

كَلِمَات

Kalimat

Collette Khoury

**The Daughter of Damascus
who Cried out with Her Fingers**

Number 21 , March 2005

كلمات
Kalimat

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

Starting in 2005, two issues will be published in English (March & September) per year.

Deadlines: 60 days before the first day of the month of issue

Kalimat publishes original unpublished work in English.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 It does not accept translations of unpublished work.

Full submissions should be made directly by email to: raghid@ozemail.com.au or saved on a disk and posted: P.O. Box 242, Cherrybrook, NSW 2126, Australia.

Writers contributing to *Kalimat* will receive free copies of the issues in which their writings appear. Their work might also be translated into Arabic, and the translations published in projects undertaken by *Kalimat*, or in Arabic media in the Middle East. No other compensation is made.

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SNOWFLAKES

This is *Kalimat's* sixth year. We have decided to cease publication of the Arabic issues and limit ourselves to the two English issues per year. They will be published at their usual dates in March and September.

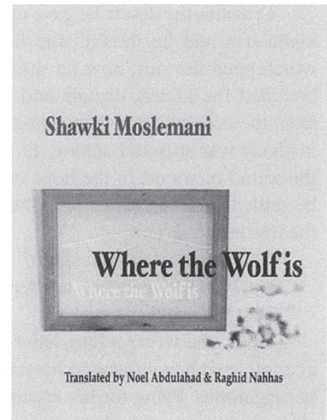
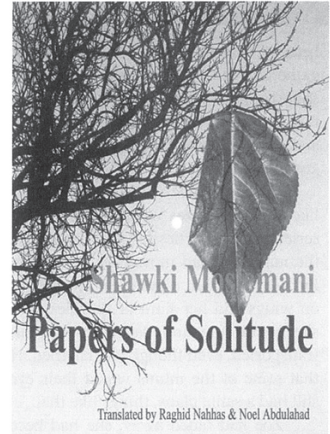
This decision has been taken to ensure the continuity of *Kalimat* and its determination to maintain high standards. Access between the English-speaking and the Arabic-speaking worlds remains one of our major pillars. It will be continued through our English publication and its contents contributed by writers of both worlds, and by the English translations of Arabic material we publish in *Kalimat*. We will continue translations of English work and publish it in Arabic media in the Middle East and around the world.

Our decision has been encouraged by the fact that several Arabic literary periodicals have recently appeared in the Middle East, with substantial improvement to standards. These periodicals are published by important and wealthy institutions, and we hope that they will make a difference in the process of reviving the Arab literary movement after years of decline resulting, to a large extent, from political tension and the lack of freedom.

To further enhance access, we will also be devoting some resources to other projects such as publishing books in both languages. *Kalimat's* first two publications in this regard are the English translations of two poetry collections by the Australian-Lebanese poet Shawki Moslemani. They are translated by Noel Abdulahad and Raghid Nahhas. (They can be obtained from *Kalimat* as explained on page 14 of the present issue.)

Throughout the past five years, we have been privileged to have a group of advisers and sponsors who made *Kalimat* possible. The new changes mean that some of the roles might change emphasis.

We congratulate Judith Beveridge on her new role as *Meanjin's* Poetry Editor- a commitment which stops her from continuing with us.



Tragic End to 2004

The year 2004 ended sadly with one of the worst natural disasters in history. The effects of this will be felt by several generations for many years to come. The reaction of the Australian people to the calamity caused by the tsunami was sincere and generous and showed that Australia at large believes in human values regardless of race or nationality.

Mamdouh Adwan

The year also ended in the loss of a prominent Syrian writer and a fine human being by the death of Mamdouh Adwan at the age of 63, after a long struggle with illness. Adwan was known as a poet. He authored seventeen volumes of poetry, but he also has twenty-seven plays and two novels to his credit. He forged a professional career in journalism and on occasions was a visiting lecturer at the Universities of London and Washington. Adwan translated several works of English and Greek literature. *Egypt Today* reported that 'he was awarded the Best Book prize at the Cairo International Book Fair three years ago. Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni honored Adwan this year for his translation of Homer's *Illiad* into Arabic.'



Adwan was a brother-in-law to Maen Abdullatif, one of *Kalimat's* sponsors and strong supporters who lives in Sydney.

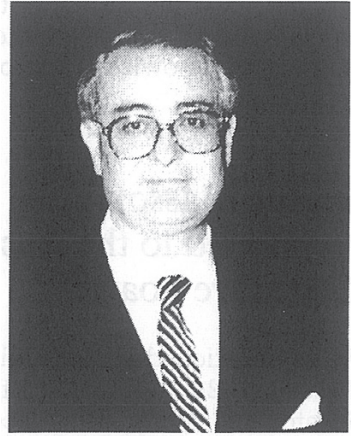
In a celebration held in Damascus to commemorate Adwan in the presence of a group of distinguished literary and intellectual figures late in January, the Palestinian poet **Mhamoud Darwish** delivered a moving address from which we translated some excerpts, presented under Dew & Sparks.

Dr. Victor Ghannoum

Kalimat lost one of its supporters and initial sponsors by the death of Dr. Victor Ghannoum, in his early sixties, after a struggle with terminal illness.

We visited Dr. Ghannoum at his hospital bed in Sydney shortly before his death. He received us with his usual kindness.

The loss of Dr. Ghannoum was also a loss to the Syrian community in Sydney. For many years, His Excellency Dr. Victor Ghannoum was the Honorary Consul to the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition to taking care of the affairs of Australians of Syrian origins in dealing with their original homeland, Dr. Ghannoum was eager to extract the skills and goodness in the Syrian community in Australia for the benefit of the new homeland and the individuals concerned.



Arthur Miller

The news of the death, on 10/02/05, of one of the most distinguished literary figures in theatre history, Arthur Miller, arrived as we were finalizing this issue of *Kalimat*.

Issa Boullata & the 2004 MESA Mentoring Award

Professor Issa Boullata, of McGill University in Canada, is one of *Kalimat's* distinguished contributors and supporters. We are glad that he was awarded the 2004 MESA Mentoring Award on November 21, 2004, at MESA's annual meeting in San Francisco, California. Professor Boullata was presented with a hand-painted and calligraphed certificate which read: 'The Middle East Studies Association is pleased to present the 2004 MESA Mentoring Award to **ISSA J. BOULLATA** In recognition of his exceptional contributions to the education and training of others in Middle East studies with deep appreciation for the extraordinary range of this intellectual and creative interests and his ability to instill in his students discipline, rigorous methods and academic confidence through patient critiques renowned for their comprehensiveness and the quantities of red ink used to convey them; for inspiring a love of the Arabic language, its literary heritage and its lore through such stirring teaching that



students from as long as half a century ago recall his classes as if they attended them just yesterday, it is an honor to recognize Issa J. Boullata, an outstanding mentor who has introduced so many to the joys of scholarship and who has, through his generous sharing of knowledge encouraged the careers of generations of students and colleagues.'

Sophie Masson Appointed to the Australia Council Literature Board

As we mentioned in the Arabic issue of *kalimat* back in December 2004, the Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp, announced on 31 August 2004 the appointment of Sophie Masson to the Australia Council's Literature Board. In his press release we read:

'Ms Masson has made a significant contribution to Australian literature for many years,' Senator Kemp said.

Since her first book was published in 1990 Ms Masson has had more than 35 novels for adults, young adults and children, published in Australia and several published overseas. Her novels include the Lay Lines trilogy—*The Knight by the Pool*, *The Lady of the Flowers* and *The Stone of Oakenfast*—and *A Blaze of Summer*, *The Sun is Rising*, and *Sooner or Later*.

Ms Masson is also a member of the Australian Society of Authors, the Children's Book Council and the NSW Writer's Centre.

'I am very pleased that Ms Masson has agreed to be a member of the Australia Council's Literature Board,' Senator Kemp said.

'Ms Masson's experience as an author and her work with literature groups in our community make her a valuable addition to the Literature Board and I am sure Ms Masson's colleagues are looking forward to working with her.'

The Australia Council is the Australian Government's principal arts funding and advisory body. It encourages the creativity and development of Australian artists and aims to increase access by all Australians to arts and cultural activities.



Such news is no surprise to us as we pride ourselves on a group of distinguished advisers, of whom Sophie Masson is a fine example.

The Story of a Back Cover

This note is to share with the readers some of the events that take place during editing and producing *Kalimat*. There is always a story about how a back cover was selected for a particular issue of *Kalimat*, and this is the story of the present back cover.

We received a photo as a part of routine information mail about creative activities. The photo appealed to me immediately, even before I discovered who the photographer was. Not that I could directly explain, but it imparted to me some sensation of awe. The photographer, Bashar Azmeh, comes from a distinguished and highly talented Syrian family in Damascus. He is a brother to a close friend of mine, but my friendship with their father (30 years my senior), the late Dr. Basheer Azmeh, was unique. Basheer Azmeh was once, among other distinguished feats, the Prime Minister of Syria in the early nineteen sixties, albeit for a short period of time. Our friendship was intellectual, and centred about our shared love for Syria and our eagerness to see a better Syrian society.

I wrote to Bashar requesting permission to publish in *Kalimat*. He wrote back saying: 'Dear Raghid, I am glad you liked my photo "A Window to the Blue". Astonishing to hear different feedback interpretations from friends, some thought I was becoming pessimistic! Others understood that the window represented hope, etc. Personally, I can see/feel the beauty in the rust itself and I am always interested in contrast. The photo was exhibited a month ago at the 25th annual exhibition of the Syrian Photographic Society. I would be delighted if you consider publishing it for the next issue of *Kalimat*.'

I wrote back saying: 'Dear Bashar, in reality, I think that the photo is a combination of despair and hope. This is what life is. This is why I like the photo. I think that you are a "holistic" person. I believe in "integrating" things, and in looking beyond the necessary details into the all-encompassing whole. This provides me with a more meaningful assessment of life and the human condition. Your photo is about that. There is much more in it than meets the eye. THIS IS WHY I LIKE IT! After all, you are all a wonderful family- a big treasure to Syria, for those who can appreciate.

This photo made me remember your father. I forged with him an extraordinary friendship. I think we both shared this combination of "sensitivity" and hope. Your photo is about that: the fragile structure with its rust, but also the shadows emphasising the power of the sun (indirectly), then the open window to the sea. Even when you use the word "blue" there is a combination of the blueness of the sea/sky and the melancholy of the heart; despair and hope. This is a great philosophy, because it is real and strikingly beautiful. Your photo is simple to look at, but the implications are far more complex. Your father was like that, and I loved him dearly!

The Editor

On the “Globalisation of Democracy”

What is the real nature of the human animal?

The globalisation of Democracy?

After reading your interesting editorial in *Kalimat 19*, I, as a western woman very conscious of our recent colonial past, and of being the heir to the most recent world colonisers, would like to present some thoughts about the globalisation of democracy. These thoughts are influenced by a degree of guilt felt by most of us when we contemplate the chaos and brutality brought about by our immediate forbears.

All the major civilizations of the world have had their turn as conquerors, colonizers and occupiers of other countries... and such is the history of the human race, endlessly repeated.

The reason why humans crave power over other creatures is an enormous and most crucial subject which does not seem to be discussed or considered and must be one of the main reasons for the injustices of the world. Until this is understood and faced, no discussions about ways of living or world philosophy will make the slightest difference to our problems. The insatiable lust for power seems to be one of the most compelling human motivators and creators of the destruction that has been our history.

Reason, fleetingly comprehended, is quickly vanquished in the presence of this overwhelming need.

Democracy as WE know it, has evolved over a long period, and has come not by force or by external imposition, and history shows that totalitarian regimes eventually fail and just implode by themselves without external help, although perhaps agonizingly slowly for all concerned.

I have felt for a long time that however slow the process may be, evolution from the inside and not revolution has to be the best way of development [on a micro as well as a macro level] and that spreading a western form of democracy is another form of neo-colonialism, and must be resented as more foreign domination. People and countries should be left to develop their own forms of government, just as we have done in the past, with different solutions for different ways of life and comprehending the world.

Trying hard to be optimistic..

Leonora Howlett
Artist, Sydney, Australia

A Love Affair

I can assure you that I hardly use superlatives in relation to what I read in Australia, however, I LOVE your magazine which shows tremendous depth and breadth, and a

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great deal of thought going into its conception and preparation. It receives all my support without any qualifications or reservations...

Malak Wassef-Edgar
President of Egypt Alive, Melbourne, Australia

Stimulating

Thank you for *Kalimat 19*. It was great seeing my article in there. Once again, *Kalimat* has proven it is unafraid to showcase opposing voices. I refer particularly to Liat Kirby's article on Jeni Allenby's portrayal of Palestinian art. Kirby prefers to put forward a more positive attitude than Allenby's towards Israel and Israeli motives. I also refer to L. E. Scott's "Somebody Blew up America", which portrays Jews (metaphorically, I assume) as complicit in New York's 9/11 tragedy. I found both these articles stimulating, to say the least. Your editorial echoed them by tackling some equally hard subjects.

Susan Beinart
Writer, NSW, Australia

Excellent Production

We received a supporting letter (in Arabic) from Ms. Nuhad Shabbouh. We present here translated excerpts from what she had to say.

Although the news of ceasing the publication of the Arabic issue of *Kalimat* came as a shock to us, we believe that your next step is in the right direction considering the circumstances surrounding your time and other material constraints.

We are glad that you will still strive to convey Australian and other English-speaking works to us through translation projects as an alternative strategy to the Arabic issues. We are certain that through your new strategy you will be able to continue this difficult mission.

We received with thanks copies of the first two books published by *Kalimat*, namely the two collections of Shawki Moslemani's, translated into English by Noel Abdulahad and Raghid Nahhas. We congratulate you on this important feat and note the excellent production of the books. We hope to see similar projects in Arabic.

Nuhad Shabbouh
President, League of Migrants' Friends, Homs, Syria.

We also received from the League of Migrants' Friends issue no.5 of their magazine *al-Sununu*. We congratulate the League on their progress with this literary magazine that publishes in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

MAHMOUD DARWISH

Translated by *Raghid Nahhas*

Arise Oh Poet!¹

You and I were born in the same year, save a little difference in hours and directions.
We were born in order to practise our innocent games with words.
We never cared about the death which beautiful women
squashed with the high heels of their shoes as if it were walnuts.
All was soaring high for us...
As high as the blue over the mountains of the Syrian coast.
And in the manner of the opportunistic weed climbing the sultan's walls,
we climbed over the rainbows, in order to write with their colours
the names of what we like, small and large:
a hand milking the breasts of a gazelle, glory to the lettuce farmers,
the yearning of the shoemaker to touch the foot of the princess,
and other traps for an audience expelled from the theatre.

What led me to you was that clatter caused by an ant between the ocean and the gulf,²
when it escaped disgrace and climbed a minaret to call people for hope.
What led you to me was a similar irony.
When we met, I recognized you from your coughing.
I had kept it in my memory from the beat of your early poetry,
frightening the cats in the lanes of Old Damascus, and
spreading the scent of jasmine.

We did not have a golden past about to return to us,
as those who frequent cafés,
afraid to hold to the horns of the present raging centuries,
would like us to believe.

Nor did we have a certain future
as those who write unsalted poetry,
overloaded by the void of the absolute,
would like us to believe.

We only searched for the present.

¹ In a celebration held in Damascus early in February 2005 in the presence of a group of distinguished literary and intellectual figures to commemorate Mamdouh Adwan, who died forty days earlier, the Palestinian poet Mhamoud Darwish delivered a moving address from which we translated the above.

² A reference to the area that includes the Arab world.

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But because of the intensity of the humiliation we were subjected to,
we did herald the coming of the resurrection loud and clear.

This brought upon us the fury of the angels dedicated to the protection of the pure
language, lest it catches the dust of the earth, and the fury of those searching for
pure poetry on the wings of mosquitoes.

We were invited in the air and speech-sterilised dissecting rooms
To the well of familiar vocabulary, but we opted for an agonising the angels.

Mamdouh, I can't bear hearing your name now!

It reminds me of what I lack from my desire to laugh with you
at Barada's³ exposed loins like our national secrets.

It also reminds me how much, whilst asleep, do I need a rest
from running in search of a stolen dream—

a dream I clearly see and even converse with its thief.

Your name reminds me of the crackle inflicting me

as if I were an acorn in the stove of a pauper on the night of festivity.

All the flowers are honest when left alone,

save the red carnations worn by generals between a star and a medal
on black or navy blue suits to deceive the martyrs' widows.

All doves are clean, even if they urinate on our balconies or pillows,
except for the doves trained by conquerors and/or tyrants

to fly officially on their birthdays or on occasions of lesser national importance.

I don't remember anything of you now!

Memory follows war, death and turmoil.

But *you*, you are still writing this elegy with me,
on this white paper, in this cold night...

Or together we write it for a failed poet.

He may not like it and stops assassinating himself,

until someone other than us writes a better elegy that he still does not like,
and lives longer.

As though we tell a poet: Oh poet arise from this pain!

You bewildered me with your multifaceted creative energies.

You refused to specialize.

You were like a music player unable to decide which instrument to master.

Haven't I told you that one of YOU is enough to be a "tribe" of bees
giving the Syrian honey a burning taste of pleasure?

You searched for the unique in so many things,
not knowing that the unique was you.

It was you in front of you in the grasp of your own hands.

Can't you see for yourself, or have you found your *self* purer in its multiplicity?

Oh my over-splintered friend, you are like a planet in its formation!

³ The main river in Damascus and its symbol of life and beauty.

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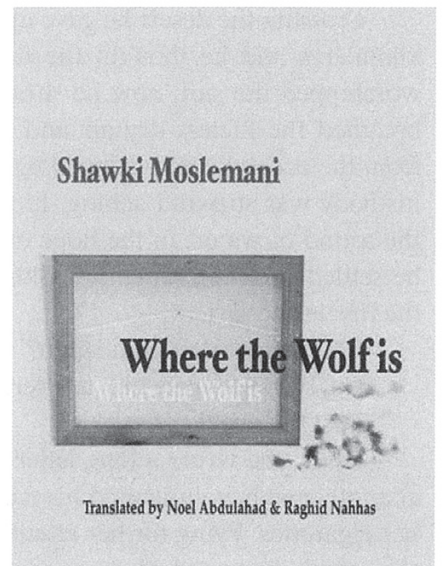
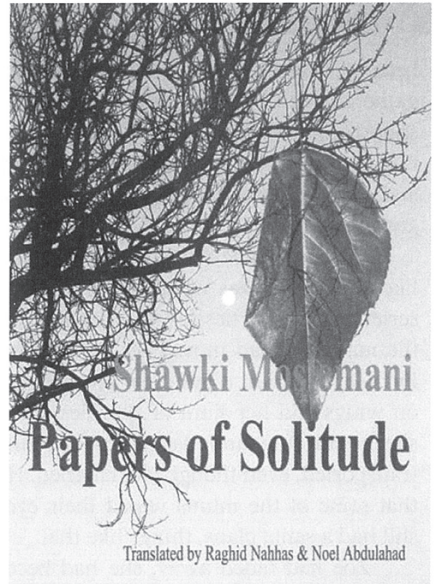
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Colette Khoury

The Daughter of Damascus who Cried out with Her Fingers

Colette Khoury is a leading Syrian literary figure. She was born in Damascus in 1937¹ to a prominent family. Her father was a renowned lawyer and assumed political responsibilities as a minister more than once. Her grandfather Faris Khoury (1877-1962) was a distinguished Arab personality who assumed the office of Prime Minister of Syria on several occasions.

Khoury abandoned her pursuit of a Law degree in Lebanon when she was married to a Spanish count and had to move to Paris. They had one daughter, but after only one year the marriage dissolved.

Back in Damascus, she finished a degree in French Literature, and married again to a prominent Syrian businessman in 1987.

She worked in journalism intermittently, but had some regular weekly columns in several leading Arab newspapers and magazines.

She also taught at schools and lectured at Damascus University.

In 1990, she was elected to the Syrian People's Council (Parliament) where she remained until 1998.

Khoury's writings include novels, short stories, poetry, essays, and historical studies. Some examples are:

Ayyam Ma'ahu (Days with Him), novel, 1959

Laila Wahida (A Single Night), novel, 1961

Ana wal Mada (The Horizon and I), stories, 1962

Keyan (Keyan), novel, 1968

Alkalima al-Ontha (The Female Word), stories, 1971

Wa Marra Saif (And a Summer Has Passed), novel, 1975

Ayyam ma'l Ayyam (Days by Days), novel, 1978

Al-Ayyam al-Modhnia (Agonising Days), stories, 1984

Imra'a (A Woman), stories, 2000

The following interview with Colette Khoury appeared in *al-Khaleej*, the United Arab Emirates.

¹ It is 1935 according to Essa Fattouh in his book "Arabian Authoresses", Vol.2, Dar Tlas, Damascus 2002. Also the introduction above is in part re-written by the translator based on Fattouh's account of Colette Khoury.

You are a pioneer story and novel writer in Syria. What does this mean to you?

Pioneering has never meant anything to me. I have never thought about it. All I know is that I am like a nightingale who wants to sing for a better celebration of human life and beauty. I only needed to sing the joy and pain inside me. I needed to share these feelings. I love sharing my feelings and sensitivities with people.

Do you mean sharing your truthfulness with them?

Of course, because I love people and I am sincere to them. I cannot, therefore, stop my voice from singing or crying.

Your literary writing is considered “committed”. What are the most prominent issues that constitute your concern?

You consider my work “committed”, though I have often been accused of writing art for art’s sake. I am delighted at what you say, because I consider my committed literary work to be part of my upbringing. I was brought up with certain principles and values that I had to sing. In other words, to sing what is inside me. I wanted to express the values I carried with me, and were part of my feelings. I love beauty—the beauty of the universe. I hate “filth”. I despise it as I do pollution.

Which of your novels can be considered your autobiography?

My autobiography is more important than all my novels. Every one of my novels has some part of *my* self. Even “A Single Night” whose main character does not resemble me at all, carries a part of me. I may have to produce over two hundred novels before my autobiography can be complete. *I* the woman is much larger than *I* the writer. My autobiography is much more important than my novels and my characters.

What were the main circumstances that paved the way for your writings and what were the circumstances associated with your first novel “Days with Him”?

I was brought up in three households: my paternal grandfather who was a poet and writer, my maternal uncle who was a journalist publishing one of the most important newspapers in Syria and Lebanon, and my father the freedom-fighter. Their homes were furnished with books, magazines and newspapers. I was brought up to consider writing to be a natural or instinctive affair. One day, whilst visiting a friend, I asked her to write down for me a piece of poetry I liked. I was surprised to hear her say that she could not find a pen. I imagined that one may not be able to find food, clothes or warmth at home, but a pen? I always imagined that pens and writing were always available in any home.

These are the circumstances that led me to write. However, what I did not like in my society, and my dissatisfaction with many things created in me a persistent need to cry out. Because I came from an educated family, I was able to cry with my fingers so I became a writer.

But these circumstances might well have been experienced by many other people without them developing the same interest. What do you think?

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It is no doubt important to have a gift as a basis for creativity. I had started writing poetry in French and sentimental pieces in Arabic. I was fifteen when my work appeared in newspapers and magazines. My first French poetry collection (*20 Years*) appeared when I was twenty.

The first poetry piece I wrote was titled "A Shadow of Life". It was about a small rose that was going to wilt. Maybe my aim was to continue writing poetry or singing. My voice was beautiful, but it was difficult for me at the time to forge a career as a singer. I continued to write poetry. I wrote a poem one night. When I woke up the next morning and read it again, I told myself that that poem should become a novel. This is how "Days with Him" was born. I started as a poet, and because I love music and poetry my style carries a touch of music. Sometimes I spend hours contemplating a sentence because a word in it does not rhyme with meaning I had in mind.

I wanted to become a musician and a singer, then an actress and the last thing I wanted was to become a writer. I wrote to express my ambitions. I wrote to say I want and I want... and I became a writer.

I understand from what you say that the same enlightened environment you were surrounded by and which did not stop in the way of your literary ambitions, actually was a hurdle in the way of your singing and acting ambitions. What does it mean that certain prohibitions are imposed on women even in the most enlightened of environments?

Sexual discrimination has always been there, and is still being practised to this day. My father, for example, was the *Don Juan* of his time. This used to hurt my mother and me. I used to find it strange how a woman could accept a man who does not give her the respect she deserves. Since I was a child, I have never been able to tolerate a man who does not indulge his wife.

I also remember that my father once said that even if he had ninety-nine sons and asked what he would like his next child to be, his answer would be another son! This is despite that he quickly qualified his statement by adding that 'Colette is worth all the boys in the world.' Nevertheless, I felt hurt and always wanted to prove that I was equal to men and even better.

Did Colette Khoury feel discriminated against because of her gender?

My grandfather once asked me, after I published my novel "Days with Him", 'Are you determined to continue taking the literary path?' My grandfather's question, and he was a scholar of integrity, stemmed from his understanding of the magnitude of the difficulties facing a young, intelligent and attractive lady like myself who had not yet reached the age of twenty. When I answered positively, he said: 'Our society does not like a clever woman. Our society never forgives a woman because she is intelligent. Our society is fond of a beautiful, superficial woman, but intolerant of a beautiful, intelligent woman. You will suffer a lot. Society will attack you and people will stand in your way. They will do everything they can to destroy you, so what do you say?' When I answered that I was going to write no matter what happened, my grandfather replied: 'Go ahead, and I am behind you'.

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Indeed I faced many difficulties, accusations and rumours about my personal life, including those describing me as uninhibited. Not only that my personal life was impinged upon, but it was pictured totally different to my shy, polite nature.

After my divorce, the velvet society rejected me on the grounds that I became alone without a husband and that I was “revolutionary”. The right stood against me because I worked for the liberation of women. The left persecuted me because I came from a bourgeois family.

Which one of your main characters was nearest to you? Was it Reem in “Days with Him”, Rasha in “A Single Night”, Suhair in “A Summer Has Passed” or others?

All my heroines resemble me. *Asma* carries the name of my grandmother and she resembles me politically. *Suhair* shares with me my ideas about sex and liberation. *Reem* is similar to me in revolt and passion. *Keyan* is as patriotic as I am. The same applies to other characters. No single heroine is nearer to me than the rest.

It seems that you love all your characters, males and females.

Yes, I love them all. I love my male heroes for a while and when I leave them I feel upset. Whenever I write about any one of them and describe him in a certain way I feel attached to him and wish he were real.

In your first novel, there is some resemblance to the environment surrounding the heroine and your own environment. You both belong to Damascene bourgeois families and you are both eager for liberation. Did you actually face difficulties similar to what we read about *Reem*?

I never abandoned my background and I can only write about an environment I experienced. What was associated with Reem and other heroines of my stories was something I had partially experienced in different times. The difficulties Reem faced were similar to the difficulties I faced in that time. The difficulties faced by Asma in “Days by Days” are similar to my difficulties with the left when the Ba’th Party came to power in Syria and when the party had internal divisions leading some politicians to leave for Lebanon and some of my friends were injured in demonstrations. The same applies to my heroine Suhair who was associated with the period of the start of the Lebanese civil war. And the list goes on!

It is possible that the writer’s tendency to express different aspects of what he or she experiences is related to the differences we see in female versus male literature due to the particularity of the living experience of each gender. What do you say to this?

In my opinion, there is literature or no literature. There is no female or male literature. I do not see any justifications for all these classifications such as black, children, bourgeois, struggle, American or Arabic literature. True, a working class fellow might be able to write about his background better than the others, and a woman about herself better than what a man writes about her, but all of this does not justify the classification. You either write something of literary merit or you don’t.

It is noted that love occupies a large space in your different creative works. In my opinion, this love does not end, as the case with the romantic writers, with death or failure— rather it forms a post for self-reassessment and discovery. What is love to Colette Khoury?

Life without love is worthless. But there are two types of love. One is what gives life its distinctive flavour and meaning. This is always associated with sex. I love this man, I always want him next to me, touching my hand... Your love to a man gives the feeling that you can carry this universe on the palm of your hand. This “sickness/concern” that you love to be inflicted with accommodates the world between the arms of your lover.

The other type is devoid of sex and it is for life, living and friends. This type is wider and lasts forever. While a love of man and woman is prone to disappearance.

These two types of love are the hope of the world and by them life becomes more beautiful. All feelings against love in its two types upset life. Life is love. This is why I am against romanticism which leads to sorrow and depression. Romanticism might be good for writing, but it is bad for life.

You say that love between man and woman does not last. In the beginning of your novel “And a Summer Has Passed” you promised the reader to gradually disclose the meaning of love throughout the novel, as if you considered love is a multi-faceted whole involving beautiful sentiments. Does this mean that you consider this love to be only a mirage?

No, it is not a mirage, but as I said it is a real sickness that you feel and it reaches a climax but it cannot stay there. It transforms into friendship and understanding. If it is solely based on sex, it transforms to hatred. There is a difference between a sexual passion and love built on mutual understanding and respect.

Is love conditioned by the surrounding background, such as being affected by prevailing social and cultural standards?

