

كَلِمَات

Kalimat

Number 7 (English), September 2001

العدد السابع (إنكليزي)، أيلول / سبتمبر 2001



Fouad Toumayan:
the Mundane and the Quest for Artistic Elation

دورية عالمية للكتابة بالإنكليزية والعربية
An International Periodical of English and Arabic Creative Writing

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Kalimat 7

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

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from the *Editor*

The Fruits of the Loom

For sure, it has been a weaving process. With the next Arabic issue in December this year, *Kalimat* completes its second year. The fruits of our loom are indicated by the many rewards we keep receiving such as the one by Etel Adnan in her letter to the Editor (published in the present issue). Our sincere thanks go to all those who contributed to *Kalimat* by their creative material, editorial assistance and financial support.

The policy we have adopted of publishing original work and translating already published work is working well in providing an access to cultures through literary means, and maintaining quality at the same time.

To this end, feedback on the various sections of the periodical has been favourable, both as to the content and effect. For example, *Landmark* has been enjoyed by readers all over the world. Many found value in becoming familiar with other creative people and their work. Some Americans were delighted to read about L. E. Scott from *Kalimat*. Some readers commented about how Greg Bogaerts too has become well known in Syria. Requests for contacting writers contributing to *Kalimat* keep coming to us. The present issue includes, among other things, a number of poetry translations of several Arab poets, including some internationally prominent ones. This is part of our mission, and we are proud of it.

We, in *Kalimat*, use available technology such as the internet to help us communicate effectively with others. We believe that the ultimate value of access lies in a face-to-face human contact. Unfortunately that is not practically possible most of the time, so we resort to phone calls, the best alternative means. On Saturday 21st July 2001, I was fortunate to meet with some of our Australian writers at a lunch gathering arranged by Greg and Jill Bogaerts of Newcastle. For the first time I met people with whom I had had contact by correspondence or phone. It was lovely to meet them face to face and exchange with them constructive thought and ideas.

I mentioned to the Newcastle writers that Newcastle was about 150 kilometres north of Sydney, which is about the same distance between the city of Homs north of Damascus, the capital of Syria - from where I originally come. Both Homs and Newcastle were important factors for the progress of *Kalimat* through the contribution of their writers who were among the first to act, to continue to contribute and to show a tremendous support of the literary and cultural values behind the periodical. I expressed

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my sincere gratitude to Greg Bogaerts who has been part of *Kalimat* since its inception, and who was the one who introduced it to Newcastle and its writers.

Kalimat 6, the latest Arabic issue, presented Greg Bogaerts and highlighted his short stories about Newcastle in the Landmark Section. In the present issue, we present two of Bogaerts' stories, set in a different environment. It seems that after 120 published stories about Newcastle and its working class existence, Bogaerts is setting sail to other environments.

Kalimat 6 marked the start of our launch of an international periodical of creative writing in both English and Arabic. This was due to the overwhelming response and continuing support received from several places all over the world, particularly Syria, The United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Spain, England, France, Sweden, the USA and Canada. This will increase access amongst Australian writers, artists and their counterparts all the world over.

When we chose the name *Kalimat* for our periodical, we thought that it was the first time ever that such a name was used. We now learn from Bassam Frangieh's article about Qassim Haddad in the present issue that the latter was Editor-in-Chief of a leading literary journal by the same name: *Kalimat*, used to be published in Bahrain.

We came to know also that the end of the present year will witness the birth of a literary journal, in Bahrain, that publishes in Arabic, English and French. The journal uses terms such as 'access' in its mission statement. A large number of eminent literary figures from Bahrain, the Arab World and the rest of the world have been approached to be on the Advisory Board.

May the word continue to flourish, and we wish the University of Bahrain a very successful new periodical, that would fill an important gap in Arab and international literary creativity.

Raghid Nahhas



E D I T O R I A L

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to the *Editor*

Kalimat

I was a Shoshone and a Sioux,
a Navajo, a Mohawk, a Lakota,
I was a Palestinian,
and now, a Maori

Indian tribes run in my blood and
imagination because they often rescued
me from my misery

clouds roll over mountains and speak
of them their valleys are of a
particular green that I would recognise
in the darkest of nights

who writes in mother-tongues nowadays?
one is lucky of one has a mother...

time moves back and forth like water
on a beach,
uncovering bones and tales,
nothing is going to be forgotten,
not a leaf from the ancient grass

The Indians of America are angel
guardians to their devastated fields,
the Earth is burning with anger

A Maori is close to the wind-spirit,
This knowledge is this nation

I have nothing to offer, but my words.

Dear Raghid Nahhas,

I was very touched with *Kalimat*. That "far" (from Damascus, Beirut, Cairo...) Such good work, such faith in our heritage, and in our future, that publishing this literary magazine proves! The art work, also, is beautiful.

I always loved the Indians, but never knew about the Maoris, and the poems you published in No. 5 of *Kalimat* are so beautiful. Also beautiful are the ones translated from Arabic. The heart-break is the same.

Spontaneously, I wrote the above poem.

Please accept the expression of my happiness at discovering *Kalimat*. Our Aarab family felt expanded. Nothing is really lost if we keep our cultural creativity alive. It matters above all.

All my wishes.

Etel Adnan

Etel Adnan is a Lebanese-American poet living in Sausalito, California. She is the author of a novel on the civil war in Lebanon, *Sitt Marie-Rose*, and of many books of poetry.

T O T H E E D I T O R

The background of the cover is a black and white photograph of an old, weathered building. It features a balcony with a dark metal railing on the upper left, a small arched window on the upper right, and a larger arched doorway on the lower right. The walls are textured and show signs of age and wear.

*Tell the
Running
Water*

*'a scientist's precision and a
poet's eloquence'*

Geraldine Brooks

Abbas El-Zein

A Prayer with One Hand

1

I am a loner... I need a companion
An old man, I need a supporter or a cushion
A traveller, I need someone to farewell or welcome me
Anxious, I need help
Pale, I need colour
A vine, I need a wall
A fighter, I need a cause
A cheerer, I need a hero.
Troubled, I need a way out
Cold, I need a sun
I am burning, I need cool and peace
Even the peace of the brave
I am as thirsty for life as a killer for blood.

2

This is a quiet night, as awesome as a military graveyard
where there is no movement or sound
except for the moan of the wind and the whistling of distant ships
I only want to be a drummer, or a tambourine beater
around a belly dancer
or an unknown violin player
in a tenth grade nightclub
Instead of the bow, I carry a knife or a sword on my shoulder
I go around cutting the strings and what is below the strings
until I reach the shoulder, then the body,
then the ground on which I stand: I cut it like a birthday cake
and present it to the permanent members of the Security Council
with the known maestro's bow
and run... with the knife in my hand...

3

I woke up as I did every morning

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I searched for my spectacles, but could not find them beside me
I searched for my slippers, but they were not beside the bed
I went for a wash, but could not find the mirror
To prepare a breakfast, but could not find the kitchen
To make a phone call, but could not find the telephone
To write a note I conceived during the night, but could not find my pen
To smoke, but could not find the tobacco box
To put on my clothes, but could not find my wardrobe
To go out as I was, but could not find the door
To walk, but could not find my feet
To embrace the photos of my absent children
But could not find my arm
To cry for help, but could not find my voice
To pray, but could not find my kiblah
And like a madman I opened the window wide
But could not find the horizon...

Everyone departs, migrates and flutters his wings
And I want to engage with anything... even if I have to use cold steel

4

Not long ago
my memory started betraying me openly like a whore
I started to forget the names of my friends and their phone numbers
and the names of my favourite singers and actors
and the times and events of the serials I watch
and the names of the streets I pass
and the cafés I frequent
and the grocers I deal with
and the bus stops I use

Then all the titles of my books and poems
then all the colours of the clothes I wear
and the types of food I prefer
then the colour of my eyes
Then I forgot the names of my neighbours and my street
And now... I have forgotten the name of my country.

محمد الماعوق

Mohammad al-Maghout is a prominent Syrian writer and thinker, living in Damascus.

D E W A N D S P A R K S

HIKMAT ATILI

Translated by Noel Abdulahad

The Oil of the Lantern

Be it known to you: O Most Decisive of the Moments
‘There is yet some oil in the lantern,
some liveliness in my populous house,
and all my dear and beloved ones
keep me company:
my wife,
my children
and loyal friends’

My heart throbs thunderously
as if a thousand neighing mare
gallops in my fiery blood
sparing no time for silence...

there are yet many a matter ahead
many a dream and aspiration
in this vast world,
so turn your head away, you defier of time and space...
walk away from here,
never look back again,
you... robber of friends,
you... most bitter, most horrible... O Death!

You, Most Decisive of the Moments,
let us freely reach in the wilderness
for places where we may sport and play
enjoy the opulence of our living
or else put up with our misfortune
you... Defier of Time and Space!
how much we wish
that you never come a step nearer
how much we wish... how much we wish!

The dawn showers its silvery beads
and the face of my sweetheart glistens
like a sparkling sun
and I am torn between my longing
to reach the lighthouse of the pacific shore
and the persistence of that tactless tyrant
leading me to the abyss of an everlasting gloom!

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I weep for an impassionate dawn,
for the light that did not touch my forehead,
for the suns that failed to overcome the night on my horizon
or lighten up my darkness!

O soul-mate, firebrand of my soul...
there is yet some oil in the lantern
and I have no spare time for silence...

The universe is my vast playground...
and I still have things to live for expectantly
How much I wish that your sun fills the sky
with soothing warmth and unstained joy!
so that our barren days vibrate with peace and love
pulsate with light and affluence...
How much I wish the scheme of things
be mold ed to our hearts' desire
How much I wish... how much I wish!

O my captor... my captor...
The pure whiteness drapes this universe
As though the pangs of childbirth surprised an immaculate virgin...
As though agitation stirred up under the shade of the palm tree
As though the chanting of the saints' choir are heard from afar,
And the haloed angels – deluged with light,
and shrouded in films of fleecy snow –
swagger in the footsteps of light advancing forward towards me...
How much I wish to breathe eternity's delicate breeze
How much I yearn to meet the orphaned day:
that is neither old or new,
that has no past or future...
and though there are still many pending matters ahead, many problems to solve,
I hear its urgent call to make good of the pledge...
Ah... would the promise be deferred and the lantern keep on its flame
until the wicker withers...
Ah... would that my heart explode its fiery chants
until silence reigns...

حکمت العتيلي

Hikmat Attili is a poet who wrote hundreds of poems of diversified themes. He is also a publisher, living in U.S.A. The Arabic original of the above poem was published in *Kalimat* 6.

نويل عبد الأحد

Noel Abdulahad is a writer living in Los Angeles. He is an adviser to *Kalimat*.

We Tell the Meaningless Tale

A man and woman are surrounded by dizziness, paleness, forgetfulness and impossible love. They are lit up by a stray comet that penetrates the sky above the cave between one moment and another. There is a dream that pours out of the only lantern that counts the shrapnel of light, and then turns into mysterious weeping. On the little table are scissors and a cluster of grapes and wilted camellia flowers. Shadows cross. Invisible steps break the rhythm of the torrid summer. Whispers are absorbed by the wall. And the slanderous night reveals to the reptiles the secret of the absolute beings. Thus, outside, the road forks to the sounds of neighing.

Him: He has just returned from the sea without a cloud and without a legend. He throws aside his empty fish net. He walks in - frowning, tired, disappointed - toward the bed, which meets his body with weary moans.

Her: The soup is not prepared yet. The pants aren't sewn yet. She sits on a rocking chair, in a frightened silence, as if she doesn't see and doesn't feel. With the movements of her body, which rocks back and forth in a systematic and predictable rhythm, ideas and thoughts swing in a stream of consciousness.

From far away comes the noise of bread, the bleating of the water, the yawning of the watchman, the echo of boredom, the guffaw of the bridle, the weeping of the wheels, the sound of lovemaking, the rustling of conspiracy, the snoring of the narrators, the spinning of the fans. Then suddenly the voices are subdued and a terrifying silence prevails, taking the form of injury or death. A silence no one can endure.

After a bit, she says, 'I wonder what he's doing there now. Is he still chasing blind butterflies that came out of his forehead every time he sighs passionately when he sees a princess bathing in the lake? Is he still seducing the young brunettes who rub their breasts with sweet basil and enter his silky kingdom without shame? Is he still carrying confusing books under his arm, not even saying anything except once in a while? Or is his crystal-clear defiant imagination a corona that still surrounds societies?'

I remember his pride and self-confidence. He loved elegance. He would sleep under the willow tree and tie up his dreams in the form of a garland. He would put it gently on the nipple of the river and contemplate it floating, directed toward sailors who were sipping their tea at the moment.

Ah, how handsome is his soul when he touches the fringes of my dreams with his fingertips, when his eyes are full of laughter. When he bends down to smell the companions of childhood, he seems so handsome and pure. After a bit, he says, 'Every time I cast my nets in the depths of the archipelago, I was taken by surprise by the mocking octopus. It grabbed me by the waste with its long tentacles, its hundred tentacles, soft and strong, and it hissed in my ear, whispering: 'Wherever you threw your net, death will get you.'

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Even the seashells don't help me find a bold sailor to save me from my plight. But I love that broad sea, like the swift in-breath of a woman who glances at a naked man for a minute, lucid as the blue eye of an infant, quiet as a lush carpet. Despite all of that, despair pierces me.'

O guide, o lighthouse guide, how much do I have to plead before you feel pity for me? The roads of the land are thorny, and no one gets used to my steps except the sea. Guide me to the womb of the Gulf or let me pass. 'What's he doing there, why doesn't he come? When they pulled him from my lap, they said only an hour and we'll return him to you. But months have passed and I haven't seen him.'

'I can't bear his absence either. I feel empty.'

'Then why did you let them take him?'

'What else could I have done?'

'Refuse. Scream. But you preferred silence. You turned away and let matters go as they desired.'

'You're ignorant. You don't understand.'

'OK, I don't understand. I don't understand what you understand. But at least I did something. I spat on one of their faces.'

'And what did it get you? He slapped you on the face and left you on the floor.'

'Fine. But when I looked in his eyes, I saw fear. He was afraid of me. Nobody noticed. But he himself thought he wasn't afraid. I'm the only one who understood. And that was enough for me to feel a little proud.'

'That's how you always are, viewing yourself as an exemplar of courage and heroism, and everybody else has less courage and less dignity. Sometimes feel that you hate me.'

'No, I can't hate you, but I also can't forgive you.'

'How can you consider me guilty or treacherous? He is my son too, or have you forgotten that?'

'You're right. I have to stop doing that. It's not right for me to blame you. You used to love him as I did. You used to know the extent of the sensitivity of his heart like me. When he was young, we used to go out together. Do you remember?'

'Yes, yes, I used to carry him on my shoulders. And you used to carry a basket of apples and apricots.'

'Yes, we used to play and entertain ourselves. We combed the promenade with our laughs. You used to carry him high up. You were proud of him. And I used to look at you both and say to myself, these two people are the dearest to my heart.'

At the end of the night I lean against the wall, and I call him. Come here, our child. There's no one but you who can light up our spirit. When sadness weighs heavy on my shoulders, I incline toward you and kiss your forehead. You suspect that I'm sleeping, but I inhale your breath when you press into me, and my nerves shiver, and I whisper to myself, 'I love you.'

I know that we are one body. Neither of us can move away from the other. And when you touch me closely, I slide into a delightful intoxication, I feel hot sweat melt our soft parts, and I whisper, 'Take me.'

'So I cover you with my mast and sails, and I take you to the labyrinth to dizzy islands brimming with rich silt and rub your thighs with the foam of the summer. We

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watch in fear. The birth of the celebration is in us, but he hasn't come yet.'

'Who?'

'That stranger, who has just passed from here, and because of whom the scoundrel slapped me that time. It passed like a scratch. He sewed the fire of love in my womb, then he disappeared in a moment, without a sign or a promise.'

'Forget him, my daughter. I feel sad when I see your soul sick'

'He stood before me, tall and handsome. A shining came out of his eyelids whenever his eyes transfixed. He beckoned me to come close to him, so I did. He put his palms on my cheeks and kissed my lips. Then he said, 'I will never be for anyone else but you.'

'Don't go far in your hallucination. It is burning. Return as you were, o my spoiled child, o friend of the breeze. Have pity on my old age you feverish woman.'

'When I opened the window, I saw the green foxes crowded together, stretching their necks, and howling. Tell me, did you kill him?'

'To protect you I had to kill him. But I didn't do it. I only asked him to leave.'

'He left me alone with my ghosts. I stir my memory with contemplation, but I find nothing but emptiness'

'Enough, you poor old woman. Your scream woke up the ailing nightingales.'

'Soon, all the dormant hurricanes will awake, and then, humanity will have no glory left.'

'Let me lead you, o blind woman, through these forests, even though I don't know who you are.'

'I am the oracle, you novice, you guide without a face. Take me to the homeland of the lanterns. Here are waterfalls running, playing. A cave is lit up by the eyes of the fighting lions. Women are pregnant with small animals. The feathered soldiers are pushing each other in the mouth of death. The guardian dust writes its false commands on the rock. Enough. I know longer see a thing.'

(A man and woman sit this way every night silently. They don't exchange any signs, like two strange beings, whom nothing brings together except mute dialogue. And they begin to assume different roles.)

أمين صالح ♦ قاسم حداد

The above text, translated by Bassam Frangieh, is from *al-Jawashin* (The Shields), published by Dar Toubqal, Morocco, 1989. It is a poetic text written jointly by Qassim Haddad and Amin Salih.

Qassim Haddad is a poet from Bahrain. He is the author of many collections of poetry. Among his publications *Al-Bisharah* (The Good Omen) and *Qabr Qassim* (Qassim's Tomb).

Amin Salih is a writer from Bahrain. He authored many books, among his publications *Huna Al-Wardah*, *Huna Narqus* (Here is the Rose, Here we Dance) and *al-Farashat* (The Butterflies).

Dr. Bassam Frangieh is an author and academic, currently with Yale University. He has published many literary articles, and translations of poetry of major Arab poets such as al-Bayyati and Qabbani.

BASSAM K. FRANGIEH

Qassim Haddad: Irregular Rhythms of Life

Qassim Haddad is unquestionably one of the finest contemporary poets in the Arab world. A poet of an uncommon voice and unique experience.

Haddad established himself as the leading poet in the Arabian Gulf immediately after the 1970 publication of his first collection of poetry entitled *Al-Bishara* (The Good Omen). He contributed greatly to the development of the Arabic poetic modernism movement which continues to reflect changes and experimentation in the Arab world.

