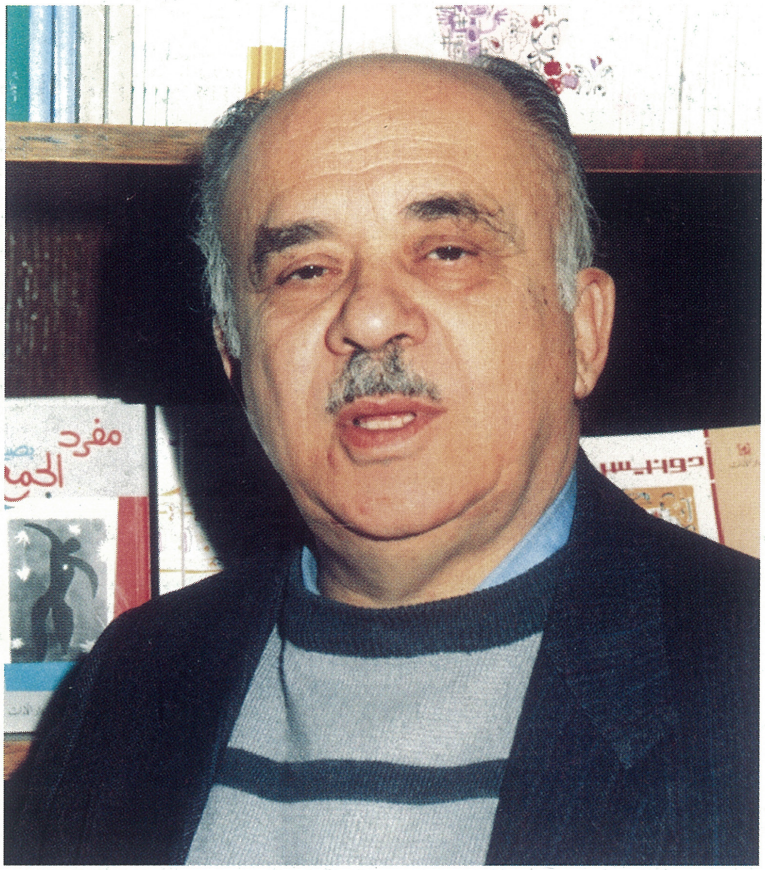
كَلِمَات

Kalimat

Number 5 (English), March 2001



SOUHEIL IDRISS
THE LITERATURE OF COMMITMENT

An Australian-Arabic Literary Quarterly
ISSN 1443-2749

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Number 5 (English), March 2001

Published
by

سيروس

SyrAus Incorporated
The Australian-Syrian Cultural Council
Registered No. Y3060544

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الكَلِمَةُ بابُ الإرثِ الحَضاري، والكِتابَة مِفتاحُ دَيمُومَته

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

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Printed in Australia by Prima Quality Printing, Granville, NSW.
Bound by Perfectly Bound, Gladsville, NSW, Australia.

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from the Editor

Munir Baalbaki & *al-Mawrid*

The Grand Shiekh of Arab Translators & his Lasting Influence

On 19 June 1999 the Arabic and English languages lost the man who was perhaps the most important link between them in the twentieth century: Munir Baalbaki. In Baalbaki's case, however, the term 'loss' creates a dilemma. For how can we say we lost him and he still lives next to all who speak Arabic and English. He lives through *al-Mawrid* (The Resource), the English-Arabic dictionary he published in 1967 and continued to be updated and published in further editions. Hardly any Arab who attempted to learn English failed to hear of or use *al-Mawrid*. For professional writers, translators or researchers in arts or sciences, *al-Mawrid* become an inevitable companion simply because it is comprehensive, well organised and to the point. It provides an intelligent list of alternatives to explain a meaning of a word thus enabling the most appropriate version to be used in a particular context.

Al-Mawrid was a result of hard and intelligent work. Until the publication of its first edition in 1967 Baalbaki was busy translating many books from English to Arabic, and continued throughout his life time. These included Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. To Arab readers these translations were eye-openers to the world of style and literary beauty and greatness.

It all started in 1945 when Baalbaki left his teaching career and established with his friend Bahij Osman *Dar el-Ilm Lilmalayin* (The Learning House for Millions), which became a leading publishing house in the Arab World. Baalbaki needed material to sustain his organisation so he opted for more translations. In an interview published in *al-Arabi* (No. 417, 1993) Baalbaki said that he suffered from all the problems encountered by translators at that time, particularly the lack of reference material and dictionaries. He therefore coined new terms when none could be found in the dictionaries available to him. He would then determine the most appropriate equivalent in English write it down in the margin of the dictionaries he was using. Some people suggested he should compile a new dictionary to assist readers and translators, in particular scientists, engineers, professionals and literatéurs, at a time when English was becoming the language of our civilisation.

The dictionary kept getting larger and larger, but Baalbaki opted for another work in order to keep his dictionary manageable, at the same time provide what he considered was necessary for the Arab World. He produced the *al-Mawrid Encyclopaedia*, comprising all the items that were excluded from his original dictionary.

Baalbaki believed that translation should be supported by a centralised Arab organisation focusing on what should be translated, devising policies on methodology and keeping track of past translations to avoid double handling. He also espoused the cause of translation becoming a subject taught at Arab universities.

Baalbaki's views on translation are shared by *Kalimat*. He, for instance, objected profoundly to what the Arab call *tarjama be tassarruf* ('free' translation), used mainly by those

who did not speak the foreign language and depended on others to summarise the text and they would then translate it into Arabic. Al-Manfalouti (1876-1924), a well known author, used this method when he translated from French, a language he never learned. There are currently a number of translators in Australia who translate from Arabic despite their total ignorance of this language. Others with only a basic command of English, put their names next to texts translated from Arabic. Baalbaki believed that the time for 'free' translation had long gone.

Baalbaki also rejected literal translations, because each language has its own nuances. He read whole paragraphs, then translated them as a whole, using appropriate expressions from Arabic to match. Successful translation according to him depended on loyalty to the text and knowledge of both languages; knowledge in the sense of cultural understanding, not simply literal proficiency. A translator should be able to convey the spirit of the original text as well as its contents: 'When I translate Dickens, I am eloquent and pure. When I translate Hemingway, I am simple and clear,' Baalbaki said.

Baalbaki also believed that translation was more difficult than authorship. He said:

> *I experienced both translation and authorship. Authorship is easier because you have many references available to you, from which you select what you would like to include or exclude. You are like a car driver in a wide road; you go right, left, stop and move again in any direction. In translation, you are like a tram driver; if you deviate from your defined track you are in trouble.*

Baalbaki's achievements included his role in publishing two important journals: *al-Oloom* (Scinces) and *al-Adaab* (Literatures). He was editor of the first from 1956 to 1972, but *al-Adaab* was soon left to Suhail Idriss. *Al-Adaab* became a leading literary magazine in the Arab World. *Kalimat* is proud that in the present issue *Landmark* is about Suhail Idriss, another literary giant in twentieth century Arab culture.

I am personally grateful to both Baalbaki and Idriss. Like millions of Arabs of my generation, I was a prolific reader of Baalbaki's translations when I was in my teens; but since the first edition of *al-Mawrid* I have been a beneficiary of its accuracy, resourcefulness and practicality. Like Baalbaki, I also graduated from the American University of Beirut. When I first joined the University's orientation programme, they recommended to us an English-English dictionary entitled *The American College Dictionary*. The teacher told us that this was one of the best dictionaries ever. Being at the time biased to everything English (literature wise), it was hard for me to believe that an American dictionary could be so good. Thirty years on, I believe that it has been for me one of the most accurate, resourceful and practical aids. No doubt Baalbaki benefited from the style and systematic approach of the American College Dictionary when compiling *al-Mawrid*. His attention might not have been drawn to that dictionary when he joined the University, but his genius in selecting what is best served him well.

I am also grateful to Idriss because back in 1978 a friend of mine (we were both in England preparing our Ph.D.'s, he in English literature, I in science) showed me a copy of *al-Adaab* with one of his short stories published in it. I thought it was great for a young man to be able to have his story published in a top literary periodical. I felt very proud of him. The next day, I showed him a short story I had written and asked him whether he thought Idriss would accept it for publication. My friend said that it was very unlikely. His reaction spurred me on because I felt my short story was as worthy of publication as his was; so I sent it to Idriss. A few months later, my friend came to me with a copy of *al-Adaab* in his hand and a smile on his face. My story was in it.

Although my scientific career in England, Syria and Australia has left me little time to pursue my literary interests, the publication of my short story in *al-Adaab* had a great impact on me because it animated my dormant literary disposition whenever I had the chance.

I believe the only meaningful way of thanking those who led our way, such as Baalbaki and Idriss, as well as our colleagues who challenged us and joined in celebrating the success of the beautiful and meaningful in their work, such as my friend Mohammad Anwar al-Kourayti, is to follow in their footsteps and live up to their expectations.

Kalimat is our way of thanking them all.

Raghid Nahhas


Mike Rizk

to the Editor

The Warmth in the Age of Frost

Your magazine is excellent and has been received with an overwhelming respect in all aspects. *Kalimat* is a song of colour in your nation. *Kalimat* is a book full of extraordinary warmth in this age of amazing frost.

Tarek al-Yazigi, poet, Syria

A Dawn for the World to Bathe in

From the land that receives the dawn before the whole world does, the new green world of nature and man beyond the oceans, *Kalimat* is published to prove that there is a leading role for Australia to play in contemporary cultural dialogue of modern times. It is a literary meeting between the experience of the writers of Oceania and Arab writers.

We salute the Editor's provocative ethical reference to the particularity of every culture, group and or work, and his description of how to enjoy access among them without compromising individual distinguishing features.

The rich variety of subject matter that came from authors of different backgrounds throughout the first year of this magazine reaffirms the magazine's will to be representative of a wide spectrum of human achievement.

The alternating English and Arabic issues provide a great opportunity for the rich Arabic language to stand side by side with English, the language of our modern age.

Yes! *Kalimat* crossed continents like rockets with heads containing messages of access and love, written by a select group of authors to fulfil this noble goal. It will, at the same time, expose to the world the grandeur of the literature with which the Arabic language has never ceased to pulsate. *Kalimat* has built a green road: every now and then a kangaroo crosses it, or an Arab horse jumps over it, with a noble knight at the reins.

Tafeed Abu Kair, journalist, Syria

Great Success in a Short Time

I congratulate you on a great success in such a short period of time. I bow for your great respect for creativity, and allow me to relate this saying by al-Nikary: 'The wider the vision, the shorter on words we become'.

Nada al-Salama, author and poet, Syria

Terrific

The September English issue of *Kalimat* was terrific. It gives me the strong feeling of *Kalimat* establishing itself and beginning to make its mark.

Dr. Eva Sallis, academic, author and adviser to *Kalimat*, Australia

You Make me Live your Persistence

I am very glad with your translation of chapters of my book Friday, Sunday. You have put a lot of

hard work into this project, and I particularly thank you for translating some work for a good number of Lebanese poets, thus introducing them to Australia. Let me assure you that you make me live your persistence on this task.

Dr. Khalid Ziadé, academic and author, Lebanon

Beautiful

Thank you for my beautiful Arabic copy of *Kalimat*. I feel very honoured to be amongst the other poets, with my work translated and published in a journal that is striding across two cultures. You should feel very proud of what you have achieved.

Dr. Julie Leibrich, public health commissioner and poet, New Zealand

L. E. SCOTT

Contemporary Maori Writings

Soft Leaf Falls of the Moon
by
APIRANA TAYLOR
The Pohutukawa Press

&

Star Waka
By
ROBERT SULLIVAN
Auckland University Press

As readers of the last English language issue of *Kalimat* will remember, I wrote a short essay for that issue outlining developments in Maori writing in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In it I spoke of two Maori writers, Apirana Taylor and Robert Sullivan, who I believe will be major influences in the shaping of indigenous writing in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is with that in mind that I review their latest books.

For a poet to become known for the creation of one poem is an amazing feat in anybody's universe. Apirana Taylor is such a poet and the poem is *Sad Joke on a Marae*. If Taylor had never written another poem in his life that one poem would always bring his name into any examination of 'Maori writing' of this period.

But Apirana Taylor was not to be a one-poem-wonder. From 1979, when he burst onto the scene with his first book of poems 'Eyes of the Ruru', it was clear that contemporary Maori writing - poetry in particular - was about to take a different turn, a new direction. And that direction revealed a Maori voice not of lyricism but of anger - anger at racism, anger at loss. It was urban and immediate and its cry was: What do we want? Justice! And when do we want it? NOW! As one of the stanzas in *Sad Joke on a Marae* says:

> Then I spoke.
> My name is Tu the freezing worker.
> Ngati D.B. is my tribe.
> The pub is my Marae.
> My fist is my taiaha.
> Jail is my home.

Since the publication of his first collection, Taylor has gone on to become a prolific artist and not just in the field of poetry. His output during the last 15 years or so has also included short stories, novels and plays and he has a growing reputation as an actor and performance poet.

Apirana Taylor's writing has always had a sharp political edge to it and this is seen particularly in his poetry. Those who know and celebrate the power and rawness of this man's words will recognise the flames in his new book 'Soft Leaf Falls of the Moon', as in these lines from *I Am*:

I thirst for the waters of knowledge
and I burn
I burn and I burn and I burn
in the streets
in your hearts and minds
I am fire
I am revolution

Taylor's fire doesn't just come from the power of his political beliefs, but also from the power of human love:

The Family Tree

I was
am
and will be
alive
growing
bearing fruit

living
dying
in you
and me

I am
the
family tree

But Apirana Taylor has lived in this world long enough to know that in the affairs of humankind, trying to love your neighbour may be all well and good, but if your neighbour is a racist white vampire you may have to drive the patu through his heart. In the words of his poem *Patu*:

This is the haka of the patu pounamu
that in the veins of the race of the flicking tongue
and rolling eye
warms to the beat of the feet thumping the earth
in the rhythm of war

Robert Sullivan is another Maori poet who has been pushing forward since the late 1980s with an 'urban Maori voice'. His first book of poems, 'Jazz Waiata', was published in 1990 and speaking of that collection recently Sullivan said, 'When I wrote 'Jazz Waiata' I was a young university student listening to rap. I was busy taking rhythms out of my stereo and borrowing lines from bands like Public Enemy ...'

Like Taylor, Sullivan's writing is at once based in the mythology, culture, beliefs and spirit of his race and dressed in the clothes and colours of urban political hipness.

'Star Waka' is Sullivan's third collection of poems. The book consists of 100 poems (waka/canoes) and 2001 lines (warriors) - the pages are the waterways and the poems move through three time spaces in their travels on the water – past, present and future:

Waka 77
In pre-colonial times the crew would walk
across the isthmus near Otahuhu to cross harbours,
carrying the waka.

If they were visible today
there would be motorcades, policemen
to control the crowds and traffic -
probably tv crews too,

Waka 100
And you waka, who have seen heaven,
the guts of the ocean, brought terror
and pleasure, who have exhausted
your crews of home thoughts
who have lifted songs above
the waves of the greatest and deepest ocean,

rise - rise into the air - rise to the breath -
rise above valleys into the light and recognition -
rise where all who have risen
sing your names.

Sullivan has learned, as all oppressed people have learned, that if the truth and history of an oppressed people is to be known, it will not come out of the mouths of the oppressors. It will come out of the mouths of those who have felt the wretched hand of the oppressor. Robert Sullivan's 'Star Waka' is glittering on the waters, telling truth and history to shape the coming time.

In a review of this book, David Eggleton posed the question: 'Is the awesome, born-again energy of Maoritanga the single most potent cultural force in New Zealand today?' The answer is yes.

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


MikeRizk

SOPHIE MASSON

Imagination's Stronghold

The first library I remember was my father's, in our house deep in the green, wooded countryside of south-western France. A great collector of books old and new, many on esoteric or obscure subjects, he had had a room set aside from the beginning in the cavernous old place he and my mother had bought when it was not much more than a haunted ruin, for just this purpose. As the house took shape again, the golden-lit flesh re-knitting over its beautiful stone bones, this room became a hallowed place, a place of light and shadows, cool in summer, warm in winter. Because my father is a romantic from way back, it had a fireplace and a large winged chair beside it, a desk made of fragrant Indonesian wood, quills and silver inkstand and leather-bound blotter at the ready, for when note-taking mania took hold of you; blue toile de Jouy curtains featuring scenes of 18th century bucolic life, a Persian carpet decorated with long-tailed birds alighting in marvelous trees; and of course, books. Books in large wide open shelves of beechwood, built specially for the purpose by a local artisan with an accent so thick it sounded like he was speaking through a mouthful of the local fouasse cake; in antique bookcases with doors that were like fretted screens, so that the books behind them looked as if they were in a kind of beautiful prison; books behind glass and in sandalwood chests. It was a place no child was ever allowed in on their own; but sometimes Papa would take you in there, sit you on his knee and read from some old collection of Perrault's stories, or the fables of Jean de la Fontaine, illustrated by Gustave Doré. Other times, he would take down the huge volume of reproductions of Hieronymus Bosch's art, and point out to his quaking offspring the hellish consequences of misbehaving, of losing your footing on the ladder of holiness, or else, driven by another mood, pull out from the sandalwood chests bound copies of 19th century magazines and read out ancient faits divers, or human interest stories that seemed, strangely enough, to pop up again from time to time, almost unchanged, in the local newspapers.

Later, as we got older, we were allowed little by little to enter the library on our own, but no book was ever to leave it. You had to read the books in Papa's library in that place only; sitting in the winged chair, or at the desk. And that seemed such an amazing privilege, such a wondrous thing. Of course, we children had our own 'library' of books elsewhere in the house, shelves crammed with the pink-backed children's hardbacks of the Bibliothèque Rose, and the green backs of the Bibliothèque Verte, dogeared paperback collections of traditional stories from all over the world, and magnificent illustrated editions of the Thousand and One Nights, the Ramayana, Greek mythology; Tintin and Asterix, and, later huge 19th century novels: by Balzac, Hugo, Féval, Gautier. On those shelves were journeys and escapes and spells; but they weren't what we called the library. That word, spoken in rather overawed and excited tones, was reserved for Papa's library. In that room was all the mystery and strangeness and ordered beauty of another world; a world removed from yet strangely within the world we knew; a world you had to earn a place in, through patience and the gaining of wisdom, a world that beckoned, whose enchantment made time stand still. It is an image that stayed with me, and every time we went back to France as children—which was at last every two or three years—after having rushed around to rediscover toys and bedrooms, it was always the threshold of the library that drew me, to stand dreaming and hesitant looking in at the books, waiting for

permission to be invited in.

In Australia, Papa had a room full of crowded bookcases, but it was not the same. The books were much less glamorous, there was no atmosphere in the room itself, and besides, I'd discovered another enchanted place. For the other world that drew me in Australia was our local public library. The children's section was probably not very big in reality, but in my memory it is a kind of huge, secure place, far away from the grit and heat of the street, far away from the dull routine of school. I was a good student, at least in fits and starts, but a rather bored one, having been raised on the rich treasure of stories, and not facts. In any case, at the rather modest parish school I went to, the only 'library' was a couple of sets of glass-fronted bookcases in the senior primary room. At home, we'd only been able to bring a few of our beloved Bibliothèque rose and verte with us, and insatiable reader that I was, I'd soon have desiccated from the need to imbibe stories if we children and Maman had not discovered the local library. That was my real education in English, the library; left alone by Maman to make my own pathways through English-language children's books, I made wonderful discoveries, but also missed out on some marvellous things. Quietly stubborn, I made my reading decisions according to some rather strange criteria; sitting cross-legged on the itchy carpet near the bookshelves, I scanned titles and blurbs with a keen eye. Magic and fairies and giants and trolls and other worlds always attracted me. Anything that smelt of mundane routine I cast aside, and thus it that was I met, and loved dearly, Tove Jannsson and CS Lewis and Alan Garner and Patricia Wrightson and Leon Garfield and James Thurber and a host of others, but missed out on Laura Ingalls Wilder because I was sure a book with 'house' in the title must be about housework, and that Tom's Midnight Garden must be about pushing wheelbarrows, or pulling out weeds, both things Papa used to try and force us to do; and I simply could not see why anyone would care about What Katy did at School! It wasn't till I was much older that I read those books, and loved them, and wished I'd met them much earlier.

What my mother lacked in knowledge of English-language children's books, or classical English literature, she more than made up in knowledge of modern English adult literature. She it was who introduced us to Anthony Burgess and DH Lawrence and who scouted out Australian novels for us to read, as teenagers. When, in high school, the school librarian sent a note home querying my younger sister's wish to take out Martin Boyd's mildly racy novel *Nuns in Jeopardy*, my mother sent back a note informing the librarian that her daughter was perfectly capable of dealing with such things, having cut her teeth on Rabelais and Perrault! I'm not sure what the librarian thought of it, but I noticed that afterwards the book was placed on a 'Special Permission' shelf!

Ah...high school and the school library...It too, became another world for me. Despite the mild wowserism that occasionally broke out a la *Nuns in Jeopardy*, it was a great place, and the librarians very pleasant people who did a lot to extend my reading range. It was also a place where I could go to be in peace and quiet to compose poetry and look up poetic forms which I wanted to emulate. In my first term in high school, I'd had a very bad experience of bullying which had changed the usually quietly confident child I had been into an ultra-sensitive adolescent, for whom the library was a true refuge from cruelty. When my parents, realising my plight, moved me to another school, there was no longer any need to escape, but I never quite recovered the trust I'd had in the past, and cultivated a certain wary self-sufficiency, even with my friends, which meant I could tactically retreat whenever I needed to. As well, my parents' strictness meant that much of the usual teenage preoccupations—ie sex, drugs, rock and roll, all pumped up by peer pressure—had to be kept hidden from view, secretively thought about, rarely indulged in, and that left plenty of time for reflection, for intellectual and mystical excitement, for strange story-pathways to be taken, through that

world within the world. I must say that now, though I do not necessarily think that prohibition is a very good idea, my parents' attitude certainly forced me to follow my own deepest inclinations, and not just the whims of teenage fashion and trend, at a time when most kids simply cannot stand the peer pressure. I actually got bored with constant conversations about who was dating who or sleeping with who and what so and so had got up to that weekend, for all that could only be academic for me, and the library was the perfect place to retreat to, to be myself and follow my daggy enthusiasms for myth and legend and wild adventure. It had always been a place associated with pleasure for me; mind-journeys, heart-adventures, in the past. Now it also became an island of calm in the turbulent seas of adolescence, where I could explore both reading and writing at my leisure. I did not spend quite as much time in the public library any more; having outgrown the children's corner, but not quite ready for the maze of adult bookshelves. Fortunately my school, limited as to space, growing hugely as to population, never stinted on the library, and there was always much to occupy me there. There were also audio-visual sets available for senior students; you could go in a little booth and write poetry whilst Vaughan Williams' The Antarctic Symphony flowed into your ears from your headset. You could also watch an early video of John Bell and the Nimrod theatre company playing Hamlet. You could sit crosslegged behind tall banks of metal shelves, and pore through all kinds of books on myth and legend, making feverish notes and sparking off all kinds of ideas for vast novels. The first novel I ever wrote—for I had written lots of poetry, short stories, plays and illustrated tales before, but not novels, thinking I could never finish one—was started thus, at the age of 16, in the library. It was a vast fantasy novel—I'd discovered Tolkien and others of his ilk by then—which would incorporate as many of the known mythologies of the world as I could manage. It filled exercise book after exercise book, full of wild magic, strange adventures, and unpronounceable names, and I loved it dearly. Writing it made me read and read even more too. For those of you who think the rise of fantasy is the sign of a growing illiteracy amongst young people in particular, think again. Fantasy writers—and readers—are probably the most voracious readers of all, delighting in all kinds of connections and arcane knowledge.

When I finished school, I left home after one too many arguments with my father, and struggled in poverty for quite a while, trying both to meet the requirements of a tough BA specialising in Middle Welsh, Anglo-Saxon, medieval romances, and Icelandic sagas, and to keep food in my mouth by doing all kinds of jobs, from folding clothes in a Laundromat (where once a customer, seeing me read in a quiet moment, said to me, What! You work in a laundrette, and you read a book!) to preparing salads in a pizzeria, whilst dodging the lustful owner. None of these jobs ever earned more than a pitiful amount. I remember once having to make a decision about whether I'd have a sausage roll for lunch or catch the bus home from Sydney University—I lived in Neutral Bay with my older sister. The sausage roll won; and I walked for hours to get back, stopping in on the way at my favourite place, Stanton Library in North Sydney. What a great place that was, for a desperately poor, proud student who could have been kept in the manner to which she had long been accustomed, if only she had crawled back to her equally proud and stubborn father and his strict rules! There were many days when I felt very much like giving up the struggle, but the library always put new heart into me. Not only was it free entertainment; but it also provided information on all kinds of literary possibilities, and I entered many competitions advertised on its noticeboards, and spent many happy hours continuing on with my various enthusiasms. The library reminded me that there was a world beyond flat wallets and gritty pavements and people who thought laundry assistants must be illiterate. It gave me heart, too, by reminding me that somewhere, sometime, people had cared enough about literature and about their destinies as writers to struggle

through even the most difficult periods of their lives. No way did I want to follow the safe and dull careers of routine that had been proposed for me. In the reckless way of youth, I wanted to do what I felt I was born to do—and the library, so quiet and demure in appearance, but with such a multi-chambered, raging heart of tumult and vision and destiny and heartbreak and magic and joy, gave me the courage to continue, and not to lose hope...Equally, I knew that without those like me who had dared to hope and dream, to stubbornly and quietly keep on going, the library would be just a nice quiet and cheap place to sit out of the cold and the heat.