Of course! Let's take The Virgin Mary. Every culture views her in its own way. Europeans think of her as a woman with blue eyes. Africans think she is black. I, too, am unable to fall in love with a man from Jupiter. It is also very difficult for me to love someone who is drastically different from me or my environment.

Have the years added anything to your view of love?

They have consolidated my beliefs. For example, that violent love does not last, and that without love we cannot live.

Why do most of your heroines fall in love with a man many years their senior?

Maybe because some childhood is still lurking deep inside me. I have grown up, but I still need a father. My current husband is only one year older, but I feel that he is like my father. I love this feeling.

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In your novel “And a Summer Has passed” you say that you write because you are afraid of death. Do you really mean that?

Of course! I fear the death of the one I love. I fear the loss of the people I love. This idea terrifies me and makes me shiver. I fear the feeling of disappearance, and that we are merely passers-by in this life. This made me feel how important it is to leave a trace— be it a mere twinkle. Reading the lines I write makes me feel that it extends my stay.

It is noted, in your texts, that what preoccupied you most in the relationship between East and West is the woman. You seem as if you oppose western materialism in this regard despite your support of Arab women liberating themselves from the traditions that chain them backward. Don't you consider women's sexual liberation part of the whole process?

Not at all. I am against female sexual liberty, not because I am traditional or fundamentalist, but because I have a good taste and hate vulgarity.

But why should men have sexual freedom?

Sex to me is sacred for both sexes. But let me talk about women and leave the talk about men and sex to men themselves. Sex in my view is the crowning of love. In this way it becomes the most beautiful thing in life. But when it becomes liberal, it loses its beauty. It loses what makes it unique, its intimacy and transparency.

You build your novel “And a Summer Has Passed” on the contrast that Arab characters in London are seeking sex, whilst westerners are avoiding quick relationships and seeking love. You seem to be defending your stand on western materialism and eastern traditions as if you are standing in the middle. Is this a right impression?

I wanted to say that sexual freedom for women, eastern or western, enhances their loneliness and exile. I mean here sex for sex. Sex without love leads a woman to a stage that she wishes to sit with a man who says he loves her. Sex does not kill loneliness, it enhances it! Love, on the other hand, removes loneliness and builds for you a world full of life.

In your novel “Days by Days”, you often reiterated the following statement: ‘We still have the future. We are, despite everything, despite the world, still standing on our feet.’ Do you still believe in this despite all the tragedies that have befallen the Arabs and have never stopped for twenty years after writing this novel?

I am always hopeful of the future. I always repeat what the poet Said Akl said: ‘The most beautiful history was tomorrow.’ The golden age of the Arabs shall come, maybe not in our days. It is all right if it comes during the time of my children and grandchildren. Despite all the tragedies and my disappointments, I am still a believer in Arabism and Arab nationalism. The Palestinian people and the people of south Lebanon deserve a great future. I am very certain of that. This does not mean that I am not disgusted with what is happening around me and around the world.

Don't the past twenty years deserve that you write your autobiography or any other biography?

Of course, but I finished the first part of "The Papers of Faris Khoury" dealing with the Ottoman history, and the second part dealing with the Faisal rule in Syria and Lebanon. Now I am embarking on the third part dealing with the French mandate and The Great Syrian Revolt. If "history" did not take that much of my time, I would have written an autobiography.

It seems that you have a number of future projects...

Yes, in addition to the above I am about to finish a story collection titled "Damascus My Big Home". I am also working on three volumes titled "Faris Khoury by the Writings of His Contemporaries". I am preparing a collection of poetry titled "The Scent of Rendezvous". I also intend to publish the letters I received from the poet Nizar Qabbani when we had a relationship between 1959 and 1960, before the disagreement that separated us and made me leave for USA and he for China.

What does the period between the late 1960s and the last third of the 1970s, associated with your novel "Days by Days", mean to you?

It is the period of the Ba'ath revolution when ideas and opinions changed. A group of patriots or people looking for a better future, in their own way, took over the country. My heroine is from the sixties, and the hero from the upcoming revolution. The novel contains discussions about love and about the political climate of that period. My heroine says: 'I am a revolutionary woman, and my revolt is out of love...' What she means is that because she loves the world and her country, she wants her nation to be the best and most advanced. Her statement expresses me. There are revolutions built on malice. Malice does not give beauty or build nations. Love does, and I still believe in that.

In "Days by Days" you also tried to explain that an intellectual like yourself has one of two choices: either to be a Syrian in exile or an exile in Syria. What has Colette Khoury chosen?

I chose the more painful decision and stayed in Syria. Many of my class have left Syria. I stayed and felt exiled until Hafez Assad came, and whether we like it or not, he is not a man that history produces every day. He said: 'We will eliminate the feeling of exile from every citizen.' He returned, to me at least, a little bit of amiability and trust in life.

Rafif Rida Sidawi is a Lebanese journalist.

Transcribing Roles: The Female Body and the Palestinian Stage

In spite of the common assumption that poverty, illiteracy and backwardness were widespread in the Ottoman Empire, cultural activities were flourishing in Cairo and Beirut. Also the travel routes, which helped transport civilisation as well as trade, were readily accessible among the different regions of Greater Syria.¹ Rashid Khalidi² demonstrates how cultural life and Palestinian identity in late Ottoman Palestine was in tune with similar developments elsewhere in the Islamic world particularly in neighbouring Arab regions. Although Jerusalem, Khalidi argues, was an important capital district of southern Palestine, 'its importance extended far beyond that. Its schools, newspapers, clubs, and political figures had an impact throughout Palestine, even before the country's British mandate boundaries were established after World War I'. Distinctive marks of cultural consciousness and appreciation of drama and world literature can be witnessed; although, at the time, it may not have been strong enough to reflect political consciousness to the same extent as literary productions, i.e. poetry in pre 1948 Palestine.

Under the Ottoman Rule, drama and theatre activities were restricted to missionary and private schools, clubs and Christian parishes. Audiences, were exposed to western literature especially plays by Shakespeare and Molière. With its defeat in WWI, Ottoman rule over Arab lands came to an end in 1918. Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq came under the British Mandate in 1920. The issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, promising a Jewish National home in Palestine, resulted in political instability not only in Palestine but in the Arab world as well. Furthermore, since there was no central national government to speak of, theatre arenas, facilities, and institutions that nurtured young talents had no permanent sponsors. This had a devastating effect, both on the quality of the dramatic work and on the production of original dramatic texts. However, theatre activities in pre 1948 Palestine were promoted by a small group of educated Palestinians of middle-class backgrounds such

¹Beirut to Jerusalem via Damascus in a four-day trip, cited in *The Blue Guide* (1938), a book which describes a simple travel itinerary for the region cited in: *After the Jews and Arabs Remaking Levantine Culture*. Ammiel Alcalay (1993). On the cultural vacuum in Palestine region see Kamil al- Sawafiri (1979).

²Khalidi, Rashid 1997. *Palestinian Identity: the Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. Columbia University Press.

as al-Guzi theatre troupe.

Firqat al-Guzi (al-Guzi Theatre Troupe) was established by Nasri al-Guzi from 1930 until 1947. Nasri wrote *al-Haqq Yalu* (Truth Prevails) in 1928. His second social moral play (1930) was *Fuad Lila* (Leila's Heart), followed by *al-Shummu al-Muhtariqa* (The Burning Candles) written in 1930. His transition from social to political issues came in 1935, when Nasri wrote *Ashbah al-Ahrar* (The Ghosts of the Free). This one-act-play dealt with the danger of the influx of Jews to Palestine, defending the lost land, attacking the ones who sold their land, calling for Arab unity, and defying and fighting against both the British and the Zionist presence in Palestine. The play was staged on the YMCA theatre in 1935 and in 1936 (al-Guzi pp158-160), but due to the strict British censorship rules, the play was banned in the city of Ramallah and in the rest of the country.³ Gamil al-Bahri is yet another prominent Palestinian figure who contributed significantly not only to Journalism, but also to the theatre movement in Haifa before 1948. Gamil al-Bahri owned the journal *az-Zahra* (The Flower), and the *al-Maktaba al-Wataniya* (The National Library). He published his plays and books in Haifa. In 1919, he published his play *Qatil Akhih* (His Brother's Murderer).

Although the period of British Mandate over Palestine saw contributions to the revival of cultural activities at all levels, in many ways the development of the Palestinian theatre was hindered before 1948. Apart from the unstable political situation, there existed a taboo against women appearing on stage.⁴ Generally speaking, between 1920-1930 males performed female roles. They put on women's costumes and makeup, and imitated feminine gestures—the female presence on stage being limited due to both strict Catholic and Moslem teachings and social circumstances in Palestine. However, with the founding of the Palestinian Broadcasting Station in 1936, women felt more comfortable acting behind the microphone and many women were involved in the broadcast of al-Guzi's plays.⁵

Contrary to the general assumption— that women were not allowed to appear on stage - women managed to participate in many plays. Although few in number, we

³ Al-Guzi, Nasri 1991. *Tarih al-Masrah al-Filastini 1918-1948* (The History of Palestinian Theatre 1918-1948). Al-Guzi states how his own play was banned by the British Mandate from being staged in many Palestinian cities under the threat of imprisonment. pp158-159. In 1945, Nasri al-Guzi was the first Palestinian dramatist ever to write plays for children. Among his ceaseless contribution in this field are: *Daka' al-Qadi* (The Wisdom of the Judge); *La li bay' al-Arabi* (No to the Sale of Land); *Id al-Jala'* (The Feast of Deportation); *Filastin lan Nansaki* (Palestine, We Shall Not Forget Thee); *Wafa al-Asdikak*^o (Loyalty of Friends); *Hatimu al-Asnam* (Break the Idols!).

⁴ *ibid.* Al-Guzi argues that al-Bahri was against having women actors while he supported their presence on stage.

⁵ Al-Guzi, p37. Snir Reuven in *Palestinian Theatre: Historical Development and Contemporary Distinctive Identity*. In: *Contemporary Theatre Review* (Vol.3, 2, 1995) 29-75, does not mention the names of the few Palestinian females who participated in the Palestinian theatre activities and concludes that generally women's roles were given to men.

are able to trace several Palestinian female actors: Gulnar and Mary Akkawai for example, who were known in the city of Bethlehem. Also, Asma Tubi of Acre, who contributed significantly to Palestinian female presence on stage and is known for her political and literary input.⁶ Another Palestinian female figure who contributed much to female literary activities during the British mandate was Nagawa Farah Qawar.⁷

With the eruption of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 local theatre came to a halt; for many of the people who were involved in various cultural activities, such as al-Guzi group, fled and ended up refugees in Arab countries. As a result, professional theatre went through a period of stagnation, with activities restricted to schools and clubs. Only after the 1967 War did Palestinian theatre rise again. In spite of the fact that more women were active in performing plays, yet they were one-timers; they never produced or written plays and their names were forgotten.

The problem of female actors on stage is a recurrent theme in the historical development of local theatre. Current theatre-makers in Palestine have their ideas about why women are not an essential physical element on stage, not to mention why pressing women's issues are not being tackled. In two interviews with George Ibrahim, from *Masrah al-Qasaba*, and Jamal Abu Ghosheh, from *The Palestinian National Theatre*, both describe the continuous struggle of female actors as one of the main problems they face.⁸ In Ibrahim's opinion, the image of Palestinian women on the stage 'has always been a priority and a very positive one. She is portrayed as the mother, *symbol for Palestine*, the wife, and sister of the *martyr*' (emphasis added). Abu Ghosheh disagreeing with George Ibrahim, asserts that because of this shortage of female actors, 'one *only* sees women taking the traditional role; as the mother of the martyr.' Lack of female actors, admittedly, constitutes a serious problem for *The Palestinian National Theatre*, as it does away with female roles altogether when it cannot find female actors. In Abu Ghosheh's view, the absence of women on Palestinian stage makes it difficult to reconstruct the traditional image, or stereotype of women.

In a society which demands of women to earn a university degree, and where there is a lack of finances that would enable women to have a career in theatre and the familiar misconception that the theatre is a place that brings "shame" to women are all elements that contribute to the shortage of female presence on the Palestinian stage. In addition, there still exists a religious stigma about the free mingling of the sexes in public, which has become especially acute with the rise of conservative political Islam after the first Gulf War in 1990. Abu Ghosheh states that women who

⁶ Asma Rizq known also as Asma Tubi. For more information, see al-Guzi 1991, pp67-78.

⁷ More on Najwa Farah Qawar, see Khadra Jayyusi, Salma (ed.) 1992. *An Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, p434.

⁸ What I am presenting here is taken from a personal interviews with both George Ibrahim from *Masrah al-Qasaba*, and Jamal Abu Ghosheh from the Palestinian National Theatre, done chronologically on the 25/1/1999 and on 26/1/1999 and from various email correspondences.

want to work in theatre have to be a 'bit open and liberal', but with the existence of fear from males, some women feel intimidated by the close presence of men on stage. To Abu Ghosheh this also has been [one of] our biggest problems. Those women who want to be part of the theatre movement in Palestine, have to have the initiative, the guts, and the ability to struggle, since they are going to be initiators, and role models for other women. This is not an easy thing to do! And if they made it, they could not face up to the challenges, so they drop out (Personal Interview, 26.1.1999).

Other women, who go on and accept the challenge, end their contribution once they get married. Even *Ashtar* who presents itself as an avant-garde theatre, also lists the lack of female actors as one of its main challenges.⁹ *Ashtar* admits that parents of some of their drama students were a bit suspicious at first. For many of the girls who started with us [Ashtar], faced pressure from their families and had to drop out. The parents were also reluctant to let their daughters go out to rehearsals at night and to take part in an activity in which they would be mingling with the opposite sex.¹⁰

Because of this, *Ashtar* has started to direct its effort towards secondary-school students encouraging them to participate in their theatre programs.¹¹ Nonetheless, throughout its history, men have been writing and producing plays for the Palestinian stage, although some theatres like al-Hakawati in the 1980s worked as a collective group in writing plays. Therefore written texts not only perpetuate "favourable roles", but also reinforce stereotypes by imposing them on female actors.¹² In many ways this can be attributed to Palestinian national discourse and internal politics: in order to integrate women in the national struggle, stress has been placed on celebrating and elevating women's role as mothers, sisters, wives and daughters of martyrs.¹³ Another explanation is the recurring themes and images in Palestinian literature that also reinforce the stereotypes of the Palestinian woman as a mother, and as bearer of tragedy as well as of children.¹⁴ Furthermore, during the years of the first *Intifada*, the Unified National Leadership for the Uprising (UNLU) served as an umbrella group representing political fractions of the PLO as well as various women's committees

⁹ See Judith Sudilovsky. *Act II: Toward Stagecraft*. In: *The Jerusalem Post* (May 5. 1995) about female students and their battles to get parents agreement to allow them to enrol in *Ashtar* school. p30.

¹⁰ Annual report and as advertised on the theatre's web Page: URL <http://www.ashtar-theatre.org/act1/scene3/scene3.htm> [17.05.00].

¹¹ 'The girls are yet not being pressured to get married, or not to perform in public. The boys are also more open to new ideas', Mu'Allim in an interview by Annette Kramer *Creative Arts*. In: *Aramco World* (July/ August 1995). pp22-25. Here: 24.

¹² On Palestinian national discourse as a "male" narrative, see Joseph Massad *Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism*. In *Middle East Journal*. Vol. 49. No.3, Summer 1995.

¹³ Jamal Abu Ghosheh's claims that women who attended plays in the PNT theatre were mostly Christian educated females from the districts of Bethlehem and Ramallah.

¹⁴ On the contemporary Palestinian literature refer to Ashrawi, Hanan Mikhail 1976. *Contemporary Palestinian Literature Under Occupation*. Birzeit Univ. Press, Birzeit.

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concerned with women issues and civil rights. The UNLU was critical of the Oslo Peace Accord since it does not take into consideration women's rights, and consequently various women committees found themselves part of an uneasy alliance with the political-Islamist Hamas in the west Bank and Gaza. With the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2001, local theatre went into a period of stagnation which it has only recently begun to recover.

Nowadays, it is *al-Qasaba* theatre in Jerusalem and Ramallah taking the lead in local cultural activities. On stage, the subject matter is the portrayal of the Palestinian daily plight and suffering. Unfortunately, the prevalence of male producers, directors and writers means the continuing transcription of traditional texts onto women's bodies and voices on stage. The last two plays by *al-Qasab* theatre, for example were *Alive from Palestine: stories under Occupation* (2001) and *Smile you are Palestinian* (2004). In both plays the lone female actor, Georgina Asfour, was portrayed mainly as a symbol of Palestine.¹⁵

The current unstable political situation makes it impossible for cultural life to thrive in the Occupied Territories. The continuous occupation, incursions, invasions, curfews and roadblocks are all elements hindering its development. In sum, the Palestinian theatre makers seem to be unable to break the cycle of dictating traditional roles and reiterating Palestinian national discourse through female actors—effectively denying women both the chance and the platform to speak their own voices.

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¹⁵ <http://www.alkasaba.org/thearticalw/alive.html>

L. E. SCOTT

Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Conference

From 20–23 October 2004 at Chicago State University, some of the most creative African American intellectuals and writers – poets, novelists and essayists – came together for the 14th Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Conference. They had travelled from all over the United States and other world places in order to celebrate the life and works of one of the greatest African American poets. And in a sense their celebration was also an acknowledgement of the long and arduous journey from slavery and the ongoing struggle for justice and freedom in a country where duplicity and treachery ride on the wings of a strange white bird that camouflages itself in the colours of red, white and blue.

The Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Conference is more than just African American writers and intellectuals coming together once a year to praise and celebrate the life and work of this great poet and human being, Miss. Gwendolyn Brooks, but it cannot be denied that the spirit and ongoing influence of her legacy is pervasive.

The road of Gwendolyn Brooks' life was a long and full one. A few basic facts: born 1917 in Topeka, Kansas. When she was one month old her family moved to Chicago, which remained her home for the rest of her life. In 1950 she became the first African American to win a Pulitzer Prize. She taught at a number of universities and colleges and was awarded over 50 honorary degrees. In 1985 she became the 29th appointment as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. She was a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Among her many awards were the Shelley Memorial Award, the Anisfield-Wolf Award, the Kuumba Liberation Award, two Guggenheim Fellowships and as mentioned, the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. But beyond all the awards and accolades, what mattered most to Gwendolyn Brooks were her people and she gave of herself freely in many ways that impacted the African American struggle for rights and freedoms. Gwendolyn Brooks died in 2000.

The History of the Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Conference

The founder of the Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Conference is the renowned writer and poet, chairman and publisher of Third World Press (the oldest independent Black publishing house in the US), distinguished university professor (Chicago State University) and long-time friend and supporter of Gwendolyn Brooks, Haki R. Madhubuti.

Fourteen years ago Professor Madhubuti's dream of creating the Gwendolyn

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Brooks Writers' Conference came to life and since then the conference has grown from strength to strength. It is the only major writers' conference in the USA named for an African American writer and having as its basic principle the continuing study of that writer's work and ongoing influence on African American literature. Professor Madhubuti has said on many occasions that as long as there is breath in his body he will do everything he can to ensure the legacy of Gwendolyn Brooks is held high. In addition, Professor Madhubuti sees the conference as a way of bringing the African American community together to hear a range of writers and intellectuals debating and strategising ways to confront white America in the ongoing African American struggle in the United States.

So with the above in mind, the Director of the Gwendolyn Brooks Centre at Chicago State University, Professor Quraysh Ali Lansana (also a noted poet whose latest book is *Southside Rain* [Third World Press]) and his staff chose a phrase from Gwendolyn Brooks' poem *Paul Robeson*, 'Our Magnitude and Bond', as the theme of the 2004 conference to shape a four day collage of Black creativity and thought.

Day One

The first day of the conference opened with these words from Professor Quraysh Ali Lansana: 'It is with great warmth and deep respect that I welcome you to the 14th Annual Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Conference on Black Literature and Creative Writing, the nation's oldest and largest annual gathering of writers from throughout the African Diaspora... To that end, we are honoured to bring together a wide variety of the best minds in Black literature and thought. I am so awestruck by the notion that Amiri Baraka, Molefi Asante and Dennis Brutus, three of the most significant voices in Black struggle, are here...'

Professor Haki Madhubuti added to the welcome: 'This year's conference theme, Our Magnitude and Bond, celebrates the greatness of Black minds, while at the same time urges us to hold ourselves, and others, accountable for the obstacles we must overcome every day. This takes courage, and we find that courage within, and within the minds and mouths that speak truth to power relentlessly...'

In terms of events, the first day jumped off with the Chocolate Chips Theatre Company performing a play and skits for young Black school children, teaching them about Black history and the historical struggle of African Americans. The company was founded by Nora Brooks, the multi-talented daughter of Gwendolyn Brooks. Another participant in the first session was Walter Dean Myers, a prolific and acclaimed writer of children's literature. Mr Myers read stories to the school children that reflected their lives and their neighbourhoods. The stories were funny, reflective and informative.

The rest of the day comprised various panel discussions. One was titled 'Practical Strategies for Teaching Creative Writing' and the teachers in attendance certainly would have found the various views and methods discussed enlightening. Another panel looked at 'Liberation in the Early Poems of Gwendolyn Brooks'. The day concluded with a musical feast from Maggie Brown singing songs in celebration of Blackness.

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Day Two

One of the many highlights of the second day was a panel of writers, educators and musicians debating how Rap and Hip-Hop, like other forms of African American music such as spirituals, blues, jazz and soul, have influenced and shaped not only America but the world.

When this music started on the street corners of the African American community some 20 years ago, there were many who believed longevity was not on its side. But the young Black men and women knew they had something – a weapon to express the fire they felt living BLACK in the United States of America. Their music had political thought and challenged political thought.

The panel discussion looked at how this ‘fire’ is now being corrupted by corporate America and redefined into packages for mass distribution without the essence that gave it birth. The good news, as the panel members pointed out, is that some hip-hop artists are learning ways to control their own music and messages and are refusing to buy into the lure and loss inherent in the corporations. They are moving back to smaller music companies or forming their own, getting their music out with all its political fire intact and selling their cds direct to the people.

Also on Day Two, as part of the ongoing commitment of the conference to the Black community generally, not just its writers, there was a panel discussion dealing with ‘HIV/AIDS in the Black Community’. The doctors and community medical people on the panel provided education and advice about the virus and what services were available for those living with the virus. The emphasis on knowing how to protect oneself and one’s community was a powerful message.

Day Three

The third day opened with poetry readings. Some of the poets taking part, such as Mari Evans, had come through the fires of the Black American struggles of the ‘60s; others such as Cornelius Eady, Allison Joseph, Van Jordan and Toi Derricotte were of a younger generation. But young or old, these poets come to their creativity with the knowledge that their work has to reflect the world in which they live. Their art is not abstract; it is seeded deep in the struggle of a people who have tasted every conceivable injustice that can be perpetrated on a race of people. And they are clear about their task – they are soldiers in the struggle and their words are their weapons.

The evening session of Day Three began with a keynote address by Dr. Molefi Kete Asante. To quote briefly from his extensive bio: ‘Scholar, educator, writer, and a leading authority on African culture and philosophy... has distinguished himself in the fields of education, communication and anthropology. He is the author of over forty books addressing Africa and African Americans... currently a professor at Temple University where he founded the first Doctoral programme in African American Studies... taught at the Zimbabwe Institute of Mass Communication from 1981–82, where he trained the first set of Zimbabwean journalists following the revolution...’

During the course of his address, Dr. Asante spoke of his recent trip to Senegal, West Africa to attend a conference of more than five hundred African and African

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American writers, educators and academics. The message that Dr Asante brought back was that Africa and Black America are interlocked in a Black Renaissance that is shaping itself with such dynamic creative force that it will produce a Black Arts explosion not seen since the Harlem Renaissance. Dr Asante also stated, as a number of other speakers had noted, that an international Black journal was due, so that as this Black Renaissance blossomed there would be a vehicle to transport it around the world.

The third day ended with the 'Seventh Annual Induction for the International Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent'. This was a wonderful spiritual evening of love and respect for Black writers who have stayed on the course of righteousness.

Day Four

The fourth day of the conference is set aside as a 'Giant's Day Celebration' and the writer selected for the 2004 conference is indeed a giant – Amiri Baraka. Over the last fifty years this man has produced a mountain of work – plays, essays, poetry, books on African American music – that is beyond match.

For African American writers in particular, Amiri Baraka is known as the Father of the Black Arts Movement of the 1970s and '80s. Larry Neal describes the movement thus: '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.'

Amiri Baraka is now in his 70s but his mind, body and spirit have not grown tired or lost the fire of revolution. He stands today as he did yesterday and will tomorrow – a voice for his people. He believes in their beauty and the rightness of their struggle.

At the closing of the fourth day, as old and new friends embraced and said their farewells, those who had gathered for the 14th Gwendolyn Brooks Writers' Conference knew in heart and mind that Gwendolyn Brooks' legacy is an incalculable gift and that it had been a privilege to come together under the light of her life.

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.

EILEEN MARSHALL

Is there a taboo on tenderness?

Leonora Howlett is an artist and I am a writer. Long-time friends we found we were thinking about similar issues in Australian society. One aspect we have discussed is the way people have become less soft and more abrasive. Her collage 'Evertrue and the death of sentiment' triggered the discussion together with 'Rhinoceros tell me your story', a painting of a rhinoceros standing on a plinth lamenting his own extinction.

These paintings are congruent with my belief that the 'tenderness taboo' that an English psychoanalyst Suttie spoke about in 'the early 20th Century, is well and truly alive in 21st Century Australia. I wrote an essay exploring this concept and connecting it with those paintings of Leonora's that had triggered our original exchange.

We feel the collaboration is unusual; Leonora is not just illustrating someone else's ideas and I am not merely describing her paintings. Our expression of our ideas is not identical and our focus, at times, is different.

Something seems to be fading from the world, something that made everyday life a little easier, a little pleasanter. I'm not merely nostalgic and I don't mean material comfort. In so many ways life in Australia today is more comfortable than ever. What I want to talk about is emotional comfort.

The changes were gradual enough. I wasn't fully aware of what was happening. The realisation came suddenly, when I was forced to admit to myself that the world had changed. And so had I.

My manner had become abrasive, not directly rude but I didn't indulge in gentle exchanges without a point, or waste too much time with pleasantries or small random acts of kindness. I simply got on with it. Then one day, I didn't get on with it

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perfunctorily. I smiled at people in the street, thanked a bus driver for waiting for me while I ran for the bus, put an effort into sounding pleasant when I was making a query by phone. After the reactions I experienced that day I decided to continue this way.

I have, although I often have to remind myself because the old brusque way was so economical of time and effort, and tends to be the approved norm. Maybe we all have become rougher and more abrasive in our dealings with each other? The so-called time-wasting affability that eased the way of previous generations is often derided as 'uncool'. Even some personal exchanges are more like commercial transactions: functional and to the point.

Why are we like this? What's happened to gentleness, to softness? Is there, as Suttie maintained, a taboo on what he called tenderness?

Suttie, an English psychoanalyst in the 1930's said in "The origins of love and hate" 'it may seem incredible that such an amiable emotion as tenderness, the very stuff of sociability, should come under a taboo'. He spoke in England, obviously in a different era, about negative epithets of 'cry-baby', 'mummy's boy', 'milk-sop', 'soft', given to those males who did not conform to the ego-ideal for men of being aggressive, hard, powerful. The main ideals for women were of course passive, soft, compliant, etc.

For a while we had a new creature in modern Australian society, the Sensitive New Age Guy (SNAG) who is, as often as not, now ridiculed. They are still around and we are all the better for the men who have taken the conventional female roles of househusband or mother. I know one. Built like a front row forward he looks after the house, does the cooking, the housework, the washing – he even hangs her undies on the line, has a part-time job and is a full-time writer. She goes out to work and is the primary breadwinner. A very acceptable switch in conventional roles for both of them, although the conservative affect shock.

Each era has its taboos. Sex is not ours, nor is violence. Despite our protests that our tv screens and newspapers are full of sex and violence, such programmes dominate the screen. Instead, we appear to have the taboo on tenderness that Suttie spoke about, a taboo on demonstrative manners and softness.

Russell Meares in "Intimacy and Alienation" says "The tender emotions, so fundamental to human existence, have, for a long time, been excluded from the discourse of psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis as scientific disciplines'. Over 60 years earlier, Suttie had said, 'we have been so anxious to avoid the intrusion of sentiment into our scientific formulations we have gone to the length of excluding it altogether from our field of observation.'

Is there an increasing dislike in the 21st century of even *having* sentiments, so that sentiment is equated with its mawkish cousin, sentimentality?

We've had quite a revolution in Western society, started by the feminists who sought to correct the real inequities that handicapped women. The main difference between ours and Suttie's day is that women, as well as men, now seem to follow the same ideals of hard-edged self-assertion and lack of sentiment. This may come at the

cost of self-esteem.

