***Al-Kitab***, Vol. III, p. 347)

In many of his other writings, essays, and interviews, Adonis is openly and unabashedly critical of the Arab world, its prevailing culture, and its current political regimes. The greatest problem of the Arabs today, in his view, is the repressive and coercive nature of political authority. This problem is at the root of all other problems. Adonis contends that, after the demise of Ottoman hegemony and Western colonial rule, the Arabs established a variety of political regimes (kingdoms, emirates, and republics), but they have not instituted what he calls civic society, a society in which citizens can freely practice their rights and duties, and democratically bring about the change they need to lead a modern life. Current political regimes, not based on genuine civic institutions and relations, are authoritarian systems of total subjugation of the Arab people by their government at all levels, intellectual and physical. Loyalties continue to be very narrow in Arab society. If they transcend one's immediate family, they may be loyalties to one's tribe or what stands for it, such as one's religious group or sect. In certain cases, political parties may attract some loyalty, but often because they are reinforced by religious or sectarian loyalties, by tribal, family, and even personal relations, but seldom on account of ideas and programs only. The individual is suppressed for the interest of collectivity and the ruling regime. Arab intellectuals, in Adonis's view, must reject this prevailing Arab culture and must criticise it radically and decisively, since the populace is mostly inarticulate or subdued, and afraid for reasons of personal safety. Freedom, for him, is the most essential value to be developed, for it is equivalent to revolution, to creativity, to modernity itself. He sees modernity as a continuous and endless struggle to transcend oneself, to go beyond the accepted and known world, and thus to revolt against prevailing practices and beliefs, and always create new and better ones—and the individual must be completely free to do that.

This struggle for a new Arab culture, in Adonis's view, is not limited to politics. It is a comprehensive struggle that should reach all aspects of the Arab-Islamic heritage, which is still prevailing in Arab life. In his 1980 book entitled *Fatiha li-Nihayat al-Qarn* (Overture to the Endings of the Century), he says: 'Different culture can begin only by a criticism of the heritage in a radical and comprehensive way, for we cannot build a new culture if we do not critically shake the structures of the old culture. Without that, the new culture will [merely] be a layer that accumulates on the layers of the old culture so that these latter will [eventually] absorb it, and it will have no effectiveness' (*Fatiha li-Nihayat al-Qarn*, Beirut 1980, p.225).

The real Arab-Islamic heritage for Adonis is not only what has been accepted by the current prevailing culture to be such, namely, a one-dimensional culture that preserves

only the traditional static values, practices, and institutions of the past, most of which—he thinks—are not useful or functional in modern times. He believes that the Arab-Islamic heritage has also dynamic elements that have mostly been ignored or suppressed; and it is these ones that should rather be stressed in modern times, for they can inspire freedom, change, and progress. As he showed at length in his 1973 doctoral dissertation, the dynamic elements in the heritage have been submerged by the tradition-bound mentality of the rulers and their supporting intellectuals over the centuries with the passive acquiescence of the masses, and only the static elements have survived to the present. Innovators in the past were quashed for the sake of continuity and self-preservation, and innovation was considered to be a ***bid'a***, a heresy; and this has eventually led to the ossification of Arab-Islamic institutions and values, and their dysfunction in modern times, when change and creativity are of the essence. Conservatism and traditionalism now appear to many as the culture's main features, but Adonis believes that the dynamic elements are no less a part of the Arab-Islamic culture and must be invoked to revivify contemporary Arab life, not by being imitated—as some people advocate—but by having their deepest significations adopted. For example, it is not Sufi thought and institutions of the past that must be recreated in modern times, but rather the Sufi attitudes of self-improvement and transformation, the Sufi desire to search for truth and rise to higher stages of knowledge, the Sufi abnegation of material and societal trappings, and the Sufi affirmation of freedom and of the wholeness of being. Only those values of the past cultural heritage that illumine the present and the future should be preserved inasmuch as they help the Arabs not only to keep their identity and specificity but also to build a better future. He says that Arabs must remain of necessity open to other cultures, intelligently assimilating what they adopt from them, and creatively adapting it to their own use and betterment, and in turn contributing to world civilization.

Adonis's most radical cultural criticism is clear from his opinion of those who unquestioningly accept in modern times the presuppositions and assumptions of the Arab-Islamic heritage and its foundational texts, including its religious texts held to be incontestable. Contemporary Arab intellectuals like Moroccan Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, Egyptian Hasan Hanafi, Moroccan 'Abd Allah al-'Arwi, Syrian George Tarabishi, and others who have studied the Arab-Islamic heritage in the context of the Arab desire to establish modernity have wasted their energies, in Adonis's view, by taking for granted its foundational texts and not subjecting them to rigorous questioning. Real modern thought, in his view, must start from a criticism of those very assumptions in order to build new Arab thought. He believes there cannot be real thought in Arab culture if it does not question the truth of those assumptions or their importance. He considers Muhammad Arkoun and, to a certain extent, 'Abd Allah al-'Arwi, to be the Arab intellectuals who have been closest to critically examining those assumptions, and he has a preference for Arkoun as having the most serious critical

project regarding the foundational texts, which al-'Arwi did not deal with. Yet he adds that Arkoun's attempt needs more courage and further expansion, especially in treating the first foundational text, namely, the religious text, as a historical text subject to modern methodology. Adonis says that Arkoun told him that he [Arkoun] fears for his own life and is not ready to pay that price if he goes beyond what he has already said and written. (See Saqr Abu Fakhr's interview with Adonis in *Hiwar ma' Adonis*, published by *al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr*, Beirut 2000, pp.112-113.) Adonis believes that Egyptian Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd has a similar project as Arkoun's, and exhibits similar circumvention; but, as we know, neither this circumvention of Abu Zayd nor his circumspection protected him from opponents in Egypt, and he had to flee the country with his wife in 1995 to live and work in the Netherlands when he felt his life was physically threatened. Farag Fouda who had criticised the Islamists and their romanticized version of Islamic history and naive notion of an Islamic state was indeed assassinated in Cairo in 1992, and an attempt was made on the life of Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz in Cairo in 1994 for his allegorical novel *Awlad Haritna,* representing the virtual failure of religion and the eventual triumph of science. Other Arab intellectuals, writers, and artists were assassinated in Lebanon, Algeria, and elsewhere. You will now better understand why Adonis says in his book on al-Mutanabbi: 'To think is [a cause] to kill or be killed' (***Al-Kitab*** , vol. 1, p. 107).

Let me end by observing how poetry in Adonis's understanding is a crucial art, very strongly related to Arab culture and very deeply involved in politics and other aspects of Arab life. For him, freedom of thought and expression and the centrality of the human being and the individual are some of the highest values, not only in poetry, but also in Arab society and its culture—if Arabs really aspire to modernity and a viable place among the nations of the world.

NOTE

I am grateful to Adonis for information he gave me about himself, for his latest book *Identite inachevee* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 2004) that he sent me, and for an unpublished view on religions he presented (7 June, 2003) in a debate in Germany with Polish thinker Leszek Kolakowski that he put at my disposal. I am also grateful to my brother Kamal Boullata for providing me with the latest two books of poetry by Adonis (*Tanabba' Ayyuha al-A'ma*, and *Awwal al-Jasad Akhir al-Bahr*, both by Dar al-Saqi, Beirut 2003), and for information he conveyed to me that he personally knows by virtue of his long-time friendship with the poet.

This Salisbury Lecture has benefited from my previous writings on Adonis, including the following:

1. "al-Sura wa-l-Fikr fi Shi'r Adonis," in *Al-'Arabiyya* , vol.8, nos.1-2 (Spring- Autumn, 1975), pp.18-28.
2. "Adonis: Revolt in Modern Arabic Poetics," in *Edebiyyat* , vol. 2, 1 (1977), pp. 1-13.
3. "Contemporary Arab Writers and the Literary Heritage," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* , vol. 15, no. 1 (February 1983), pp. 111-119.
4. "Review Essay—Adonis: Towards a New Arab Culture," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.20, no.1 (February 1988), pp.109-112.
5. "Textual Intentions: A Reading of Adonis' Poem, 'Unintended Worship Ritual'," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* , vol. 21, 4 (November 1989), pp.541-562.
6. *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), esp. pp.27-31.
7. "Adonis wa-l-Mutanabbi," in *Nizwa* , no. 21 (January 2000), pp. 43-52.

Further readings include:

1. The works of Adonis in Arabic.
2. Kamal Abu-Deeb, "The Perplexity of the All-Knowing : A Study of Adonis," in *Mundius Artium*, special Arabic issue, vol.10, no.1 (1977), pp.165-166.
3. *Al-Islam wa-l-Hadatha* , Nadwat *Mawaqif* (Discussion Group of *Mawaqif* , Adonis's quarterly), (London: Dar al-Saqi, 1990).
4. Patrick Hutchinson et al., *Adonis: Le Feu Souterrain* , No.16 of *Detours d'ecriture* (Paris: Noel Blandin, 1991).
5. Saqr Abu Fakhr, *Hiwar ma' Adonis* (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 2000).
6. Kamal Abu-Deeb, "Contradictory Sel<f / ves: From Static Harmony to Dynamic Contradiction. The Contradictory Visions of the Unified but not Unitarian Self: A Contradictory Study of Adonis," on the Internet: www.jehat.com/english/studies-1htm accessed 27 January, 2004.

عيسى بُلاّطة

Professor **Issa J. Boullata** was born in Jerusalem. He graduated from the University of London, embarking on a long and distinguished academic career. He is currently with the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Canada. He has a large number of publications, including a novel, short stories and translations of novels and poetry. He edited and co-edited several journals.

My Origins[3]

by
Adonis

Translated from French by Issa J. Boullata

I lived in a cultural milieu where there was no individuality. The individual was a diffuse notion, hidden within a totality. This totality was the family, and we all came from this large totality. The *umma* (community) is a particular idea in Islam. In Arabic, *umma* is the feminine of *umm* (mother). Therefore my relation to my mother, like my relation to my father, was as if there was a lake or an ocean, and we were all part of this ocean, this sea, this mother... I did not have an individual relation to my mother. Later, in adolescence, when I had read some books, I discovered in my readings that there is a personal relation between a mother and her child. I read all that Freud had written. What he wrote is another world different from ours. Of all that he had described and clarified, there was no one aspect similar to anything in the life I lived. There was none of all those instances of neurosis in my life. We were all like one single tree, and I was like a branch.

I never experienced childhood as it is lived in modern societies. In fact, I never knew the age of childhood. From my first steps, I entered the daily life of the village, life in the fields, life under the trees, life on the streets that led to the springs, to the streams, to the fields in order to work, to sow, to labour. Therefore I worked and I did not have any particular relation, in the Western sense of the word, to my father or my mother. My mother does not read; she is illiterate. I feel she has been educated by life, by the suffering of life, by the work of life, by memory, for memory plays an extraordinary role in the life of illiterate people. Therefore, I say my mother is educated. She is still alive and is now almost ninety-six years old. She is still in good health, she speaks, she walks, she sees well, she came once to Paris and did not like it. To me, my mother was a tree, a speaking tree; she was a river, but a river that worked. To me, she was part of nature, living nature, and in this sense she influenced me a lot without saying anything to me. She was the contrary of my father. My father was educated and he taught me. He introduced me to pre-Islamic poetry, to mystical poetry, to poetry after

[3]This is a translation of Chapter 9 entitled "Mes origines" in *Identité inachevée* by Adonis, with the collaboration of Chantal Chawaf, published in January 2004 by Editions du Rocher, Monaco. It is translated and published here by permission of the publisher.

the advent of Islam, but above all he taught me mystical poetry. It was he who opened for me the road to poetry. He himself wrote traditional poems. It is to him that I owe my early culture. At thirteen, I had not yet ever gone to school. In the village, I went to the fields until the age of thirteen. And until that age, I had never known electricity, nor seen a radio or a car. I was completely part of nature, like a cloud, like a tree, and that is why I say that I did not know childhood, in the modern understanding of the word. And now, in my old age, I try to imagine my childhood and to discover it. This interests me a lot now: to see how I passed those first thirteen years of my life, for example. That period is a void for me. I try to see myself when I was one year old, when I was two or three years old, I try to follow myself up to the age of thirteen—and that is not easy. I try to ask my mother, but my mother today does not remember. My pals of the village can remind me of certain things, starting from age six perhaps, but not earlier. I am therefore cut off from my childhood but am maybe stimulated by this lack of early memories for I feel that, by trying to recover childhood, I invent an atmosphere of childhood and thus I continue my childhood–and this is an exciting prolongation.

One of my childhood friends related to me how we learned the alphabet under a tree. It was in the shade of a big tree. He told me that I did not like to be there, that I resorted to deceit and said to the chap who taught us the alphabet, 'I have no bread with me to eat, so I have to go home in order to eat.' The teacher said, 'Go! But come back soon.' I got away but did not come back. The chap stopped trusting me and put his cane in my way to prevent me from running away. He thought he succeeded in keeping me, but I always tried to get away from him. I did not want to spend two or three hours like this, writing. I did not like that. Freedom is a consciousness. One must have consciousness of being free. As for me, I already had this consciousness. I always loved being alone and free.

I practised sex with the earth; I deflowered it, I had orgasm. The power of sex is enormous. I never had any problem with sex in my life. The body for me is like air or water. If one is free in one's mind, one must also be free in one's body. Chastity is antireligious because religion as law is against nature and against being human. If freedom is not physical, it is nothing but an abstraction. All that appeared to me to be beautiful and good to do; I did it. For me, the absolute ethic is never to harm the other...

I spent my childhood with nature. I experienced sexuality in the open air, in a little stream behind our village where a woman, older than I was, took me. I was twelve or thirteen years old at the time. I tried to make love to nature. We had grass and trees. It was very beautiful in the spring. I went every day to this place of greenery. I imagined a feminine body made of grass and clods of earth. This body was very sexy and I dreamily made love to this grass and this earth, which had imaginary, voluptuous forms. For me, the mother was perhaps nature. Unfortunately, this is gone today. The technology of our age has destroyed the time when a little peasant like me could marvel at the feeling the he was a thread in a fabric that was called nature.

What binds me to my religious father is not religion but rather sincerity, authenticity.

He never said: do this, don't do that. He always said, 'Before you do anything, before you get involved, think. Taking a decision is not easy, but before you do, you must think deeply.' That is what he always told me. He taught me what was essential: to choose my way freely.

Therefore, I dared.

I have chosen a name that liberates me from a religious identity and opens for me an unexpected horizon in our society. I still ask myself, even today, how I could pull that through. This name, Adonis, has liberated me from my name, 'Ali, and from a closed social belonging to the closure of religion. By my new, definitive, non-relative identity, I have opened myself to what is human. I chose an absolute identity. Starting from this choice, I no longer had a ready-made identity determined in advance.

I began to create my identity by beginning to create my writings. I took note of the dimensions of this creating name. At first, I was not conscious of that, and I continued the unconscious process. Eventually it led me to taking note of my creating name.

The result of this course of action is that I continue to create my identity. This experience has taught me that identity is to be always created and re-created, and this does not end with one's death, especially when one leaves something after death.

After death, texts are open to infinity. Time will define and redefine them. An identity is movement and it cannot be stopped or retained in a fixed position.

I am now at the opposite end of my original identity. I try to transpose my liberation, to transfer it to others, to create foundations in my Arab culture in order to build on them. I want Arab culture to be open to this kind of free identity.

Since everything for us is religious and what dominates is religion, religion for Muslims is not only the rituals and the faith. It is also the language—a whole culture, a system of values. And I have to liberate this language by my own liberation.

When I felt I was liberated, I began to realise that the "I" could only know itself through the "Other" and therefore that—in order to understand the Orient better—I had to understand the Occident, just as the Occident cannot know itself if it does not understand the Orient. Cultural identity is like love, it is a dialogue, an alliance between the "I" and the "Other". The "Other" is not only needed for dialogue, the "Other" is a constitutive component of the "I". Language serves to communicate between languages.

Love Poems
by
Adonis

Translated by Issa J. Boullata

The following love poems are translated from Adonis's latest collection entitled ***Awwal al-Jasad Akhir al-Bahr*** *(Beirut: Dar Al Saqi, 2003). They portray love at its deepest and most memorable moments, even in later times of life when its vehemence may ebb but love abides in strength and memory. They are untitled, but each poem is followed by the page on which it is found in the collection.*

I am sure: your tears are what is most beautiful in you.
Between their waves sail
The ships of our past days.
In my palms, I used to open lines in which they flowed
In the darkness lit
By the stars of our dreams.
I used to take my ink
From the sighing of their fountains
And write on the paper of night:
The tears of the one I love are my own wounds,
A language for space. (36)

You and I, now here in bed, celebrate the water
Flowing down from our bodies.