Since that time, libraries have continued to be amongst my favourite places. I live in the high cold northern Tablelands of NSW in the university town of Armidale with my family, and am a regular both in our local library and the university library, as well as having a rather large but messy library scattered in all of the rooms in our house, and trawling through the vast virtual libraries that one may find on the Net. I continue to follow overgrown, wild, exciting pathways through magical lands and undiscovered countries; many of my novels have started from something seen by chance in a library book. I have had a great deal of very pleasant interactions with librarians, and admire their great dedication, erudition and kindness to me who is often a rather disordered and awe-struck traveller in their domains. Though I still love magic and mystery, I have come to understand, as I've grown up, fallen and stayed in love and had children; built a house of our own with my husband and cherished the garden we have made, that the world within the world incorporates all those things, that the flesh and the spirit are tightly woven together, and that the spell cast by the library, the spell that seems to stop time, is the spell not of old paper or old magical formulae, but of imagination, that greatest of all qualities, which makes us both fully human, fully mortal, yet immortal too. The library is the record, the garden, the house of souls; but it is also the place where the soul is helped to emerge from its chrysalis, to spread its wings and be truly free. And there is no price that can be put on that. In a world which all too often seems dominated by shiny newness and the bottom line, the library is a stubbornly ancient symbol, a stubbornly ancient reality, another world which will exist long after materialistic capitalism has gone the way of theocracy and communism.

In the Middle Ages, illiterate people used to come and gawk at the great chained book, the Biblica Pauperium, on the lecterns of churches; their imaginations nourished, expanded and inspired by its glorious pictures and well known stories. Theirs was a truly visual and oral culture, much more so than ours, their traditional stories rich and deep and beautiful. But it was that single book, in all its actuality, its mysterious presence and tangible, yet elusive magic, which represented the vast worldwide library of souls for them, beyond the bounds of their villages. It was that which linked them back to an almost forgotten time, the very literate world of the Romans. That book was not for them a dead manifestation of a lost age, though; it spoke loud and clear to them. And it was partly that experience, the possibility of another world, of a limitless world within the real and rich heart of mundane and customary reality, which made Western culture gain in confidence and complexity. These days, in a time when many people, including, I'm sorry to note, some librarians, taken either by gungho neologising fervour, or panicked by the Nostradamus-like pronouncements of the media, seem determined to misrepresent the literate, indeed rather bookish, Net—in my own quite long experience of being on the Net, I've 'met' as it were, many more people interested in books, reading and writing than in real life—determined, as I said, to make out that it spells the end of book culture and of actual, as opposed to virtual, libraries, don't let's forget the lesson of the chained book on the lectern. A library's being on the Net is not going to interest those people who are not readers already anyway; but an actual library, with actual books in it, can work real and extraordinary magic. It's not a computer game that has caught the passion and imagination of

modern children, no matter how computer-savvy they are; it is a series of books, the Harry Potter books, in which libraries play a very important role indeed, and in which one of the central characters, Hermione Granger, with her love of libraries, is a reflection of the author herself as a child. We don't need libraries renamed as Information Services Centres; we need them recognised as strongholds and gardens of the Imagination.

Les Chouans

I am sitting at my desk, in my room, sucking my pen. In the living-room, Dad's put on a record, an anti-Revolution collection of songs dating from the eighteenth century. These are the songs of the Chouans, the counter-revolutionary Bretons and Vendéens who fought a hard guerilla battle against the armies of the Republic in the 1790's. They were mostly peasants, hard, wary, religious, brave and sometimes cruel. They fought hard for their traditions, their land, their beliefs, and for that crime, their countryside was pillaged, their farms burnt down, thousands of them and their families massacred in the name of liberty equality and fraternity. A dark episode of frightening emotional power; a darkness which looms large in my father's mind. He's told us stories about them, stories to fill your mind with dread and grief, stories that filled me like a well. I would sit, and write, this day. I would show my parents, when I had finished, the heavy brooding mystery they had given me. It would be an attempt, to explain, to receive, too, to thank and understand. I wanted to give them the fear, the tragedy, the horror of that time: the poor against the poor.

'Night. Hardly any sound, but the light rustle of wind in the thickets, the slow soft flop of leaves on the ground. Shrivelled moon peering over the mound of a far away hill. Night of a thousand spirits, All Souls' Day. Then, in the distance, sound breaks the silence. The heavy tread of frightened men, singing songs to comfort themselves. Soldiers, republicans, sans-culottes, les Bleus!'

Dad always spoke of the 'Bleus', the republicans, as if they were only half-human: bloodthirsty power-grabbers or poor, enslaved robots. I wanted to try and see it differently, to see the inevitability of the tragedy, the pity of it. For surely those Bleus- Normans, Champenois, Poitevins- were, often, peasants, too, hardly comprehending the gigantic struggle, the bloody nature of the battle. The Revolution always eats its children.

'Most of them don't even know what they're here for, in this gloomy, lost, trackless country. Even though they have been told that the old God does not exist, still they furtively cross themselves.'

Vive la République! comes a voice from the rear, that of thin, fanatical Louis Chardon. Few voices answer.

'That idiot is positively yearning to die!' says Etienne Ferrat, a Champenois and a blacksmith.

'Ah, to be a martyr!' mocks Pierre Saunier. 'To have your name inscribed on a wall!' His voice distorts suddenly. 'What's that?'

I am taken with shivers. I am there, with the men, dirty, without shoes, the eternal soldier in someone else's battle. Waiting, always, for the night to come, without gentleness, or kindness, but in a long terror.

Yann Kerzuelen, the only Breton there, murmurs, 'Les Chouans! Les Chouans!'

They've all heard about the Chouans. Their very name--taken from chat-huant, the

screech owl, is enough. Bird of darkness, of death, of prey, gliding silent of wing. They've all heard of Charrette, and Jean Jan, and the huge Breton, Cadoudal, big as a giant from the beginning of time, leading his ragged men to the ancient death-wail of the bagpipes. From the depths of their secret forests, the Chouans hoot down their owl-cry, ferocious peasants speaking a strange tongue. Peasants who own knives, against wolves, knives they keep sharp, with longing. The Chouans sharpen their knives, the owl hoots, and hoots, and hoots...'

From the living-room, I can hear the bagpipes keening for the dead, for the living and their hard lives. I can see the Bleus, sweating, terrified, alone in the forest with an unseen enemy, hundreds of miles away from the rightness, the comfort, of their revolutionary masters in Paris.

'Come on, citoyens, show them we are not afraid,' urges the pale leader. Slowly, the soldiers advance. Further into the dark. The trees are getting more numerous, the ground makes a soft squelchy sound of rotting leaves and wet earth. The owl.

'The Chouans! the Chouans!' Yann repeats and repeats. Face to face with his own countrymen on his own ground, Brittany, old, ferocious, tenacious Brittany, which never forgives betrayal. He understands it. He has lost. He must be gone from even the meaning of his own name. The others don't know. They are stupid with terror, but they still think they might escape.

The soldiers' spirits begin to lift a little. No more owl hoots, the night is quiet, but black, thick. Yann holds it in his heart, this night, and thinks of his mother, his father, his brothers. Perhaps it is they, out in the night, they, whose knives will sink into his flesh...'

For maybe, I thought, even the ones they call betrayers didn't mean ill, in the beginning. Perhaps they were simply fluid with unformed emotion, glazed with resentment and inarticulate longings, easily manipulated, easily disposed of...I can hear Dad singing in the living room, the words of a Breton song with its Celtic cadences, its Celtic subtlety and strange, gleeful mourning tones still there, even in French translation. He will have tears in his eyes when he's singing it. I know, because I do, whenever I hear it. It is a song of grief for I know not what, but something I recognise, instinctively.

'Suddenly, another hoot. Closer, this time. Then another, then another. The trees around the men have got voices. The owls' cries grow and grow, and then there is a scream from Louis Chardon at the back, echoed by one from the leader at the front.

'Nom de nom de nom!' sobs Pierre. The Chouans are here. The forest is full of them. Yann is in the midst of the fighting, he too has got his wolf-knife. The others know he is Breton, they can smell it, feel it...He fights madly, desperately.

Night. Night. A few rustles in the undergrowth, the moon starts to lurch towards dawn. The shadow-men, the Chouans, have gone. And with them, Yann has gone. He has served them well, his brothers the Chouans. Without him, the ambush would have been impossible.'

Cadoudal's pipes are wailing again, and I sit stunned at my desk, watching the words I've just written. A sense of horror fills me.

'But Yann is not entirely satisfied. Young Pierre Saunier invoked God just before he died. He's one of those Bleus who won't go to Hell!'

That is right, yet still the pen drags as I write. Dad comes in from the living-room. I hand him my story. 'A story,' he says. 'Les Chouans. Ah. 'Something crosses his face, and he hands it back. 'Later, perhaps.'

I go to see Mum in the kitchen. She's always telling me to write about what I know, write about your country, your culture! I show her the story. 'Les Chouans,' she says. She is pleased. 'Give it to me. I'll read it now.'

She reads quickly, hands it back. 'Yes,' she says.

'Well?' I want to hear her say she likes it, she finds it horrifying, terrible, she hates what I've expressed. The Revolution, she's told me, bred a certain kind of evil. She's never admitted the evil may have leaked, everywhere.

'It's powerful,' she says. Her eyes have registered an impact- the disappointment of the unexpected, perhaps? I fear tears pricking in my eyes. 'Don't you pity them?' I say at last.

'Oh yes,' Mum says. She looks at me. 'Oh yes. I pity them. But what good has pity ever done? It can only be a betrayal, when you're fighting for what you believe in.'

And I find that I am speechless.

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Imagination's Stronghold was delivered as a lecture at the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Annual Conference in Canberra, October 2000.


Mike Rizk

PETER INDARI

A Poet and a Belly-Dancer

I heard someone, who deals with poetry and literature, sarcastically tell about one acquaintance of his who invited a poet to a private party. The poet did not only accept the invitation, but also was grateful for a payment of five hundred dollars for his performance.

I asked the cynical story teller about the relationship between the two men. He said, with the same tone of sarcasm, that they did not know each other well, which proved that the poet was invited to adorn the occasion with his poetry, and possibly his voice. He was telling me about the occasion as if the poet had committed a sin dishonouring poetry, poets and their mission.

I do not know why we deny a poet the right to be compensated for his creativity and the products of his mind, whilst the cheapest local belly-dancer does not accept less than two hundred dollars for an interval of less than twenty minutes!

The sum of five hundred dollars does not equate with one verse written by a creative poet, let alone a whole poem specifically prepared for an occasion, where the poet squeezes in the best of his ability in a soirée that might last the whole night.

The singer, the musician, the dancer, the clown and the drummer all have the right to their sacred payments, but poetry and literature seem to be without a price to our Arab mentality. If the products of the mind are not all for sale at any price, isn't a poet still entitled for a living- even those with work we brand as 'priceless'?

Some years ago, the Tunisian Union of Writers invited the leading poet Adonis to participate in a poetry festival. He apologised due to previous commitments, and ended his letter of apology by writing: 'I hope that you will deal with the poets you invited to your festival as you would with fifth-grade belly-dancers.'

It is said that fifth-grade belly-dancers in Arab countries charge over three thousand dollars for half an hour of mediocre dancing.

How many years would you need, Adonis, to achieve the same level as Fifi Abdo who charges twelve thousand dollars for one dance interval?

Peter Indari is a leading Australian-Arab journalist. He is currently the Editor-in-Chief of *ash-Sharq* (The Orient), an Arabic weekly newspaper, published in Sydney. The present article originally appeared in Arabic in *ash-Sharq*, 31/01/2001, Sydney.

RICHARD HILLMAN

Teaching Children
to Reach for the Sublime Object of Power

For my son's third birthday my mother (his grandmother) put together a collection of animated films (produced by UNICEF) as a birthday gift. The films were received with joy, especially by me, for obvious reasons. One of the films was called *Teeny Tiny and the Witch Woman*, from 'an old Turkish tale', about a child's resourcefulness in the face of a feared Other.

The children in this film are warned about a Witch Woman who lives in a nearby forest, who waits for children, catches them, then eats them. Teeny Tiny disobeys his mother's warnings and enters the forbidden forest with his two brothers. All three boys become hopelessly lost until they find refuge with a 'reassuring' old lady who turns out to be the Witch Woman. Cautious Teeny Tiny eventually escapes with his two older brothers and with the Witch Woman's 'magic objects'. The wicked old woman chases after them but Teeny Tiny uses the stolen 'objects' to help his brothers return to their mother and the relative safety of their small rural community.[1]

The cinematic exchange of various images of the body elaborate certain fears, such as a fear of sleep, of separation from the mother, of the consequences of disobedience, of desire.[2] The exchange of 'gifts' at this cinematic level reflects a 'passing on' (or 'handing down') of images that contain fundamental knowledge, information whose power resides in their influence over the way images of death might be viewed by the receptive though passive child.

A cinematic language is used to convey images of death without a 'thought to the blood and suffering these words imply'.[3] The visual presentation of death to children is often a thoughtless and, consequently, cruel act. Instructions for the child, on how to cope with fear, are given through the telling of a story, and the child is consequently forced to cope with the fearful narrative that has unexpectedly confronted them beside a series of violent images. Yet, should children have to 'cope with fear' that has been presented to them by adults in this visual medium? And, should such gifts be 'given' in the first place.[4]

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[1] John Holt's 1980 *How Children Fail*, Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, orig 1964, p.168: the presentation of adults, animated and non-animated, as 'all-knowing, all-powerful, always rational, always just, always right' is only a disguise for adults' 'fears, limitations, weaknesses, prejudices, [and] motives.'

[2] ibid, Holt, pp.59-60: 'Perhaps most people do not recognise fear when they see it...the subtler signs of fear escape them. It is these signs, in children's faces, voices, and gestures, in their movement and ways of working, that tell me plainly that most children...are scared.'

[3] ibid, Holt, pp.166-167.

[4] 'Snuff Watch: *Snuff* movies depicting graphic suicides, murders and tortures were shown to a NSW Supreme Court jury to help them understand the state of mind of Matthew O'Grady, who was 16 when he fatally shot another boy. O'Grady, now 18, has pleaded not guilty...claiming he was *desensitised after watching the violent, illegal movies*', in *The Australian* 22 November 2000. 'Coping' doesn't necessarily suggest suppression of desire or fear.

The 'voice over' as a form of animation

The short film begins and ends in darkness. The non-animated hands of an elderly woman are offered like candles, filling the dark space of the screen with their presence. The woman, who invites us to know her only through the presentation of her hands, is the storyteller. The complementary voice of the storyteller merges sound and sight, alluding to the image of a sound as it appears in the brief guise of the gesture. Here, oral language is a 'voice over' though the viewer is also asked to look upon the image (of the hands) as a site of articulation.

The 'voice over' operates as if it were a form of linguistic animation but brought to life through the director's accent on the image. In a sense, what is being said can be looked at in the light of what is being seen. Here again, sound and image are unified.

The Story Cycle

The storyteller points to her viewers (mostly children) with her right hand fore-finger. Her hands tremble as if she might be suffering from Parkinson's Disease. Her left hand is an arthritic claw. She clasps her hands together then places her right hand inside her left, so the right hand is hidden from our view. The appearance of the hands complements the telling of a very old story, one handed down from generation to generation, from grandparent to grandchild, to be repeated/retold when the grandchild in-turn becomes a grandparent. It is the story-cycle which is important here, one which is stressed by the invisible narrator, that bears witness to a child 'touched' through the teachings of the parent. But does the story provide an image-based dialogue for the child or does it allow the child to create his/her own story, his/her own images?

Eye and Image: The Sleep/Wake Dichotomy

The significance of images becomes more apparent as the film progresses. The opening animated scene invites the observation of a collection of images — a large kettle, a sun, a shadowy hand, and a mosque over-looking a village. These images curl into one until the kettle and the sun look out at us like two eyes. These 'eyes' merge into one, the kettle predominant, like an evil eye. The hand is stretched over the scene, clutching, enclosing it, veiling it in shadow, and perhaps, blinding it; it marks the presence of something fearful, perhaps polluted and contaminating, over-hanging the village. The mosque, in contrast, does not move. The white/blue mosque stands over the village like a silent protector, or bodyguard. Yet, the mosque is unable to cast off the dual image of defilement and blindness the shadowy hand has cast.

We hear and see a mother speaking to her three children. Teeny Tiny (TT), clothed as the jester with cap and bells, imagines the horror his mother is conjuring up as she warns them about what lies in wait for them inside the forest. TT imagines a dark mysterious forest, trees with hungry faces, branches that stretch out like claws, and a Witch Woman (WW) surrounded by the bones of the children she has eaten.

The mother tells TT and his brothers that her grandmother told her that the WW is a true person but, the children disbelieve her. They laugh at their mother's warning, then make their way towards the forest. TT has his reservations though, and states to his brothers that he will

keep his 'eyes open' and his 'legs ready to run'.

During the children's journey in and out of the forest we are shown objects with faces, trees with eyes open and mouths gaping wide. The WW's house is a craggy, haunted-looking face into whose mouth the children must enter. The repetition of images of dissatisfaction forces the viewer to think of the children's hunger, their desire. The open-mouthed faces represent the children's urgent need to be fed, to be found. It is the 'need', this dependency on the Other for survival, which drives the boys toward the WW's house.

The consequences of a 'childish' desire to explore and abandon fear is re-negotiated by the film. Before the children give in to their hunger, we hear the forest breathing deeply, heavily, desperately. Yet, upon entering the WW's home warnings are given. The door screams when opened and the WW appears; and, as if she has been expecting the children, she says, 'come in, come in, my children.' The two older brothers act as though they are afraid of the WW. She laughs, tells them that they 'don't need to be afraid'. And, as if these words are enough to dispel the children's fear, the two older brothers accept the WW's words, and her hospitality. They give in to their hunger, their desire, and enter the WW's home. TT follows at a reserved distance.

In the opening scene we were invited to witness the 'evil eye' as it stared out through a broil of mutating objects. Then, we are asked to look at TT's eyes, or through his eyes, as if to offer a potentially unsettling contrast: the brothers' sublime eyes are closed, narrowed, caught up in a blind trust of the dangerous Other — the forest and the Witch Woman.

When the brothers' eyes are open, they show their eagerness, their hunger. In such scenes, TT's eyes are shown as closed, hidden, or darkly recessed. TT's cautiousness stands in contrast to the brothers' open and exposed desire. When the three brothers are given a bed for the night in the WW's house, TT does not sleep. He lies awake with his eyes wide open, listening to the sounds of the WW and her house. The wake/sleep dichotomy exposes the dream/er as a potentially harmful, or dangerous state-of-body. The dreaming body is shown as vulnerable, weak...blind. The cautious TT does not miss a 'trick'. He sees the WW sharpening her knife, notices the rats and spiders sitting in distant nooks and crannies, waiting for him to fall asleep.

Images of Death: Deceptions and Magic Objects

Outside the house is a fence made of bones, 'little people bones'. Inside the house TT sees skeletons hanging from the rafters, or slumped in corners. The beds are made of bones and the clock on the mantle above the fire is made from a human skull. All these images of death are not lost on TT. He acts more determined than ever to 'keep his eyes open'.

Inside the house is a cage, also made of bones. TT asks the WW what she might keep in the cage. The WW answers, 'strays'. This seems to confirm TT's suspicions, realising that he and his brothers are 'lost'. The WW tells the boys to go to sleep, and to 'sleep well', because in the morning she will show them the 'way home'. But the way home is through the vulnerable state of sleep. This deception is not lost on TT, who decides to stay awake while his brothers sleep.

The WW comes into the bedroom, where the boys are 'sleeping', on three occasions. Each time she enters, she asks, 'who is sleeping and who is awake?' On each of these three occasions TT states that he is awake but, will go to sleep if the WW gives him what his mother usually gives him when he can't go to sleep at home. The WW places three 'magic objects' (a sharp knife, a cake of soap, and a sewing needle) on a high wooden shelf, before waiting on the sleepless child. Firstly, TT asks for a cooked egg, which he is promptly given. Secondly, he asks for popcorn and raisins. The WW is secretly infuriated by the child's requests but 'gives in' to

his demands, not realising that the child has not fallen for her motherly charade. On the third occasion, TT asks the WW to fetch water from the well with a sieve. The WW who would deceive the child is deceived. When the WW leaves the room TT wakes his brothers. TT then reaches the high wooden shelf, with a little help from his woken brothers, and takes the WW's 'magic objects'. They then make their escape from the haunted house.

The children escape, slipping passed the WW who is vainly attempting to draw water from the well with a sieve. She sees them escaping and gives chase. The boys clear the forest in very little time. TT drops behind his brothers, being the youngest and smallest of the three.

TT realises that the WW will catch him if he doesn't do something to stop her. He remembers the 'magic objects'. From out of his pocket he removes the cake of soap and says, if the soap is 'not magic' then she might at least 'slip on it.' So he throws the object in her path. The soap bubbles up into a great mound of soap, into which the WW runs. She tries in vain to climb over it but is forced 'to run around it'. As she begins to catch up with TT, the boy pulls the needle from his pocket and says, 'if it's not magic at least I'll prick her with this needle,' and throws the needle into the WW's path. The needle multiplies into a great hill of needles, into which the WW runs. She attempts to climb over it but the fierce pricking forces her 'to run around'. TT is now desperate. It seems as though the WW cannot be stopped. He pulls the knife from his pocket and says, 'if it isn't magic at least she'll cut her foot on it and we'll escape. It's our only chance.' TT throws the knife into the WW's path. The storyteller/invisible narrator tells us that: '...that knife cut a crack so long and so wide the WW couldn't run around it and couldn't jump over it...' and the boys run all the way back to the village where they are met by their calm mother.

The 'magic objects' are not what a viewer might expect. We are not shown the witch's broom, or wand, or crystal ball. Instead we are shown soap, a needle, and a knife. They are not without significance either. TT uses the soap in the hope that the WW might 'slip' on it. Instead, she 'sinks'. TT uses the needle in the hope that the WW might 'prick' herself with it. The first object sees the WW entering the magical substance but it is something she can get out of. The second object penetrates the WW but the penetration is only skin deep, it only makes the WW more determined in her pursuit. TT uses the knife in the hope that he might 'cut' the WW's foot but once again the purpose that the object was intended for is not fulfilled. Violence is not shown as a solution, although it is an intention. The knife does not 'cut' the WW, it 'cuts' a space, a gap, or rift between the WW and the boy. The *cut* separates the child from the object of his fear, the message of death carried by the WW. Yet are we being told that a separation from a powerful, and fearful, ancestral image, will only happen if the child reaches out for these 'magic objects', even if their magical value is doubtful?

During the chase the WW screams with a voice that is taut yet, as the chase lengthens her voice begins to strain and stretch. Her hands are constantly reaching out for the child but only grasping at thin air. When she is finally stopped, she literally shrinks, and disappointedly puts her head down and drops her arms to her side in a gesture of futility. She turns around and slowly returns to her home in the forest. The storyteller tells us that the WW: '...will wait a long long time before she hears a knock at her door again...'

We are shown an image of the WW, seated at her dining-room table. She is bent over the table in what appears to be a posture of absolute despair. Her anguish, her disappointment, and finally, her absolute despair, reveals the futility of her 'evil' and 'solitary' life. This is the picture of the old woman, sitting alone, not to be trusted. It is given like all those other stories from our past; it is given so that we might distrust the old woman who lives on her own, without children. Stories like this one have branded single, old women as witches for centuries.

The Return: The Weapon as Useless Toy

The film returns to TT, at home. He is in his bedroom, looking out the window at a wall of forest in the distance. In his right hand he holds a toy. It is a wooden sword. The irony here is that the storyteller has created an image of a child who doubts 'magic'. The story is the storyteller's 'toy'. The story, as an object, is given magical properties. These objects allow the child to escape people or things that might be feared. The boy, holding onto the toy 'weapon', reveals the story's message: that flight into the imaginary may overcome the sublime object of fear in reality.

The scene draws away from the window and the boy; we are asked to view the village without the shadow over it; the mosque rises up to dominate the screen, stands over the village. We are asked to 'believe' in the power of ancestral images: the mosque, the mother's story, and the now imaginable object of sublime fear.

Through the genealogical recycling of stories power is inserted into the dialogue of the child. The child is taught through the narrative of the story to reach into the objectified though illusory world, to take control of it, to use it to conquer the imagined fear that has been given. It sets up an illusory cycle of domination over others, a cycle which cannot be easily let go, but one that can be broken.

The story ends with the storyteller (for whom the hands are a weapon yet to be announced). We see again her thin, bony hands, and hear her old, shaky voice: 'I remember. My grandmother told it to me and her grandmother told her. One day you will tell it too. And so the story goes on and on.' As the storyteller speaks she points with the fore-finger and index finger of her right hand as if she were leveling a gun. Her left hand is curled closed, like a grenade. When she reaches the words 'on and on' she 'explodes', opens out the palms of both her left and right hands in a gesture of 'giving', then she clasps them closed in a gesture of 'capture', referring to the death of the Other, the viewer, the child.

Pedagogy: What is a toy?

Through the pedagogic gesture of storytelling, children are allowed to enter the world of the parents.[5] The telling of horror stories to children offers an insight into the horror of adulthood, of what it is to be 'social' — it allows children to feel afraid, and forces the child to emerge from childhood surrounded by socially-constructed images of fear. As a result, it stifles the child's capacity to creatively engage a 'desirable' social.

Parents toy with their children. They display images which a child might fear but the story also releases the child from fear.[6] Fairy tales (also myths and religious stories) give children's 'fears a name and identity' which they might let go. The story teaches the child that a flight to power (through the taking of 'magic objects') will provide an escape from fear. It provides 'escape', but it does not 'stop children from being afraid.'[7]

Images of power are represented in the symbolic form of the object (the toy). Power, in this iconographic sense, is shown as external to the child, as something which might be reached

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[5] op cit, Holt, p.69.

[6] ibid, p.69.