Even labels in the workplace can erode self-worth. People have become as dispensable as a packet of soup mix (reached their 'use by date'), or called a 'human resource' - a company's property to be mined like a mineral deposit. People down on their luck are described as losers. No longer are the mentally ill described as patients or clients. People needing mental health facilities are now called consumers, a more assertive concept perhaps, but one that suggests greed.

We wouldn't want to go back to the Victorian era with its child labour, abominably low position of women and hypocrisy about sex, to name but a few. We wouldn't even want to go back 30-40 years ago, in Australia, when young girls were stigmatised for being 'exposed to moral danger' and committed to an institution. I spent a few months as a trainee psychologist in such a place and I was appalled at the staff's attitudes towards girls who 'go bad' which invariably meant they were sexually active. The idea that the girls were worse than boy delinquents who merely bashed or robbed, prevailed.

Another concept that has affected society is that good manners are often equated with cringing servitude and insincerity. Curtness is more self-assertive. The "truth" is honest, anything else is phoney, unless you are a salesman or a politician then by definition the truth has to be used sparingly.

In a recent article in *The Sunday Life* magazine in the *Sydney Herald*, the question of political correctness, of pseudo-niceness was explored, particularly the formatted insincerity that has come out of the mass marketing and service industries. I cringe from pat phrases telling me to 'enjoy (the rest of) your day', to be told that 'it's not a problem' when I ask for something in a shop or a restaurant, which incidentally, makes me feel the reverse - that I'm a pain in the bum. I do react favourably to being told 'you're welcome'. The Irish are better at the blarney; they invented the phrase 'you're welcome'.

But am I ignoring something? Maybe there is reassurance in these platitudes for the speaker and the spoken to, alike? They are lubricants in social exchange as so-called manners have always been. Without them, would many such exchanges be reduced to a series of grunts and head movements?

And of course, the lack of certainty in society, particularly of job tenure makes people uneasy about depending on anyone or anything. Personal relationships have often become more temporary, and so are not to be commemorated as they were once. I'm not talking only about marriage, but of friendships, community membership, work friendships or even family relationships. Nor am I saying this is all bad, I'm just saying it is different and takes some getting used to, and that we are sometimes impoverished by the transitoriness of relationships today.

All of this coalesced in my mind when I saw Leonora Howlett's picture *Evertrue and the death of sentiment*.

A collage of old postcards on a water- coloured background and some real handmade crochet borders. The centrepiece is a card from the last century, hand painted on silk, with a tender deferential message to *Dear Miss*. The main message of

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the card printed in relief is *Evertrue*.

Leonora said she had, in her visits to a market looking for bits and pieces of memorabilia of a long gone age, stumbled across a lost world. She found the world of old postcards, 'invariably sentimental – the sort of sentimentality I had thought until then suitable only for ridicule. I recognised an innocent kind of tenderness in these celebrations of anniversaries and of a gentle deference to alluded feelings – poignant mementos.'

As she said, 'I wondered if we had lost something, some of the social emollient to a world where truth has often come to mean insult, and relationships utilitarian.' She also collects doilies and other handwork from the past, sometimes as far back as the late 19th century; women's handcraft usually done to commemorate significant, personal and historical events in life. She showed me one after another. A doily celebrating home life – embroidered with the words *Home Sweet Home*, one from the First World War embroidered with the words *Hands Across the Sea*.

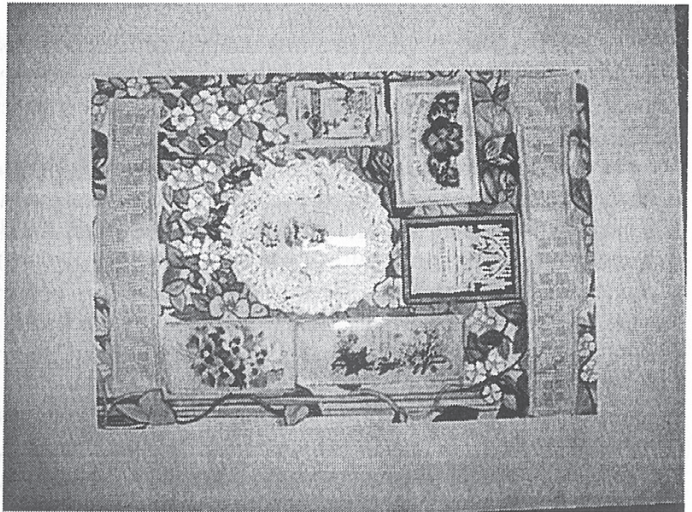
These and postcards enshrined memory, as photographs, maybe, do now. Cards to loved ones, doilies dedicated to a person or an occasion. Keepsakes, maybe even votive offerings, an attempt to make the wishes expressed a reality, or the moment celebrated and made eternal.

Perhaps the strongest indication of our need to express tenderness is the growth in the importance of pets in our society and a more humane attitude to animals.

Some people have always valued having an animal as a companion. Many more do now. Perhaps animals respond in the undemanding way that allows for intimacy without threat of being derided for being sentimental. Affection can be quite covert.

Kindness to animals is not universal; we wouldn't need an RSPCA if there weren't still a lot of ugliness in the way some people treat pets.

Our concern for the existence and wellbeing of wild animals had better catch up and surpass their extinction rate. The painting by Leonora Howlett titled *Rhinoceros tell me your story*, is dedicated to all the wild creatures of the earth and shows a rhinoceros standing on a tomb in a ruined classic temple, lamenting 'the passing of rhinocerosness from the earth'. 'He grows cold and turns to stone and becomes an edifice on his own tomb'.



Many people of all ages I have spoken to, seem to feel the lack of soft and assuaging relations in their daily life and said they craved them, so we have not lost the need for them. We've just become more wary about expressing them. Even some of the teens and twenties I've spoken to have expressed a longing for this. They tend to seek it amongst their peers; they do not frequently spread it around other groups.

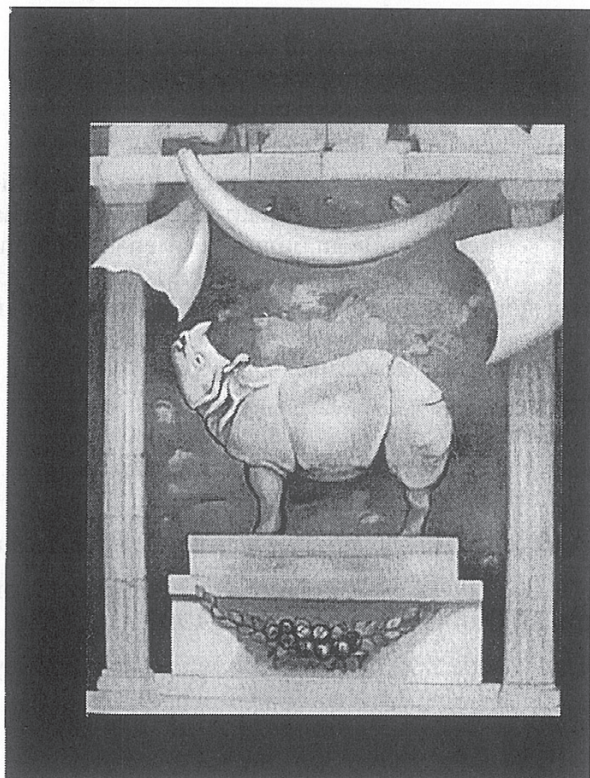
Russell Meares speaks of self as having 'a core of positive feeling. This feeling tone gives value to that which is sensed as peculiarly personal. An accumulation of those feelings, which are generated in conversation, gives to the individual his or her sense of worth. Those that are the most vulnerable to trauma are the tender emotions.'

Softness and tenderness often seems to be missing from courting as depicted on television and the screen, yet productions of novels like Jane Austen's are popular. Is it the fun of looking into the past and being amused by its outmoded quaintness? Is it the beautiful sets and the costumes or is it really something more. Pretty frocks and handsome heroes and even a good story do not of themselves a success make. Maybe it is the absence of blatant confrontation, sashaying around the big issues, enjoying more finely graded exchanges with each other that makes them special.

Love as feeling, not simply sexual mechanics. The popularity of Romance Novels must owe something to this more tender expression of sexual interaction. Explicit sexual encounters where the couple does not get past the lift into the hotel bedroom have a following but the allure of romance is at least as strong.

Except perhaps some reactionary men and women, very few of us would like to return to the era of Jane Austen or indeed to the later Victorian era. But are many of us looking for something that is in short supply in society, or that we feel in some cases has been lost altogether?

The Kiss, a poem by Jan Owen, about a Pole kissing a woman's hand, with a look that says 'this means nothing and everything' is about both romance and respect. A custom that may seem ridiculous to many of us and is unlikely to ever become the



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norm in the modern world, is a tender and impersonal way of celebrating womanhood. He doesn't simply bestow the kiss on the young and the good-looking:

you are Baila, my first love
in her blue cotton dress,
you are my mother
holding back her tears,
you are garrulous Mrs Majewski
who gave us eggs,
you are all our grandmothers
waving after the train,
you are woman,
we may never meet again.

Few of us can live with unrelenting and confronting reality. We are all going to suffer sickness, most will grow old and all will die. Perhaps we need the soothing that comes with softness, gentle manners, and enshrinement of a moment or a person. We all need a little unreality. Even perhaps a little hypocrisy? A fudging of the otherwise grim story of life? Perhaps we need it even more in the world of today.

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G R E G B O G A E R T S

This Begging Life

I was only eighteen, just out of school and I thought I had the world at my feet because I'd landed a job as an articled clerk in a law firm at the top of town. Nothing seemed impossible to me when I left the office, wearing my new pinstripe suit, and strode up the hill to the courthouse to lodge the latest sheaf of documents prepared by other people.

It didn't occur to me that really I was a beggar receiving twenty-one dollars a week for fetching and carrying for the qualified solicitors and the office girls as well. It wasn't that long ago when parents paid a lawyer hundreds of pounds for a son to be indentured into the law.

The suit, the tie, the increasingly polished manners were all a facade. But I looked the part and to me, at such a tender and naive age, that was all that mattered. But what also mattered was not to spill coffee or tea down the front of my suit when I struggled back from the takeaway down the road carrying paper bags full of sandwiches, balancing hot drinks for the lawyers, typists and stenographers.

This routine would have continued but for the onset of law week which saw every lawyer, would-be lawyer and me in The Cathedral overlooking Newcastle Harbour. There we all stood and sang hymns of triumph over adversity, sat and listened to the Church of England minister rejoicing in the church's work for the poor and offering up hopes for a prosperous legal year for the congregation.

We stepped out into the hard light with the gravestones of convict forebears at our feet. They were the worst of felons shipped from Sydney to Coal Town to toil for nothing in the rat hole coalmines. They laid the infrastructure of roads, pavements and buildings, for the small wage of a cat-of-nine-tails across their backs.

A real eye opener came after the service to commemorate the opening of the law year. Some of the clerks and solicitors went to the Westminster hotel in Hunter Street. The Westminster was an old, tiles-on-the-walls-and-floor pub so the publican could hose off the blood and vomit at closing time. You could only swing a cat without a tail so close were the walls to the bar.

There we stood propping up the bar with schooners lined up in front of us. We were in a shout, slapping each other on the back so that strange wigs-and-gowns mateship seemed to become genuine the more we drank. This reverie was cut short when two old blokes burst into the bar and demanded money to bury their dead mate.

Some things don't change. Some would argue nothing changes in Newcastle. The two bristle-chinned derelicts looked just like the men in the photographs I'd seen in

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the textbooks at school when I studied about The Great Depression of the 1930s. They wore the same Salvo suits, the same stained shirts, the same cracked and thirsty leather shoes as I'd seen the men in the photo wearing as they stood puzzled by poverty, yet proud, at the front of a tent town near Horseshoe Beach.

But there was nothing down and out about these two blokes as they worked the bar like the raconteurs they were.

'Come on mate, a few bob to bury our mate. 'e was a veteran. Fought t' make yer safe,' said one bloke.

Hands went to some pockets but mostly they weren't the silk-lined pockets of the solicitors and would-be lawyers, they were the pockets of other men drinking at the bar.

One of the lawyers refused the request for money to bury the man.

'Waddy mean no. Yer can afford it by the look of yer. This man fought for yer!' insisted the second derelict.

'I don't believe you've got a dead mate. I think you're scrounging money to buy more plonk,' replied the lawyer.

Heads nodded in supposed sage agreement, the lawyers, the trainee lawyers stood as one facing the men, a phalanx of defiance that struck the two down and outers dumb. The two circled the bar, quieter now, requesting, almost in whispers, money for their dead mate but no one gave another cent. The two scarpered from the Westminster.

I thought about it. Yes, probably the two blokes didn't have a dead mate to bury, probably they were going to spend the collection on booze. But so what? Why refuse them some sweet port or sherry? Why make their begging even more humiliating by destroying their myth of the dead friend?

It was the beginning of the end of the legal career. I left the pub, went back to the office. When the head typist told me to get her a cup of coffee I told her to piss off.

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

Said Taky Deen (1904-1960): The Satirist who Mixed Business

Introduction

From ancient times satirists have shared a common aim: to expose foolishness in all its guises - vanity, hypocrisy, pedantry, idolatry, bigotry, sentimentality, corruption - and to effect reform through such exposure. One of the earliest known satirical writers is the Greek dramatist Aristophanes whose play *The Clouds* (423 B.C.) satirizes Socrates as the embodiment of atheism and sophistry, while *The Wasps* (422) satirizes the Athenian court system. Another famous satirist was Lucian of Samosata¹ whose 'mission in life was not to reform society nor to chastise it, but simply to amuse it'² through witty and well-phrased comments. A Syrian by nationality, Lucian's satiric dialogues ("Dialogues of the Gods," *Dialogi Deorum*, and "Dialogues of the Sea-Gods," *Dialogi Marini*), which form the bulk of his work, has a style that nicely blends exaggeration with understatement, wherein terrible things are trivialized. Syria also begot the two distinguishing satirists, Meleager and Menippus. A playful epigram on Menippus reads:

This man was a Syrian by birth,
And a Cretan usurious hound,
As the name he was known by sets forth;

¹ The exact duration of Lucian's life is unknown, but it is probable that he was born not long before 125 A.D. and died not long after 180. Something of his life-history is given us in his own writings, notably in the *Dream*, the *Doubly Indicted*, the *Fisher*, and the *Apology*. If what he tells us in the *Dream* is to be taken seriously (and it is usually so taken), he began his career as apprentice to his uncle, a sculptor, but soon became disgusted with his prospects in that calling and gave it up for Rhetoric, the branch of the literary profession then most in favor. In this way Lucian traveled through Ionia and Greece, to Italy and even to Gaul, and won much wealth and fame.

² http://www.tertullian.org/rpearce/lucian/lucian_intro.htm, 02 January, 2004.

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You've heard of him oft I'll be bound;
His name was Menippus-men entered his house,
And stole all his goods without leaving a louse,
When (from this the dog's nature you plainly may tell)
He hung himself up, and so went off to hell.

Said Taky Deen was perhaps the most recent representative of this satiric tradition in Syria. His works, 'almost a dozen in number, fall into the dramatic, the fictional, the autobiographical, the aphorismic, and the journalistic social-political essay.'³ His main contribution in these works lies not only in his mastery use of language in relation to his intentions, but also in his ability to dramatize a human vice or folly with 'acidic sarcasm'⁴ and 'imposing dignity.'⁵

As we attempt to reach an overall assessment of Said's personality and work, we realize that satire was not only an instinctive art for him, but also a device for moral alertness and a means to extend our awareness of why we are as we are. We laugh, but we swallow our laughs when we realize what we have just laughed about.

Childhood and Education

Said Taky Deen was born on 15 May 1904, in Ba'aqlin, a Druze village located in the Shuf region of the Lebanon. Said's early education was at local schools, enhanced by the guidance of his uncle, the well-known poet Amin Taky Deen. This was followed by admission to the Preparatory Department of the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1918. He graduated (B.A.) in 1925, the first member of his immediate family to attend AUB. Another influence on Said's early personality came from his maternal uncles, who provided a 'festival of humor, satire and fun.'⁶ Edvik Shayboub notes, in *Said Taky Deen: His Life and Literary Output*, that Said's natural disposition toward satirical and witty literature may have been the result of 'the company he maintained with his maternal uncles who were known for their quick-wittedness and sarcasm.'⁷

The milieu in which Said was brought up was dominated by Druze religious and cultural values. Among the features of that society the following may be noted: a strong sense of social and religious cohesion that facilitated unity in peace and war; communal and familial dualism;⁸ sectarian animosity, particularly with the

³ Alfred H. Howell 1994. Said Taky Deen (1904-1960). *Middle East Quarterly*, 1(3): 37.

⁴ Latif Abul-Hasan 1994. Said Taky Deen: A Revolt Against Reality. *Middle East Quarterly*, 1(3): 30.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Said Taky Deen 2001. *Ghabat al-Kafour*, Fajr an-Nahda, Beirut. p7.

⁷ Edvik Shayboub 1980. *Said Taky Deen: His Life and Literary Output*. Fikr Publications, Beirut, p. 38.

⁸ This dualism consists of two main classes, 'the initiated', known in Arabic as *uqqal*, literally

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Maronites; inter-Druze rivalry; political feudalism; and, oddly enough, a strong communal identification with Great Britain:

In Lebanon we were sects pertaining to foreign states, and the Druze's share was Britain. To this day – and I claim to be liberated – every time I utter or write anything about Britain I get a shiver that I still can't describe.⁹

It is not difficult to discern the reason why Said felt that way even in his 'liberated' days. The Taky Deen family had enjoyed a remarkable close relationship with the British since the mid 1800s when the British Consul had personally intervened to quash a decision of the Ottoman authorities to have Said's grandfather dismissed from his government post. The Consul's good-office fostered a pro-British feeling in the Taky Deen clan which passed from one generation to another. In 1912, when the British Consul turned up at Said's primary school, the then eight year-old Said gave a welcoming speech in which he said: 'Rest assured, my Excellency, that I am a British Druze.'¹⁰

Although Sa'id wrote mostly in Arabic, and his instruction at secondary level was predominantly in French 'his command of the English language was excellent, as attested by the many spirited (sometimes vitriolic) articles that came from his pen.'¹¹ One of the earliest illustrations of his English language skills can be found in a memorandum presented to the 'Trustees and Faculty from the Arabic-Speaking Students Committee on the Revival of Instruction in Arabic in the American University of Beirut.' The memorandum speaks volume about Said's literary and analytical style. It is an important sidelight on his personality, particularly his frank and outspoken attitude. Above all, the memorandum shows that Said's political loyalty at the time lay basically with the pan-Arab movement of his day. AUB archives indicate that he was elected to the chairmanship of *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*,¹² a pan-Arab student union at the University, in 1923-24, and that he played a very important role in molding its activity and program.

After graduating in September 1925, Said was offered a teaching career by the Iraqi government. But his uncle, Najib Taky Deen, who was serving as a civilian medic in the Medical Service attached to the U.S. Military Force in the Philippines, persuaded him to pursue a commercial career in the Philippines. The idea appealed to Said instantaneously: he was eager for a lucrative job to replenish his parent's diminishing budget. His father used to say to the family 'If I fail to reach the summit, I

"wise," who are familiar with the religious teachings of Druze faith and "the uninitiated", known as *juhhal*, or literally "ignorant" who are not initiated in the Druze doctrine.

⁹ See 7, p28.

¹⁰ Said Taky Deen 1960. *Riyah fi Shira'i*. Beirut, p227.

¹¹ See 3.

¹² The exact date of the establishment of *Al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* can be traced back to the year 1918, when it was officially recognized by the university administration. See Ahmad Hassoun, "The Rise and Fall of *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*," *al-Mashriq*, Melbourne, vol. 2, no. 8, pp. 99-100.

am bound to see one of my children there mounting our flag.¹³ As the oldest of the children with a university degree, Said was ideally positioned to fulfil his father's wish for a more affluent lifestyle.

The Philippine Years

In the Philippine Said established a business in Iloilo, district capital and chief commercial centre on the island of Panay, and then in Cebu, the district capital and chief commercial centre on the nearby island of Cebu. He was a dynamic and tireless worker,¹⁴ but reckless and impulsive, which explains why he went bankrupt twice before he hit the jackpot. At twenty-seven he married Beatrice Joseph, a highly cultured young lady of a Roman Catholic Iraqi family, and begot his only child, Diana, in 1933. Beatrice inspired Said to take up writing again, which he did, by engaging him in literary and artistic discussions. His imagination went wild with different scenes and stories but he never got around to publishing any of his works partly because of his business commitments and partly because he didn't want to take risks with his writings as he often did with money. 'Duty,' he asserted, 'required me to remain true to my art and to go to the people after I have given it my best shot.'¹⁵ The Japanese invasion of the Philippines came as a further blow and set him back few more years.

In 1936, as his financial position convalesced, Said moved to Manila, the Philippines capital, to pursue wider commercial interests. It was tough getting started again, but Said's wittiness and experience carried him through: he went on to conduct a thriving business in partnership with a leading Lebanese entrepreneur. He even purchased a house and settled down to family life. But then disaster struck. On December 8, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the Philippines just ten hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At the time, the defending Philippine and United States troops were under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, who had been recalled to active duty in the United States Army earlier in the year as commander of the United States Armed Forces in the Asia-Pacific region. The aircraft of his command were destroyed, the naval forces were ordered to leave and because of the circumstances in the Pacific region, reinforcement and re-supply of his ground forces were impossible. Under the pressure of superior numbers, the defending forces withdrew to the Bataan Peninsula and to the island of Corregidor at the entrance to Manila Bay. Manila, declared an open city to prevent its destruction, was occupied by the Japanese on January 2, 1942. In the ensuing chaos, the Japanese rounded up Said during a massive mopping-up operation of suspected US collaborators and jailed him in Fort Santiago, a dreaded place where hundreds of men and women were jailed,

¹³ See 7, p. 52.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁵ See the introduction to *Nakhb al-Adu*, Fajr an-Nahda, Beirut, 2001. p5.

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tortured and executed by the Japanese military police, the Kempeitai.¹⁶ Said was interned for a period of 53 days in the Fort after which he went to Baguio, the “summer capital”, 125 miles north of Manila, and itself a scene of bitter fighting before the war was over.

In 1944, the US started a new military campaign against the Japanese. MacArthur's Allied forces landed on the island of Leyte on October 20, 1944, accompanied by Osmeña, who had succeeded to the commonwealth presidency upon the death of Quezon on August 1, 1944. Landings then followed on the island of Mindoro and around the Lingayen Gulf on the west side of Luzon, and the push toward Manila was initiated. Fighting was fierce, particularly in the mountains of northern Luzon, where Japanese troops had retreated, and in Manila, where they put up a last-ditch resistance. Guerrilla forces rose up everywhere for the final offensive. Fighting continued until Japan's formal surrender on September 2, 1945.

After the re-taking of Manila, Said moved back and embarked on new commercial and business ventures. He benefited from the ensuing stability and economic prosperity and was able to finally achieve his primary goal of an affluent life. Financial freedom brought with it personal freedom and prestige and Said, who had a talent for making friends, began to make his presence felt in social and political circles, striking a direct personal relationship with the Pilipino President, Elpidio Quirino.¹⁷ Reflecting on those hardship years, Said wrote:

My weapons during those struggling years were youth, hard work, ambition and acumen. And my enemies were acumen, ambition and hard work along with the treachery of time and people, the folly of youth, over-optimism, prodigality, trusting people off-handedly, and going for ambitious plans that cost millions by punting thousands. So I rose in the world of business like a mounted balloon and plunged down as if I was jumping from a plane. These days I climb the mountain at a pace of one thousand feet a day and descend it at the pace of one thousand feet in split seconds. My eyes are fixed to the summit, but my feet are in the valley, physically aching but spiritually sound... The business people around me reckon I am a great writer and the intellectuals seem to think that I am a skillful businessman. Personally, I think they are both right and wrong.¹⁸

In actual fact, Said had none of the vital hallmarks of a good businessman. He was impulsive, over-trusting, adventurous and highly disorganized. He often embarked on

¹⁶ The fort was destroyed by American forces during the 1945 Battle of Manila, and was restored as a public park after the Congress of the Philippines declared it a “Shrine of Freedom” in 1950.

¹⁷ Elpidio Quirino took his oath of office as president on April 17, 1948, two days after the death of Roxas. He continued the unexpired terms of Roxas inheriting from his predecessor the unsolved problems of the Republic. Among these were peace and order, economic rehabilitation and restoration of faith and confidence in the government.

¹⁸ Said Taky Deen, *Nakhb al-Adu*, p32.

major business activity without analyzing the risk factor. Yet, in spite of all his business inadequacies, Said was able to build a considerable fortune and make a name for himself in Manila's business community. In 1946 he was appointed Honorary Consul of Lebanon to the Philippines through the good offices of Charles Malik, then Lebanon's ambassador to Washington. He held this post until 1949. Said also became deeply involved in national Arab issues, particularly the Palestine issue. By his own account, he even managed to persuade the Pilipino President to vote against the UN resolution to create an independent Jewish State in Palestine. He also returned to intellectual life with two books: *Nakhb al-Adu* (A Toast to the Enemy) in 1946 and *Hifnat Reeh* (A Handful of Air) in 1948. Both books proved successful and quickly helped to re-establish Said as a first-rate writer and satirist after he had been almost forgotten back home. One of his earliest satirical lines can be found in the prologue to the *Nakhb al-Adu*. 'This study is by the admired to the point of worship, Said Taky Deen.'

Homecoming

Buoyed by the success of *Nakhb al-Adu* and *Hifnat Reeh*, Said decided to scale down his business ventures in the Philippines and returned to Lebanon in 1948. 'I returned to Beirut,' he wrote, 'with a burning desire to do something, inside me a power, an electric voltage that could send a mountain to Mars.'¹⁹ Indeed, Said threw himself into local causes with exceptional eagerness, starting with the Alumni Association of the AUB, which was in dormant state 'confined to the tennis courts and a small tea party held once a year.'²⁰ Said was elected President of the Association late in 1948, and served four years, 1949-1952. His presidency gave the Association a new lease on life and led to fundamental changes both in its public image and program. Among his achievements were:

1. Brought the Alumni back into the fold of the Association.
2. Established the Alumni Club House.
3. Restored the Association's newsmagazine *Al-Kulliyah* and its one-time running mate *Middle East Forum*.
4. Expanded the Association's public role.

Appraising Said's contribution to the Alumni Association Alfred Howell wrote: '[Said] will be remembered among AUB Alumni and others who know the full story as the one to whom credit and honor is due for having revived, one might almost say refounded, the modern Alumni Association, virtually defunct since Shehadi's days. The Alumni Club House, the revived *Al-Kulliyah* and its one-time running mate *Middle East Forum*, are monuments to his vision and energy.'²¹

¹⁹ Said Taky al-Din, *Ana wa Al-Tannin*, Fajr an-Nahda, Beirut, 2001. p128.

²⁰ Fajr an-Nahda, Beirut, 2001.

²¹ See 3.

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The Alumni Association offered Said the opportunity to enter the public arena without compromising his image or reputation as an outspoken and honest writer. It freed him from the constraints of local politics and shielded him from its corrupt ways. More importantly, the Association enabled Said to carry on politically from a platform revered for its independence and scholarly achievements. He reciprocated by turning the Association into a moral mouthpiece on sensitive issues, like Palestine. His memorandum to the Committee of Conciliation and occasional political outbursts are instances of how he tried, and perhaps succeeded, in transforming the Association's image. That he was able to do this unopposed was due not only to his charisma, but also to his ability to express his views and ideas, the political and non-political ones, in a moral and responsible fashion. His frequent recourse to gentle satire did not harm his cause.

At the conclusion of his term in 1952, the Association's presidency passed to the wealthy Lebanese businessman, Emile Bustani. Although Said had by now taken a fancy to other public interests, as will become clear from subsequent discussions, he never lost interest in the Alumni Association. He kept a vigilant eye on his successor to ensure, among other reasons, it never slips back into oblivion. Here are some of his critical remarks of how Bustani ran the associations:

Under your leadership, we have an Association lounging on its back imbibing Colas and watching very round tennis balls being chased around very flat courts.

We meant to have a Club with hotel facilities - it is a hotel period.

Not only have you created no new services, but some of the wonderful leads to service that existed before your taking over have just died of neglect.

I vacated for you an office that throbbed with life, ideas, plans, services rendered. You just went in, stuck your picture on the wall, and then abandoned it.

Said's dissatisfaction with Bustani's presidency was one of a number of reasons behind his dramatic entry into the lists against Emile for election to that office for the term 1956-7. The election, held 4 December 1955, was the most hotly contested in the Association's history. Vituperations were traded freely. The *Al-Kulliyah* wrap-up story (January 1956 issue) reports that Bustani had characterized Takieddine (sic.) as 'a dangerously political man.' For his part, Said promised that if he were elected, he would make *Al-Kulliyah* an organ of propaganda for one cause - Palestine... affirmed that if he were to become president he would, if necessary, sell the chairs and tables of the Association to send members abroad to lecture Europeans and Americans about this part of the world. Said's admirers were aplenty: it was early days to forget how, in the two terms he served, he helped 'to develop *al-Kulliyah* beyond a small parish magazine and was the moving power behind building the Club-house and launching

the Association on the road to its golden era.²² This time, however, victory eluded him. He lost by a slender margin despite all the money and other allurements that Bustani invested in his campaign.