O God, whose limbs grow mellow
In the veins of lovers,
Is there a celebration
Of greater splendour and loftiness? (38)

Oh, how tender was the moon
When it came to take its water from her basin
Then set, bidding her farewell!
How tender were the bed, the mattress, the coverlet
When our limbs intertwined
In a long embrace, and we hoped
The angel of wakefulness
Would walk on his bridge
In slow, leisurely steps!
How tender were the stars! They used to sing
When the evening brought us together
And was wrapped up in our states. (45)

Perhaps
There is no love on earth
But this one that we imagine
We will have one day.

Don't stop.
Continue to dance, O love, O poetry,
Even if it were death. (55)

Because of separation,
Which became a wound on being disclosed,
I occupy myself
With continuously thinking of her. (82)

Oh, no!
I don't want for my eyes to swim in any space
But his eyes. No,
I don't want for my love and its things to have clarity,
I don't want any belonging, lineage or identity.

I want nothing for us but that we be languages
For unrestraint, and that our limbs be an alphabet. (83)

I was not away
When you came that day, sir.

I was in isolation
Arguing with the light of your shadow,
I was touching what remained of you on my bed,
Feeling my bed, counting the handkerchiefs, the pillows,
Counting our disappointed prophecies.
No, I was not away. (84)

Let us once more return
To streets we frequented.
We walked, we saw the universe anchored
In the lake of our breaths,
While time coming and going
Passed through broken windows.
We walked over our traces
In the mirrors of our footsteps,
In lexicons for dead paper,
With no sound but that of our footsteps.

Let us once more walk
In the gardens of our high days. (86)

I measured myself by the woman I imagined,
I went searching for her but
I found nothing to indicate where she was.
I did not find any bridge
Between my body and my dream.

Thus I came to reside in what I imagined
And live with my illusion. (90)

What will remain
And light the lamps of our past days for other lovers?
What words will remain
From the lexicons of our depths, of our limbs,
Of our distant myths?

What will remain
Other than what our killers said:
We wrote our love with the ink of our bitterness,

We lived without wisdom
And inhabited a poem. (94)

I came to love that bed covered by our past days.
How often have we cast our visions, sighs, and secrets on it.
I see it stare at us and ask about our present state–
Our present state?
Drowned in bitterness, I feel compassion for that bed,
And I love that scream
Which explodes in its silence. (102)

We meet anew
In the bed, which was one day ours.
'Was one day,' the pillows say. Don't ask us,
O pillows, about our love, about our time,
About our two bodies.

We don't know what to say now. The remains
Of our two bodies speak for themselves:
Two shores and not a wave. (105)

JOUMANA HADDAD

Seven Poems
Translated by ***Issa Boullata***

I have a Body

I have a body waiting at the ocean's bottom.
I have a body which is like a volcano,
Whose crater the water licks
Lest it should emit pleasure before love comes.
I have a body which I don't know.
It may be a grain of sand
Or a red fish
Or a pearl in a shell.
But I will discover its taste
With two lips which will burn
And a tongue which will take in,
And with lava which has a sound
Like entering Paradise.

At the ocean's bottom,
Inside bubbles of desire,
I have a body for you, my beloved,
And I have a morrow and an eternity with you:
A morrow in which you will reach me
And an eternity in which you will open the shell
Slowly,
With all the slowness I desire
And you are capable of.

I am a woman

Nobody can guess
What I say when I am silent,
Whom I see when I close my eyes,
How I am carried away when I am carried away,
What I search for when I stretch out my hands.
Nobody, nobody knows
When I am hungry, when I take a journey,
When I walk, and when I am lost.
And nobody knows
That my going is a return
And my return is an abstention,
That my weakness is a mask
And my strength is a mask,
And that what is coming is a tempest.

They think they know
And I let them think so,
And I speak.

They put me in a cage so that
My freedom may be a gift from them,
And I have to thank them and obey.
But I am free before them, after them,
With them, without them.
I am free in my suppression, in my defeat.
My prison is what I want!
The key to the prison may be their tongue,
But their tongue is twisted around my desire's fingers,
And my desire they can never command.

I am a woman.
They think they own my freedom.
I let them think so,
And I speak.

Woe if it remains behind

I will be strewn about on your bed
Like fingerprints of fire.
I will be implanted in your night,
And my day will come out from your jar.
I will know your rooms by heart word for word,
And your verses line by line.
I will run and run in front of you,
And I will press the wind's hand and bring it on.
My mouth will move from your forehead to your neck,
From your neck to the most significant crux,
And I will let down my dreams on your shoulders
And you will let me wander.
Come forth.

The earth is collapsing on me
And I will not flee into myself.
Lust wishes to taste me
But I will not guide it to my home.
My dress is devouring me
But I will not chase it away alone.
Come forth.

You penetrate my head
And so I veil myself with my fancy, and I chase you.
Come forth. I shall not call you for long.
Come, cling
And don't waste my dizzy craze.
Woe to you from my fragrance
If it remains behind
And I go!

I don't remember

I don't remember
That I took off my clothes ever before,
In broad daylight,
For a man
Whose eyes were closed.

I don't remember
That I was the saliva ever before,
And he the desired, forbidden one;
That I was the hungry one
And he the impossible bed;
That I was the conqueror
And he the resisting city.

I don't remember, I don't remember
That I invaded a man like a tempest ever before,
And he became the windows
Wide open on my weakness,
Or that I pounced on him like a fever
And my tongue sucked his delirium.

I knew that a man's body was a journey
And my body an arrival and an easy farewell.

I knew that a man's heart was two hands
And my heart a choked promise
Remaining unkept and achieving victory.

I knew that men's arrival was a gentle flood
And their departure a temporary debris,
And that forgetting them was an illusion
Of a rebellion in my dusty memory...

I have never before known a man
Whose love practises broken-heartedness
As a certain tragedy.

I have never before known a man
Who transformed me from an Eve to a woman.

A chronically wet face

He had to remove her clouds with his hands,
To remove the mountain on her wet looks,
To make a tempest and a night.
He had to distract her until dawn
And to drink her pain.

He had to stab her death,
To wake her up with the temper of his times,
To die in vain.
But he was afraid of returning empty-handed,
And he feared her face, afflicted with a chronic night.

He had to take her without caution,
To give her reasons for rashness.
It was sufficient for him to get ahead of her regret,
To suddenly appear and then besiege her,
To call her in order to reach,
To sweep her off in order to preserve her laugh
From the wounds of the window.

It was sufficient for him to open his heaven's prison a little
For the water of her madness to leak out.
It was sufficient for him to free her sorrow's bird
For both of them to soar high.
It was sufficient for him to listen only to her absence's rustle
In order to find her love in the depths of his eyes.

Mere shadows

I pretend that I am myself
But unknown creatures live in me.

Eyes that are not mine see the world for me,
And other bodies walk about with my life.

I pretend that I am myself
But I am the known one, concealed.

Neither my mines have been discovered
Nor my metals polished.
What appears of me
Are mere shadows you cast on me
And they act for me.

They are mere ideas you invented for me.
You may think that I live here,
But I have not yet arrived, nor am I about to.
There is no space for me to cross toward you,
No moon to make an appointment with,
No night to descend from to daylight.

I pretend that I am myself
But in my inexistence I wander.
Laziness there continues to be an invitation,
Chaos is still shepherding the seasons.
Time there has not yet become time,
Nor forms have yet become forms.
Lips are lips by nature,
And clouds do not pursue their rains.

Free, I disappear in my mirage.
I have no identity to abstain from,
Nor a belonging to be threatened by.
I multiply until numbers get tired
And I am ignorant of them as is the sea of its names.
No one calls me,
No one knows me.
Only words
Slowly make me.

I pretend that I am with you all
But other creatures live in me.
If I am not yet born
And my illusion has preceded me to you,
That is because I have preferred to be a little late
Until my moment arrives
And those other creatures I have been will disappear
And I become myself.

On my head's playground

For a long time
I was their spear and its goal

Until the scream of sex
Filled my loneliness.

For a long time
They did not know
When I shone with my early femininity
On the bed of my childhood,
When I learned
To steal my own treasures in order to become rich.
For a long time
They did not know
When my body mellowed with its honey sheen
And found its narrow path.

For a long time
I invented arts and practised instincts good for me
When I played with them on my head's playground.
I played the coquette,
I flirted and dallied,
I refrained,
And I yielded.
For a long, long time
They sat in my imagination
And I devoured them
And they did not know.

جمانة حدّاد

Joumana Haddad is a journalist/translator/poet from Lebanon. She has three poetry collections to her credit. She speaks seven languages, has translated many books and preparing a Ph.D. in translation. Her website is www.joumanahaddad.com

The first four poems are translated from *Da'wa ila 'Asha' Sirri* (Invitation to a Mystical Supper), Dar al-Nahar, Beirut 1998. The last three are translated from *Yadan ila Hawiya* (Two Hands toward an Abyss), Dar al-Nahar, Beirut 2000. Professor **Issa Boullata**, the translator of the above poems, is also the author of the Landmark article in the present issue.

ZUHAIR ABU SHAYEB

Translated by **Noel Abdulahad**

A Body stolen Wholly

I open the mirror's door slightly.
And take a look at the drowned ones, hidden beyond my eyes.

In what a dream had they abandoned themselves
behind the night, and came forth?
In what a dream had they baked my brunet soul, on olive wood,
and arrived preceded by my father's fire and granddad's spark?

I open the mirror's door, and wait, until my dreams,
confined to their darkness, remember me!
Until I see water ensnaring my face,
and flowing over the mirror, like a dewy dawn.
I draw my organs as though I pull a chair,
and stay on them, awake all night
Behind me are the blue spirit of the water, and
the voices of the drowned, rising like uplifted hands.
In front of me, many a potter who lent me
mud, shade and thought.

They lent me the colour of the wheat
the flowing of grayness in the hair,
the homing eyes,
the roundness of the face,
the mystery of the lower lip, and
the ruins of the chest

They lent me the sullen smile,
the untamed spirit,
the upward strolling with the grass,
the fear of darkness,

women,
the silent language, and
the imposed oblivion.

They lent me a body,
a name,
divine teachings, and
they all stood against me.

I open the mirror's door
searching for something that belongs to me
in this wholly stolen body
in this land, occupied stone after stone...
I search
I search
I search...
Only to find looks, deluging the mirror,
like a dewy dawn.

زهير الشايب

Zuhair Abu Shayeb is a poet from Amman, Jordan. He has several collections of poetry to his credit. He is the Arts Manager of the Arab Institute for Research and Publications. The above poem appeared in the poet's collection "A Life History of the Grass", published by The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1997.

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*.

BADIA KASHGARI

Five poems translated by ***Noel Abdulahad***

Absence

You were not absent last week,
for your face was nestled between
the horizon and my eyes.

Defeat

Were I able to prevent the sunrays from
penetrating the glass panes of my window,
I would have never stood defeated
before the nightingale that
perched on the remnants of my shoulder, and
asked me to sing with it, melodious songs and
fly aloft on a wave of light.

Wings

I watched my wings grow like
a butterfly with brilliant colours...
knowing not such glistening radiance
would burst into a blazing fire inside my ribs—
    a revolting bird too difficult to detain
    inside the cages of death.

Bleeding

The wounds bleed
shooting stars that
I pick up on the tips of my fingers,
till the children's dawn appears
transforming them into glittering pearls
that feed their nectar to the steeds of mercy
at the extremities of human moaning.

Questions

Why do tears coagulate on our faces?
Why does the soul's lamp transform into
    blazing fires in our cells
    changing even the colour
    of blood in our veins?
And why do the stains of suffering abduct
    the colour of twilight?

بديعة كشغري

Badia Dawood Kashgari is a poet from Saudi Arabia. A graduate of English Language from King Abdul Aziz University, she is currently a co- journalist in the publishing division of ARAMCO.

The original Arabic of the above poems appeared in the poet's collection "When the Sand Blossoms", published by The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, Amman 1995.

HIKMAT ATTILI

Translated by **Noel Abdulahad**

The Roaring of the Wind

To dearest Amal...
To dear friends: Salwa, Gladis, Issa, Nizam & Noel

Good evening to you O soul...

The eye is the vibrating wick of the lamp,
The heart distressed and wounded...

What goodness comes out of the "ah"?
As we go to sleep, why
does the night's distress expand and
rock us with its bitter blame
when the Milky Way puts out the lamp—
the last sparkling sparks of the night's wakefulness?
What goodness comes out of tears, when life is
crippled with worries and pain?

O soul... O lady... Dear lady of mine!
I beg you, in my mourning plight
to wipe all the pain off my wounded heart,
all its worries and anguish...
And off my worn-out eyes, you may save
the remnants of a tear...

O gratifying and gratified soul!
Cloak me with the mantle of the shore's passion
that nestles an injured penguin in its lap...
Oh contended blessed soul!
Unbound my shackled blistering wrist and
release it from its sorrows
Extend a ladder of rainbows so as to
reach the divine firmament
Adorn the route of my ascent, to the heavenly mansions,
with glad tidings, that I'd freely reach them,
with burning craving...

So weary I am of my pains,
my heart is heavy and sick,
my home is a prison,
my wing plucked off, of its feathers, bleeds

Good evening O soul, swaggering in its dazzling caftan,
Be merciful to me and do tell me if my hour drew nigh
and the "word" fulfilled.

▪▪▪▪▪

O calm sea of mine!
Where have your furious waves retired?
and why did the seamen, abandoned their vessels?
in which direction have they left?
and why has the foam collapsed and tumbled down,
turning into specks of dust?
How can a wave, be stripped of its fervency?
How can the sea die out?
How can the white penguins be silenced?

The surging sea, transforms into a salty dead lake,
a swamp of mud
a quagmire
No seaman can cross it, not even an adventurer!

Have mercy upon me, O companion, my companion!
I beg you to free me from my bondage, and abandon me not
whatsoever the feeble light of the vessel may quiver
whatsoever life's treasures lay in waste!

In the name of our courtship,
I ask your waves and gales to be merciful to me
I beg you, dear sea of mine, to perpetuate your self
to renew it and rise up from your ashes,
like a burnt phoenix
I swear I badly need you,
for restlessness choked my breath,
and agony buried my dreams, alive...

▪▪▪▪▪

Night... O my night!

Lighten my burden
Reduce it in weight...
Many were the longsome nights that
trapped me in their aching web
O nights of the olden days, adieu...
O companions of mine, who washed me many a time,
with fragranced lotions, and smeared my eyes,
with the kohl of the first threads of darkness,
subjected the shining moon to wipe, with light,
my open wound...

Those olden nights were my boon companions;
the witness of my love,
the throbs of my heart,
the pulsation of my veins

In the first days of love, my alienation
suffused with fascination and passion
But today, O woe to you O today!
you clouded my soul's horizon with a veil of
boringly killing darkness that
severely broke my heart and
brutally shattered my back...

O night... O slothful mount...
O lover who abandoned me,
have mercy on my...
I beg you for a while to stop, and
inflict me no more, with pain and grief

Good evening O lady... my soul!
The eye is the wavering wick of the lamp, and
yearning overwhelms me with burning fires,
rendering my sufferings unbearable...
So when O soul, dear soul of mine, would
my hurricane rumble,
and the wind roar?

حكمت العتيلي

Hikmat Attili is a poet, translator and publisher. He lives in USA. The original Arabic was published in *al-Watan*, California 17/06/004.

Life in the mountains of Lebanon
Photograph by Raghid Nahhas

JIHAD ELZEIN

The Poem of Istanbul
Translated by ***Raghid Nahhas***

The Poem of Istanbul

a poem of eleven ships

The Third Ship

In the proximity of the blind stock market, and its walls clamorous with the fall of its metallic horses inside the calls of the minarets of the end of the century, my technical question, darling, is how do I include numbers in a gleaming poem?

Modernity died after it had aged in the casks of the twentieth century, and here I am, mature and not embryonic, asking myself about the wind— the wolf and the forbidding darkness in the Anatolian winter and its constant customs, similar to a wind that is an accomplice to an ancient secret.

Am I the discontented combating nations,
and the admittance, the embargo?
I tied you, oh ship of oil dealings, to the ends of modernity
Pale wax seeped off your breasts
and you are not dead yet
without your death
without yo...ur...dea...th

...If only the sailor's wife had told me about the poem's beast
about the barbaric fear in the language— aberration
the letters before I pronounce
soundless letters that cannot be uttered
the strange letters...
Who would shelter in this virginity of the women's dictionaries?
And who would burn the forest of secrets
at the fountain of its words?