[7] ibid, p.59.

for and taken if a child is to dominate and/or control his/her fear. The child is given to believe that they are marked by some sort of Biblical 'original sin', or by a Freudian 'original fear', they are never shown as bearers of an 'original power' — even in stories such as the Harry Potter books where the discovery of an innate power comes as a surprise to the child, power is located within a magical or daemonic dialogue, as an exercise over good and evil, not free from the moral residue of a genealogous cycle of illusionment[8]. The child bears witness to power as it is displayed by the 'magic objects', not by themselves, and any suggestion that power might come from within is viewed as a shock or surprise and therefore 'disbelieved'. Children 'recognise that their ability to shock and horrify is a kind of power over other people' because they have been shocked and horrified by the power others have exerted over them. Perhaps, if power has to exist, then children might be taught to use power in creative ways, ways which might 'be more interesting than either their fears or the possibility of arousing fear in others.'[9]

An externalisation of power disassociates the child from the body as a source of power; in that sense, the flight to power is disabling. A dependence on *magic objects* is taught, so that the child might overcome the feared Other. Dependence inevitably results in conflict when access to the object is limited or denied by the feared Other. Children are trained to depend on acceptance or approval — but the withholding of such is destructive.[10] The gathering of objects, surrounding the body with commodities ('toys') or making the body a commodity, becomes a sign of one's power. Yet, power is dependent on the holding onto of the sign to the point that one cannot let go of the sign. It is this cyclical entrapment within a genealogic dialogue of power which, consequently, denies self-autonomy: self-limitation, dictated by fear, 'destroys intelligence' and 'creativity'.[11]

To this end, in *Teeny Tiny and the Witch Woman* the child does not find his/herself, the child escapes, returns to the mother, the ancestor: children are trained to act/behave like adults, this re-creates a fear of 'detection, capture, and death' as retributions for forgetting to act/behave like an adult. The return is a release from a 'given' fear, albeit, a dependent one, a social perversion that has saturated the unregulated space of power until it is no longer a toy but a practice that cannot be abandoned without disruption to the way society thinks of itself as an infantile conglomerate of needs and persuasions.[12]

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[8] I am referring to a cycle of illusionment, dis-illusionment, and re-illusionment supported and encouraged by the father of child psychology, D.W. Winnicott in his *Childhood and Society*, Penguin: Ringwood, 1953.

[9] op cit, Holt, p.59.

[10] ibid, p.176.

[11] ibid, p.59.

[12] ibid, pp.64-65. Also, Foucault, Michel 1991. The Repressive Hypothesis. in: P. Rabinow (ed) *The Foucault Reader* Ringwood: Penguin, pp. 301-329. There is a similarity between Foucault's 'incitement to discourse' and my idea of a 'flight to power' which I must acknowledge — both arrive from a reading of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals/Ecco Homo*. Kaufman W. (ed.), W. Kaufman & R.J. Hollingdale (trans), Vintage Books, N. Y.

YOUSSRI AL-AMIR

Landmark

Landmark this issue is an interview with Souheil Idriss, a leading Arab writer and publisher, conducted by Youssri al-Amir and published in al-Adaab, No. 9-10 Sep-Oct 2000. The following is a translation of most of this interview.

Souheil Idriss

Renewing the Mission and the Vision

Souheil Idriss was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1925. He graduated a shiekh (Moslem priest) from an Islamic law school in 1940, but soon left the shiekhdom and went to France where he obtained his Ph.D. in literature.

Along with Bahij Osman and Munir Baalbaki, he established *al-Adaab*, but in 1956 he became its sole owner and editor. In 1956 he established *Dar al-Adaab*, a publishing house.

Idriss worked in teaching Arabic, translations and literary criticism in a number of universities and institutes.

In 1968 he established the Lebanese Union of Writers in collaboration with Constantine Zreik, Joseph Mghayzel, Munir Baalabaki and Adonis. He served as Secretary General of the Union for four terms.

Idriss has six collections of stories, three novels and two collections of studies, essays and articles. He translated over twenty books. He is currently finalising three dictionaries serving Arabic and French readers.

He is married to Aida Matraji, and they have three children: Raeda, Rana and Samah.

What does the man who established *al-Adaab* think about *al-Adaab* conducting this interview with him?

It is a paradox, but it could be an opportunity to pour forth some ideas I have not considered before.

Let us imagine that Souheil Idriss continued with his religious pursuit, and did not take off the shiekh's garment, what would his condition be today?

I cannot deny that I gained from the period during which I was pursuing my religious studies. Most importantly, becoming proficient in Arabic. This opened the door for me to the realm of linguistics and lexicography. There is no doubt that my learning of the Quran and the Hadith refined my language. A comparison between my first writings and the ones that followed would reveal that the latter enjoy more economic use of words and the disappearance of repetition. In contrast, keeping on the religious garment would have deprived me the freedom I have been enjoying with my civil garment on. The religious attire would have deprived me the emotional credit from which I draw all of the content of my quiver. This is a subject I attempted to deal with in my novel *al-Hayy al-Latini* (The Latin Quarter). In life and in the novel, it was about removing the restrictions imposed on the hero in his homeland

before moving to Paris.

I cannot conceive of the idea that I was once pushed to pursue becoming a sheikh, let alone continuing in that field. Freeing myself from that situation was indeed my first revolution, or first rebellion in social life. It has not been a coincidence then that all my later passions and projects, particularly my drift for enlightenment, were instigated by a quest for freedom.

What were the reasons for this first rebellion against sheikhdom and society, particularly in relation to individual freedom and liberalisation of relationship between the sexes?

I think this is the question I answer in *al-Hayy al-Latini*, through the hero himself, when he emphasises that deprivation- particularly the sexual deprivation he suffers from in his homeland (extending over the whole Arab peninsula)- will disappear when he moves to another society which is more developed socially and culturally. The quest for social liberation takes a clearer picture in my novel *al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq*, where it does not restrict itself to liberating the hero as an individual in society, but deals with his passion for liberation within his family and society as a whole. Thus rebellion becomes a situation imposed and justified by the conditions it is rejecting, albeit this rejection is limited by some inevitable social restrictions.

I understand from what you say that the rebellion was a result of personal needs and motivations, not from adopting a general approach in life.

It is natural that a rebellion is self rather than ideologically motivated, because all human efforts and passions start from personal experiences that cast themselves upon other conditions. From here, most researchers and critics agree that in *al-Hayy al-Latini* I express a collective desire, despite the individualistic starting point. I think that every creative work must be subjective and objective simultaneously, particular and general, so that the reader feels that the writer is talking about him when he talks about himself.

It is noticeable that there is a focus on youth in your first stories, but you draw a clear picture of what you demand from men whilst your attitude towards women is rather foggy.

We must take into account the period during which the first stories were written. It was a period characterised, no doubt, with immaturity because it resulted from fantasies rather than experience in life. I touched on this subject when I republished my first stories. I asked myself: 'Is it the right of a writer to deny a particular period in his writing?' (Considering that I was not happy about those initial creations.) My answer was in the negative, because confirming these creations sheds a light on the development of the writer. If my attitude towards women in that early period was vague and oscillating, it became very clear later in my three novels where the hero entered the realm of the female aiming at knowing her and learning about her struggle. I became a supporter of her liberation, and called upon the male to share with her his private and public life.

Your first three collections of stories are dominated by sexual obsession. How did society accept you at the time, a dissident coming from the study of religion? What was your impression of that Beiruti society to which you belonged?

I do not think that at the time I reached the influence I later attained, namely after publishing *al-Adaab* magazine and the novels *al-Hayy al-Latini* and *al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq*. Only then I started to attract attention. This was not always positive. For example, some men of religion did not judge the novel *al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq* as a true picture of a particular religious society, but as a slander and severe criticism of that society. I remember that one of

my ex-friends at the Faculty of Sharia (Islamic Law) launched an attack on me from a mosque and accused me of atheism, as if he was calling for shedding my blood.

Was your dissent limited to taking off the religious attire, or did it extend to religion itself? If you do not consider yourself a religious dissident, how can you justify shedding that attire?

I did not feel any need to justify that exit, because in reality it was not. I did not fall into atheism in a reactionary manner as did a number of people. I remained a believer. I recall a review of *al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq* by Samira Azzam entitled *God is in al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq* to prove that the hero was a believer in the Creator. I adopted this attitude in my translations of several works of Sartre and existentialism, turning a blind eye on their atheistic tendencies, because I then believed that atheism was not a pillar of existentialist thinking. In fact, I believed that ethical existentialist thought was focused on freedom and moral obligation. These two aspects guided my translations of Sartre's *Les Chemins de la Leberte* (three volumes), and even when I translated *La Nausee*. I, anyhow, think that I inherited my belief from the Islamic Arabic heritage, and I did not see that denying God sticks, despite that some of those who wrote about me insisted on this denial of faith in me.

How do you describe the cultural environment in Lebanon in which you started your writings?

It was clear that I was an exception to the rule compared with my other family members. My brothers dealt in commerce, as did my uncles, but I started showing interest in literature and writing at an early age. I remember that I published my first article in 1939 in *al-Makshouf*, a Lebanese journal. It was about al-Maari's book *Risalat al-Ghifran*. Encouraged by my publications in the Syrian magazine *al-Amali*, I sent them my first poem. It was a humorous poem, and the editor put it on the first page, possibly as a mockery not admiration. Some writers attacked the poem in the same magazine, and this was the end of my poetry writing.

In some of your earlier stories, you positively expressed your attitude towards independence, but a lot of details were absent about that subject. For example, we do not see in what you presented any references to the disintegration of the internal affairs of the state, the sectarian issue or Arab nationalism, despite that these were the subjects of the hour in that time. Why did you avoid any details? Why didn't you find any of the available political parties satisfactory?

I ascribe this to my political immaturity at that time when I was young, but my stories had the seeds of national concern that would germinate later on.

Do you consider Souheil Idriss who travelled to France was different from the one who returned from it? What were the non-cultural factors that contributed to that change?

My travel was basically educational; to obtain a doctorate in literature. This aim, however, got muddled up with another social aim, namely opening up to life and getting rid of deprivation the student used to endure. There is no doubt that my stay in the French capital changed me enormously. It changed my cultural orientation, and made me gain new dimensions in my contact with international literature, particularly French literature. As a result of this, I developed my understanding of a national concept through gaining political awareness, that originally burst out from the Palestinian calamity in 1948. Meeting a number of educated Arabs in Paris, many of whom were members of the Baath Party, had a positive effect on my attainment of that national dimension. This influence was clear from my first editorial in *al-Adaab* and consequently this periodical became the medium that reflected national Arab thinking. When I returned to Beirut in 1953, I was a remade person, politically and socially, adopting new concepts concerning the role of an Arab thinker in the life of his

nation.

But your practice has been restricted to writing and publishing the periodical, and not extended to an organised political work. What s the secret of your attitude regarding political activity?

I have never been convinced of the need to belong to a particular political party despite my belief in the ideas of some of those parties, particularly in relation to unity, freedom and socialism. I have always believed that belonging to a party deprives a free thinker from his freedom of choice, and imposes on him a pattern of behaviour that is not always free. During those days, Saeed Takyyudine was one of my best friends, and I admired his creativity in arts, but his partisan tendency, and possibly his eagerness to head the Syrian Social National Party, and his continued donations to that party, made me drift away from him, believing that we lost the creative writer when that party won him.

During that period I had a lot of disputes with the communist Arabs because I basically opposed their connection with Moscow that amounted, in my opinion, to slavery. I might have, over the years, relaxed my attitudes towards partisanship but I still believe that it is not in the interest of literature and the writer to submit to any party. If I personally believe in nationalistic Arab ideology, it is because I think that this ideology is all-encompassing, preventing any partisan fanaticism.

Was the comparison between Paris and Beirut disappointing, or was it an invitation for revolt and change in your country?

It was, of course, an incentive for me to seek change and elevate Arabic standards to the horizon of modern civilisation. It was natural for intellectuals to direct their concerns towards attempting to remove the effects of the tragedy of the Palestinian problem- the central problem in the life of any intellectual in the fifties. Our plan in *al-Adaab* was to deepen awareness of this problem, and allow writers to incite the Arab nation to continue to find ways of eradicating the causes of defeat.

Was the crystallisation of the nationalistic idea in your consciousness a result of education and influence, or a reaction resulting from east-west relationship?

It has never escaped my mind that most of the West harbours some animosity to most of the East, started since the times of the crusader wars. But I think that we should benefit from the achievements of this West, so that we can face up to it using tactics similar to its own. When we do this, we are only retrieving part of what the West owes us from the benefits it achieved during the Middle Ages. This is perhaps one of the topics in *al-Hayy al-Latini.*

What attracted you to the existentialists?

My interest in existentialism springs from the interest of its greatest thinkers, particularly Sartre, in national struggle. I was particularly interested in Sartre's attitude towards the French occupation in Algeria, and his condemnation of it. My wife and I collected these ideas in a book *Our Shame in Algeria.* My love for its writer grew, and we translated his work and published for him and wrote about him in our periodical. I was hoping to keep him on our side in defending the rights of the Palestinians and their struggle against the Zionist occupation. Despite his changing attitude towards the Palestinian problem, the last announcement he made in that regard was not a clear rejection of Palestinian rights. I remember here, that Mahmoud Darwish, considered that I was wrong when I declared my regret for translating Sartre. My declaration came after Sartre's visit to Israel and the bias he showed in its favour. This, however, does not negate the importance of existentialist thinking

in modern international intellect, even though this has now faded. There are some who believe that the twentieth century, as far as philosophy and the intellect are concerned, is the century of Sartre and Existentialism.

Existentialism and nationalism meet specifically on the subject of believing in the freedom of the individual and his responsibility. This was the reason that attracted many Arabs to existentialist thinking, and its influence on them. Even before I translated *Les Chemins de la Liberte.* I must have been influenced by it in my novel *al-Hayy al-Latini.* This is obvious because of the similarity between the two topics.

Don't you see that the nationalist attitudes that took over the Arab World after the emergence of Nasser, were passionate reactions lacking in scientific basis and intellectual justification? And do you see that they were a longing to a past gone, or a result of a modern influence by contemporary thinking and specific vision of the future?

They were a combination of being influenced by the past and having a longing to that past. This makes me emphasise the influence of the Arab heritage on our present time. I mean that we cannot deny what we culturally inherit from the past. When we are influenced by the past, our yearning to it is about regaining the achievements of our forbearers.

You and your periodical were engrossed in welcoming many Arab 'revolutions' that emerged during the Nasser era, and you contributed to giving the status of 'revolution' to some *coup d'tats.* How do you intellectually justify this, particularly that these movements always ended in disappointments?

It is not always possible to distinguish between a rebellion and a revolution; even the revolution of Nasser was described by some prejudiced analysts as a rebellion. It is a question of realising the particularity of every situation. For example, whilst we denounce military interference in the life of a nation, we have to distinguish this from army intervention to protect the independence of the nation.

What were your guarantees that the nationalistic idea would not change into radical tyranny similar to what Europe experienced? Don't you see that your nationalistic zeal might have limited your vision?

There is no doubt that a socially committed intellectual practically faces some difficulties that blur his vision. I have often admitted that my nationalistic zeal for 'Nasserism' for example, concealed from me some ills carried by it or by those representing it. I should have for example denounced the arrest of some intellectuals during the Nasser era, but I did not and I later felt very sorry for that. It is not always easy to reconcile theory and practice.

Do you feel that the revolutionary Arab innocence, in all its trends, was a beautiful illusion or a reality buried alive?

I prefer to consider it a reality buried alive to avoid falling in the naivete of beautiful innocence. We no doubt lack some realistic spirit, otherwise we would not have been deceived by the false information provided by the Arab media during the 1967 war with Israel. Ahmad Saeed and other broadcasters like him deceived us when they made us believe that victory was a few steps away. This was a double calamity when the truth was revealed. But a defeated person needs dreams to compensate for his painful reality. Therefore, the repeated defeats we incurred have not demolished our dreams.

Why do we have the courage to equate reality with illusion as in the previous question? Who is responsible for our doubts- we the latter generations- in what preceded us?

The reasons behind the defeats of the Arabs have not been deeply analysed, otherwise some Arab regimes would have benefited from the lessons learned and avoided further defeats.

Intellectuals are also responsible for this, because some of them were deeply rooted in the ruling authority and continued to applaud it, forgetting that the duty of an intellectual was to stand in the face of the regime not on its side. This required sacrifice, and some were not ready for it. They, therefore, turned a blind eye and opted for what they called realism. The literature of rejection is very sparse in our modern work. As long as the feeling for comfort wins over the need for rebellion and protest, we will continue to have problems with what is real in Arab culture. Some writers, particularly poets, are still appeasing tyrant authorities, despite that the latter led their peoples to various disasters. We badly need to deepen the sense of criticism in our mind and hearts, and have enough courage to stand up to the tyranny of the Arab regimes.

What was the stand of Souheil Idriss and *al-Adaab* after the defeat of 1967?

On a personal level this was devastating, and inflicted upon me a general decline in my energies, almost stopping me from writing. This was probably what made me chose a new type of creativity, namely linguistics. I started working on dictionaries, believing that language is the best way of resistance and confrontation. We also opened our periodical and our publications for the protest writings by intellectuals such as Adonis in 1967, however this was not sufficient. The opportunity is still open to this day, and I believe that the new era in *al-Adaab*'s life with my son Samah as the editor will provide energy and endurance- something that has become weaker in me. Defeat has been so dangerous and extensive that one generation of intellectuals alone is not enough to deal with it. The struggle is becoming more severe, and we are called upon to feed it with more fuel.

But you published a collection of stories in 1972, without dealing with this protest. Instead you consoled yourself with the emergence of the Palestinian resistance, expressing yourself very consciously and passionately about it without discussing its internal conflicts. Wasn't this concerning to you?

Of course not. The Palestinian resistance at that time was a saviour. I did not then expect its men to weaken and rush towards giving up what they did to the enemies. There are exceptions of course. Resistance is the last remaining hope, and we witnessed the results in south Lebanon. There are lessons to be learned there, if we want to rid ourselves from the spirit of defeat that dwells in us. I, personally, have to benefit from this lesson to make up for what I could have neglected in my past work.

When you returned from France, you announced several times your desire to publish a new periodical. What were your personal reasons for that? Couldn't you see in any of the available periodicals what could have fulfilled the ambitions of *al-Adaab*?

There was hardly any magazines in Lebanon in the fifties, particularly after *al-Risala* and *al-Thaqafa* ceased. Add to this the neutrality of *al-Adib* that made it a 19th century journal rather than one published in a lively cultural capital such as Beirut. A committed magazine was necessary in my opinion, particularly after the influence of some French ones on me such as Sartre's *Modern Ages*. All this led to the publication of *al-Adaab*.

What were the reasons behind leaving your two other partners in *al-Adaab*? How did they accept that?

My partners were the late Bahij Osman and Munir Baalbaki. Their interest in the cultural aspect of the periodical was limited, but they originally were the other two financiers beside me. During that time I met Aida Matraji who directly felt the injustice of this partnership and incited me to separate and be independent with *al-Adaab*. There was also another reason. *Dar el-Ilm Lilmalayin* owned by Osman and Baalbaki decided to publish another periodical, *al-*

Oloom. They refused to allow me to be their partner in that as they were in *al-Adaab*. I requested the separation and compensated them for my independence with *al-Adaab*. Aida became the editorial secretary and remained beside me to the present day.

Who of the Arab intellectuals was for *al-Adaab* and who was against it? Has either changed attitude later?

There was some rejection from those who did not believe in Arab nationalism, and did not want to see a periodical expressing the general intellectual public opinion of the Arabs. The magazine *Shi'r*, with Yousuf al-Khal at its helm, was one opponent. Al-Khal belonged to the Syrian Social National Party that believed in a Greater Syria than in Arab nationalism. Then we were opposed by *Hiwar*, a journal sponsored (as discovered later) by the CIA in order to defend intellectualism opposed to the left and independence in the third world. Some intellectuals such as Saeed Akl were not comfortable with *al-Adaab* because they considered it an Arab magazine, not a Lebanese one. He was also an advocate of using Latin letters to replace Arabic, and to use the Lebanese colloquial language rather than classical Arabic. We had to cope with all those, but we had the support of some great creative Lebanese writers such as Khalil Hawi who became a pillar of *al-Adaab*.

***Al-Adaab* appeared at a time modern ideas were arriving in the East. What was the periodical's attitude to these ideas? Was there a separation between your own ideas and those of the periodical?**

I have no idea how those who studied that period judge me, but I don't think that any of them considered me a conservative, except for some Marxist extremists such as Mawahib al-Kayyali and Radwan Shahhal. I opened the door for a wide range of modern literary forms in Arabic literature, including blank verse, the translation of existentialist literature, and devoted a section of my periodical for literary critics to objectively analyse material published in previous issues.

The Egyptian writer Dr. Mohammad al-Nuwayhi confirmed the role of *al-Adaab* in adopting modern trends in Arabic literature. He emphasised that a number of Egyptian periodicals refused to publish some of his daring studies in evaluating literature, whereas *al-Adaab* welcomed such work.

Perhaps one of our most important aspects of modernism was our continuous defence of the freedom of Arab intellectuals. we believe that modernism cannot be isolated from defending national and liberal values, particularly democracy.

There are several studies addressing the role of our periodical in Arab modernism. The most recent is a study by the Italian orientalist Monica Rocco. The problem, however, lies in defining this modernity which was measured by some by prosaic poetry. We admit that *al-Adaab* did not welcome such form of writing, because we did not believe in its status, particularly its internal rhythm.

Your periodical challenged Arab red tapes and attempted to cross their lines with success, despite bearing the consequences. Did you consider that Arab writers were able to bear such a burden? Was the periodical able to be up to its own expectations?

Al-Adaab's ambition has always been higher than its achievements in confronting Arab censorship. *Al-Adaab* openly called for abolishing all forms of red tape, at a time when communications and information technologies started spreading, allowing individuals to obtain instrumentations that could frustrate the aims of censorship. Our mission has been to change the status quo, and we do not accept the argument that things cannot change. We would like intellectuals to struggle for freedom; because without freedom Arab writers cannot

confront censorship, and freedom can only be obtained through experience and persistence. A time might come when Arab regimes realise that suppression in any form is not the solution, and that they should get rid of it, introducing more democracy and openness.

How was *al-Adaab*'s relationship with leftist periodicals?

I think that leftist periodicals did not welcome the publication of *al-Adaab*, because they had already taken a negative attitude against the existentialist thinking appearing in it, despite that Sartre was not necessarily antagonistic to communist thinking, albeit he had some reservations against it.

Some leftist periodicals accused us of bias towards western capitalist thinking, but communist writers soon retracted their accusations realising that we often agreed with their anti-capitalist tendencies. In fact, *al-Adaab* was sometimes nearer to leftism than the Arab left itself, particularly in its defence of democracy and its call for independence and the unity of the Arab people.

Some writers of communist leanings joined this campaign against *al-Adaab*. One notable example was the Iraqi poet Abdul Wahab al-Bayyati who accused *al-Adaab* of being an agent of American thinking. Some of his compatriots confronted him and encouraged me to sue him for defamation. Later al-Bayyati retracted his accusations, felt sorry for what he did and apologised.

Communist writers today acknowledge the importance of the role played by *al-Adaab* in Arab cultural life.

Have you ever felt that *al-Adaab* was a reason for some Arab regimes to persecute some intellectuals, and what did you do?

During the reign of Kassem in Iraq and the infamous judge Mahdawi who presided over a series of trials, *al-Adaab* was often cited when Mahdawi convicted the accused because they used to publish in it.

One of the workers in the printing house where we used to print the periodical, hated President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. He added to the text of a play by Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Makkawi (an Egyptian) the French words *Âne-Noir* (the Black Donkey) which resemble the way in which *Anwar* is pronounced. I had to fly to Egypt to tackle the situation and prove the innocence of Dr. Makkawi.

***Al-Adaab*'s success in crossing a particular country's red tape depended on what was published in it. If allowed to reach the readers, this implied that it was not in opposition to that state. If prevented, no one could read it. What is your impression of this dilemma?**

The national, democratic and socialist tendencies of *al-Adaab* often prevented it from entering certain countries. This put us in great financial difficulties.

I made a mistake that I still regret. I once submitted to the requests of a number of Iraqi writers, who wanted the periodical to reach them, and agreed to omit from some issues our criticism of the regime of Nouri as-Saeed. Later, I never reverted to such a dishonest act.

What is the type of material that might cause the periodical not to be allowed in a certain Arab country? What sort of regimes are frightened of a word?

it is difficult to understand the motives of censors, particularly that they consider themselves the protectors of moral, religion and the regime. They never tell you why they banned your periodical. This is left to you to discover. This means that writers are often unable to say anything. Their liberty is struck in its deepest depth, yet there are those who ask why

creativity has receded.

Were you the sole person responsible for the choice of material for publication in your periodical? What were the standards? Doesn't this give you an authority, particularly over creative material?

The editor is ultimately responsible for what goes to print. There is, inevitably, some dictatorship in this. I attempted to overcome this by forming what we called the Reading Committee to whom I would forward material that caused me some problems after my reading of it. We were financially unable to commission work and do more than what we did.

Do you consider that intellectual modernism coincided with modernisation of tradition, norms and the means of material production in Arab society?

When a creative writer produces a piece of work, we are not supposed to question him about the utility of his action. This is the job of critics or reformists. it might also be unnecessary that creativity exerts an instant effect on society, rather its influence might come with time. There is always the concern that exerting a pressure for immediate and direct influence might kill spontaneity and truthfulness in creativity. Here I ask: did not the intellectuals and thinkers have a role in the victory achieved by Lebanon in liberating its south?

Why did you use your own life experience as the basis for your trilogy?

I did not categorise my novels as autobiographies, but critics and researchers did. There are, however, basic differences between an autobiography and a novel. I believe that my novels have some autobiographical touch, but they are predominantly non-autobiographical. A lot of writers lean on their own experience and this enriches the product and makes it more credible, but we must avoid confusing the two categories, because this will spoil both or at least one of them. My novels *al-Hayy al-Latini*, *al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq* and *Our Burning Fingers* represent features from real life, but they also have a lot of fabrications and imagination that are not in my real life. I felt, as an author, that there were facts I needed to expose, and found myself drawn to certain possibilities imposing themselves on me. I obeyed and did not reject this urge. I believe that this enriched my stories.