Two factors contributed to Said's defeat. The first was his public identification with a political ideology (Social Nationalism). The second was his wit. Although admired for this art, Said probably did not realize that it demands considerable self-possession to believe that satire and wit are valid ways of viewing the world. As Robert Martin succinctly put it: 'Self-doubt, worry, fretfulness [are] more adequate demonstrations of concern than the confidence and assurance that allow a man to be playful with ideas, and lack of ease is thought to be a better indication of trustworthiness than confidence.'²³ Martin's remark is a pointer to Adlai Stevenson's defeat in the US presidential elections of 1952 due to his wit.²⁴

Political Activism

The reason for Said's "politicization" is not difficult to discern. Internal Lebanese politicking, the catastrophe of Palestine, mounting internal and regional pressure, and the intrusion of Cold War rivalries into the Middle East, affected the Lebanese polity in dramatic ways. They exacerbated the country's existing divisions, intensified political discussion, forced public figures to take sides, and fostered a thirst for political action. Just about every Lebanese was caught in this complex web.

The central issue for Said was, had been, and would remain Palestine. The struggle for "Southern Syria" had resumed after World War II (1939-1945) as the number of European Jews arriving in Palestine illegally swelled. Britain, unable or unwilling to offer a tangible solution, finally turned the problem over to the United Nations (UN) in 1947, which in turn voted to partition the country into two states: one Jewish, and one Arab. The proposal was rejected by the Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab states but accepted by the Jews. On May 14, 1948, the Jewish population declared its independence as the state of Israel. Israel was promptly

²² <http://www.aaalumni.org/aub.html>, (January, 2004)

²³ Robert B. Martin 1974. *The Triumph of Wit: A Study of Victorian Comic Theory*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, p5.

²⁴ Adlai Ewing Stevenson (1900-1965), politician and diplomat, was twice the Democratic Party's candidate for President of the United States. He brought freshness, depth, passion, wit and vision to American politics and to international diplomatic discourse that illumined an era. Many considered him one of the greatest political orators of his time, second only to Winston Churchill. After he lost the 1952 election many people who voted against him wrote Stevenson letters expressing admiration for him. Again the Democratic Party's nominee for President in 1956, he received the largest popular vote of any losing candidate in American history. When in 1961 Dana McLean Greeley was elected first President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Adlai Stevenson sent him this note: 'Congratulations on your election as president. I know from hearsay how satisfying that can be.'

invaded by the armies of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Large numbers of Palestinian Arabs fled during the fighting, while others were expelled from their homes through sheer force and terror. Israel managed to maintain its independence and even expand its borders, but a new refugee problem, of the Palestinian people, was created.²⁵

Like many young people of his generation Said was horrified by the plight of the Palestinian people. It fired inside him an intense national consciousness and a thirst for political action. In 1951, in collaboration with Beshara al-Dahhan, he formed a task force called "Every Citizen is a Watchman" (*kul mouwattin khafir*) to combat Zionist activity and propaganda and to expose Israel's local cronies. Fundamentally, "Every Citizen" was a bold experiment in popular action but, as well, a stark condemnation of state institutions and the regimes behind them. On this point Said wrote: 'Every Citizen... was formed to accommodate an urgent national exigency... The authorities, on their own, will not be able to wipe out espionage and smuggling unless they are aided by an organized popular endeavor.'²⁶ Although "Every Citizen" had received positive and highly constructive coverage in the media and local press, it was difficult to sustain: Said received death threats for revealing the names of people suspected of collaborating with Israel, public enthusiasm slowly tapered off, and bureaucratic red-tape built up because Said would not spare anyone. In fact, the chief enemies of "Every Citizen" turned out to be influential members from within the Establishment itself.²⁷

In tandem with "Every Citizen" Said joined the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP). The SSNP, or PPS as the French mistakenly called it, was the brainchild of Antun Sa'adeh, a Lebanese migrant from the mountain town of Dhur Shweir. Described by Albert Hourani as 'a man of courage, decision and powerful intellect,'²⁸ Sa'adeh differed from the ordinary folk of his country in the determination and inflexibility with which he held his political opinions. Much has been written about Sa'adeh, a controversial personality. The admiration he generated in some was equalled only by the antipathy, even the hatred, he aroused in others. These conflicting emotions are perceptible to this day in the attempts to assess his thinking and his vocation as a political leader.

Sa'adeh stepped into the political arena at a time when most Lebanese were uncertain about what kind of an independent country they wanted, and hazier still

²⁵ The desire for a Jewish state was based on the idea that Jews had suffered for too long as a minority group spread throughout the world. Only in a land of their own could they avoid the dangers of political powerlessness. So, although Palestinians did not have a history of mistreating the Jews who lived among them, it was deemed necessary that the new country be primarily Jewish in makeup. Following the Nazi Holocaust, the desire to establish a safe haven and homeland for Jews was fully confirmed with the full knowledge that it could only be achieved by driving the Palestinians off the land.

²⁶ Said Taky Deen, *Ghubar al-Buhayra*, Fajr an-Nahda, Beirut 2001. p50.

²⁷ See 7, p50.

²⁸ Albert Hourani 1968. *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*. Librairie Du Liban, Beirut.

about how to achieve a viable society. Their main point of contention was over the legitimacy of the Lebanese state: while most Christian Maronites - then the largest and most influential Christian sect in Lebanon - felt that Lebanon had a right to lead a separate national existence along Western lines. Most avowed Muslims, led by veteran Sunni politicians, wanted to re-incorporate Lebanon into the Syrian hinterland as it had been before 1920, although in terms of realizing a wider pan-Arab community. In a country where the central authority was weak and where the government was regarded with suspicion and mistrust, this sectarian-driven division over national identity threatened to split the Lebanese entity in half. The establishment of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in 1932 was largely inspired by the desire to see this condition in Lebanon ameliorated. However, instead of siding with one group against the other, as most Lebanese appeared to have done, the SSNP proposed a solution that explicitly emphasized nationalist goals over parochial interests.²⁹ The point that should be emphasized, though, is that the unity sought by the SSNP was a Syrian, not a Lebanese or an Arab one.³⁰ The Party believed that neither the Arabs nor the Lebanese constituted a nation because the factors that underlay their political claims, namely language, ethnicity and religion, did not play a vital role in the process of nation-formation.³¹

²⁹The founding of the SSNP, writes Sharabi, 'marked the end of the first phase of the nationalist movement of the older generation and the beginning of organized political parties.' H. B. Sharabi, *Governments and Politics of the Middle East in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), 143.

³⁰The call for the national independence of Syria goes back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Butrus Bustani, described by one scholar as 'probably the first Syrian nationalist,' (See Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Christians Between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus Bustani," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, II, 1980, 294) propagated it in *Naffir Suriyya* (The Clarion of Syria), a broadsheet he published in the wake of the sectarian unrest of 1860. His writings inspired political consciousness in Syria and gave the Syrian idea its first real impetus. In 1880 a secret group of intellectuals plastered the walls of Beirut with placards urging the Syrians to independence and revolution. Its action had no political significance apart from arousing local suspicion. As the imminent collapse of the Ottoman Empire approached, Syrian nationalism grew in popularity, but it was overshadowed by Islamic and Arab nationalist doctrines. The closest Syrian nationalists came to realize their political aspirations, was in 1920 when Syria was proclaimed an independent Kingdom by the Syrian National Congress. A few months later the new kingdom was terminated by French troops and "Natural Syria" subsequently carved-up into smaller entities by the European states.

³¹The party regards the national spirit as an embodiment of the 'most complete community' differing from all other communities only by the degree of social integration characterizing it. Its founder was opposed to the classical pan-Arabist position of subordinating the process of nation formation to cultural traits. In his paradigm, cultural traits are subservient to group solidarity: they do not cause the nation to come into existence, but proceed from it. What brings the nation together is the intermingling of peoples of different backgrounds living in a specific territory and interacting with it over diverse historical stages. For detail studies of the party's conception of nationalism see A. Beshara 1995. *Syrian Nationalism: An Inquiry Into the*

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Although an Arabist by upbringing, Said was attracted by the SSNP's sophisticated approach, its astute leadership, and its persistent attitude. More interesting were the unique circumstances that led him to the SSNP. In 1949 Said had started working on a play-script called "The Missing Million" (al-malyoun al-Da'ee'), but for almost two years he could not pen an ending for it because 'it posed a problem without a solution.'³² Then one day he received a letter from an SSNP prisoner urging him to take a more rational look at himself: 'I only just read the preamble to your book *Ghabet al-Kafour* in which you say 'My biggest worry in life is to convince my mother that I am no longer a child... It is not difficult for a man to convince his mother (*ummahu*) that he is no longer a child: the difficulty for one is to convince his nation (*ummatuhu*) that he had become a man.'³³ This observation left an indelible mark on Said,³⁴ but he did not join the SSNP until he was assured by the party's leadership (1) that the party did not seek the destruction of Lebanon, (2) that its method and tactics were not violent; and (3) that it would 'not dictate to him what he should and should not write.'³⁵

Said shrugged off criticism from foes and friends alike for joining the SSNP,³⁶ and went on to become one of the party's praised assets. He quickly rose up in its chain of command to become its Dean of Propaganda in 1955. Said was a unique blend of dedicated, perpetual fighter, righteous idealist, and theoretical pragmatist. His writing, abrasive and witty as ever, provided inspiration in a time of gloom and uncertainty. The result was six books in four years:

1. AL-Manboudh (The Discarded) - 1953
2. Rabee' al-Kharif (the Spring of Autumn) - 1954
3. Sayyidati Sadati (Ladies and Gentlemen) - 1955
4. Tabalaghu wa Balighu (Take Notice and Inform the Others) - 1955
5. Ghubar al-Buhayra (The Dust of the Lake) - 1956
6. Ghadan Noqfilu al-Madina (Tomorrow we Will Lock the City up) - 1956

In 1955, at a soccer match attended by state dignitaries, the deputy chief of staff of the Syrian army, Adnan Malki, was assassinated allegedly by a member of the SSNP. Although doubt was later cast on the circumstances of Malki's death,³⁷ the murder

Political Philosophy of Antun Sa'adeh, Bissan, Beirut, p77; Adel Daher, "Some distinguishing aspects of Sa'adeh's thought," A lecture delivered at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, January 27, 1982; and Nassif Nassar, *Tassawarat al-Umma al-Haditha* Kuwait: The Kuwaiti Institute for Further Education, 1986.

³² Said Taky Deen, *Tabalaghu wa Balighu*, p133.

³³ Ibid. The person in question was the Poet Ajjaj al-Mohtar.

³⁴ John Daye 1995. *Said Taky Deen fi al-Hizb al-Qawmi* (Said Taky Deen in the National Party), Fajr an-Nahda, Vol. 1, p26, Beirut.

³⁵ See 7, p68.

³⁶ See Beirut *al-Massa'*, *Al-Anba'*, *Al-Bayraq*, *Al-Amal*, and *Al-Sahafi Al-Ta'eh*, November-December 1951.

³⁷It is rumoured that Egyptian intelligence, said to be working through the Syrian Military

incident gave the Syrian left a pretext to get rid of the SSNP. The Ba'th and its supporters in the army 'cried for revenge,'³⁸ and the Communist Party, eager to participate, 'rushed in to support the Ba'th [sic] and in the process gave a calculated anti-western twist to the Malki affair.'³⁹ The radical pro-Soviet group led by the Syrian deputy and foreign minister, Khalid al-Azm soon joined them.

As Dean of Propaganda for the SSNP, Said led the charge against the new Syrian Left with passion. His pen went into full action producing sharp and inspiring critiques that spared no one. Even Sarraj, whose violent crusade against the SSNP often reached unbearable levels, was slammed. Said wrote as if there was no tomorrow, but often at the expense of his personal health. In 1956, the situation took another dangerous turn after Sarraj,⁴⁰ the Syrian strongman and Nasser's senior ally in Syria, announced the uncovering of a plot by the SSNP to subvert the Syrian regime.⁴¹ According to Lesch, the plot was hatched in November 1956, after a series of secret meetings attended on the Iraqi side by the military attaché of the Iraqi embassy in Beirut, General Saleh Mehdi al-Samara'i and the former Deputy of Staff of the Iraqi army, General Ghazi al-Daghistani, and senior officials of the SSNP, George Abd al-Massih, Iskandar al-Shawi, Captain Salah Shishakli, Said Taki Deen and Ghassan Jadid. Published accounts of the plot revealed that Britain and the United States were behind and fully apprised of what was going on, but that the SSNP did not become aware of their involvement until after the plot was abandoned.

Whatever the facts were, the SSNP was consequently accused of treason: 'large numbers of its members were arrested, the party offices were put under seal, a mob burned down its printing works, sympathizers were purged from the army and administration, and provisional courts set up with special powers to try the

Police Chief of the day, had engineered the murder to get rid of the SSNP. Originally developed by supporters of George Abd al-Massih in the SSNP, this theory has recently gained wider acceptance after the publication of Mustafa Tlas' biography *Mir'at Hayati* (Damascus: Tlas Publications, 1991), 465-484.

³⁸M. S. Agwani 1969. *Communism in the Arab East*, Asia Pub. House, London & N.Y. p60.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Abdul Hamid Sarraj transformed the Syrian intelligence bureau into one of the most brutal organizations in the Middle East. According to Hisham Sharabi, under him 'treason trials, arrests, plots, and counterplots became the normal order of the day. Conspiracy hunts, long-term imprisonments without formal charges, and the use of torture to obtain confessions became ordinary procedures of security. Hundreds of political refugees flocked to Lebanon and neighbouring countries.' In *Governments and Politics of the Middle East in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1962), 130. For an in-depth account of Sarraj's regime see Ghassan Zakariyya, *Al-Sultan al-Ahmar* (London: Arados Publishing Ltd, 1991).

⁴¹See David W. Lesch, *Syria and the United States*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); Wilbur Crane Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's failure in the Middle East*, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980); Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, and vol. VI of Sa'id Taki Deen's *al-Athar al-Kamilah* (Beirut: Dar an-Nahar, 1970).

accused.⁴² Said was tried in absentia and given a long prison sentence. The sentence was never carried out because Said was out of reach of Syrian judiciary. Living dangerously, he continued to hit back, to write, to speak out loud without fear— from Lebanon.

The Final Chapter

A series of setbacks after 1957 turned Said's world upside down: His best friend-comrade, Ghassan Jadid, was assassinated in a Beirut street; the party began to drift into a new direction which he didn't particularly approve of, his financial position hit rock-bottom, his personal safety came increasingly under threat and his health deteriorated as a result of long years of neglect and constant labor. In September 1958, Said left Lebanon hoping to make a fresh start abroad yet again. He went to Mexico, but the climate there did not suit him: he suffered a partial stroke and was consequently advised by his medical team to move to Colombia. After a short stop-over in Barranquilla, Said went to the Islands of San Andres in the Caribbean. His health and finances improved there, but not enough to save him from the imminent. On 15 February, 1960, he finally succumbed to the illness that had been harrying him for so many years and was buried in the local Protestant cemetery in a very low-key funeral.

Said was remembered by the Lebanese and Arab literati in a week of festivities dedicated to his memory and work. The high point of that week was supposed to be a public gathering in Beirut's UNESCO Hall,⁴³ but the government banned the planned rally at the last moment on political grounds.⁴⁴ Instead, the Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut unveiled a plaque in Said's memory in the Alumni Hall as a token of appreciation for his contribution and love of the Association.

Master Satirist

Said's literature is widely praised, not only for its striking novelties and subtle observations, but also for its fluidity, passion, and elevated language. His was a

⁴²Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 242-243. See also Nabil M. Kaylani, "The Rise of the Syrian Ba'ith 1940-1958: Political Success, Party Failure," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 3, 17. Kaylani's article is a useful reference for the Baath's involvement in the campaign against the SSNP in that period.

⁴³ According to the program, the main speakers at the gathering had it gone ahead would have been: Said Akl, Fouad Sarruf, Gibran Hayek, Abdullah Sa'adeh, Abdullah al-Alayili, Amin Nakhle, and Khalil Taki Deen. Said's daughter, Diana, was also on the list, but as pianist.

⁴⁴The government did not want Abdullah Sa'adeh, then Chairman of the SSNP, to speak at the gathering.

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beautiful lonely voice of reason that shone through the mist of political ineptness, hypocrisy, and false intellectualism. As Henri Zoghaib pithily put it: 'Not out of luxury did he come to literature, nor did he aim at degrading it. Literature, to Sa'id Taky Deen, was the beginning of a day, each day- the end of a setting day that promised another sunrise. He did not write with his pen, nor with his heart, but rather with his nerves. The word, in his literature, pulsed. It pulsed with a feverish shiver, with the lived moment. Sa'id Taky Deen was not a man who wrote literature, but rather [he] was literature in the form of a man.⁴⁵

One of the striking features of Said's works is the clever use of humorous side-notes. It is crammed with trenchant wit, irony, and sarcasm. Said does this throughout his writings, more or less intentionally and more or less knowingly. Satire⁴⁶ doesn't suddenly creep into his work: it is innate. Evidence of his satiric ability can be found in his earliest works. His speech at the graduation ceremony in 1925, aptly entitled 'Banu Bakr wa Banu Sheeban,'⁴⁷ bears witness to this.

Hence, in considering Said's writings we must remember above all that he was, first and last, a satirist. His aim was to reveal us to ourselves and to make us see reality as it really is, afresh and from new angles, so that we suddenly recognize the careless cruelty of so much that we think and do. He once said: 'If I cannot find an object for my irony, I ridicule myself.' Realizing that 'daily habit and the cliché of literary, political, or even moral theorizing can readily blind us to our own and our society's foolishness or evil,'⁴⁸ Said employed his satiric powers to surprise and shock his readers. His skillful use of such verbal and stylistic tools as parody, irony, metaphor, choice of words, compels us to be alert and aware at every point. At the end, his greatness is his power to make us think, and feel, for ourselves, and to overcome our self-indulgence which so often confuses our thinking.

To this end, most if not all of Said's literary skills are tuned, and only in relation to this end can they be appreciated and understood. His writings in the English language are no exception.

Here is just one example:

They tell you Israel lives on aid. I tell you it lives on gripe. They occupied Palestine on the gripe that the Arabs took it away from them 2,000 years before. After extracting those billion dollars from West Germany, which the U. S. paid, they've now perfected a gripe against Spain. Look for a Smear - Franco campaign in the U.S. that will be sparked very shortly. It seems the Spaniards chased the Jews away from Spain some centuries ago. Now Israel will be requesting indemnities for that act. I met a fellow reputed to be worth two million dollars who told me that his great great grandpa had a shop in Spain

⁴⁵ Henri Zoghaib, 'Said Taky Deen and Living Literature,' in *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 1, No. 3, Summer 1994, p39.

⁴⁶ The word 'satire' is derived from the Latin *satura*, meaning 'dish of mixed fruits.'

⁴⁷ Reprinted in Said Taky Deen, *Sayyidati Sadati*, Beirut: Fajr An-Nahda, 2001, pp. 100-104.

⁴⁸ Kathleen Williams 1968. *Jonathan Swift*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. p5.

worth six thousand dollars but had to run away with only fifty dollars in his pocket. Now he is working up a claim based on a formula which would show how much money he would have had if his grandpa left Spain with six thousand dollars instead of fifty. This department in Israel is called the 'Ten Year Gripe Perpetual Revolving Plan'. They have claims against all countries which they will reveal at the proper time.

This is a skill which involves at once political perception, imagination, and moral power. Unless we appreciate the detailed precision of these elements we will not be able to fully recognize the moral implications that lie beneath his persuasive words. When we do get there it makes us think, and feel, for ourselves. It helps us to overcome the self-indulgence which so often confuses our thinking.

Said's satire is captivating because it swings backwards and forwards between the two foci of the satiric universe, the exposure of folly and the castigation of vice. On occasions it uses the kinder, gentler form of Horatian satire, as the following extract from a political pamphlet directed to US marines clearly shows:

Like your good ship whose radar can discover an attacking enemy miles away, a good citizen should be equipped with a mental radar that can sight dangers which are still at a distance. There was an American who, years ago, located dangers on his mental radar, James Forrestal, as Secretary of Defense, knew what Communism and Russia meant. He also realized what Zionism and Israel signified. Both the Communists and the Israelis hounded him and he quit, radar and all, via a high window.

The style is casual and informal, and the tone is eminently amusing, but this quiet expository remark admirably served Said's real purpose, which was to insinuate into the minds of his readers the idea that Zionism and Israel were really the other side of the coin to Communism and Russia. The words are carefully chosen to enable Said to make, as well as his general point, some incidental comments that appeal to the sentimental side of human nature. The style is stimulating and precise, and, more importantly, very effective because it is more likely to be read than if it were blatant or direct.

On other occasions, Said is harsh and biting in true Juvenalian fashion. His style strongly exposes the madness and evil of human beings, not taking anything lightly, but instead showing it in all its ugliness:⁴⁹

Who caused the tragedy of last Sunday? Who will cause the future tragedies that will inevitably befall us? It is that vicious system which rewards trouble makers with handouts, with medals, with social recognition and with political plea. Unless we stop throwing coins to the circus operators and cease applauding their

⁴⁹ These quotations come from: John Daye 2004. Said Taky Deen: Bridge Under Water, Fajr an-Nahda, Beirut.

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theatricals, we shall remain in danger of being bitten by a sectarian monkey.

Said was just as sharp in the manner with which he ridiculed people. The following remark about the Egyptian politician and Nasser's strongman, Major Salah Salem, is indicative of what Said was capable of:

As a diplomat, Salah Salem was more of a success dancing naked before African tribes than fully clothed facing intelligent audiences.

Said's ability to oscillate between the two broad satiric categories, Horatian and Juvenalian, is matched only by his ability to employ satire in a humanely constructive way. Infused with good humor and forgiveness, his satire allows the satiric target to participate in the laughter with few ill feelings, and the satirist to act as a sort of a moral guiding figure:

When Mr. Ross packs in a N.Y. Times column so many statements of bald-headed absurdities he is living up to two great traditions. (1) That of an able reporter converting himself to a fake scholar. (2) That of a foreign resident floating around an area and acquiring a false reputation of being an authority on the territory he covers by the mere fact that he occupies a room in one of its hotels... Mr. Ross would do the cause of international understanding a distinct service in putting great distance between himself and this area on which he is reporting, for his mere presence in it throws a cloak of authority on his pronouncement.

Here the superficiality of Western journalism is set before us inconspicuously and reasonably. Its manner blends wit with a critical attitude. Though its tone is light, its function is wholly serious and actuated by a fierce and strenuous moral and intellectual enthusiasm for order and truth.

Another feature of Said's satire is his ability to employ 'mouthpieces', 'personae', or 'masks', and to make them portray certain events or things as they write or speak. One example is 'Shamdas'. Another is 'So Sez Mee'. These personae demonstrate the sustained richness and liveliness of Said's imagination, which constitutes so much of his charm. Their wit, humour and imaginative power are both attractive and convincing, and engage our feelings in a thoroughly enjoyable fashion. After reading each account with close attention we find ourselves manoeuvred into a new way of seeing things for what they are.

The *persona* is almost always intelligent and rational, public spirited, and even in certain ways, unusually far-sighted. He is someone very like Said.

If the whole point of satire is to ridicule and make fun of persons or events by pointing out the ridiculous qualities in them, Said has succeeded. This is true even when it is serious politics. Said could attack and ridicule such diverse areas as the political system, foreign policy and foreign governments, foes and friends, and human folly and stupidity as a whole, and still maintain something that resembles a continuous plot. He does this wonderfully as, for example, in his first ARABWEEK contribution "How they turn Communists". After satirizing Communism as a

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phenomenon akin to 'bird lovers and witch hunters' he delights the rational imagination with the following remark:

[The Communist Party wants its adherents] to hate the capitalist system represented by both local and foreign lords of corruption living amongst us. Not much effort is needed there for hatred to intensify. The reds want their comrades to read books which they furnish, either free or at very low cost, and to repeat slogans. They want them to meet in cells. These cell meetings are very popular. For one reason our people don't have much to do in the evenings. Clubs (mostly gambling joints), entertainment and sports are beyond the average man's means. What better entertainment could be furnished than to meet with a few fellows in defiance of the law, cussing the rich and the mighty, discussing a respectable intellectual doctrine and dreaming of a world of happiness and revenge when victory comes marching down the street waving its banner and making the local comrades the masters of the earth?

Said then turns on the West, which 'tore up our country to pieces and made minced meat of what should have been a united Fertile Crescent— Syria.' With wonderful accuracy and plenty of humour, he ridicules the American approach:

How strong are communists? Official Washington figures list them as 18,000. This is not true... Several months ago the communist party in Lebanon was reported to have conducted a maneuver in which they proved they could paralyse communication in one night. This caused concern in many quarters including ours. So four PPS men, two of whom newspapermen were assigned the task of making an experiment. In two hours flat they toured Beirut and in a mock maneuver blew up the airport, the radio station, the river "Nahr el Kalb" bridge and one guard house at the waterfront. They could have blown up the Bristol Hotel, but instead they decided to go in and have a drink. The fact is that nothing is guarded and any handful of men bent on destruction is able to do so.

Said's total innocence made it possible to him to satirize all different strata of political life. It placed him in a position of authority elevated from the satiric target, be it figure or event. It also gave personal autonomy inside the factual world around him. Said painted portraits with wonderful accuracy and plenty of humor, but behind each portrait lay an interesting story, a moral message, and wisdom. Said saw a great deal wrong with the world, but thought too that one way to deal with it is to laugh at it. His insistence on wit, however, was much more than a personal compulsion: it arose out of a passionate commitment to the common good. Like other satiric writers, he wanted to reform and improve the world or else 'satire has no real effect.'⁵⁰

⁵⁰ H. J. Jensen and M. R. Zirker Jr. (Eds.) 1972. *The Satirist's Art*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. xiii.

Conclusion

Said's indirect way of writing, and his use of ideas and expressions in unconventional terms, render him a thoroughly enjoyable writer. His attitudes and views and his sharp eye for wit are congenial to readers at any time.

Said did not write merely to delight and amuse us. He did not write for the sake of writing. He was interested in writing primarily for its power to move an audience. He wanted his readers to go beyond the immediate targets and to question in the most profound way the social world they lived in. Said's ability to do this by exposing things on a grand scale or by pushing a perfectly acceptable way of thinking in society to a logical conclusion, exonerates him from the traditional charge that 'the satirist... expresses his own pathology rather than the sickness that he claims to observe in the society around him.'⁵¹ Said did not write to appease anyone, let alone himself, but to compel us to think and act for ourselves, to 'shock us into clarity of vision,'⁵² so to speak.

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⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 28-29.

⁵² See 48.

ASHLEY HIBBERT

The Internal and External Exile

Introduction

In this essay I would like to use Knapp's description of the philosophical implications of the esoteric and exoteric exile in order to draw parallels between instances of internal and external exile, and thus to allow the experience of women and minority groups *within* a nation to be understood in similar terms to the refugee. Exoteric exile is a 'permanent physical departure from the land and banishment to areas outside of the boundaries of the country' (Knapp 1), while Esoteric exile is a "private exile" suggesting 'withdrawal on the part of the individual from the empirical realm and a desire or need to live predominantly in their inner world' (Knapp 2).

Minorities, Krishnaswamy suggests, have as much claim to outsider status as exiles and migrants.

If... we read the frontier as a metaphor for the margin... we could include "internal exiles" such as women living within patriarchy, minorities living on the margins of hegemonic cultures, or oppressed majorities living under occupation... (Krishnaswamy 136)

Likewise, Knapp distinguishes two forms of exile - Exoteric (meaning "outer realm"), and Esoteric (meaning "inner realm"). "Exile", Knapp then argues, can be approached both in terms of physical exile - the way of the forced migrant - and psychological exile - the way of minorities, women, and children, who remain "outside" of the state, yet within its official borders. This idea of the introverted, esoteric exile (compared to the extroverted, exoteric exile) may provide a model of the experience of racial and cultural minorities, indigenous groups for whom there is no chance of return, and women and young people who become exiles in their own land.

Said suggests that nationalism - the very cultural artifact designed to enable individuals to have a sense of 'belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage' (Said *Reflections* 176) - is in fact the creator of both the internal and external exile. Said goes on to suggest that, 'statism... is one of the most insidious ["remedies" for uprootedness], since worship of the state tends to supplant all other human bonds.' (Said *Reflections* 183) The very wars which are inspired by national identity are the conflicts that generate the refugee; and the stronger a sense of national identity that results from the birth or rebirth of a nation, *perhaps the greater the suffering of those that are an exception to the rule*. Such suffering could be a result of both a national conscious that is unable to factor the exception into their progressive vision - in other words, from neglect, apathy, and ignorance. Or, such suffering could be a result of

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aggression from the ruling class towards the group that *defies* its own sense of national selfhood, which highlights the short-falls of its own aspirations.