The world of Qassim Haddad is frightening. It is a world of fragmentation and the formlessness of life in Arab society. Further, it is a world of disconnection and shapeless reality that is almost beyond reconstruction. The complexity of his poetry reflects this chaos. Thus, reading Haddad is like reading Adonis - a difficult task. The reader is continually amazed by his unexpected diction, tone and attitude, and amazed by his effective use of language to penetrate to the soul. Nevertheless, his reader is often left exhausted and drained. Haddad's verses bring to life the horrific world of discontent and ugliness that suffocate reader and poet alike. They plead for harmony, and seek meaning for the life and reality around him, which seem void and empty.

Qassim Haddad was born in Bahrain in 1948 in a shi'ite Muslim family. He is, like the distinguished Syrian poet Mohammed al-Maghout, a self-made and self-educated man. Obsessed with the ideas of freedom, social and political justice, Qassim Haddad paid a high price for his rebellion. He was arrested, tortured and incarcerated for five years, but left prison a stronger man and more progressive poet than before. He continued to speak out for revolution and change.

Indeed Haddad's literary, social and personal presence grew stronger. As soon as he was freed, he contributed to the foundation of the Association of Writers in Bahrain, then became the editor-in-chief of *Kalimat*, a leading literary journal of great importance. He held the position of Director of Culture and Art at the Ministry of Information and was elected president of the Bahraini Writers' Association.

Qassim Haddad is a prolific writer who has more than 20 literary works of poetry and poetic prose to his credit. His complete collected works, published in two volumes in 1997 contains his works up to that time.

In 1996 Qassim Haddad re-wrote the tale of Majnun Layla (Layla's Mad Lover), a classical romantic Arabic legend. It is the story of an idealized and platonic love affair between the poet Qays Bin al-Mulawwah and his beloved Layla, believed to have taken place in the seventh century, during the Ummayyed period, the original legend - well established in the literature - concerned the Madman of Bani Amir, a poet from Najd who loved a girl named Layla and was raised with her until she became a young woman. When they were separated by her father, he roamed the wilderness chanting poetry, eating whatever was available and living with animals in the desert.

Until his death he continued composing emotional platonic love poems to Layla,

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expressing his agony. The poems of Qays about Layla had established in Arabic literature a new genre known as the school of chaste love. The legend has lived in the Arab reader's mind throughout the centuries as a symbol of idealized love and purity.

Haddad rewrote the story, shattering the original nature of the legend and destroying its symbolic purity. He recreated the tale using the diction of the original poet and capturing the spirit of that time and place, but adding erotic and sensuous verses and images. In Haddad's version Qays is not an innocent and neither is Layla. They flirt and engage in passionate sensuality. In one scene, newly created by Haddad, Qays comes to Layla at night, pretending to borrow butter. Outside the tent while her father and family are busy with guests, the butter flows between Layla's young naked breasts while Qays caresses her all over in an erotic sexual encounter. By challenging the well-established literature, Haddad opens a window of doubt into our past, implying that what we have been told is all fabrications and lies.

In his poetry, Qassim Haddad explores the psychological and spiritual disturbances in the Arab world, expressing bitterness of Arab intellectuals toward their governments, a bitterness mixed with restlessness and disgust.

At times, clouds of despair sweeps over Haddad, and like other contemporary Arab poets he feels there is no exit from his miserable situation. 'All is in vain,' he writes, echoing the verses of other leading Arab poets such as Adonis 'Only Madness remains,' Khalil Hawai 'The light is dead,' Badr Shakir al-Sayyab 'Black fields have no water,' Qabbani 'What use are a people who cannot speak?' Abdul Wahhab al-Bayyati 'We are a generation of meaningless death,' and Yusuf Al-Khal 'It is madness.' These despairing verses from Haddad and others in the modernist poetic movement reflect the failure of Arab national unity and the failure of the Arab cultural and political project, a reflection of the emergence of 'structureless poetry,' to use Kamal Abu Deeb's words.

Haddad utilizes an existentialist tone in his work and speaks of the absurdity of the present in verses of deep anxiety and loss of direction. He elegantly portrays the fear and emptiness of the oppressed Arab man with existential and frightening images 'The dead ask the dead for direction' and 'Death is slow and dragged by mules.' He portrays modern women as 'impregnated with tyrannical genes in order to give the nation clones of their tyranny.' At first one senses a madness in Haddad, but a careful reading shows that the ability to express these hallucinatory images has helped the poet avoid suicide.

Haddad's challenging poetic text *Al-Jawashin* (The Shields, 1989), co-written with Amin Saleh, is a fine example of this. The poets write of the 'crazed' world in a voice acknowledging the absurdity while rejecting it. In *We Tell the Meaningless Tale*, Haddad wrote:

'You are ignorant. You do not understand.'

'Okay. I do not understand. I do not understand what you understand. But at least I did something. I spat on one of their faces.'

'And what did it bring you? He slapped you on the face and left you on the floor.'

'Fine. But when I looked in his eyes, I saw fear. He was afraid of me. Nobody noticed. He himself thought he was not afraid. I am the only one who saw it. And that is enough for me to feel a little proud.'

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Haddad, unable to understand reality or to answer to the questions that plague him, sees towers of chaos:

I do not know why
I sit this way
My head the peak of the universe
And my hands in a frenzy.
I see only whiteness - towers of chaos.

Further, in *Delirium*, he describes the diffusion of a dream into a cloud of chaos and fear. Everything takes on a misty, ethereal, transitory and nebulous quality. The dream is arrested, as is the Arab man who clings to it:

I am neither asleep nor awake,
Yet the enchanted dream dazzles me.
The same dream interrupts my every waking
And every sleep moment.
A group of angels leads me.
They say:
Do not open your eyes
And do not close them,
Do not sleep and do not awake.

There are no answers, Haddad writes:

Because
We are terrified rabbits,
Falling into whiteness.

In *Uzlat al-Malikat* (Isolation of Queens, 1985), Haddad writes mysterious verses, on the absurdity of life ending in untimely and meaningless death. As he stands on the sidewalk waiting for someone or something, a man comes from behind and for no reason stabs him.

Breathing my last breaths,
I beg him not to reveal my secret.
If my life was a well-known game,
My death ought to remain a mystery.
This is how I long to die.

Indeed, Haddad's poetry is disturbing. In *Horses* he writes perplexing lines, in which horses ask women about the sins of the night, and reveal to them secrets of rape and the zeal of the sparks:

Mad horses, born out of the lust of the springs,
Penetrate the tales of the evening,
seducing the prey, as they delight in sin.
Horses with horns and manes like hoopoes,
Terrifying the churches' lovers, and
Mingle in the clay of punishment.
Women give the kingdoms tyrannical fighters.

In *Lantern*, Haddad attempts to push the climax to destruction:

I depart at dawn with the fragrance of warriors
To awaken the insane.
There is no happiness
My footsteps have only error for guidance.

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In *Private Party*, he writes about prisoners of war haunting him, waiting on his balcony until the time is ripe to pluck the mystified mint from his body. Although they are dead, they are:

Arbitrating my days, deflowering my mail,
Violating, hiding, and waiting.
I saw them in my backyard,
When the green approaches like a gazelle,
They surrounded my limbs
And prepared me for slaughter.

Haddad sees a foggy horizon, and freedom seems removed and inaccessible. In *There*, he writes:

Freedom is distant, remote, desirable.
Life is thin like a blade, sharp like lightning,
Towering like the looming of gods.

The poet envisions the Arab world on the verge of a total collapse beyond repair. His sharp observations on this world heighten awareness in his readers and enable them to see the hidden and the invisible. Haddad accurately reflects the spirit of our age, an age rife with fear, oppression and darkness. He echoes the irregular rhythms of life, and writes toward their transformation into sound, healthy beats. He shouts in the face of tyranny:

O King
We are your flocks,
Of whom you boast to the nations.
We are fed up with this glory.

Through the power of language, Qassim Haddad continues to provoke the minds of the people, grant them vision and inspire them until real change takes place.

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SCHEHERAZADE

A TALE

ANTHONY O'NEILL

WAHID RAZI

An Overview of Major Trends in Political Thought in the Islamic World from the Seventh to the Eighteenth Century A.D.

The first political dispute and division amongst Muslims occurred immediately after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. This dispute was the precursor for the formation of two major Islamic sects: the Shii and the Sunni. The present overview recalls the major points of polemics between these two groups, and other groups that sprang as a result of this schism. One notable group emerged twenty-five years after the death of Prophet Muhammad. This was the extremely revolutionary group al-Khawarij. It is believed that many modern Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brothers have been heavily under the influence of Khawarij's political doctrine. It was inevitable that this group began to attract rival groups eager to play an influential role in the development of Islamic thinking. There were many issues of discussion between Khawarij and its rival groups.

The eighth century marked the emergence of another revolutionary group: al-Mu'tazilah, comprising the most rational thinkers in the history of Islamic civilisation. We provide here a brief insight into some of the key points of Mu'tazilah's philosophic ideas, as well as the doctrine of al-Ikhwan as-Safa, one of the most unorthodox social and political Islamic groups.

From the seventh to the tenth centuries, Muslims seemed to enjoy their intellectual and philosophical exercise and had a fruitful intellectual interaction with the rest of the world. From then on, however, a change in their attitude occurred. They started to believe that they had reached a stage of total perfection, enabling them to close the 'Gate of Knowledge'. The investigation of social, intellectual and political impact of such a policy is a key issue in our present overview. Furthermore, we examine the theory of the Caliphate by analysing the works of the three great Sunni thinkers: Abul-Hasan al-Mawardi, Abu Hamid Muhammad Gazali and Badr ad-Din Iban Jamaah.

The confrontation and encounter of the Islamic world with the Western world in the last two centuries have created a tremendous degree of pressure and a challenge to Muslims that they have never experienced in such intensity and complexity during the long history of their civilization.¹ In fact, the history of the Muslims in the last two centuries has been nothing more than that of humiliation, oppression and constant defeats by the Western powers.

In the course of the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Islamic societies one after another were conquered by the European colonial powers: the Dutch seized control of Java, the British established their paramouncy in India and the French colonised North and West Africa. Russia occupied much of Central Asia between 1864 and 1885. By World War I, most of Africa was under European control. The nominally independent Ottoman and Qajar Muslim empires in Turkey, the Arab world, and Iran fell under British and Russian tutelage.²

¹ See Goldschmidt, Arthur, Jr. 1984. 'The Colonial Period, in Kelly, Marjorie': *Islam the Religion and Political Life of a World Community*, London.

² Lapidus, Ira M. 1983. *Contemporary Islamic Movements in Historical Perspective*, Institute of International Studies, University of California. Berkeley, p11.

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With the colonisation of their lands, Muslims not only lost their sense of pride, but they had to deal with the painful search for their lost identity. Western technological and political influence and in general Western civilisation have shaken every corner of the life of Muslims during the last two centuries.

The central and chief argument for the Muslim intellectuals in the last two centuries has been an effort to redefine Muslim identity. The immediate and primary consequence of this search has been an ongoing struggle of various Muslim societies for their freedom and independence from Western powers. For the same reason, political thought has been the most active area of Muslim intellectual life over the last two centuries.³

Suddenly awakened from a long and deep sleep and confronted with an unknown and terrifying world, Muslim intellectuals had to find answers for some of the most important questions confronting the Islamic world: who am I, and who are they? Where am I and where do I have to be? Where do I come from, where do I belong to and where am I going?

In search for a response to these questions Muslim intellectuals have been divided in two broad camps; traditionalists and modernists. The traditionalists' response to the Islamic dilemma has been an atavistic but not all-reactionary response: return to the core values of Islam as lived during the time of Prophet Muhammad and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafa' ar-Rashidun*). The message of the modernists has been more flexible and in line with the demands of social and economic realities of the time.

The bases of Islamic government are held to have been laid down in the shari'a and to be immutable for all times in all circumstances. No explicit reformulations of the theory of the jurists once established is therefore to be expected. Nevertheless, the various controversies which agitated the community and the political event which fragmented it left their mark on the theory of government.⁴

In general the study of politics and Political thought as an independent branch of human science is a recent activity within the Islamic culture.⁵ It was only under the political, military and cultural influence of European colonial powers since the end of the eighteenth century that Muslim intellectuals started to write separate political works.⁶

This does not mean that Muslim intellectuals never dealt with politics as an art of government. In fact the Philosophic and Political works of Muslim thinkers such as *Averroes* had for centuries dominated and affected political and philosophical trends in the Western world. The fact that Muslims had not studied and recognised politics as an independent branch of human science, had its root in that in Islam there is no distinction between state and religion as has been the case with the Western world. Furthermore, Muslim intellectuals have always seen Islam as a comprehensive way of life. Politics is seen as a decisive tool of this universality.

Beside theological and legal studies, a great number of literary works, particularly in Persia and Afghanistan, focused their attention on political themes. Historically their impact on the social psychology of people has not been less than the impact of theological and legal works.

The logical and rational expectation of a religion of which politics has been an indispensable part is to see that all political institutions and political attitudes are under the influence and control of religious norms and religious values. In reality, the majority of Muslims during their history, lived under political regimes that often had only a 'casual' link with the core values of

³ Enayat, Hamid 1982. *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, University of Texas Press, Austin, p1.

⁴ Lambton, Ann 1981. 'Changing Concepts of Authority In The Late Ninth/Fifteenth And Early Tenth/Sixteenth Centuries', in Cudsi and Dessouki: *Islam and Power*, p49.

⁵ See Akbar, S. Ahmed 1992. *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*, Routledge, London and New York.

⁶ Enayat, Hamid 1981, p3.

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Islam and social justice, and they only used Islam as an instrument for the legitimacy of their power.⁷

Looking at four out of the five 'pillars' of Islam (prayer, fasting, alms-given, pilgrimage), it is obvious that we cannot compare it to any other religion to be so responsive towards politics, group solidarity and community life. In particular social justice and the welfare of the poor and the needy are essential components of Islam.⁸

There is a great number of Koranic verses which preach unity amongst the community of the believers and encourages them to see themselves as a group with common goals, common needs and common philosophy of living:

- Let there be one Community among you, inviting men to good, bidding to honour, rejecting what is disapproved; such are those who prosper. And be not as those who divided and fell into disagreement after the clear signs had come to them: for them there is a mighty punishment (3:105)
- You are the best Community brought forth to men, bidding unto good, rejecting what is disapproved, believing in God (3:105)
- Thus We have appointed you as a central Community, that you might be testifiers to men, and that the Messenger might testify upon you; nor did We direct how you should pray except that We might know who followed the Messenger from him who turned back on his heels (2:134)
- If God had willed, He would have made men one community, but He would test you in [the truths] that have come to you. So be foremost in good deeds; unto God you shall all return, and He will tell you of that where in you differed (5:48)
- Among those We have created are a Community who guide by truth, and by truth act with justice (7:180)

Again through *Hadith*, or sayings ascribed to the prophet Muhammad we see insistence on the same values:

- My community shall never unite upon an error, so if you should see a disagreement, you must stay with the majority
- None of you truly has the faith, if he does not desire for his brother Muslim that which he desire for himself
- The Muslim is the brother of the Muslim: he shall not do him wrong or let wrong be done to him. If he comes in his brother's need, God shall come to his own need, if he delivers him from suffering, God shall deliver him from some of the sufferings of the Day of Resurrection, and if he shields a Muslim, God shall shield him at the Resurrection
- Help your brother Muslim whether he be the oppressor or the oppressed. People said, Messenger of God, if he is oppressed we shall aid him, but how shall we aid him if he is the oppressor? He replied, Prevent him from oppressing⁹

Contrary to the teachings and core values of Islam, neither the majority of the Muslim rulers nor the religious leaders during the long history of Islamic civilisation ever bothered to take the issues of social justice and basic fundamental human rights very seriously, except in certain circumstances and during certain historical periods.¹⁰

Why and how have devoted Muslims allowed such a violation of the core values of their religion by their political and religious leaders during the centuries? There is not any easy answer to this question. Muslim behaviour towards politics and power might not be so different from other human groups. Politics and political behaviour by their nature are so complex and have a strong connection with the historical realities and social facts of the time.¹¹ Besides, one of the greatest reasons which has motivated various Islamic movements and activists to fight

⁷ Ibid p1.

⁸ See Kasravi, Ahmad 1348. *Din Va Siyasat (religion and politics)*, Tehran.

⁹ Quoted by Williams, John Alsen 1971. *Themes of Islamic Civilisation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, p9.

¹⁰ See Abu Zahra, Muhammad 1975 *Al-Da'wah al-Islam (the call to Islam)*, Tehran.

¹¹ Mitchell, Richer P. 1969 *The society of the Muslim Brothers*, London.

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effectively against the states and foreign powers has been to address this problem and to create societies more in tune with the core values of Islam, in particular the value of equity and social justice.¹²

The history of political thought amongst Muslims goes back as far as the seventh century. Immediately after the Prophet Muhammad's death Muslims faced the hardest and most challenging question of their time. Who was to succeed the Prophet, since he was not only the founder of a religion, but also the head of a state and a powerful army?¹³

The Koranic verses, the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and the most important political document *The Constitution of Medina* which was issued and written by the Prophet Muhammad constituted the basis of the political philosophy of Muslims. While all these three major sources have dealt with many political and social issues, the issues of head of state, government, the election of rulers, the ruler's right and his obligation, the duty of the community towards rulers and many other important political questions were not discussed directly or in detail.

Since the majority of Muslims believed that the Prophet had deliberately not selected a successor for himself, they decided to put the issue forward for public discussion. Dispute broke out at the *Saqifah* assembly over the choice of a right man to succeed the Prophet. This day was the beginning of a deep schism in the Muslim community. Even though all the disputes were over Islamic personalities and the degree of their devotion and piety to Islam, there was an underlying fundamental concern about the interpretation of the Koranic verses and the Prophet's sayings regarding some of the most important political and social issues.

When Prophet Muhammad was heading to his last pilgrimage to Mecca at a place called the *Ghadir Khumm* (Khum's Creek), he made an important announcement about one of his closest companions, son-in-law and cousin Ali: 'He for whom I was the master, should hence have Ali as his master.'

One group came to be known as the Shi'ah (literally followers) of Ali, claimed that the Prophet had in fact designated his successor and that was Ali, and his statement about Ali in his last journey to Mecca which is known as the *Ghadir Khumm* statement (this statement has been reported in different versions) is the best testimony to their claim.¹⁴

The minority group of Shi'ah developed their polemic further by saying that considering the importance of the issue of the community leadership, and considering God's justice and benevolence towards Muslims, it was inconceivable to think God and the Prophet would have such an important matter undecided.

The third important point of the Shi'ah polemic was that beside Ali's commitment to Islam and his particular virtue and piety as a close companion and member of the family of Muhammad, he had the opportunity to gain a special knowledge (*ilm*) to understand and interpret the true meaning of the Koran and the tradition of the Prophet.

According to Shi'ah doctrine this special knowledge was only available to those who were near and dear to the Prophet - especially Ali, and through him, to his eleven male descendants: this at least was the position of the Shi'ah of the Twelver School (*ithna ashari*).¹⁵

Beside these points Shi'ah insist on the 'irrevocable necessity of justice as a condition of rulership' and to them no one had this quality more than Ali.