How were these novels received? Were they viewed literary, politically or ideologically? Did the fact that you were an owner of an active periodical and publishing house influence their reception?

Researchers and critics generally received the three novels positively. Many wrote about them, including Mikhael Naime, Raief Khoury, Raja Nakkash and Ahmad Kamal Zaki. Critic and poet Najib Srour wrote about narcissism in *al-Hayy al-Latini*, but I believe that this does not harm the story. It emphasises that the deprivation experienced by the hero in his eastern society pushed him to speak of his passion for women and about the 'victories' he might achieve in his relationships.

al-Hayy al-Latini was ideologically attacked by two writers as mentioned earlier, but what I could not understand was a study by Ibrahim al-Saafeen who did not find any word of praise for the novel which was described by Naguib Mahfouz as being a landmark in modern Arab fiction.

Regarding whether my position could have compromised the attitude of critics, I leave this to others to judge.

Despite the presence and clarity of some important female characters, some images remain confused; such as Janine in *al-Hayy al-Latini*, Sumayya in *al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq* and Samiha Sadiq in *Our Burning Fingers*.

I admit that some characters are not as clear as others. This is not necessarily a flaw as much as it is a realistic description of those women and their relationship with the main characters. Secondary characters may not affect the flow of the story, but they are necessary to complete the picture.

The hero in your trilogy is not prepared to marry a woman who previously had a relationship with him or with others. What does this mean? What was your attitude to sex then, and has it changed?

I don't think that I argued for absolute sexual freedom, otherwise the hero of *al-Hayy al-Latini* would not have attempted to expiate what the author considered mean behaviour. Liberal behaviour was always associated with a sense of responsibility on the part of all my heroes. If this responsibility is lost, freedom loses its value. My view on this has not changed.

How do you ethically evaluate the attitude of the hero of *al-Hayy al-Latini* to Janine? Don't you consider his submission to his mother an acceptance of the authority of traditional ethics? Doesn't this make him an opportunist who exploits the problems and weakness of that girl in order to satisfy his desires?

The answer without hesitation is yes! The hero of *al-Hayy al-Latini* says accusing himself and confirming that there is no justification for his deeds: 'Put your mind at peace you filthy rogue...' The hero is an opportunist submitting to the norms of his society, but he also rejects his own behaviour. He wants to redeem himself, but the heroine does not give him the opportunity. Nevertheless he learns that one bears the consequences of one's doings. The last answer of the hero to his mother, when she asks whether everything was over, is: 'Rather, we now begin mother'. He means beginning the struggle against tradition and decline- and a struggle within the self.

Doesn't the subject of sex belong to traditional restrictions? What are the limits of responsibility you call for?

I think that the sexual revolution in my stories is part of the revolution against suppressive traditions. I am against any norm preventing humans from exercising their humanity, because this exercise frees them from the shackles of suppression and persecution. This requires self-sacrifice, but liberal society can only be achieved this way.

Was your busy life the only reason for ceasing to write novels? Isn't it strange that you are leaving this form of writing at a time when it is starting to dominate all other forms in Arabic literature?

This is a sad point in my life, started with the Arab defeat in June 1967 which I consider the main reason that stopped me. There are also other reasons such as family responsibilities, attaining a reasonable life standard, and my preoccupation in authoring three dictionaries consuming all my time and effort. I, however, console myself with the contribution I am making in publishing the creativity of others and the compilation of the *Grand Manhal* Arabic-Arabic dictionary.

Why then didn't you deal with the 1967 defeat in any of your stories or articles?

I started a novel entitled *The Time of Defeat and Victory* before the June 1967 defeat, and I used to think that the defeats incurred by the Arab nation since the loss of Palestine in 1948 would one day change into victory after a decisive battle. This battle, however, brought an overwhelming defeat in 1967 causing me a great frustration that I was not able to overcome even after 1973.

You adopted specific techniques in your style of writing novels such as descriptive narration,

omissioned point of view and dialogue. These styles repeated themselves in the three novels, without any further development.

There are variations of style among the three novels, and some critics indicated the importance of the change from first, second, to third person I often adopted. The critic Dr. Sami Swaydan confirmed this precedence in my novel over Naguib Mahfouz's *Thief and Dogs.* I actually used this technique out of need rather than innovation.

We know about your zeal for Arabic. Was this language flexible enough for story and fiction writing? What was your solution to dialogue in classical Arabic?

I believe that Arabic is one of the most flexible languages for fictional writing, because it has an immense expressive energies if used appropriately. Leading Arab writers such as Naguib Mahfouz and Hanna Mina do not find any difficulty in using classical Arabic for dialogue. I do not put myself at bay from using some colloquial phrases if they include more expressive energy than formal phrases, despite that I have never personally used colloquial expressions in my dialogues.

Perhaps I have been cautious in view of some calls to use colloquial Arabic to replace classical Arabic as Saeed Akl wants. The irony is that Akl is one of the purest poets in classical Arabic, and his call might be related to reasons other than the artistic.

We do fear for the Arabic language if we abandon it in this way. Our current work on a grand Arabic-Arabic dictionary shows us the richness and flexibility of this language that will be able to absorb the various dialects and increase the ties among all Arabs.

After the defeat of 1967, you published a collection of stories concentrating on some details of your life, and expressed your zeal for the Palestinian resistance. Did this resistance constitute an alternative to previous frustrations?

Resistance, whether Palestinian or in the south of Lebanon, gives one a deep feeling that there is an alternative to the defeat of armies. This brings hope that the Arab Nation will not forever remain in the shadow of defeat. I take this opportunity to commend the role of the resistance culture adopted by *al-Adaab,* and nurtured by its present editor since 1992. By the way, he is also revising the grand dictionary, discovering some errors his father made; I have no trouble admitting that.

What distinguishes this dictionary? Do you expect a positive reaction from the Arab Language Academies?

We claim that it encompasses all aspects of the Arabic language, including what is called 'obsolete' words. We believe that everything is able to live again, albeit we need to take off the dust covering it. It also includes some English and French terms next to some newly coined Arabic terms.

The foremost feature of our dictionary, however, is the use of 'quotations', past and present. Users will be surprised at the abundance of evidence compiled from the work of modern writers. We also attempted to provide all the possible meanings of a term indicating the date of its appearance if possible. This might provide a core for the first future historical dictionary of language.

You were the Secretary General of the Lebanese Union of Writers. During your reign, the Union was distinguished by its fierce struggles in defending the freedom of Arab writers, and muddling in some Lebanese and Arab affairs. Do you relate this to the absence of the authority of the state? Did you and your colleagues leave the Union or were you sacked?

I first would like to say that I have never believed in these Arab unions of writers, simply

because of the ties everyone of them has with the regime of its country. I believe that writers should criticise the state, not speak on its behalf. During my work with the Union I attempted to keep it away from the dominion of the state.

When the first minister for culture in Lebanon asked me what did the Union want from his ministry, I replied: 'Leave us alone, even if you decide not to grant us any financial assistance'. This made our union the most vocal during literary conferences.

My resignation from the Union was related to the attempts of its Secretary General at the time to link it with the regime, and unsuccessfully exploit his position for his electoral purposes.

How do you see the future of *al-Adaab*, periodical and publisher?

We believe that there is still an important role for *al-Adaab* to play, particularly as our social and political conditions continue to deteriorate. Our mission is a call for more confrontation and steadfastness, after the resistance has proven its necessity and effectiveness. In this way, the literature of resistance is going to be the lasting material of *al-Adaab*. I am not saying that writers should produce such literature, but we feel that many of them are going to produce it under the present climate. As long as it is of worthy literary quality, it will be welcome by us. Committed literature is at the top of our agenda.

The mission of our publishing house is complimentary to the mission of the periodical in attracting the largest number of creative Arab writers. Our big obstacle remains Arab censorship, but part of our mission is to fight this control. There is an increasing number of loud voices confronting the tyranny of red tape. We have great expectations that we will succeed.

MARGARET BRADSTOCK

Four Poems

Sojourner

(In 1405 the Ming Emperor Yong Le sent his chief eunuch, Zheng He, on sea voyages to countries in the South China Sea. Evidence suggests they may have travelled to Australia.)

At my command
sixty-two of the biggest ships,
a tiger, I,
gait as long
as my tall shadow in the sun.
My seamen bring wives and concubines.
Growing herbs and ginger,
sprouting beans in buckets,
I am not so encumbered.
I re-establish Chinese authority,
rebuke kings,
collect tribute and wonders
(ostrich and long-necked giraffe),
casting stone anchor
beside alien shores.

I know the stars to steer by
to determine longitude,
smell and feel of the mud we draw up,
the shallow coral waters
of the Pacific Ocean.
Running the narrow, violent tides
of the south land,
land of parrots and baobab trees,
where Canopus is seen
gaining brightness as we travel
towards the Pole,
we offer sacrifice,
soapstone carvings,
to the God of Longevity.

And always carrying my Little Precious
in this earthen jar
fixed to my belt,
a disgrace to enter
the next world incomplete.

The Saga of Lambing Flat

(as seen by the European wife of Simon San Ling, interpreter)
Sunday 30 June 1861.

Rule Britannia!
Britannia rules the waves!
No more Chinamen
in New South Wales.

& still the Chinese came,
carving stairways up the schist
to seams of gold,
mining their futures
    the thin tokens of prayer
or washing the meagre tailings,
crossing imagined lines
in this depleted land.

Raising the flag, any flag,
St. Andrew's Cross or Stars & Stripes,
they marched into our camp
in clamorous vigil,
offended stockmen,
angry miners
answering the call,
burning the cradle, firing the tent
(war-lords routing children),
rounding us up with whips.

Stragglers
        hung by their pigtails,
like men of straw,
or flayed Odin
        from the gallows-tree.

Bendigo, 1950

Eight years old
and I'm walking to the library
past opium dens
the small, dark warrens,
the joss houses
of Johnny Chinaman.
Hurry by, don't look in
- they eat children,
roast them on a spit.
Of course I look in
and see old men
sitting like silent buddhas,
sometimes with dinner bowls,
smell the sweet, alien fragrance
of their pipe-thin dreams.
Rice-paper lanterns
hang like victory flags
in the uncurtained windows.
Posters for New Year Festival
promise dragons
prancing and snorting,
faces a fearsome mask,
a slash of colour
in this mined-out land.

The Chinaman's grave. Monaro, 1954.

Between the cemetery
& the softball field
a headstone, half-sunken,
engraved with Chinese characters.
At first I'm afraid to go near,
but then we sit on it
& eat our lunch & talk,
schoolgirls in box-pleated tunics
waiting for Sport to begin.
Wind rustles the grasses,
sighs coldly among the pines;
the graves of infants
tell their own bleak story.
He's outside hallowed ground,
unworshipped, no one's ancestor.
Was he a suicide, or just Chinese?

As summer wears on,
he's part of our afternoon,
our own attrition,
close to home base,
the white ball flaring.

Dr. Margaret Bradstock is a writer and academic who lives in Sydney. Her poetry has been published in many journals. The present four poems are from *The Pomelo Tree*, an unpublished collection which won the Wesley Michel Wright Poetry Prize.

EILEEN MARSHALL

Facets of Love

Writing - Speaking - Singing - Love?

I tried to write of love but hate,
Love's twin - stayed my hand.
I went to speak of love but my
Lover, envy, stopped my mouth.
Then I sang of love and regret
Our misshapen child twisted the notes
Till the universe fragmented, I stopped
Writing - speaking - singing.
The roiling dark had devoured the light.

Love by another name, is it love?

Of life and death I sing - Eros and Thanatos.
Of love I also sing - Agape, Philos and again, Eros.
I search for my kind friend Philos,
I reach out for Agape, tender counsellor
But all I find is Eros, tearing limb from limb,
All I hear is the screeching of my soul
From the rending of my heart torn asunder.
You are killing me killing me with your eyes.
Close your eyes close your eyes
For Godssake close your pitiless eyes.
Love by any other name, is not Love.

Love, the child

Into your life, creeping
Came love the child
While your heart was sleeping
Came love the child
Honeyed voice pleasing
Sweet smile teasing
With your heart toying
Its games enjoying

Did you not know love
Has found a new toy
To play with, then destroy?

Eileen Marshall writes novels, short stories, essays and has more recently been writing poetry. Her work has been commended on several occasions.

JAN DEAN

Three Poems

The White Horse

Snow eating grass in a negative
world would exist as Black Beauty
standing in a bath of blood.
Grazing on an overgrown strip
near home, he is a gift
left by someone for suburban eyes.
A live version of the white horse
Paul Gauguin painted.

The dream-decoder tells
white is illumination; purity; innocence;
a horse is power or personal energy.
And if awake:
At the circus
ponies donned plumes for their performance.
Horses projected from walls of their temple
drawn by dozens of Hare Krishnas
in a procession.

Snow is the one
circus ponies and spirited replicas
desire to become.

Sunhat

In Guatemala the Ladino woman
back-strapped to a tree anchored by the earth
makes her feast. Backwards and forwards
she leans tension and slack.
Weaving fingers weaving colours immured
within the rainforest; tropical rainbows
rising by waterfalls to hover with flashing birds.
Warp ends fringed whispers.
Slightly taller than their band, worry dolls
nestle, dressed to gaze in fabric scraps, hand-woven.
How many quetzals for this striped hatband?

Past borders further south an Indian woman
of Ecuador sits in the sun braiding
the colourless blur of dried grass waving
or boiled rice swiftly fanned when preparing sushi.
From the centre minute swirls in basketry
mould a crown, then flow into the brim.
The woman imbues pliancy.
How many sucres for this Panama?

Two women who know rhythm, ply gifts
that spin over oceans, breathing possibilities.
Hat and hatband pause on separate sides
of Australia in anticipation of the dreamer
and her handful of thumbs stitching unity.

Artisan
(Loaves and Fishes)

When I heard Jesus was walking into the desert
I left my anvil and an urgent order for twenty pots
to follow. Curiosity overrode everything:
my responsibilities, the distance, my seared feet
fatigue, the encroaching crowd; four or five
thousand men besides women and children.

It was a day of miracles. I saw him heal the sick
and uplift the crestfallen, but by evening hunger wrenched
and his disciples became anxious; they begged him
to send the people home. We were told
to sit on the grass and a minuscule amount
of loaves and fishes was blessed and distributed.

I thought it a folly; surely the smell of food
would send us demented.
After everyone ate his fill, twelve baskets
were filled with leftovers. Once you have broken
bread with another there is eternal connection.

Now all the metalware I make is embellished
with a border; a repetition of two fish
and five barley loaves on a background
of wickerwork, signifying the feast of peace.

Jan Dean has received several awards for her poetry. She is currently the Vice-President of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, Hunter Region, and President of Poetry at the Pub, Newcastle.

RICHARD HILLMAN

Pokok Kayu

Is this filling of spare time just a way of learning ancient crafts,
borrowing tongues that can't be brought back as easily as these ideas

speaking out of tongue. Perhaps this is the irony of courtship: almost
the language of another taking root in a lover's empty dowry, the gift

grafted to these gossip-thin stems of life, these status swollen lines
as simple as ancestry. Or treachery. Gestures come from all angles, slide

off all arbitrary surfaces. The shape of wind suddenly given meaning
as a curtain blows over a window sill, drags upon the stationary frame

as complacently as a married couple's question, or cry for recognition.
The way it moves ever so slowly between the inside, & the outside

shapes the frame of this room. Here, an old black & white photograph
stuck with rusty staples to a yellowing piece of cardboard. A snapshot

worn around the edges like an old sarong; the soft sense of something captured:
a dancer suddenly empowered, the stance of a warrior trapped on a gust

of social change, forever captive in calligraphic pose. Those captivating
leaves leaning towards tomorrow. Another unadorned autumn. Her heavy

sap-coated costume as dark as dried blood, the appearance of amber breasts,
hold her up like a wind-break, a tree that has learnt how to stand on its own

though, a face looks out. When the wind blows its warm warning she bends but
does not break. Her head cocked with cosmology, takes everything in, absorbs

all light until she becomes a shape, an echo, the stance of a shadow, or even
more mysterious, a puppet brought into the world through another's womb.

We face each other like shades animating the living, our two bodies aligned
with mutual ancestry. My dreams fall like leaves at her feet, imitating

the skeletons of lost words, forgotten pains, recent memories. My dreams
reach like musical notes, levitate & drift into arrangements around

the melody of her body, the composition of her skin stretched with meaning.
Then I see her arms inching towards mine, but we do not touch. New shoots

sprout from the living surface of a forgotten tune. Her feet embrace the earth
as if they were divining rods announcing a water birth, a fresh spring beneath

the fading foundations of our world. When the north wind lifts her eyes, tears
pool at her feet, & I feel connected by the Timor Sea, fresh rain on my face.

Richard Hillman is a poet, editor and a family guy. He has an interest in Indonesian and Islamic cultures, particularly Sufism. He wrote the above poem in 1994 attempting to address some aspects of the conflict between Australia and Indonesia over East Timor. Things have changed since then, but the concept of the poem is still relevant. The title refers to a *dead* tree stump, something cut off, and from which new shoots suddenly spring to life. The poem focuses on a photograph of Dawan, the first female warrior in Balinese dance, captured in a power stance, suggesting that out of conflict and destruction, renewal and repatriation are possible.

ALICE MELIKE ÜLGEZER

Reflections on Istanbul

I woke up with the beating of wings on my face,
short stacattoed gusts of air;
rhythm and a rooster wailed
the pale disk of sun rose resignedly to her zenith and the stars fell through the sky
the pigeons sang morning in my ear
the mad woman sat volatile; her place in the gutter, brooding vituperative unintelligible cries
that sat discarded with stale bread about her knuckled feet.

A lugubrious sky overhead groans slightly with the songs of Allah
and I think of my father alone, his feet bound and broken, sipping çay
with a Turkish cigarette pursed between his lips;
I watch the minarets in their quietude.

The holy woman grasped hold of my hands
she'd seen me before my father my mother before that
the clock in its prism of glass was docile
the cats fat on love yawned and stretched
her friends dusted the windowsill
she told me she'd pray for me, she was sorry.

Remembering Istanbul is like remembering a mammoth dream
that lurches from the enlightening to the terrifying; images resurface.
The precarious and crazy link of my father is what bore me to this heaving city; its sultry windowsills,
its unfathomable twist of lanes, the rough cloud of 'Camel' smoke and the sweet blackness of coffee.

Being indignantly lost in a manic market just minutes from the flat I buy juniper, mint and apricots.
Electric light globes hum and chatter, hang like trapeze artists on wire strings above us
an insistent white glow.

Playing backgammon in the çay house with Ahmet, Grand Bazaar. We are hysterical at my foolish moves as he wins easily. Marg used to laugh and say knowingly, 'Well you can play Iranian backgammon or Turkish, take your pick.'

When the tobacco ran out ...
I found a corner shop to buy some more. The woman eyeing me inquisitively replied,
'No tobacco in Turkey over the border in Iran.'
I imagined a note I would write,
'Caught the train across the border. Need tobacco. Back in week.'

How much I dreamt in those long nights. Nightmares of driving through the Saudi desert lost.
Which way would I go? No direction here ...

Kalimat 5

I woke up with a scream one night. Just a dream I had. Only to see a faded black and white photo
of dead Babana gazing at me with subdued melancholia.
The drums for Ramadan had started and a muezzin was singing.
I kept the rhythm with my heart.

Walking under the bridge at Eminonu, the husk of evening wrapped tightly around me.
An encroaching blizzard.
I watched the men and boys squat around a makeshift fire warming their tired hands.
Going back to Istanbul was like remembering a mammoth dream from which I was born.

I beseeched Buyukbaba one evening to show me his photos.
Old skins, dog-eared, faded.
'Your father was born in Kurdistan,' he said in German.
I wish I'd asked which part.

Leaning out of the kitchen window,
the area scattered beneath with pigeons and cats, an old shoe, deserted grapevines,
I would call to women on balconies, 'Australia! Buyukbaba Turk, Baba Turk!'
Communication broken down to vital, universal words, play-acting and expression.
They understood.

On meeting Akin, the enigmatic sea captain,
I learnt of the sorrow that surrounds my past. When he left,
the old woman with the hennaed plait down to her hips held my hand and sat with me.
There was no need to talk of pain.

It was a teetering stroll I led in those streets that sang of faith and poverty
whilst my shadow reared behind me like a melancholy bird.

What does it mean to lie next to a dying woman?
Neurology, Florence Nightingale, Istanbul
I asked myself this as they rolled me over and crunched me up tightly for the injection.
'Allah, Mashallah, Bismillah ... Ai!'
I listen to her attempts at prayer. Her soft husky voice crying deep with pain.
The sleet dripped on my bed.
The snow blew beyond the threshold.
It was dark outside; I had the only room with an electric light.
They brought me bottles of water and all the while I thought of an inscription on a tombstone I once saw;
'Until the day dawns and the shadows fly away.'

Alice Melike Ülgezer is a Turkish/Australian conceived in Turkey, born in London and lives in Melbourne. A musician, belly-dancer and emerging writer, she is inspired by her Turkish blood.

KHALID AL-HILLI

Cloudy Cities

The Garden of Sadness,
Called Happiness by Chance

A voice splits my head
comes to me in the night...
whispers...and rains
I gather myself
sleep in my hand
relax my worries and sleep
my watch departs my wrist
I search
I am in my hand...
and the hand is my blood
where are my papers that know my sorrow
and my passion...and belonging to boredom...?

the watch is lost...and the hand is rain
and the night is over
and my hours are rain
my body has not departed the hand...
I have become a hand in the rain
embraced by the sun at dawn...
and in the morning
dispersed in the oceans of boredom

before I knew that this dazzled world was growing
my step had been developing at the window
and in my chest I had all the doors of distance...
a street to the Universe,
stretching to a universe surpassed by my imagination, in years before I was born, when I walked in blood never seen by man before, never born by death yet. I was alone walking happily like perfume...as free as water
I did not know the meaning of a life dissolving in the tea of cafés
I did not believe an incident not told one day by my lips

I was walking over my days as quick as time
as slow as joy
I built histories from my white papers...slept with dreams in my chest,
I embraced for me another joy
my feet stepped on sand...in the sand I drew a face...
the face became a voice and a body
we united
what a history this moment was...
distances disappeared in my voice
and distances shrinked to a
dot that became my voice
and we started

I was alone the first exultation
I was the sea and the trees...
and the ever spreading fragrance

I land from the end of my voice....to start another voice
to whisper something...who would hear my voice...?
who would tell my trees and my seas about my death
should I die alone...?
now I know that I am going to die

my body watches my shadow
and I watch the shadow of the shadow
are we going to die
a body inside its shadow?

then even silence would escape our place

Khalid al-Hilli is a poet of Iraqi origins who lives in Melbourne, Australia. He is currently an adviser to *Kalimat*. The original Arabic of the above poem is from his collection *Cloudy Cities* (Babil Publications, Morocco 1988) that we started translating in the September 2000 issue of *Kalimat*.

YAHIA AS-SAMAWI

Some Visions

Once I had a dream that I was a wing
and when I awoke
the sky was a horse's back
the wind its saddle
and between my exploited country and me there was a gallows
stretching from the flute of the night
to the window of the morning.

Once I had a dream that I became *Abu Nuwas*
and when sleep migrated out of the pupils of my eyes
I saw my eyelid a bottle of sorrow
and my wound a glass.
And between my slaughtered country and me there was pus
and blood flowing from the morning minarets of my city...
and an orchard with dead seedlings.

Once I had a dream that I was Iraq
and when I rubbed my eyelashes
my hands fell...
and the pupils of my eyes fled out of my eyes
and between God and me in the mihrab
there was the new *Abraha* in *al-Karkh*...
and the wolves in *al-Rassafa*.

The original Arabic of the above poem was published in el-Telegraph, Sydney on 18/12/2000. It is one of as-Samawi's many poems dealing with the plight of his country of origin, focusing on the human condition in its moments of extreme anguish and passion together. Abraha was a king of Yemen who, in the year of the birth of the prophet Mohammad, attacked the holy Kaaba attempting to demolish it using elephants. Abraha did not succeed, because according to the Koran, birds carrying stones of baked clay attacked the elephants. But now there is a new Abraha demolishing Iraq. He lives in the district of al-Karakh. On the other bank of the Tigris, his intelligence services are located in al-Rassafa. Abu Nuwas (the Wine Poet) gained prominence during the Abbassid period, 750-835 A.D.

Yahia as-Samawi is a poet from Iraq who made Australia his home. He lives in Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. He has so far published nine poetry collections in Arabic. His poetry has also been published in various media in Australia and around the world.

DAAD TAWEEL-KANAWATI

Poetry

a poet can take you through a maze
and leave you alone
roaming around bends awaiting danger
he will wait for you silently
not requesting a report on what you see
you will be surprised when you see that
he only wants you to wait and see

a poet can set up a theatre
enthralled by scenes
with tapes of current pictures in the background
or shadows of the past or visions of the future
the pictures will charge you with the rest of the scene
as soon as everything comes together
some parts are taken out
and it is left to your mind's eye to complete the scene
and compose a text of your own, longer or shorter
and you will see people walking on raised wires
at the edges of hell or the bottom of an abysses
it is a hell of a walk and the scene does not change

a poet can throw you on a tower or a hill
from where you can see the extent of your land
heaps of corporations and agencies and dealerships and banks
falling towards and over the commuter and the walker and the bystander
and on the carriages, the wheels, the doors, the walls
and over those busy with baking the loaf of the coming time
or mixing the cement of the future
you will see mad sludge befalls them - fire, floods, bricks
some will drift
some will attempt to jump
and some will hold on to a bulge in a wall
or a post
or a crack in a rock
or poetry or prose
poetry will drag you far away
and far away from the stage
and if you happen to return rich
loaded with wisdom
or charged with patience

you will find between you and the quay
heaps of debris and piles of boats
you can't get through

I sit on a wall
surrounding the background of this theatre
I swing my legs and watch all things
my limbs start dismantling under the beats
a wall cracks in my heart or a plate is torn out
sharp pain flows
I hold my lute
I start playing the sorrow of the Universe

my strings start to break
I am overwhelmed with numbness, paralysis or a sudden heart attack
my limbs freeze
the wall of the heart closes
my lute sinks inside broken eyelids
I fall in a decayed well
then suddenly appears
a beautiful expression or an innovative word
I scream *aha! ahe! aho!*
my soul gathers itself in enchanted moans
before returning over the brim of tormented time
I teeter, assemble, crumble
inside other cycles

Daad Taweel-Kanawati is an academic, writer and poet from Syria. The original Arabic version of this poem appeared in *Kalimat 4*.