All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement... In time, successful nationalisms consign truth exclusively to themselves and relegate falsehood and inferiority to outsiders. (Said *Reflections* 176)

This projection of falsehood and inferiority may be targeted at those whose existence is interdependent on the nation that they inhabit – such as women and people of color – and which therefore cannot be excluded. It is possible that, in order to have a sense of self, one must have a sense of the other – and this may be as applicable on a national scale as on the personal.

The Internal Exile

While Krishnaswamy notes that ‘Class, gender, and intellectual hierarchies within other cultures, which happen to be at least as elaborate as those in the West, frequently are ignored’ (Krishnaswamy 129), in *Four Ways* and *Old music and the slave women* (Le Guin *The birthday of the world and other stories*), the richness and dynamics of the post-colonial community becomes a focal point in a number of the different stories that are told – how the elderly are looked after, and of course the status of women after a revolution that purports to have done away with slavery, yet has in fact maintained the subjugation of women by their husbands, and civilians by the military.

Le Guin’s novel *Four Ways to Forgiveness* and her short story *Old Music and the Slave Women* have the most overt engagement with Postcolonial concerns of any of Le Guin’s work, specifically showing the dangers of an ex-colonized people becoming a neo-colonial nation. And part of that is the danger of the neo-colonialists colonizing their *own* people - using the same rationalizations that were used to justify their prior enslavement – specifically women. Women become the new colonized, the territory for the patriarchy to inscribe its continued dominance on. This fear of the aborted, half-hearted, incomplete revolution is raised in *Four Ways* when the Caucasian women (the slave cast) challenge the Caucasian men on their continued practice of slavery, through domestic enslavement – that is, “marriage”.

In *Four Ways*, Rokam, an ex-slave argues against sexism within the ex-slave community. The rationale behind the maintenance of sexism that is provided, relates to a call for solidarity – in this instance, that women should look after the children so that the men can fight against their common enemy.

Other said that private affections must be overridden by loyalty to the cause of liberty, and that any personal issue must take second place to the great issue of emancipation. Lord Erod spoke thus at a meeting. I rose to answer him. I said that *there was no freedom without sexual freedom*, and that until women were allowed and men were willing to take responsibility for their children, no woman, whether owner or asset, would be free.

‘Men must bear the responsibility for the public side of life, the greater world the

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child will enter; women for the domestic side of life, the moral and physical upbringing of the child. This is a division enjoined by God and Nature,' Eros answered.

"Then will emancipation for a woman mean she's free to enter the *beza* (residential property), be locked in on the women's side? ... What is freedom for a woman? Is it different from freedom for a man? Or is a free person free?"

The moderator was angrily thumping his staff, but some other asset women took up my question. 'When will the Radical Party speak for us?' they said, and one elderwoman cried, 'Where are your women, you owners who want to abolish slavery? Why aren't they here? Don't you let them out of the *beza*?' (Le Guin *Four Ways to Forgiveness* 203-4; emphasis added)

Rokam's argument highlights hidden sexist undercurrents amongst a people united through their subjugation. This parallels with the rationale provided by Caucasian feminists who are against making racism an issue in their war against the patriarchy:

Bonding as "victims," white women's liberationists were not required to assume responsibility for confronting the complexity of their own experience. They were not challenging one another to examine their sexist attitudes towards women unlike themselves or exploring the impact of race and class privileging on their relationships to women outside their race/class groups. (Hooks 'Sisterhood' 398)

What this suggests is that the eradication of inequalities cannot be piecemeal. Rather than sexism being eradicated, and then racism, and then classism, and then ageism, both justice *and* expediency demands that all inequalities be discarded as part of the one endeavor; justice because one cannot fairly propose that one is fighting for freedom while hanging on to those aspects of the system that infer the imprisonment of others; expediency, because movements towards the eradication of sexism for instance are handicapped when the power structures adopted from the patriarchy are held on to – such as white upper class women being the spokespeople and leaders for their black, lower class so called "sisters". As Simone De Buvoire argued, 'At the end of *The Second Sex* I said that the problems of women would resolve themselves automatically in the context of socialist development.' (Schwarzer)

The inversion of power based on skin color in Le Guin's *Four Ways to Forgiveness*, like the mock trial of Europeans by the Chinese in Lessing's *Shikasta*, makes 'the term "colonized" a shifting position within the text.' (Rowland 176) Since both the black human inhabitants of the two planets in *Four Ways* are in fact descendants of the Hainish (a star-faring race), as are the humans on Earth, Le Guin is showing that the masters of one planet can just as easily be the slaves on another, even if they are of the same "stock". This inversion of power relations can remind us that the tribes which now make up Britain were themselves once victims of colonialism in the Romans' empire building. Dichotomies such as East (Colonized) - West (Colonizer) can easily break down when East colonizes East, West Colonizes West, and East colonizes West. The benefits of further challenging a dualism of East-West, Developed-Developing nations, as the object-subject of Postcolonial Studies, is that it permits "'native" breeds of colonization and oppression' (Covi 56) such as the "colonization" of women, which occurs both in developed and developing countries.

Hooks highlights the hypocrisy of white women trying to maintain the status quo in terms of white-black relations (Hooks "Racism and Feminism" 377).

White Racial imperialism granted all white women, however victimized by sexist oppression they might be, the right to assume the role of oppressor in relationship to black women and black men. (Hooks 'Racism and Feminism' 375)

The legacy of this is that feminism has not evolved to implicitly include the end of racism. Especially not when the Caucasian woman's professional mobility – which she has worked so hard to win, is facilitated by black women who look after children, carry out domestic chores, and provide sweatshop labor in the manufacture of goods which the white woman goes on to wear.

It would then seem, to judge the feminist movement by its "successes" that feminism has aspired for the same rights for women as for men. Unfortunately, this model of "freedom" involves the opportunity to subjugate the racial other. Likewise, neo-colonial states can be seen to aspire to develop into a western model, which operates under a climate of scarcity, and thus repression of other groups. Said's description of exile as a "jealous state" (*Reflections* 178) can also assist in an understanding of Caucasian women's hypocrisy.

Likewise, Caucasian women may not be willing to even concede the plight of people of colors, since to recognize *another* repressed group is to endanger one's own pride in the history of one's suffering. It is to destabilize one's sense of martyrdom. In reference to Israeli attempts to eradicate the appearances of the Palestinians as experiencing an exile in any part resembling that of the history of the Jews themselves, Said suggests that 'It is as if the reconstructed Jewish collective experience, as represented by Israel and modern Zionism, could not tolerate another story of dispossession and loss to exist alongside it.' (Said *Reflections* 178)

Byerman notes this reluctance to disassociate oneself from the status of victims in the case of the Antiguans. Without the comfort of the slavery, Byerman argues, 'there is the painful reality of human freedom and responsibility ... Antiguans, then, maintain a myth of their own noble enslavement in order to escape their entry into a common humanity.' The persecution of a culture, class or race by a historically persecuted group, then, is not hypocritical of, or contradictory to, that persecuted group – it is essential to it.

The External Exile

Edward Said romantically "foregrounds the "exile figure" as the most authentic embodiment of the postcolonial intellectual" (Krishnaswamy 127). Krishnaswamy praises the migrant as being anti-nationalistic, pro-humanitarian, and socialist (Krishnaswamy 126). The traveler is a trans-nationalist, and the exile the new paragon of postmodernism, having

Transformed the world into a vast playful text and legitimized the pleasures of non-attachment and non-commitment ... delinking the distress from dislocation and the attendant idea of belonging everywhere by belonging nowhere. (Krishnaswamy 137-8)

Rushdie also appears to look upon the loss of a homeland as belonging more to the realm of romanticism, affirming the exile's possession of "stereoscopic vision" (Rushdie *Imaginary* 19). Gurr summarizes the act of "creative exile" as being a movement from the *Gemeinschaft* or 'small, immobile, close-knit communities' which he goes on to refer to as the "colony", to the *Gesellschaft* or 'large, impersonal and individualistic society' which he goes on to refer to as the "metropolis" (Gurr 7-8). The artist, then, does not simply seek to move from the small-town mentality of the province, to the greater creative liberties of the city, but from the conservative to the liberal. The major personal benefits of Mansfield, Joyce, and Naipaul's creative exiles, then, were to allow both themselves and their readers to gain a fresh perspective of their home.

The great strength of modern writing in English lies much more in its exiles than in its metropolitan writers. I think that the reason lies partly in the stronger sense of home which the exile has, and in the clearer sense of his own identity which his home gives him. (Gurr 9)

However, in light of Glad's *Literature in Exile*, Gurr's proposition that 'the pressures of creative exile on those modern writers who were born in colonies and who took flight to the metropolis could be enormously constructive,' (Gurr 9) certainly appears to fall into the category of American romanticism – an idea illustrated by 'poets in Paris passing their time in cafes and having their saucers counted' (*Literature in Exile* 1). Glad lends a much needed weight to bring us back to earth and remind us of the realities of exile:

From the point of view of the writer, however, exile is at best a mixed bag. The writer abroad encounters obstacles far greater than those in the path of the stay-at-home. First of all, his chief tool – language – is often useless. Furthermore, his former way of life – national history, food, television shows, road signs, etc., etc. – is irrelevant (and perhaps even uninteresting) in the new context. (Glad vii-viii)

Said argues that the exile suffers, and must suffer, from their *own* sense of mobile nationalism, as paranoid as the conventional, stationary form of nationalism (Said *Reflections* 177). The exile, then, is possibly not as virtuous as Knapp often passes them off to be. Formed from an act of gross exclusivity by their peer, does the exile in turn aspire to create their own bubble of exclusivity that Jiri Gruša describes colorfully as a "portable ghetto" - 'a circus cart that you push ahead of you all around the world?' (*Literature in Exile* 32) Strangely echoing Knapp's description of the esoteric and exoteric exile, Rushdie also emphasizes the dangers of adopting a 'ghetto mentality' (Rushdie *Imaginary* 19):

To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be, I believe, to go voluntarily into that form of internal exile which in South Africa is called the "homeland". (Rushdie *Imaginary* 19)

This, however, may not result solely from a spiritual need – the exile seeking to glorify their status for their own morale – but also from a practical necessity: As Said observes:

Exile is a jealous state. What you achieve is precisely what you have no wish to share,

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and it is in the drawing of lines around you and your compatriots that the least attractive aspect of being in exile emerge: an exaggerated sense of group solidarity, and a passionate hostility to outsiders, even those who may in fact be in the same predicament as you. (Said *Reflections* 178)

Thus, Said goes on to explain, the persecution of the Palestinians by the 'proverbial people of exile', the Israelis, is not a senseless, sadistic policy by a people who Gentiles would assume could empathize all too easily with those suffering under the yoke of tyranny. It is in fact a cold, calculated act of securing one's own place in a dangerous world, amongst numerous other groups which are hungering for the same right – to have a place to call home. That the Israelis are the very agents of the diaspora of the *Palestinians* is conveniently breezed over (though I use the term "diaspora" with its original meaning, "dispersion", in mind, rather than attempting to draw strict parallels between the contemporary Palestinian experience and the historical Jewish experience, a project which Said himself is averse to (Rushdie *Imaginary* 173-4)).

Said, though affirming the virtues of the exile achieving a "contrapuntal" awareness of various cultures does go on to stress the psychological destructiveness of migration. There are many different reasons behind exile – as Krishnaswamy recognises – and different experiences of the state of exile, as attested by *Literature in Exile*. As well as different motives behind exile – as Said observes, 'Hemingway and Fitzgerald were not forced to live in France. Expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions.' (Said *Reflections* 181) These different responses are important in highlighting that as well as their being numerous different *forms* of exile (indeed, it appears that the word is used far too liberally), each particular experience of exile even within a particular form of exile is unique. As Radulescu observes, 'There are as many exile stories as there are exiled bodies.' (*Realms* 186) It therefore appears more appropriate that "exile" be used to refer not simply to a forced migration, or a voluntary migration taken at a young age, but rather whether such a move has helped form an individual who is, to use Said's expression, intrinsically 'out of place' – that is, with no real land to call home. Exile, then, should be a term that refers to (psychological) effects rather than causes.

Said appears antagonist towards the "pallid notion" held by non-exiles regarding the "redemptive" benefits of the exile. Instead, he sees the true value of the exile lying in much darker realms that can inform the non-exile of the heartlessness of the world towards the homeless. (Said *Reflections* 183) The exile gives a personal element – a "face" – to refugees, which are rarely considered in singular terms, opposed to plural terms. I would argue that the ability to make alien what to the non-exile was once "natural" is inherent in the voluntary or involuntary émigré, not exclusively - as Said appears to suggest (Said *Reflections* 185) - of the exile. Rather than the exile being the scapegoat, or martyr figure, as Said's use of the term "redemptive" appears to suggest, the exile's experience is confrontational. Instead of challenging national borders by crossing them, the migrant may in fact reaffirm the power and reality of borders through the pain of their transition. Uniquely, the exile can help the non-exile to

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understand

That in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross border, break barriers of thought and experience. (Said *Reflections* 185)

As Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands" suggests, any form of extended yet finite absence from one's homeland, be it due to a voluntary or an involuntary departure, results in an exile *from the place that we knew* – 'the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity.' (Rushdie *Imaginary* 12). Thus, Rushdie appears to suggest that exile is a fundamental aspect of the human experience. We are constantly banished from the moment of time that we just inhabited. We disperse through time. The physical exile is one who can more easily remind everyone of the inevitability of *temporal* exile – to remind the non-exile to 'regard experiences as if they were about to disappear' (Said *Reflections* 185).

That V.S. Naipual, like Katherine Mansfield, 'Began his life in exile by ... creating a sense of his own identity by building his home in his fiction' recalls Rushdie's notion of the "imaginary homeland". These descriptions of and by creative exiles do not do anything to reassure their reader that an accurate, organic image of the third-world experience is being portrayed. Just as the colonialist has been shown to have projected their own shadow, or any preconceptions for that matter, on the "East", the émigré third-world intellectual may be repeating history. This raises the questions of whether the third-world intellectual can speak on behalf of the people that they have left behind or whether they merely attempt to 'colonize' their reader, the first-world bourgeoisie, by overwhelming them with their *own* vision (potentially less fantastic than the western vision only by degrees) of the East. Who, then, is in a position to present an honest, authentic portrayal of the third-world? I doubt that the westerner can - in exploring how Lessing reproduces the 'white man's burden all over again' (Le Guin *Language of the Night* "Science Fiction and the Other"), Rowland also highlights the political dangers inherent in well-intentioned representations of an Other who one is not exactly familiar with, and thus the 'colonial ironies of representation where desire for solidarity with the "brown man" is insufficiently distanced from the white dictator' (Rowland 171).

I would suggest that it is the nomad, the internationalist, the wanderer, the Diaspora, in the more balanced sense of the words – one who does not belong anywhere and instead belongs *everywhere, including their home of birth*. For the third-world intellectual to depart their homeland, and then wander the West, does not make them a person of the world – not if they are unwilling to return, time and again, to the East. To use the Western academic institutions as a mouthpiece for Eastern concerns – to attempt to speak to the bourgeoisie of the developed world on behalf of the proletariat of the undeveloped world - is impossible if one is not willing to constantly reaffirm one's bond with the "colony".

This scenario contrasts with the motivation behind creative exile that Gurr

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provides: of an attempt to escape from the burden of one's nightmare-like history – the 'rubbish heap in which lie hidden the materials from which self-knowledge can come' (Gurr 10). The motivation Gurr observes behind the creative exile is clearly therapy – 'they flee from their own society and history at an early age. They spend the next decade or more of their lives constructing a vision of the lost home in their fiction. And only thereafter, if the vision is achieved and the therapy works, does the writer emerge, truly detached, homeless and history-less.' (Gurr 11) The transnationalism that Krishnaswamy praises, then, is driven by a desire to escape one's nation.

In any case, both Knapp and Gurr concur that the artist, writer, critic, and intellectual must exile themselves within or without their own community, to fully realize their abilities and precisely critique their own society. The artist must be either introverted, or extroverted. Yet as Le Guin suggests throughout her work, clearly with *Always Coming Home*, whether introversion or extroversion, internal or external exile, is chosen, one must end one's exile. This does not require a home coming. Rather, one must transcend one's status as "homeless".

The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his [love]. (Hugo of St. Victor, quoted by Said *Reflections* 185)

Rather than understanding themselves as being cut off from one place in the world, I propose that the émigré perceives themselves as having the rest of the world opened up to them – unlike Hugo of St. Victor, rather than *perfect* exiles I propose *strong* exiles. I would also argue that a person who is aware of many beliefs, and compassionate towards all victims of dogma, is as unlikely to fall victim to any as one who had 'extinguished' their love of place, though I do recognize the distinction between "place" and "people". Said appears to fail in his attempt to establish that the standard exile, who he describes as being aware of *multiple* cultures, settings, and homes, fits Hugo of St. Victor's criteria of "the perfect man" (Said *Reflections* 186). Said thus appears to be describing the exile as a "strong man". *How* strong they manage to be, he leaves open, is a matter for how varied their experiences, and how total their love of the world.

Said himself appears to wish to be a "perfect man" rather than a "strong man", to avoid remaining in the 'state of standing civil war' that he experienced as a result of his Western-style education during his youth (Said *Reflections* 558). He appears to argue, then, that being a man of one world (a "tender soul") is fine if you have every reason to believe that you will never need to leave your country of birth; being a man of two worlds (a "strong man") involves a hellish division of loyalties; while being a worldless man (a "perfect man") means none of the distractions to an otherwise disinterested scholarly life. James Seaton, however, argues that Said's attempt at scholarly objectivity – to be a "perfect man" – is an unattainable ideal.

Said's problem is ... that his intellectual stance is based on a determination to avoid entangling alliances with any traditions at all. This refusal encourages Said to present himself as entirely high-minded, seeking only truth and justice, untouched and unimplicated in the guilt that all traditions must bear by virtues of their histories. At

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his best Said grapples with the dilemmas of multiple allegiances. All too often, however, he eludes such difficulties by moving to a moral high ground far beyond ordinary mortals, anomalous territory for a proponent of worldly, secular criticism. (Seaton 182)

By highlighting Hugo of St. Victor's emphasis on the need to 'achieve independence and detachment by *working through* attachments, not by rejecting them' (Said *Reflections* 185), Said suggests that the state of perceiving oneself *as an exile* is important in the process of achieving a transnational identity. The exile is caught up in the desire for objects, people, and places lost and beyond reclamation. They appear to the non-exile as having transcended materialism, yet this is an unfair appraisal. Just because the exile appears to be unimpressed with the materiality of their host country does not mean that they do not desire the material familiarity of their homeland. This, as suggested earlier, fails to recognize the suffering of the exile. By crediting the exile with having transcended the material world, credit is not given to them for their endurance of the pain of having their immanent world torn asunder. Yet at the same time, too much credit is given when the exile is seen as having achieved the state of perfection that Hugo of St. Victor describes, who appears to suggest that upon assuming the status of "strong man" or "perfect man", they will have transcended the label of exile.

It is the nomad who is more entitled to the label of strong, or perfect. Nomadicism is, in many regards, a voluntary life style, which I believe grants it a greater nobility than the exile, for whom whatever strength of will that they have gained from their emigration is a result of circumstances beyond their control. The exile grows out of necessity – the nomad, it would appear, grows out of choice.

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The Unknown Arriver

It is the last week of his unendurable struggle with cancer, he is sitting in the room reserved especially for him in the main city hospital, surrounded by his visitors: family members, relatives, friends, students and admirers, and by all those whom he has, for one reason or another, asked, or hasn't asked, to see, but who came anyway. He lets a brave smile spread across his face, as he relates anecdote after anecdote, and joke after joke, triggering long ripples of laughter and creating a cheerful atmosphere. The same people had gathered on happy occasions, such as a wedding, a circumcision, or the birth of a child, but not to bid farewell to a dear one who is about to depart this life in a few days or hours. Here joking and earnestness seem to mix well at the doorstep of death.

I pretend to smile and to listen to what he is saying. In truth, I try hard to comprehend one thing: to unravel a mystery that has baffled me for the whole weeks of my long, uninterrupted visits I have been paying him; in other words, during all my semi-permanent stay with him in the hospital ward throughout the last four months he has been there. He had been going to Paris almost every month, where he was treated for five consecutive years. The treatment did not work; when he fainted one day, he was rushed to this national hospital.

The one thing that has baffled me and made me feel so powerless and, at the same time, jealous is that his right eye has been fastened on the entrance of the ward as if expecting someone, while his left eye seems to dread the arrival of that expected arriver and not to want him in yet. It is as if one eye were inviting that unknown arriver to enter while the other is warning him not to come in, turning him away.

Thirty years of good companionship, close friendship and true brotherliness, not to mention the striking similarities of our family backgrounds, education, experiences and professions. All this has enabled my friend Mohammad and me to appreciate each other's desires and feelings by a mere look into the other's eye. Isn't the eye an open window on a person's inner self? At times, we would, in the presence of others, communicate with each other, without uttering a word. We would express desires and requests, acceptance or refusal, satisfaction or anger, and joy or sadness, while the others were completely oblivious to our "conversation". To understand his request, all I had to do was to look at his eyes; and for him to know my feelings, he had but to glance at mine. We could get to the bottom of each other. We had no

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secrets; our hopes and worries were the same. Our sentiments were identical and our feelings similar, as if we were one being or one soul living in two bodies, as the poet put it:

*His soul is mine and my soul is his,
When he wants I want,
And when I want he wants.*

That is why I grew alarmed at my inability to understand this ambiguous situation: his right eye burning to meet that unknown arriver, and his left eye shunning his arrival.

It is perhaps the feeling of grief rising from my breast that has dulled my intuitive power, or it may be the stress I have been experiencing lately that has paralyzed my intellectual faculties. That is why I have today plucked up my mental and spiritual powers and concentrated my gaze on him without him being aware of it, for he has been too busy talking to his visitors. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that his right eye is hoping that the unknown arriver will come soon, and that his left eye is repelling him.

In all my philosophical studies and psychological research, I have never come across a similar case in which a person's mind splits up in such a way and his resolve is so clear. All I can remember from my studies are two cases: a drawing and a poetic verse. The drawing is carved on one of the walls of the ruins of Babel representing a viper with two heads, each one of which is pulling violently in the opposite direction. The poetic verse is by an ancient Arab poet in which he describes a frightened wolf in these words:

*It sleeps with one eye shut,
With the other it guards against death;
It is both wide-awake and asleep.*

I am not one to accept defeat; and my resolve is as strong as his. He's been battling cancer for five long years; it has mercilessly assailed the bone marrow, gnawing at his bones until they have become like a piece of glass the cracks of which look like a spider web. The bones have become so brittle that they could collapse at the lightest gust of wind and break into small pieces that scatter all over the place. That is how his Doctor described his state. In spite of this, Mohammad leaves his room twice a day to walk in the hospital corridors in a vicious attempt to "breath life" into his fragile bones. Then he returns to the reception hall in his ward to take his seat in the middle of the gathering to welcome the visitors, and to tell them funny anecdotes, jokes and stories. Sometimes I can tell from the look in his eyes, as he speaks with a smile, that he is in acute pain, but he just casts a meaningful glance at me and smiles. He wants to teach me how a man dies in dignity. 'As he has lived in dignity!' I'd add, with a glance. Then without drawing anyone's attention, I walk into the nurse's room

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next-door to ask her to give him a painkiller dissolved in water so that his visitors would not notice that he is taking medicine. It's his last week, according to the head Doctor who is attending him.

I glance around me, looking at each face. They are all here. I know them all. Not one of his friends is absent. But who is this expected arriver? For me the problem is no longer just my inability to solve the paradox in his eyes; the challenge I am facing is to unravel the mystery of this expected arriver whom my friend refuses to announce. In other words, what pains me is that my bosom friend has kept it a secret from me. I have never kept a secret from him!

The fire of wanting to rise to the challenge keeps burning inside my ribs. I must solve this mystery. It is curiosity that is deep-rooted in the soul and which elevates man to the peaks of knowledge at times, and at other times it sends him tumbling down. I will not allow him to carry his secret with him to the grave! I will crush this shell to get the pearl out. To learn this secret, I'll have to proceed differently. I am not going to beg him to tell me it! It is clear that he does not want to tell his secret to anyone, not even to the closest people. He conceals it from even *his* "self", I mean from *my* "self" who is *him*. I'll unsheathe my second technique which I have kept up my sleeves, and I'll brandish it at him. The first technique, by which I mean "eye language", helps only to understand desires, requests and feelings, but it fails to reveal the subtle expressions and exact names. In the last case, I'll resort to the second technique known as "mind-reading".

This last technique, which we both master, consists of reading each other's mind without the need for words. Mind-reading had first arrested my attention when, as a child, my father took me with him on a trip to Alexandria, Egypt, in the summer. One evening, we went to a theater-restaurant for dinner. On the stage, there were two magicians, one of whom went down towards the spectators while the other remained on the stage, blindfolded and with his back to the public. The first magician walked towards me, perhaps because I was the youngest of the spectators, or perhaps he knew from my complexion that I was not Egyptian, but just a tourist on his first visit to Egypt. He gently asked me to give him my passport or my ID, which I did. Then he began to read the information in my passport silently without moving his lips. The magician who was on the stage was reading aloud the information which his friend was reading silently:

Name: Ali Ibn Mohammad Alkasimi
Nationality: Iraqi
Profession: Student, etc.

After a short while, the first magician went to another tourist and repeated the same thing. Turning to my father, I asked him, my eyes alight with excitement and happiness:

'Isn't there a trick in all this?'

'Absolutely not!' my father said, 'They are reading each other's thoughts, just as others can read lips. For example, a lip-reader uses his eyesight, and a mind reader

uses his mental perception. It requires a bit of intellectual harmony, training and concentration.'

At this moment, the boundaries between magic and reality vanish, and imagination and reality merge in my head.

'But, Dad, can I learn mind-reading?'

My surprise and joy intensified when I heard my father say: 'Why not? I can help you!'

My father had studied religion in one of the religious schools in Baghdad and practiced spiritual exercises and Sufism. Upon our return from Egypt, my father started to train me on mind-reading. This art is slightly different from telepathy in that mind-reading takes place in the presence of two people who are in the same place. My father explained that "thinking" and "idea" or "ideas" are not quite the same thing, because thinking is a mental process. It is molded into a thought that is translated into an internal verbal sentence that sticks in the mind and which linguists call "middle language". When this sentence goes from the stage of thinking to that of expression, and when it is expressed in words through the tongue, the lips and the rest of the mechanisms of articulation, it is picked up by the listener's ears and transmitted to the brain for understanding and assimilation.

My father's exercises reminded me of those of my piano teacher who taught me music lessons. She'd strike a note and ask me to name it. I'd listen to the note and say: 're'.

'Try again!' the teacher said, playing the same note again.

Then I'd say: 'fa.'

'Try again! Listen carefully!' she said as she played the same note a second time: 'mi'

'Yes! That's good!' she said, which made me feel good.

My father followed a similar method: he'd think up an idea, and ask me to read it in his mind. I'd collect my mental perceptions and concentrate on his mind, exactly as he had taught me to do. Then the idea would gradually become clear in the form of a linguistic sentence which I had difficulty reading at first. However, through repetition and practice, I was able to read his mind easily.

Here I am sitting in front of my friend in the hospital ward. Two days have elapsed since I launched my continuous, but unsuccessful attempt to solve the mystery: that of his right eye expecting an unknown arriver, and his left eye warning him not to come in, fearing his arrival. To solve the mystery, I must use my second technique: mind-reading. But I hesitate to unsheathe this technique for two reasons. One is the mental strain that accompanies this technique due to the energy spent concentrating; the other is that my friend also reads thoughts. What is amazing is that he, too, had learnt it from his father who taught religion at Al-Qarawyyin University in Fes. Didn't I say that we had similar hobbies, values, customs, education, and family backgrounds? My friend has only three days to live, according to the Reanimation Doctor. He is surrounded by all his relatives, true friends, former students, and even by some doctors and nurses who have been spending some of their off-duty time with

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him. Sidi Mohammad, whom I have nicknamed “Heart winner”, has won them all. He has stolen their hearts, and they cannot stand the thought of being away from him. I glance at him. Our eyes lock. From my look, he senses that I am trying to read his thoughts. An unusual smile flits across his lips, and his eyes glow in a particular way. I understand what he means! He is flinging a challenge at me, as if to say:

*I have kept the secret in a room with a locked door,
Whose keys are lost;
And the door is now sealed off.*

He’s joking with me; there’s no doubt about it. He’s playing, as he always does, even in our everyday conversations. He’s constantly playing, always using paronomasia and antithesis, and making ample use of play on words. He uses ambiguous expressions, and invests his linguistic studies to speak and think in an inimitable manner. But this time, I’m not going to let him get away with it. I’ll put an end to it! I’ll show him what I can do, too. I’ll break the seal, knock down the door, and smash walls.