¹² See for example, *Islam Dar Inqilab (Islam in revolution)* Persian translation, Tehran, 1982. Also See Akbar, S. Ahmed 1983. *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society*, Cambridge University Press, USA.

¹³ See Ishtiaq, Ahmed 1992. *The Concept of an Islamic State*, St. Martin's Press New York.

¹⁴ For the history and philosophy of Shiism, See Shihabi, Mahmud 1978. *Al-Islam wa sh-shi'ah (al-imamiyyah) fi asashihia' tarrikki wa kiyaniha 'l-i'tiqadi*, Tehran. Also Muhammad, Husayn, Kashif al-Ghita, *Asl ash-shi'ah wa usuluha*, Tehran, 1971 and Nasir ud-Din, Amir Sadiqi, *Ruhaniyyat Dar Shi'ah*, Tehran, 1970, Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, *Shi'ah Dar Islam*, Tehran, 1969.

¹⁵ Enayat, Hamid 1982, p5.

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Contrary to the Shi'ah group, the Sunni majority defended the view that the Prophet deliberately did not select a successor, leaving such an important matter to his *umma* (community of believers). These Sunnis (the followers of Sunnah or tradition) showed their devotion and adherence to the core Islamic principles rather than to personalities. While they accepted and respected Ali amongst some of the closest, most distinguished and devoted companions of the Prophet Muhammad, they offered a different interpretation of the Ghadir story. They also argued that the fact that the Prophet had not left any son was a further testimony for their claim that the Prophet gave this right to the community to choose his successor.¹⁶

It was the Sunnis' view which was accepted by the majority of the Muslim community and as a result the assembly finally elected a successor for the Prophet Muhammad; he was Abu Bakr, a distinguished and one of the closest companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Abu Bakr was older than the other contenders for the Caliphate and he had also accompanied the Prophet on his migration from Mecca to Medina and was the father-in-law of the Prophet and his chief adviser.

Despite the apparently democratic manner in which the Sunnis conducted the affair of the succession, it was not the ordinary people of the community who elected Abu Baker, but a group of distinguished elites or the 'people who loosen and bind' (ahl al-hall wa'l-aqd) who made the final decision. The same process was repeated during the election of Umar, Uthman and finally Ali to the Islamic Caliphate. For centuries, their system of government, social and political justice was accepted as the most ideal political system by the majority of Muslim intellectuals¹⁷.

Beside the abovementioned groups, twenty-five years after the death of the Prophet an extremely revolutionary group came to existence, known as the Khawarij (plural of Khariji, meaning an outsider or seceder).

The period of Ali's Caliphate was a further cause of a schism in Islamic history. Khawarij were initially the adherents and followers of Ali. When Muawiyah (a companion of the Prophet and a leading aristocrat of Mecca) raised a revolt against Ali, Ali agreed to refer his dispute with Muawiyah to arbitration. Again this arbitration was a beginning for many other conflicts and bloodshed amongst Muslims. Khawarij condemned Muawiyah for being responsible for the dispute, and wrongly creating disputes and bloodshed amongst Muslims. They also rejected Ali, by knowing that he was right and still agreeing to refer his case for judgement to an arbitrator committee. The Khawarij eventually became more powerful and they managed to gain control of certain Islamic territories and developed and modified their idealism further and became one of the most radical and revolutionary groups.

Their extreme attachment to the Koran made them one of the most uncompromising factions. For the same reason they developed their political doctrine by insisting that all Muslims have equal rights irrespective of their tribal, racial or class distinctions to elect or depose, or to be elected as a ruler. This set them against Sunnis, who for the most part confined the Caliphate to the Meccan aristocracy (Quraysh), and the Shi'is, who restricted it to one branch of it, the House of the Prophet (Banu Hashim). The Khawarij believed that their actions and ideas met the criteria of true faith, and had no problem using violence against their opponents. When we consider all of this, the full import of their radicalism and the conscious or subconscious affinity that some fundamentalist groups in modern history have had with them, becomes apparent. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt have sometimes been accused of being Khawarij. They have always denied the charge, and have even spoken of the 'errors' of the Khawarij, but have nevertheless praised their 'rectitude and their struggle in the path of God'.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Muhammad, Abu Zahrah, *Al-mujtama' al-insani fi zill al-Islam*, Beirut, n.d.

¹⁷ Enayat, Hamid 1982, p6.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p7.

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Even though from a philosophical point of view al-Khawarij played an important role in the development of Muslim intellectual thought. Politically, they never became as important as the other two groups of Sunnis and Shiis. Historically both Sunnis and Shiis have shown their hatred and dislike of al-Khawarij, and for centuries under the political control of Sunnis and Shiis, al-Khawarij's existence and activities remained totally underground. Today al-Khawarij population has vanished except for a small number of them living in isolation in countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Oman and East Africa, but their place in the history and development of Islamic political thought as one of the most perfectionist and idealist social and political groups will always remain of a special merit.

These were the three main political groups and trends during the first four decades of Islamic history and continued their existence to the present time. Of course, there were many other subdivisions amongst every group, but the scope of this research does not allow us to examine and evaluate their political thought.

Despite the fact that the majority of Muslim intellectuals has always condemned the existence of all these divisions amongst Muslims as an impediment to their unity, historically these divisions helped the enhancement and richness of Muslim political thought.

In general, even though the Shi'ah group has always remained a minority group within the Islamic community, they have raised some of the most important and valid questions against the Sunni majority. This helped the Sunnis develop a powerful basis for their doctrine and polemics against other groups.

The Shiis 'attitude of mind which refuses to admit that majority opinion is necessarily true or right,'¹⁹ has always been a powerful point, not only within the Islamic world, but in the history of philosophy as a whole.

As an isolated and social protest group for centuries, Shiis did not take an active role in the political life and political activities of their time (not to mention that they had little opportunity to do so and quite often hid their identity in societies where Sunnis were controlling political life) because they viewed politics as a symbol of corruption, a tool in the hands of the Sunni majority to exploit and oppress not only the Shiis, but all other minority and disadvantaged groups.

Historically the disagreement of the Shiis with the Sunnis was a basis for the Shiis not only to develop their own system of theology, specific codes of jurisprudence and legal practices, but most importantly to create a different attitude and in particular a social and psychological ethos which makes them unique among other Islamic group.

As an "isolationist" group, Shi'ah developed a lack of trust in the majority group. Always a victim of constant harassment and persecution by the majority group of Sunnis, Shiis developed their ideology and teaching in an esoteric and expedient dissimulation style. They viewed themselves as the true preserver of Islam and the Koran. According to the Shiis' doctrine, the Koran contains two aspects: an inner or secret meaning (*batin*), and outer or apparent meaning (*zahir*). The full truth and inner part are only known to God, the Prophet and the members of his House. After the disappearance of the last Imam, the Ulama (religious scholars) and Mujtahidun (persons qualified to derive legal norms from the sources of the law), if in the right path of God, they will play the role of the agent of the Imam until the return of the hidden Imam. They will gradually develop the qualities to understand the true meaning of the Koran. (The hidden Imam refers to the last male descendent of Ali who disappeared, and Shiis believe that he will appear again to fill the world with justice.)

Contrary to the Shiis, the Sunnis' interpretation of the Koran and Islam has less mystical and supernatural. They have a more rational and realistic approach to the concepts of human nature,

¹⁹ Ibid, p19.

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man's understanding of himself, men's relation to each other, man's relationship and obligation to rulers and states and finally man's obligation to his God.

The Sunnis' doctrine gives more credibility to the ordinary man, his potential and his capacity for the right choice, thought and action. Sunni philosophers always refer to the famous saying of the Prophet when they argue the superiority of their case over that of the Shiis: 'My community will never agree in error'. They also argue with the Shiis' commentators that the fact that God in the time of Man's creation commanded his angels to bow in reverence to Adam, and the fact that he punished his closest angel (Satan) for not doing so, is the best testimony that Man has the capability to act as the agent of Divine Will.

On the contrary Shiis' commentators refer to a verse of the Koran: 'We offered the trusteeship (al-amanah) to the heavens, the earth and the mountains; all refused to assume it, and were terrified by it. But Man accepted to take charge of it, because he is wrongful and ignorant' (33:72). Thus Shiism sees man as a wrongful and sinful creature who, without Imams and their agents (Mujtahidun), is capable of doing all wrong deeds. This is despite the fact that the Koran does not accept the notion of original sin. Such a description of Man as being feeble and wrongful, incapable of governing his life without the guardians of Imams and their agents, is a very idealistic and meta-historic as far as political thought is concerned.

On the other hand, Sunnis realism does not offer any acceptable explanation for the reality of their history or for the fact that the majority of Muslim rulers except for the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (632-661 A.D.) abused their power and misused Islam as a device to legitimise their existence as heads of Islamic states.

In general the Islamic golden age, a period of thirty years, was followed, in the next three centuries, by a wave of Islamic expansion and growth both militarily and intellectually. Islamic scholars (Ulama) pushed the frontiers of ancient Greek rationalism to new heights.

Even though the impact of Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato eventually became visible in the very early period of Islamic civilisation, it was the Mu'tazilah, a revolutionary intellectual group in the eighth century, who for the first time raised some of the most important and controversial political and philosophical questions such as the limitation of Man's freedom within the Islamic scheme of things.

Mu'tazilah were possibly the most rational thinkers in the history of the Islamic civilisation. They were the first group who made a serious attempt at the reconciliation of reason and revelation. This is exactly what Muslim modernists have been trying to do from the nineteenth century onward. They were the adherents of the principle of free will (ikhtiyar) and strongly rejected the philosophy of predestinarianism (jabr), prejudice and superstition. They made the first attempt in the history of Islam to build up a rational basis for Islam and to show the compatibility of Islam with logic and free mind. Similar to the Khawarij and the Shiis, the Mu'tazilah in their time were the subject of prosecution and they preached their unorthodox ideas underground.²⁰ To what extent the Mu'tazilah borrowed their doctrine from Greek philosophers is something which needs to be investigated. What is obvious is that they were under the influence of Greek rational philosophers and that they were using rationalism and logic in their dialectic against Christians and other 'non believers'.

The other group which possibly deserves to be mentioned at this stage is the Ikhwan as-Safa (the Brethren of Purity).²¹ There is no exact information available about their historical background, but they were probably living between the ninth or tenth centuries. Their major work, *Rasa'il* (Epistles) has been recognised as the first Islamic encyclopedia. As Enayat noted,

²⁰ Ibid, p8.

²¹ Enayat, Hamid 1977 'The Political Philosophy of the Ikhwan as-Safa', in S.H. Nasr, ed: *The Isma'ili Contributions to the Islamic Civilization*, Tehran, pp25-49.

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the central themes of Ikhwan's teaching were matters related the transmigration of souls or the doctrine of emanation, but because they took a serious interest in the social conditions of Muslims and identified some of the causes of moral and social problems of the Islamic communities of the time, their work has a significant political value.²²

Ikhwan as-Safa, seemed to be revolutionary unorthodox social protesters with a possible link with the Ismaili school of Shiism, who constantly raised some of the most important political issues in relation to the functions of the Imam, and the duty of Muslims towards unjust temporal rulers.

They put a higher place on the value of knowledge and consciousness and encouraged not only the elites but the masses of the people in the accumulation of 'sciences and wisdom'. What is more, they valued only that kind of knowledge which could be conducive to action, which they conceived as an effort for both the spiritual and material amelioration of the individual and society. Combined with their belief in free will and the inevitability of change and movement in all natural and social phenomena, the *Rasail* contained the outlines of an indictment of Muslim beliefs and practices in the third and fourth centuries, plus a thinly-veiled call for a watertight programme of doctrinal re-education and revolutionary struggle. All this makes Ikhwan as-Safa irresistibly appealing to Muslim intellectuals today who find their coreligionists in the same state of moral drift and social stagnation as that prevailing in the third or fourth century.

Despite the fact that the Sunni rulers were quite successful in suppressing the revolutionary and unorthodox groups such as Shi'ah, Khawarij, Mu' tazilah and Ikhwan as-Safa, overall the period between 7th to 10th centuries A.D. has been recognised as the Islamic golden age. This period witnessed the greatest Islamic expansion and growth. During this period the Islamic world was the colourful garden of political, philosophical, social and scientific ideas and thought. Muslim intellectuals were, in fact, leading the world in almost every aspect of life. At the same time they had a very open and flexible approach to the world of ideas and there was a great degree of interaction between Muslim intellectuals and non Muslims in a broader sense.

For quite mysterious and unknown reasons in the tenth century Muslim intellectuals (*ulamma*) reached a state in which they claimed total perfection, closing the 'Gate of Knowledge' and believing that all thinkable human questions and problems had been answered by the Masters of the four major Islamic (Sunni) Schools (Hanafi, Shafii, Maliki, and Hanbali). According to the *ulamma* of the time the Islamic law was finalised and institutionalised.

The task of future generation was to follow God's path as set forth in the authoritative legal manuals. Individual, independent reasoning or personal judgment was no longer deemed necessary or permissible the door of *ijtihad* (personal interpretation) was henceforth closed. Jurists were not to write law books but commentaries. While individual religious scholars like Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) and al-Suyuti (1445-1505) demurred, the majority position resulted in the traditional belief prohibiting substantive legal development by jurists: the power of absolute *ijtihad* was completely abolished; a 'relative' *ijtihad* was allowed. This meant either that one was allowed to reinterpret law within one's own school of law or, and this was the highest point of legislation, one could carry on an eclectic and comparative study law of different schools and thus find some scope for limited expansion in details. The task of the judge and Islamic law court was the 'application' not 'interpretation' of law.²³

Such an approach to law, politics, the world of ideas and human thought had two major implications: firstly, the beginning of the closing of the 'Gate of knowledge' was in fact the end of a productive and constructive interaction, integration and communication with non-Muslim intellectuals and of the blossoming of thought. Secondly, it was an announcement leading to the

²² Enayat, Hamid 1982, p9.

²³ Esposito, John L. 1984 *Islam and Politics*, Syracuse University Press, New York, p19.

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creation of iron boundaries for Muslims in general and intellectuals in particular, undermining rationalism. Islamic scholarship and creativity entered a long period of decline.

The political implication of such conservatism was quite costly for the Islamic Caliphate and it became a reason for disintegration of the *Abbasid* state. The Islamic world eventually lost its unity and the characteristic of its centralised power, with the rise of the rival Caliphate in Cordov and Cairo, and the autonomous Persian and Turkish dynasties. Eventually the Caliphate in Baghdad became weaker and weaker. It was this period during which most of the theories of Caliphate came to being, which has a significant value in the study of the history of political thought in Islam.

At the same time political themes became a major issue of a great number of literary works, particularly in Persia and Khorasan (current Afghanistan) and many Sufi masters such as Faridudin Attar and Mulana Romi tried to take a leading role in the education of people against injustice and tyrannic regimes.²⁴

This was the time of the rise of powerful and autonomous kingdoms in Persia and Khorasan such as the Ghaznavid and Saljuq. Overall they were expressing their loyalty to the Caliphate in Bagdad, but from time to time they were challenging the authority of the Caliphate over certain local issues. Possibly the most significant rebellion of all was that of the powerful King of Ghaznavid, Sultan Mahmud who reintroduced Islam into the subcontinent of India and who threatened the Caliph a number of times with the invasion of Bagdad.

Some of the most important political works in relation to the theory of the Caliphate were completed during that period (from 1058 to 1332). Amongst all, possibly the works of three Sunni thinkers: Abu'l-Hasan al-Mawardi (1058), Abu Hamid Muhammad Gazali (1111) and Badr ad-Din Ibn Jama'ah (1332) are particularly important in the theories of Caliphate, the justification and basis of power of state and ruler and finally the sociology of politics and power.

Mawardi strongly defined and justified the necessity of the Caliphate as a symbol of spiritual and temporal power of Muslims. He recognised the supremacy and indivisibility of the Caliphate not only from the prospects of the Shariah, but also from an historical point of view as a symbol of the community's acceptance or *ijma* (consensus).

He insisted on the point that the political authority can be as valid as religious norms and most importantly, contrary to his predecessor political thinkers, recognised the executive power of the local rulers as a necessary condition for the success and survival of the Caliphate. In fact he was the first person to open the gate of discussion about the legitimacy of the local rulers and the validity of their power, if not equal to the Caliphate but quite important as such.

The next step in this direction was taken by Ghazali, in whose time conditions had deteriorated even further: the Caliphate 'was no longer regarded as conferring authority, but merely as legitimating rights acquired by force'. Betraying a concern for expediency uncharacteristic of the self-examining intellectual that he was, Ghazali declared that: 'We consider that the function of the Caliphate is contractually assumed by that person of the Abbasid house who is charged with it, and that the function of government in the various lands is carried out by means of sultans who owe allegiance to the Caliphate.' Government in these days is a consequence solely of military power and whosoever he may be to whom the possessor of military power gives his allegiance, that person is the Caliph.' With the overthrow of the Abbasid Caliphate by the Mongols in 1258, even casuistical pretensions were set aside. Although a nominal Caliphate was after a while established in Cairo to confer legitimacy on the Mamluk dynasty, this was not allowed in Sunni Jurisprudence to conceal the truth about the political system. The recognition of this last phase in the evolution of the classical

²⁴ For a study of Mulana Romi's idea check his masterpiece in the Persian language, *Masnav-i Mahnavi*, 1978, Tehran.

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Caliphate was the main achievement of Ibn Jamaah, who declared military power pure and simple as constituting the essence of rulership.²⁵

One of the reasons why the Sunni thinkers such as Mawardi, Ghazali and Ibn Jama'ah could successfully adjust the theory of Caliphate according to the political changes of the time was the fact that the Sunni view about political power was realistic contrary to the Shii theory of Imamate and its metaphysical sanctions.²⁶

Such realism was paradoxical. On the one hand it made it easy for followers and the community in general to accommodate unexpected political changes. On the other hand, it provided a basis for the survival and legitimacy of unjust rulers and tyrannical political systems. Historically, and from time to time, there were isolated rebellions against injustice and tyranny, but such events were exceptional.

The majority of the Sunni thinkers went even further in justifying tyranny in order to maintain 'law and order' and the security of society. The following statement was made by Ibn Taymiyyah (1328) the great Hanbali theologian:

It is obvious that the affairs of the people cannot be in a sound state except with rulers, and even if somebody from among unjust kings becomes ruler, this would be better than having none. As it is said: 'Sixty years with an unjust ruler are better than one night without a ruler'. And it is related to the fourth Caliph Ali, may God be satisfied with him, to have said that: 'People have no option but to have a rulership (*imarah*), whether pious or sinful'. People asked him: 'We understand the pious, but why bother with the sinful?' He said: 'Because, thanks to it, highways are kept secure, canonical penalties are applied, holy war is fought against the enemy, and spoils are collected.'²⁷

Conclusion

We could imagine the profound political and social psychological impacts of such conservatism on the life of community and people. Eventually such an approach to politics and power was accepted by the majority of people and religious sects and groups as the best and only way of individual and group survival.²⁸

The justification for the existence of rulers and even unjust political systems in the Islamic lands was possibly not so different from beliefs elsewhere. In the Islamic world, such conservatism has been responsible for the calamity of Muslims in general, and for a long period of political and social stagnation, characterised by periods when corrupt rulers and religious leaders collaborated and successfully exploited and controlled the masses.