NADA AS-SALAMA

Confession

I passed by
so many times...so many times
threw passion
at your doorstep
and went...
I wanted to comb my heart
and let it hang
jasmine on your balcony.
I wanted to read the inside of my eye
in the mirror of your shivers
to rest my head
in the shade of your shadows
My tired soul...
at the bottom of the glass
embraces a star;
whispers to your crescent
and before it falls
at the brim of the last glass
raises its head to the sky and hopes...
for a little of the nosebleed of your lightening
and many of the horses of your clouds
and all that I have of the miracles of subjugation
so that I enter the womb of your perpetual disobedience
and I do not embrace the earth
without the birth of a sea...
and the scented breaths of the breeze
scrub the edge of my hidden garment
I dance with the trees...
I press the nakedness of the moon
against my breast
and throw away a life,
a remainder of a life...
How I wanted to
enter the vigour of your downpour
and steal the shiver of thirst
from your lips.
And I confess...
Once upon a time
I passed by
so many times...so many times

threw passion
at your doorstep
and went...

Nada as-Salama is a writer from Syria. The above poem is from her collection *The Swan's First Memory*, Dar al-Thakira, Homs, Syria, 1995.

GHASSAN ALAMEDDINE

A Thread of Whiteness

Suddenly

before the approach of this darkness
they suddenly disappeared
with their umbrellas
and shadows.

remains

let the questions of the dead fall
and their laughter roll
inside the oven of my days,
to tell me
about those who at dawn loaded
the gear of the night and the future

scraping the remains of their shadows
off the walls.

shadows

then
let these shivers go on fire
and these screams go blind
and you go sore in the eyes
your life is an abyss where
your shadows reached before you.

table

the night is listening in the street
and piling up its dead

and I am watching medicine boxes
and a table of eyes.

cracking walnuts

darkness is a flint
striking against the matches of his loneliness
and in his imagination
he cracks his life's walnuts lying
on the couch of their oblivion.

they found them

they found
the voice that was a fire
in the dark
smelling whiteness
and the world that was lost,
in his eyes.

soirée

we can widen the eyes of the dead
keep them awake with us
and before they are guided by the night
we return them to their families.

rituals

ghosts are on my dissecting table
their hollow eyes
hold ceremonies for the souls of mothers
who love sex with their children
and at the end of the path,
the end of the game
is written on my face.

to the sea

a daily chore
to dismantle your grief,
spread the pavements of your dreams
and return the gulls of your ecstasies
to the sea.

thread

the past
is led by the thread of its whiteness

it will be reconnected to the air

and all will rain laughter
and tears

Ghassan Alameddine is a Lebanese/Australian artist and writer. The above poems are from his collection *A Thread of Whiteness*, Almassar Publications, Beirut, Lebanon 1999.

GAD BEN MEIR

A Swing of Fire

I asked my heart
for how long then,
would it pulsate the yearnings
of its besotted keeper?

My every beat,
it answered bleak,
is nought; pre-weaning treat.
Taste my Love's blossom!
Thence lie awake as creation slumbers.
a scorching flame crackles within
endless sparks and breathe humble.
Paradise when she comes
to darkness when she leaves.

I then said to my heart,
have you forgotten
her despairing lovers
her honey they suck
as she desires,
thence misery when she retires.
A priestess of fornication
adulater of ostentation,
animator of corruption to life;
betrays and smiling,
blames you for a'whiling.
No peace in her domain
nor salvation in her refrain.

My heart said,
none suffered more
her painful shrapnel embedded,
and ever intoxicated by this venom,
I swirl in her bondage
as a swing of fire

is oscillated by devil's desire
ripped by orgasmic beauty,
all prudence is blinded,
by her mythical rays and steel-claw play.

So, I forgive her everything,
and anything for a smile, word or hope.
Her triumph sings in the nightingale's hum.

Blame not the hearts
their pleasure, because
when all yearnings cease
orphan's tears
they will shed.

My last throb
as my first
shall remain wedlocked
in a melody of love.

Gad Ben Meir is a solicitor, editor and poet who lives in Melbourne, Australia. The original Arabic of *A Swing of Fire* was published in *Kalimat 2*. The above translation is by the poet, embellished by his friend Morry Blumenthal, also a poet-lawyer.

EILEEN MARSHALL

That Beauty's Rose Might Never Die

It was one of those glorious spring days when the air is light and easy to breathe. Like the first glass of wine it brought a flush of a youth I had forgotten to claim, I was not old but jaded so I might as well have been old. I've known very old people with much more of the life force than I had then.

I was unpacking my collection of paperweights, dreaming as I unwrapped each glass jewel, of the new vistas stretching before me bright and untouched. Cramped and claustrophobic in my inner city flat I had shrunk into a hard sapless core. Now I had twenty acres all to myself, a new world to explore and people who didn't know me, or Richard. I felt myself expand to fill all the space around me.

'This is the life' I shouted then trilled *The Drinking Song* from *Traviata*, my meagre soprano stretched thin over the notes. What did it matter if I sounded like an old record with scratches on it, I was alone.

Or I thought I was.

'That's a nice song, you sound happy.'

I'd left the door wide open.

Shock at hearing a strange voice made me drop a heavy box on my foot. It hurt in that annihilating way things like that hurt; for a few minutes I was mute with pain. By the time I recovered the speaker was inside.

All I could do was gawk, my eyes were instantly drawn to her mouth: wide open and round like a voracious baby bird's ready to receive a worm. Inside the cavernous space, the gums were transparent, pink and absolutely toothless. With an exaggerated movement of her lips, like an old fashioned elocution teacher declaiming, my visitor said 'Welcome to the valley, I'm Rosalie Evans.'

She was just into middle age; her features were exquisitely modelled which made her slack mouth all the more grotesque. The pink empty mouth of a baby is an ugliness when you see it in a grown woman. Lavinia with her tongue torn out to satisfy the blood lust of barbarians. A tragic figure? An agonised martyr. Not so! She laughed at my serious face, and promptly dribbled.

'Excuse - I, can't help it! I can't wear those teeth the dentist gave me. They choke me.'

For Rosalie, that was the end of the matter.

'How do you do? I'm Jennifer Barton' not knowing what else to say and not wanting to offend in a small community.

'We're neighbours Jennifer, I seen you arrive. Just ask us if you need anything. The people before you was snobs.'

After she left I was on a lower key, I wasn't quite sure why. That night I had an unsettling dream. A figure draped in black stood over my bed. It looked like that cliched personification of death, the grim reaper. The spectre turned its face towards me and laughed. The mouth grew into an enormous black hole and engulfed the rest.

I am quite ordinary, even my friends are evasive on the subject of my looks; they turn instead to the booby prizes of intelligence and character. Attributes that didn't stand a chance

with Richard when the first mindless pretty face came along.

The face in my dream had my neighbour's mouth; otherwise it had been my face. Mine quite a few decades hence when even the small claim I have to comeliness has been obliterated totally.

Next morning, when I decided to go to Rosalie's, I felt quite jocular. It was a bright day, the horrors of my night had dissipated and the air was full of the perfume from the citrus trees the valley was renowned for.

Her arms were full of roses in full bud when she met me at the gate.

'How beautiful, I love roses. How did you get them to bloom so well?'

'Huw and I love growing things, we're happier outside, we'll finish painting one day.'

She waved her arm towards the house, an elderly weatherboard, freshly painted white in some parts, green paint shredding off in others. An orchard was set out at the bottom of the property near a large dam and extending for at least an acre from the house, an amazing profusion of vegetables, flowers and vines, brandished their fecundity - as if they were all competing to win the attention of some plant diva.

It was obvious where her heart lay. A vast rose garden in absolute pride of place was packed with bushes loaded with blooms beginning to burst out of their buds into an amazing glory. The colours were so rich they seemed to glow in the sun. It must have been an optical illusion, but the perfume was no illusion. I have never, before or since, smelled such intense rose perfume, even in a perfumery where they sell the distillation of thousands of rose petals in small bottles of essential oils called attar of roses.

Rosalie gestured towards the roses 'You're welcome to take all you like, we have so many during the season.'

She took me up the flagged stone path to the back door of her kitchen. Plants grew on either side of the path up almost to the door. Familiar culinary herbs like parsley, mint, rosemary, sage, jostled for space with strange ones I'd only seen before in illustrations in a mediaeval herbal. The kind of plants that were once used for medicines, beauty preparations, love potions or other charms and spells.

I'd been wearing dark glasses; it was some minutes after I removed them before my eyes adjusted to the gloom of the kitchen - the small windows allowed only a minimum of light to enter. I could make out strings of onions and garlic hanging from the low ceiling. A large black cast-iron kettle, and an even larger black pot - the kind used to make stock, were steaming on the fuel stove.

Rosalie arranged the roses in a huge brown pottery jug and set it on the wooden table. In the dark room, the roses shone with an intensity of hue and a lustre unlike any other roses I have ever seen.

As she prepared tea, I watched her graceful movements, her voluptuous but lithe body, her mass of almost white blond hair. I wondered how she could accept the spoiling of her face so unconcernedly, without even the prop of dentures.

My teeth are my one vanity. I dread losing them - to me they symbolise youth and sexual attractiveness. I have read somewhere that underneath the fear of losing one's youth is a worse terror: the logical outcome of ageing. I'd mocked the idea when I'd first heard it, as New Age pop psychology, but now it made some sense.

I went home that day, fascinated and disturbed. Rosalie for all her mateyness was glacially cold. When she looked at you it was if she were looking through you. Her large grey eyes became opaque like metal. She was calculating, I don't know what.

Huw, her husband, was even more disturbing. I never felt comfortable with him even for a

moment. He was well-mannered and helpful, but there was something about his besotted fawning over his wife and his erotic possessiveness that made my flesh creep.

Carnal is the word that springs to mind.

I met Huw during my second visit to Rosalie. We were standing in front of the rose garden when he came up. He was a small man with abnormally developed shoulders and upper arms and a big handsome head.

'You must be Jennifer, our new neighbour. I'm Huw Evans, lucky husband of this goddess.'

He can't be for real, I thought, he's putting her down. I soon found that he wasn't.

'Huw stop that nonsense, go and get Jennifer some spinach and some parsley.'

'Anything you say precious'.

He handed over a huge bunch of roses in bud, as if they were a tribute to a divinity, then scuttled off crab-like, to do her bidding.

She stood motionless for some time, holding the massive bunch in front of her. I thought of Druidic rituals and arcane mysteries, of the old Celtic Goddess of the harvest, of fecundity and human sacrifices.

Buds were rioting into colour and fragrance on every bush. I bent over to smell the one closest to me.

'How do you get such growth Rosalie? I've never seen better roses.'

'Jennifer, I've told you before, you're welcome to take as many as you like.'

'You're very generous but I'd like to grow some myself. What's your secret?'

She threw her head back and laughed uproariously.

'You'll have to ask Huw, it's his baby', she caught sight of him. 'Get the secateurs Huw, let's give Jennifer a big big bunch.'

Huw took me around the rose beds so I could select my favourites. When Rosalie was out of earshot he confided 'Rosalie was the most beautiful girl in the district when we married and she had teeth like pearls. She lost her teeth having so many babies but none of them lived.'

I smirked to myself. More likely pyhorrea from neglect. What a primitive mind he had. Fancy thinking the foetus strips teeth from the mother's gums.

He handed me a spray of livid red roses in bud and hissed in my ear 'What she suffered because of my lust!'

I froze, horrified in case he confided even more intimate details. Rosalie came over, pointed to a particularly beautiful pink rose and chided 'Why didn't you give her some from May's bush? At least May was born.'

I must have looked shocked, Rosalie just laughed. 'Poor Huw, it's not his fault. My womb is bad, the babies can't stay long enough.'

I was repelled by that couple but I continued to visit them. My solitude had palled; it's one thing to seek your own space in a crowded city, another to have it as your only companion. She never visited me, she scorned houses like mine that were too orderly 'like a hospital'.

One couldn't accuse her of an excess of order. Her house was always awash with cats and their offspring, grey, marmalade, silver, black and many permutations of these shades. I didn't approve but I rationalised her plethora of cats as showing her love for animals. So what if her house is overrun with small furry creatures? It shows a nurturing nature, I reasoned, anxious to show tolerance I didn't feel.

Eventually, I was forced to confront the truth.

There was a noticeable ebb and flow in the kitten population. At times there was hardly a place to walk between the furry shapes writhing on the linoleum floor. At other times the floor was almost bare. I put off asking Rosalie what she did with the surplus kittens, I had already

taken one and had refused more. I'd called him Minnaloushe after Yeats' cat because he was pitch black and had pale gold eyes like half moons. He'd creep through the long grass on his dainty feet and turn his eyes to the sky as though the source of his life came from there.

One day I was no longer in any doubt about what happened to the kittens.

I'd found Rosalie despondent, as if she were grieving. She was, her favourite cat was dead, Huw had run over it on the tractor.

Her sorrow was short lived; her face suddenly brightened 'It's all right really, she had her babies.'

'Rosalie' I uttered with a sinking heart 'Rosalie, what happens to all the kittens?'

She shrugged 'I don't know, Huw takes them away in a bag, I don't think he drowns them, that'd be cruel.'

'Don't you think it would be better to have the mother desexed, to avoid having so many kittens?'

'No, that's not natural, they must have their kittens.'

'But' I said helplessly 'what happens to the kittens?'

'I suppose they die, the dingoes or the foxes get them' Again she shrugged 'I don't know.'

But I knew she knew and I knew she didn't care.

After that incident our relationship was guarded, there were unspoken things between us. One night I had a dream about the kittens. They were disgustingly hairy with evil red-hot eyes like those of rats. She was laughing and stroking the mother cat while Huw put the mewling kittens in a bag; his head had grown till it was twice as large as in life while his body had shrunk to the size of a baby's.

I decided to make my visits infrequent. Loneliness was better than nightmares, besides I had started to develop other friendships. People were warming to me.

My neighbours were considered to be 'peculiar'. People in small communities gossip outrageously, it's the main entertainment. They didn't gossip about my neighbours but asked uneasy questions about them like 'How do you get on with the Evans's?', 'Do you ever see them?' 'No one knows them well, they keep to themselves.'

I continued to visit Rosalie, but infrequently, and always with an excuse at the ready so I could leave quickly.

Soon a year had passed. It was Spring. All through the valley the air was deliciously sweetened by the perfume of many hundreds of citrus trees. I felt lighthearted and expansive; I decided to pay them a proper visit. I took a jar of grapefruit marmalade I had made from the fruit they had given me when I first came. As I walked across the paddock I could see Huw digging in the rose garden. I was almost behind him before he knew I was there.

I wish I hadn't seen what he was holding.

A new rose bush still in its pot waiting to be planted was on the path beside him, he'd dug a hole in the rose-bed to receive it. At the bottom of the hole was a small furry body; the one he'd thrown in as soon as he saw me.

He must have seen my face and the look horror had carved on it.

'Rosalie and I like to bury our little pets in the garden, that way they live on in beauty as roses. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust as the old saying goes.'

He smiled seraphically at me and in a way, he was right. What better end for a kitten than to be a feast for roses? He'd just omitted to mention how the kitten had become a corpse.

I couldn't contain myself 'Huw, how did the kitten die?'

'They all die sooner or later. We get so many of them. Rosalie can only keep a few.'

'But Huw, wouldn't it be better to desex the adults then you'd have fewer kittens and you wouldn't have to get rid of them.'

Ignoring my remark, he took the rose bush out of its pot, put it in the hole, filled it in with soil then watered it from a watering can. His movements were tender and almost reverential. When he'd finished he looked up at me with beautiful blank eyes.

'It's perfectly natural the way it is, besides she loves her roses. Go up and see her, she'll be so pleased, we haven't seen much of you lately.'

'Huw, I'm in a bit of a hurry. I'll catch up some other time.'

I wanted to run for my life, but for a moment, I couldn't even move. With an enormous effort I wrenched myself away, stumbled home across the paddock, pushed open the unlocked door, slammed it behind me and bolted it.

The jar of marmalade was still clenched in my hand.

From that day on the Evans's ignored me and I never visited them again.

I'm not really a country person, so when I had an opportunity to move back to the city, I seized it. Life went on comfortably and uneventfully. I no longer felt hemmed in by buildings or oppressed by crowds - my flirtation with the wide open spaces had made me appreciate the vitality and the noisiness of inner city living.

I could even laugh at the terror I'd felt when I saw Huw planting the rose. It was after all a dead kitten he'd been burying, not some other little body. I am prone to let my imagination run away with me.

I benefited from my time in the country, it cleared away the anguish I had felt at Richard's defection. The only problem is it has left me with an allergy to roses. Even the smell is enough to bring me out in a rash or start me wheezing. It's strange about Minnaloushe, he behaves as if he hates them.

One day when my friend Sue brought me a bunch from her garden, I live in a townhouse and haven't much space for growing things, Minnaloushe jumped out at her spitting and clawing. Sue was left with a deep scratch on her arm. I had to take the roses into the laundry and shut the door before Minnaloushe would calm down.

Sue was shaken 'What's wrong with him Jenny, he's usually such a gentle cat, he seems terrified?'

'I don't know, he's been a bit temperamental lately.'

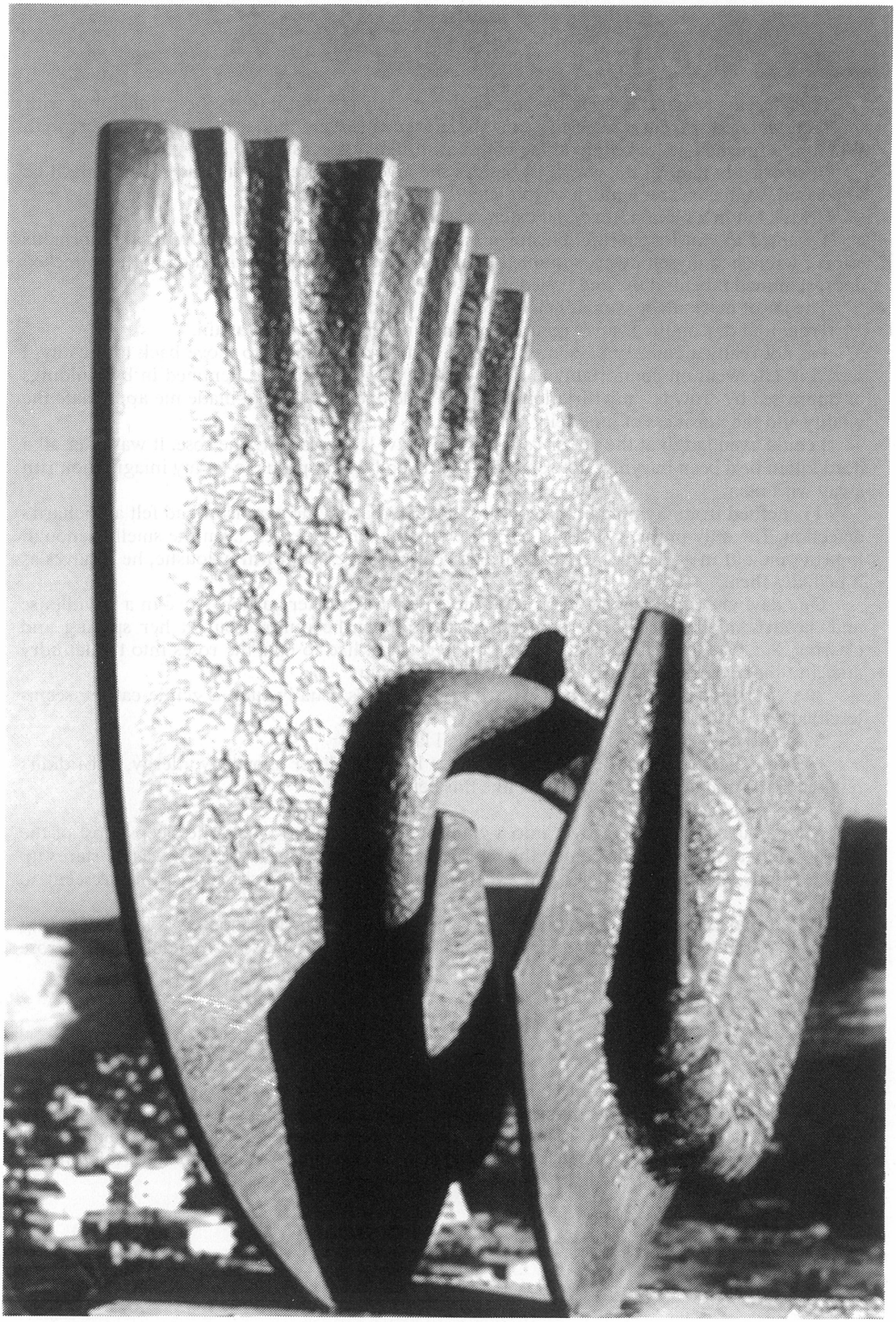
Fortunately Sue is a cat lover so she forgave him. I told her about my allergy, but I didn't tell her that Minnaloushe had behaved like this before.

How could I?

Minnaloushe has since grown into a giant of a cat, lazy and placid, he sleeps most of the day. It's only at night that he comes alive. I love to sit with him on my balcony, as he stares up at the night, watching his pale gold eyes range 'from round to crescent, from crescent to round'.

What makes the pupils grow from tiny chinks to luminous full moons? Is he recollecting his former home? Is he longing for his kitten playmates? Or, has he remembered the rose garden?

Eileen Marshall is a writer who lives in New South Wales, Australia. The present story received a special mention in the Dennis Butler 1998 competition, and Commended in the 1999 FAW Hunters' Hill competition. The title is from Shakespeare's first sonnet. Reference is made to The Cat and the Moon by W. B. Yeats.



ILONA PALMER

Dear Stanzi

Stepping down from the last cloud before making his final approach, Wolfgang knew that the Earth was close even though his knowledge of aeronautics left a lot to be desired.

The supreme Archbishop had said: 'Wolfgang, you have served two hundred years in Heaven, you have earned a long-service leave. Where would you like to go?' Milleniums later, back in Happy Heaven, he could not recall why he said 'Salzburg'. Salzburg of all places!

The Chief Ticketing Officer of Happy Heaven Pty. Ltd. gave his personal assurance that the luggage will be there on time. Yes, in Salzburg, and no, not in Honolulu, so Mozart boarded the cloud. The flight was uneventful and it was not long before the Chief Hostess, purple lips, purple fingernails and purple eyebrows pleaded 'please extinguish your cigarettes and fasten your seatbelts.' The route H/E-1 counted as an international flight, so smoking was still permitted for those remaining few who had escaped the Great Round-up otherwise known as the Era of Re-education.

Wolfgang dutifully extinguished his cigar. From there and on he was on his own: the Archbishop of All Archbishops had granted him free wings to land. He circled, for how long he knew not, in thick fog, his landing lights flickering on the tips of his wings, until slowly, reluctantly, as if it didn't want to be discovered, Salzburg appeared. First the fortress, the Festung Hohennsalzburg, with its ramparts protruding arrogantly above all things alive and dead, then the Glockenspiel with the belfry...

Could it be it?

It was it.

His heart was pounding with excitement and anticipation and he nearly forgot the green button. 'It's below your left wing,' the Resident Scientist in Heaven had said '...to slow down, all you have to do is press it'. His fingers, so accurate in the past, searched, frantically, for the button. Then searched again. IT WAS NOT THERE! It simply wasn't there. He was descending at a breath-taking pace and Salzburg rushed to greet him in a decidedly unfriendly fashion. By a miracle, he avoided a collision with the fortress and the spire of the Cathedral seemed a frightening few yards away. His fingers groped for the green button well, any wretched button really, but to no avail. He uttered a silent curse in the immediate vicinity of the Archbishop's Winter Residence.

Nothing works, nothing ever works!

Suddenly, the roar of air around his head eased and a large, white carpet of snow beckoned to him invitingly. Wolfgang flapped his wings gently and made a smooth, near-perfect landing in the snow. His landing lights all but extinguished, had just enough life left in them to shine on a tombstone. A cemetery! He landed in a cemetery.

Wolfgang looked around and slowly recognised the place: Nannerl was here somewhere and of course, Papa. Overwhelmed by a flood of childhood memories he tried to sit down and think things over but the wings stood in his way. Oh yes, the red button. '...all you have to do is...' With a small, sceptical smile and a minimum of hope his hand reached in the direction where the spot in question was to be and was not in the least surprised to find that the red button was not there. He pulled on the wings then twisted them. There was nothing to it but to

try to hide them under his cloak. As he neared the small iron gate Wolfgang promised to be back '...most definitely, Papa but just now it's holiday time, a well deserved break from pink angels and harp music.'

He left the cemetery, closing the gate gently, respectfully.

Annette Bouvier was chewing on a pair of wurstlis, which would have been simply called hot dogs back in Canada, and cost half of what these did here. She would have preferred a steak, hot and steaming, but the group manager said spend as little as possible; the Festival lasts for a week and just being in Salzburg should be an honour for you...and me, he added in a sudden upsurge of modesty. The conductor, Xavier Otsokani, said very little but this was understandable; generals rarely reveal their inner thoughts to the troops.