The Fourth Ship

A woman thinking[1]... in the dark

Do words address her desire or
read the forbidden man?

Goethe is alone in the harem[2]

Goethe is alone in the forbidden
The bridges of fear alighted among their forgiving grounds
Doves spread
The cooing-unbosoming spread in their pain
...The body spread
A woman says I am the unbosoming goddess
and everyone else is an extension
a mere extention
The flesh of flesh
Unbosoming flesh
Forbidding unviolated flesh

...A woman shall pass
How did she, Hamdi Bey, disappear
and you did not paint her shadows in some corner
of the shady souk and in every corner
of the whispers of manly resources

Has your brush quenched its thirst with her "weapon"[3]

Or is it that your soul's confession never darkened
by the confession of the flesh?
Istanbul... you are adulterator of pure languages,
but your "U" stays put like an ethnic mark...

Or as the blond in *Bogaz*[4] one evening told me:

'This strait is like my faintly lit necklace,

[1] This is the title of a painting by Omar Adel at the Museum of Ankara.
[2] The painting by Prince Abdülmecid II, titled *Goethe in the Harem*. The prince was the last crown prince of the Ottoman Sultanate, and the last caliph when the sultanate was abolished in the beginning of the republican era. The artist prince left Istanbul for Italy where he stayed the rest of his life.
[3] The painting *The Arms Merchant* by Osman Hamdi bey.
[4] The name given by the Turks to the Bosphorus

cross its awesome intersection…'
I crossed the blackness of its water and hurt its noble notion

Sir, Abdülmecid, how could elegance be complete without a violin[5]

I mean without the oil migrating in the canvas
without those subdued orphan nations

A sadness the "mist"[6] shall spread over nations

I mean alone… with impotent indifference painting oil with oil

I mean and I mean all what he means[7]…

The city and the poem and the intimate one.

A woman shall play in his *Saray*[8]…

Fire blew all over her
The prince to the prince stretched a hand
He alone is a host and a visitor.

The Fifth Ship

Times do not change… They fall on the steps of *Bay Uglu*
rolling to the abyss of sadness…
What a sadness, oh Istanbul! And what a perpetual playing of an agonizing game:
To be or to be
I love you as if you are not what you are… sad and weak and vast
I love you as you are… stronger than me and more capable of alienation

Put my blame between your mature bewildered breasts
and wake up on my panting.
Oh woman! You are not what you are…
Fake and genuine, rather genuine fake

[5] The paintings by Prince Abdülmecid *Mist* and *Beethoven at the Saray*. *Saray* is the Turkish name for "Government House".
[6] ibid
[7] A slang expression used similarly in Turkish and Arabic.
[8] See 5.

Near *Galata Saray*, this old Greek shall ask me why
don't I cross the sea to Crete and I shall say to him
what you have drawn for my eyes:
I do not see a sea, but a blue space in watercolours...
You were, oh sailor's wife, a silent onlooker

on the other street of *Taqseem*[9]

As if you were a slave from the middle ages watching
a graduation ceremony from later centuries...
Return to your holy water... Return to your defiant outrage
and I shall wait for my ship
I, the wicked leaver from another wicked generation

Time does not change...
It falls slain and you must
preserve its corpse in good condition
this infidel nonsense is only acceptable in Istanbul...
The frightened, ugly, magnificent, wooden, stony, watery, without metal courage
is enough to quench her dreams...
and for us to believe her as we should and as we should not

Istanbul, oh workshop for the memory of monotheistic nerves
Oh tree drinking from the language of the desert
and water thirsty in water!
What an astounding deviation in whose womb you were delivered
to be what you are not, what you are...

Istanbul, oh transparent veil of narrow lanes,
the necks of your buildings crane up in a final game
started two hundred years ago and still goes on...
Istanbul, oh transparent veil behind which stretch crowded shoulders
in a demonstration that has forgotten itself...

and I drink my coffee at *Pera Palace*[10] composed,

that morning, in the midst of elegant spectra

[9] The most crowded square in Istanbul.
[10] The oldest of the large hotels in Istanbul with its particular historical and heritage character. It was built towards the end of the nineteenth century. The doors of each of its rooms carry the name of a famous personality who was once a guest in that particular room, such as Trotsky and Agatha Christie.

of crime and revolution.
Agatha Christie and her burning eyes,
and the disappointments of the retired Trotsky...

In two days, you will be suddenly struck by the reverence of Ramadan[11]...

And he who did not notice you will strike you
like a mad celebration in a mad season:
Istanbul is fading and unrestrained and prostrate and sinning
exuding its passion in the light... the evening burns
Angst flirts with her and breaks her as if its defiance is the sky's ceramics
Spread your dust so I see my pain
and dance salt upon the salt of wound and healing
The salt of wound and healing without healing

The Sixth Ship

All tremors[12] are not going to make my head bow,

for it is inflicted with fighting fantasies
Too great to retract my cunning off the banks of
the blue greenness of the deceitful sea of Maramara

or near the timeless *Bogaz*[13]

And I am beautiful to remain the princess of
contemporary angst around the Dardanelle
I am writing the history of my archipelago
I am mounting my concerns
And this boat, solely consecrated to me, will come
carrying my body to me so that I kiss me...
Do you hear the cries of the earth in my soul?
and the sufferings of the earthquakes in my undulations...
Would you carry me like another panic

[11] The Islamic fasting month.
[12] After the earthquake of *Admeet*, the inhabitants of Istanbul are anxiously awaiting the next earthquake predicted by science. Some rich people have already sought alternative residence in areas inside the city, predicted to be less affected by future earthquakes.
[13] See 4.

that comes and saves me from
the panic that I had fashioned for my blood?
Come, let us collect the rubies off my breast...
send them to the depth of the dream
after the propagation of the tremor in my flesh.

جهاد الزين

Jihad Elzein is a leading Lebanese journalist. A graduate of law, his love for exploration led him to report on many countries around the world, establishing himself as a first-class journalist. He is renowned as a political columnist, a feat he has undertaken with leading newspapers. In addition to numerous articles, he is a contributor to some books.

In 2002, he surprised the press and literary circles in Lebanon and Syria, and revealed his poetic talent by publishing his first poetry book *Qassidat Istanbul* (The Poem of Istanbul). The book, published by *Dar al-Fikr al-Hadith* in Beirut, comprises three parts: a long poem that carries the same title as that of the collection, seven poems written as *Statements of Gratitude to the Impressionists* and five poems under the title *Women*. The poems are masterly in their stye and content, modern with fine use of metre. "The Poem of Istanbul" as originally published comprised "nine ships", but now it is a poem of eleven ships, after late in 2003 the author added a finale.

The first part of the "Third Ship" above is printed in italics, because the original Arabic text is in prose style.

J. K. MURPHY

Two Poems

Functional Stones

We each retained a pocketful of marbles,
Treasured and worked, much as a heedful
of schooled brains knocks puzzles
out of the ring.

Then I heard of games rolled along
Country roads on Irish evenings.
Two fellows would bowl metal balls,
judging the camber, allowing for bends,

Till, a mile or so away, the end.
Fewest shots would win.
Such accuracy and function intrigued me
And when I saw in Bill Martin's field

Grey scattered boulders, moonskin marbles,
I asked: How did they consolidate
Themselves there? Perhaps a thimbleful
Of power fired steam. Nearby

A man-made wall of stone kept grass private.
Red ochre slanted on the granite
At sunset, the colour on the final stones
Most resting-places wear.

Fiction Tutor

I have been diligent
Since you died, and I cling to the little I know now.
Your gallstones itched to be quiet
But of course you kept your purgatory silent.
Your nightly heaven was a study glowing yellow.
Give me a place full of light,

The poet says. You taught short story craft,
Its genesis a word, a spark, a friction,
With feeling to oil it.
Think-and-write, think-and-write, a rowing, fore and aft.
Read poems, scrolls, tablets, novels, moderns, wide addiction,
Senses diligently on the chase, alert.

I remember you stressed: what drives
A tale is character. Misgiving. I feel it when I touch a tome
Of course. Your function
Was to heave the mind towards creation: characters' lives
Tossed up and down
And up, like yours now gone, receiving, I believe, a higher unction.

ج. ك. ميرفي

J. K. Murphy lives in Melbourne, Australia. His first book of verse was *Mottled Shallows*.

CHARLOTTE CLUTTERBUCK

Nagasaki dawn

The mirror hides nothing. It shines without
a selfish mind. Everything, good and bad,
right and wrong, is reflected without fail.
Chikafusa Kitabatake, *Jinno Shotoki,* 1339

In the Catholic retreat house, the kindly priest
ignores the Temple's gong sounding at midday,
talks of this people's godlessness, religiosity...

each morning I plod through the thick, damp air,
bow at the Shinto torii – the lesser kami lurking
in the smooth-trunked trees, not entirely friendly –

make an offering at the shrine, and leave its lights
as just enough dawn filters through rain, mirrored
on the steps leading up the wet slope's suddenness,

and reach the mountain-top dwelling of the Kami,
with its signs of recent worship – water, flowers, coins
and incense sticks, prayers on slips of paper in the trees.

Later, in the Peace Park, a white slab accepts
responsibility for the deaths of Koreans enslaved
by Japan – but I find no word from the Americans...

in Urikame Cathedral, the head and arm are torn
from a Crucifix, leaving a gaping hole like a mouth
crying out, his remaining arm like an accusing finger.

تشارلوت كلاتربك

Dr. **Charlotte Clutterbuck** was born in England in 1950 and migrated to Australia in 1958. She lives near Windsor in NSW with her family. While studying English religious poetry for her doctorate, Clutterbuck taught Communication Skills to mature aged Aboriginal university students. She is currently teaching senior English at a girls' school. Charlotte is a Roman Catholic but has always felt a desire to know more about other cultures and religions.

SUSAN BEINART

Patrick White's Other Side in "The Tree of Man"

The first thing I did on arrival in Australia was to embark on a career teaching English to non-English-speaking migrants. In those days, the late seventies, my students were mostly Asians and Europeans. I too was new, but came from English-speaking South Africa. My students who spoke basic English, I soon discovered, had to find out how to survive in their new land. For example, some needed to learn how to ask for directions. However those who had more sophisticated English skills needed more subtle knowledge such as which Australian cooking oils to use, and what schools were best for their children. The more functional their English, the more subtle were the things my students needed to know. Because I was on my own personal learning curve, I sometimes had to search for my own answers to their questions.

After six years, I moved from Sydney to a rural city, one of the last places in Australia to acquire SBS TV. Even now, in their local paper, the multicultural program is tucked away to the right of Channel 10's, as if it were an afterthought. The education centre where I developed English learning packages had a friendly librarian with a pronounced stutter. He soon gauged that I felt like an outsider in country Australia. 'If you want to understand Australia, read Patrick White,' he advised. So I read all the Patrick White fiction I could find, and learned many subtle things about the Australian national identity. I also learned much about the human condition, and have often wondered whether my librarian friend found a salve for his alienating stutter in the humaneness of Patrick White.

In our splintered postcolonial world, where the after-effects of migration and massive social change have alienated many, White's evocation of the human condition has significant appeal. His fiction says what many regard as unsayable, by skilfully revealing a cast of outsiders and their brittle detractors. For example, in the Nobel Prize-winning *The Tree of Man* (1955), White champions disadvantaged Australians and exposes those who deride the belittled ones as cruel or downright snobbish.

However not all splintered and alienated groups can be said to identify with White. I have had a spirited discussion with a feminist who considers White to be a privileged Eurocentric male who does not represent her views. There are other critics of White to whom I shall refer later. As regards those who criticise White for not representing them,

it is worthwhile considering influential postcolonial critic Edward Said's view that we can never be totally authentic when we represent others, as our own personal characteristics will get in the way. For this reason, Said encourages us to get to know ourselves well.[1] I believe White knew himself well enough to inject us with the astringent truth.

As Seymour has stated:

> Patrick White's significance... as a writer and a person, was that he represented the Other, the unexpected thing, the dissonant voice, the dissident person, and because of that, he was very good for us all.[2]

According to Boehmer,[3] postcolonial theorists refer to those who have been colonised and have typically had 'their agency, diversity, resistance, thinking, voices' screened out, as the '*colonial other*', or the '*Other*'. She goes on to say that 'the concept of the Other, which is built on the thought of, inter alia, Hegel and Sartre, signifies that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which an authority is defined.' Colonised people, with their perceived lack of expertise, have been a backdrop for Western perceptions of itself as superior. Clearly, if we look at the Australian context, Aborigines are a potent example of a belittled group.

These days, it is common to come across examples of Otherness in print. Here is one: Crichton and Stevenson,[4] in commenting on Sydney's spate of Lebanese Muslim rapes of 'Australian' girls, state that community coverage of these rapes was particularly sympathetic to the victims, and punitive towards the ethnic perpetrators. This, they say, is part of the 'ethnic other' syndrome.

White is a postcolonial writer who represents and asserts what he sees as genuine aspects of Australia's characteristics, rather than glorying in a fantastical past. His range of Others include and enlarge on those aspects of Australia that some colonialists and romantics might deem inferior or risky. They include the Australian landscape, the poor, the foreign and the mentally impaired. When I reread *The Tree of Man* recently, I remembered my experience with the stuttering librarian, and looked out for White's sensitivity towards those who do not fit in. Discovering many examples of Others in *The Tree of Man*, I found myself exploring why White is so sensitive to those who are deemed different from, and inferior to, the status quo.

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[1] Gramsci in Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. Random House, New York, p.25.
[2] Seymour in Lawson, A. 1994. *Patrick White. Selected Writings*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p.xv.
[3] Boehmer, E. 1995. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.21.
[4] Chrichton, S. and Stevenson, A. September 14-15, 2002. *Crime and Prejudice*. The Sydney Morning Herald, p.31.

White's biographer, David Marr[5] says that White 'was a child of the Empire, born in London [in 1912] to Australian parents who took pains to see that his upbringing confirmed the puzzling circumstances of his birth.' White's mother, Ruth, arrived in Australia when she was young, and could never settle. She moved the family back and forth between Australia and Britain. As a result, the divided White moved between these two countries for much of his life.

Other things too made him feel different. Marr[6] points to his crippling asthma, which contributed to his inability to mix easily with other children, and to his homosexuality, which initially caused him great feelings of shame, and led him, as a young man, to hold angry views against society. Exceptions to White's anger, Marr says, were 'loving servants and those strangers and sufferers whom he later called "the burnt ones,"' referring here to a book of White's short stories, *The Burnt Ones* (1964). The title is the literal translation of a common Greek phrase, which means "the poor unfortunates".[7]

In his autobiography, White says this about his ambivalent feelings towards his colonial background:

> The London streets gave me confidence. My nonentity allowed me to float in the tide. I strutted at times... I devoured the arrogance of those who had nothing to fear, insolent, tailored men, and their long lean women... Their remoteness and the fact that they would have disdained me did not wither, but on the contrary, fertilised the soil in which the seeds of colonial snobbery lay.[8]

When White began writing *The Tree of Man* in 1950, he was back in Australia after a long stay in Britain. Now he lived with his partner, Manoly Lascaris, in a house in then-semi-rural Castle Hill. Together, the two men worked the unaccommodating land. According to Marr,[9] White had grasped by then that the Australia he had idealised in exile as a 'paradise of order and comfort, of freedom, primitive sensuality, well-run houses and beautiful gardens' was a fantasy. All his life, he 'was to draw on these early childhood memories while raging at the reality around him'.

At that time, White was ill with asthma, and a failure at working his small farm. He was also wounded by the negative Australian reaction to the three novels he had published so far: *Happy Valley* (1939), *The Living and The Dead* (1941) and *The Aunt's Story* (1948). He realised that he was seen as 'a threat to the tradition of Australian

[5] Marr, D.1992. *Patrick White. A Life.* Random House, Milsons Point, Australia, p.11.
[6] Ibid, pp.32-75.
[7] Ibid, pp.432.
[8] White, P. 1981. *Flaws in the Glass.* Jonathan Cape, London, pp.1-2.
[9] See 5, p.276.

literature'.[10]

Jennifer Rutherford describes the hostile literary atmosphere in which White found himself, this way:

> When White's novels first appeared in Australia, the response was typified by a marked acrimony. While his texts were gaining an international audience and acclaim... the Australian response was one of refusal... The most infamous response was that of the poet A. D. Hope, who... argued that White's writing "has nothing essential to do with Australia or with pioneering, or with the pattern of country life." Hope... depicted White as violating... [an] essential boundary of White Australia: the boundary separating the Australian from its European Other.[11]

Rutherford[12] argues that this boundary has always been an important part of the mythological white Australian identity. Referring to White's famous essay, *The Prodigal Son* (1958), she says that White's conceptualisation of the 'Great Australian Emptiness' illuminates the void that lies at the heart of a mythological Australia. This void, she says, 'extends not only to the exclusion of the Aboriginal, the immigrant, and the feminine, but to a micro-regulation of an intimate self.'[13] White, she is saying, exposes the emptiness of white Australia's heart.