It took centuries for Muslims to awaken from their deep and costly sleep. The decision of the Muslim Ulama in the tenth century to close the gate of knowledge has continued its impact until the present. But for the Muslims themselves, it took them centuries to notice and feel their apparent moral and intellectual bankruptcy. The main reason for such neglect was that the post-caliphate period was both a dynamic and expansionist period in Islamic history. Even the fall of Baghdad in 1258 at the hand of the Mongol invaders was not the end of the Muslims' military and technological hegemony.

²⁵ Enayat, Hamid 1982, p11.

²⁶ See Lambton, Ann 'Changing Concepts of Authority in the Late Ninth/Fifteenth and Early Tenth/Sixteenth Centuries. In: Cudsi and Dessouki 1981. *Islam and Power*, P49, also Enayat, Hamid 1981, p10.

²⁷ Quoted by Enayat, Hamid 1981, p12.

²⁸ Lapidus, Ira M. 1983. *Contemporary Islamic Movements in Historical Perspective*, University of California, Berkeley, p7.

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Even though with the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate Muslims lost their symbolic unity,²⁹ this fall gave way to a burgeoning number of Muslim sultanates which governed and controlled a vast part of the world that extended from North Africa to South-east Asia, East, West and Central Africa, Central and South Asia, and Eastern Europe. The military expansion of Islam was accompanied by large-scale conversions. Beside religious preaching, the Sufi orders played a crucial role in inspiring the masses about the message of Islam, in particular its insistence on social justice, even though such a justice often was not present at home.

By the sixteenth century three major Muslim empires had emerged in the midst of the many sultanates: the Sunni Ottoman in West Asia and Eastern Europe, the Shii Safavid in Persia and the Sunni Mughal in the Indian subcontinent. Harnessing gunpowder technology, these "gunpowder empires", whose central governments were supported by a blend of religious ideology and military strength, dominated the heartlands of the Islamic world: North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Reminiscent of Abbasid times, great sultans like the Ottoman Sulayman the Magnificent (1520-1605), Shah Abbas in Persia and the Mughal emperor Akbar in India, were patrons of learning and the arts. The Islamic character of the state was reflected by the Ottoman conquerors who, after conquering the capital of the eastern Roman world and renaming Constantinople Istanbul, 'crowned the hills with monumental mosques'.³⁰

Whatever the attitudes of Sulayman the Magnificent, Shah Abbas and Akbar were towards arts and learning, it was the 'infidel' West which proved to be the winner of the last game. From the seventeenth century onwards Muslim weakness was becoming visible not only in intellectual matters, but eventually in military and technological areas as well. After the eighteenth century, Europe was rapidly emerging as a real threat to the survival of Islamic hegemony.

The industrial Revolution during the late eighteenth century was a further catalyst for Europe's rise. Agricultural society changed to a commercial and industrial capitalism. These moves were accompanied by the development and introduction of new and advanced technology.

This was the time when Muslims seriously felt the threat and the power of the Western World, without knowing what to do. This was the price which they were paying for constricting their freedom and dignity. For centuries they had resisted opening their doors to new ideas and new political and social thought.

وحيد رازي

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²⁹ See Kerr, Malcolm 1966 *Islamic Reform*, Berkeley.

³⁰ Esposito, John L. 1984, p24.

L. E. SCOTT

Contemporary Maori Writings

The Better Part by Meg Campbell

Hazard Press 2001

Postscripts by J. C. Sturm

Steele Roberts 2001

It would be remiss of this reviewer not to note that these two women poets, who have their own growing reputations, are/were married to poets of considerable standing in the New Zealand literary world: Meg Campbell to Alistair Te Ariki Campbell and J C Sturm to the late James K Baxter. It would be foolish to pretend that the shadows of the men they married have not become a part of their own shadows. It would be equally foolish not to deal with the extra baggage from Jump Street and then get beyond that and deal with the shadows they have shaped for themselves with their own words. That may be easier to say than to do. But first, those other shadows.

Sturm's extra shadow is visible in her poem *Twenty-five years later*:

Of those early years,
his passion for words
and burning intention
to make them remake his world,

is what I remember best.
The rest is blurred images,
uncertain memories,
even wishful thinking.

Meg Campbell's other shadow can be glimpsed in the poem *A Time for Leaving*:

alone, in a nightmare
frightened by your anger,
perplexed by your indifference.
I couldn't know the cause

I left you more than once
not to hurt you,
but to leave life altogether.

I failed in this.

Had an affair with an electric
machine. Shook me
into brain-baking flight.
As often as I left you,
I returned...

Now to the shadows of the poets themselves. Meg Campbell's shadow evokes images of a woman locked in a dark room with the sound of dripping water resonating through her two minds. After reading and swallowing her words (some of these poems *do* make you want to swallow), one is left with the feeling that having given the demons a bridge to

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cross over from the subconscious to the conscious, she is no longer their jailer. Both states of mind are set free to roam here and the first poem, *Heredity*, jumps right into our judgmental faces:

Inescapably, this is me - the diagnosis
is cause for anger at those
who brightly say we choose our destinies.
There is no store of courage,
wit or will can save me from myself,
and I must face my children,
feeling like that wicked fairy
coming uninvited to the christening
to bestow on my own
amidst murmurs of apprehension,
a most unwanted gift -
that of a blighted mind.

This first poem is in one sense the blueprint for the collection and the collection is a personal journey in the company of family and demons whose surnames are Fear, Hurt, Anger, Expectation, Disillusionment - and some stuff in between. The poems are the receipts (paid in full) for having the company of such good 'friends'. As the old folks say, ugliness resides where you find it.

So, if *The Better Part* is seen as a journey, what has the travel been like - and do the poems go beyond the house Campbell has built for herself? The answer to the second part of the question is No, but no is not bad. These poems are the chronicle of a woman who may or may not have escaped from the 'house of mirrors' and, to judge by pieces like *Impunity*, their birth from the womb has not always been easy:

I was a naughty young girl!
In my father's garden
animals and birds bred
with impunity.
In the dark I stood with one
big boy after another

and those boys were natural
as the tree trunks, and my
skirt, lifted up, said it all.
We stood in pools of light
shed by the many windows
of my father's house.

She writes intimate memoirs, and many of them are dressed in the raw truth of what fathered them. As R D Lang has said, people don't go mad, they just sometimes go and live elsewhere. Meg Campbell's poems are about the elsewhere-ness of where and how she has travelled in finding her way here. They are from her world and as the opening lines of *Journeys* reveal:

At the end of the journey we built
another pyramid, intending
to rendezvous with the gods.

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Some would say demons by another name.

Unlike Meg Campbell, J C Sturm does not often dance overtly with the shadow of the man she married. The demons are there, but not so naked. The peeping toms and voyeurs who come to *Postscripts* seeking an autopsy of the Sturm/Baxter union will not see much blood-letting, though there is some, as in *Twenty-five years later*:

It has taken me twenty-five years
to admit he always had
more than one life,
more than one leading lady.
It is hard to say,

harder to accept:
the most he ever had
was not what he took from me,
the most I ever had
was what I gave to him.

There is also some blood in the poem *In defence of a dead poet*, but it's from a different cut of the knife. The say (the old of the world) that most animals can smell and know their own blood, so those of you who can smell the blood will know:

Now they turn their backs on him,
The clever boys,
Jeer with witty cryptic phrases.
Minimal is what they like
Minimal is what they do...

Most were still babies
Poohing their nappies
When he was in his writing prime.

This is Sturm's second collection of poems. Her first, *Dedications*, was published in 1996. Of the two collections Sturm has said, 'When I had finished *Dedications*, I still hadn't finished what I had to say. That's why I've called the second book *Postscripts*... sometimes when you write a letter the thing you really want to say you add as a postscript.'

So what is being said (beyond the Baxter flashes) in this PS? Sturm's poems speak to us from a broad canvas - there is philosophy and love, history and anger, death and life. 'Her history' reflects our need, in spite of beauty, to make love with much of life's ugliness:

Her father
 couldn't live with her mother
 and went away.
Her mother
 couldn't look after her
 and went away too...
The father of her first son
 was a street kid.
 He left her seven months pregnant.
The father of her second son
 was different.
 He wanted to stay and so he did.

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The daughter they wanted
was still-born.
That changed everything.
Her father came back
with cancer in his mouth.
He went down south.
Her mother came back
with Jesus in her heart.
She went up north.

There is also the PS that deals with our relationship with death, as in *What I'd like*:

I don't much like the thought
Of being stretched out straight
And stiff in a long box
With all the warmth gone out
Of me. I don't like to think of it
Or whatever follows after ...

As for the spot: definitely
Not that place up the river -
I'd hate that - or in a lonely
Valley or up a hill too steep
To climb easily. You might
Like to visit on my
Anniversary Day.

And, at the last, perhaps the full stop to the postscript in *Let go, unlearn, give back*:

Give back, but gently
Loving and being loved.
Then leave them, in the leaving time
And go alone.

Meg Campbell and J. C. Sturm write poetry that draws on what they see looking back at them when they look into their respective mirrors. There are similarities in the looking-glass, but the voices they use are different. Campbell's knife is jagged and her poems cut in such a manner - you feel it immediately. Sturm's knife is sharp and her poems cut with a smoother stroke. What the reader takes away from both collections is a sense that these poets have made love to their demons and the poems they have given birth to reveal the pain and truth and understanding born from their experience. The afterbirth hasn't yet been buried.

لويس سنكت

L. E. Scott is an African-American writer, poet and editor living in New Zealand. He is an adviser to *Kalimat* for New Zealand and the Pacific Island.

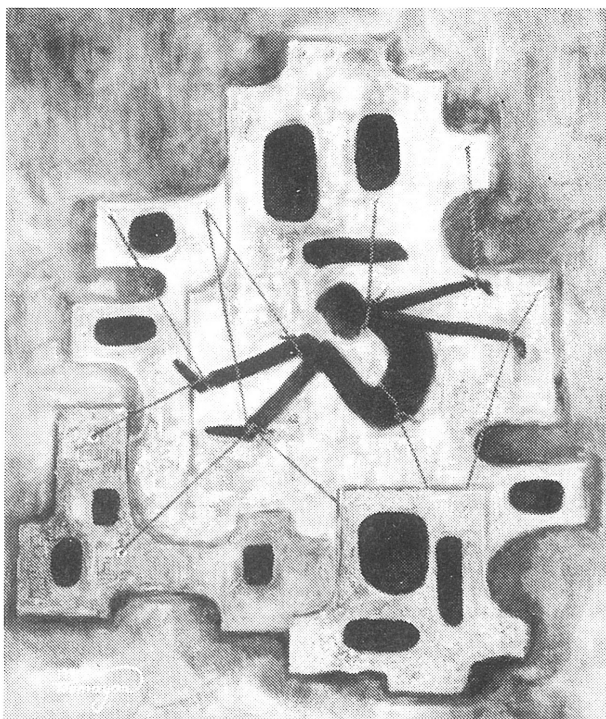
Fouad Toumayan: the Mundane and the Quest for Artistic Elation

'I have not suffered in the personal sense, but my suffering has been associated with moments of expectation and happiness, almost like an expectant mother in her last few weeks before confinement: every moment of pain is coupled with a feeling of hope for the birth of the new life. A new painting.' **Fouad Toumayan**

In 1991 Fouad Toumayan painted *Globalisation* (oil on canvas) to express his feelings about the new world order. The painting was introduced to the readers of *Kalimat*, in full colours, on the back cover of No. 5 in March 2001. It depicts a human being tied from every angle of his body, which is trying to assume the faetal position despite the pull of the strings from every direction. This is a human on whom the new world order is being imposed so that he becomes like a puppet pulled by strings, not even being able to live his sorrow in a natural manner.

The Gulf War of 1991 triggered this painting: 'I knew for sure that this war was a tragedy for both Kuwait and Iraq, and a major assault on the Arab World. The new world order they were talking about was actually a recipe for more American dominance of this world.'

When we first set our eyes on this painting, many ideas came to our minds. We thought about migration and the long journey an artist such as Toumayan had taken for almost all of his life. We thought about nostalgia to the motherland, about alienation and economic hardship in the new land. Are these elements behind Toumayan's reaction to globalisation?



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This is possible, but only partially. Toumayan's emotions do not only stem from his personal experience, but also from his feelings to the world around him. He is a person who cries with the cries of the world, and laughs with its laughs. Samir Srouri, in an article about Toumayan in *an-Nahar* newspaper (24/10/91, Sydney, Australia), likened this painting to Picasso's *Guernica* in terms of the enlightened feelings it reflects about the human condition of the others.

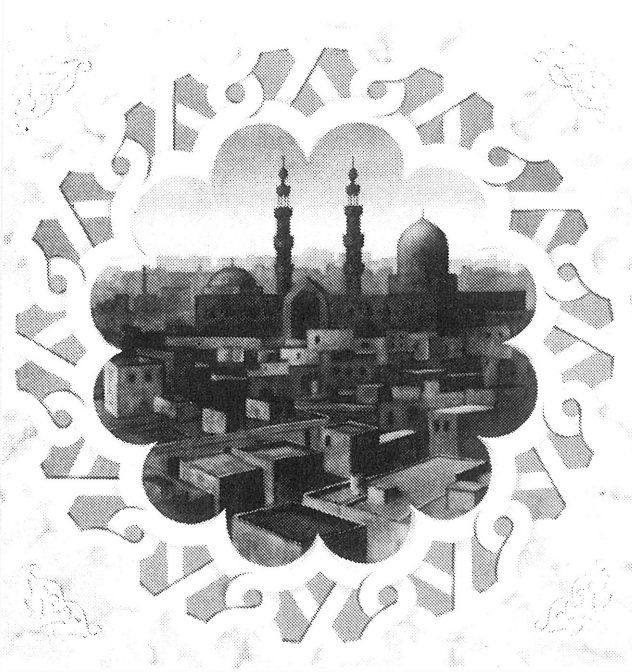
Toumayan is a diversified painter. In contrast to his symbolic work, classical paintings seem to dominate his work. In this, he also diversifies his techniques depending on the subject matter. He mentioned to us that he draws what he feels, and the adoption of any associated technique happens spontaneously as part of his emotional state.

For example in his paintings about childhood, children appear in the paintings in an environment familiar to the painter. This is suburban Melbourne, Australia, and these are naive paintings with bright, delightful colours.

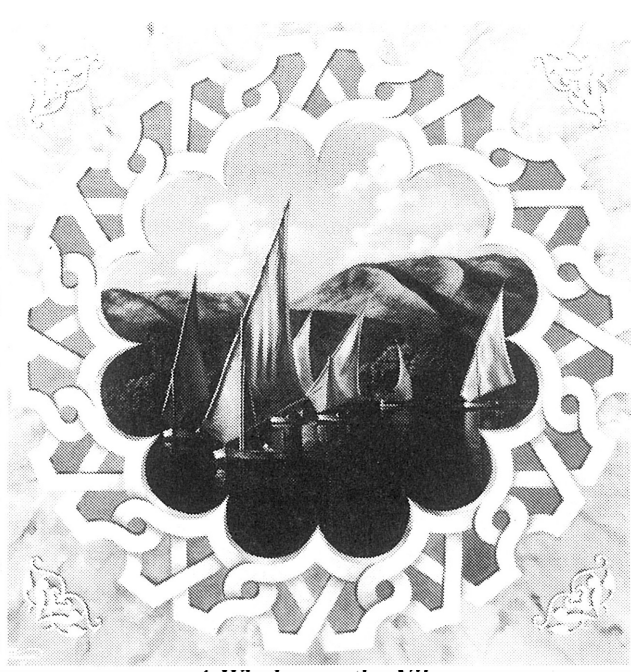


In his classical works depicting the landscape of some Arab countries, he surrounds every painting with a frame synonymous with Islamic design. Every frame becomes his window on a particular scene: *A Window on Damascus*, *A Window on the Nile*, *A Window on the Desert*. These paintings were exhibited at the National Gallery of Victoria. Five thousand postal cards were printed depicting the first painting. The 'window' is also used in some of his other paintings such as the head of a horse.

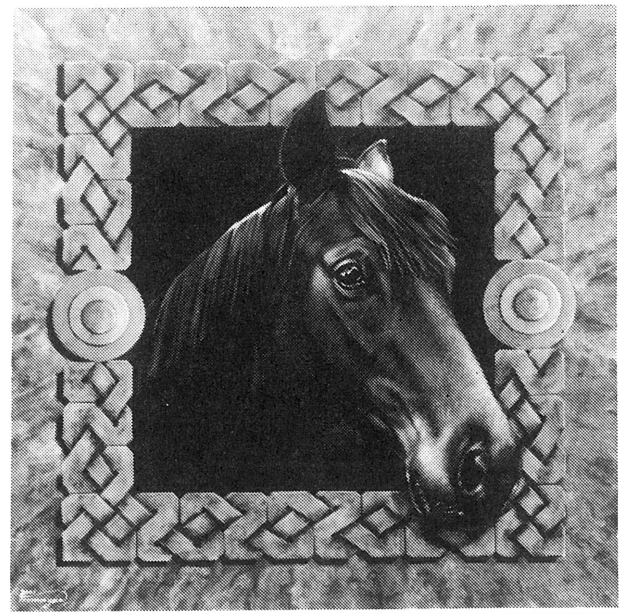
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A Window on Damascus



A Window on the Nile



A Horse and a Window

L A N D M A R K

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The paintings we have seen of Toumayan's portrayal of Victoria, the state of his residence, are of delightful, elegant and peaceful colours, although these colours might change drastically from painting to painting. For example, the painting below (presented here in a black and white print), is dominated by greenish-blue and sandstone colours.



The other painting is on the back cover of the present issue. It is dominated by Australian earth colours. In both cases, we feel that this landscape is not uniquely Australian. It is possible that Toumayan paints Australian landscape with the emotions of nostalgia to other worlds. Even his painting *Window on Damascus* brings to us ancient scenes from Baghdad or Aleppo. So perhaps these windows reveal the painter more than they do the painted; a person with inner collective appreciation of the world and its history. Each painting could be a stopping place of reflection along the long road of Toumayan's journey from place to place and culture to culture, but above all the journey through the self.

The colour similarity between the two paintings on the back cover of the present issue is interesting considering the different subject matter. One is about a landscape in Victoria, Australia. The other, titled *Killing the Peace*, is about the Gulf War of 1991.