Annette uttered the sigh of the underprivileged, but-the-world-will-know-one-day, as she queued up by the cash-register. The woman said 'danke' and Annette flung her bag over the left shoulder when the door burst open to let in a man wrapped in a long, black cloak. He brushed past her and a minute later, out in the street, she could not, for her life, tell why her heart beat so fast. In the afternoon she practiced the music of the great composer Pocounut O'Ganda and by the time the sun set behind the Fortress the music gradually worked its way into her mind because that's what it was supposed to do for girls like Annette, who played the sixth violin on the left.

Wolfgang wandered the streets taking an occasional swig of wine from the bottle he carried. He was in no hurry; his itinerary has been worked out meticulously:

Day One - relax, catch your breath. Day Two - plunge into the streets of Salzburg. Day Three - compose a symphony or two.

Day Seven was reserved for a special purpose and was recorded in code: KILL COLLERADO. Well, not really, he didn't really want to kill the Archbishop of Salzburg but he was determined to teach him a lesson. His pistol was safely tucked away in the bottom of his pocket. When the time comes he will pull it out in a flash and before the guards could say 'Your Grace', point the barrel at him. Collerado will throw up his arms in terror. Before firing the first shot at his feet, Wolfgang will say: 'This is for calling me a servant, this for...'

Over the past two centuries he re-wrote the score of this Opera Buffa time and time again until the humiliation of Collerado reached perfection and the arrogant Archbishop was reduced to begging for mercy.

'It's good to be back, Stanzi and I can tell you, Salzburg has changed little in the past two hundred years. But, are you ready for this? I have just had lunch and what do you think the place was called? CAFE MOZART.'

He walked under a familiar looking archway, past the Mozart Cake shop, Mozart Drogerie, McDonald's Mozart Hamburgers and ran into a crowd queuing in front of a house. A red-white-red flag hung from the third floor, reaching just above the entrance of an old apothecary.

'Remember Getridgasse, Stanzi? Number Nine? The house I was born in. The inscription says: MOZART GERBURTHAUS and the flag is almost like the Imperial flag. It's gigantic, Stanzi. The house is unchanged, I even saw my chamberpot under the bed and no, I can't recall it all but there was my piano in the spot it used to be in, the portrait of Papa on the wall... A group of people whispered: "C'est merveilleux...", another one "Guarda questo qua...", yet another, "Na, nézd Józsi...". There was a group which said nothing, just stood there in their grey,

shapeless suits, as if mesmerised by the lock of my hair under glass. In the corner, empty and sunlit, a simple sign on the wall: "Hier stand Mozarts Wiege."

Here stood Mozart's cradle.

Picture this, Stanzi? But then, why not? I WAS THE BEST.

Long for you and kiss you millions of times.'

When he left the house, Wolfgang knew that he was great. Great. G R E A T . The world of two hundred years after thought he was great.

Turning up the collar of his cloak he roamed the once despised streets of the most despised town and the intimidating presence of the Fortress no longer mattered. He was oblivious of the fine drizzle and descending darkness. He must have been walking for hours because the crowd thinned out around him. Arriving in a square, his eyes caught sight of a statue and Wolfgang was hardly surprised to see that it was a statue of him.

'A most appalling piece of work, Stanzi, I am certain, I've never looked so ordinary...'

The bells of the Glockenspiel started to ring and he waited for the fortress to join in. He waited then he waited a little longer.

'Know what, Stanzi, I don't believe he is there. I DON'T THINK A N Y O N E IS THERE. Will go and find out tomorrow.'

Annette Bouvier stood by the small, wrought iron gate closing the entrance to the funicular. A cardboard sign, attached to the spikes by a piece of string said: OUT OF ORDER. Her eyes followed the tracks and somewhere half-way up the nearly vertical walls of the Fortress, stuck like a fly caught in honey, stood the carriage, lifeless. She hesitated for a moment then set out up the narrow path, ignoring the warning: DO NOT PASS THIS POINT BETWEEN OCTOBER AND MARCH.

Two hours later she was picking her way down the icy steps, her gloved hand clinging to the rail. There was a contended smile on her face: the camera was full of magnificent shots of Salzburg taken from the Fortress and Sue will go green with envy when she sees them.

Then her hand lost its grip, feet shot away and she found herself flat on her back, looking at the bare branches of a frozen tree before the world became blurred then slipped out of focus altogether. She could have been there for minutes or hours before the warmth on her left cheek slowly crept into her consciousness along with some additional warmth in the vague area of her hips. The face above, not quite unfamiliar...

When was it? Where?

The voice soft, comforting.

'You are alright, just a little fright, that's all.'

The stranger turned to leave and Annette caught the fleeting sight of something very much like angel's wings under a black cloak. She shook her head then shook it again and the vision was gone.

Wolfgang leaned on the rampart, a little smile in his eyes.

'The girl was in distress, Stanzi, honest.'

Down in the valley lay Salzburg, the domes of its cathedrals, churches, The Residence, basking in the late afternoon sunshine. So, there is no archbishop in the Fortress, in the Palace or anywhere else, no kings, no emperors. They are all gone, their glory vanished, the gods of the past turned into dust, just like that of the men who polished their boots.

Wolfgang uttered a curt laugh then flung his gun into the clear air above Salzburg. It made an indecisive half-circle before clattering down the slope and disappearing in the thick bushes.

There was no way of telling how the rumour started but start it did. The next morning it became headlines hitting Salzburg like a nuclear bombshell.

'MOZART IN TOWN', 'AMADEUS AMONGST US AGAIN', shouted the newsboys and 'PEOPLE OF SALZBURG THE DAY OF RECKONING IS NEAR' but this turned out to be a preacher from Arkansas.

From there on, events took on the shape of a fast forward video: the Salzburg of 1991 wanted him, him alone, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The great composer, Pocounut O'Ganda, was among the loudest in the square: 'WE WANT MOZART', he shouted and the crowd followed.

'It's unbelievable, Stanzi, my music is judged by those for whom it was intended in the first place: everybody. No, I have not composed anything new but it doesn't seem to matter, they are listening to the same old things over and over. No, I have not played the piano either, or any other instrument. I let them do it. Picture this, Stanzi: the square jam-packed with people, the sun goes down but no problems; light appears out of nowhere and hundreds of eyes are focused on me. WE WANT MOZART. Get this? Kings, emperors, with their bloody wars and short-lived conquests, glories and their vanity, all of it gone, but my music lives on.'

Then he caught sight of a hand in the crowd, raised above heads, showing three fingers. It disappeared for a moment then came up again. And for the third time. Three. Three. T H R E E. Later in the evening, exhausted by triumph, Wolfgang collapsed on the bed and could not be rid of a sensation of foreboding. What do they want? My Sarastro turned out to be a good guy. Did I give away secrets? I may have done but surely, everyone knows about Freemasons by now and nobody cares. Tamino sang his way to victory and...

Oh, the hell with it!

'...I am a little tired now, Stanzi but I will talk to you tomorrow. Meanwhile, please stay away from Baden-of-Heaven. As for the girl, she W A S in distress.'

About half-way through the Twenty Fifth Amadeus made his decision: he jumped from his seat in the tenth row and catapulted himself onto the podium, shoving Xavier Otsokani aside. His arms shot up sending the orchestra into exhilaration. He had no baton but it did not seem to matter: ninety six pairs of eyes blazed in front of him, following the movements of his arm, the slightest flick of his fingers, and the Menuetto soared up to the sky.

And beyond.

When he, finally, let his arms drop by his side, the silence was absolute for a few seconds then a thunder of applause shook the hall. The orchestra rose to a man in silent awe.

In the fifth row, the sixth violin form the left, stood Annette Bouvier, her hair drenched, the white silk blouse sticking to her shoulders and she knew then that the vision of the other day, up in the Fortress, was no vision at all. There will never be a night like this again until the last day of her life and she will be asking herself, for the rest of her life: was it real? Did it really happen on that night, in November 1991, in the Festival Hall of Salzburg.

The knock at the door was apologetic.

'Herr Mozart? Please don't blame me, I am only a messenger. Your father died.'

Wolfgang needed cold water, a lot of it. He put his head under the tap and let the water

soak his hair, pour down his face, cool his burning eyelids. He shook his head and wiped the mirror: the face, looking at him, aged a thousand years. I will write a requiem, Papa, I will write it for you, the most deserving father but I am tired now, very, very tired.

'Remember the day in the Prater, Stanzi? I told you then how I was writing my own requiem...'

It was his last day on Earth and there was one more thing he wanted to do before boarding the cloud which will take him back to pink angels and harp music: he was going to get drunk. Completely, totally, absolutely, sodden drunk. He shoved the return ticket in his pocket, left the hotel and headed for a bar in down-town Salzburg. He ordered a bottle of white wine then a rose, after which came a red one topped up with a bottle of champagne. Things around gradually took on soft, rounded shapes, the voices of drinkers pleasantly distant through a bluish haze of cigarette smoke and, generally speaking, life was an agreeable affair.

Life?

Wolfgang threw back his head and laughed then he laughed more until tears ran down his face. He left the bar three hours later and headed for the Wing-Port. He stepped from the curb when the lights turned green. The car came out of nowhere and did not slow down. Wolfgang's last thought was: Did I see a hand with three fingers or is it you, Salieri?

Blue lights flashing, sirens blaring and the boys in blue are at it. Sergeant Schultz is in a vile temper: it's just his luck, first to be transferred from Vienna to this godforsaken place then a hit-and-run accident on the first day.

'Driving licence, Constable?'

'No, Sir.'

'Any ID at all'

'None, Sir.'

He scratched his head.

'Actually, Sir, there was this...there were some...wings.'

'Some WHATS?'

A man in a black velvet jacket detaches himself from the crowd.

'I think I can help you, Sergeant.'

Sergeant Schulz lifts his left eyebrow.

'And who might you be, Sir?'

'It doesn't matter. This man, I mean the deceased here, is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.'

'Yeah, sure. Sure. What did you say your name was...Sir?

'I didn't. I said I knew the man on the ground.'

On the ground were bits and pieces spread over the asphalt: boots, a black cloak, a bit of hair, some wings...'

WINGS?!

Sergeant Schultz knew then that he needed a drink. Badly.

'Take him to the ambulance.'

As they were taking the body to the waiting ambulance a motorcyclist raced to the scene.

'I have the decree of the Emperor...Herr Mozart is to be appointed the Kapellmeister at St. Stephen's Cathedral.'

This was the last drop for Sergeant Schultz: another lunatic!

He sighed the sigh of resignation.
The Emperor...sure.
Ah well, another poor soul for a pauper's grave.

Ilona Palmer is an ethnic Hungarian born in the former Yugoslavia. She migrated to Australia in 1969. Palmer worked as an analytical chemist with ICI-Research then with CSIRO. She has been writing short stories in English and translating from Serbo-Croatian. Most stories, and translations, were first published by *Australian Short Stories* - Pascoe Publishing. She is currently working on a book. Palmer lives in Melbourne with her husband and two beautiful German Shpherds.

HYACINTH AILWOOD

An Uncertain Gift

Paspalum weeds grow tall on the corner of our street. As I sit in the gutter long stems tickle my face and sweep away the tears. Sticky seeds cling to my bare legs and feet. I pull them off and taste the sweetness of honey on my fingers as I wait for my dad to come home on the miners train at three o'clock.

Before I left home Mum roused at me and said that I had tried her patience. 'If you've asked me once for the time, Heather, you've asked me a dozen times. What's up with you? You've had the fidget's all day.'

I wish I could tell the time for myself so I wouldn't have to keep pestering Mum. Sometimes Dad taught me by the fire at night, not with the big black clock on the mantelpiece, that one was a wedding present and my dad looked after it. Every so often he would pinch a feather from one of our chickens to paint the inside with oil.

It was so busy in there. He showed me how the tiny wheels meshed, and how the little gold hammer donged a wound up spring when it chimed. Then he polished the eagle heads and placed two of its four claws on a piece of cardboard to make it level on the mantelpiece.

Dad said that roman figures and the chimes made that clock a bit hard for me so he brought the alarm clock from the bedroom. He could move the hands about for practice, but sometimes I watched his hands instead. Tiny specks of coal dust were buried deep in his knuckles, too deep for soap and water to wash away.

At last he set the alarm clock for five o'clock.

This morning it woke me as well. I slipped past my little brother, Danny, who slept beside me in the big iron bed. There in the kitchen my dad poked the fire to life. At night he banked it down with slack coal, not cobbles, and damped it with water from the kettle. Now he shook coal dust from the pit socks that dried on the oven door at night and pulled them over his big pale feet. He left the leather boots till last. The coals on the fire burned a clear red with no smoke. My dad cut four slices of bread and handed me the long toasting fork.

He liked his toast well done so I took my time. It was then that he told me.

'Heather,' he said ' remember the day we went on the train to visit Fred and Mary?' Fred worked beside him down the pit, and Mary was his wife.

'Yes Dad, I opened the window in the tunnel and got my eyes full of soot, Mary bathed them with salt and water. She was kind to me.'

Then Dad said, 'She's sent a little present for you. Fred brought it, but I'm afraid I left it on a dynamite box down the mine. Today I'll put it in my crib tin. I never forget that.'

My father was perhaps pulling my leg. I wanted to cry but I didn't, I couldn't be a sook, not in front of my Dad. My voice sounded like a sob.

'Wha-what was it the pre-present?'

'Fred said it was a pair of gloves wrapped in pink tissue paper.'

Then my father got a wicked look on his face and said,

'I hope that rats haven't got them.'

'Rats!' Now I was really howling.

'Hush Heather, you'll wake your mother. You know I think Mary must have taken a fancy to you.'

Then my father went out into the darkness of the morning and the mine.

White gloves were for rich children. Doctor Murphy's little girl wears lace ones. At church she sits between her mother and the doctor. I watch her hands as she turns the pages of her prayer book. The cover gleams like her mother's pearls, as creamy as top milk. When the collection comes around her hand hovers like a butterfly above the plate to drop a shiny silver sixpence amongst the pennies.

I wonder if my gloves will be made of lace. How would Mary know my size? Grown-ups always bought everything too big so that you could grow into them. Well all-right I'll stuff the fingers with wadding, but the rats might have ripped the tissue paper and they'll be covered with coal dust with the fingers nibbled by little sharp teeth. No, nothing will stop me from wearing them, but what if the rats carry them into those pitch dark tunnels I've heard Dad and Uncle Jim talk about? Why there might even be a mine explosion; if the canaries in their cages stop breathing. I can't stand to think about that.

The clock on the mantelpiece struck seven times and Mum was up. Back over the fire the porridge burst thick bubbles and I set the table for breakfast.

Danny came and stood by the fire with his pants around his ankles. He pulled my dress and lisped 'Hever, will you fix my bwaces?'

'Aw Dan, can't you do it? You're getting to be a big boy now.'

'Heather, you know he's too little to untwist them. You just help him.'

He's a bit spoiled, is Danny, but today I don't mind.

At the table I asked my mother, 'Do you think the miners might go on strike today? Perhaps the "no work" whistle will blow.'

'I hope not Heather. Why?'

'I'd like Dad to come home early. What's the time?'

'Time you tidied your room, it's like a pigsty. Let Danny help you.'

Danny made the mess, but time might fly. Mum says it does if you're busy.

The eleven o'clock chimes were drowned out by the sounds of Uncle Jim's Harley Davidson. He was my favourite uncle and worked in the mines like my Dad, so why was he home today?

He stood with his back to the fire and blocked out the face of the clock, then winked at me as if we shared a secret.

'Will you stay and have a bite with us, Jim?' My mother asked.

On the kitchen table a fat brown teapot snuggled under the skirt of a china tea cosy doll; a story book lady called *Madame La Pompadour*. She seemed to feel no shame that her clothes were covered with tea stains and bubbles of charred wool formed a frill around her hemline.

I could smell spring onions, vinegar and fresh buttered bread, best of all blackberry jam that Mum made from blackberries Dad brought home in his crib tin after the 'no work' whistle blew that morning. He walked home through the bush. His hands were all stained purple.

'Day dreaming again, Heather.' My mother spoke sharply, 'Uncle Jim spoke to you.'

He winked again and asked 'Will you dance at my wedding, Heather?'

'Is my dad going?'

'Going love? He'll be my best man.'

'Has Hilda set the date then, Jimmy?' asked my mother.

'You bet. The nineteenth of September, nineteen twenty eight, will be a day to remember. 'Here,' He reached into his pocket, 'I've brought the invitation.'

Then they forgot I was there.

'I'm getting out of the pits, Net.'

'But you'll need to have a job Jim.'

'Too right, and I've got one this morning. Next time you see me I'll be driving the 'Glebe' bus around town.'

'You're lucky Jim, to get out of the mines.'

'Yeah I think so too. Last week two of my mates were trapped in the workplace, pinned under a fall of coal, - we worked day and night to free them - extractin' pillars they were - against union rules - left six kids between them.'

My mother rolled bread back into dough with the tips of her fingers. 'George didn't tell me.'

'Fair dinkum, Net, you don't know what it's like, working your guts out in flannels stiff with coal dust and sweat, listenin, -always listenin, to the roof creaking on the timbers, waitin' for a change in the sounds that make yer scream "she's going mate - get out - run - run for your life".'

'Oh stop Jim.'

My mother looked upset but my Uncle Jim went on.

'I'm sorry Net but I'm fed up with it. I go weak when we ride the skip towards tunnels that stretch out under the Pacific. Sometimes yer can fancy yer can hear the surf rolling in up there in the sunshine, and wish yer were there naked in the white caps, but there's just you and yer mates and the lights from the safety lamps flicker up the ghosts of the dead.'

Uncle Jim's words frightened me more than the wicked witch who lived in the gingerbread house in *Hansel and Gretel.*

'Please can I leave the table now Mum?'

'Ah yer poor bairn, ay I didna ken yer were still thar.'

My mum was Scotch and this was how she talked when my Granny came. She seemed to come out of a dream.

'Go and play with your brother, Heather, and see if the chooks have laid any eggs for the rice pudding.'

I left the kitchen as the clock struck two. I heard Uncle Jim say.

'Sorry Net, I don't know what came over me. Cripes! Is that the time? I have to meet Hilda to buy the ring. Cheerio Heather.' He shouted from the back door.

But I was too busy looking after my brother 'Get out of that coal heap Danny.'

And a jolly good riddance to you Uncle Jim with the bad news, I thought as I heard the sounds of the motor bike fade away.

Now there was a worry in my head that had nothing to do with white gloves. I knew it was to stay there forever. Even two brown eggs wouldn't comfort me.

Back in the kitchen the stove looked black leaded and shiny, the lid on the big black kettle danced for Dad's bath. Spurts of blue flame fizzled through cracks in the bright cobbles of coal. Every day it looked this way when the hands of the clock were half way round to three. Time to go!

I knew his grey flannels would smell like the earth he turned up with the potatoes, and his face would be covered with coal dust.

Now in the deep grass on our corner the dark shape of my father stands above me. Without a word he unbuckles the strap holding the crib tin and water bottle and places them over my shoulder. The water bottle scrapes the ground.

'There's going to be a wedding.' I say, and when he smiles at me, white lines break through the black of his face.

Hyacinth Ailwood is a writer who lives in Newcastle, Australia. She is currently working on a collection of her and her late husband's short stories.

DAMIAN BOYLE

Crossing the Line

February 3 1927. It's summer but the weather doesn't know it. A cold wind blasts the small settlement of Salisbury, near Nhill, on the edge of the Big Desert in the north-west pocket of Victoria. This is sheep and wheat country, pioneer country, the Mallee where gristled men harrow and hack at the scrub, clearing for crops, their sweat-stained shirts washed once a week. Where slag heaps of Mallee roots dot the landscape waiting a turn to burn in the fire of someone's hearth. Nhill, home to the Mallee fowl, is a no-man's land with a rainfall barely whetting the whistle of the soil. Its raging dust storms bear down on Melbourne hundreds of miles away, blanketing the city suffering already from heat and humidity. Intense summer heat most days. Bugger all shade. Winters cold enough for the children to suck ice from the edge of the dirt road on their way to school. The next stop is Bordertown in South Australia.

A small girl wrapped against the chill cuts a path through the buffeting winds, hands in pockets and shoulders bent. A thick muffler covers her ears and silences the roar of the wind. She is heading for the crossing at the railway station on her way to school. Her eyes are cast downwards against the dust - except the once when she looks up to take bearings and sees her friend on the other side of the tracks, waving. They always meet at the crossing.

The crops are in. It's busy at the silos - trucks laden with wheat and men scurrying about coupling and uncoupling. They're hard at work in the cold and dust and flying wheat. A worker pounds on a coupling to break the seal, to pull the pin so a couple of empty trucks can be withdrawn from the train bound for Melbourne. It gives, but only after some effort. He pushes hard against the empty trucks so they free-wheel a few metres away, out of sight in the swirling dust. They'll stop of their own accord he thinks. And they do . . . when they run into the back of a stationary truck, fully loaded, further down the line. It moves an inch with the whack and then another and another. And the collision is silenced by the wind.

The girl nears the crossing but doesn't look up. Too much dust in the eyes already. She doesn't want to break the streamline of her body bent against the buffeting. Her friend on the other side of the line is waving frantically. She watches a laden railway truck inching into life and gathering silent momentum along the tracks, the noise of the wheels turning deadened by the bawling blasts of wind. Jean she screams through the din but the little girl doesn't hear her name being called. *Jean . . . watch out . . . look up Jean . . . Jeeeeeaannnn!*

Jean steps onto the track.

The truck gathers momentum, a wild runaway thing unable to discern between the cold steel of the tracks and the warm flesh of the child. Jean never even looks up...doesn't have a clue. The beast moves silently towards her, twenty-five tons of steel and wheat on eight wheels . . . a gnat-smacker . . . one helluva roller skate. The impact blows the girl to her back, blows her to pieces, blows a massive crevice between her knee and lower leg. Her leg on one side of the track, she on the other.

Too late for screams now. The friend runs...runs for Jean's life...runs to the home of a nearby wheat agent . . . a friend of the family . . . a friend to Jean. He collects Jean's mother and together they race to the crossing. No screams from this mother who has known hardships before. Jean's mother wraps the knee in baby towels to stem the gush of blood. She yanks the

boot and sock from the foot of the severed leg and wraps that in baby towels too. White baby towels, as white as Jean's face from the shock and loss of blood. Her blood on the crossing.

'They took me six miles to Nhill. I wanted to go to sleep; my mother wouldn't let me. I had no pulse. I would have died.'

No fancy tying of knots in veins and arteries in 1927. Sealing the wound is job enough. Save the life . . . save the life . . . bugger the leg. A week later doctors get out the hacksaw and do another job on the leg. They saw it off above the knee, saw through pulpy flesh and gristle and bone, like butchers making lamb chops. Flecks of flesh and bone spatter the surgical whites while Jean sleeps, knocked out this time by anaesthetic, a flat bench in place of train tracks.

Later comes the peg leg, a nine-year-old with a peg leg. Stumpy but with all the grit of a kid who has faced death and survived. Her war trophy is a magnet to other children at first. Catch me Jean they call when playing branders-in-the-ring. And she does. Plays cricket, skittling along with crutches . . . and her peg leg. She learns to ride a pushbike and, as the child becomes a woman, sets out for dances at the local hall. She starts work at sixteen and never stops - milking cows and looking after the farmer's children. Later, she keeps house for a pair of elderly spinsters in Horsham close to The Grampians, a jagged range squeezed upwards from the surrounding plains, all sharps and angles pointing to the sun.

October 1940. The Depression has left its mark and now there is the onset of war. Jean marries Daniel having put together a modest glory box from money saved working long hours and going without - essentials for a home and a few baby items. They set up a home of their own in Colac, three hours south of Nhill, on the edge of the Otway Ranges.

Colac - a few thousand souls eking a living from the dairy or cutting timber from the rain forest. Timber cut by long saws in trees notched with planks so the cutters can get at the tapering butts that'll take the length of their saws. Two of them, on planks, either side of a massive mountain ash, sawing for their lives, for their livelihoods and hoping like hell the bastard doesn't fall early or the wrong way and crush the life out of one of them. Or both. And hoping there're no termite-infested upper limbs to break loose - overhead - as the tree begins to fall or even during the sawing when the tree vibrates and teeters in the breeze. Widow-makers they call them.

Fire country. It's bad enough on the plains but perilous in the bush where whole communities live and work for years in makeshift camps which become permanent digs as the forest opens up. Normal towns of rough-sawn weatherboard homes or communities living underground in dug-outs with limbed roofs covered by soil and allowed to grow grass, with holes either end for ventilation, to get away from the heat of summer, the flies and mosquitoes. The dug-outs afford a measure of safety against wildfire . . . if the smoke doesn't get them first. Here, people live, sometimes a mile below the mountain top, near creeks and mountain streams, where the best timber grows, where the biggest leeches feed. Where massive steam engines are brought in, carried down the slippery inclines in pieces and assembled next to the river with its supply of water. The steam engines drive sawmills that slice the great logs brought to it by teams of horses pulling hard across the ranges . . . up and down . . . up and down . . . with more than an occasional life lost when the horses slip and a log goes out of control and crushes the men dragging arse at the rear.

Colac is where Jean and Daniel settle in their cottage in Pound Road, just across from the cemetery. They pay ten bob a week and the rent is never raised in fourteen years. Jean gives birth to their first child, Ronald William, just nine months after she marries Daniel. On 29 July 1941.

She is with child again in short time and, fourteen months later, gives birth to James

Edward on 3 October 1942. To become Edward James Smith, then Edward 'Jockey' Smith, and finally just 'Jockey' Smith. Jimmy to his friends. A kid growing up in hard times post-war where the only entertainment is what you make yourself. Jimmy cuts timber with his dadda and helps look after the poddy calves that provide a few extra bob for the kitty, along with the cow to be milked morning and night. He takes to ferreting with his dadda, for rabbits, and leaves the skinning and the selling to Jean who pushes a pram around the town, brim full of skinny carcases . . . two bob each missus. No street kid, Jimmy, but streetwise nevertheless . . . feisty . . . like his mum.