As White (also) states in that essay, *The Prodigal Son*:

> It was the exaltation of the "average" [in Australia] that made me panic most, and in this frame of mind, in spite of myself, I began to conceive another novel. Because the void I had to fill was so immense, I wanted to... suggest in this book every possible aspect of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman. But at the same time I wanted to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people, and incidentally, my own life since my return. So I began to write *The Tree of Man.*[14]

This was the setting for White's family saga about a couple called Stan and Amy Parker and their pioneering lives in an Australia that was developing rapidly around them.

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[10] White, P. 1989. *Patrick White Speaks*. Primavera Press, Leichhardt, p.139.
[11] Rutherford, J. 2000. *The Gauche Intruder*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p.180.
[12] Ibid, pp.176-181.
[13] Ibid, pp.176-177.
[14] See 10, p.14.

I have read *The Tree of Man* twice. The first time was twenty years ago, when following the advice of my stuttering librarian friend. All I can remember from that first reading is that I felt excited because an Australian writer understood what it felt like to be an outsider, just like migrant me. Here was White, illuminating the Otherness of Australian and non-Australian-born alike. Stan and Amy Parker are a poor farming couple devalued by society. My own outsider status made me empathetic towards theirs.

My second reading of the novel compounded my first impression but I was also able to explore its artful structure. In particular, there are four disasters from which Stan and Amy learn and move on. These are flood, fire, war and death, which structure the novel into four (informal) segments. For example, in the first segment, when they are young pioneers, Stan and Amy experience a flood, which, by causing destruction and loss, challenges their youthful innocence.

It is against this background of a poor farming family who struggle with familiar Australian hazards such as fire and flood, that White sets his cast of (mostly) human Others. The Parkers and their intimates are made Other by their poverty and lack of social graces.

Stan Parker is a good man, looked down upon by those who respect artifice rather than kindness. When he marries Amy Fibbens, a poor skinny girl from a squalid family, he disappoints his more sophisticated relatives. Stan is no social prize himself. His teacher mother married a drunken blacksmith, an inadequate father to Stan. However Stan, a simple, stolid, inarticulate man who tries to be a good father and neighbour despite the odds, is one of White's most decent male protagonists, and we therefore view those who scorn him as less majestic than he. And this, I believe, is White's intention. As White has said, he [White] is looking for something special in ordinary things. He is thumbing his nose at colonial artifice as well as at the spiritual void and worship of wealth that is prevalent in our society, and which forms part of what he calls the 'Great Australian Emptiness'.[15]

As Colmer[16] points out, there is a consistent contrast between Stan and his wife, Amy. Stan is spiritual, while Amy looks at only what is tangible. An example of this is the contrast between Stan and Amy's reaction to a performance of *Hamlet* that they attend in Sydney. Stan is left more satisfied by the performance than Amy; the death scenes remind him of his mortality, while Amy thinks the play is a bit of nonsense.

Stan also has mystical experiences. At the end of the novel, with his world challenged by the growth of soulless suburbia around him and by stark family disappointments, he suffers a stroke. As he dies he experiences his finest spiritual vision. Encouraged by a passing evangelist, he becomes aware of God's presence. As

[15] Ibid, p.15.
[16] Colmer, J. 1984. *Patrick White*. Methuen and Co, London, p.30.

Hewitt[17] puts it, 'He becomes aware that he is sitting... at the centre of a mandelic design of great beauty, though made up of a vegetable garden gone to seed, bare paddocks and encroaching purple villas.' In this setting, Stan finds the presence of God in such simple things as a gob of spittle, a leaf, and ants struggling on a crack in a path. True to White's own vision, Stan finds greatness in ordinary things.

Amy Parker is arguably one of White's most satisfyingly developed female characters. In the early pioneering days, as Amy and Stan meet, marry and then work their land (as White and Manoly worked theirs), Amy appears even more Other than Stan. When Stan first sees her, she has bare feet and legs. She is an orphan whose uncle shovels cow manure. But despite her flaws, Amy grows in stature. Although she longs secretly for a glamorous life, which, during her long marriage, manifests in a sordid affair with a travelling salesman and an obsession with the life of a rich and fancy lady called Madeleine, she does not take second place to Stan. Although she is not as spiritual as him, she is nevertheless a highly developed female character.

Despite her disappointing children, in particular a son who turns out bad and is murdered, Amy is always looking for value. She finds this in her marriage with Stan. The couple is emotionally and physically connected. She also finds value in a grandson who will, one day, turn out good. Her life, though simple and short of luxuries, feels whole in contrast to her daughter's ultimately empty one.

Stan and Amy's daughter, Thelma, becomes a social snob who sees her parents as Other after she makes an advantageous marriage and becomes part of the superficial gentility that White increasingly satirises in his later fiction. The snobbish Thelma, White ingeniously shows, has wealth and social standing, but an emptiness inside. For me, she is one of White's most sympathetically drawn parodies. One can imagine her pallor, her debilitating asthma – both of which White cleverly uses to provoke a modicum of sympathy for her – and her feelings of incompleteness. She has to teach herself how to ape those whom she now prizes, and to consciously avoid her low social background.

In the following extract from the novel, Thelma visits her aging parents on their farm:

> Then Mrs Forsdyke, the daughter, drove down in her own car, they had two. Most people did not know Mrs Forsdyke, or had known and forgotten that this was Thelly Parker. Those who might have remembered, she did not encourage, narrowing her eyes until the skin almost obscured her conscience. Those who had never known, she was above, so slid past in her smooth black car, which quickly left behind all that was in any way

[17] Hewitt, H. 2002. *Patrick White, Painter Manqué.* The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, pp.34-5.

> mediocre or in bad taste.[18]

Bub and Doll Quigley, near neighbours to the Parkers, are more examples of Others. Bub is crazy but, like a Shaekespearian fool, has an aptitude for seeing and speaking the truth, which upsets his detractors. Bub's sister, Doll, serves him with love. She is one of White's good Others, someone who serves, a possible link to White's fondness for the servants who looked after him so well when he was young.

The fierce Australian landscape, which is exposed as the Parkers tame the wilderness around them, is yet another Other. White's own love for the landscape is recalled by Marr[19] who reveals White's possibly first awakening to the beauty of the Australian bush as a young jackeroo who rides his horse and 'is seized by the need to find words to match the landscape'. In *The Tree of Man*, there are loving descriptions of this landscape, in spite of its dangerous Otherness.

For example, when the calamitous bushfire starts:

> Passionate volumes of smoke towered above the bush, and in that smoke, dark, indistinguishable bodies, as if something were being translated forcibly into space. The men... straggled along the bush tracks, in groups, discussing other fires, or singly, looking at the ground. The latter were surprised at the details of sand, stones, and sticks they saw. They had discovered in the earth an austere beauty that they now loved with a sad love that comes when it is already too late.[20]

Although there are more Others in *The Tree of Man* than there is scope to discuss here, I cannot exclude White's confronting evocation of the status of *ethnics*. The Parkers hire two farmhands. The first is an old German called Fritz who the children begin to taunt and adult neighbours deride because of the war with Germany. Stan is away at war and Amy, the only adult in the neighbourhood who sees Fritz for what he really is, a good old man, is helpless amongst all the hatred. Even her young son Ray, who has loved Fritz, throws a stone at the old man. There is no doubt that White is exposing ethnocentrism here, and he shows it well. Through physical description, he emphasizes the old man's helplessness. As in other texts of White's, a technique he uses is to employ two opposing ideas in the same phrase, as in 'Then the *blood* began to run, to trickle down his *clean* chin'. And, 'Now he could *hate* the old German that he had *loved*'. These opposites expose the underlying moral tensions. In this case, the reader, feeling the full weight of racism, is cut to the core. Lawson[21] refers to Edgecombe's argument that 'White's vision is achieved... by the "agonising, tense contiguity of

[18] White, P. 1955. *The Tree of Man*. The Viking Press, U.S.A. York, p.395.
[19] See 5, p.97.
[20] See 18, p.164.
[21] Lawson, A. 1994. *Patrick White. Selected Writings*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p.xx.

opposites"'.

The second farmhand, Con, is Greek, just like White's partner, Manoly. The neighbours are at it again. They mock Con's poor English. This ethnic Other is also abused by young Ray Parker, who destroys a precious snapshot of Con's mother. Ray even tells Con that he hates Greeks. Again to her credit, Amy recognises that Con is a human being. Many years after Con leaves to marry a widow with a mixed business in Bondi, Stan Parker meets up with him again. At Con's shop, Stan encounters Con's stepdaughter, Panayóta, who wants to be known as *Pam*. It is clear that she is confused about her identity, and White ensures, through cutting prose, that the reader understands this. Being an ethnic Other, he reminds us, is never easy.

As well as a Postcolonial fiction writer who represented the Other, White was a public intellectual of note who defended social justice issues. He championed causes such as Aboriginal Reconciliation, Environmentalism and Multiculturalism, all of which have become arguably even more Other in our present, inward-looking society. In one of his essays, *Patrick White's views on the Bicentenary*,[22] he gives provocative reasons for not supporting Australia's 1988 Bicentennial celebrations.

I am sure White, if he were alive today, would criticise the way we demonise Muslim asylum-seekers, as if they, like Fritz the German farmhand in *The Tree of Man*, were the guilty ones, instead of the victims they are. And I suspect that my stuttering librarian, whose handicap exposed him to outsider status, would be critical too.

Recently I went back to my old library to look amongst the books for the stuttering librarian, but my covert mission was unsuccessful. After all these years, he has probably moved on. His advice, however, lingers on in my life. Twenty years ago, he provided me with a great service: he introduced me to that staunch literary defender of Others, White.

سوزان باینارت

Susan Beinart was born in South Africa. She spent her first 20 years in Australia teaching migrants and refugees. Since then she has published stories and articles in literary magazines and newspapers, and is presently working on a second novel.

[22] See 10, pp.5-6.

L. E. SCOTT

Somebody Blew up America

On September 19, 2002 the biennial Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival convened. This is the largest poetry festival in North America and hundreds of poets and teachers of poetry, along with thousands of people interested in poetry gathered at the Waterloo Village in Stanhope, New Jersey.

During the course of the three day festival, African American poet Amiri Baraka, Poet Laureate of New Jersey, took the stage and read a poem he had written shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in America, entitled "Somebody Blew Up America". The shit hit the fan. In protest at "The Poem", as it has become known, a number of poets and members of the audience walked out of the readings and panel discussions in which Baraka was a participant.

The Poem

"Somebody Blew Up America" is a long poem (77 stanzas) that chronicles the United States of America's history of terrorism, slavery, lynching and genocide; its murderous conduct towards countries that fail to tow the line of its interests; its part in the overthrow of governments either directly or indirectly and its support of oppressive dictators for as long as they are useful.

But what else is in Baraka's poem, other than the indictment of America as a worldwide terrorist and perpetrator of much of the evil that has befallen humankind, for it was not these accusations that had other poets, panelists and members of the audience walking when he read his poem on three different occasions at the Festival. It was this stanza:

> Who knew the World Trade Centre was gonna get bombed
> Who told 4000 Israeli workers at the Twin Towers
> To stay home that day
> Why did Sharon stay away

Outside the Festival, the reaction was also swift. The powerful American Jewish organization, the Anti-Defamation League, accused Baraka of anti-semitism and US government agencies said it was a 'shameful act' to suggest that Israel had foreknowledge that the World Trade Centre was going to be attacked.

Baraka had only recently been made New Jersey's Poet Laureate. The Governor of New Jersey, Jim McGreevey and other state and local government officials called on Baraka to 'apologize and resign' from this post. Baraka refused to do either and issued a five page press release.

In part Baraka stated:

> The recent dishonest, consciously distorted and insulting non-interpretation of my poem *Somebody Blew Up America* by the Anti-Defamation League is fundamentally an attempt to defame me. And with that, an attempt to repress and stigmatize independent thinkers everywhere.
>
> This trashy propaganda is characteristic of right-wing zealots who are interested only in slander and character assassination of those whose views or philosophies differ from or are in contradiction to theirs.
>
> First, the poem's underlying theme focuses on how Black Americans have suffered from domestic terrorism since being kidnapped into US chattel slavery, e.g. by Slave Owners, US & State Laws, Klan, Skinheads, Domestic Nazis, lynching, denial of rights, national oppression, racism and character assassination, both historically and at this very minute throughout the US. The relevance of this to Bush's call for a 'War on Terrorism' is that Black people feel we have always been victims of terror, governmental and general, so we cannot get as frenzied and hysterical as the people who are asking us to dismiss our history and contemporary reality to join them, in the name of a shallow "patriotism", in attacking the majority of people in the world, especially people of colour and in the third world.
>
> This is said to us, even as this counterfeit president has legalized the Confederate Flag in Mississippi. Could the victims of European Fascism be as frantically loyal to a regime that would fly a Nazi Swastika over their homes? So we cannot, in good conscience, celebrate what seems to us an international crusade to set up a military dictatorship over the world, legitimatised at base by white supremacy, carried out, no matter the crude lies, as the most terrifying form of Imperialism and its attendant national oppression. All of it designed to drain super profits bluntly from the coloured peoples of the world, but as well, from the majority of the peoples in the world. For all the frantic condemnations of Terror by Bush etc, as the single International SuperPower, they are the most dangerous terrorists in the world!

The Poet Laureate

Baraka has made it clear that he can stand the heat in the kitchen and that he is not going to apologize or resign. It is interesting to note that before this incident, many

citizens of New Jersey were not even aware that they had a Poet Laureate. They were further surprised to learn that neither the Governor nor anyone else in the state had the power to remove him. As the outrage grew and the newspapers intensified their calls for Baraka to go, State Senator Peter Inverso announced he would introduce a bill that would give Governor McGreevey the power to fire Baraka from the position of Poet Laureate.

Amiri Baraka's appointment came into effect in mid-summer 2002 and was to have run for two years. He had been recommended to the Governor by a six-member selection committee with the New Jersey Council for the Humanities and the New Jersey State Council of the Arts.

Jim Haba, a member of the panel that recommended Baraka, stated:

> He is a New Jersey native who has a national and international reputation which has already survived almost 55 years, who shows every sign of persistence as an artist of high accomplishment... Our responsibility was to nominate him, it was not our responsibility to appoint. It felt to us that it would be irresponsible for us not to nominate him... Anyone looking at the history of 20th Century literature in America would see that he is absolutely one of the major literary figures.

The writing communities in New Jersey – those on both sides of the debate about Baraka's poem – feel that Senator Inverso's bill is a dangerous move. If passed, it would give the Governor the power not only to remove the state's Poet Laureate but also to set a "performance guideline". Senator Inverso said of his bill:

> This provides the Governor with the necessary tools to ensure the Governor can select a Poet Laureate who can serve this state in a civil and positive manner, and give the Governor the ability to remove a Poet Laureate when that person brings shame upon the government and the people of this state.

Who Is Amiri Baraka?

Everett LeRoi Jones was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1934. He attended Newark public schools and in the early 1950s enrolled at Rutgers University – a "white university". Jones later transferred to Howard University (Washington D.C.), one of Black America's premier universities.

After graduating from Howard in 1954 with a Bachelor's degree in English, he did a three-year stint in the US Air Force. It was while he was in the Air Force that Jones' literary seed began to grow. He immersed himself in the work of Ezra Pound, James Joyce and other modernists. Jones and the Air Force parted company in 1957 when he was discharged for 'possessing allegedly communist literary journals'.

Greenwich Village

Jones then headed for New York, where he established contact with members of the avant-garde Beat, Black Mountain and New York School movements. It was at this time that he published his acclaimed book of poetry, *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note.* From that success, he and his then-wife Hattie went on to co-edit the poetry journals "Yugen" and "Floating Bear" with poet Diane Di Prima.

Success was leading to success and by the early '60s LeRoi Jones had been embraced by the hip white literary scene in New York and his reputation was beginning to spread from coast to coast. In 1964 two plays by Jones, "Dutchman", for which he won the Obie award, and "The Slave" put him at "the top". It was during this period that he decided to change the direction of his life.

Changing Neighbourhood

Three major events led to his decision to distance himself from the white bohemian literary scene: the growing civil rights movement, a visit to Cuba during which he came into contact with its revolutionary artists, and the 1965 assassination of Malcolm X.