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In *Killing the Peace*, the colours are very peaceful. The only indication of the feeling of frustration comes from the face of the woman in the painting.

Using facial expressions to convey messages is part of Toumayan's belief in the commitment of art to reflecting the human condition in its joy, sadness and life-struggle. He is very good in presenting these expressions through the eyes of his subjects. In the *Flute Player*, for example, the eyes of the girl playing the flute glisten with joy. In *Jealousy*, the eyes convey a clear message to the observer.

Toumayan's admiration for the work of Michael Angelo, made him paint the face of David. The face below speaks with its hair, eyes, nose, mouth and cheeks.

Toumayan believes that artists are mirrors of their societies and the products of the thought dominating the era in which they exist. He cites the example of Europe in the fifteenth century when Italy was the dominating center of a religious culture, resulting in the emergence of three masters: Leonardo D'Vinci, Michael Angelo and Raphael. Religious themes dominated the works of those artists.

Europe later changed. In more recent times, photography, two world wars and the resulting unemployment influenced the works of artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leading many of them to break the rules of classical art. New schools such as the Impressionist and the Cubist emerged.

In a painting titled *The Price of a Book*, Toumayan painted a twelve years old milkman counting the coins he receives for selling milk, with which he intends to buy books to allow him to study for school. This is a depiction of the plight of many



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struggling families in Aleppo the hometown of Toumayan.

Toumayan achieved several paintings dealing with the plight of the Palestinian people and the occupation of their land.

Toumayan was born in Aleppo, Syria in 1949. He attended an industrial school in Aleppo, but he always preferred the arts. He believes that he is 'A strange mixture. I come from Aleppo, but you cannot say that I am an Aleppan. I left Aleppo for Beirut when I was seventeen. My industrial training helped me in my career there, namely designing and producing movie posters, for four years. I learned a lot in Beirut, particularly that Lebanon in the sixties was a country of freedom and prosperity. Then I returned to Syria where I spent four years of military service during crucial times when some of my friends died fighting in the war with Israel. I learned that death was easy and possible. Above all, I learned how valuable my civil life was; my personal freedom.'

Then Toumayan left Syria for Kuwait spending nine years working for two leading newspapers. He worked as an artist, draftsman, chirographer, producer and head of design. This gave him the opportunity to travel to many European countries and to Australia before migrating to it. His most important achievement there was his work as an arts critic. His articles were published in leading newspapers.

Toumayan migrated to Australia when he was thirty years old. He was already a mature artist, with his own style and techniques. Before this migration, he had already exhibited his works in two solo exhibitions in Aleppo (1973) and Kuwait (1975), and participated in many group shows around the Arab world. His experimentation with art started when he was seven years old.

In Australia, Toumayan had to earn a living to support his family. He is married to Lena Toumayan, also an artist, and they have three children: Michael, Andrew and Nicole. He also had to find the means to continue his artistic creativity, painting and organizing exhibitions. He opted for what he calls commercial art, such as book cover design, advertisements, cloth pattern design and posters.

He worked with several companies concerned with textile design, sign writing and poster production. He was designated the best poster artist in Victoria. He currently designs and produces commercial advertisements. He is currently President of Middle East United Fine Artists, an association he helped establish in 1993.

The Arabic Heritage League, an association based in Sydney, conferred upon Toumayan *Gibran's Literary Award* in 1997 in recognition of his artistic achievements.

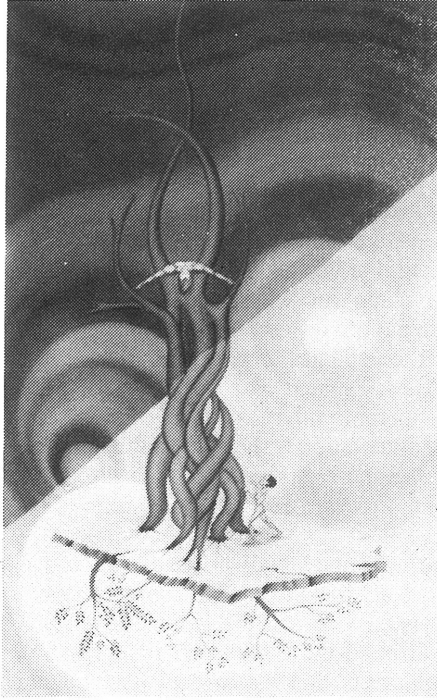
Toumayan seems to be the outcome of all those events and changes that occurred in his life. He feels them, and he has not lost the urge to express them.

Talking to Toumayan, it is easy to see the goodness in him. He is a man who wants to see the whole world, see through the others and pour his love onto the universe. During our talk he made some statements that we present here together in an attempt to see how he paints with words some aspects of his thought and personality.

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'When there is a cloud over our vision, we think that the others are wrong.'
'Life is a one act play: it finishes quickly.'
'I do not like chickens, because they cannot see beyond their location. I love eagles flying high in the sky, being able to see the largest possible area of this world.'
'I hate sleep, because in sleep there is no productivity.'
'The hardest exile is the one you experience at home.'
'The situation of Arab artists in Australia is similar to the situation of a singer in a hall without audience.'

Underlying all of that, Toumayan seems to have been searching for 'the truth'. He symbolized his search by the following painting. We are, however, not sure whether Toumayan is likely to stop his search, no matter what discoveries he might make.



علي أبو سالم ♦ رعيد النحاس

Ali Abou Salem is the Editor of *Algethour*, Melbourne, Australia.

L A N D M A R K

GREG BOGAERTS

Two Chapel Street Stories

Coping

Johnny Dent stood at the corner of Chapel Street and Dandenong Road with the hammer of traffic quaking through his body. A thin, prisoner-of-war body hunched against the cold and the bayonet-blade din of the traffic sprinting for the heart of Melbourne. Johnny reached into the long, green trench coat he was wearing and pulled out a pair of fluffy, purple ear muffs he'd placed in that particular pocket of the coat; the ear muffs he carried every time he went out and had to stand at that particular corner.

He slipped them over his ears and the grin stitched itself amongst his broken teeth and sometimes-empty gums because it was a blessed relief, a deliverance, as far as Johnny Dent was concerned, to have the big-gun racket of the traffic removed from his hearing. He stood there, still feeling the artillery thud of cars and trucks in his small frame, but the quiet was peace-time bliss and Johnny walked across the road when the lights turned and the barrage of cars and trucks came to a temporary stop.

Walking slowly across the road, he peered into the windscreens of the motorists, as alert and as ready as sentries behind the wheels, toey and ready to trigger jam down on their accelerators when the lights turned green in their favour. But the sight of Johnny Dent, dressed in his long trench coat and his green beanie on his head, and wearing fluffy purple ear muffs and grinning broken teeth and spaces at them, was enough to put any would-be road rager off his or her mettle of menace.

As he crossed, Johnny came right up close to every windscreen and grinned at all the drivers lined up because Johnny felt as though he had exercised some mysterious and great power in commanding the traffic to stop. The King Canute of Chapel Street, Prahran, he thought of himself when he stopped the tide of metal and rubber.

And the drivers would sit there watching the small man with the wild wisps of grey hair like bullet traces in a night sky; the sunken jaw and ridge-thin jowls like a no-man's land. Many of the motorists would sit there watching the man even when the lights had turned green. Honking of horns came along the lines of traffic and the drivers, first off the mark, finally woke themselves from the spell of the goblin who'd come out of their last night's dream to haunt them on their way to work.

Johnny stood on the opposite corner with a prisoner-release grin as though he'd crossed the river and almost made it to the Promised Land of Chapel Street, Prahran. He stood there waving to the men and women as they drove off, his smile turning to tears because he was almost in the heart of the bunker of Chapel Street and the others, the lost souls behind their steering wheels, were condemned to the barbed-wire purgatory of inner Melbourne and elsewhere.

The old-and-maybe-young man descended the slope of Chapel Street and he felt the buildings close like the certainty of trench walls about him, his tears dried, he smelt the roasting of coffee. He saw the drops of olive oil in the air he reckoned; told the others he ran into on Chapel Street that he could see the olive oil escaping in bullets from the

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chimneys and metal flews of the restaurants and cafes that lined the street. And he stuck his tongue out and lapped the olive oil and garlic out of the air and scared the hell out of other passers-by.

It was rare for Johnny Dent to venture out of Chapel Street, Prahran, and when he did, he could hardly wait to get back to where he belonged. It was as special as an armistice, for Johnny, when he came back from visiting friends in St. Kilda. A homecoming of prodigal son proportions even if he'd only been away an hour or two.

'I'm back!' he'd tell any Chapel Street regular he knew.

'Didn't know you were gone Johnny,' was the usual sort of reply.

'Yeah, been to visit Tim and Gina in St Kilda. Yeah, used t' live in Prahran. But I told 'em like I always do. Told 'em they made a mistake moving out of the suburb. Told 'em they were part of it. Fitted in like the bolt and stock of a rifle they did,' Johnny would say until the regular tore himself away from the refugee grasp of the small man. The regular usually wondered whether his own thoughts of moving were wise ponderings considering the commandant wrath he'd have to put up with from Johnny Dent when the little man found out.

Johnny usually headed for Dan Murphy's Liquor Store when the doors opened because he felt he had a place there, particularly in the antique wine section. Johnny Dent reckoned he knew how the bottles of old and valuable wine should be arranged; rank-and-serial-number perfection in the wooden racks. He reckoned the manager of Dan Murphy's didn't know his arse from his elbow when it came to sorting and arranging the bottles according to price and quality.

And the current manager, the third in three years, was turning gun-metal-grey from the stress of Johnny's regimented determination to re-arrange the antique wine section. The sight of Johnny precariously balancing ten bottles of Grange Hermitage in his arms was enough to ensure the manager's hair became a silver rind of Western Front winter frost.

Johnny's determination to arrange things as he saw fit wasn't confined to Dan Murphy's and stopping traffic on Dandenong Road, although he did have a reputation for standing at that corner and pressing the pedestrian button for hours on end just to see the cars and trucks stopped and in the order he wanted. Until someone alerted the coppers and one was dispatched to have a chat with Johnny.

He spent considerable time roaming up and down Chapel Street arranging the garments on trays out the front of clothes shops. Until the irate managers and shop attendants chased him away, sighed and set about putting the clothes for women back where they should have been until Johnny came along and hung them from the tops of tram stop signs.

Johnny also spent considerable time roaming up and down Chapel Street telling side walk winers and diners that they were incorrectly seated and persuading them to pick up their plates of pasta and cups of long black coffee and glasses of wine and shifting them into a regimental seating pattern Johnny considered to be all correct and accounted for. Something that drove the owners and managers of the eateries to distraction. Something the regulars of Chapel Street ignored or coped with by telling the frantic goblin, dancing up and down in front of them, to piss off. They told him to pick on someone who would let him get away with it. Like tourists who usually obeyed the little dictator out of fascinated awe because they thought he was one of the local custodians of cultural pride and custom and therefore to be obeyed.

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And many Americans, back in their home towns, had snap shots in their photo albums of Johnny Dent, striding the pavement with the aplomb of General Rommel in the desert, re-arranging winers and diners on Chapel Street, Prahran, Melbourne, Australia. The Americans spent enthusiastic hours explaining to their relations and friends the intricacies of pavement eating patterns according to the guru and commander-in-chief they'd met in Melbourne.

Johnny just had to have everything arranged correctly in Chapel Street and everything on time; including the trams. And there was no excuse of heavy traffic causing delay for any tram driver as far as Johnny was concerned. At lunch time, he stood in front of Dan Murphy's like an officer in the field, and checked every tram, coming both ways, was on time. If it wasn't, he boarded the offending vehicle and gave the driver a good court marshalling for being late.

'I couldn't help it Johnny. The traffic's murder,' was the driver's usual reply.

'Well, okay I'll overlook it this time,' was Johnny's usual reply.

The tram took off, later than it had been before Johnny got on to lecture the driver, with the puzzled faces of the passengers pressed hard against the window watching the little man sprinting across the intersection to board another tram that was late.

Johnny lived in a bedsitter on Chapel Street, Prahran, and everything had its place in the one room and small kitchen. Not enough room to swing a field marshal's cat but its tenant had fitted everything possible into such a small space. The ends of cardboard tubes, from inside toilet rolls, had been sticky taped over and tacked to the four walls of the bedsitter; the cardboard rolls held pens, a tooth brush, a razor and a shaving brush.

The microwave was stacked on the back of the stove and the television was stacked on top of the microwave and the small CD player was stacked on top of the television. Johnny had the television going and the CD player going with something turning around in the microwave and something cooking in the oven of the stove. All at the same time.

He'd nailed wooden extension posts to the ends of his bed, and strung wire across. He hung his wet washing on the wire and left the window open next to his bed to dry the clothes during the night when he slept below the warfare of sheets, shirts and underwear. And it didn't matter to Johnny if it was blowing a gale during the night. He had to get his washing dry while he slept and he wrapped himself up in two or three army surplus shirts and a couple of ex-navy jackets and multiple layers of army blankets.

Johnny was known to all and sundry on Chapel Street, but there were only a few who knew his story, knew of his past. And they kept themselves hidden away most of the time and weren't about to let on to anyone, who might be interested, about Johnny Dent.

Johnny Dent came from Europe. Sailed on one of the liners after the end of the Second World War. He left behind his home town in the middle of a continent sheared apart by the fire and metal of Hitler's army and airforce. He left behind, but carried with him, the sound of Nazi tanks rumbling up the main street of his village and the sound of shells pounding apart the buildings; the chaotic sounds of women and children and men fleeing in fear.

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The Aunt

Mame had hair the colour of flame; hair she'd dyed for years to the point where she could have stopped rinsing the red colour through it she said because everything Mame did or said was cast in iron and could not be turned back or contradicted, as far as she was concerned. Mame's large body was girdled tightly into control by the corsets she commanded to do their work every morning she got out of bed and prepared for a new day in Chapel Street.

Mame, the woman everyone called aunt or aunty because everyone on Chapel Street, Prahran, knew the woman, knew that duck waddle of an arse grinding up the main drag, heading for one of her usual positions. The woman intent on finding the early morning winter sun to melt the arthritis in her bones, shifting to other strategic positions as the sun moved its radiance along the strip of Chapel Street.

Mame waddling down the slope of the street and leaving behind her bedsitter in St Kilda East because she always reckoned she belonged in Prahran because it was a bit closer to the water of the Yarra River; the place where Mame and her husband, Henry, once sailed, tacking their small craft into the upper reaches of the river and sailing back down and out into the open ocean along the coast. Ducking into rivers and streams along the coastline and exploring the estuaries, then heading for home, tied up on the dock of the Yarra in the middle of the city.

All a long time ago Mame would tell anyone who would listen.

'Nights amongst the shallows with my Henry netting for prawns for hours then making love until the sun came up through the reeds of the river. God that man could do it. That bloody Henry was at me all night until I ordered him off and into his own bunk,' Mame would say to some unsuspecting tourist and leave them red-faced at the entrance of Coles. With the locals, lined up at the cash registers, their faces full of smirks because they all knew Mame and her favourite topic of her Henry and how he could go all night.

Something Mame broadcasted up and down the aisles of Coles with her voice as loud as her flaming red hair because the old woman was a bit deaf now. Not that it worried the locals; they all stopped and chatted to the old woman with her pink make up applied as thickly as icing on a wedding cake, her mouth an over-ripe strawberry creviced with pinched lines of age. Mame would chat up any male who stopped to talk to her.

'Hello gorgeous,' she'd greet any man who happened through the line up at Coles and came upon Mame sitting on one of the seats just inside the doors of the supermarket. 'Want t' come home with me?'

And it would be the same if she sat at the tram stop near Dan Murphy's in the afternoon. Tram drivers would ring their bells when the old woman hobbled across the crossing. Mame would pull up a few inches of skirt, show some leg and the tram driver would belt the bell even louder.

Mame planting herself on the tram stop seat near Dan Murphy's as if it was a throne and she had taken up royal residence. With the afternoon sun shocking through the red tresses of the old woman's hair, the wind scuttling up Chapel Street and tossing the mass of red curls until Mame's head seemed to burn. Passers-by would stop and look and the old woman would begin again on her favourite topic of her Henry and how he could go all night.

A regular routine for Mame, and as the last rays of the sun were lost in the building

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shadows of Chapel Street, she would raise herself, waddle into the bottle shop and buy her usual; a bottle of Penfolds Royal Reserve Port. Cuddling the bottle close to her breasts, she travelled on the tram across the thundering line of traffic that was the Dandenong Road. Gingerly lowered herself down the steps of the tram half way down the St. Kilda hill and shuffled off to her bedsitter where the port would set fire to the marrow of her bones. Until she fell asleep with the sound of the tram rattle still in her head.

In sleep came the memory of the ocean opening at the mouth of the Yarra and the taste of the salt on her mouth as Henry sailed the boat in her dreams and caught fish and netted prawns and took her back to the birth on the Yarra in the middle of the city.

In sleep came the fire, the heat of her love making with Henry all those years ago. Mame would wake in the morning, in the middle of winter, and feel her old hide aglow with the fire of the dream, as if Henry had come back to provoke the warmth in the woman.

Mame's life was a routine until one day something happened. The old woman sat at her usual spot inside the doors of Coles but her hair had changed, the regular shoppers could see. The silver was growing out from the old woman's scalp until there were two colours; one of silver grey and the other of red at the end of the thick mane of hair. And the red seemed to disappear a little more each day as Mame cut off a few more inches.

Until there was only a scrub of grey silver that seemed a twilight presence after the fire of the red hair. The old woman seemed diminished and less certain of her existence in Chapel Street. She stopped wearing her pink make up and her fire-engine red lipstick. Her face matched the grey of her hair; a dull pearl colour as though Chapel Street had been washed over by the ocean that had heaved itself from the bottom of The Bay and flooded down into the heart of Prahran.

Regular shoppers at Coles and Dan Murphy's seemed to sense the cold come into the bones of the old woman and they shivered whenever they saw Mame and her seaweed strands of silver hair. The flame, the burning bush of her hair that once drew them to her for the usual rude and more than suggestive banter was gone and the regulars avoided the old woman. Who had become silent and never asked any man, coming through the line up at the supermarket, to come home with her. Never talked about her Henry.

Mame didn't acknowledge the bells of the trams anymore and she never hitched her skirts to show a bit of leg half way across the road when she headed for the seat near Dan Murphy's. Tram drivers stopped banging the bell because all they saw was an old woman worn down to an abalone shell lustre of grey.

Mame stopped buying her bottle of Penfolds Royal Reserve Port and sat on the tram with her arms folded over her breasts as though she'd lost something she was trying to hug to her. It was an effort for the old woman to lower herself down the tram steps and shuffle off to her bedsitter.