You know who I am! No, my dear friend, you’ve overstepped the bounds of joking, and landed in the courtyard of earnestness and reality. Death is the only invariable reality in this existence; it accepts no joking. You’re still wearing the clown’s mask and laughing and joking around. No, my good friend, that is not the way to enter the dominion of death!

I shut my eyes and concentrate the energy of my visual powers on his thoughts to read them. I cannot see anything, so I try again with greater concentration. To my utter surprise, there is nothing to read. His mind is empty; there is no idea in it that I can pick up. What am I saying? *Even the small mind of a fetus in its mother’s womb has convolutions in which are recorded all the sounds and events that have reached it from the outside; even this small mind is not a blank sheet as yours is now. Stop playing; for I’m in no mood for that!*

He breaks into a smile and continues his conversation with the others. He’s challenging me. I’m ready to meet his challenge. What I need is more concentration and effort to carry out an unprecedented attempt: I’ll try to read his emotions before they are expressed in a “middle language” sentence. No doubt he has intentionally shut his feelings out of his mind. He has kept them down there in the depths of his soul.

I spend all of the afternoon trying, my whole body dripping sweat. I have a high fever. One Doctor, who is amongst the visitors, notices my condition. Even the hospital Doctors have fallen into the habit of spending their leisure time with him. He has fascinated them with his talk. He’s the greatest “enchanter” of all. I walk out of the room, the Doctor hot on my heels.

‘Nothing’s the matter.’ I said, ‘I’m fine!’

But I’m not one to be defeated at a first try. I’ll try again tomorrow morning. All his visitors have now left him. It’s dinnertime. I must go, too. I do not wish to see the

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nurse spoon-feeding him, because he has not been able to use his hands these last two days. But I'll be back tomorrow morning. He has only one or two days to live, according to his Doctor, and I must solve the mystery which he did not want to tell anyone.

I try in vain to get some sleep in preparation for my last battle. I get up early, take a cold bath to summon all my internal and outer energies. I head for the hospital in the early morning before the sparrow starts singing, the lark leaves its nest, and the sun reaches the vault of heaven.

I find him alone. Our eyes meet. The nurse walks in, carrying his breakfast. I ask her to leave. Something inside me makes me want to be alone with him. I begin to feed him as we sit in silence. We are engaged in a continuous eye talk, even though eye reading is today much more difficult than usual; for suppressed tears have stuck to the inner corners of our eyes. This has been the case for the last four months: as soon as we are alone, stubborn tears assail us.

Unwillingly, my eyes beg him to disclose the secret of the unknown arriver. No response! He has a vacant look in his eyes. There is neither acceptance nor refusal. This is his habit: he never says 'no' to anyone, and he's very generous. But what's this information that he is withholding from me? I look at him. From my look, he understands that, in these circumstances, I'll do my best to unravel this secret.

He falls silent. Brimful of tears, my eyes are riveted on the whole of his body - not just on his eyes or his facial features, but also on the whole of his being. With my powerful look, I transpierce the wrinkles of his weary face, the orifices of his withered eyes, his pale skin, his crushed bones, and his flattened chest. I get to the bottom of his heart, and join its faint beat in a funeral recital. I infiltrate into his blood that flows painfully slow. I dive deeper and deeper.

My forehead is oozing sweat, and my body is burning with fever. My heartbeat increases rapidly, and my vision becomes blurred. I see him inclining unnaturally in his seat. He shuts his eyes. His head drops down his chest, and his body leans forward. He's falling off his chair. I cannot see anything. Everything is shrouded in darkness. I fall down, too, unconscious. Our bodies are laid out side by side on the floor.

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S U S A N B E I N A R T

The Diamond Ring

In Africa life is cheap and black lives even cheaper. That's what our mother says when asked about our 15 years in Cape Town. She shrugs her shoulders and looks beyond me for she has found a bit of peace in latter years. Then she rests her hand on the edge of the tea tray and flashes her diamond ring. 'This,' she usually adds, her long arm quivering, 'is all I really got out of Africa.'

Our dad, too, resisted Africa's charms. He used to suck his Sherlock Holmes pipe and trample our proteas into their native soil. Or redden his sons' buttocks with his carved stick while his whisky with ice wilted on the sideboard. He kept a collection of guns hidden about our house. 'Just in case,' he said, 'the natives riot.'

Though Ray was the one who liked stealing Dad's guns, I was the son who annoyed him most. For example I once stamped on and squashed Ray's pet mouse. I did it because I had to; I couldn't stop myself. I grinned in Ray's face while Dad laid about me with that carved stick, and my mother was hurt trying to push Dad off me. After that I watched our maid, Daisy, bend down and pick up the flattened mouse, burying it among the trampled proteas. Its rigid head and claws curled inwards. Then Ray found Dad's new rifle and aimed it at my shoe and Daisy clucked and wrestled the rifle from his grip.

After that incident Dad began to shout about what *I'd* do next while our mother sobbed and parted her swollen lips at me in a thick smile of regret. Ray, of course, escaped Dad's ire.

Our father didn't return with us, our mother said when we reached London, for he'd made some money engineering diamonds with De Beers and had an easy life. Furthermore, he was tired of her inability to settle, and she always felt a future in Africa would be bleak for their sons. So there it was. That was why we'd come back and he'd stayed on. As she spoke her bottom lip trembled and arm muscles twitched while my English grandmother shook her head and wondered what had happened.

The truth was that not long before my mother rose above my father's bullying and took me and Ray back to London, the authorities found a white body on a segregated black beach on the shores of the warm Indian Ocean.

The beach was a forty-minute drive from where we lived. Our house, far from the troubled townships, nestled beneath the shadows of craggy Lion's Head. It stood on a hill that ambled down to the cool Atlantic Ocean. Behind it crouched flat-topped Table Mountain, which dwarfed the town and hid the rest of South Africa from its fortunate inhabitants.

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Further along, at Africa's tip, our warm and cold oceans met.

That was how Ray remembered it when he'd lost it. He said he had to concentrate hard on how his world had been, for his new life in London was as absurd as a witchdoctor taking the holy sacrament. By remembering it he tried to forget, by eavesdropping on his past he hoped to wash his spirit and purge his soul.

But even here in London the dead woman affected my mother's life. In my mother's dreams, the corpse lay on sand, her hand horribly wide-open. Her De Beers *rock* was gone from her stiffening finger. There lay Jenny Petersen, as brittle as her missing diamond, flaunting herself in my mother's nightmares.

Truth is stranger than fiction. My dad speechless, his mouth trembling, the gun lying at Ray's feet. Our house, its gables buried in grape vines, the trampled hydrangeas oddly enough dangling into the swimming pool. 'Oh, God,' Dad's lips moaned. All these features blurred when, the following day, a few of us pictured Jenny covered by a sheet, she who'd swum in our pool on Sunday, now a slain White woman on the Monday evening news.

'They'll get the black bastard who did it!' said Dad's mate, a finger bobbing on our radio dial or stroking, with intent, an imaginary trigger. Dad's unusual silence made his mate's rough voice stand out.

'Hear, hear,' said the man from the house next door, and Dad's weeping secretary frowned and rose. After she left, Ray dropped down beside Dad and scowled at me from his chair.

Jenny's former guardian, a farmer, was the last to go. He shuffled up to Dad, shaking his frail grey head at him. 'She was a simple girl but we lost touch when she came here, to the city,' he said.

As he pressed the old man's hand, Dad averted his gaze.

My mother sat on a stool, looking out of the window, over the hydrangeas she'd cut back against the verandah step that morning, to the pool, its ripples dark as the approaching night. Her jaw remained firm. 'Was that your whore we destroyed, or just your accountant?' she asked my dad.

Dad lurched towards her, his fists clenched, but she glared at him and forced him back. You see, on the night of Jenny's death, my mother changed. By that next day, her voice was hard. She'd even begun to shout orders at Daisy who was too bruised to cope with the household tasks.

Daisy had developed yet another puffed-up eye. Her lip was split like a watermelon; that Sunday night, her ex had visited her in her simple back bedroom at the very moment my family's own battle ended, poolside, in our separate part of the backyard.

To me, her predicament was incidental. It was fourteen-year-old Ray who, in spite of all, had picked up the rifle from his feet and run like the south-easter to Daisy's room, when we first heard that storm of blows and screams. Daisy's ex, a *thorough scoundrel*, took one look at Dad's rifle and melted into the night.

It was like that before we left for London. That first night, my mother locked me and Ray in our bedrooms while she pleaded with Dad in a high-pitched voice.

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Battered Daisy was useless; she could only stroke Ray's skin. My parents bickered all day, my gloved mother scrubbed the seat of Dad's Chevy, the trampled hydrangeas were cut back and our lives in tatters.

Dad's rifle vanished, probably buried by my mother, unregistered and unreported. She told us she would do whatever she could to throw a lurking constable off the scent. Before we packed our suitcases to leave Africa, she sent Daisy back to the Transkei. After we left Daisy on the crowded bus, Ray paced our empty kitchen floor for hours.

Miles Sandgrove and the other chaps at our new school in Hampstead were too wrapped up in their own existences to know of the cold hand that gripped Ray's heart. That's what Ray said when my mother asked the two of us if we were enjoying life in London.

Jenny Petersen, Dad's accountant. She had parked her Alfa in our driveway on Sunday morning and our lives had changed forever. She'd walked slowly, as if hesitantly, to our door. Although she always chatted to Ray, and had even once brought him that dumb white mouse (me: zero), this time she seemed distracted and floated straight past us.

My dad, who always invited her over, ignored us more than usual. He ogled her breasts with transparent familiarity while my mother, incongruous in floral, remarked on the size of her visitor's solitaire and, as she warbled, spread greengage jam on her own dry toast. I, their neglected son, also worried about Jenny and the origin of her ring. For when she entered our pool and waded in there, out of her depth, that diamond glittered and Dad's teeth gleamed against his skin.

Ray too sat and watched our rival. He was yet another lonely figure perched between me and our mother, the three of us watching Jenny from the far end of the pool. At one stage he whispered to me fiercely that it wasn't only as a father figure that Jenny regarded our dad.

We watched Jenny that Sunday morning and even more when she returned that night, draped in her purple toga. Beneath the pool lights her skin looked drawn under tiers of makeup, as if it wasn't sure of something. However I knew she'd come back to seduce Dad and empty my world further, so this time it was *me* who jumped from my towel and searched in the garage until I found Dad's rifle, hidden in a trunk at its darkest end.

Next to the hydrangeas I aimed at Jenny's forehead with Dad's rifle. I watched as her long-stemmed wineglass crashed to the tiles. Her wide-eyed head and toga-bared shoulder followed, like a side of butchered lamb. Then I threw the rifle at Ray's feet, which was a useless gesture, as Dad had seen my finger hit the trigger.

'Psychol' Ray yelled; I grinned in his face. It wasn't the first time he'd called *me*, his senior, that.

My mother held Dad back from hitting me on the head with his whisky bottle.

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She threw herself at him over the hydrangeas, saying she alone knew how to take care of us. She sobbed as she lay there, her palms gripping Dad's leg.

Her shoulders shook like that when she recalled, years later, in a quavering voice, how Dad had almost murdered me. 'If he hadn't listened to me, how might our lives ... mine ... have turned out then?' she asked Ray. And, 'Did his terrible guilt finally soften your father?'

Ray didn't bother to answer her.

As for me, I went after that pesky rifle because I had to; I couldn't stop myself. My blood drained out of me until I pressed the cool trigger. Even stupid things like Ray's old school reports can set me off. In this case, Jenny came back for more. More seduction of Dad, more preoccupation for my mother, more emptied life for me. My pelvis still twists with pleasure when I picture Jenny's knees falling.

Another fine thing is that these days my mother and I fill our days sitting side-by-side, chatting to admiring ladies over trays of scented tea.

Yet the events of that night cost me a lot. The next day Dad had to carry the body from his Chevy through rotting seaweed and glass, over jagged rocks to the flat slab overhanging the sea. Although I stood watch for him on those rocks, he wouldn't even look at me; I felt him spill out of me. I had lost him for the rest of my life. And Ray's hometown, his flat-topped mountain, I suppose I'd lost that too.

But Dad gave my mother the flash ring she richly deserves, though she still trembles when she stretches out her arm to show off the diamond. And how I hugged her when she bought my goody-two-shoes brother a ticket to return to his *new* South Africa, to join Dad and Daisy there during that *euphoric* time after the authorities released Nelson Mandela from jail, and Dad wooed Daisy home. You see, Ray could never inhabit me in the way my mother does. She says she sent him back to my dad to keep him away from me, but I'm sure she did it to render herself wholly mine.

As for Daisy's ex, the scoundrel they hanged five years ago for the murder: he'd been found drinking at a local shebeen, thrown into the back of a chicken-wired truck and tried, as they could in those days, without ceremony. My mother winced when she heard the news but she reminded me and Ray that he deserved it; he'd bashed and killed three of his girlfriends. For those crimes, the police hadn't bothered to look for him. Then she smiled at us and said, for the first time, that we shouldn't worry because in Africa life is cheap and black lives even cheaper.

That was the moment when Ray first cracked and said he wanted to go back.

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.

ASTRA WARREN

The Wave

Neil has asked me to write this before we leave, for anyone who comes here after us; so that you who read it will know who we were and where we went. A sense of history made us bury it at the foot of a post with a metal plaque nailed to it, in the same way as the first discoverers of what used to be called Western Australia.

I write looking out at our walls for the last time. They are not very high - we can just see over to where the towering eucalypts loom against the light filtering through the overcast - but they are high enough to keep out the dogs; the walls, that is, and the double row of sharpened stakes driven diagonally into the foundations on the outside. Any dog attempting to leap over has always ended up impaled until the rest of the pack pulled down the carcass.

It is five years now since The Wave. In that year, my first as a School of the Air teacher at Kalgoorlie, I had been eagerly anticipating my twenty-first birthday party at the York Hotel. It was my choice of venue. I loved that old hotel, with its cupolas crowning the facade and floor length mirrors at the curve of a magnificent carved staircase. Dad, a widower, was a mine manager and could afford to indulge my whims. The occasion was to be as much a public relations exercise as my party. Everybody who was anybody in the Goldfields was on the invitation list.

But The Wave changed all that.

We knew, of course, about the increase in volcanic activity around the Pacific rim and in the Indonesian islands. Every news and current affairs programme, as well as newspapers and magazines, had roped in a scientist or seismologist to expound on what was happening to our earth.

Theories proliferated until they became tedious. Most people witched off, or adjourned to the kitchen to crack another beer until the soopies came on.

Later we guessed that The Wave had been caused by a really big upheaval, or even several simultaneously.

It arrived in Kalgoorlie without warning, almost peacefully. At four o'clock on a bright Spring afternoon, children were into their after-school activities, mothers shopping, the mines on their change of shift, many people out and about in the cool of late afternoon.

Rising out of the Bight came an enormous surge of water. Like a dam breaking, except that this had the wind and weight of oceans behind it, it rose over the coastal cliffs, inundated the Nullarbor, and washed eastwards and westwards through the

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scattered settlements until it lost momentum against the inland plateau of Australia.

In fifteen minutes, water was up to the second storeys in Kalgoorlie. Some people drowned immediately, trapped in buildings or vehicles, but many floated on the rolling mass, struggling to the surface. There was no smashing surge, and most buildings remained intact.

What really did the damage was the savage undertow when The Wave rushed back into its oceanic trough. As the water spent its force, it had seemed to hover, to hesitate, then sucked backwards with a ferocity that collapsed buildings and hurtled bodies along like matchsticks, scouring the surface and filling holes and hollows with the detritus it carried in its depths like a liquid glacier.

I had stayed late at the School of the Air, working on lessons for the next day's transmission. Poking my head into the radio room, I waved goodbye to Neil, our principal, who was still on air to a remote station.

I was crossing the dusty carpark when a rush of air made me glance up. Stunned, I saw the curling, dust-frothed edge of a wall of water twice as high as a house. Almost instinctively I dived into it and flailed upwards. As I surfaced gasping, the only things showing were the tops of tailings dumps and, unbelievably, the School's wireless mast. I grabbed it as the water carried me past, hanging on as the water settled and grew calm.

There had been a mullock dump just to the north of our buildings. Many times I had looked out of my window, hating that ugly black excrescence, never dreaming it would save my life. As the water began its savage retreat, the heap deflected the rip to each side of the flimsy buildings we were housed in. The dump slowly collapsed and was washed away, but it had served its purpose. As the water subsided, I floated down the mast hand over hand until I was sitting on the flat roof of the radio room, shocked and shivering.

How long I sat, stunned by what had happened, I have no idea. Water was still waist deep when I became aware of a wading figure and a desperate voice. 'Sue. Answer me. Sue. It's me, Neil. Pull yourself together.'

Hair and clothes plastered to his lanky frame, he shouted at me. Slowly comprehending, I shuffled to the edge of the roof and hung down from the guttering while he supported my drop to the ground. He was as shocked as I was, but in command of himself.

'I can't believe it. After you left, I went outside for a quick smoke. The water just picked me up and threw me onto the dump. I scabbled in under the crest and escaped the backwash. I saw you on the mast and hoped you would have the sense to float down.'

'Neil.' My voice shook. 'What was it? What happened?'

'This was it, Sue. The big one. The tsunami. The inevitability we've all been trying to ignore.'

We stared at each other. My mind began to race, questions tumbling. How many escaped? My dad - dear God, he had been underground. Neil's wife and family? The children? The town? The stations? How far had it spread?

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'I can't cope Neil.' My voice quavered like an old woman.

'What do we do? Dad - he was underground...'

The schoolmaster surfaced and took charge.

'What to do? Well, it'll be dark in a couple of hours. And cold. Our chances of finding anything or anywhere dry are zero. See what we can salvage, then I'm going to look for Annie and my kids. We'll dry off walking.'

I went with him, of course. In the fading light we slogged through the mud and water, feeling for bitumen underfoot, otherwise we would not have known where the roads were.

Kalgoorlie had been swept off the map. The locations of a few of the older solid stone structures were recognizable by corner stones or buttresses protruding like broken teeth. The ghost town image had come to Kal. We came to a place where bitumen went off to right and left. Standing at what had been the main Roe Street intersection, we gazed, stupefied with horror, at total desolation. The very flatness of the area had contributed to its destruction. Nothing had impeded the surge and ebb of the water.

In desperation, Neil quickened his pace, not caring whether I followed. I sat on a splintered tree stump in exhausted reaction as his figure receded. I might have dozed off, or even passed out. Eventually I became aware that he was back, standing choked and bowed in faint moonlight.

'Nothing,' he whispered. 'Nothing. The house, the street, the whole suburb. There's a few tree stumps. Everything's gone. Gone...'

I took his arm to make him move, and we retraced our steps to the battered school. Despite gaping holes, it was a shelter. At last, huddled together for warmth, we dozed in exhaustion, waiting for daylight, taking refuge from a terrible reality.

I cannot speak of the next nightmare days. My mind still recoils from the beating it took as I struggled to come to grips with an empty world. Neil reasoned that if anything were left, it would be equipment round the mine sites, too heavy to be washed away, or debris caught under the levelled dumps. So every day we went off in a new direction, taking the loud hailer used at so many happy camp sports days. Although we sent its hollow voice echoing into the silences, only twice we glimpsed movement - dogs who fled at the noise, domestic pets running wild.

The excavation that had been the Superpit had become a lake, already being used by waterbirds. We scavenged anything we could carry and earmarked other things for possible later attention - a battered 4WD, a truck weighted down with a load of girders, a concrete mine bunker intact with explosives. In Boulder, we danced for joy when we discovered storage cellars under the older houses, filled with mud but with canned food and tools buried in the slime.

At least during the day we were warm as the land began to dry out under a hot sun. Each morning, we stacked our campfire with damp rubbish, hoping that the column of smoke would bring in any survivors.

Our first arrival was an exploration surveyor, who had been floating on his motel swimming pool when The Wave lifted him, airbed and all, and carried him

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twenty kilometres beyond Kalgoorlie. He was dumped when the water receded and had walked back, barefoot, still clutching his airbed.

He was heaven-sent. Years out in the field had given him a bushman's knowledge and gift for improvisation. He and Neil tackled the School of Air transmitter and emergency generator. The fuel drums were intact, and one magic afternoon, the set crackled and hummed, and we were on air.

Our call sign went out for five precious minutes. Neil repeated it over and over, until an excited response came in from one of the northern stations.

In the next days, we established contact with a network of five inland stations that had been beyond The Wave and unaffected. The furthest north had been able to contact Meekatharra on the Royal Flying Doctor link. In this way, terrible news was relayed to us.

The whole South-West had disappeared. The southern shoreline was now at the foot of the Stirling Ranges, and tidal water washed through the streets of Northam. The hills of Albany were deserted islands. We had to get used to thinking north and east, because there was no longer any south or west.

There had been no answer from Port Hedland or Darwin Schools of the Air bases.

In these days, other survivors struggled in until there were seventeen of us, sheltering by night and contributing what they could to survival. We spent two days working on the 4WD and truck we had found. There was great jubilation when both eventually chugged in. After that, scavenging was easier; we were able to bring in heavier items, like drums of fuel and building material from the minesites.

I try to remember a time frame, but now in my memory, each day merges into the next. Survival took all our time. It was only at night, alone in the dark, that mental distress took over. One would often wake to hear the sound of someone's anguished sobbing.

We became a tightly knit group. There was always a helping hand when a task became too daunting or frustrating. Impelled by mutual need, we chose partners for comfort and support, rather than any illusion of love. Neil and I simply drifted together. Even though he was twice my age, it seemed a natural progression after all we had been through together.

So I cannot remember which came first, the dogs or the cloud. Perhaps they happened together.

We had been aware for some days that the sun's light was veiled by a light overcast. Often there was drizzle, which at least replenished our fresh water. I had been troubled when we were out, by glimpsing slinking shapes shadowing our movements. Whatever else had disappeared, dogs seemed to have proliferated. There were always pups running alongside the packs, watching and learning.

One morning, there was a scream from one of the women who was fetching in water. She fell up the step and slammed the door shut, blood running down her arm. That was the first attack. Soon the dogs became bolder, prowling at night and scratching at the doors.

We had to build a barricade. Our first was a hasty defence of fuel drums, and we

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fetched in the girders long ago unloaded from the truck. It became necessary to guard the outside working parties from attack.

One night, a slavering Rottweiler managed to leap and scramble over the makeshift fence. The men cornered it and beat it to death, but we had to devise a stronger defence. We used the Roman idea of a wall and ditch system with sharpened stakes. It was effective, but made us feel imprisoned; we could only go out under escort in one of the vehicles. The almost continual drizzle through heavy overcast, which we later realized was clouds of volcanic dust, combined with heat and humidity, swiftly turned a dry landscape into a jungle. Eucalypts, that even before had a rapid growth rate, now tower massively. We, who had been used to wide panoramas, feel closed in and threatened.

So after five years, we have to make a decision. The gloom, compounded by encroaching vegetation, makes us all edgy. Any work has to be done outside, as, even at midday, the interiors are shrouded in twilight. The children - four of them now, including our son - find the confinement of the compound trying. There is the constant menace of the dogs.

Fuel supplies are running low and no more to be found.

Radio contacts tell us that a large community is establishing itself in the centre. Groups are going in from the south and east to where a huge freshwater lake has formed; artesian water is bubbling to the surface through cracks caused by earth tremors. Desert is becoming fertile land, and the dust cloud is not so dense there.

We have all decided to go together, as far as the fuel will take us. The men have built a covered shelter on the tray of the truck. Those who wish may settle at other places along the way, but Neil and I are determined to make the whole distance. If we are lucky, we may pick up more fuel, otherwise we shall have to walk. We have been told that with all the changes, the Nullarbor is now a treed and grassy plain, so it may not be so hard.

I wonder whether this account will ever be found? You who read this, if you still believe in a God, I commend you to His care in this hostile and abandoned place.

We leave in hope and optimism.

Our children are the future. For their sake we must go on.

Kalgoorlie
December 25th, 2012

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T H O M A S S H A P C O T T

The Red Hat

It wasn't that he feared his aunt, far from it. She moved swiftly and he had to keep up with her, no lagging. On the few times he stayed at her cottage overnight she was up so early it was indecent. That didn't bother his uncle, though. Nothing bothered Uncle Pat. Mark still remembered the first time, when he was woken - and to wake in a strange bed was a sort of dislocation anyway - and somewhere outside the thin window with its ancient brittle glass he heard a scratching sound. On and on.

Finally he could not bear the suspense. He raised his head and shoulders, glad for the thick flannelette pyjamas Aunt Olga had found for him (almost certainly a pair of Uncle Pat's), and then he peered out. His aunt was just below, weeding the garden bed along that side of the house— planting petunias, as it turned out. It must have been 5 AM.

When he asked her at breakfast - boiled eggs and toast soldiers - why she had been up so early, she laughed and swiped her long, strong fingers through his tousled hair. 'I'll beat you up any day, boyo. Best time is early. Beat the sun to it, that's the idea. Want to join me tomorrow? There's that whole front bed needs planting.'

Only Aunt Olga could have dragged him out like that. Of course he was up and dressed and hovering on the little front verandah in time for her to sweep past like a rocket. She threw him a trenching tool (which he caught clumsily but without letting it clatter to the tiles) and was out and in action already. Uncle Pat always loafed in bed and waited for his morning cup at seven.

Aunt Olga was always there. So when his father remarked in passing, like that, without even a change in tone from the way he read the newspaper headlines like any other Tuesday morning, that Olga must be approaching the airport in KL at this minute, Mark was caught by surprise. 'Where is KL?' was his first question, but that was only a front, as it were. Nobody had told him.

When his mother explained that KL stood for Kuala Lumpur, in Malaysia, Mark already had dredged up that fact from his memory bank of TV travel features and that assignment he did; but the insult remained. 'How long is she going for? And Uncle Pat, did he go too?' He knew not to add, 'And why didn't they tell me?' He had been over there just two weeks before and had helped Aunt Olga harvest the last of the tomatoes, as well as bottling them. She had been in her most chatty mood. Now, he guessed why.

Uncle Pat was in Sydney for the week that Olga was off gallivanting, Mark's father explained, with one of those smiles to his mother that was beginning to get to

Mark. He felt left out. There were codes and signals everywhere that were either new, or he had not noticed them before. His parents had included him in everything. As a kid he had been encouraged to speak up and ‘dob in his pennyworth’, as his dad used to say. Aunt Olga, in particular, listened and often as not dragged him into long arguments over something that really got him going, like Monkey or the game of Trivial Pursuit—in the days when Trivial Pursuit was a novelty of course... Before.

Before Grammar and before he overheard the reference to ‘chatterbox’ (though Aunt Olga had pounced on his dad for saying that; still, it had hurt). In the last year so many things had changed. It was crazy: the older he was growing, the more his parents treated him like a child; it was as if they could not see the changes in him.

It was as if he was neither the one thing nor the other. He was himself.

Last week his father barged into the bathroom and caught him examining under his armpits for hair. ‘A razor for your next birthday, eh, boy?’ he had said, but no joking could hide the put-down. Mark started to lock doors. Aunt Olga would have made a joke of it, and he would have laughed.

Or the time his mother dragged him around after her, holding the material for the new dining room curtains while she tucked and measured, her mouth full of pins. He felt like a dumbo, and it took so long! He was draped in the floral stuff from head to toe as his mother dropped the second last curtain all over him. She said later she was being playful. Playful! Well, Aunt Olga swept in at that moment and, quick as a flash, she cried out, ‘It’s the Sheik of Araby, Jennifer, you dark horse! Why didn’t you tell me you had your Oriental Lover helping you out so gallantly?’

The women giggled but Mark did not. He scrambled out from under the heavy drapes and shot through, not to his room, but outside where he found the soccer ball and kicked it viciously for half an hour, deliberately aiming at his mother’s dahlia bed. Aunt Olga came down in the end and got him out of his mood; she threatened to put lipstick on him, and her rouge—‘though you don’t need that with your lovely colouring,’ she said, just to taunt him. He kicked the ball right at her midriff but she deftly leapt and deflected it sideways with her shoe. He was actually impressed and couldn’t help showing it. So they had both ended up in a tussle as she gave him a bearhug and what she called a beating. He loved her more than anyone else in his family.

Why sneak away then? And to Malaysia? What was she doing there? He could have told her lots of stuff about it, if she had asked him. He had done a project on rubber plantations last year; he still had his assignment book.

And there had been that TV doco on Sabah. He’d wished he had recorded it on video but you never think of that in time and without the opening credits everything would be lost. Still, he remembered the images of those slender, beautiful Kalantan girls who made even roadwork and hot tar and gravel seem somehow effortless. There had been a sequence with them bathing under a waterfall, too, and with bare breasts. It had been breathtaking and it had stayed in his mind ever since, though it was only a few moments, really. His mother had remarked on what a shame it was to make those girls do all that heavy manual labour, that was a job for men, what were they thinking of? His father had made some comment about the Kalantans being

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looked down on by the Malays, it was all territorial. 'Perhaps it is because the Kalantans are so beautiful,' his mother had said, and Mark agreed.