Jones left Greenwich Village and headed to Harlem, where he became more involved with the militant political organizations of the '60s. He was a major force in the birth of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre, whose impetus was ' to create a well defined black aesthetic'. Though the theatre didn't last long, it was the catalyst for what was to come. As James Smethurst wrote: 'Though short-lived, it provided the blueprint for similar theatres across the country and helped develop the cultural corollary to black nationalism, the Black Arts Movement.'

After a year in Harlem Jones returned to Newark, New Jersey, where he set up his base of operations in a building he named "Spirit House". But his role as a Black Arts and Black Power leader continued and his influence grew as the Black American struggle burned across America.

Slave Name

In the early 1970s Jones came under the influence of cultural nationalist Maulana Karenga. It was Karenga who was instrumental in Jones' decision to rid himself of his "slave name". LeRoi Jones was no more. Amiri Baraka was born.

From his base in Newark, Amiri Baraka set about influencing and shaping African American life, both literary and political, as an advocate of the Afro-centric doctrines of separatism, self-determination, and communal African American cultural and economic self-development.

Later on in the '70s, Baraka shifted his base principles again. He came to the conclusion that "Black Nationalism" was not a broad enough platform from which to

address 'the inter-related problems of racism, national oppression, colonialism, and neo-colonialism'. He embraced Marxism/Leninism as his weapon of choice. It was during this period that Baraka published *The Motion of History* (1978), *Reggae or Not* (1981), *Daggers and Javelins* (1984), and *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (1981).

Notwithstanding his influence as a poet, writer, playwright, essayist, leader and teacher, what stands out for many in Baraka's list of achievements is his role as the father of the Black Arts Movement.

The Black Arts Movement

A poet and close associate of Baraka's, the late Larry Neal, wrote in an essay in 1968, entitled "The Black Arts Movement", that 'it is an aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept'. And like the concept of Black Power, the Black Arts Movement was clearly making a statement to white America that along with the struggle to win justice, the Black "aesthetic" would be defined by Black people for Black people and about Black people.

Larry Neal wrote:

> The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America. In order to perform this task, the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique, and iconology. The Black Arts and the Black Power concept both relate broadly to the Afro-American's desire for self-determination and nationhood. Both concepts are nationalistic. One is concerned with the relationship between art and politics, the other with the art of politics.
>
> Recently, these two movements have begun to merge: the political values inherent in the Black Power concept are now finding concrete expression in the aesthetics of Afro-American dramatists, poets, choreographers, musicians, and novelists. A main tenet of Black Power is the necessity for Black people to define the world in their own terms. The Black artist has made the same point in the context of aesthetics. The two movements postulate that there are in fact and in spirit two Americas – one black, one white. The Black artist takes this to mean that his primary duty is to speak to the spiritual and cultural needs of Black people. Therefore, the main thrust of this new breed of contemporary writers is to confront the contradictions arising out of the Black man's experience in the racist West. Currently, these writers are re-evaluating western aesthetics, the traditional role of the writer, and the social function of art. Implicit in this re-evaluation is the need to develop a "black aesthetic". It is the opinion of many Black writers, I

> among them, that the Western aesthetic has run its course; it is impossible to construct anything meaningful within its decaying structure. We advocate a cultural revolution in art and ideas. The cultural values inherent in western history must either be radicalized or destroyed, and we will probably find that even radicalization is impossible. In fact, what is needed is a whole new system of ideas.

The Black Arts Movement, like the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, was without question a major turning point in African American literature. But unlike the Harlem Renaissance, when Black writers were still at the whim of white publishers, the Black Arts Movement brought forward Black publishing houses such as poet Dudley Randall's Broadside Press and poet Haki Madhubuti's Third World Press. Thus a massive amount of work was published by Black writers who spoke for and to the community they came from, without requiring the sanction of white America.

Baraka Today

When Amiri Baraka said, 'I will not apologize and I will not resign', that was vintage Baraka. He is now almost 70 years old and for nearly all of those 70 years he has stood tall in the face of America's racism and terrorism. He has shown time and time again that he cannot be bought, scared or intimidated. The struggle is his life. He continues to produce an avalanche of work as a poet, playwright, essayist and historian of African American music. As Spike Lee says, Black men like Baraka will always tell white America to kiss their black asses twice. Apologize and resign? To hell with you. Amiri Baraka Lives!

Postscript

The New Jersey Senate has recently voted– 21-0 with 19 abstentions – to remove Baraka and the entire Poet Laureate post. Baraka's response: 'If they get rid of me, fine, it won't stop me from what I'm doing. If they get rid of the Poet Laureate, it's a stain on New Jersey. What does it mean, in the end? That New Jersey is too backward to recognize what poetry means.'

لويس إي. سْكت

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.

NAGWA SHAABAN

The Karm Gale

Arabian Jasmine Island

The news first leaked from a synagogue in Damietta. Careful study of the numerology of the Old Testament had unveiled a cataclysm that would strike before the week was over, probably on Saturday. Damietta's priests and sheikhs concurred, and the prophecy was sealed.

As word of the impending doom spread, Layl Basal remained steadfast and went on with her daily chores. Her sister, Sanania, was on the other hand, overcome by fear and passion and was captivated by the quickly approaching fateful day. Her anxiety was fueled by a recurrent dream of strange people with changing features pulling her to a dance floor. An old woman interpreted the dream saying, 'my little girl, you will face great danger, but will be rescued from your plight.'

Covering their shoulders in long scarves, Sanania and her friends joined the crowd heading for the northern ruins. Tonight, they intended to have fun, to allow their laughter to flow and their bodies to sway to the music. As they made their way to the ruins, they could see rats and cats running around in panic amidst a cacophony of barking, mewing, grunting and neighing. Snakes sprang from the bottom of the earth and crawled their way into nearby fields and orchards. After all, weren't these the expected signs?

Sensual Scorpio merged with loving Venus, fuelling people's passions and earthly desires. In the full moon of that Saturday night, with a soft melancholic melody playing, the dancer known as "Kitty" showed up, naked except for a long transparent scarf. With her right arm twisted into the shape of an Egyptian cobra, the belly dancer's slim body swayed to a spontaneous tide, her scarf gliding over its every rise and ebb.

The crowds stretched their arms begging to touch her body, or at least, to touch the air in her vicinity. Kitty summoned all the girls to join her. In the moonlight, they were all transformed into houri nymphs. The men tied up their turbans and sprung into the wild dance of Dervishes.

The Gypsies took advantage of this golden opportunity to sell opium, hashish, local liquor and Salonika wine. One Gypsy woman asked, 'What use will the money we collect now be to us. Isn't Doomsday at hand?'

'For the first and last time,' her fellows responded, 'we will enjoy money for its own comfort and warmth, not for the commodities it may purchase.'

In a humanly cynical moment, a number of deformed figures emerged out of

nowhere. Each showed off his physical impairment; a hump, a paunch, a wide toothless mouth or a shiny bald head. Together, they produced an assortment of diabolical sounds coming from every crevice in their bodies. They gained acceptance, admiration and the appreciation of the crowd, so they accepted themselves in the knowledge that they were bestowed individual and unique bodies— in the revelation that they were a special constituent of the body of the universe together with the earth, rivers, trees and other people.

Among the ruins, people abandoned their reserve and social decency, not knowing if they were liberating themselves of their inhibitions for a few hours, only to later restore their composure and regain their ordinary lives, or if this was indeed, the last scene.

Then, the crowd fell silent as Kitty reappeared in a short gown covering huge buttocks despite her slim body. She walked across the stage in a trained poise. People started laughing, after each of her elegant steps became infected by the vibrations and waves of joy that reverberated through her body.

A woman with a frown on her masculine features went up to Kitty and presented her with a beaver fur, the Sultan's robe of honor, thus mocking the Sultan himself and decrying his injustice. In the prevailing jovial spirit a man mockingly asked the woman:

'Brother! Where did you get that fur?'

Without responding, the woman removed her present from the dancer's shoulders and replaced the beaver fur with a heavy crown of lighted candles, which she carefully balanced on Kitty's head.

Kitty performed a new dance with astonishing poise. As molten wax dropped from the candles onto her huge buttocks, she jumped in acrobatic moves. The audience drunkenly applauded her when she plunged her arm behind her dancing dress and pulled away her artificial buttocks.

On the other side of the ruins, witches held rituals in front of a number of sheep before butchering them, for the last and most delicious roast in the world.

Everyone was enjoying the event to the full, wishing that the sky would rain pretty women.

As Kitty's performance of a variety of dances came to an end, a moment of stillness passed before the eruption of church bells. The crowds around the ruins were taken by surprise. Everyone was aware that the Sultan had forbidden the ringing of bells. Maybe they rang them today because there is no sultan on Doomsday!

Then, the earth shook and the houses twisted. Was this the earthquake of Doomsday?

Those who got tired of waiting for the day to end, and chose to stay at home, will never know what happened at the ruins because they slept forever. Only the houses in the poor narrow lanes were spared and remained intact as they clung to each other.

As the aftershocks followed, the earth around the ruins subsided and water gushed up from the bowels of the earth. From now on, children would call this spot the "Arabian Jasmine Island".

A paradoxical feeling of ecstasy, fear and comfort spread among the people at the ruins. They were safe.

The ceramist, a wanderer just arrived from the south, at this moment, gave up his loneliness and cold heart. Intuitively, he gazed into the darkness, searching for the source of a voice, not a soft one, but a deep voice betraying sensuality and the pure desire of Eros. The voice rang out again, but it was frightened this time. Briskly, he came to face her. His body a dam, prevented her from slipping away like a fish.

Sanania, paralyzed, surrendered to him.

Meanwhile, the Sufi women said their prayers and discussed the secrets of God's love as depicted in the biographies of the great Sufi women.

Having finished her prayers, Layl sat down in the back yard of her family house and tended to the okra cooking in the earthen pot. She thought to herself that even as the hour of Doomsday approached, the body had pressing needs to satisfy: eating, drinking and urinating. This simple woman dismissed with a casual wave of her little hand the specter of distress; thinking that succumbing to fear can never be an amulet against catastrophe.

Overnight, underneath the feverish lovers' bodies, hundreds of Arabian Jasmines were blooming, their dizzying scent spreading out for miles.

The sun finally arose on the first day after Doomsday. The people at the ruins woke up satisfied, but after a while they felt ashamed of what they had engaged in, the very orgy they had longed for.

The Nile waters surrounding the area were shallow, allowing the group to wade across with caution. Only Sanania crawled on all four, pulling behind her the genius artist with whom she had made love all night.

It had been a sterile night which bred silence, alienation, sleeplessness and the scent of Arabian jasmine which wafted around Damietta for a whole lunar month.

Before the next full moon, Sanania and the ceramist were married. The water around Arabian Jasmine Island became deeper and deeper. Adults ignored the spot and children forgot it. With the years' passing and a flood following another, the Nile finally submerged the Arabian Jasmine Island and it has since, disappeared forever.

نجوى شعبان

Nagwa Shaaban is an Egyprtian writer. She works as a cultural editor for The Middle East News Agency in Cairo. She has a collection of short stories and two novels to her credit. She has a special interest in the arts, accomplishing two research articles on plastic arts in USA in 1993.

The above piece, translated by the author and edited by Mohammed Tawfiq, is from a chapter titled "The Ceramist", from Nagwa Shaaban's novel *Nuwwat al-Karm* (The Karm Gale), published by the Family Bookshop, The General Book Corporation in Egypt, 2003.

CHRIS MANSELL

Eugenie of the Currawongs

Sometimes she thought of the mountain. Sometimes she thought of nothing at all. Sometimes she waited for the cold breath of the mountain to come down to her. She listened to the currawongs swoop down. They visited her in the winter. She liked to think that it was just her, but she knew that, in fact, the currawongs had always come down into the valley in the winter time. Something to do with the food being better or more plentiful or some such. She preferred the idea that they came, privately, to her.

She knew herself well enough to know when she was manufacturing illusions. It no longer bothered her like it once did. Once she would have tried to force a rationality onto herself which she, in reality, did not feel. But she had learnt the trick of not worrying, not classifying herself into madness just because she had these ideas. They were just ideas after all.

Which is not what the children said. The children wanted her to be rational and to fuss the way all children like to fuss about elderly parents. She supposed that it was normal to be grateful, but she wasn't. They always had been pests, and now they were middle aged pests and thought, because she was old, that she'd terminally lost her marbles and that they had a right to interfere. She ought to break her hip just to spite them.

There's another one swooping down onto the lawn's soft green. There's another. They look at her with their one single eye like they're asking her a question. Cocking their heads. What? What? What was it you said?

She said nothing to them. Sometimes she sang though. Old songs that she had learnt when she was a child. Songs she had no right to remember really, they were so old. Old when she learnt them. It was another world. She was another person altogether, although sometimes she still felt ten years of age. It was a good time. Ten. Ten is when you are neither woman nor child but when your limbs are strong and you don't care. That's what she felt. Ten. Not that her limbs were strong. It was then that she had learnt not to care what anyone, almost anyone, thought of her, and that she hadn't changed.

Strange to see this old face then looking back from the surface of windows. She never looked in a mirror.

'Eugenie! Eugenie!' There was a voice somewhere in the back of her mind. 'Eugenie!' Who gave these children the right to call their mother by her first name? She would speak to them if it would make any difference, but it wouldn't, so she wouldn't.

She wouldn't respond. She would refuse to respond. She would not acknowledge the call. She would pretend that she was deaf and not turn around, not even to scold. Fuck them, in fact.

She watched the currawongs watching her. She could hear their breathing. She could see their curved beaks in the morning light, the dull gleam of the light on them. She wished her own flesh were as definite as that. She disliked the way her mouth crumpled in towards her teeth. Hated the way her skin puckered and fell. Hated the texture of her reptilian hands. Hated the way her neck dropped under the chin. She knew, she told herself, that age should be respected. Enforced it in fact. She told others that they were vain and silly when they complained of spreading hips or of having the bandy, sere and slack legs of old women, but privately, she grieved mightily over it. She wanted to remain the girl she had been for most of her life. She resented her decrepitude and understood those foolish old people who tried for eternal youth. It had taken her all this time to get any understanding at all and now, just as she seemed to have worked some things out it was time to go. She didn't believe there was anywhere to go, except into a sort of nameless oblivion. Sheer matter. At one with the cosmos. Frankly it didn't appeal. She didn't see the point of swirling around with a lot of nitrogen and carbon. Perhaps that was her problem. In any case these two were set to irritate her this morning. They didn't understand, and probably never would, the importance of the curve of a currawong's beak and the dull light it threw at Eugenie.

'Mother! Mother! Eugenie! Wake up! It's me.' It's no use. The doctors say that it is no use. Past it. Gone. Finished. I used to admire her so much when I was little. It breaks my heart to see her like this. Empty. As if there never was anyone behind the mask. There's no one in there most of the time. I call and I call. It's not as if I don't care. I care, but the poor old thing doesn't realise that I've better things to do than sit around and talk to nothing all day. Really, I wonder whether, one day, I'll be like this. I wouldn't want my children to have to put up with me, not that I don't put up with them more than I should. They're getting out of hand. Cheeky. I must get Royce to have a word with them. Children owe a debt of respect, that's what I was taught and there is none in this generation at least. There will be no coming out and visiting me, that's for sure. They won't even turn off the television for me. Why I bother, I don't know. Better talk to the wall. Royce should do something. That'll be the day. That's what father's should. A bit of a firm hand. I'm tired of always being the one.

'Mother! It's Evelyn! Wake Up.' Deaf as a post as well. Perhaps it's just as well. They'll find her one morning, dead in her sleep. That's the way it will go. That's the best way. No struggle. No pain. Nothing to worry about. Wake up one day somewhere else and that would be that. Except for us. We'd be the ones left. I don't suppose that she's given away that vase I had my eye on. I bet Susan - she's always been greedy. I'll have a look in a minute. Make sure it's still here. It's us who are still here who are

going to suffer when the day comes. All the organization for a start. Bills as well. I can't imagine Susan will want to contribute. Damned if I'm going to pay it all myself though. What can you do though? Leave your own mother unburied. Cremated. We'll have a cremation. It's cheaper. Takes less space. When I go, it'll be a cremation. Quick. Clean and no nonsense. And none of this weeping rubbish. Oh, I know I say that. But who really wants it. Who wants to go and have people playing happy songs and telling jokes at your funeral, really. No one. Everyone really, really wants people to be miserable when they've gone. Devastated. Unable to cope any longer without them. You know they'll get over it. Everyone seems to get over everything, but for just one day, it would be really good if everyone for once understood how wonderful you really are. Were. Maybe a cremation's not such a good idea. A funeral. Ashes to ashes. Dust to Dust and all that. More poetic. More fitting. Tears on the ground.