So, he's number two in a family of eight. He goes to school at Elliminyt Primary just up the hill from the cemetery . . . the better part of town near the golf course. He attends Sunday school at the local church where Jean cuts sandwiches for the picnic on Anniversary Day. Full of life is Jimmy the kid. Picks peas at thirteen for pocket money. Boxes at the police ring in Colac and, later, in the boxing tents of travelling shows. Maybe even Sharman's Boxing Troupe. A game little bugger who takes to horses and learns from his father the value of being gentle.

A gentle man is Daniel. But tough, hardened by life - a crusty bark surface on a solid trunk. When the family moves to Geelong in 1956 Daniel cuts firewood for a living at Modewarre on the eastern end of the Otways, about 20 k's from home. It's hard, back-breaking work but there's nothing else going. Axe and crosscut saw. Sweat and muscle. Muscle as tempered as the head of the axe. And Daniel quickly gains a reputation for the quality of his work. Aye, that'd be Danny Smith's work all right, from a government inspector. There's only one man who stacks wood like that and cleans up after him.

Danny Smith takes his wife and younguns to Geelong in the hope of a better life. Geelong is home to the Ford Motor Company and the woollen mills lining the banks of the Barwon River. It is a growing city with new industry on the go, like the Alcoa aluminium smelter with its deep berth for ships on the edge of Corio Bay. It's a port city with the phosphate factory across the bay taking cargoes of raw earth all the way from Bougainville and producing fertilisers for the farmers of the Western District. Geelong is a workers' city, a sinners' city, with the taxis all too ready to get their hooks into the merchant seamen on dry land for the first time in months. Sometimes quick, sometimes costly rides across a foreign town to known haunts like the Ocean Child Hotel close to Corio Quay where the phosphate ships tie up or, in the city still with its trams, to the Golden Age where sailors get legless while keeping an eye on the sea. And later, an urgent dash to one of the brothels and back on board for muster.

Danny and Jean Smith rent next to an orphanage - Glastonbury Orphanage - where their children attend school. It's a tight squeeze inside their new home, what with eight of their own and a couple more from a local youth club on weekends. And Jean's mother as well. The joint's filthy and Jean sets to work with water and soap and scrubbing brush. Soon the home sparkles and the owner gives them a few weeks free rent.

It's a great move for Jimmy . . . for a while. He finds work at Godfrey Hirst Woollen Mill in Chilwell, across the Barwon and up through Belmont to home. He saves as hard as he works and comes home one day with a receipt for twenty-eight pounds and a horse . . . his horse. He is gentle with it. He teaches it to kneel and crawl under barriers in the paddock across the way from the rented home next to Glastonbury Orphanage. A galloping tangle of muscle in the care of a sixteen-year-old kid who barely stands tall enough to look over the horse's back. One day a local trainer passes by.

The trainer trains his horses at the Geelong race-track in Breakwater on the eastern side of town and next door to the showgrounds. He likes what he sees and offers Jimmy a chance to ride professionally - as an apprentice. And he rides his heart out - even places a few times

before someone from Williamson's stables in Caulfield sees his potential and hoists him from right under the nose of the Geelong trainer. It's there Jimmy meets an older fellow by the name of Ronald Ryan. They become friends.

The family is living next to Glastonbury and Jimmy heads home one night. He catches the train from Caulfield to Geelong. He's walking across a vacant paddock in sight of home when two coppers in plain clothes bail him up. *What's yer name lad. Jim Smith. Yeh, and we're Zig and Zag. Guffaw, guffaw. Give us yer right name, sunshine. I told ya, Jim Smith.* And he feels the smack on the face before he even knows it's coming. It's a stunning blow that knocks him backwards a step or two. *Where d'yer live Smithy, they ask. Over there* and he points. *The house next to the orphanage, the one with the light on. Sure sunshine* and the slap to the other cheek comes just as fast and a little harder. The blood from his nose mingles with blood from the split lip. *What's in the bag?* they ask. *Me silks, me racing silks, I'm a jockey. Give us a look* and he's given a punch to the stomach followed by an uppercut to the jaw for his trouble. And when the two coppers are finished with him, he is a bloody and bruised pulp. There's blood all over his clothes when he comes in the back door crying. It's barely congealed when he returns to Caulfield the following Monday.

But it's a crummy set-up in Melbourne. He's too young to leave the nest and one day his mumma comes to visit and finds him living in a loft in the stables with a heap of other jockeys. She watches as he eats two little rissoles for breakfast, hardly a good way to start the day she thinks. But racing being racing, the work is never guaranteed and Jimmy is loaned to another trainer, Vic Moloney, and comes back to Geelong. He lives with Vic in Vic's house with Vic's family up near the cement works . . . a monster of dragon proportions puffing away of a night to make clouds of grey smoke to blow across neighbouring houses and stick to the weatherboards and bricks. Vic's is an open house and Jimmy is not so much as tempted to lay hands to a single item that isn't his. Jimmy's keen, wants to please. Like his horse he responds to praise. And there's plenty of work with Vic training ten horses. Life is pretty good for Jimmy with early morning runs at Breakwater and back home for a breakfast of bacon and eggs on toast and hot tea in a mug. More if he wants it.

Jimmy races for Vic - at Bendigo, Burrumbeet, Camperdown, Cranbourne, Cobden, Colac, Geelong, Mornington, Pakenham and Terang - and wins many a race, and more than one on Arbilot. *But Jimmy, my boy, I've got some bad news for you lad. The bills are coming in and there ain't enough in the kitty to keep afloat the way things are now. I've got to pass on a few horses to other trainers or go under lad. You see how it is, don't you? Sure, sure, Vic, but never mind. I'll keep working for ya, for nothin' if it'll help.*

The time comes when the track work dries up altogether and Vic worries Jimmy's career will be over just when it is taking off. *I'll tell you what I'll do, son. I'll arrange for you to work for some of the other trainers, to keep you in work and money.* And he does. He arranges for Jimmy to work out for other trainers with the promise of a ride at ten bob a time. *Should add a couple of quid to what I'm paying you, lad.* But the rides are ghost trains that disappear before he can board. Jimmy does all the track work of a morning, the hard work, but the rides never eventuate.

And then Vic's training schedule dwindles to the point where Jimmy has to be put off. It's bad timing, just when Jimmy is making a name for himself as a respected jockey. But fate, so it seems, intervenes. A deal comes from another trainer; a sweet deal, too good to refuse so it seems; a deal including a 1948 DeLuxe Ford sedan supplied with petrol and a promise of five pounds a week. The first week's pay sweet and Jimmy lets out the clutch on the old Ford and heads into town for a bit of shopping and a few pressies for mum. But the deal turns nasty by the second week . . . when the trainer jumps up and down about overheads and sweet deals

and *Christ boy, yer should be thankful for a job at all. Here's two quid and think yerself lucky.* The following week the wage stops altogether with the trainer declaring *yer can work for nothin' if yer want petrol for the car.*

Jimmy is young and naive, deadset in love with the horses and fearful of losing the contact. A few months pass with nought in payment but a tankful of petrol here and there. Jimmy takes to thinking this ain't right, that he ought to be getting more. He thinks he ought to be taking what's around the place. And he does. And the owner sees the gaps where his things used to be and sets the police to Jimmy. Of course, he doesn't know Jimmy is already busy about the town.

Like when he pulls up to the Winter and Taylor service station in Mercer Street, in the city, to refuel. The garage is closed for the evening but the two bob automatic pumps are working. He feeds two bob into the meter and the fuel comes out and he wonders about the stockpile of two bob coins. In the middle of the night he returns and helps himself to the store of coins and hides them in the door of the Ford, behind the trim.

Little jobs, petty stuff, but attracting attention from the police. Garage break-ins, shop-lifting and then safes.

Daniel is working at the cement quarries at Fyansford by then, not far from where Vic lives, and Ron and Jimmy sometimes go with their dadda to work. The explosives for blasting the walls of the quarry are kept in a shed out of sight, almost out of mind. Jimmy takes a few sticks of gelignite thinking a safe or two might be fun.

He's with a mate and they do a break and enter. The safe's in the back but they can't figure out how to blow it up. There's nowhere to put the stick of gellie. The silly buggers are looking for a hole . . . in a safe? In the end, they lift the safe enough to stick the gellie underneath. They use two sticks just to be sure, light the fuses and nearly kill themselves from the explosion. Too much gellie and not well placed. The safe heads for the roof before coming back to earth at their feet. Their faces are covered with powder burns. The safe . . . still safe . . . unopened. Afraid the noise might have given them away, they manoeuvre the safe to the back of the ute and manage to get it on board. They high-tail it down an isolated road to the Barwon River where they try everything to break open the safe. No go, boys, and they dump the safe into the river where it sinks into the mud and stays until the police retrieve it some time later.

The police notice a group of lads, pals of Jimmy's, doing laps around the McCann St square in town. McCann St is the local hot-spot for hoons, a place for widgees and bodgies to hang out. It's a Mecca for groups of young girls dressed in tight-fitting jeans and low cut tank tops with their long legs and high-heeled wedges. They mill about outside the cafes and pinball parlours which line the hundred metres of McCann St and where, at all hours of the day and night, a cuisine of fish'n'chips and hamburgers is on offer inside, contrasted against a smorgasbord of flesh on the streets. And don't the young blokes love it. Whooee! Wolf whistles and burning rubber as carloads of pimple-faced boys and goateed young men with long sideburns and flowing hair do the block . . . the McCann Street block.

Jimmy Smith is there from time to time in his souped-up '58 Star Customline, the Cussie a recent acquisition from a friend who owed him money, a goer of a car, a mean machine by any standards. Impressive girls . . . check it out. Check out the donk.

The police do the rounds periodically, make a few arrests for drunkenness or slap canary slips on unroadworthy vehicles. McCann Street closes when the Johns are about but the hum is still there, lurking in the back alleys and dim recesses of the city, waiting for the place to clear and then it's business as usual. Carbon monoxide levels rise at a rate comparable to the libidos of the drivers. But it's tame stuff really, a few petrol heads getting their jollies, except when the fights break out. One in, all in.

Herb Jeffery is a local copper with an eye on Jimmy Smith's mates. He follows them to a

house in Isabella St, Geelong West, an older part of town close to the city where mostly small and semi-detached houses open onto street fronts. The house is close to the old Pix Theatre where, for a couple of bob on a Saturday arvo, patrons white away a few hours munching Fantales and Jaffas. Jeffery, who later gives up policing to become an Olympic swimming coach for Australia, does a search of the house in Isabella St when the boys are out. He finds a cache of stolen goodies in the garage. This is not looking too brilliant for the boys, particularly as Jeffery calls for back-up and waits unseen nearby for the lads to return and, when they do, he nabs them good and proper.

But not Jimmy Smith. That comes later when one of the boys splits on Jimmy and Herbie the policeman reels the jockey in. With a furlong to go, he pips him at the post. By a nose. He's a tough lad, thinks Herb the policeman; never splits on his mates. Some mates! Grass him good and proper. The safe lying dormant in the mud of the Barwon is retrieved, along with a quantity of guns and garage equipment and other bits and pieces cleverly hidden at the rear of the grandstand at Geelong racetrack.

Smith and three other boys are charged with shop and garage breaking. *Your Honour, I respectfully submit these three scallywags have been indulging in a spot of pinching. Yes, Yes, tell me their backgrounds, Mr Prosecutor. First offences, eh? Only the boy Smith, Your Honour. The others have records sir. If it pleases Your Honour, the prosecution asks for the maximum penalty. Where do they live? Your Honour, these three lads rent a property in Isabella Street.* And the prosecutor casts a glance at Smith's three mates. *Mr Smith lives with his parents at Glastonbury. Where he went to school.* The magistrate scowls. *The orphanage you say? Yes Your Honour, the very same. Well, I'll show Mr Smith what I do with thieving little beggars from the orphanage who come into my court. Eighteen months Mr Smith with a minimum of five to be served before parole.* And Jimmy Smith in August 1961 is sent down on his first appearance and given a heftier sentence than the others in the gang. *Take him away.*

And take him away they do. To the Geelong Jail - a hundred years of bluestone and red-brick with the ghosts of convicts past whispering in the breeze at the top of Geelong. *Cum in, cum on in wilt ya. Welcum to ye brother . . . dis useta be me cell, the very same wooden bed ya sittin' on with its fleas and ticks, an' the wall where I scratched me name before a tousan' others, an' the iron slit of a window facin' the south'rly chill in winter.*

Geelong Jail is positioned on prime real estate overlooking the city and Corio Bay. Not that those inside could see the sparkling waters glinting in the sun or the sailing vessels under canvass for the weekend regatta. From the jail it is a short step to St Mary's of the Angels with its towering spiral; a Gothic cathedral fit for a bishop. Indeed, a cathedral meant for a bishop before Melbourne beat Geelong in the race to become Victoria's capital. There is a certain irony in the location of the two institutions - a place of mercy overlooking a place of misery. And, like the sombre facade of St Mary's of the Angels, the jail is a cold, bleak island with huge, iron-reinforced timber doors cut into the perimeter of bluestone and bricks they call Geelong Blues.

Jimmy Smith is taken to the place of induction for an issue of uniform and blanket and a lesson in prison etiquette as well. He climbs a series of narrow, iron stairs leading to the cramped and musty cells . . . lines of them . . . and the silent howls of human beings inside.

Damian Boyle is a journalist and teacher who lives in Geelong, Victoria. He was editor and publisher of *Gathering Forces*. This is his first short story. He is currently working on a non-fiction book.

GREG BOGAERTS

Cobblestones

Tom Mason stood at the corner of the street and watched the spokes of black cobblestones radiating to all parts of the city. The lines of smooth stone cut and laid last century. As though they'd been quarried and individually polished with painstaking care by some lapidarist intent on leaving his mark, leaving his skill contained in vessels of polished rock.

Tom looked in an arc and the cobblestones delineated, defined the curves and flats of Melbourne. Every building and every walkway seemed to be stitched closely to the paths the cobblestones made. As though the stone cutters of a hundred years ago had left a map for the city fathers of the future to follow. And they had with the buildings caressing closely the gutters and drains made out of the black cobblestones. The roadways made along the lines of the cobblestone gutters, even as far out as the road to Sydney.

And the people seemed as though they were engaged in a long and pleasing love affair with the gutters and drains of rock. They sat at tables, on the footpaths, out the front of cafes and restaurants, as close as possible to the cobblestones, where they ate plates of pasta and drank cups of long black coffee, the same colour as the stones almost kissing their feet.

And the colour of the cobblestones was the colour of the clothes the men and women wore. Tom saw it, straight away, the black and grey of the stone found in the coats, trousers and shirts the men wore and the dresses the women wore. As though the earthy richness of the black had seeped from the stone and pigmented the being, the identity of the men and women who lived in the city.

Tom wondered whether it was his imagination, wondered if it was too far fetched to see the cobblestones as responsible for the warmth of the people and their ready friendliness to give visitors directions around the city. Like the old Greek lady, yesterday, who walked them to the Windsor Railway Station because she didn't have enough English to give them directions. So she went out of her way and took them in hand. They followed her with her black skirt and black jumper and black stockings and black shawl. She smiled at them and left them but not before she placed a smooth, but hard hand on Tom's arm. Winked her silver teeth at him with her thin-as-a-lizard grin.

The children of the city's inhabitants settled themselves in the dishes of the black rock, as their parents ate and drank and talked, and played contentedly as cars and trucks and trams rumbled harmlessly by. The children in the jigsaw puzzles of stone that had been put together and solved by men, last century, who had children of their own.

Tom Mason stepped off the corner and bent down. Touched the rough and smooth surface of the gutter stones and felt the warmth of the midday sun in the grain of the rock. Small furnaces of heat that held the warmth of the day long after the fall of night. He felt the heat as warm as the blood of the men, the stone masons, who had cut and carved and maybe polished the stone many years before.

Tom imagined the masons down in the earth, almost buried in the loams of soil and the strata of rock; an unconscious dark existence that became the light of the conscious mind as the veins of black rock were mined and carted to the surface and the men came out of the darkness of the earth and sat under the sun and patiently cut the rock into oblongs and squares

until it was useable.

Tom imagined, as he fondly felt the smooth arch and fish spine ripples of the stones, the children of the stone cutters sitting in their class rooms making pictures in charcoal and pencil, making sculptures more finely wrought than the stones their fathers cut, making the matter of paint and stone and wood and twine into a flare of spirit that shocked along the rows of students.

'What are you doing down on the ground Tom!?' demanded his wife, June, who had gone into one of the kitchen ware shops and had stepped back outside. 'Yer gave me th' shock of me life. I though yer'd had an another attack!'

Tom Mason breathed out slowly and raised himself upon the rock of the cobblestones. Looked with an obscure longing at the clumps of black stone at his feet, then made himself turn and face his wife.

'I'm okay June. I was just admiring these cobblestones,' he explained.

'Cobblestones!?' exploded June. 'Yer scared me half t' death. If yer want t' look at nice things come back with me into this kitchen ware shop. Their stainless steel collanders are beautiful.'

Tom Mason traipsed into the store and the dazzle of stainless steel implements took hold of him; the sun coming through the display window lit the steel with an unnatural brightness and Tom felt as though he was at home in Newcastle, out in the yard of the heavy industrial plant where he'd worked for thirty years.

Tom covered with the white ash of by product from the plant and shovelling the flakes of dross into hessian bags that were carted away by trucks to be used as filler on building sites.

The white covering of by product had slowly dazzled him, slowly turned him almost snow blind and the flakes of shit had itched their way under his skin until he had to retire with a strange dusting of the lungs that had grown fat grubs of tumours that left him with only weeks to live.

Tom in the bright light of the stainless steel began to itch and scratch and squint his eyes. Began to feel the burn he'd felt in the yard on Kooragang Island, not far from the heart of the city of Newcastle. He looked as though he'd been flayed with a cat-o-nine tails; the way the early convicts had been lashed when they built the breakwater from the heart of Newcastle out to Nobbys Head. Or when they worked the first rathole coal mines for the Red Coats.

A bleak existence for the men who first settled Newcastle. Men who indifferently chopped out coal and resentfully dumped it into skips. No fashioning of the black diamonds into another shape other than the broken blind black seam in the earth. The coal disappearing from the hands of the convicts as soon as it had been torn from beneath the ground.

And many of the felons were chained up beneath the earth in the coal mines they worked during the day. Chained up to stop them escaping, and the light of day, the light of consciousness, taken from them. Something Tom Mason wondered about because he came and went to the industrial yard before the sun rose; thirty years toiling in the mess of white powder, thirty years without the light of sunrise upon his lacerated hide.

The night of his comings and goings held no warmth, no earthy passion with his wife, in the bed with her back turned to him as he rose and left the cottage.

'What's the matter with yer now Tom?!' asked his wife impatiently.

'I..It's the light. It's too bright,' he said and barged from the shop out onto the footpath and found the cobblestones.

Tom turned back and watched the woman, his wife of almost forty years, with the at-the-end-of-my-tether look upon her face. He saw her turn back and take a silver pan from a hook. Saw her fondle the hard metal lines and he lowered his head when the glint of light from the

steel pan caught his eyes like a metal shard escaping from a lathe shaving metal.

Then he saw two of the women, the Italian women his wife had labelled 'greasy wogs' from the moment they'd stepped from the train at Flinders Street Station. The women Tom Mason could not keep his eyes away from. He watched the two crossing the road and the generous curves of their breasts in their black blouses and the hour glass hips in their grey skirts filled him with a serenity that was beyond any sexual desire.

He watched the women sit at a table at the front of a café. Saw them take out their novels and begin to read and drink their black coffees. Tom watched with a fascination as one of the women took out a diary and began to write. He watched with a fascination as the glasses of red wine arrived and one of the Italian women took a pad from her black leather hand bag and began to sketch the landscape of roads, tram lines, shops and people.

They looked up and saw him watching. They smiled and continued to write and draw and drink their red wine. No glares of hostility that Tom expected, the sort of looks he got in Newcastle if a woman thought, automatically assumed he was perving at her.

Like the time he allowed a woman, in the supermarket, to go ahead of him because he had a pile of groceries to be paid for and she only had two items. The look of sullen suspicion as hard as concrete in the woman's eyes as she refused his offer; the sneer in her face as she turned on her way out of the supermarket.

'Come on Tom yer disgustin' old perve,' said his wife as she stepped from the shop. Her mouth stitched in a ruined paling fence of distaste.

Tom followed her down the hill but he looked back and saw the Italian women and he had to stop himself from going back to them. Had to quash the desire to go to them and beg them to take his head between their hands and hold him to their breasts. Because that's what Tom Mason wanted. It's what he had always wanted but hadn't known until he came to Melbourne for the first time. Just three days ago.

An image of himself naked and curled around the women blocked away the skinny arse of his wife working the blades of her bones down the street. He thought of the cover of Rolling Stone Magazine one of his sons had brought home one day, years ago, with John Lennon naked and curled around Yoko Ono. Something Tom liked because the woman was clearly nurturing the man, clearly mothering him.

Something his wife hadn't liked.

'Get that smut out of here! I won't have pornography in the house!' she'd exploded.

Tom Mason made himself follow his wife and he wondered about her, wondered about her coldness over the years, wondered about their courtship amongst the giant stones of Nobbys Breakwater. Stones as high and as wide as houses with pockets of sand in between.

Tom Mason breathed hard to catch up with his wife, who walked as quickly as possible to make him suffer because she'd caught him looking at the women.

He breathed as hard as when he fucked his wife-to-be, years ago, amongst the stones of the breakwater manacled across Newcastle Harbour. Long hours of love making that wasn't really love making, so much as intercourse. With June under him commanding him not to come, to hold off for a bit longer. As she squirmed like a cut centipede in the gritty sand that bloodied Tom's flesh with its abrasiveness. Her urgent instruction as he thrust harder and began to groan.

'Take it out Tom! I don't want t' get pregnant!'

He remembered the shot of sperm like a white fire in the night. The long thick line of it on his legs and arms. Glistening on his body like the jelly fish in the harbour water; the white fleshy dome cups of the creatures rising to the black surface of the water and falling back into the darkness. The sperm on his body stinging his tender hide as badly as the jellyfish did when

he went swimming and the cold tentacles seared across the back of his legs.

Tom trying to wipe away his seed with the sand that only served to plaster it closer to his skin, only made the itch and the red rash worse. And the working-machinery sounds of the other couples amongst the giant stones of the breakwater; mostly men from the steelworks who took the women, they met at dances and pubs, to fuck along the brace of stones.

Tom Mason only caught up with his wife when she stumbled on the cobblestones of the gutter when she went to cross the road to leave him. June with her ankle twisted and her knees skinned on the black rock.

Tom went to her and balanced himself on the uneven stone. Bent and offered his hand.

'I don't want yer help Tom Mason,' she spat and raised herself but found she needed to rest her weight on the arm of her husband to walk. Tom took her to the nearest tram stop and they went back to their apartment.

Tom stood at the corner of Dandenong Road and Chapel Street; on the cusp of St. Kilda and Windsor. With June back in the apartment laid up with a swollen ankle which left Tom to his own devices while she slept.

He considered his perspectives of the city as the traffic thundered in and out of the heart of Melbourne. Traffic with a din that jarred bone but formed a serenity in Tom Mason as he waited for the lights to change. He looked at the dipping curves in the road running west and he saw the lines of trees and tram lines and the tram coming a mile away; he looked at the rows of black cobblestones that rippled like ocean currents down into the heart of Prahran; he turned and saw the St. Kilda Hill running down to the sea. And he realised the city was a sculpture of parts made over time. But parts that fitted as snugly as the black stones were fitted into the earth and tar and tram lines at his feet.

Tom felt the fractures in himself healing. Felt himself nurtured by the city and made whole again; a feeling he'd not felt living in Newcastle. Had never felt he now realised as the lights changed and pedestrians and trams and cars flowed in four directions at once.

As he walked and fought with the shortness of breath, he thought about Newcastle. A town with its core crammed tightly into a narrow isthmus of land; houses shackled into the sides of steep hills at the top of town. The heart of the city, honeycombed by the tunnels the convicts had made in the early years when they cut and barrowed the coal from the earth. The stories were still fresh in Tom's mind. Stories he'd heard about the 'Newcastle Creep', the shifting of the whole hill because the heart of the city was a husk of thin rock covering empty tunnels beneath.

Newcastle's core had split in deep lines that delved down into the convict past of the settlement; crevices that broke Newcastle into bits and left the houses furrowed with cracks. Cracks that widened and houses that fell apart when the earthquake hit and scattered Newcastle like bone knuckles in a game of Jacks.

Tom Mason walked from village to village; St. Kilda became Windsor and Windsor became Prahran. The small settlements tied closely to each other by the lines of cobblestones. A web of people moving freely among the suburbs of Melbourne.

Tom stopped and had his first long black coffee. Something June had forbidden him.

'I'm not lettin' yer drink that wog muck Tom. Yer sick enough without drinkin' that muddy crap,' she told him.

Tom tasted the coffee and he felt it run blackly and sweetly through him; a line of pungent black like a fine filament of steel tied around the damaged walls of a small stone

cottage.

He got up, paid the bill and left the cafe. It had rained, briefly, then cleared to a sky of silver. Tom Mason saw the men and women dressed in black and grey framed by the silver light of the day. Their forms like dark fish swimming to the silver surface of water. And he went into the nearest men's wear shop he could find.

'Christ Tom I don't know why yer brought them clothes. Yer look like one of them wogs!' said June as she walked with her husband along the station platform.

'I'll be glad t' get yer home away from Melbourne. It's made yer strange,' she said.

They stopped in front of the train carriage. Tom in his grey shirt and black trousers and black coat and the expensive patent leather shoes.

'Well come on. The sooner we're out of here the better,' said June.

'I'm not going,' said Tom and held out his hand to his wife and helped her on board the train.