She shivered herself to sleep under blankets and quilts and felt the slivers of ice, in her bones, niggling at her as the trams ran a few streets away. With the sound of gun shots in the air that were the steel wheels of the trams running over ten cent pieces left on the tracks by children, who should have been in bed long ago.

Mame stopped dreaming of her Henry on the boat anchored in an estuary. She stopped dreaming the heat of their passion long passed. She dreamed Henry standing on the cold oblong of stone that was his gravestone; the ragged flaps of rotten flesh of the risen corpse, the worm-filled mouth, the bridge spans of bones that made the hands and

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the eye sockets filled with the darkness of closed rooms.

But the old woman persisted in her routine in Chapel Street, even though the cold had planted itself in her bones and the valves of her heart. Mame made herself go out into the day and she searched the faces of the men and women, who came from the aisles of Coles and who passed her when she sat on the seat near Dan Murphy's.

Mame looking, waiting, wanting the sound of another human voice because she'd been forgotten and the regulars of Prahran didn't speak to her anymore. Their fear of her change had become a habit of avoidance they performed automatically. Instinctively.

Until one day a little girl fell over in Coles and Mame spat on her handkerchief and dabbed away the bright red blood of the cut in the little girl's knee. The young man, who was the father of the little girl, stopped inside the glass doors of Coles and spoke to Mame with her jellyfish tentacle hair and her grey face and grey eyes.

'I don't hear you talking about Henry anymore aunty, he said to the old woman.

'I don't talk about him because I've remembered him the way he really was. Not the way I used to say. Not those stories about the trips on the boat and the prawning and the fishing and the love making. All true enough but not what I've come to remember,' said Mame and shone her charcoal-coloured eyes on the man who straightened up and took hold of the hand of his daughter and made ready to escape through the double glass doors into the wind-tunnel cold of Chapel Street.

'No don't go yet. Stay a moment and listen to what I have to say,' she said to the man. Mame's hands playing an invisible cat's cradle at her breasts; worrying the air between herself and the young man with his daughter.

'Henry wouldn't give me children. Said he didn't want them. Told me from the start of our marriage. And when I insisted later I wanted some he left. Walked out and left me with just enough money to buy my bedsitter. He sailed off somewhere and I hadn't a clue where he was until I found out recently he was dead and buried.'

'But we're your family aunt. All of us who come through the check-outs. All of us on Chapel Street. All of us,' said the young man.

Mame came back to Coles the next day and her hair was dyed red but not the red-light-district red of old; a deep burgundy with a muted black gloss. Her eyes had lost their drowned sea shell look. She focused her blue and violet eyes on the men and women of Chapel Street, Prahran, and she chatted to them about their lives and their wives and their husbands.

And their children.

غريغ بوجارتس

Greg Bogaerts is a writer from Newcastle, Australia. He has published 120 short stories and currently working on some novels. *Kalimat* translated some of his stories into Arabic. He was the subject of *Landmark* in the Arabic issue of *Kalimat* in June 2001. His stories, and the article about him were received well by Arab readers and critics.

L. E. SCOTT

Black Family Letters from Boston to Aotearoa/New Zealand

Ki te Taane Pango no Amerika e noho ana kei roto i te whenua i tapaa ai ko Aotearoa, araa kei roto i teetahi pahii kaitito i te tiriti Raumati o Ponsoyby... E hika

I hope I've written that right in Maori - I took the words from the glossary in the back of the *Mana* magazines you sent me.

Well, Mister (and I don't mean that in the Alice Walker sense), here we go again - me in my kitchen and you in yours. Some more cooking, some more tasting, some more flavours, some keeping, some throwing out, some putting aside - and don't we know, keeping and putting aside don't have to live in the same neighbourhood. You don't have to be a woman to know this, but it helps.

I know it was hard for you to make that trip home to say goodbye to your Mother, when at the same time your wife had left you to go back to her Mother's house. I'm really sorry that you have messed up (I want to say fucked up, but I was raised in the church) your marriage to that nice woman, who loved you in spite of all the dirt you have wrapped around your life. When are you going to learn, Mister, to do right by those who love you? I am so mad at you I just want to shake you, but Lord, I'll have to do that another day. Right now, child, there's something else I need to talk with you about - your Mother.

You have been back in Aotearoa about a week now and your Mother is still holding. She's got a strong will to live and that's all there is between her and death. We all know that no matter what happens now, you won't be able to come back (money can be such an evil first cousin to life). You came back to say GOODBYE to your Mother while she was still alive and we - the family - understand what your coming home to Boston was about. The choice was not in doubt - if you can say goodbye to the person you love while they can still hear, you do it gladly (gladly is one of those funny words in life and I don't use it too often) and for your Mother you have done that. So rest your soul and do not fret what God has in mind.

From all the things we talked about in my kitchen when you were here, this is what I've written for and about your Mother.

A Southern Black Woman Dies

Mama, you came into this world on November 12, 1904. What a long life - what a long country row you had to hoe. You were born a Coloured woman, lived long enough to become a Negro, then Black, then Afro-American, and further still, you lived long enough to become what you are - a Black woman, an Afrikan American.

When you came into the world it was not a friendly place for people of colour. They (who are they? white folks) did not want you to learn to read and write but you did - from the Bible. They (who are they? white folks) did not want you to dream and yet you did - about being a school teacher. In between you gave birth to 15 children (all home births) and they became your students. And from them you have enough grandchildren and great-grandchildren to start a universe - and you have. Blood from your being will walk upon the face of this earth until time is no more. You are still...

We know from the stories that have been passed down that when you were a young woman (and not so young) you used to dance in the kitchen. Cooking collard greens with one hand, baking bread with another, frying chicken in an iron black skillet with an

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invisible hand and, just to show that you had four hands, making a cotton flour-sack dress for one of the children's birthdays. And during the course of the day didn't open the ice-box but twice - once in the morning to take out what you needed for the day and once at the end of the day to put back what was left, hoping the 25lbs of ice would last until the ice-man came again.

You were not a Dr. Martin Luther King, nor a Rosa Parks - you were both. In and around Arabi, Valdosta, Waycross, and Cordele, Georgia, there were so many dusty roads that you had to walk (sometimes at midnight) facing many unkind white words, knowing that dignity does not surrender itself.

Boston is a long way from Georgia, but not so far as Afrika. There are some truths in this world that must never be forgotten. There are some smells of hurt in this world that must never be forgotten. Some of the pain you had in this world in your life was because you were born a Black Woman. Many things happened to you because of that, the stumbling white blocks that were in front of your life were not God-made but man-made. Some way or another with a cotton sack around your neck trying to pull you back, you pushed on because if you hadn't, no matter how badly we are doing now, it would have been worse. No, you didn't walk on water, but you taught your children how to walk between the raindrops. And within that space of wet and dry, you taught that no life is without struggle. You struggled well.

About some of your children - those you buried before you left this world. The old folks say there is no greater sadness for a mother than to bury her children, to leave her footprints around the graves of her children. There is no longer walk from burying the afterbirth to burying the child.

Dear Mother, your husband, our Father, left this world 27 years before you. When he died you had been married for over 40 years because in 1919 you 'jumped the broom'. It is truly a wonder how you both created so many strong and beautiful children, starting in the 1920s and ending in the 1940s, and kept them safe in a world that was not safe. Much is being said in this world today about "the Black Family", what it is and what it isn't. Well, we are still standing, we're still moving on. There are some problems in "the Black Family", but as your children gathered here to pay homage to your life, we are saying: THANK YOU for having us, THANK YOU for raising us, THANK YOU for being there for us, THANK YOU for your milk...

In a Baptist Church in the countryside, surrounded by Georgia pine trees (a history of their own - sing Strange Fruit for us, Billie Holiday), our Mother started her lifetime faith. It was a simple and unpolluted belief - God is God... It is time to give her back...

Well, Mister, that's what I've written for your Mother as she moves from the light. I'll close now. I'm feeling too tired to talk about what is going on between you and your wife, but I do care. I just need to look after me right now - no doubt the same words your wife said to you before she left. Knowing you and knowing her (the little I do), she did the right thing. You're going to have to learn, or become an old, dried up, bitter man without any love for yourself or anyone else. Please know, I would not like to see you like that. It would hurt me.

Dear One, I've got to go. I'm not feeling that good about all this. Your Mother is dying, your wife is leaving you - love and rage are often walking companions. I don't know how to get you through this night. You just have to stand in the rain and the pain and be washed.

I must go now. I love you in the words of Anita Baker, 'with an open hand', and I do know the morning comes... I will kiss then...

Goodnight

L. E. Scott is an African-American writer living in New Zealand. With the above story, he continues his *Letters from Boston* series that he started publishing in other magazines before.

MARISA CANO

Sarah's Mouth

Sarah Wilson could not speak because she did not have a mouth. She used to have one once. She had been born with a mouth, but it was taken from her in her early childhood. Over the years, her lips eroded and her oral cavity closed, so that now no trace of a pre-existing mouth could be found.

Being without a mouth wasn't as annoying to Sarah as people assumed it was when they first came across her "handicap" - as some would politely call it. Actually, Sarah found it quite comforting at times. For example, when one was lost for words, or was asked a compromising question, or had to give a speech, or was required to entertain unknown guests, be funny, or witty, or say things one did not really feel like saying. In all those instances Sarah had the advantage of simply not having a mouth.

The problem of eating resolved itself in a miraculous way: Sarah had only to sit in front of a plate and the food would evaporate into a kind of steam that would then be inhaled through her nose and absorbed through every pore of her body, leaving her nourished and satisfied.

Her mouth was not taken from her abruptly, it was not torn or pulled or snatched from her; rather it was gradually erased off her face. At age 33 Sarah could remember perfectly, as if it were only yesterday, the day her mouth finally disappeared. She had been playing with her two sisters - one older, one younger than her - a game, hide and seek. Then, as usual, an argument started between them: you cheated, you peeked, I didn't, you didn't count up to twenty, you took too long to hide... And the inevitable: 'You four-eyes fatso!' To which she had no other answer but to strike out with her hands, pulling hair and scratching skin with her fingernails.

Then her mother appeared - she had a knack for turning up at the precise moment when the dirty battle was raging, albeit never the moment the stinging name-calling was being hurled at Sarah. As usual Sarah hadn't had the chance to explain her behaviour - specially now that her mouth was already half faded- before one of the sisters took up the customary cry: 'Sarah started it'. And when her mother glared down at her demanding an answer, one second was all the time Sarah was granted to come up with a good excuse - a deadline she could never meet - before a cascade, no, an avalanche of recriminations, threats and accusations, delivered in the presence and to the amusement of her two sisters, put a definite end to her mouth.

When next a humiliated, tearful Sarah looked at her reflection in the mirror, the space where her mouth had been was now a blank. It didn't come as a surprise. She had of course noticed her mouth fading away for some time, becoming atrophied for the lack of use, and more and more useless for its atrophy. 'Good!' she said to herself. 'Now at least Mum won't come to me with her stupid questions. I hope they all leave me alone forever!' Sarah was only five at the time.

It was when Sarah started school that, for the first time, her parents showed any concern over her lack of a mouth. They had barely seemed to notice it at home, or else regarded it as unimportant. But now, they even had a private talk with the school principal because of Sarah's 'problem'.

For the first few weeks her teacher was forever enticing her to use a mouth she did not have: 'What a lovely painting, Sarah! Do you like to paint?' 'You look pretty today. Who did your hair this morning?' 'Would Sarah like to tell me how many apples there are on the table?' And Sarah would just nod or shake her head, show her fingers or shrug her shoulders, since nothing else could be expected of a child without a mouth - why couldn't the teacher see it?

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Soon the teacher gave up her unsuccessful attempts, for it became obvious that, despite her 'handicap', Sarah was an extremely intelligent little girl who paid full attention to what was taught in the classroom, learnt to read and write at a surprising speed, could work with numbers in a very short time and was a delight to have as a student: never answered back in a rude way, never disrupted the classroom and was as quiet as a mouse whenever the teacher spoke. Once she could master the pen, Sarah had no further trouble in communicating with the rest of the world, and so her school years went by smoothly and productively. She reaped as many prizes and awards at the end of each year as were available to one single person, and went on to obtain a Doctorate in Art and Humanities at university five years after obtaining a breathtaking 99.8 mark in her High School Certificate.

Sarah left home soon after graduating. Life with her family, although bearable after losing her mouth, had not been exactly easy. Not being able to answer back could also be frustrating, so she became a withdrawn child who enjoyed spending most of her time in the solitude of her bedroom. Therefore, leaving the parental home was no painful severing of ties, rather the final undoing of a loose knot.

Before graduating, she had already secured a job. The fact that she was such a dedicated student prompted one of her teachers to take her under his patronage, referring her to an arts publicity firm, where she was accepted on the spot for a full-time position. Her work consisted of preparing catalogues and press-releases on arts events and exhibitions held at different museums and art galleries in town, and editing a specialised arts magazine for in-house circulation.

She was then an attractive, bespectacled young woman of 23, who felt in control of her life. She moved into a tiny studio apartment in Paddington, so small that a bed, a desk, a chair and a combined TV and stereo set made it look crowded. But sunrays filtered through the window in the afternoon, just when Sarah arrived home from work, and stayed until all light was gone; they filled the place with peace and hope.

Sarah loved her job. It was tailor-made for her. She had her own little office where she could immerse herself in the love of her life - art - and where no one would bother her with irrelevant talk. Her colleagues never commented on her 'handicap' - she suspected the professor had warned them about it beforehand. She was grateful for their discretion. Ten years later, she was one of the few people who remained on that job from their early days of employment, and swore she would stay there for the rest of her working life.

Sarah had never had a boyfriend. During her adolescence boys hadn't thought it worth the trouble chatting up a girl without a mouth - perhaps the prospect of a date during which all the talking would be in their hands was daunting to them. So her social life had been a carbon-copy of her home life. Although her isolation had made her very lonely at times, Sarah knew from experience that surviving is a matter of adjusting to the obstacles of life, and she did just that in this case too.

But now, uninvited, love came knocking at her window. It loomed as an intrusion into her quiet routine and threatened to interfere with her peace of mind. His name was Theodore.

Theodore had been hired by the firm a month before, and given the office space right next to hers. He was a well-mannered young man, close to thirty, always smartly dressed and with a funny little pony-tail at the back of his head. Being in such proximity most of the day had allowed a friendship to develop between them both. Theodore never referred to her 'handicap' in any way and acted as if, in his eyes, being without a mouth was a most common thing. He talked to her in a way that only required from her a nod, a smile or a movement of hands.

Then Theodore did the unthinkable: he asked her out. Caught by surprise, all Sarah could managed was a blank stare, and he, used to doing all the talking, went on to finalise the details of when and where. That evening, after work, he took her to dinner to an inconspicuous Greek restaurant in Surry Hills where they served, he swore, the best souvlaki in Sydney. Theodore

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hadn't as much as blinked at the food being evaporated, inhaled and absorbed by Sarah, as if that was a most ordinary way of eating a meal. After dinner, they had walked all the way to her apartment, where he wished her a good-night without a kiss while she beamed at him without a smile.

They dated several times since, and Sarah realised she had fallen in love with Theodore. Their friendship had taken a turn towards intimacy, and physical contact became an urgent need. And therein lay the problem: how would Sarah proceed from there on? How would she express her innermost feelings to Theodore without a word? Could an 'I love you' scribbled on a piece of paper convey the truth, the depth or the passion of a spoken one? How on earth could a person without a mouth kiss? And was it possible to make love without whispers and sighs and the taste of breath?

For the first time in almost a life-time Sarah began to despair of her 'handicap'. Whenever she looked in the mirror now her *mouthlessness* stood out like it never had before. If only she could rub it into being, like those lottery tickets where you rub the prize into existence. If only she could wish it back with the power of the mind. If only fairy god-mothers were real...

She was falling into listlessness; not even the sunrays filtering through the window could bring light into her shadowed spirit. She thought of discontinuing her relationship with Theodore, but... via a letter? It would sound more like a dismissal! And, would she cope with the guilt of the break-up afterwards? She went as far as taking pen and paper and writing an unsteady 'Dear Theodore' at the top of the page. Instead, she asked him over for dinner.

This night Sarah knew would be the last: either the last of their relationship or the last of her *mouthless* past.

During the evening, and while getting things ready, she tried hard. She called upon, returned to and relived her childhood days and all the pent up hurt and frustration, paying minute attention to the neglected bruises in her soul. She wept with her younger self, comforted her and forgave her, like a kind mother. And just before Theodore was due, when she rushed to the mirror to compose her features and re-do her smudged make-up, she thought she had glimpsed the wistful line of a mouth beginning to show on the space where mouths are found.

When she answered the knock on the door, in her delight at seeing Theodore she almost sensed the opening of a smile on her face, almost felt the cool air on her closeted teeth. For a wild moment she thought she might spell out a welcome.

He came with arms full of wine and roses. She had set the table on the kitchenette bench and he placed the roses in a vase in the centre, together with the bottle of red wine. He took one of the stools at the bench. She turned on the radio and searched for soft music, and, having found it, took her seat beside him.

Theodore filled both glasses with the crimson red. He lifted his and invited her to do the same. As their glasses clicked together, so did the world around Sarah for the moment disappear, the only reality left was that of her heart in silent contemplation. Was it his hand that came up, his fingers that traced that space between her nose and her chin, like they were sketching a mouth? Lost in a turmoil of emotions, she brought her hand up to help them do it... and found no other healing touch than her own. It was at that magical moment of no present, past or future, that Sarah's soul was redeemed.

It was at that moment that Sarah Wilson recovered her long-lost mouth.

ماريسا كانو

Marisa Cano is a journalist, translator and community writer. She facilitates creative writing workshops for non-English speakers. She is active in translating literary work, organising literary events and involved in the publication of multicultural anthologies.

ZERIAF AL-MIKDAD

Translated by Ouday Jouni

The Rituals of a Female

Brought back to my father's house, I smiled maliciously, made a quick look at the yard, and glanced sparks of anger in my mother's eyes. I rushed down the stairs of *almadafah* (the entertainment hall) where I sat with my head between my knees, then burst into tears.

The mayor of the village entered the room with my husband's cousin. I waited too long till I was on the verge of taking a nap should not my brother's wife stretch her hand towards me and say: 'Come on! wash your face and go into my room so that you are not seen by anyone.'

I took her hand avoiding to look into my mother's face. I sat at the room doorsteps with my eyes roaming in the yard.

My mother used to comb my hair under the lemon tree while I spoiled the soil with my toes, touching her round belly and pushing her backward. 'Naughty girl! You would kill me!' she yelled. I laughed maliciously and felt the baby in her belly moving under the touch of my hand, so I pressed more.

My mother brushed my hair with oil and plunged the teeth of a comb, made of bone, into my hair harshly, before she braided it behind my ears so I look like some one who hung from her ears.

I shouted at my sister as she came closer to me. The poor girl bent her head down and moved away. My mother hit me. I laughed wickedly. 'No body can defeat you,' she shouted.