She's still there. Waiting for me to die no doubt. Wanting something or another. Can't she see that I don't want to talk. Don't want to have another of her conversations about her wretched children and complaints about ditto husband. They can all drop dead as far as I'm concerned. If they won't leave me alone. I want to think. I've never had the time to think. Now is the time I've always wanted to have, and now I'm having it and she can bugger off. She always was a whining child. If I pretend I'm asleep perhaps she'll shut up. Pretend I'm asleep. Dribble a bit. That'll make her go.

• • •

One morning I woke up and I hated the sound of currawongs.

I knew that if I was forced to hear them one more time I would go mad. It is not a figure of speech. I meant 'go mad'. That there would be an irrecoverable fizz in my head which made me lose contact with everything. I hated the scent of freesias. I detested the sickly sting of wattle. I wanted to be anywhere but here: me, the person who had always revelled in my Australianness. The Wide Brown Land. Your beauty and your - One more currawongness. One more magpie-ness.

The world had shifted and I had strayed in place. Everything else was in the slip. I heard the screeching fibres give way. I hated the birds. Their blackness. Their sharp as stiletto beaks. Their one eye then another eye.

The currawongs gurgled in the air and I was desolate.

This is what currawongs do to you.

I tried to tell her how the beaks of the currawongs pressed in on me. How I could hear the tearing of the fabric. How the sharp fibres of light sprang off the eye of the bird. How they pierced my lungs. But she didn't listen.

كريس مانسل

Chris Mansell's most recent publication is a chapbook of poems, *Stalking the Rainbow.*

BARBARA FERN

Goldilocks the Street Kid

A dissertation on the problem of Feral Children in Anglo-Teutonic Fairy Tales

On a spin through my imagination, my time-machine touches down in traditional Folk Fairyland, the province first mapped out by the Brothers Grimm in Nineteenth Century Bavaria. I have arrived at the Golden Palace where Sleeping Beauty and Prince Charming reign benignly, amid fabulous art treasures and primitive plumbing.

Beside the Grand Entrance is a sign, which reads:

TONIGHT
SEVEN O'CLOCK
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH MEETING

We welcome representatives from all of the Realms of Fantasy, old and new - from Ancient Fairyland to Ms. Blyton's Toyland Sub-division. Manifestations from Lewis Carroll's Wonderland are welcome, although we understand that your stay is temporary until you change form. Representatives from film and television are not required. The film Censorship Board takes responsibility for you. All Qualified visitors Welcome.

I reach into my pocket for a little packet of white powder, and I eagerly sniff the Fairy Dust. Suddenly I am able to fly like a swallow, through the window - up - to the top of the crystal chandelier.

From this vantage point I can see the Royal Charming family seated on the stage, with Snow White and her prince, and the Duchess and the Red Queen from wonderland.

Perched on satin chairs round the walls are every kind of monster, giant, troll, and goblin.

Spaced among these carnivorous nightmares - the slavering wolves, foxes, and bears - sit their natural prey, including rabbits, mice, little pigs, and every other link in the food chain, right down to the Gingerbread Man.

However, rather than tension and conflict, and the thrill of capture and escape, there

seems to be a spirit of shared purpose among the company. They seem to have a common problem

A hush falls over the gathering. A tiny blue wooden policeman doll, wearing the helmet of a British Bobby, strides to the centre of the stage and bows solemnly to the royal personages.

'Your Royal Highnesses, Lords, Ladies, Gremlins, Goblins, Ghouls and Banshees, my name is P. C. Plod' he croons, 'and as one of the few upholders of Law and Order in the Realms of Fantasy for Children, it is my duty to listen to your complaints and assure you of my unstinting aid!' Everyone, including Snow White's wicked stepmother, claps enthusiastically.

'Quite right, too!' growls Father Bear. 'We bears have suffered a Home Invasion, vandalism of private property (that is, one high chair) theft of food (porridge) and an attempt to squat in one of our bedrooms. Down with Goldilocks! **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!**'

'Off with her head!' shrieks the Red Queen, and immediately turns into a tarot card signifying **DEATH**.

'You think you have problems!' howls the giant from the beanstalk. 'You haven't had your means of livelihood stolen away by a juvenile from a single-parent family! Where is the supervision these days? I ask you...' and the giant bows his head in despair.

'Keep calm, gentlemen!' purrs Mr. Plod, 'I can now tell you the good news. There is a move afoot to Clean Up Fairyland!' An enthusiastic murmur runs through the room.

'And to this end,' he continues, 'Little Miss Locks is at this moment learning pottery and basket-weaving at the Sunshine Home for Young Offenders!'

Granny Hood interjects. 'Dear Mr. Plod, do you think it fair to mention her name like that? She is under eighteen years old...'

'Everyone who ever read a story-book knows who she is, Mrs. Hood!' he chuckles. 'I have the particulars of her detention here!' and Mr. Plod pulls a piece of paper from his wooden tunic. He reads:

Family Name - Locks
Given Names - Goldie Madonna
Sex - Female
Age - Eight years
Address - No fixed abode

Convicted of illegal entry, vandalism, theft, and squatting. Detention for six months, with release to an approved foster family! So you see, she will never worry you again!" A cheer runs through the assembly.

'What about young Jack? He cut down my beanstalk - everyone thought I was killed!' roars the Beanstalk Giant.

A hush falls on the ballroom as Jack makes his appearance in the doorway. He is dressed as a monk and carries the Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs, under his arm.

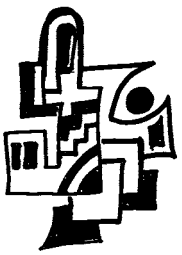
'I am living a monastic life as a penance. I couldn't forgive myself!' he cries. 'I have given my great fortune to Medical Research - in particular, to discover the gene responsible for gigantism in humans. Here is your goose back!' He thrusts the goose at the Giant. 'Farewell - I go back to my life of penitence and wine growing!' And Jack departs in a saintly glow.

'So you see,' purrs Mr. Plod, 'Things are getting much better in Fairyland since everyone's consciousness has been raised! I will now declare the first meeting of the World of Fantasy Neighbourhood Watch successfully closed.'

An angry mutter arises from the Swiss Family Robinson.

'Did you hear what Jack said about wine-growing?' asks Mother 'I think we should start a Fairyland Group of the Temperance Society. We may need it!'

MORAL: Whatever anyone says or writes, anywhere in the Known Universe, somebody, somewhere, will take offence.



بربارة فيرن

Barbara Fern is a former teacher and journalist, who dabbles in art, writing poetry and short stories. She is a member of the N.S.W. Poets Union, and have had several poems published recently. One of her illustrated rhyming stories for children, will be published in August, in a Peranga Post anthology called Fair Dinkum Stories For Aussie Kids.

GREG BOGAERTS

Novel

Black Diamonds and Dust

Chapter One

Edmund Shearer saw it by the flame of his miner's lamp. The wall of coal heaved outward toward him like a wave pulling out of a mass of ocean. Edmund was three feet from the coalface from which he'd chopped half a ton of coal that shift. The bulge of the black diamonds caught his face and cut his skin with a thin lash mark before the wall wrenched back into shape.

He stood up and breathed in the smell of harbour water above his head. Edmund was down in the estuarine mine, The Devonside Colliery, burrowed out through the strata below the Throsby Basin water and the harbour of Newcastle.

He stopped breathing, watching the flame of his lamp convulse against the wall, heard the sibilant sound above his head and behind the wall. He couldn't move. It was as if the coal had grown up from the floor around his feet with shiny, black chains and shackles holding him to the spot below the earth and the water.

He opened his mouth to breathe, to begin to run and screamed the fear he kept down inside his guts every time he went down the mine. Willing his legs to move, he felt the soft weight of shit in his canvas trousers.

Salt water, sand and mud ran from the fissures in the coal face. It poured in through the roof down upon Edmund's head. He screamed again but could not hear himself above the earth shifting under the pressure of water. Torrents of mud, sand and water rose up to the miner's knees snatching at his legs to take him down into the water.

Edmund waded backwards towards the dry land mine opening, far away. He heard the pit horses their shrill screaming a fear worse than his own. Wading around an ox bow bend of water, he saw, in dim shafts of light coming from openings in the earth far above his head, the pit ponies, their heads just above the water line, red eyes rolling in dark space. Their manes were bloody with red mud, their nostrils flared, their necks

flecked with froth. The animals went below the water and drowned in front of Edmund's eyes.

Tearing away his clothes, Edmund let the water rips take his shirt, trousers and long underwear back through the labyrinth. He was on his back floating with his mouth above the water. His lips seemed to almost touch the roof of coal. He was like a lover in pursuit of a woman he could smell and taste but could not reach.

There was little light in this part of the mine because his lamp had been extinguished by the water. Edmund swam his way blindly to the left-hand side of the bord[1] where the fall of coal was not so high and wide, where the water shallowed out.

But then there was an enormous fall of sand and water through the mine walls that stopped his way as it rose quickly shutting him in. Edmund felt the water rise again as though he were sentenced to die innumerable deaths.

Floating on his back, he wedged himself between the fall of sand and mud and the mine wall. Edmund pushed into the narrow opening, scrambled from the black womb into a small cavern. He felt the rush of fresh air and saw the shaft of light from the rat hole just above him.

The miner forced his mouth above the water and yelled, heard the clambering of boots above his head, not far away. Then came the cry of, 'Hold on lad! We'll lower y' the rope!'

Edmund Shearer held onto the slippery rim of the rat hole and felt the tide of estuary water turn. The run out from high to low began to drag at his body and he knew he would be taken with the strength of the flow. Edmund would be rammed into some deep crevice in the earth no miner had made.

He held on but felt his fingers falter and slip. The arthritis pain was in the knuckles from the cold and from the cutting of coal, day in, day out. Edmund saw the rope loop down to him as one of his hands lost its grip on the slippery coal surface. Edmund Shearer lunged and found the rope.

He held on but saw his father's convict face and body laid out on the gum wood table in the back room of a pub at the top of town. Alfred Shearer was taken dead from the rat hole mine. The spine was splintered, curled, so they couldn't unwind him to lay him out straight on the wood of the table. Edmund saw him in the darkness and light of the Devonside pit. His father was a foetal curl of lash-flayed flesh and broken bone.

[1] The place in a mine allocated for miners to work at.

The miner saw his father's eyes break open like doors to another world. He saw the dead eyes upon him, the blue lips of his father so close to his and the same as Edmund, as a boy years ago, saw on the wood in the pub where Alfred Shearer spent his shillings when he cut an extra ton above his quota.

Edmund Shearer held onto the rope that was a rough umbilical. He felt himself pulled closer to the circle of the sink hole and he felt the water pass over his eyes. The water washed the face of his father from his sight.

Gaining a length of rope, Edmund wrapped it round the thin, bony girth of his body. He heard the long grunts of effort above him from the miners who'd escaped because they were near the entrance of the colliery when the ocean broke in. The men hauled him from the earth.

He watched the strata pass down around him with the good rich flesh of the best coal, the skin of conglomerate rock, the bones of soil and loamy grass. The earth inflicted wounds in him with rocks, roots and coal until he was a wet, bloody, muddy mass; a bestial thing born out of the earth and salt water where he didn't belong.

He emerged into the air and light where he didn't belong.

Edmund was one of the handful to survive the flooding of the Devonside Colliery. Ten men, who'd lost the gamble beneath the earth, were taken by the tide of the Hunter River Estuary.

He stood there in the mid-morning light, with the sea breeze rivering up off the water that'd claimed the other miners. The clean, salt wind parted the watery mud on his naked body. The wife of one of the miners wrapped him round with a blanket taken from one of the drowned horses.

Edmund Shearer was a loner at best and worked a bord by himself, more often than not, but was cheered by his fellow miners even though they knew little about him. He was cheered by the men as a hero who'd cheated death. Edmund had purchased, almost with his life, a passing affection from the men and the few wives and children, who lived close to the estuarine colliery.

Then Edmund and his new friends turned as quickly as the tide had turned beneath their feet. The rush out of tidal water grew in speed and the ground collapsed beneath them as the salt scoured out the earth and the workings of men. Men, women and children ran from the subsidence opening up beneath their feet. It was an earthquake of force that shook the trees. Coal skips disappeared into an abscess of red mud and water.

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Edmund swung against the lurch of the cart with the movement twisting his frame with pain. The horse and cart was taking him home, miles distant from the colliery, far out into the bush, outside the mining village of Adamstown.

Edmund looked at the other three miners in the wagon, who each paid the driver a pound a week to take them to and from the colliery. They would leave the cart in Adamstown and Edmund would travel the extra distance into the bush. The three men were black with the coal left in their skins and almost asleep from exhaustion after a twelve-hour shift of mining coal. Their heads were down on woollen vests.

Sometimes, one would over balance in sleep and fall from the cart into the muddy scar of track running out to the mining settlements. But no one would laugh, the cart would stop and the other men jump down and help up the surprised miner, sitting in the red earth. It was as though they could not escape it because the earth would always swallow them all their living days.

Edmund watched the black faces, the pewtered hands, the coal dust tattooed into the living flesh. They were markings that would not come out when they reached home with their wives waiting with tin tubs, soap and bristled brushes to wash and scrub and scrape what dirt and coal they could from the bodies of their husbands.

Unconsciously Edmund reached down to stroke his terrier dog, Jack, but found nothing there. Then he remembered the terrier being swept away in the flood. The dog went with Edmund daily into the pit to watch his clothes and bait, but more importantly to keep the rats away. Devonside was infested with the long, black vermin with some as large as house cats. Jack, like the other terriers the miners all kept, had made life bearable beneath the earth savaging the rodents and giving the miner companionship. Jack had been his best mate.

Edmund had felt a closer bond with the drowned terrier than he had with some of his own family. He knew the expression on the faces of his wife and two of his children as he approached the house after trudging the final mile from the cart stop, or walked the three miles from the pub in Adamstown holding down a cargo of beer and rum that sent him rolling through the bush.

The look was one of fear as he came out of the gums. He was an Indian ink form, and the children, when they were young, had not been certain it was their father until Mary scrubbed him as fresh and clean as possible in the tub.

Edmund's sometimes-drunken anger and fear still sent two of his children from the house. They bolted into the bush away from the leather strap of his belt. His fear of

death in the mine by drowning, coal collapse or gas explosion drove him to the pub more often than not to ease his taut nerves.

Now it was worse, Edmund knew, because his children were older, his son and one of his two daughters could see and judge for themselves. They knew the weakness in his reckless, drunken rages that erupted like the summer storms off the ocean and cracked in over the ridge of bush where their house stood.

Edmund was born out of the earth, by luck, everyday and delivered to his family, who avoided him whenever they could. Except for Ann, they saw him as a necessary evil they had to live with. He possessed the pounds, shillings and pence he earned as a miner to keep his wife and three children. There was the fear amongst the family that Edmund might be taken by a fall of coal or a dump of water and leave them homeless and helpless.

As well as fearing his family and the danger of the mine, Edmund feared the bush through which he travelled. He raised his head and saw the gum trees that were alien masts of wood and leaf to him even though he was a Currency lad, born of a convict father and a convict mother. He should have settled peacefully into the landscape of sandstone and river and forest.

Edmund was ashamed of his convict past and this shame drove him to the bush away from the Scots from Dunfermline, the Welshmen, the Irish - free men who'd sailed the open ocean and settled in Adamstown. Edmund's shame was strong enough for him to hide among the gums that rattled his roof at night and scraped twig fingers through his sleep. The bush ate him as surely as the mine took him when he stepped out into the morning dark to take the cart back to the colliery.

Edmund was deaf to the carolling of magpies, the creek gurgle warbling that sang him through the sentinel gums, standing guard over him, escorting him through the dark. His hunched form was drawn away from the lacy bark and rich red sap so close, so far from him.

The cart stopped and let down the miners in the clay strip that was the main street of Adamstown. Edmund watched them taken in the catchment of darkness. The three figures receded from his sight and it seemed as if the earth rose to close them in clay before they made the front doors of their cottages. The kerosene lamplights in the miners' cottages were small cups of colour in the onyx wash.

Edmund hesitated. The cart driver turned and threw an inquiring look at the miner,

who met the unsaid question with a grim grin and swung himself from the wood.

'Go on home Harold. Get some sleep b'fore t'morrow. I'll go t' th' pub. Make m' own way back th' rest of th' way.'