'What do yer mean yer not goin'!?' she commanded.

'I've got a month, maybe less to live and I'm spending it here. I'm not going back to Newcastle,' he said and turned on his heel and left his wife standing behind the glass of the train window.

Tom Mason out of the belly of the Flinders Street Station, down the steps to where the black cobblestones rose like a warm uterine tide to his feet.

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

DURAYD AL-KHAWAJA

The Ancient Sea

There are rainbows and scattered cups. A mythical atmosphere surrounds the place. Music is emanating from the room's objects and their shadows. The striking of horses' hooves can be heard coming from a distance outside the window overlooking the sea embraced by Siham's beautiful wide eyes.

His voice came moistened by a song: *Some love the moon, some love life. Some love the sea, but I love you.*

Ya Allah! I often told him: 'I don't like a person who calls objects by words, or crosses over them. I like a person who calls objects by wings!' Oh that sea fantasy that I love from behind my window that overlooks his heart, in the languor of a perpetual night, in my exile away from home. Why did not you leave me someone else? Even though he would only be a mirage, just like my days. Yes, a mirage.

A falling star kisses the sea at the horizon. She is lively, but melancholic. Approaching the moment of her nightly preoccupation, as soon as she wonders inside the room she returns to the window, and burns. She sees his face night after night, drawn over the extent of the sea that is drowning in the turbid night; but the sea is lit by its waters, strong by itself, its jewels and shells. It does not care about the lights from the nearby buildings, or the lanterns of the fishermen quietly wandering on its shores, or those spending the night in their pain near it, themselves drawing blue light from it.

The sea seems like a great collection of lamps breaking as they touch one another. She sees Yahia's face hanging over the window with a wide, strange, exciting, lovely smile that makes her forget the shattered state of the sea. How she had longed to envelop this smile, or have it envelop her as it exhausted her body and soul together.

You came late Yahia! Just like the ancient sea. I thought that being near the sea would make me love life a thousand times. Here I am, finding myself backing a thousand miles away from him, despite having travelled a thousand miles to be close to him.

She resigns herself to the table, to the books, the diaries, absent-mindedly turning page after page, smelling the scent of his body and hands on a book she borrowed from him. Her heart beats as she reads words playfully written in his hand, the same way it beat when she saw him for the first time behind his work desk. There were a thousand clamorous worlds and a world in his eyes.

The eyes met. She spoke too much in a brief time. She gave him her poetry collection as a present to the ancient sea in him, and to his eyes that were wider than the space of water, and to the tall palms in his manhood. Then she went out quickly and pressed her hand hard against the hand of her friend who was waiting outside the door, as if his hand was in hers! She said loudly: 'It is time for happiness my friend.' Her friend accused her of hallucinations and madness. Siham ignored her friend's lack of understanding and her sharp comments. When they were out in the street, she repeated loudly: 'This is the time of hallucination! How happy I am with him today, and will be tomorrow...' And she flew.

I would have liked to feel settled, to have some warranty against any drowning in the corners of space and time – but I reached him late, and he reached me late. My thirsty

approaches towards him did not move him much, nor did my playful engines on his shore! But his waves called me, they quivered and their dance created in me a life yearning for a moment open for unexpected pleasures with him. Why do his waves deny me gifts?

These waves have not left their present pacific state, though they have their clamour inside their deep well, so sometimes they appear in the colour of anemones.

You made me sail for some short periods, but soon the sea took me back to its shore. It did not abandon me on the horizon of hope. An impossible promise stayed on my head, quenching the thirst of pride.

Has the ancient ferocious sea stopped celebrating my time? It conceals its deep ancient secrets and the adventure of its beautiful temptations. It desires to grant some of its temptations. It gives from these secrets and lives by them. I see! What it gives me it gives itself, so that it remembers and is strong for life...so that it lives its ancient depth. It does not want its depth to set, but it wants it to rise every now and then with a woman, a woman like me!

I told him once over the phone: 'What a beautiful voice you have!'

How beautiful the ancient is in it! It is a voice of the echo of the devout sea waves in an old/new/perpetual age. It contains so many hobbies by which the heart is inspired – it does not know them, but feels them. How could the emaciated women of this earth be denied this voice? One of those in particular is me. Please speak, continue what you are saying, all my senses are attentive to the tone of your voice. I am with you. I do not want anything to distract me from this rhythm. Then you laughed. You sounded like the sea throwing its water on shore. As if it was telling me: 'it has been a long time.' Have you lost your feeling of pride with the language of a female like myself coming from a scorching land, from which she only gained deceit, falsity and thorns? You are sincerity and an oasis. Why do you deprive someone like me? Why do you, oh sea, remain in a remote depth. Last night I did not sleep. In the beginning of the night I rang you. At the end of the night I rang you. Have mercy, oh aged sea whose antiquity, provisions and ships I passionately love. You did not answer. I sighed. I felt pain. You will not permit me to travel along your shores. You said to me: 'In the long night when you lie down in your bed and the agonies awaken in your heart, you will hear the sound of my feet advancing towards you, for I am the sea near you. You will hear a song lulling you and I will stay near you, next to your bed, until you fall asleep. I have nothing but this. My ships are tied to the past.' I cried. And wrote you a poem. I knew you were returning to me the leftovers from the sea, oh you mighty one! I, now, take my decision: I no longer agree to short-term sailings with you, in you or to you...

Oh you of ancient love and pretence!
I draw a drop from the sea
my sun tumbles in your sea,
and my time favours you
for some mornings and some evenings,
and you are no longer a sea in my chest
or a song.
I return the gift
for after a weary time
and counting the nights
and the dryness of my well
can I only accept a leftover?

Durayd al-Khawaja is an academic, writer and literary critic from Syria.

WAFA KHARMA

The Net

The threat

He shouted in the jailer's face, 'I will kill her!' The jailer swore at him obscenely. He screamed inside the space of the cell: 'I will kill her.' The others shook their heads in pity, sarcasm or disdain. He continued extracting the words from his teeth: 'And the child...I will kill him too...by God I will.'

Someone shouted from a distant corner: 'You pig, get out of this jail first!'

The woman tells the events of her nightmare

He hastens his steps behind me when I hasten mine. He stops when I stop. My son presses himself against my bosom. He spreads his arms. He pushes his body over my shoulder as if attempting to jump towards the man. I turn my head and catch him beckoning in an inviting manner. I quicken my steps over the blue tiles, trying to escape this pursuit.

I see myself standing on the edge of a high wall. I step over the protruding bricks, frightened of falling or being caught by the man. Would he be able to climb the wall behind me? I clutch on to a tree-branch when I feel its leaves touch my face. The branch breaks in my hand like a brittle stick. I teeter. My son screams.

A branch extends across my path like a barrier. I stand unable to go forward. I scream: 'My God!' I hear a distant deep call. I look down. I am surprised to see a blue river and a man standing in a boat signalling to me to leap towards him.

Would this be my rescue or my demise?

I hold my child against my chest. I throw myself into the abyss towards the blueness of the water.

As the river engulfs us and takes us into its depths, I see him through its thick rainbow fog, sitting in the boat laughing. His features sparkle and shine inside my memory and I become certain that he is the man in the street...the one who pursued me.

The awakening

The woman opened her eyes, heard the beats of her heart. She felt her limbs convulse...her mouth was dry. She turned to her side, frightened. Her child slept peacefully. He moved his hands and turned over suddenly. She leant over and took him in her arms.

She quietened as she saw the light of the day blossom in her room and a ray of sun infiltrate from the balcony. She left the child and went to the kitchen to prepare a cup of coffee. Disarmed, she reached for the matches, the coffee box and a spoon.

She returned to the room. Froze. Gasped. The tray fell from her hands as she rushed to the empty cot.

Like a mad woman she rushed towards the balcony's door. She saw her boy slide through the balcony's railing, then fall. She screamed in agony, and threw herself behind him.

Kalimat 5

The words of an eyewitness who was standing in front of a vegetable shop in the street

I saw him standing on the other pavement, beckoning in the direction of the high flats opposite. I looked to where he was pointing. There was a child on the balcony, stretching his arms eagerly through the iron bars of the railing as if intending to fly. Then I saw him slide through with the ease of a cat and fall. I heard the scream of a woman and in a wink I saw her throw herself over the railing.

His features? I could not clearly see them. I only remember that when we all rushed to the bodies of the woman and child, I heard a loud laugh. Was he mad?

The words spoken by the man as he left the noisy crowd gathered around the bodies

A stray cat, am I, or a lost dog? Nine years I have been searching for her face amongst the faces of the wives and mothers of my inmates who came carrying tears and delicious food. She divorced me to marry another and give birth to this beautiful child who should have been mine!

Wafa Kharma is a writer from Syria. The above story was originally published in Arabic in her collection *al-Burj* (The Tower), Dar al-Haqaeq, Homs, Syria, 2000.

KHALID ZIADÉ

Book

Friday, Sunday

Chapters from a Biography of a City on the Mediterranean

Dr. Khalid Ziadé is a graduate of philosophy from the Lebanese University, and obtained his Ph.D. from The Sorbonne in France. He was the President of the Cultural Council of North Lebanon from 1984 to 1986, the Director of the School of Arts and Social Sciences at the Third Branch of the Lebanese University, 1985-1987, and Fellow of the Advanced Studies Institute in Berlin, Germany, 1998-1999. He is currently a lecturer at the Social Sciences Institute of the Lebanese University. He is a member of the UNESCO National Lebanese Committee and Vice-President of the Lebanese Association of Sociology.

Dr. Ziadé has participated in many seminars and conferences in the Middle East and Europe, and has published eight books to date, as well as several studies and articles.

The following chapters are from his book *Friday, Sunday- Chapters from a Biography of a City on the Mediterranean.* This book was published by *Dar al-Nahar*, Beirut, Lebanon in 1994 and was reprinted in 1996. It was also published in 1996 by *Thakirat al-Mutawasset*, in French, Italian, German and Spanish.

Kalimat is proud to be the first to translate and publish this work in English, a task that we started in the September 2000 issue.

The book has been described as presenting a new way of writing about a city (Tripoli, Lebanon) that has witnessed varying stages of modernism and the associated social contrasts.

Leisure Time

Scenes. There are only scattered scenes in my memory. Each of them is like a framed picture; pictures of places. In one, to the right there is a wide sandy area surrounded by houses and to the left a stone wall along the road that crosses it. Behind the stone wall there are trees, mostly of the old Eucalyptus variety. The details of this picture render themselves indelible in memory of the landscape and surface in the mind as well defined fragments of the bigger picture. A wooden gate with a metal handle on top; one of many gates immediately overlooking the neighbourhood. Between two gates leading to two separate houses appears a narrow path which, in its turn, leads to other gates and houses.

Within the framed landscape there are green areas of trees that do not lose their colour despite the change in seasons. Even in memory the bright sunshine of Summer and greyish dullness of Winter are still distinct. Throughout the changing seasons the public square always seems to be a few centimetres higher, as if a thick layer of red sand has covered it. This view is

somewhat different when we climb the stone wall that we often use as an upper path for our play, or stand on a roof. Then the picture becomes greener and a minaret appears on the horizon.

I played in the sandy area long before I went to school. The thick sand that stained the asphalt road with a dusty colour had given the area its name ages before. We called it *al-hara* (the lane). The only barrier between it and our house was a wooden gate, with a threshold that was more than just a symbolic barrier between everything inside and everything outside. *Al-hara*, which started at the public square, included the surrounding houses, the road, the shops and the children who lived there.

These were scenes and pictures of particular places; repeated copies or different shots of the same view. Places out of time and out of date, with colour being the only thing they gained from the changes of season. I feel as if memory can recognise places before it can time and stays put. Nevertheless, soon time crawls into these views and moves them as if freeing each one from its frame, transferring it from stillness into motion, filling it with people, expressions, words and noise. The sandy square in front of our house and the other squares, near and far, that I came to know later, were like paths through which time escaped, changing the view.

No matter how heavily populated the neighbourhoods were in the city, or how close their buildings were, they still preserved some vacant land. Sometimes a neighbourhood would spread sideways to meet a vast empty area, or to join a road leading to other neighbourhoods. Hence, boys of *al-hara* spent a lot of their time in different squares where they filled the atmosphere with the noise of their play, using toys they made themselves. By contrast, their homes maintained a solemn state; no noise, no play, no talking in the presence of the elderly and early to bed. Mothers obsessed with protecting their homes from the mess of their children made certain that the rules of the house were not to be broken. Thus *al-hara* became the resort of our leisure time.

Leisure contradicted time, for time escaped to those places in the form of boredom. Time penetrated the stillness of our homes and resided heavy and thick as if wanting to sweep the place or re-form it in its image. Thus entered TIME to our world of childhood. We tried to pass it by waiting, or kill it by playing whenever that was possible.

Yet we did not learn about time, or concern ourselves with it, until we started our schooling. It was very hard to make time pass there. Strict schedules, calculated minute by minute, made us realise the value of the short school breaks, as compared with the longer lazy times of the summer holidays.

I grew up in *al-hara*. I was a child who did not accept food easily, so my older sister used to carry me in her arms to the eucalyptus tree by the stone wall, to convince me to eat my food. So, even before going to school I started forming friendships with some boys in *al-hara* whose faces or names I cannot recall.

We had fun, but we spent most of the time in that sandy square. I used to stay behind with other pre-school boys when my sisters and brothers went to school. In our world - *al-hara* - there was no fear for the children, as there was always one neighbour or another keeping an eye on them. Cars came into the square or passed through the side roads only occasionally. The square was our front yard.

Further out, there was a lonely Mamluk mosque located among the fields. It marked the last border of our wandering and playing. It had a plaque showing its name and the year it was built seven centuries before, creating a legendary status for it in our imagination. We were fascinated by the tales of the mosque's double-stair minaret. We were apprehensive about entering it, and even if we had tried the keeper would have prevented us.

A primitive and aimless play characterised the painful passage of time that rested heavy on

our childhood. As I started crossing over to other sides of the square, I began to feel that it was expanding. I added new dimensions to those still scene as I accompanied some of my family members on their visits and outings; other houses beyond the ones I knew, faces, shops, gates and roofed alleys leading to pathways to other lanes. I became able to reach a point from which to observe the traffic on the main road, where noise contrasted with the stillness of our lane in the morning periods. Amidst my discoveries, we moved houses to another *hara*. I was sad. My mother noticed that I was the least happy of her children about that move.

The neighbourhood to which we moved was not far away from the one where I was born, but only rarely did I go back. So, my memory retained changeless scenes from it. Our new neighbourhood was located on what looked like a hill, with a few olive trees and a path going up the hill to the houses on top. We called the hill *Jabal* (mountain). At the bottom which led to the public road, there was a flat square that formed part of the whole landscape. We spent our time between the flat soil square where there were few old trees, and the *Jabal*. What we used to think of as random fun had an inherent order that was in fact in its final years before being broken by the fever of change.

There was an inner demarcation line in all that scene that made the boys go out and kept the girls at home. An early separation? Girls played at home with hand-made toys from rags, whereas boys played with materials from the surrounding nature outside. The other segregation that characterised our leisure time in the neighbourhood was the division of boys into groups. We liked to call each group a gang. It was easy to go from one gang to another. This usually happened after an argument. The only thing that united us was an attack from outsiders. We used to unite in alliances that disintegrated as soon as the round of outside aggression was over.

Sometimes, the square we considered *ours* would be occupied by teenagers who thought of themselves as adults. Their arrival meant the younger ones were either kicked out, left a minor space or transformed into an audience. There was an air of both mystery and pretension about their presence. Usually it foreshadowed something: a competition in cutting canes into two halves in with one hit of a knife, a violent fight, or a show of strength by showing their pocket knives and taking them from under their leather belts.

The square which we thought to be our own also belonged to street vendors, especially those who sold sweets, candies, hand-made drinks and cookies after the evening prayer, as well as ice-cream in summer. The square itself would become a massive festival ground during the feasts of *Eid al-Fitr*, after the holy month of Ramadan, and *Eid al-Adha*, the season of the pilgrimage to Mecca. We also called them *the little eid* and *the big eid* respectively. The norm was that during Ramadan, wooden swings were erected awaiting the beginning of the festivities. We never questioned the fact that these wooden machines were kept hidden in the same square for the rest of the year, secured by thick cables to existing posts and walls. They kept their elegance over the years and were passed from generation to generation. Those who inherited them also inherited the right to use the square for the feast and its rituals.

The unwritten rule that governed the neighbourhood maintained that when boys became teenagers, they should leave the square for those who were younger. They were not tolerated there, but were driven to the outskirts of the city. They used to head towards three areas: a hill in the east, the sea to the west and the coastal highway in the south. The road to the north led to a lake about which many tales were told. The lake was surrounded by seats for the benefit of picnic goers arriving from the city to spend their time smoking the hooka and feeding the fish with bits of bread. Men could go to pray in the nearby mosque, which also provided the playing grounds with a lot of shade.

Those places were not invented by those boys. They were conceived by the city, for each

city creates the spaces that are located outside its imaginary walls. To reach those places, the olive fields on the hill or the orange orchards near the sea, the coastal road must be crossed. During certain seasons every year, the city dwellers, old and young, women and children, made their way to those destinations where they spent a whole day having fun, particularly during the spring.

The scene of our *al-hara* did not collapse until it missed its appointment with its familiar time, and other times took over.

أوقات لهونا

HIKMAT ATTILI

Translated by Noel Abdulahad

On High

(One of al-Aqsa Uprising youths was wounded in nine confrontations. In his tenth, he was fatally hit to death. Honored by martyrdom's credential, the youth gave up his soul to its creator)

And so sepulchered in such pomp dost die
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die
John Milton

The first nail in the right palms:
an unbearable suppressed pain...
a bleed of Hennah...
Dewed droplets dripping from the face
wrinkled with cares and worries
Suffusing the earth with celestial odor
blending it with his spilt blood
deluging the Universe with peace and love

[Our Lord on High:
let Your compassionate Will be done
let Your ever-eternal, all powerful Mercy be put in
Accept O Lord my pains' pleas]

The first wound is for Jerusalem
for its mosque and temples
for its berefted women
for the doves that mirthfully cooed yesterday
for the peace overwhelmed the souls

The first wound:
a meltdown suppressed pain
droplets of sweat
embraced the tolerant thirsty earth
a bloody crimson-red sap watering it tenderly...

في العَلياء

حكمت العتيلي

جرح أحد شبان انتفاضة الأقصى تسع مرات خلال شهر، ولدى إصابته العاشرة، فاضت روحه إلى بارئها، ونال شرف الشهادة في سبيل الله!

أول مسمار في الكف اليمنى...
زلزال من ألم مكتوم،
ونزيف من حنّا...
وقطيرات ندى فوق الوجه المهموم...
تتساقط، تهدي الأرض العبق السامي
تتمازج والدّم، والتبر الظامي
تتهامى...
حبّاً وسلاما:
(لتكن يا ربّ مشيئتك الرحمانية
لتكن رحمتك الصمدانية
وتقبل يا أبتاه تبتل آلامي)

أول جرحٍ للقدس
لمساجدها
لمعابدها
لحرائرها الثكلى
لحمائم كانت في الأمس
تهدل جذلى
بسلامٍ يغمر أرجاء النفس!
زلزالٌ من ألمٍ مكتوم هو أول جرحٍ،
وقطيراتٌ من عرقٍ تلثم وجه ثرانا السمح،
ونزيفٌ من نسغٍ قان...
يروي عطش الأرض برفق وحنان

Kalimat 5

To bleed or not to bleed
  that's not the question...
For neither the blasting
  nor the blowing up
  or cannon's roaring
  intimidate us...
We vow for Jerusalem

[Our Lord on High:
  let Your compassionate Will be done
  let Your ever-eternal, all-powerful Mercy fold over us
let Your Divinity set Al-Aqsa free]

The second nail in the left palm:
  a volcano of perpetual caustic pain
How could Goodness permit evil infestation?

Christ's sobbing melts in tears
  droplets' pearls glisten in his eyes
  each droplet racing its counter-pearl
Numbness clouds his dazing sight
How could the beloved be disgraced?
  and the Godliness crucified?

[Our Lord on High:
  let Your compassionate Will be done
Accord Your mercies to Jesus
  Your chosen and beloved one
Accept your cross pains' pleas...]

The second wound is for the land
  for honor and chastity
  for the crushed and the vanquished
  for the betrayed trees
  for the devastated terraces
  for the children's blood
  for the eyes choked with tears...

Conventional wailing beguiled the hearts
  a volcano of erupted pain...
We vow for Palestine...
How can the dead be hurt
  or inflict pain?
To die honorably is nobler than living in disgrace

[Our Lord on High:
  let Your justice perish the tyrants
  let Your judgeship ruin the occupiers

(لفلسطين النّذر، وما همّ النّزف
لن يرهبنا نسف، لن يرعبنا قصفُ

لتكن يا رب مشيئتك الرّحمانية
لتكن رحمتك الصمدانية
وتقبل يا رب تبتل هذي الآلام القدريّة
منّ على أقصانا بالحرية)

ثاني مسمار في الكف اليسرى...
بركان من آلام تترى
كيف إله الخير يمكّن للأشرار الشّرّا؟
أنّات يسوع تتوالى
ولآلئ في العينين تتلالا
تتهامى...
لؤلؤة تسبق أخرى!
خدرٌ غشّى نظرته الحيرى،
وحباه رضا وسلاما
هل يعقل أن يوصم بالشّرّ حبيبُ؟
أن يقضي مصلوباً، ابن برّ مصلوبُ؟

(لتكن يا رب مشيئتك الرّحمانية
لتكن رحمتك الصمدانية
وتقبل يا رب تبتل آلام صليبك
وارأف لصفيِّك عيسى، وارفق بحبيبكْ.)

ثاني جرح للأرض
للعرض
للإنسان المقهورِ
للشجر المغدور
للشرفات المدكوكة
لدماء الأطفال المسفوكة
لعيونٍ قرّحها التعبير
وقلوبٍ بتراويد الندب تمورُ
بركانٌ من ألم ثائرْ،
هو هذا الجرح النّاعرْ
لفلسطين النذر، وهل صارت آلامُ...
ميتا؟ *ما للجرح بميت إيلامُ!*
الموت ولا عيش الذلّ
سحقاً للغاصب والمحتلّ
(لتكن يا رب مشيئتك الرّحمانية
لتكن رحمتك الصمدانية

let Your compassionate Will be done
let Your ever-eternal, all-powerful Mercy overflow...
Accept these destined pains
and set free O Lord the land of the free]

The third nail in the foot:
into Your thrust I entrust my burdened life
and to Your Sanctity I surrender myself...

The third wound:
inflammable like live-coal
[We would die rather than yield or kneel down]

The fourth nail: the fourth wound
more painful than slaying

The thirsty earth drank nine bouts to the cub's health
The first martyr of love didn't die
though seemed to them He was crucified...

The martyr of love ascended to Heaven
to meet His Lord on High...
And like all of the chosen martyrs
their corpses united in wedlock
with the lenient earth

Their souls soared high up
bursting forth into bunches of blazing stars
lighting thereby God's widest realms
and joined by symphonies
performed by His angelic choir...

وتقبل يـا رب تبتـل هـذي الآلام القدريّـة
منّ على وطن الحرّيّـة بالحرّيّـة.

ثالث مسـمار في الفـدم
(لله أنيـب وأرجـعْ !)
ثالث جـرح مضطـرم...
كالنـار...(نموت ولكـن لـن نركـعْ !)
رابـع مسمار، رابـع جـرح
أنكى مـن ذبـح !
مرّات تسـع وجـراح الشـبل توالـت،
وتـراب الأرض العطشـى يشـرب نخبـهْ !
وشـهيد الحـب الأول لم يقـض، وإنْ شـبّه للقـوم،
فقـد لاقـى ربّـه...
شـأن الصفـوة مـن أبـرار الشـهداء
زفّـوا الأجسـاد لأرضٍ فدّوهـا،
أمـا الأرواح ففـاضت في العليـاء...
لتشعشـع في سمـت سمـاء الله الرحبـهْ...
باقـات نجـومٍ زهـراء،
أرتـال ملائـك تحدوهـا !

كَلِمَات

Kalimat

كَلِمَات مجلة أسترالية عربية فصلية تعنى بالفكر والكتابة الخلاّقة، تصدر عن سيروس إنكوربورايتد، المجلس الثقافي الأسترالي السوري، وهو مؤسسة ثقافية لا تبغي الربح. يصدر عددان باللغة الإنجليزية (مارس/آذار وسبتمبر/أيلول)، وعددان بالعربية (يونيو/حزيران وديسمبر/كانون الأول). آخر موعد بالتقدم بالمواد لكل عدد هو ستون يوماً قبل أول أيام الشهر الذي يصدر فيه العدد. من الضروري جداً إرسال تفاصيل الاتصال كاملة بما في ذلك أرقام الهواتف. كما نطلب نسخة عن السيرة الذاتية للمؤلف/المؤلفة، أو بضعة أسطر تلخص منجزاته/منجزاتها (المستجدات فقط لمن سبق له إرسالها). جميع المواد التي ترد فيها أسماء أو كلمات بغير العربية يجب أن ترفق بلائحة هذه الكلمات باللغات الأم.

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

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

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

جميع المواد المقدمة للنشر تخضع لتقييم قبل قبولها، كما أن الدراسات الأكاديمية ترسل إلى مُحكمين مختصين.

يحصل المتقدمون بأعمالهم الأصيلة إلى كلمات على الأفضلية في إمكانية ترجمة أعمالهم لاحقاً ونشرها في كلمات أو مشاريع أخرى يتبناها المجلس. ونحن نعتبر هذا مكافأة عينية على جهودهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتلقى من نشر في كلمات اشتراك سنة واحدة مجّاناً. لا نقدم في الوقت الحاضر أية تعويضات أخرى.

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كَلِمَات

Kalimat

Kalimat is an Australian-Arabic literary quarterly, published by SyrAus Incorporated: a non-profit cultural association.

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

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

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

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

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