My sister remained silent whereas I kept laughing secretly. I heard my father's steps approaching the yard, so I adjusted myself in my seat and surrendered to my mother's hands as quiet as a good girl. 'Watch out, the girls' hair!' my father screamed. My eyes welled with tears as I freed myself from her hand and flung into his arms. I released the hoe from his hand, dusted the soil off his clothes, and struggled to let loose his turban once he bent his head down.. 'Well done,' he said.

I splashed water on his feet and he started laughing. I did much in showing my skills that made him move restlessly and pushing me away by his hand. I left him to my routine playful running in the yard, jumping without restriction.

One afternoon, my father woke up from his daily siesta and noticed that my mother was in pain. He got angry. 'I hope the one in your stomach would die,' I said to her. 'How careless you are!' he rebuked me angrily. 'Hope your brother would bear my name. Hurry up to Um as-Saad' He shouted.

His looks alarmed me, raising the level of concern I had for my mother. Um as-Saad, the midwife, lived far away from our house so I ran through the fields. On my way, I saw my aunt. I did not stop, but I urged her hurry up saying: 'Mum is in labour'. When all the neighbours and my aunt heard the news, they all rushed into our house.

Accomplishing the task entrusted to me, I went back home with severe pain in my feet. So, I took off my shoes stealthily. The minute I entered the house, I squeezed my toes inside the shoes. My father noticed the fine dust on my clothes. 'Go and wash quickly,' He ordered me.

I pried and listened slyly. Seeing the women go to and fro, I roamed with them but my

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aunt pushed me away saying: 'Be off', but I hid under the window and heard Um as-Saad urging my mother: 'Aisha! push, push, try to help your self lest your baby suffocates.' My mother screamed out of pain, and I tight-knitted my teeth and burst into crying. Discovering my hiding place, my aunt threatened me: 'If you don't go away we will cut off your hair.' So I ran away fearing my father would kill me if my hair is cut off.

I tried to grasp a light sprinkled by those twinkling stars stretching upon the sky's expanse. 'My mother may die. That newcomer would kill her,' I then told myself before finally surrendering to slumber.

I got up with those hideous ideas in my head: perhaps, my mother died at night and was buried without my knowledge. Or perhaps the women had already taken her with them. Amid my amazement, I found a strange creature lying beside her, soft and lean. I gazed at him, and felt scared. I tried to cling to her feet, but she did not notice me. I followed my father but I found him busy receiving the peoples' congratulations.

Meanwhile the women sprayed water on the ground. Many women and men gathered in our house. They all neglected me. Once more, I tried to come closer to my mother's feet, but she was indifferent. I tried several times to attract her attention, but in vain. Meanwhile, my father busied himself playing with the baby's feet, when my aunt came, untied my braid and combed my hair harshly. I screamed of pain, tried to draw my head away from her, but she went on shearing my hair and as powerless as a lamb. I cried but nobody heard me. She then washed my face and changed my dress before telling me to take care of my self.

I ran sporting in the concreted yard. To the right of *almadafa*, there was a lemon tree around which there was a pit of soil. In the middle of the yard, there was a pond of water with raised edges I tried to climb on so as to attract someone's attention.

My mother breast-fed the little being warmly, then my father held him in his arms and went happily with him outside the house. I came near him cautiously, touched his limbs and face, feeling the softness of his head. His hair was fair, his toes and feet so lean.

They used to put a white light handkerchief on his head. Once, I thought to tighten the handkerchief around his neck and strangle him, but I had never had the chance to be alone with him. Everybody around was happy with him. I did not even know how he came. All I knew he was in my mother's belly, lost there, and knowing not how he came out from his world there to ours.

They used to fasten his hands and legs straight to his body as if they were crucifying him. They brought a white swaddle and wrapped it around his body. He screamed of pain while I was happy seeing him crucified and fastened down to the sheet. The women laughed and when my aunt noticed my astonishment, she said: 'It's to help his body grow strong.'

Days passed. I tried hard to accept that newcomer by taming myself playing and jesting him mirthfully in hope I would reconcile and forgive him for what he had done to me, though I was certain that he took over my place in the family, or possibly beyond that. But father was very compassionate, for once he realized all that, he bantered with me as though he was consoling me.

I got used to him and started to toy with him. Touching his head, I felt a pleasant tremor flow into my limbs. Once I begged my mother to let me carry him. I did everything she asked me to do, splashing water on the ground of the yard, watering the flowers down *almadafa*'s stairs and drying my wet clothes. I did not play with the soil and repressed myself from crying when she combed my hair even if it meant biting my lips with my teeth.

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Having grown, I stretched my arms, took him to my bosom and failed to sense how I felt then. My ribs embraced an infant. I did not know what an experience overwhelmed me. Later I realized that that little being was my brother.

I don't remember how many years went by, for I counted them from the game of water and salt on the muddy roofs. I took it as my own sport game. Men used to gather on the roofs of some of the houses built of mud, including our house. It was a method that helped farmers predict which month would the heavens pour down its rain.

They put four handfuls of salt on the roof, naming the first December, the second November, the third February, and the fourth March, then pouring water in every hole of the heaped salt.

Women were strictly denied to come near those holes, but I managed to eavesdrop one time and came to understand the rules of the game. They believed that the hole which filtered water indicated the month of rain. I still remember that when all were busy, I climbed over the roof of the storehouse and hid there till everybody went to bed. Later I climbed the roof of our house and disarranged the holes of salt, leaving water run from all of them. In the next morning, the men were confused before the Sheik told them: 'Perhaps, it is going to be a good year, only God knows, and rain may fall during all these four months.'

My brother grew up before my eyes. My mother's care and interest in him was tremendous. She neglected me relentlessly. That newcomer was like a crown on her head. I realized later that my mother expected to be recognized as a mother only when she bore a baby boy. As for me, I was only a she-born baby and so was the case with my elder sister, and another sister born before us and died. I did not feel my mother had ever remembered her. Sometimes I felt my mother was subconsciously too harsh on herself and her gender in general. As a fact, my father was then the one who unintentionally created such fear and tension in her.

As time went on, I reached a sort of compromise with the little baby. He started uttering his first words and I taught him to do so. Sometimes, when mother turned her face away after delivering him into my hand, I used to beat him till he cried.

Once my mother left him with me in the field when she was collecting the hay she had mowed with my father, and my aunts. I pretended to be asleep, then I pinched him till he cried. My mother came addressing him furiously: 'You would never let me help your father, would you?'

I used to play beside the waterhole, washed and combed my little brother's hair. I taught my sister to be brave enough to come near, play and take care of him. She proved to be always naive and afraid of him. In contrast, I was rather naughty. Did my rebellious self make all that? I do not know, neither do I know how at that time everyone recognized me as a mature woman though I was still a child. I didn't even know what wrong deed I committed when I lifted my dress a little up my legs to avoid being wet by water. 'Put down your dress,' roared my mother in reproach. My body's lineaments changed, and I only realised that too late. I was slim, yet my femininity could not conceal itself.

One day some men came to my father. There was amongst them a man of big stature who gazed at me. They entered *almadafa* and closed the door behind them. The next day, my mother became interested to know how much I was physically matured, so she started touching my body in a strange way. I was confused by her actions and particularly for her winking at my aunt. It took me a while to understand, but I came to know later what that old woman had meant.

Then my mother accompanied me to the market. She bought many things for me, showing undauntedly her skills in choosing the colours and saying: 'Thanks God, the

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bride has grown up.' Yet I couldn't imagine giving me up so easily. My childhood deserted me, so did my mother. My father's hands no more flowed into my head's hair. My mother looked at me happily. My dress was too big for my size that the hairdresser was confused fitting it somewhere. She laughed as she tried to insert pieces of cardboard to enlarge my breasts. I screamed as she combed my hair, and the girls winked at me saying: 'You have really grown up!'

His cold hand caught the tip of my fingers. I drew my hand back. Scared, I fled. My mother told me nothing about the secrets of married life.

'She is yet a child, you have to teach her,' my aunt said.

'She has to learn by herself, the same as we did all. Who taught us Fatima? We learned from our husbands,' my mother replied.

So I went to a man not knowing what he might do to me, could I be with him and why I had to be with him in the first place.

The room was too large. It contained a wooden wardrobe and a wooden bed covered by sheets. My sad clothes filled the wardrobe. I wore my dress, long and big enough to contain many other things with me as well as within my body.

Gradually, my feelings glaciated. I became afraid of him. Afraid of my body's contours. Something had changed. I was not aware of what happened till I found myself surrounded by the four walls of the room. A confinement with everlasting effects on me.

I can still sense these effects. He came forth to me. His face flattened. I did not realize the meaning of his looks. His eyes were big. His hand too. His shoulders eclipsed both the door and the window. He stood on my shadow as I trembled under his. He placed his hand on my forehead. I felt my body as if vanishing under his hand. Fear overwhelmed my aimless looks. My shadow disappeared.

I learnt how to serve and take care of him. I managed his clothes, his food and did what he liked me to do. Yet I never felt the kind of emotion my mother told me, and my aunt later asked about. I never felt it or even realized it. I felt I was cold, dead. I don't know if that was because of that man or of what they have had done to me.

A year later, he became fed up with me. He went to my father and said: 'She is childless.' 'Be patient, she is still young,' my mother implored him.

Perhaps, he did not realise that my stomach was curling up like a ball, like my mother's to give birth to a baby whom I would take care of, whom he as well as other people wouldn't be able to see, for I was the only one to see him. May be I was getting closer to the brink of insanity or sanity.

I was growing older day after day; a woman of beautiful lineaments. My satisfaction came from the great happiness I felt whenever I looked at my self in the mirror, or touched my body and celebrated its details. I strictly rejected whatever might make me more affiliated and related to him.

'There is nothing wrong with her,' the doctor said.

My hair was growing more beautiful, my body much stronger. I embraced my waist and never felt my femininity in his hands. I had to get his arm off my bosom.

'Do I hate my mother?' I thought. What has she done to me? Has she left me to an unknown destiny? She might have done what she had considered appropriate, or simply applied to me what others imposed on her. She did not hate her children. Why would she?

I loved the shadow of my baby close to me. I loved my baby whom I breast-fed many times.

I noticed her tears while she combed my hair. 'God may recompense you,' she said. I

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sensed her fear for me, not because of my going back to my parental home, but for the fate that awaited every childless woman.

Feeling the pain in silence, she was astounded with my maturity. 'Oh! Fatima. The girl prematurely matured. We gave her to marriage too early,' she often said that to my aunt, to the yard and water, but she never allowed me to see her sadness.

My younger brother became a father of a baby whom I played with, and that filled me with the same great pleasure I had when I used to play with his father long before. I laughed, telling my brother how I often used to pinch him when my mother left him with me.

Anyhow, I decided to get rid of the person who was imposed on me since I grew up, as I wanted to be what I willed to be. Whether consciously or subconsciously, I rejected to stay with him. For this reason, I refused to show him my five kids whom I played with, took care of and fed. When he slept, I gave every one of them my breast to suck gluttonously, then I would hold him to my bosom till he slept. Stealthily, my husband would come into the room to find me talking to things he could not see.

I tidy up things belonging to small kids, giving one of them my breast. I feel them all around me. Once I was in the kitchen when my husband surprised me by taking hold of me and yelled: 'Crazy woman! who were you talking to?' I pushed my son and asked him to go away in order not to be seen by my husband.

Actually, he could not see my kids whom I never gave them to birth. I pitied him. His loneliness was unbearable. A lot of things confused me.

I grew up earlier than I should. I looked in silence at those girls who grew up prematurely. I looked at the soil. I touched the salt on the muddy roofs and smelled the scent of flowers under *almadafa*. My feet were dirty with the earth dust, my little brother crying, my mother combing my hair. Despite the passage of all those years, I am still chained to many things.

At last my husband decided to get rid of me. I laughed cunningly as he led me out saying: 'Collect your clothes.' Without saying a word, I followed him. My steps trailed behind him as he accompanied the village chief. They knocked at my father's door. I heard their words colliding with the roof of *almadafa* and the walls, without going through the air, or crossing the windows or going down the stairs. Their voices were indifferent to the sound of water or the dew on the flowers.

I recollected sad memories in my head. My mother's eyes sparked before she cried bitterly.

I splash water. My mother combs my hair. I play with the soil. I pick up my kids. I shout at my nephew. I play with him. My mother gazes at me compassionately. Her gaze engulfs the house.

My kids run after my shadow. Their shadow embraces mine.

'Watch out, don't tread on the baby's feet.' I yell at my nephew.

زرياف المقداد

Zeriaf al-Mikdad is a Syrian writer, with two collections of stories to her credit. She is a member of the Union of Arab Writers. The original Arabic of the above story was published in *Kalimat 6*.

عدي جوني

Ouday Jouni is a Syrian writer, poet and journalist living in Sydney, Australia. He is an adviser to *Kalimat*.

Vestiges

In the lightlessness of our later days
we combed through other years for vestiges
of light and colour as if for consolation;
as if these remnants might tune us to each other -
we felt we hummed with intentions not our own,

tense and argumentative. And you seemed opaque,
as if you wore on your skin a coded message
like inscriptions on a deep blue vase,
rich and sensuous and classical,
but I couldn't see the detail in these shapes,

sensing only that you carried grace,
and seemed to burn with a different beauty,
a vase refired, reinscribed with art,
decisive and astute. In our nights
we lay just touching, electric with new doubt.

Within and Without

I wrote poems at night, with you in bed,
the children sleeping, perhaps a house-trapped fly
droning against the iambics that I searched -

once I stood and watched your sleeping form
in the half-light from the hall-light's fizzing bulb.
Your breathing calmed those early nights, as months

crept through my writing while you lay in bed,
then children's cries split night and sleep for years
and words were often hurried, often left

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to sit on desk, or arm of chair, or bed.
The poems, like knowledge, accumulate but are
somehow too slight for all that's said and thought,

somehow obscure, like your breathing form.
I write poems at night, with you in bed,
and light a hope for years to come that I

will sit again and hold perplexity
again, repeating minutes that retain
the flavour of the countless hours and weeks

that have occupied this dwelling contemplation
as words unfold like occupying thoughts.
Outside a storm abates, and thunder fades,

rain-soaked grass is wet under my feet,
and a rhododendron sits in an inch-deep pool.
I walk towards an over-reaching pine

cherishing the blossoms rain has bruised
that splash in pink across the sodden green.
Nothing can hold the moment; I must leave;

a car starts up; the paper in my hand
is running with sudden drops from the leaning pine
and inky words splash and splay in lines

like a pre-school child's experiment in art.
I sit again inside; I stand again
and listen to the breathing of the wind,

all that I know suddenly confined
to this dark room, the bedrooms down the hall.
A child sighs, another turns in bed

and I am once more at your sleeping door
reciting to myself a half-made poem
smudged by fingers and the night-blown rain.

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The Wife of the Seasons

I have lived within the seasons of his leaving,
eruptions of arrivals, lived with doubt

and silent, hurried passion, his sweet talk,
while the birth of children, harried care,

the sweeping stutter of their nightly cries
undid the persuasive tenderness of hands.

Sometimes a vanishing carried him to me
to be reclaimed in the territory of touch

where he seemed to live beyond himself,
lost in eddies of unspoken doubt,

a river coursing through his trembling frame,
while I let the seasons carry me in blood -

expecting hands, rough and sweet with pine,
expecting to wear my love like a clumsy coat,

my days a cycle of drought and sudden flood,
my silence a swelling dam in which to drown.

The Light Going over the Hills

Your skirt like a wash of blue, flurried water
circling your legs, a magpie flying low,
beating through this listless afternoon,
the light going over the hills.

Is love like this, threatening to depart,
not on any day, but through a life
that knows the darkness coming,
love like a message hidden in the bone?
I reach for you, to renew our feeling,

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to understand again how we are here
on this hill, what we have brought each other.
As the light slips away, you skip lightly
down a curling path, your long dress trailing,
billowing, netting the restless blue of the sky.

And I Wake

Sometimes I wake at night, our bodies touch;
sometimes I lie and listen to your breathing.
I imagine narratives for us
that we have never ventured; you respond
by turning in the bed, or murmuring.

I wonder what our situation holds
that we are not aware of; what I know,
and how my knowledge intersects with yours,
and think how we will separate at last
(at last, I know, we're due for separation).

But when I turn, I know that we retain
more of one another than we'd say,
and have absorbed each other in the flesh
that wraps our different bones like bandages.
We are so like and unlike, and I sleep.

بول هذرینگتون

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MIKE LADD

Three Poems

Away

The poplars, switch-brooms for the sky –
dark now at four.
Late and last, the moon stopped in a gelid pool.
I saw a pale fish rise, nightwatchman like,
then turn numbly to warmer ooze.
This morning, in shadows, there's ice on the grass;
the mower is sunlight, its blades cutting white.
I bury my nose in a dream of our bed.

Come Home

Out there the child is swimming
swimming between the lights
the lights just points in the darkness
the darkness where the child swims
but is never coming home.

The child drowned in the boots of cars
cars driven by men who seemed ordinary
ordinary men who dug shallow graves
in their hands the child has drowned.

If they could all rise up
rise up on their way home from school
rise up at bus stations where they should have been met
rise up by the corner shop.

If they could please, please
come home

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Goodbye in Advance

I am is already goodbye, parcelled out with birth.
But it won't spoil our time together –
we've already put that goodbye behind us.
So when we meet it coming up again
like some strange wall,
we'll be hand in hand with prior knowledge.
Too late to take that life from us.

مايك لاد

Mike Ladd is currently producer and presenter of the Radio National poetry programme *Poetic A*. His most recent book *Close to Home* is published by Five Island Press.



P O E T R Y

GLENDA FAWKES

Six Poems

Always After Rain

Rain drips from the awning.
You observe a honeybee slyly
approaching, and the rosemary
leaning over the jar, in a burst
of colour drops flowers
on every blue reflection.

We are so used to it nobody
notices that at some point every
day (usually in the afternoon and
always after rain), time slips back
and repeats the last few seconds.

You know the conversation over
coffee before it happens,
just as you knew, before you spoke,
the man you met once
at a London party decades ago.

And time can jump a few beats -
restart further on, somewhere else.
The rosemary alert and upright is
suddenly intent on the business of
living. The bee transcribing
a slow arc is halfway home

and your friend who has said
nothing is waiting
for some kind of response. But
the moment has gone – like the
ones you'd have wanted to keep.

**Last Day
at the
Beach**

Sunlight catches
in your hair.
Small hands are
white-knuckled
as if holding hard
to something
you tried to save.

Muted voices
ebb and flow.
Grains of sand
like tiny stars
glitter and go out,
as pohutukawa
shadows lengthen
silently.

I close your
empty eyes
against the sun
and take your
cold white hand
that opens
trustingly
in mine.