'Aye, go on Eddy. Yer deserve a drink after t'day,' the driver said and saluted, with a raised hand, the risen dead. He turned back, spat into the clay, rang the whip with a bushfire crack above the horse's head and creaked back into the night.

Edmund felt for the five pounds, in his top pocket, the colliery manager had slung him— a type of compensation for near death. The manager was keen to keep the miner under the water and earth because Edmund was his best worker, hewing half a ton more than most, day in, day out.

Pausing again, Edmund thought about going straight home with the five pounds to Mary and the children. Five pounds was enough money to buy planed and dressed timber to build a solid house; a permanent home that would withstand the storms off the ocean. The home of wood, iron and nails would replace the hessian stretched across the tree-pole framework. The hessian was white-washed with a lime solution and the crevices plastered shut with wattle and mud.

There was enough money in Edmund's hand to buy bricks to lay a hearth and build a decent fireplace and chimney to keep his family warm. It would be different from the hole in the hessian that wouldn't take all the smoke and had the family at the table in tears over their meals. Winter wind as cold as the harbour westerlies sailed in around their heads and buffeted them purple and blue.

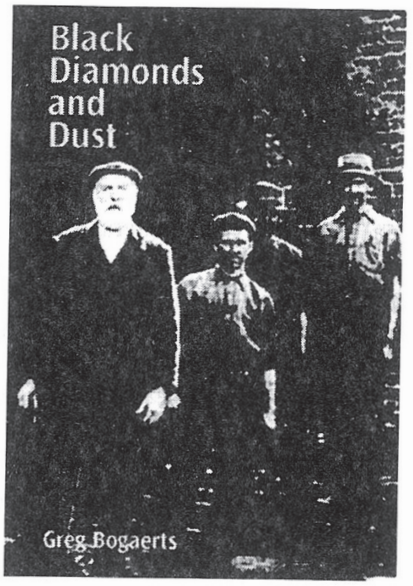
But Edmund felt the ocean at his throat in the Devonside Colliery. He turned and went to the pub. The miner pushed open the wooden, slatted door and found a scattering of Scots, Welsh, Irish and English with their beer and rum chasers at the bar.

He removed himself around the bend in the bar, away from the sight of the miners and away from their Chartist militancy they'd brought with them to the pit. Their radicalism scared Edmund. Their militancy might have the miners out on strike for higher pay per ton of coal, or marching on the proprietor's house to set down their grievances and demands.

Sitting by himself, Edmund drank the dark beer and the dark rum. The hot rum was like the fire that took his home only a year before; blasted through the bush, jumping ridges, igniting gums into torches. The gums looked like the miners marching at night in fiery protest.

Edmund remembered the bending back of the wind change when he thought they

were safe. The fire broke back, in waves, in fiery shore dumps, through the green. It sheeted through the hessian humpy of his house and left it a stark, shimmering cicada shell, luminous in the morning light. A touch of one of Edmund's fingers shattered the gutted mesh of the glowing fabric to a heap of black and red beads blinking at him like the red eyes of the bush rats glowing at the edge of the clearing.



Drinking deeply, Edmund felt his body sag. He felt the coming of the shortness of breath— the `dusting' of the lungs - the ghastly and deathly settling of coal dust in the lungs. It had Edmund coughing blood and yellow mucus every morning. It had him scared. The drink sometimes didn't help. It just made it worse in the close bar of the pub that was as narrow and dark as the warren tunnels of Devonside Colliery.

Edmund drank his last beer and rum, gritted his teeth to hold it down. He heaved in a breath of tobacco pipe air and lunged from the pub into the coal-fire smoke of the settlement; a heavy pall of grey grabbed his breath, tugged his nose with the stink of burning coal. Something he could not escape.

He pushed into the night heading for a hessian house and family that were better than nothing.

غريغ بوغارتس

Greg Bogaerts is a writer from Newcastle, Australia. He has had many short stories published in journals, magazines and anthologies in Australia and America. Many of his stories have been read on radio, and some translated into Arabic.

The above chapter is from Bogaert's forthcoming novel *Black Diamonds and Dust*, to be launched in Newcastle late in 2004. For further details, please contact the author by email on bogaerts@hunterlink.net.au or by phone on (61 2) 4969 4783.

SOPHIE MASSON

Blogging Iraq

One of the consequences of the fall of Saddam Hussein has been an enormous proliferation of new media in Iraq. There's hundreds of new newspapers and magazines published, and much pamphleteering going on, all with different views. Broadcast media is also beginning to pick up. But it's not only print and broadcast media that have benefited from the end of Baathist control of the media, but also the newest form of all: Internet weblogs, or blogs as they're more generally known.

Blogs are a combination of personal diary and political/social/cultural soapbox. They express an individual person's views but also help to draw attention to media stories elsewhere on the Internet. They're excellent for getting a personal view of what's going on in a particular place, though it must be remembered that they are subjective and cannot be expected to have the resources or the fact-checking of 'Big Media.' (I think of them more in terms of opinion columns). They've been popular in Western countries for about five years or so now (and have been around for a while longer, having evolved from home pages and the like), but it's only recently that the Arab world has been starting to catch onto this very accessible and interesting form of media. In fact, by far the greatest number of blogs from the Arab world are run by Iraqis—not surprisingly in a country where in the very recent past, you could literally lose your tongue for speaking anything critical of the regime, people are now desperate to have their voices heard. The first of these blogs, by 'Salam Pax', was actually started just before the war—the author, 'Salam Pax' is now no longer blogging, as he's been offered a book and film contract to tell his story (and he was in Australia recently, as a guest of the Sydney Writers' Centre).

The amazing diversity of views you find in these blogs is, I think, a sign of hope for Iraq's future--as long as the Internet isn't policed as it is in many other countries in the region (hence the paucity of blogs in the rest of the Arab world).

There's all kinds of Iraqi blogs, and I'd like to profile just a few, so that readers can go and see for themselves, and also mention a few other interesting Arab blogs that are written from other countries. (All the blogs I profile are in English, incidentally, as I don't read Arabic, but Arabic-speaking readers will no doubt be able to find a few written in Arabic). Many, but not all, of the blogs have a comments facility, where readers can leave comments on articles the blogger has posted, and most also have an

email address, should you wish to contact the blogger personally.

All the Iraqi blogs I am profiling are by Iraqis, and are anti-Saddam. Not all are pro-American. You can also find other blogs (Arab, Middle Eastern, and Western) on bloggers' sites, by looking at the side-bars where they link to other sites. Many also have links on their sidebars to organisations and websites of interest to anyone wanting to know more about Iraq. There are also links on some of them to the blogs of US soldiers serving in Iraq (for instance, http://bootsontheground.blogspot.com) which are well worth checking out.

Iraqi blogs:

Healing Iraq: http://healingiraq.blogspot.com This famous and very popular (and interesting and well-written) blog is written by Zeyad, a dentist, who lives in Baghdad but often commutes to Basrah for his work. As well as what's going on in Iraq today, he has also written very worthwhile pieces on Iraqi history which help to illuminate the state of the country now.

Iraq the Model: http://iraqthemodel.blogspot.com Run by three Baghdad brothers in their 20's and 30's, Mohammed, Omar and Ali (the first two being dentists, the other a doctor) this is also a most popular and interesting site.

Road to a Nation: www.roadofanation.com is an amiable site run by engineer Sarmad Faraja, and as well as the blogger's own views and comments, includes (audio) interviews with Iraqis, and lots of photographs.

The Mesopotamian, http://messopotamian.blogspot.com is run by Alaa, and is often quoted by other bloggers.

A Family in Baghdad, http://afamilyinbaghdad.blogspot.com is an interesting site run by Faiza, who is a female engineer, and also has links to her three children's blogs: Raed, Khalid, and Majid. .

Fayrouz, http://fayrouz.blogspot.com is the blog of a Catholic/Chaldean Iraqi woman from Basrah, who fled Iraq sometime ago and who has lived in Australia and now the US. It's an interesting view by an overseas Iraqi.

Baghdad Burning: http://riverbend.blogspot.com is the blog of an Iraqi woman who calls herself 'Riverbend'. Her blog hasn't been updated for a few weeks (no entry since June 18) so it's hard to say if she's going to come back or not.

Kurdo's World, http://kurdo.blogspot.com This is the view from Kurdish Northern Iraq, and is a most interesting site also, with links to other Kurdish blogs, in Iran, Iraq and in the Us and elsewhere.

Other interesting Arab blogs to look at:

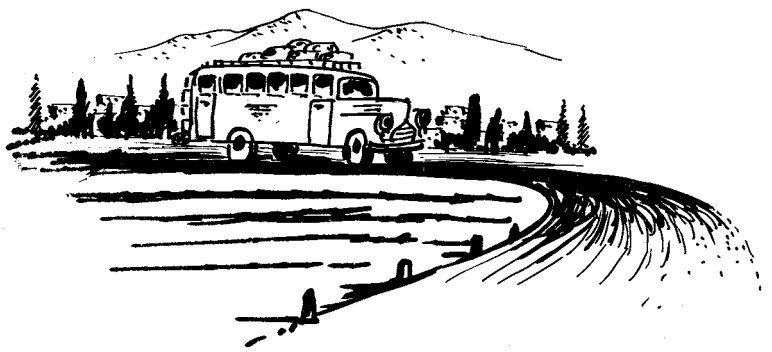
The Religious Policeman, http://muttawa.blogspot.com This witty and fascinating site is the first Saudi blog ever. The blogger, who calls himself 'Alhamedi Alanezi' has to maintain his site through a very elaborate process of subterfuge, as the propositions he makes on the blog would warrant arrest and imprisonment by the Saudi authorities if

he was caught. Dedicated to the memory of the 15 Mecca schoolgirls who died in a school fire a couple of years ago, because the religious police refused to let them escape unveiled, this flays the hypocrisies and absurdities of the Saudi regime whilst also maintaining a most intriguing sense of humour.

Mahmoud's Den, www.mahmoud.tv is run by a Bahraini called Mahmoud, and it, too, is a witty and interesting round-up of life in a Gulf state, with much commentary on cultural and social as well as political events and concepts.

The Angry Arab, http://angryarab.blogspot.com is run by As'Ad Abukhalil, a Lebanese writer, scholar and journalist now living and writing in the US. He is very critical of US foreign policy, and also of Saudi Arabia.

In the Land of the Pharaohs, http://bigpharaoh.blogspot.com is one of the first of blogs emanating from Egypt, and is very interesting and passionate.



صوفي ماسون

Sophie Masson's latest novel is *Snow, Fire, Sword* (Random House Australia 2004).

HENRY DI SUVERO

Play

Crescent Moon, Yellow star

"Crescent Moon, Yellow Star" is a satirical play with echoes of Beckett, Sartre and Pinter.

In the context of the dispossession of the Palestinians from their land, the play challenges the perception of Israelis as victims and illuminates the totalitarian similarities of Nazis, Zionists and the Vatican.

The three characters are Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, Pope Pius XII, Pope during the late thirties and World War II, and a Carpenter. Each is dressed in concentration camp clothes of the Nazi death camps: a grey and white striped shirt with a yellow Star of David on the upper left chest and grey and white dungarees.

Set in Hell, the action occurs in a carpenter's workshop without walls.

SYNOPSIS

When Ariel Sharon arrives in a Carpenter's shop, he doesn't know where he is. The Carpenter, building endless coffins, tells him he is in Hell. After all he has done for Israel, Sharon finds this hard to believe.

The Carpenter is an ambiguous, questioning figure who quietly needles Sharon into defending the dispossession of the Palestinians and their harsh treatment under Israeli occupation.

The tedium of Hell is interrupted at intervals by announcements in German of trains departing for death camps or by urgent Arabic announcements to vacate buildings followed by the sound of gunfire and buildings collapsing. The German train announcements send the Carpenter into what appears to be an epileptic attack, and Arabic announcements precede Sharon being trapped, crushed and suffocated as buildings collapse on him.

Each recovers and the arguments continue until the Pope arrives. He also refuses to believe he is in Hell, but like the Carpenter, appears to have an epileptic attack whenever the death camp train announcements are heard. Interrupted by Gregorian chants and the Islamic call to prayer, Sharon and the Carpenter attack the Pope for his failure to protect the Jews.

Three suitcases turn up in Hell with the worldly clothes of each. As they don their clothes, each is transformed into their worldly character. In the play's climax, it is the Carpenter whose transformation shocks, not only Sharon and Pius, but also the audience.

The shock cements together the play's themes.

The last two scenes have a final twist with the discovery of a fourth suitcase labeled "Heaven" which contains Arafat's clothes. The play concludes with the Pope dressed in Arafat's trademark head gear and Sharon demonstrating Israeli torture methods on the penitent Pope.

In 9 Scenes, the play is 110 pages and had a workshop reading at the Baywrite Theater Company in Byron Bay and will be staged in Sydney at the Belvoir Downstairs in November 2004.

Scene 2

Time has passed.

CARPENTER continues working on the 1st stretcher.

CARPENTER
Do you want to help?

SHARON walks over, looks.

SHARON
Who's it for?

CARPENTER
I told you, someone who's dead.

SHARON
No, no, the name of the person.

CARPENTER
They never tell me.

SHARON
How many have you built?

CARPENTER
Oh...hundreds... thousands I stopped counting... so I don't know.

SHARON
Why do you build them?

CARPENTER
They're needed.

SHARON
This isn't for a Jew, is it?

CARPENTER
Coffins for Jews and Christians. S tretchers for Muslims. Right now it's for some Gaza dead.

SHARON
We have to bulldoze houses. The alleys are too narrow for tanks. We need wide vision. It's all for security, you know. Soldiers warn people to get out.

CARPENTER
I wasn't being critical.

SHARON
The media calls it "Burying people alive". If people stay inside it's their choice.

CARPENTER
In the West Bank coverage I saw a man in a wheelchair come out with a white flag flying. A tank rolled right over him.

SHARON
That's war.

CARPENTER
Against terror.

SHARON
People die when there's a war.

CARPENTER
You have to expect that. After all, that's what war's all about, isn't it? Killing people.

SHARON
Killing militants.
Terrorists.

CARPENTER
How'd you know who's a militant?

SHARON
It's difficult. The Arabs don't wear uniforms.

CARPENTER
Well, Palestinians don't have an army,
do they?

SHARON
No, they're not allowed.

CARPENTER
Why not?

SHARON
We don't let them.

CARPENTER
How come?

SHARON
We won all the wars, stupid. In '48, 56, 67, 73, 82.

CARPENTER
You rule the same area as the Romans?

SHARON
Not quite. As an occupied territory.

CARPENTER
D'you hang people on crosses?

SHARON
Don't play with me. I'm not an idiot. Crosses went out centuries ago.

CARPENTER
The last news item said five young unarmed Palestinians were lined up against a wall, then shot dead.

SHARON
You believe that?

CARPENTER
They say if the UN had been let in...

SHARON
(cutting in) Bullet holes tell you nothing. Bullet holes can't tell if the person was holding a gun, can they?

CARPENTER
That was smart, real smart, keeping the media out during the big West Bank campaign. The one in Jenin.

SHARON
It was for their own safety.

CARPENTER
Crap!

SHARON
We learned from Viet-Nam. Television destroyed the American war effort. We let reporters come in ***after*** it's over. Then all they do is haggle over the body count.

CARPENTER
No one gets too upset over just numbers.

SHARON
Especially when they're low numbers.

CARPENTER
Doesn't compare to six million.

SHARON
Nothing does.

The first stretcher is finished and CARPENTER carries it Off Stage. CARPENTER returns with two long pieces, moves back to his worktable and begins to work on the 2nd stretcher.

SHARON
What's your name?

CARPENTER
Ricardo... I was born in Bolanzo, South Tyrol... northern Italy. My mother was German, my father Italian. Italy ruled Tyrol, but it was really German you know. During the war... I saw Auschwitz near the end... You know, after the Italian Jews were rounded up... I was one of the lucky ones... After the war I went to live in Argentina.

SHARON
How old were you when you saw Auschwitz?

CARPENTER
Let's see... 36.

SHARON
Have you ever been to Israel?

CARPENTER
Twice. Once in 37 to see what it was like. I visited again in 60. Everything was so different. So very different.

SHARON
After Auschwitz... so why are you here?

CARPENTER
Who knows? I don't think about it anymore.

SHARON
Don't you question it?

CARPENTER
I've learned to accept it.

SHARON
What happens to the stretchers?

CARPENTER
Are you an idiot, or something?

SHARON
I know it's for a dead Muslim. But who takes them away?

CARPENTER
They do.

SHARON
When do we sleep?

CARPENTER
No one sleeps here.

SHARON
What happens when you feel tired?