Would Aunt Olga be going to Sabah? No one told him anything. He could have urged her to go to Kota Kinabalu if she was making a trip to Malaysia. He could have told her about the Kalantans. Sabah was where the main rubber plantations were, too. He would have urged her to go there.

The explanation, when it did come, had been that Olga made the trip on a sudden impulse. She was like that. She had seen a special discount airfare with Malaysian Airlines because of the economic situation and one of her paintings had been sold, the first one in two years, so she decided to splurge on the flight. Uncle Pat hated air travel and besides, he was obsessed with Y2K and all that.

Her flight was on 9.9.99 and Uncle Pat was convinced all planes would drop out of the sky on that day. In fact, dad said, that increased Aunt Olga's fascination with the idea. 'My sister was always like that,' he said, 'She was born on Friday the 13th and I think that made her think she had an affinity with witches and wiccans and wizards. She used to scare me shitless - hmmmph - when I was a bit younger than you were, Marcus.'

'Mark,' he muttered, but under his breath.

And he did remember the Friday the 13th party just after his own 13th birthday, last year. Aunt Olga had insisted he come over, alone, no parents, no friends, just himself. And as soon as he opened the door to their cottage he had been bombarded with the full Addams Family stuff, there were even cobwebs, real cobwebs that he had to somehow push through to get inside once he opened the front door. He still felt them tangled in his hair sometimes. And later that evening, after the blood-coloured cakes and the black teeth and the skull that he had to drink black cordial out of and Uncle Pat dressed as a corpulent skeleton in luminous bones, and when he had thought everything was over, and he had gone to the bathroom to clean his teeth, Aunt Olga had insisted he take a bath.

Okay, he said, and when he turned the tap on in the bath the water had come out dark red too. How did they manage that? He had laughed and crowed and Uncle Pat had come in to giggle with him then and had manhandled him out of the last of his clothes and dropped him into the red bath. It turned out to be a bubble bath and the bubbles rose and frothed almost immediately, though the water still felt oily and rather invasively slippery all over his body. Aunt Olga, too, had come in for a laugh at his Hollywood Sex Bath, as she called it. It had been sort of close and intimate but also a bit embarrassing and he was afraid to show what his body was doing down there under the bubbles. He was not like some of the kids at school who swanked round showing their horn in the dressing sheds. 'Stiffie! Stiffie!' they would boast and everybody would laugh. When Aunt Olga laughed at him in the bath he had to join in but rather wished they would leave him alone. When they did, somehow he did not enjoy it that much anyway. The water had grown cold and the bubbles were flattening and only the oily feel all over him remained. Uncle Pat was the last to go and he made much fuss about leaving the big towel for Mark to dry himself on, 'When you are ready'.

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That had been the real shock of the night. That towel had been half covered with cobwebs too. Mark had hopped out of the bath and he grinned at the size of it: until he wrapped it round and began drying his genitals. That was when the cobwebs stuck. It was horrible.

He had let out a shriek (and he only realized, later, that his Aunt and Uncle were just outside the door, waiting for just that moment). He had dropped the big towel instantly, of course, and began rubbing himself hard with the ordinary one that had the blue stripes.

'Just you wait,' he had called, 'I'll put spiders in your bed!'. But the very thought of that, and of the possible spiders in his own bed, were enough to stop his gob instantly. He dried himself quickly and dressed again. But he could not lose the sensation of those cobwebs sticking to him, down there, and all over his parts, especially his testicles. He had taken down his pants once more and rubbed again carefully. No, there was nothing visible. But it felt like it. It was ages before he was able to relax and forget that sensation.

They had called him a spoilspot when he said he would go home that night, not stay at their place. Aunt Olga promised on her bended knees that there would be no spiders or cobwebs in his bed or in the bedroom. Uncle Pat brought a hot mug of milo and promised to sit down by his bed and read him a calming story, like he did once when Mark was a little boy. The story would not be about ghosts and monsters, it would be a fairy story, but an adult fairy story, Mark was an adult now, Uncle Pat had seen that and was sorry he hadn't realized. Aunt Olga said she would paint him, lying in bed and tucked up and wonderful.

He had been appeased.

The story was, it turned out, sort of magical. It was from one of Uncle Pat's own books about a Prince who was born grown-up and who had to learn how to be a child, which he had never been. The prince did not actually grow smaller or lose those special grown-up things like his body hair and the smell under his armpits, but he realized what he had never had since birth was his innocence. He had been born knowing everything and that had made him unable to love, not even his parents, who were old when he was born and who died soon after. He had grown knowing everything and not feeling anything much because he knew what everything felt like. But one day he saw this beautiful dusky maiden bathing under a waterfall in the forest and for the first time he fell in love, though he knew all too well what love ended up as most of the time and he knew what sex was all about, putting his thing in her thing and all that, but he saw this beautiful girl under the waterfall and for the first time he felt that sex was only a small part of what he was feeling. What he was really feeling was the onset of innocence.

'You've got to keep that as long as possible,' his uncle said, and Aunt Olga, who was also sitting alongside the bed, put in, 'innocence means you can still laugh.' She was stroking Uncle Pat's shoulders as he was telling the story so that for the first time Mark felt they had a real closeness together not just the usual joking and sparring and play-acting. He had forgiven them their Friday the 13th silliness and he realized he was not just a victim of their cruel jokes, but had been expected to join in the fun. It

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was almost as if they had been trying to reinvent their own innocence. Hah! Some innocence! Sticky cobwebs were not Mark's idea of innocence.

When he had come out of the bathroom, still half wet from the haste with which he had dressed himself after the cobweb towel, Aunt Olga had burst into a sort of motherly concern and had insisted he dry himself properly or he would catch a cold. She had stripped off his shirt before he had a chance and had mopped him down. As she rubbed his chest and lifted up his arms she had murmured at how he was developing and he knew instantly she might want to rub the towel vigorously into the crease of his buttocks and mop him all over the tender front parts, but he pulled the towel from her hands and, laughing at last (if secretly out of embarrassment), he said, 'I can do that.' He let her button his shirt again, though. That was when Uncle Pat had gone off to the kitchen for the milo.

After that new sort of intimacy, things had changed, that was true. He went over to Aunt Olga less often, but when he did he was freer. It was as if they had shared a secret, and it was exciting and very private. His parents would never have understood this new-found intimacy. It was not innocence—it was experience, or the promise of experience.

That was why Aunt Olga's sudden secret flight to Malaysia was so hurtful and so surprising. The intimacy had been ruptured, it was like an assault. Even Uncle Pat, scurrying over to Sydney, seemed part of the conspiracy. Uncle Pat had never been more than a sort of shadow to Aunt Olga, really, but his story telling had opened something up. Mark knew what it was: it had been the first time anyone had told him things about his own body and the grown-up future of his own body in a way that made sense. That preserved the innocence as well as took for granted a great deal about knowingness, and did not make it somehow secret or shameful.

Mark's own father had spoken about sex and masturbation and all that but the kids at school were there long before that so it was no news. The bits about women and their bleeding and eggs and the pain of having babies, his father had been good on that and it was more urgent, somehow, than the video at school had been. It was as if his dad were confiding real feelings and Mark had asked about his own birth and if it was painful for his mother.

'It was painful for us all,' his father had said, and that had set them both back. It was a new angle on things. 'But I tell you this, son. It was worth it.' And he had given Mark one of his rare cuddles.

Over the next week, while his aunt was overseas, Mark dug up his old essay and assignment book on Rubber plantations in Sabah. He had forgotten that there was one picture of Kalantan girls working on a stretch of roadwork in the tall forest. He had not noticed before that some of them wore their sarongs so as to free the breasts. Why had he missed that? Not even his teacher had remarked on it. Now that he looked at it again, though, it was quite obvious. He searched out the magnifying glass just to make sure.

And then Aunt Olga was home again. Everything was the same. 'She sweeps everyone before her,' his father said, but he laughed and Mark could see that brother and sister were close. It came as a jolt. Aunt Olga and his father were so different.

She promised him photographs when they were printed. She had a swathe of batik. She had some little carved wooden figurines and a couple of shadow-puppets that she was going to save for herself: painted red and gold and with long jointed arms and legs and elongated faces with no upper lips. Mark thought they were just the sort of thing Aunt Olga would go for, both spooky and ridiculous. The male figure was like a cross between a spider and a butterfly. Wayang Kulit, she had said.

But she had brought Mark back a special present. 'I found it in a small village outside Kinabalu,' she said, 'where there was a village madman and those delicate limbed Kalantan girls you've got the hots for, Mark, you randy little monkey. But this is a musical instrument. I think it is called a Selah.'

She handed him a smallish gourd, with a pan-pipe stuck into it, and a handful of pipes with finger holds. 'You have to puff until you make enough air to fill the gourd and then more so; then you can play several notes at the same time, with those little pipes. I couldn't manage it. But then I could never play the bagpipes either.' She made him try. After the third or fourth attempt he managed to create a small wail on the instrument. That had been enough for both of them.

He took it to school and not even the music master had seen one of these before. Mark did not try playing it again, but it was hung on his bedroom wall, a real trophy. It was only some weeks later that he noticed the tell-tale signs of some insect infestation. Aunt Olga had smuggled it in past customs.

His father insisted it be destroyed immediately. He snatched it from Mark and took it away to burn, himself.

When Mark went round to tell Aunt Olga of this tragedy, that was when he first saw her latest painting. It was a self-portrait.

'Woman in a red hat,' she called it. It was also the first time Mark noticed how like his own father Aunt Olga really looked. Indeed, when he walked into her studio which was really the living room of their small cottage, she was eager to show it to him, though often enough she hid her paintings or tore them up. If they were on hardboard she was known to get at them with the axe. She said she could not afford canvas. This one was on paper.

'Wow' Mark had said... And he meant it.

But he could not get the image out of his mind: it was a picture of his father. Only the floppy red hat made it seem Aunt Olga. It was her hat, he recognized it. That was not sufficient disguise. And the eyes kept staring at him as if they knew. He had never really noticed his father's eyes, but they were his. They were following him and what was really spooky was that the look Aunt Olga had brought into the painting was the sort of look she had that night on the Friday the Thirteenth party. It was the look that seemed to be wanting him to grow up. More, it seemed to be wanting him to take off his clothes so she could reach out and touch him all over. It was Uncle Pat, at the time, who had said 'What a man you are growing, lad.' Aunt Olga, though, had really made him feel how he had changed, in his body, in his mind. It was almost a look of envy, as well as of appraisal. In her painting both his aunt and his father were expecting something of him, something he could not give.

She gave him her painting.

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‘Perhaps I did it for you,’ she said. ‘I don’t know—anyway, it’s yours.’

He thanked her, but he couldn’t wait to get home.

The mouth: that had his father’s severe look. Eyes and mouth seemed to be saying different stories.

When he did have it in his room, Mark could study the painting more closely, and in private. Was all this adult business always so confusing, so filled with conflicting messages and truthful lies? Though he had instantly admired it, now he was not so sure. It was not a portrait of Aunt Olga at all. It did not get her violence or her jokes. Uncle Pat was not in it, and her portrait should have had the presence of Uncle Pat somewhere, somehow, if only in the background.

But then he thought of Aunt Olga in Kuala Lumpur or Sabah, alone. And he knew she would be revelling in it. She would be herself then. Like in this portrait.

Those echoes of his father. How could that be? The lines of eyes, and jaw, and cheek, could be hers or his. People talked about genetic links, but looking at her picture left him with that sticky feeling, like cobwebs, almost as if some shadow of his Dad had been somehow with her that night... He had kept the incident a secret. Perhaps, though, Dad might have understood. He might even have laughed. Could that be possible? The way his uncle and aunt laughed with him, that was a sort of secret bond, perhaps even a secret promise?

But he did not mention to his aunt that reminder of his father in the portrait. Instead, he said, ‘Have you ever done a painting of Uncle Pat?’

She had laughed. ‘Your uncle is too evasive a creature to sit still for a portrait.’

She had drawn out from behind the pile stacked against the wall another work on board. It was the same red hat, but beneath the obscured face the tubby body had something of his uncle’s way of lounging over the furniture, though the body was hairless and naked. Indeed, it was like a giant baby’s body, even to the unformed genitals. ‘He hates it, of course. But he refused to do a life study for me, in the altogether. So I did the next best thing. That’s Patrick as he imagines himself to be. ‘This one,’ and she pointed back to the newer painting, ‘this one is myself as I want people to see me. None of us is ever really honest with ourselves. But you know that, dear Marcus. You, after all, have seen through all of us. Have you forgiven us yet?’

‘I haven’t forgiven you for sneaking to Malaysia and not telling me.’

There, it was out.

His aunt looked across at him but she wasn’t smiling now.

‘So like your father. So possessive already. Ah, little Markus, you are growing up, more’s the pity.’ And her mouth did broaden then. ‘Think of all the things I’ve no intention of telling you. Then ask yourself why?’

She would not be drawn out further. Perhaps no one had been so honest with him before. And he knew he had no way to handle it.

Something had come between them, and it wasn’t even honesty. It was like the sweat under his armpits—something new and intrusive. When he left, for the first time he did not kiss her goodbye.

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

BEN SCHROEDER

Drive

Alma closed the door to the living room, leaving the two girls arguing in whispers. She coughed quietly. Her husband, eating rice and beef at the kitchen table, glanced up and grinned.

‘No.’ She wagged her finger. ‘You cannot buy a car.’

Falfal shrugged. ‘I cannot? Who are you to tell me that I cannot?’ He leant over and pushed one of the plastic chairs back from the table. ‘Sit down, Alma. I don’t like it when you stand over me.’

She shook her head and started to clear the plates from the table. ‘I am your wife.’ She spoke softly and clearly. ‘I can help you make these decisions.’

Falfal chuckled and wiped his hand over his mouth. ‘And help you do.’ His mouth was half-full and a slice of beef slid down onto his shirt. ‘But, Alma, I must have the car.’

She sighed as she filled the sink with hot water. ‘You think you must.’

He rocked back in his chair and groaned. ‘Why? What do you suggest?’

She slid the cutlery into the sink and poured the detergent. Falfal waited for a moment then asked the question again. She waited until the sink had filled and everything was soaking in the sink, then she dried her hands and turned to face him. ‘Art School for Shali.’

‘Ha!’ Falfal slid his cigarettes from his top pocket and flicked one out of the packet. ‘Art School huh?’

Alma shrugged.

‘It’s impossible! We cannot afford that sort of thing, not now.’

‘It’s time. She will be finishing her high school this year. It is what she wants to do.’

Falfal laughed again. ‘How good for her, to do what she wants to do! I’m telling you, Alma, it’s impossible. I have enough money to buy a car, a cheap car that will break down, that I will need to fix and fuel and care for. I need this car to find a better job.’

‘Oh?’ Finally, Alma came to sit beside her husband. ‘What kind of job, dear?’

‘Maybe,’ her husband sighed, ‘I can find something where I can sit down and work, like I used to.’

‘Oh yes? A job where you own a factory, dear?’

Falfal slammed his palm against the table, rattling the coffee pot and spraying ash

onto the wooden top. 'Unreasonable.' He eyeballed his wife. 'My daughter could go to her private art school, waste thousands of dollars, where she will learn to waste her life painting pretty pictures and praying for money.' He stood and shook his head. 'I'm going out for a coffee.'

'You're going out for coffee? What's wrong with the one in front of you?'

He shrugged. 'Ok, ok. I'm going now. We'll talk about this later.'

Alma stood and straightened her dress. She pecked him on the cheek and turned back to the sink. 'Enjoy work.'

'Ok, ok.'

He walked down the corridor, waved to the crazy Chinese woman hanging bells in her living room, down the elevator and onto Brunswick Street. He thought of coffee and friends. He missed them both. In Australia, these things were bitter, expensive. In truth, he thought, I have no friends. I am still new.

He walked into the pub and shrugged his overcoat off.

'Falfal.' The bouncer announced his name like he was standing in front of a judge. He turned and nodded, he couldn't remember what the bouncer's name was, and he didn't really have anything to say to him anyway. He smiled and walked to the bar, through the small jungle of pokie machines. Bells went in one corner and a woman screamed. Sad people around him unplugged their eyes from their screens for a moment, glared towards her. Falfal didn't turn or look, but kept straight ahead.

'Espresso, please.' As he sat himself down at the bar-stool, and laid his coat at his feet, the girl behind the bar raised her eyebrows at him.

'Changing tonight, Falfal?'

Yes, he thought. No, he thought again.

'Short black.' Why didn't he talk to this girl? He had seen her most nights for four years. But, at home, this wasn't the way things had been done. You knew people when you knew their families, and then you spoke. He knew nothing of this girl, with her straight blond hair and her crisp black shirt, unbuttoned to three buttons down. He could see her breast as she leaned over packing the coffee into the handle, if he cared to look. He reached over and took the newspaper from behind the bar, snapped it open carefully.

'Eh, Falfal, you out playing tonight?'

He looked up, mouth straight, but didn't turn to the voice. 'No, Keef.'

'Beer eh?' Keef called over the bar.

Beer. Who drinks beer? Poison is better. Falfal glanced up at the moment. The boy had had a haircut. It made him look even more ridiculous, if that was possible. Combed back slick at the sides with little lines shaved though. With that big puffy jacket which he never took off, and those pants that buttoned up on the side and his enormous sneakers he was a pushy, ugly, clown.

'Ah, so you're reading about the boat eh?'

'No, I'm reading about more bombs being dropped on our home, Keef.'

'Your home, man, not mine.'

The girl came back and dropped a beer onto the bar. The foamy head slopped

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and dribbled.

‘More careful with that, baby.’

She nodded and took his money, walked away.

‘So, what are you going to do about your daughter?’

‘What?’ Falfal looked up, anger flashing across his face.

‘Nothing, but people have been talking.’

‘What business is that of yours, huh? What things have you been hearing?’

‘Nothing man, nothing. Just expressing interest.’

Expressing interest. Everybody talked in that place. That was the problem, everyone knew everything. Falfal looked glumly back at his paper and then at his watch. He folded up the paper and put it back behind the bar.

‘If she going to have it?’

‘The course?’

‘Course?’

‘I don’t even know what you’re talking about, boy.’ Falfal spat out the last word, then began to stand. Keef laughed and clapped him on the back, stood as he did.

‘I know who did it.’

Falfal felt his body shake with rage. He was too tired for this. He was soon to be late for work, and he had no time to hear idle talk from boys who should be studying, not drinking. *It* could be anything. Something taken, stolen, someone stabbed or hurt. Anything.

‘What?’

‘Paul raped Susa.’

He was driving down a long road, at night. It took him a moment to recognize, but the flat roofs and cold air took him straight home. When he looked for the moon, he saw the face of that bouncer at that pub, pulling him away from Keef, who had blood running from his cheek, who was staring at him with vast, white eyes and pin-prick pupils. He was being pulled towards the door.

‘Go home, Falfal.’ The bouncer stood above him, with folded arms. ‘Go home.’

Yes, yes, he would. He stood outside the pub, staring down the road, that was nothing like the dirt and dust of home that always took him home, but flat and clear with the rails of tram tracks.

He wiped his face with his hand and sighed. The way kids talked. He turned around and walked towards the city. He worked his shift, and he thought of nothing. He tucked the thought away, to die, and he forgot the boy who had talked of lies at the pub, and he smiled when he signed out at the desk and unclipped his badge. Tomorrow, he thought, I will buy that car. But inside his heart it circled like a hawk. He felt it as he walked but he thought it was the cooler weather and the heartache of being tired and walking amongst the waking. When he arrived home, the house was cool and silent, and he found it easy to shut his eyes and sleep. Dreams came, of dark roads without horizons, and birds diving and swooping above him. He spoke when his eyes snapped open. He said, ‘Paul raped Susa.’

He rubbed his eyes and sat up in the bed. ‘Alma! Alma!’ He chuckled and then lay

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back down. Such strange dreams. His wife was not home, his children were not home. He was panicking for what?

He walked into the bathroom and took a shower. The cool water rinsed his conscience, and he felt light as he walked into the kitchen to find food to make dinner with. The clock on the oven flashed seven oh seven. He had overslept. Normally, Alma would have woken him and told him about her day, what she had seen, what the girls were doing. Sometimes, Susa and Shali studied late after school, but he didn't remember them ever being home this late.

An hour passed. Falfal spent the time preparing, carefully peeling vegetables and stewing meat. Nothing. He was a little worried, but expecting them to return shortly. Eventually he took a seat at the table and watched the steam rising from the dish on the range. It was a bad curry, he knew that. The produce was so poor here, even the herbs tasted sour. The door-knobbed clicked and he lifted himself up. 'Alma! Is that you?'

'Yes, my love.' Her voice sounded so tired, Falfal felt his body weaken when he heard it. He walked through into the living room. His three women were standing in the doorway, Susa so pale her eyes were like black stones in a river. A circling bird collapsed in the sand.

'Who is Paul?'

Susa began to cry. She was so tired, her body collapsed against her mother. Shali, his older daughter, stroked Susa's head. She looked up at her father. 'Why are you asking this now?'

'The child, did it belong to this boy?' Falfal heard his own voice. It sounded sure and calm. He saw his wife start to cry.

'It doesn't matter now, my husband.'

'It doesn't matter who the father is?'

'No, my love, it doesn't. The child is gone.'

Falfal felt every muscle in his body tense up. 'What?'

'Shali, please take your sister to her room. Give her tea and let her sleep.' Alma passed her frail daughter to her sister, then walked towards her husband and touched his face. Behind her, the two girls walked together to their room.

'Alma, please explain.'

In a whisper, Alma told him that his daughter had been raped. They walked together into the kitchen and sat together at the table, and she told him that she only heard after Susa had had an abortion.

Falfal listened. When he had heard enough, he began to wail. His voice inflected and tears fell. The cries were heard throughout the building, over the park outside, even people on Brunswick stopped for a moment before continuing on their silent path. Alma left her husband to grieve, and returned to comfort her daughter.

After an hour, the wailing died away, but still Falfal could not see. There was a knock at the door. Mechanically, he stood and walked to it. He breathed deeply as he clicked the handle. A young boy stood outside, wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, shaking.

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'Hello, my name is Paul Benton. I would like to talk to you about you daughter.'

Falfal smiled. 'Please, please come in.'

Paul smiled back, and walked with him into the kitchen.

'Would you like coffee?'

'Yes, please, that would be lovely.' He looked like a smart child, Falfal considered, somewhere inside his head. Well dressed, rich probably. Rapist. Falfal switched on the kettle and searched for mugs in the cupboard.

'How do you take it?'

'White and two, please.'

Ha, ha. Yes, that was it. White and two. Two white people. Not my daughter, please sir. He opened the drawer where the cutlery was kept, passed his hand over the teaspoons.

'I would like to ask your permission to ask her on a date.'

Falfal turned quickly and in a breath was stabbing him in the throat. Blood poured onto his white shirt and his eyes filled with tears. Not talking. Not now. Paul was staring back, wide-eyed. His chest was heaving and blood was coating him.

He turned and placed the knife in the sink. He ran the tap, and carefully rinsed the blood off his hands. He then turned and closed the door on the gasps. He stripped and changed, tossed the bloody clothing into the hamper and walked to the door. On the way, he poked his head into his daughters' bedroom. The three of them were asleep, his daughters together and his wife on Shali's bed. He wiped his face with his hand and began to sob. He slapped himself lightly.

He continued to the door and walked down the hallway. He would like to talk to Dr. Tuvale.

Falfal knocked on his door and waited. A few moments the crazy old Chinese woman let him in, yelled out 'Fio!' Then, 'Falfal.' She back down on the couch.

Dr. Tuvale came out of his room. 'Hello, Falfal. Come through, won't you?' Inside was the same as usual. A big bed with a desk beside it, two small chairs to sit on. Falfal sat at one and the doctor took the other. The doctor coughed, half-stood and quickly tidied some papers on the desk. 'What's on your mind?'

'Fio. I've just killed a boy. His body is in the kitchen. I stabbed him. He raped my daughter.'

'Ah.' Fio's face was blank. 'Will you excuse me?'

Falfal nodded and the doctor stood. He walked out of the room then he heard him talking. In a moment he returned.

'The police are on the way, Falfal.'

'Thank-you.'

'Why did you kill him?' The doctor was used to this. He had seen bodies dropping past his window as he buttered his toast in the morning.

'He made my daughter kill my first grandchild, Fio. There wasn't any question.'

'Why did he come to your house?'

Falfal shook his head, and then clasped his hand over his face. Outside, he heard a scream of tires, and a smashing of steel.

In the living room, Dr. Tuvale's mother-in-law was sitting on the couch. She glanced at the closed door of Fio's bedroom, then stood and walked into the kitchen. She opened a drawer and took out an envelope stuffed with money.

She shuffled down the hallway, clutching the envelope. 'Of course it wasn't Paul,' she clucked, 'a lovely boy, lovely boy. It was those bad boys, Yogo and Keef.'

She slid the envelope under the door and shook her head. 'This'll help her with her art. She'll be able to do that course eh? Maybe she'll leave here. This is a bad place, bad spirits.' She adjusted a hexagon she had hung in the hallway, and smiled to the policemen walking past.

Ben Schroeder is a 27yr old writer who lives in Melbourne. This is his first published work, and a recently written novella is in submission.

RAFIK HARIRI

The Assassination of a Nation

The assassination of Rafik Hariri, the ex-Prime Minister of Lebanon took place whilst this issue of *Kalimat* was under print. This action is a continuation of the attempts to destroy Lebanon, particularly that Hariri was a man of construction who brought back Lebanon to life after years of civil strife.

A billionaire businessman, Hariri was a very cultured and charitable person who assisted young Lebanese to attain studies in Lebanon and all over the world. As such, his cultural understanding of the world was a very practical one. I hardly know any family in Lebanon that does not have a student who had a grant from one of Hariri's foundations. Hariri gave without prejudice. He was not only building the Lebanese structure and infrastructure, but he was also resurrecting the Lebanese spirit by supporting multifaceted cultural programmes.

The Editor



Hariri with his wife

Sloping Path in Montmartre

Susan passes the man just as he is about to place his foot on the first step. He sees her and stumbles, almost falls down the flight of sandstone steps and she cannot help but smile. But she turns her head away and determinedly pursues her two sisters who are several yards in front of her walking into the shade cast by the small forest of pine trees fenced in by the wooden palings running along the sides of the path. Susan does not dare turn around to look at the man but she hears the falter of his feet as he struggles to regain his composure to negotiate the stairs.

It's not an easy thing to do, even in a state of calmness, because the stairs have been there since feudal times and thousands of feet have worn waves and troughs in the stone so it is like walking upon a rough ocean on a stormy day. And the stone, because it is so old, often crumbles under foot. But Susan finds it difficult to imagine the man causing such a collapse because she still knows what he looks like naked, the small and spare frame, the body of an elf risen from out of the daisies, roses and mushrooms at the foot of some garden in Montmartre.

But no elf as far as her two sisters are concerned, rather a grotesque goblin full of evil, full of all the cunning of the lecher they brand him many times, every day, assaulting Susan's ears with their condemnation of the man married with six children. Then turning their vinegar tongues on their young sister, telling her she is no better than the strumpets who sell themselves along the Boulevard de Clichy.

'Giving yourself up to that man like a common whore!' says one sister and slams the good crystal back into the cupboard smashing two of the delicate glasses to smithereens.

'Letting him have his way with you and in that forest of pines near the path where everyone walks. Why some of the neighbours might have seen you. What would we have done then missy?' says the other and punches and pounds the bread dough viciously, slaps it in the metal baking tray and bangs it into the soot-lined oven.

Meekly, Susan follows her two sisters but she can still smell him, her once-upon-a-time lover. It is the smell of the spice of cinnamon, sugar and yeast because he is a baker of sweets and cakes, a creator of glazed tarts filled with syrupy fruit, sponges with a thick vein of cream running down the centre, scones risen in golden peaks with hot doughy hearts that steam when they are broken open.

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She tries to find her sisters but the two women are grey smudges in the forest shade. It is as though they have disappeared from Susan's eyes; as though their penguin waddles, their reprimands, the smell of their bread and dripping maidenhood have vanished. Only their demure white caps, bobbing like nuns' habits in the gloom, can she see.

As she enters the shade of the forest, Susan stops, looks over the paling fence and sees the bower where she made love with the man. The thought of it makes her wet, her desire flames up like the fires of the foundry making molten steel along the banks of the River Seine.

She wonders what it was that made her forget herself, made her give herself up to a married man when she knew the consequences living in a small village like Montmartre. The first time she saw him was in his shop, she entered and the small metal bell above the door rang loudly startling her.