CARPENTER
You feel tired.

SHARON
And if you feel thirsty?

CARPENTER
You feel thirsty.

SHARON
There's no water?

CARPENTER
No.

SHARON
Where exactly am I?

CARPENTER
I thought you were pretty smart.

SHARON
Not just pretty smart.

CARPENTER
Very smart?

SHARON
Some people say I'm a genius. A military genius.

CARPENTER
No!

SHARON
I never brag about it.

CARPENTER
Not much.

SHARON
Well, answer me. Where am I? Or am I having a dream?

CARPENTER
Slap yourself. Then you'll find out.

SHARON
(gently slaps the side of his face)
So? This doesn't tell me anything.

CARPENTER
That's no good. Do it harder.

SHARON
(slaps himself again lightly)
I still don't know.

CARPENTER
You don't do it hard enough. *(slaps SHARON on the side of the face).* Like this.

SHARON
Hey, watch that!

CARPENTER
Well. What d'you think?

SHARON
It's not a dream. I didn't wake up.

CARPENTER
But it's like a bad dream, isn't it?

SHARON
Answer me! Where am I?

CARPENTER
Genius, you're in Hell.

SHARON
No! Impossible! Me? This is a nightmare. I know it's a nightmare. How long does this last?

CARPENTER
Before you wake up, how about helping me ?

SHARON
How long does the nightmare last?

CARPENTER
How do I know? It's your nightmare.

CARPENTER continues working. SHARON walks around the stage.

SHARON
What's to do beside the stretchers?

CARPENTER
Coffins. I told you already. We also build coffins for Jews and Christians.

SHARON
Anything else?

CARPENTER
We can talk.

SHARON
That it?

CARPENTER
That's all there is. Except for the occasional news item.

SHARON
There's no one else?

CARPENTER
I've done a lot of time in solitary.

SHARON
How long?

CARPENTER
You keep asking the same question. Forget it, you're going to be here for a very, very long time.

SHARON
How d'you know?

CARPENTER
Just guessing.

SHARON
This hell is going to be a pretty boring place.

CARPENTER
What did you expect?

SHARON
I was never religious. I never thought about hell. What little thinking I did, I guess I thought I was going to heaven.

CARPENTER
Did you? ....Why?

SHARON
I served all my life for my people. I saved Israel. Four times.

CARPENTER
Saved?

SHARON
Over and over again.

CARPENTER
Saved?

SHARON
The last time the country was paralyzed by Rabin.

CARPENTER *(pulls out his hammer, holds it like a pistol and pretends to fire it at SHARON several times)*
Bang...bang...bang! Shot dead for negotiating with Arafat.
A Jew assassinates his own Prime Minister! Bang, bang, bang, bang.

SHARON
He was a zealot.

CARPENTER
A law student.

SHARON
A zealot. No Jew should kill another Jew.

CARPENTER
A fanatic like Goldstein.

SHARON
Goldstein? ...ah Baruch Goldstein!
He had the right idea, but did it in the wrong place.

CARPENTER
You shouldn't kill twenty nine Muslim men when they're kneeling, praying.

SHARON
I agree, especially not in a Hebron mosque.

CARPENTER
Murdering Rabin paved the way for you.

SHARON
History doesn't wait.

CARPENTER
It waited for you.

SHARON
I waited for history.

CARPENTER
Waiting's good preparation.

SHARON
For what?

CARPENTER
For here. All we do is build stretchers, or coffins and wait.

SHARON
You sure?

CARPENTER
Well, what d'you want?

SHARON
I don't know. Maybe to see the different levels of heaven.

Same sound of a train siren from far off, approaching, coming closer and closer and finally stopping.
CARPENTER repeats the routine: leaves his plane on the worktable, takes off his smock, pulls off his hammer, and then removes his glasses, putting them carefully away in a eyeglass case. He stands, faces the audience feet apart, expectant and waiting. A loudspeaker crackles with static and announces:

"Achtung! Achtung! Der zug nach Dachau fahrt jetzt. Alle einsteigen!"

With the sound of the departing train, CARPENTER's body is again whipped about as if by an electric shock application or an epileptic fit; he flings his arms about wildly, his body jerks uncontrollably and he finally falls to the floor.

SHARON who has been standing aside, watches.

CARPENTER sits up, dazed.

SHARON
That was another stop, wasn't it?

CARPENTER
What?

SHARON
The stop before Dachau?

CARPENTER
You're a better linguist than you were a General.

SHARON
(slaps the back of CAPRENTER'S head in disgust)
How can you say such a thing?

CARPENTER
You were never a Napoleon were you?

SHARON
What d'you mean? I led a tank squadron in 56. Swept around the Egyptian flank. Seized the whole Sinai. I did it again in 67. Only this time we crossed the Suez. On pontoon bridges. We had the Egyptians encircled and I was on Cairo's doorstep.

CARPENTER
A Desert Fox?

SHARON
They tied my hands.

CARPENTER
Who did?

SHARON
In 56 it was the Americans. Eisenhower. Twice I could have flown the Star of David over the pyramids. Wouldn't Moses have been proud?

CARPENTER
Ah yes, Eisenhower.

SHARON
In 82 I could've taken all of Lebanon... Beirut was only a stop on the road to Damascus. I could have taken Syria.... and yes, gone on and even taken Baghdad. The Americans stopped us again. Americans are so short sighted. I could have saved them two Gulf wars.

CARPENTER gets up, goes back to work.

CARPENTER
What battle will history remember you for?

SHARON
I don't care.

CARPENTER
Nonsense. You'll be known as The Destroyer of Sabra, Sharilla, Jenin and Rafah! The Great Conqueror of Refugee Camps!

SHARON
No one remembers Sabra. Or Sharilla. Or Jenin. Or even Rafah.

CARPENTER
The Palestinians do.

SHARON
Camps! Hah! Some camps! They all had buildings!

CARPENTER
Buildings?

SHARON
No tents like proper refugee camps.

CARPENTER
No tents at all?

SHARON
Narrow streets. Alleys.

CARPENTER
Like old-fashioned ghettos?

SHARON
Jews were ***forced*** to live in ghettos. The Arabs can live anywhere they want.

CARPENTER
Anywhere in the West Bank?

SHARON
Not in our settlements.

CARPENTER
In the West Bank you've walled them in, haven't you?

SHARON
Some of it's just fences.

CARPENTER
Razor wire fences?

SHARON
It's been approved by our Court.

CARPENTER
Legal, huh? A bit like the Warsaw ghetto?

SHARON
How can you compare us to the Germans?

CARPENTER
They can live anywhere in Gaza?

SHARON
Don't be stupid.

CARPENTER
Anywhere in Israel?

SHARON
No. Just the ones that stayed.

CARPENTER
But they can't buy land any Israeli owns, can they?

SHARON
So?

CARPENTER
The ones who fled, they can't return can they?

SHARON
Return? Are you meshugener? *(phonetic: muh-shu-gun-ah; i.e. Yiddish for "crazy")*

CARPENTER
Just asking... Jews have the right of return, don't they?

SHARON
That's fundamental. Jews from anywhere in the world have the right to live in Israel. Like you did, any Jew can return to Israel.

CARPENTER
But not the Palestinians?

SHARON
No! No! No!

CARPENTER
None of the seven hundred thousand refugees who fled in forty eight?

SHARON
That's almost sixty years ago! That's ancient history!

CARPENTER
Fled from the Irgun's terror?

SHARON
We never hijacked planes.

CARPENTER
Torched farms. Raided villages. Shot people dead. Bombed buildings.

SHARON
That was all exaggerated.

CARPENTER
What? Bombing the Star of David Hotel in Jerusalem? Killing ninety three people with just one bomb?

SHARON
It was the Stern gang, not the Irgun.

CARPENTER
Including the UN negotiator?

SHARON
We were fighting for ***our*** land, the ***Promised*** Land!

CARPENTER
Blew him to bits! A BBC program called the King David bombing the dawn of The Age of Terror.

SHARON
Anti-semites.
What about Kristallnacht?

From a loudspeaker, high up, as if from a minaret and circling around the stage, a high male voice, calling the faithful to prayer:

Allahu Akbar!
Allahu Akbar!
Allahu Akbar!
La ilaha illa Allah
(Trans: God is the greatest. Repeats 3 times. Then last line: There is no God, but God.)

During the call, the CARPENTER stops and stands, listening. SHARON, after the second line, circles the stage, looking up, trying to identify the source of the call.

SHARON
How often d'you hear this?

CARPENTER
It's the first time.

SHARON
This place gets crazier and crazier. Soon you'll tell me Jehovah's a Muslim.

CARPENTER
Actually he's a Black man.

SHARON
No! A shvartzer!
(pronounced:sh-vat-zha, Yiddish for "nigger")

CARPENTER
Joking. He hasn't shown up yet, so I don't know what he looks like. Or she. But the call to prayer

has a haunting quality, doesn't it?

SHARON
"Haunting quality"? D'you realize what you're saying? Are you stupid?

CARPENTER
At least it breaks the silence.

SHARON
How long've you been here?

CARPENTER
I told you. A long... long time.

SHARON
When did you start to lose your marbles?

CARPENTER
Going vacant? ...Oh ...It comes and goes... Having you for company has perked me up.

SHARON
You've begun to lose your identity, haven't you?

CARPENTER with his chest puffed out, puts his left thumb under the Star of David patch on his shirt, pushing it forward to SHARON, gesturing "Look here!"

CARPENTER
Where were you during the Holocaust?

SHARON
Here, in Palestine. I mean Israel. During the British mandate.

CARPENTER
You've got no right to wear the Star.

SHARON
It's not my fault. I arrived dressed like this.

CARPENTER
No one went to the camps from Palestine, did they?

SHARON
So?

CARPENTER
I mean the Nazi camps.

SHARON
You know the answer.

CARPENTER
(turns back to his work) (a beat)
No one sent to Auschwitz? ...Sobihor? Bergen-Belsen? ...Belzec?

SHARON
You think I'm stupid?

CARPENTER
Or Babi Yar? ...Gross Rosen? ...Buchenwald? ...Dachau?

SHARON
(cutting in) I know the list. Every good Jew knows the list.

CARPENTER
You don't get it, do you?

SHARON
What are you saying?

CARPENTER
No Palestinian sent a Jew to the camps, that right?

SHARON
So?

CARPENTER
So why do they have to pay for the Holocaust?

SHARON
Because it's ***our*** land. The ***Promised*** Land.

CARPENTER
The Palestinians promised you?

SHARON
Don't be stupid. You know the story.

CARPENTER
Ah! The Palestinians had to pay for what the Nazis did?

SHARON
It wasn't just the Nazis. It was the whole world! All the collaborators! Everywhere! In France, Holland. In Hungary. Croatia. In Poland, the Ukraine, Russia.

CARPENTER
But no Palestinians?

SHARON
So?

CARPENTER
Now answer. Why do the Palestinians have to pay for what the Christian world did?

SHARON
The whole world gave us back our land.

CARPENTER
Come on.

SHARON
The UN did! When the British rule ended.

CARPENTER
Did the Palestinians agree?

SHARON
What kind of a Jew are you?

CARPENTER
What? Because I question?

SHARON
It was ***our*** land, stupid. The land ***promised*** to us from the time of Moses.

CARPENTER
Promised, so long as the Jews followed Jehovah's teachings.

SHARON
Everyone in Israel follows Jehovah's teachings.

CARPENTER
What? Treating the Palestinians the same way the Nazis treated you?

SHARON
We don't! We never have! No trains, no yellow stars, no furnaces.

CARPENTER
Just camps.

SHARON
They choose to live in camps.

CARPENTER
Just identity cards.

SHARON
You forget, they live in ***our*** occupied territories.

CARPENTER
Just tank invasions.

SHARON
Invasions? You don't invade land you control. We occupy the West Bank. We occupy Gaza. When our tanks roll in, it's a police action, not an invasion.

CARPENTER
Like the Chinese in Tienamen Square?

SHARON
Right.

CARPENTER
Like the East Germans in Berlin?

SHARON
Correct.

CARPENTER
Like the Russians in Prague?

SHARON
Stupid, you can never invade your own territory. The Arabs see us as invaders.

CARPENTER
But you're not.

SHARON
We won the wars. We can do what we like.

CARPENTER
Take over all their land?

SHARON
They bring it on themselves. With their terrorism. Their suicide bombers.

CARPENTER
You keep building more and more settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

SHARON
I offered to give them Gaza.

CARPENTER
Give them? What was theirs?

SHARON
All of it was ***our*** promised land.

CARPENTER
You think the world believes this?

SHARON
Who cares what the world believes.

CARPENTER
You only care what the Americans believe.

SHARON
Not always. But they count. Yes, they count. They're with us. Weren't you a Zionist?

CARPENTER
When I was a young man I read Herzel. I agreed with him wholeheartedly.

SHARON
And now?

CARPENTER
He didn't say Jews had to find a home in Palestine, did he? Zionists looked in Africa, in Latin America. Even in

Australia, looking for a homeland.

SHARON
That's ancient history. Today, every Jew all over the world recognizes and supports Israel as the Jewish homeland.

CARPENTER
And everything it does?

SHARON
Right or wrong.

CARPENTER
And if they don't?

SHARON
They're traitors. Short sighted suicidal traitors.

There is the sound of the rapid exchange of gunfire, pauses and then more gunfire. Then the sound of heavy tanks moving on pavement, the crash of a stone building falling, punctuated by a babble of shrieks and screams.

SHARON and CARPENTER both pause and turn to find where the sound is coming from. SHARON is to one side, standing.
There is the sound of a loudspeaker in Arabic:

'Kul wahid yatla minal mabna. Itla-u min-al mabna alaan Sawfa nudamir almabna. Kul wahid yatla minal mabna.'
(Translation: 'Everyone leave the building. Leave the building at once. The building is going to be destroyed. Everyone leave the building at once')

Silence.

SHARON
See, we give them warning. Plenty of time to leave. It's their choice if they stay. *Kul wahid yatla minal mabnaaa.* See, we tell them in their own language to leave the building. At least twice.

Sound of another exchange of gunfire and then the rumble and crash of a building falling, rocks tumbling.

SHARON appears to have been hit and pinned by the falling building; the sound subsides, and as he struggles to get up he is shot by a round of bullets, hitting him at different parts of the body. He twists and turns as he is hit and then an imaginary wall falls on him, pinning him firmly on the ground.

SHARON
Help! Help! Pull me out! Here! Here! I'm here! Oh! Oh!

BLACKOUT

هنري دي سوفيرو

Henry di Suvero has been a Law Lecturer at UNSW and UPNG. He is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard Law School. He has practiced as a barrister in NSW and the United States. Recently retired from the graveyard of failed actors, he has also written *The Ballad of Rachel Corrie,* a play about the murder of the American peace activist in Gaza by an Israeli bulldozer. He is now working on *The Wall,* the last of a trilogy of plays dealing with the Palestinian dispossession. He is married and lives in Northern New South Wales.

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 ـ **المواد الاصيلة** التي لم يسبق نشرها مطلقاً بأية لغة.

ثانياً ـ **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. (الاعمال التي تأتي مترجمة سلفاً قد يتوفر لها حظٌ 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. كما يتلقى من نشر في كَلِمَات نسخة مجانية من العدد الذي تنشر فيه مادته. وتعتذر كَلِمَات عن تقديم أية تعويضات أخرى.

الاسعار والاشتراك للأفراد (بالدولار الاسترالي)

سعر العدد **20$** ضمن أستراليا ونيوزيلندة، أو **40$** بالبريد الجوي إلى أي مكان

الاشتراك السنوي (4 أعداد) **60$** ضمن أستراليا ونيوزيلندة، أو **120$** بالبريد الجوي إلى أي مكان.

(نصف القيمة للاشتراك بإحدى اللغتين فقط.)

للمنظمات والمؤسسات والمصالح التجارية ضعف القيم أعلاه في كل حالة

الإعلانات: نصف صفحة 100$، صفحة كاملة 200$

ترسل كافة الدفعات من خارج أستراليا بحوالة مصرفية بالعملة الاسترالية ويحرر الشك باسم Kalimat

المؤازرة (الرعاية المادية)

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

تبدأ المؤازرة للأفراد بمبلغ 400$ سنوياً، وللمنظمات والاعمال بمبلغ 2000$ سنوياً. ويحصل مقدم الرعاية على اشتراك مجّاني لسنة الرعاية، كما يحق له الإعلان مجّاناً مرة واحدة في السنة.

المراسلات والاشتراكات إلى العنوان التالي: P.O. Box 242, Cherrybrook, NSW 2126, Australia.

joumana haddad

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photo by

wisam mousa