He looked up, his eyes wide and blue in a mask of flour. She laughed and he grinned, he bent over into the glass display case and selected a plum tart. Although she hadn't said a word, he handed it to her and told her to eat. It was sour and sweet, the slow cooking had caramelised the early-season fruit bringing out the natural sugar, and the pastry was as light as a kiss.

Even then, as she carefully ate the tart, she was half-lost to him with his ocean-blue eyes and his arms as golden as the scones he baked. She came back every day to buy tarts and sponges, luxuries she could ill afford with the three sisters barely keeping their heads above water since their father died during the last bitter winter. A hump of snow slid from the roof of their house onto the old man chilling him to the bones, ensuring his death.

As she walks deeper into the shade cast by the pines, Susan sees her sisters stop and turn and she can see both of them tapping their sober black leather boots, impatient with her slowness, suspicious of where she might have gotten to in the few minutes of separation.

Susan pulls the red shawl around her shoulders because it is cold in the shade. The two sisters worked together on the shawl crocheting the garment in red wool to remind their young sister, they said, of her shame.

'A hundred years ago and they would have branded you on the forehead so everyone would know what you had done. So do not complain about having to wear a red shawl. It's for your own good, a reminder of what you have done,' said the elder sister.

'Yes and a warning to you never to do it again, a garment to remind you of the scarlet woman you are,' said the other.

But as Susan approaches the two waiting women, she laughs because her nipples are hard, they push through the spaces between the stitches of wool. She feels him against her flesh, the light weight of him on top of her and the abundant flesh of her belly pushing against him, her hands are Montmartre swallows flying up and down the curve of his spine, her slender legs making a knot around his waist.

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It is a battle she relishes, the confrontation of her two sisters and the memory of the man. Susan has come to enjoy it because she has come to see that for all their admonishments, for all their scolding of her, for all their punishments meted out to her, her sisters will always lose. The memory of her lover is too strong and too sweet for the war of words to take him from her mind.

As she comes to the women, Susan digs into her apron pocket, pulls out the half-eaten plum tart and with a voluptuous deliberateness shoves all of the pastry and fruit into her mouth.



Greg Bogaerts is a writer from Newcastle, Australia.
The above story is one in a series inspired by Van Gogh's paintings.

L . E . S C O T T

Black Family Letters from Boston

Your Friend and his Daughter

Dearest Friend,
Dearest Friendship,
You need to read this poem:

I can't stay long
I hear the river song
just a brief remembrance
of spoken tongues
spilt words

Sometimes people baptise
hurt with hurt
and from that seed
each new day is a funeral

You know us human leaves, we get blown around by many different winds of emotion as we travel through this brief time we have here. And most of us by a certain age know one real fact: family and friends will get you through the storms.

But every now and then, Baby Friend, someone who has lived in your being as a true friend will cut the skin off your bones without a moment's notice and you may or may not know why. Sweet Baby, I ain't talking about no mistake on their part, but they knowing full well their decision was going to bleed you and still made the cut. Well, that's a hard one to swallow. You can call it nasty if you want to.

I know from what you told me in your letter that you and Lee no longer had a daily friendship thing since you moved from Auckland to Wellington a few years back, but that you guys were tight cats hanging out together over the years in Auckland. And that you had broken bread with him and his family many times at his table and he and family at your and your ex-wife's table. For you the friendship with him and his family was alive and well – not a daily thing, but an ongoing life thing. But life is never clean-cut. There have been one or two twists in your friendship with Lee and his family that had something to do with what he did.

Who could have imagined when your marriage broke up and you had that torrid affair (we won't even say anything about that poem you wrote about it) with that mutual friend of yours and Lee's, what ghosts that would give birth to! And ghosts are not just nocturnal; they will show up at high noon ready for a gunfight. In this case they dressed up in their graveyard best to come to the wedding and Lee and his wife

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(and maybe their daughter) knew at whose table they wished to sit. Weddings and funerals come with their own set of gravediggers and Lee and co. were trying to keep the numbers down.

Your questions to me: Do I think what Lee did was wrong? Now ain't that a word in the affairs of humankind. Do I think it was strange that Lee called you some days – like a half-a-month – after his daughter married the son of that 'mutual friend' and told you that foolishness that it was not 'his side' that didn't want you at the wedding? Do I think it was wrong (there's that word again) that they hadn't even bothered to tell you dot about wedding plans until after the business? Well, where do I go with that? Where I go with that and where you go with that I fear will be worlds apart. I know that some folks have those 'walking wounded' friendships. That's a strange afterbirth water to swim your life in – why would one want to live in such water?

Your letter about friendship felt like a wake. It is not my place to arrange the burial. I know that at weddings and funerals people come to witness and testify on behalf of the ones they know. I know you. I have only known your friend Lee through your words over the years since you met him there in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I have not heard his side and the reality is that I have to accept the rent on taking your words at face value.

Dear Loved One, your friend not inviting you to his daughter's wedding is a strange twist of friendship. I tell you something old: friendships are rare, love is rare, happiness hides out a lot, regrets often seek our company, what seemed unforgivable at midnight gives birth to courage at sunrise if you are open to the light. I don't know what to tell you to do about this 'friendship hurt'. Much comes with age but some things remain unclear, perhaps until we leave here.

I think there are few humans who get through here without hurt. Some will swallow it day after day, others will shape strange judgements and give revenge another colour. Some will pray. Others will curse their gods. Some will do nothing but hide their hurt and bring forth a smile that means nothing. Wherever you go with this hurt, I hope it will not be a place without sunlight or sunflowers. Beyond that, put one foot in front of the other and then the other one in front of that one... and grow.

With friendship.

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.

This is another one of a new series of "Black Family Letters From Boston". The stories in the series cover a wide range of subjects that may be loosely grouped under the heading "the Black American experience" and explore the relationships between family members and the way in which their lives are affected by their struggle in and with white America.

J A B R A I B R A H I M J A B R A

Translated by *Issa J. Boullata*

Untitled

Why is your phantasm always stationed at my door,
In my sitting room,
In my bedroom,
In my library, sitting at my desk,
Playing with my papers, scribbling with my pen,
Repeating itself as in a thousand mirrors,
Whispering, frowning, pressing
Its delicious lips, laughing,
Letting down its hair on my face,
On my eyes, thrusting its hands
In my books, its arms dancing
And its body twisting like a thousand snakes
In a forest in which even the angels
Lose their consciousness in ecstasy?

I beseech you by God, my sweetheart,
Tell your phantasm to have pity on me,
And let it know
That enough is enough,
And that in the crowd of its faces
I might not see your own face,
And in the crowd of its voices
Your own voice might be lost to me.

But it will never obey you, I know.
For it knows that deep down
I am pleased that it repeats its face
Before my eyes,
With its mirrors reflecting your presence
Ever prancing in my blood
So that, bewildered, I may wonder in the end

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Which one of you both is the phantasm to me
And which is the body,
Which one of you both is truly real
And which is truly my dream.

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1920-1994), a Palestinian, was a leading literary figure in the Arab world. He wrote this poem when he was 72, and it was published posthumously in 1996 in a collection of his latest love poems titled *Mutawaliyat Shi'riyya, Ba'duha lil-Tayf wa Ba'duha lil-Jasad* (Poetry Sequels; Some for the Body and Others for the Spirit), Al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, Beirut, 1996.

Professor **Issa J. Boullata** is at McGill University, Canada. He is a renowned scholar, writer, translator, critic and academic. He was a student of Jabra's in Jerusalem between 1946 and 1948, and later a good friend of his. Boullata published in 2002 a book in Arabic on Jabra: *Nafidha 'ala al-Hadatha, Dirasat fi Adab Jabra* (A Window on Modernity, Studies in Jabra's Literary Writings, and Jabra's letters to him: *al-Tajriba al-Jamila* (The Beautiful Experience). Boullata also translated some of Jabra's poetry, his autobiography *The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood* which was published in 1995, and his later autobiography *Princesses' Street* which will be published in November 2005.

RAFIK HARIRI

The Assassination of a Nation (see p94)



Hariri kisses his wife



Hariri kisses the hand of his mother

ISSAM TARSHAHANI

Peppermint Fires

Translated by *Raghid Nahhas*

The Rain Shrine

Some scent becomes fruitier
when it engages in me
White is the flame inside me
and some blue snow...
Flowers are tossed among mist particles...
In the wild night, some woman listens
to a star falling in the hurricane...
Some pulse...
pounds in the light,
bedews me with a new revelation
makes me part of it...
And the woman is the lady of creation
as if the marvellous and I are one fire
I don't know how long it took
I don't know how long the dream carried us and wandered...
With black chaos I have painted a supreme shrine for the rain
It is a female...
'Unlike the sword, and unlike the phantom.' and unlike...
She came out one afternoon and
s p r e a d...
a farming legend,
and huge clouds of dust...

Issam Tarshahani is a Syrian poet who lives in Aleppo. He has sixteen poetry collections to his credit. The above poem *Maqamul Amtar* is one of several under the title *Hara'iqul Na'na'* (Peppermint Fires), published in *Al-Issbouh al-Adabi*, No. 569, 12/07/1997 (the newsletter of the Arab Union of Writers, Damascus, Syria).

KHALID AL-HILLI

Cloudy Cities

Translated by **Raghd Nahhas**

Vestibules

1

These doors cannot shut out the wind...
My heart is rain
My paths are trees
The scarfs are dust
There is fire beyond this dark tunnel
The windows, planted by the sun alongside the doors,
appear to me a haze of drizzle and waiting
I was hung between the hand of death and the moment,
as though I was an orbit.
Oh vastness! Take me
towards my face
Submerge me
in the details lost in forgetfulness.
Inside the pit of my years
my lip has become a ship
my blood has become oceans
my first dream is about a gypsy
my mouth is mad
my head turns with the clock
buried by the fire of questions.
As much as I am ignorant of how long
my blood kept flying with abandoned miracles
and how I manipulated my closed life,
I am tonight ignorant of my self.

2

My face ascends when my homeland sinks in it
and the ships disappear
Among the whispers of the wind to the wind, I saw the roads
giving two sides to the game:

Kalimat 21

paths for life
and paths for death

3

Should the face return to the mirror, the forest of fear shall cry
and the door of darkness shall return to the finger
They have drawn eyes on the face and life in the heart
On the wall, they had left a notion of hope that
slept in my eyes for a while then died
I returned to the mirror paralysed
my face is its demise
and my longing is its face
When my voice felt this loneliness,
it left this life and flew away

4

A word dropped by the night in my way
rolled me towards rivers of tar
When I was there, I sadly washed my self
with the sand on the banks
and I shrouded myself with a week-long of days
that became my memory
I regained my way only to
return today begging for my present life.

5

I am mere numbers in a room of riddles
Symbols of multiplication and divisions
doubling, reducing, subtracting, summing
As I add up the years of life in my mind
I become the paper
buried
under millions of papers
The iris died under my eyelids.

Things Related to the Mirror

1

I returned with a face that
had flown on a cloud of blood
There is paleness in its looks and
concern in its eyes
Questions awaken in its corners
only to remain unanswered
It asked all the questions that you did not want to answer
Have mercy on the concern it carries in its eyes.
The day feels like aeons as the moment escapes the hands
The murmur keeps on your lips
The face lowered its eyelids,
slumber is another epoch to this face
and so is the path
The path is fenced and surrounded by lips that
give birth to fantasies and sip their own vows

2

When we returned handless we parted
You and I my face... the face that awakened my hand

3

When I felt hungry, I drank the rain
I became a vagabond in whose eyes the world is captured
When I became thirsty, I devoured boredom
I was worn a little...
When the forests were lush, I lived
I felt I was the rain and
covered myself with trees

4

You try to escape the consciousness of escape
You are like me
Who, I ask, created a mirror for us?

Kalimat 21

Is it the mercury floating on the sea?
Or is it the sand burdened by the sea or
the face that burdened us?

You try to escape the consciousness of escape
You resemble me...
Is it the mirror that revealed our secret?

Nightmare

When I looked in the mirror,
water was flowing
chatter was spraying
another handful of death
and memory's yearning.
A door opens my lanterns to darkness
The door is morning.
If I leave my face behind,
the wind will call me
and death will call my face.
As I depart my eyes,
heaven comes to me
an exile on my feet
digging a sound
and a song in my blood
carrying death.

Khalid al-Hilli is a poet of Iraqi origins who lives in Melbourne. He is an adviser to *Kalimat*. The above poems are from his collection *Mudon Gha'ima* (Cloudy Cities), Babil Publications, Rabat, Morocco 1988. For other translations from the same collection and more comments on al-Hilli's work see *Kalimat* 3, p71 and *Kalimat* 5, p55.

JIHAD ELZEIN

The Poem of Istanbul

Translated by **Raghid Nahhas**

The Poem of Istanbul

a poem of eleven ships

The Seventh Ship

What I know of the bygone centuries, and the twentieth is its most ancient, is that the poem is a celebration of candles which grandly opens the dark corridors of the soul or lovingly closes its lit halls.

Istanbul knows that she is the borderline between two poems of two continents. However, since she has become the head carriage in the train of sufferings of bygone centuries, she does not know that she is the foremost martyr of the eternal doomsday of some frightened nations.

Oh inhabitants of the suburb of modernity
History shall have an arch at the gate of the ocean
People shall line up in two rows...
Everyone shall insert his tomorrow inside his travel ticket
Here are the applications being completed at the embassies of the high lands
and I see a lavender-like princess
her face is the moon of the seas dying in the horror of noontime
prisoners in what to come keeping their spirits gasping
changing by a stronger place
changing by the *Seen*¹ stakes...
I mean it shall kill these spirits and give them birth again
and the jailor, that giant of a warden, shall come to them
ask them, embrace them and load them on Santa's carriage
to set them free among the stars...

Oh inhabitants of the suburb of modernity
History shall have a shut door to the ocean
The door is unseen and those who escape
roam the land of the embassy:²
pirates spread hope and announced
their paradise as we lingered in our hell
There will be a shut door sealed by pale wax

¹ "*Seen*" is the Arabic letter (similar to "S") used in the beginning of words indicating the future.

² In reference to those who call on the USA embassy seeking migration.

Kalimat 21

There will be a bewildered sea
And there will be another dream for Istanbul...
Oh inhabitants of the able suburb:
a language has died in our desert
and the forgotten poet has become bored with the dens of expression
the songs of the night have become silent
for the virgins who are as ripe as the palm dates
The language of all our languages was
his roaming...
his pilgrimage...
his phonetic ray in modern times
the words spreading themselves in the closed ocean.
The queen of languages and all the rest become
a convoy of slaves arriving from the south
Do we see a new epoch carried on the back of
this pilgrimage to our coming century?
Shall I reiterate, as we make our seventh circle,³
that the omens of triumph between Boston in the north and its green fire,
are glittering for the pilgrims?
The symmetrical metal bewitches the figure of words
and returns it a language of a paradise too difficult to attain
in these modern times as its neighing resonates in the deep heart of Boston.
Oh head of my convoy⁴... and all its doubts...
Ink⁵ is shed at its death bed
Sleep Istanbul so I see you dead
I don't want to see you a killer

The Eighth Ship

The sailor's wife told me something about the passion of the left breast
The pain of mysterious evenings
She said solitude comes like snakes biting the joints from their inside
Beyond what the fire permits
Beyond what fear dictates
bringing moist and dampness to the pastures

³ Moslem pilgrims turn seven times around the Kaaba.

⁴ This is a reference to Istanbul, the head of the Islamic world, leading its convoy of migration.

⁵ Meaning the "blood", but ink is used to signify culture and writing.

Kalimat 21

Oh fear... I am the desire of a sailor who went over the limits
how would I then let him remain
the prince of my sail on the waves

Give me my days' lawful bright weather
and let my arm stroke a brighter body

* * *

Where are you now? In which nervous domain
or which common grounds?

Depart this idea for the sea

I see drowned tombs, coral coffins, dead shining and spreading
I see the gold of the sun— fragments of a great idea on water
and the theology of a ray

Oh headache of the soul in Istanbul! I reinforced my own captivity
The sailor's wife in her igneous blue is as seductive as warm oysters
on islands with untamed spirits... the incantations... the sails...

She said: 'I am bitter with desire... bitter on my lower lip,
don't turn away from some immature wine...'

and she disappeared behind the veil of the cunning dusk
draping Istanbul's balcony like a truce between two lovers

The killing has matured... who would now save you
when my eyes desecrate your forest-stolen sorrows?

Make me undress as your heart beats and you resist sleep
and let yourself be the grapes of my maturing
grapes for the sound... bells for the arm of the night
femininity surrendering at its own climax
and the bewilderment of the wood of my demise

This strange sea mystifies calamities

The city soars

A breakage in the wood excites the timber sea-breaker

What temptations created this language of fertility?

Which city-women did not have pity on the death of the stranger?

Istanbul has returned to me...

A mover of a torrent of concerns... and of equivocal glow.

Jihad Elzein, a leading Lebanese journalist, 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) in 2002. 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 style and content, modern with fine use of metre.

ANGELA COSTI

Returning

The ceiling fan cuts and pastes memories
 the photo album is playing excited host
 Anna's plate is draped with sweets, fruit, meat
 glass never emptied of the Island's best
 carrying a full smile all day, her body tattooed with sweat
 Uncles and Aunties steer Anna's eyes to the mountains
 away from the check point, the border control guards
 away from the Island's wound that never heals
 they speak like parrots in brittle cages
 about the billy goat running into the *kafenio*
 about the ripe carobs drooling like large fangs
 only *Yiayia* pours honesty into Anna's cup
 coffee mulled with hurt, a dialect of undying lament
'As quick as lighting a candle, kissing a saint
they stained our homes with their mud
we left our pantries full of fresh food
we left our tables set for dinner, our bread baking
they ate, slept, danced to our music
each family received one coffin.'
 Anna holds those chattering hands
 the moon flicks barbarian shadows
 the old eyes are Anna's, she seeps tired tears
 tomorrow they will hoard what is left of their future.

Angela Costi's poems, narratives and essays have nestled in many national and international print and online periodicals. She is commissioned as a writer by various organisations across Victoria. The reLOCATED arts project, for which she was writer-in-residence at the Kensington Public Housing Estate, received the national award for community services 2002. Her poetry collection, 'Dinted Halos', is part of a chapbook series, published by Hit & Miss Publications. She is a co-founder of Saloni Mediterranean, which is an ongoing collective of artists and writers who seek to honour, interrogate and celebrate that part of themselves that is connected to the Mediterranean. In April 2005, her CD 'Prayers for the Wicked' is scheduled to be launched.

Hostage to A Dream

do you cry your eyes to sleep?

An hour after the clock hands last united
Room, blanketed by swathes of moonlit shadow
[I'm in my room, right?]

Eyes open but all is the opposite of light.
Lie in bed, held hostage by the departing
vestiges of a vivid dream.

Have you been trapped in a dream before?

Black engulfs, swirls all around;
[I was once afraid of the dark I think]

My mind is a one-way street,
Moving towards inevitable result of
not being able to fully filter out dream threads.
Do you wake up with this feeling?

A silent sigh, grateful for getting some quiet
at last. At least the *gahmen* don't carry out roadworks
[some long unfulfilled election promise]
outside my house after seven pm;
I hear only crickets and distant barking of stray dogs.
Does the roar of midnight silence deafen you?

My mouth is really dry and I feel
A mild throbbing at right temple;
[can't eat more than 8 panadol in 24 hours or I'll die]
Eyes can't focus; silhouette of a ceiling lamp
and ceiling boards stare back at me.
Do you stare at the same perverse fixtures, night after night?

Blindly reach out for my bedside pitcher
But hand carefully knocks pile of porn VCDs over the edge
[3 for \$10 from Geylang Lorong 1 vendor]
Wince as plastic crashes onto marble;
Damn. Mess on table, mess on floor, mess in brain, mess in heart.

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Have you walked through the dream of reality before?

Arm left hanging limply by bedside
Hand reaching out in vain to a lost tangle of
dream threads, images of a face;
A smile? A laugh, a tree, a field, blue skies?
Have you walked through the reality of a dream before?

Eyes close.
Drift back to REM.

21

You told me you were 21.

I wonder how old your heart truly is.
How the ravages of time have dashed the ship against the corals countless times;
Where the means and motives rush by faster than the blurry pyrotechnic lines drawn
by train carriages roaring in opposite directions;
These lines are never straight.
They rapier in and out of the catacombs of experiences felt and understood;
A miasma of disconnected dots left trailing in the wake of derailed sensations and
unsatisfied cravings.

You could be lost in a sea of faces;
In an invisible cage chock-full of frustrations and unfulfilled wishes;
That could have been an allegory for the ant-infested city we owe our allegiance to.
But then I heard a rumour of your grin;
I never bothered to look in the familiar places;
I never bothered to sift through the kaleidoscope of images stored in a dusty hard disk
that's wired to reformat after forty winks.

I wonder how you would wield the painter's palette;
Or mix the primary colours that lay in silent anticipation of the brush;
I close my eyes and anticipate the aftermath on the once-blank canvas.

I own the day and you own the nights;
Where the streetlights form blurry orbs when refracted through my bedroom
window;

Where wondrous dreams are made and lost;
Dreams of a little girl, standing at a doorway, hesitant to enter.

I think you once told me you were 21.

The Politics of Chancing Upon Your Ex

you sit next to me, on bus, thighs nearly touching
Almost betraying uncomfortable squirm
as you struggle to burn off excess energy
brought on by the rush of seeing someone you
did not want to see at first mention
but probably thought the other way in some
deep inner subconscious corner of mind.
Checking watch, scrutinizing imaginary spot
of intense interest somewhere between the door bell
and the exit sign.

The silence, the silence, the silence, hangs between
us like a heavy veil of musty lace and mouldy velvet,
suffocating, stifling, oppressing.

Silently praying for handphone to emit
unnecessarily loud ringtone indicating an incoming
SMS, or better, incoming call, a rescue buoy
thrown from some corner of suburbia.

Thawling the inner recesses of your now-empty
mind for something remotely interesting,
possibly relating to one's mother, occupation
or the war in Iraq. Something to say, to pass off
as lame conversation to kill, to butcher, to massacre
the enormous hordes of time that lie in front of us.

Thawling, yet taking immense care not to
snare your net on the hidden corals of unhappy
memories, unhappy memories, unhappy memories
that will raise a foul cloud of silt, polluting and
tarring the once-blue tranquil sea, possibly tearing
your fragile net, still fresh from repair and rehabilitation,
to shreds.

Wishing that our planned trajectories from Point X
to Home did not, did not, did not by twist of fate or
will of God, extrapolate and meet at bus-stop.

Wishing the devices of time could be rushed along at
top speed, but Einstein's Theory of Relativity is in
full swing here. Once put into motion, can't be stopped.

Two people, on the bus, silent, yet not silent.

Paradigm Shift

waking up
it's already late morning
a distant car alarm goes off
i lie in bed
watching rays of sunlight
orange beams through drawn curtains
making spotlights on the carpeted
floor
thinking about last night
a jet roars by overhead
the ceiling boards are matted with dust
i lie in bed
it's already late morning
cawing crows scratch the roof above
crumpled bedsheets spill over to the
floor
close my eyes
thinking about last night
the pillow is cold to the touch
my head moved during the night
a paradigm shifted last night
i lie in bed
open my eyes
hearing the clock tick away
it's already late morning
the blue walls seem stable enough
the paint is not peeling off yet

CDs litter the desk
you once listened to those I think
close my eyes
trying hard to imagine
your voice
not the car alarm
your warmth
not the pillow
your laugh
not the crows
your face
not the dust on the damn ceiling
i wanted so much
so much of you
it's already late morning
open my eyes
i lie in bed
the car alarm goes off again
the cawing crows fly away
maybe the roof was too hot for them
my pillow still feels cold
ceiling's still full of dust
the orange spots moved
no more paradigm shifts
the carpet's still there
i wanted so much
so much of you

Eisen Teo is a 20 years old from Singapore.

patterns in the hourglass sand

Taste on my lips the ripeness of pomegranates;
they are seeds of a tomorrow that, waking, does not fall into my lap.
Within a memory palace walks my reconstruction of you;
knowing all along eternity is a heretical dream.
Sometimes in nights of smoke and liquid frenzy
I think all we are is a choice of amnesia;
discarding what's grotesque in favour of the instinct for beauty,
what's being human if not to want a second reality?
When light is low and shadows, long,
the only thing calling a sunrise from a sunset
is your memory of the hour that went before.
In this way we choose who, what and how we love.

Insomnia

Headlights of passing cars shift shadows on empty ceiling;
I watch my abstract angels play.
Quiet breaths cast adrift a tiny current. In my palm
moebius time loops itself. So still, the clockwork hours.
Beneath the frequency of twenty hertz, what words slip through.
You are asleep. Dream well. For sentience is knowing
how lamplight polarises each detail in a fauvist choice;
that the only thing greater than solitude is loneliness in love.
In a nightless city drenched electric
exists a degree too low for breathing.
Always, the hours.

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Wear them lightly on your skin, like a nocturne
whose ciphered prophecy you cannot unmask.
So don't try. In the nights of normal things,
worlds revolve and flutter down to silence.

Edlyn Ang Yi Ting is 24. She has been published in the Singaporean journals *2ndrule*, *the Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*, *The Poetry Billboard*, as well as in the Australian and American e-zines, *Stylus Poetry Journal* and *HOW2* respectively. Her works have also appeared in the anthologies *Love Gathers All*, *One-Winged*, and in the Hong Kong exhibition, *ColoringWords*, in 2002.

RAFIK HARIRI

The Assassination of a Nation (see p94)



The Hariris with Pavarotti



Hariri with the Pope

The Story of the Story

I said to him, 'Teach me about writing. Teach me about the stories you write and how they come to be, these fascinating tales that you weave!' And, after a long period of silence, the writer obliged me with:

Each story
is an entity of its own.

Each story
breathes through its own mouth,
lives its own life,
love and is loved,
and
dies its own death.

'Each story
is conceived in its own way.

The conception might be a slow arduous process, a long drawn
out affair, months upon months of trying, a constipated attempt that
finally arrives at its release.

Or it might be a short furious blast, the progeny of a moment's passionate power,
the orgasmic triumph of the creative mind.

Each story
is a child from your loins
you hold all responsibility for its induction
you hold passage for its entrance
into this realm

And like your own child
your duty ends with its birth
for the next twenty odd years
you can try all you want
but this child will not be yours
its thoughts will not run parallel
its defiance will shine through

Kalimat 21

its rebellion, only a matter of time.

Leave your stories alone
Let the dust gather
Leave them to stray
Let them fade from your mind
And slowly be forgotten

And then
in a twinkle of an eye
the story transforms
the snake sheds its outer skin
the butterfly breaks from its cocoon
the phoenix rises from its flames
it fills you with such pride
to see this wondrous being
in existence

And then
you realise with some sadness
that your child
never was
and never could be
yours

if
but only
for that second
it was conceived.

for
the moment
the pen leaves
the page
the story and its writer
have gone their separate ways
searching for
destinies
that are destined
to differ

Each story
will find true love
will taste hatred
will search for life's meaning
will become its own person'

He fell into another spell of deep silence, but I was not one to leave him be.

كلمات Kalimat

تهدف كلمات 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 وسبتمبر).
ترحب كلمات بكل المساهمات الخلاقية، وترجو المساهمين إرسال أعمالهم قبل شهرين 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.
ترسل المواد إلكترونياً إلى: raghid@ozemail.com.au أو تحفظ على قرص وترسل بالبريد.

تنشر كلمات النثر والشعر والدراسات والقصة والفنون وفق طريقتين أساسين:
أولاً - المواد الأصلية التي لم يسبق نشرها مطلقاً بآية لغة.

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

يحصل المتقدمون بأعمالهم الأصلية إلى كلمات على الأفضلية في إمكانية ترجمة أعمالهم لاحقاً ونشرها في المجلات العربية أو مشاريع أخرى يتبناها الناشر. كما يتلقى من نشر في كلمات نسخة مجانية من العدد الذي تنشر فيه مادته. وتعتذر كلمات عن تقديم أية تعويضات أخرى.

الاسعار والاشتراك للأفراد (بالدولار الأسترالي)

سعر العدد \$20 ضمن أستراليا ونيوزيلندا، أو \$40 بالبريد الجوي إلى أي مكان
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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 الأسترالية ويحرج الشك باسم Kalimat

المؤازرة (الرعاية المادية)

مفتوحة للمنظمات والأفراد الذين يؤمنون بأهمية الرسالة الحضارية والجمالية للمجلة، مع العلم أنها لا تخول من يقدمها وضع أية شروط على كلمات، أو الحصول على أية حقوق أو مزايا، بما في ذلك أفضلية النشر.
تبدأ المؤازرة للأفراد بمبلغ \$400 سنوياً، وللمنظمات والأعمال بمبلغ \$2000 سنوياً. ويحصل مقدم الرعاية على اشتراك مجاني لسنة الرعاية، كما يحق له الإعلان مجاناً مرة واحدة في السنة.

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

A Window to the Blue



Photo Bashar Azmeh
(See "Snowflakes", p9)