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Nameless

I thought
it was a bird whose song
glided between
the leaves of a moment,
before I arrived.

And the poppy
that dropped its petals
did so in its own time,
for reasons
beyond my concern.

I supposed
the movement of delicate
grasses on a still day
to be caused
by a minimal wind.

I believed sunsets
an arrangement
between light and water,
a small matter
of atmospheric,

and that there was
an explanation
when a nameless shadow
passed across the stars
in a clear sky.

But you
were there all the time.
I see the sudden
silver disturbance of air
as you pass.

Now It Is Time

The separation is slow.
Under your feet smooth
cool pebbles dance
with colour,
drops of water glitter,
as you launch the boat
of your body.

Seventy summers.
It does not sound
very long. For forty-five
of them you shared
laughter, conversations,
offerings. Memories
rich and to be savoured.

They have come down
to the water's edge,
stand in a little group.
A small wind briefly lifts
their hair, and ripples
the water whose buoyancy
is their gift.

You are further out now.
They are still calling
and you respond
as you always have, but
their voices are harder
to hear. The wind shifts.
Your body lightens.

One calls a question.
You can hear the upward
inflection
but not the words.
You cup your ear to show

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you have not heard,
shrug your shoulders.

You let attachments
float away
without regret. Those
that remain are pure,
unbreakable. You have
earned this – the world
holds you up now.

Noise and clutter fall
behind. They are wiser
and more confident than
you. It is time to shed
your winter calamities
and joys as if
you are entering summer.

The water is so clear
you can see everything
under the surface.
You turn and wave to show
you will always love them.
And you smile,
because you are happy.

Visiting the Sun

Our world was
formless
light blue merging
into dark.
The cradle of
the sun on
the first morning.

In the place
all things began
we sang our formal
songs in a slow
universe, perfecting
the flexible art
of living.

On our journey
we drifted
smoothly up through
shades of green
to taste
the strange rain,
visit the sun.

Leading the souls
of the dead to
the Isles
of the Blessed,
we were never
able to envisage
capture

and the terrible
absence of water.

Safe Keeping

Rain at the window of
her one room. Her hand
trembles as she writes
against the time she
might forget, words
comforting as firelight
in an empty house.

The slow earth tips

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the years, one into
another. Some things
remain, like the morepork
whose call kept her
company through
ruined nights.

East of anywhere
the black star rises but
west of yesterday she
remembers microscopic
shells in a scoop of sand,
tries to capture them
before they slip away.

The way young
lupin leaves cup
the rain, the startling
flash of green seen
one sunset, she strives
to write
into her safe keeping.

Fiery autumn leaves
balance the weight
of shadows, three
handfuls of pain, and
in uneven capitals
on every page
she writes her name.



غلیندا فوکس

Glenda Fawkes is a poet from New Zealand. Some of her poetry was translated into Arabic and published in a previous issue of *Kalimat*.

Garden

The best place is thickly grassed, shaded
by an old gum, looking towards
the parterre garden, gardenias and box hedged:
our bit of Europe, dark green pungent rewards
for digging rocks or weeding on our knees;
and wryly watching cracks grow in walls,
or propping up the fence with blown-down trees
or watching turf go brown at summer's call.
An old order pushes against our trials,
wants to deny us our bid to graft
onto the ancient stock our bit of life.
Our spurts of growth meet hot denials
from sun and sand -- but we've just laughed:
gardeners are weaned upon this strife.

Your sex

I'd travelled over many continents
when I (still) was very young,
I charted hills, lakes and ranges bent
along their spines and from their peaks hung
upon my fingertips, chasing heights,
searching for a native fauna rich
in novelty and a flora of delights
to satisfy my pioneering itch.
Not until I trekked across your land
and surveyed both the upland and the wet
did you, with tact, press into my hand
a map to help me conquer more peaks yet:
 this contour with your fingertip you traced
 and asked me whether it was to your taste.

Kalimat 7

The Dark Thrust of Water

*I want to go to the walls of Granada to watch the
heart pierced through by the dark thrust of water*

Lorca

*Brief, it doesn't last long, the time it takes
to feel the bitter skin of the plum in your mouth*

At the waterfall your skin is white above
the pool your legs peaten brown below
wading to the mossed stones

our clothes are scattered on the bank
like bursts of laughter and I hold
your wet fingers for a moment

before the force we take ourselves
inside it the water parting our hair
beating out breath

pounding our ears and blood
nothing but this we are
holding ourselves in it with our

fingers and toes skidding

*without the skin, the plum would be too sweet
unprotected ungained*

Light brakes, sad for the night
and bone chills from the stones
I jump about
You move quietly round the pool
little strips of bare skin touching the ground

Kalimat 7

as you take the camera to find the water's voice

At Whale Beach, we stand side by side for dawn
It runs the waves through with green
and busts them up against the pool's chains

I hear you see the frames
clicks of satiety Used to seeing my art
at the end of my pen, I follow the beach's curve

and lose myself running before foam
in wet sand

*the flesh is all the more sweet
for having the tension of teeth
on its unbroken skin*

I want to go to the wall of the reef
swim my naked limbs over the trench's edge
and once just once dive

lie in the rumble of tectonic plates
crooned by whales, let parrot fish and shark
fin me with their passing

watch my heart -- pierced through with the dark
thrust of water -- be carried irresistibly
back, laid, like any flotsam

bleached, amphibious
on the shore

أنا كيرديك نيكلسون

Anna Kerdijk Nicholson is a lawyer, poet and stepmother of three who lives in Mascot, NSW, Australia with her Dutch husband. She has been Writer in Residence at The Bundanon Trust where she completed a book-length cycle of 36 cantos. She is co-editor of *5 Bells*, the quarterly magazine of The Poets' Union.

CHARLES D'ANASTASI

Four Poems

**Woman cutting grass
in a war cemetery in Vietnam**

How simple is the moment
face half hidden behind the conical hat
crouching beside the headstone
one hand clutching the weeds
scythe in the other
wrist arced, slashing,
parting a path to the sky.

Close to the bone,
a current of harshness,
a hot wind rolling
across this vast plain of silence
this tundra of fallen men
the names, row after row - white heat.

How fitting it seemed
for this custodian
to make her own way
to this open house of the dead
partake of their bitter solitude,
never far from a strange insistence -
repeated in the concrete white hands
clasped together, held high, under
passing white clouds and
generous patches of blue.

On the way back
I wanted more from the local guide -
about the woman's work,
her bag, half filled with errant grass -
'No, no' he stopped me
'she just cuts it to feed the animals.'

Kalimat 7

bandoneon

stillness and darkness
opened the night
inside the motel room
at the top of the stairs
dragging the night hours
against the reasoning of a winter wind
the sudden bursts of rain
splattering on the tin roof
ebbing in patches of quietness and unease

the corridor harbouring
faint voices, a woman's laugh,
a man's cough, the sound of a key
turning inside a lock,
a door opening and closing

waves of bandoneon notes
rising and falling, their embrace
sacred and profane
complete the aloneness
giving voice to surrogate stars
hovering on the light poles outside the window
such cruel gifts, such nakedness,
illuminating the unrumpled side of the bed

The unreliable harbour

In a house always spotless
always exhausted with calmness
and slowness, there is no ambiguity.
It is understood that their hours are crammed
with the sound of their own voices,
doctors' appointments, unfinished silences,
and always, always the waiting.

Sometimes a telephone rings,
sometimes a taxi calls.
In the hallway a clock chimes the hour.

Kalimat 7

All day a television bubbles with reassurance,
assuages with vapours from an unreal world.
Every two weeks a man comes to cut the grass.
Sons and daughters call, take off their shoes,
pay their respect, watch what they say,
bring news of the seasons collapsing
on the other side of the door.

At the kitchen table
the two sit side by side.
Outside hardly any light remains.
Darkness has almost filled the room
and when her thoughts separate
cannot be retrieved from the riddle
that's formed in her mind, she begins,
to shove it intensely, this unlearning,
this fear of entering this unreliable harbour,
to solve the void that's pressing her -
asking over and over :
'Did you say tea or coffee - I hate this -
please tell me again'

telephone conversation

two poets on the telephone line
high wire act
without the net

muffled sounds
barricaded hearts
footsteps fading
into the night

تشارلز داناستازي

Charles D'Anastasi was born in Malta. He has been writing poetry for a number of years. He has had poems published in various journals and anthologies, and some of them have been translated in Maltese. He lives in Melbourne, Australia.

JAN DEAN

Two Poems

Suburban Melodrama

*A memorial to Joy Hester, Australian painter, 1920-1960
who cart-wheeled on the beach as an adult*

The harbinger shuffles
in her slippers, hoping
to escape his harangue.
Hammered down, she
is too gaunt to struggle
with that load, while children
tug at her skirt.
He strides by, hard-boiled
from his pickling wine
wearing his belt below
his paunch, and we wonder why
she could not be dissuaded.
Coming up the rear
is the defiant one of their many
children in gauzy clothes
somersaulting 'star flips'
along the street.
What will become of her?
Cartwheels complete, she stands
at ease, gazing out to misty mountains
dreamlike and remote, as we
squirm again into the invisibility
of our bus stop seat. Hard wood
confirms the madness of our sanity.

Kalimat 7

The Mystery of Straws Lane

Over beers in a Woodend pub
theories crisscrossed directions.
Find the second rise in Straws Lane
between Hanging Rock and Mt. Macedon.
Turn off ignition.
Have vehicle in neutral.
Release brakes and wait.

In the ditch on the left
there's broom and berries.
Between trees to the right
farmland and autumn colour.

Our car creeps uphill
of its own accord.

Maybe it's an optical illusion.
Locals say it's Hanging Rock's magnetic force.
Some strangers insist on three visits.
We went twice but there's no account
of how many tries each time.

At the point of stopping
block letters in bitumen read
Bullshit 1993 Karen and Tony.
On our second visit that day
the message had vanished.

جان دين

Jan Dean is a poet from Lake Macquarie, New South Wales, Australia. She has received several awards for her poetry. She is currently a member of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, Hunter Region, and President of Poetry at the Pub, Newcastle. *Suburban Melodrama* won the Bendigo Bank Poetry Competition, 1996. Dean is currently completing a poetry collection, *Morsels*.

JOHN O'CONNOR

One Poem

**At Port Levy with Alistair Campbell,
Helen Jacobs and Mark Pirie**

we parked the car by a memorial
to Taawao, the Nga Pui missionary

which greets you as you arrive
on the final flat that horseshoes

round the bay to the wharf and
a collection of sheds and boat sheds –

it was full tide, a spring tide,
the water foreshortening the hills by

a myth or two. we were too close
yet close enough to see. somebody

wisecracked about the gullibility
of biography – or biographers – as

an afterthought from thinking that
Mick Stimpson – Dirty Mick – had

humped his load of fish past here
many a time, as we turned back

and walked together towards the
cemetery beyond the gum tree

just off road, two gates
and you're there, standing above the bay.

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and I'd never seen the bay
So beautiful, in the winter air

smoke rising and the magpies
absent, for once, there weren't

even the usual sheep in the grave-
yard that had so disturbed

my American guest a few months
before.
just Stimpson's grave at Port Levy

a bare headstone that as you say
may or may not be above the right

person. Alistair, you also said
that the mistakes don't matter

and quoted Auden on Yeats who
hadn't died in the depths of winter

but in Spain, sunny Spain, and
as we left the spot the Maori

kids ran after us, playing and
also washed their hands and flicked

the drops away. I
latched the gate and followed

you all downhill. and the kid
who asked were we old –

a naive and unexpected question
which I liked and you replied to –

you later said she was the spirit
of the place. She had come

from the creek that cuts the road
and afterward went back to the

smoky yard if a Maori family's
home or bach. How do you

end a poem like this without
saying that all poems are about

love and death – as you had?

جون أوكونر

John O'Connor is a poet and critic from Christchurch, New Zealand. His sixth collection, *Home River*, is forthcoming from Hallard Press, Auckland.

WINIFRED WEIR

Three Poems

A Matter of Politics

The gulls call a stop-work meeting at the wharf's edge
Delegates fan in from all points of the harbour
with a downthrust *kwarr* and red-legged velocity
Before agenda can be broached or discussion mooted
a sudden frenzy breaks on the floor
a contradiction of white and grey
wings beating the platform
Out of this discord a speaker erupts, crests the bollard
emphatic rising to rhetoric
to be flapped aside by a dominant frontbencher -
a rabble rouser of definite persuasion
Anarchy subsides to strutting bobbing and
the nodding wisdom of a conservative majority
An adjournment is declared while the ferry docks -
on the prevailing current evidence of human discard
tempting scraps crusts chips and perhaps with any luck
a grain or two of negotiation

Jacaranda Cat

The tree droops peacock fronds
clusters the pathway with purple bells
Shadows climb on lavender edge
The moon slips out and about, scribbling stars
in petit-point
A night for flying the sky, skittling witches,
drifting loose
Under the canopy the black cat spell'd
now mauve now blue
eyes green fire fur rush'd and full
scowls and wails its imprecations
into the gallant air

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An Old Story

they come with savage eyes
thrusting guns
plunder
our ripe frailty
the conqueror's blade
between our legs
I watch
my mother
die

this land my land burns
cracks
seeps blood
mine

I will shrivel
my pulp sucked
by the bitter tongue
of a stranger
child
within a child
this blown belly
will sprout
another shoot
of death

وينفرد وير

Winifred Weir is a Sydney poet whose work has been widely published in literary journals and anthologies and in a collection : *Contours: Four Poets* (Round Table Publications, 1991).

الجنور

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مجلة الثقافة العربية في أستراليا

FUAD RIFKA

Three Poems

Translated by Adnan Haydar & Michael Beard

If

If only we were stones
And had the earth around us,
A cave,
To shield us from the distances,
If only we were oysters
Lodged in seaweed
But no
We are a wound,
Rivers without course
Without safe anchor;
We are the sound of bells
Along time's road.

If only we could be, like rocks
At cave's mouth,
Untroubled by memory,
Then we might rest.
Instead
We are expanse,
A sign,
On endless horizons
Fire and smoke.

Dream

My beloved says:
Tomorrow you return to me

In ships of rose
Laden in warmth,
In fruit,
Flavor of the seas.

And upon your return
You fold me to your heart,
You say:
Your eyes, beloved,
Those nearby ports.

And here I am
Emerging from
The sweating brow of time
And chance,
Here to sleep
Within its yellow leaves.

A Tale

The morning sees its birth;
The full sun sees it grow;
Its ripeness is a twilight scene.
When light pales
Beyond the last distance,
It dies, my friend,
Like the folding arms
Of morning's rose.

The above three poems are from Rifka's collection *Anhar Barriyya* (Wild Rivers)

Kalimat 7

Nine Poems

Translated by Paula & Adnan Haydar

The Whippoorwill

In the days of the open wild
There was the whippoorwill.
On the treetops
In April
His voice was on fire.
Between the rugged cliffs
In July
His voice came and went
As though in a dream.
On a grapevine
In October
He sunned himself,
Nibbled at his feathers
And quieted down.
And in December
He sank into the valleys
To the alleys of forgetfulness.

Between him and the whippoorwill of
today:
The tremor of the old man's cane.

Wedding

In the winter of his years
On a chair beside the window.
Through the cracks
The snow creeps onto his feet,
Buries them,
Buries his waist and his neck,
And he doesn't move.

He knows
He is late for the wedding,
For all the weddings.

Peace of Mind

From bay leaves and basil
The gentle breezes
From the water sources in the rugged land
The trickling streams
From the threshing floors of the sun
The sunbeams
From the hands of the soil
The roses

Far away from the gasps of chimneys
And the fume clouds
Here in these mountains
He cooks roots
And dresses in greenery.

Between Village and City

Long ago
There was travel.
Provisions for the road were the rooster's
crow
The birds of the twilight haze
The walking staff by day
The bonfire by night

And now
In the carts of steel
And the feathers of speed
The senses' leaves have withered
The body's windows are closed

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Hiroshima

In the beginning were the elements
And there was love,
So they mingled.
They became an olive tree
And God called it Hiroshima.
Beneath it, He rested.

At winter's end
God said to himself:
Spring has come
I shall head to the fields
For the hoses are warm
And desire shudders beneath the soil.

Ages passed
While God tilled the earth
Spreading seeds,
Gathering the ripened crops.
Into the jars
He poured juice and oil.

When reaping was done
He saw that all was good.
He said:
Now is the time for rest.
I shall go to the olive tree
For its shade is dark and vast.

On the way
He smelled smoke.
He looked up
And saw the olive tree burning:

An umbrella
A mushroom sprawling out,
Dust blotting out the faces,
And on the waters, the winds of Sodom.

Memory's Stage

Across memory's stage
Faces pass by
Behind an iron curtain
They spin spider webs.

But from within the body's darkness
At the sacred moment of silence
One face peeks out,
Approaches,
Settles in the eye,
And in the heart's expanse
Becomes the stars.

At the Edge of the Tower

The childhood that loved him:
 In the riverbeds
The woman that loved him:
 In the darkness of roots
The friends that loved him:
 In the ships of ashes
The poems that loved him:
 In the tines of the pitchfork

At the edge of the tower
Alone he stands
No hat, no coat

A Flower

From the bottom
Of a pond in the wilderness
A flower rises,
Beneath the sun
On the pond's surface
The eyelashes unfold
An island for the bees

Kalimat 7

The Samaritan

Between the nail and the slab of wood
The body of the world.

From a cloud

The Samaritan always descends
A jar on his shoulder,
A loaf of bread in his hand,
And in his voice
A pillow and a bandage.

The above nine poems are from Fuad Rifka's collection *Jarrat al-Samiri* (Jar of the Samaritan)

فؤاد رفقة عدنان حيدر مايكل بيرد بولا حيدر

Fuad Rifka is one of the most important contemporary modern Arab poets and one of the pre-eminent translators of English and German poetry into Arabic. To date, he has published more than fifteen highly regarded anthologies of original poetry, and has translated from German into Arabic several works by Rilke, Novalis, Hlderlin, Trakl, and Olly Komenda Soentgerath. His numerous critical essays on modern Arabic poetry have appeared in premier journals in the Middle East and abroad and have been a valuable source for scholars interested in Arabic literature. Perhaps Dr. Rifka's greatest contribution to modern Arabic literature is his strong involvement in writing the manifesto of modern Arabic poetry for *Shif'r Magazine*, which he co-founded and launched with the poets Adonis and Yusuf Al-Khal (two of the most important modern Arab poets.) Dr. Rifka has been the recipient of several fellowships and awards which have allowed him to do research and teach in countries around the world.

Adnan Haydar is director of the Arabic program and professor of Arabic and comparative literature at the University of Arkansas, where he also directed the King Fahd Middle East Studies Program from 1993 to 1999. Dr. Haydar has taught at the University of California, the University of Pennsylvania, Middlebury College, and the University of Massachusetts. He has authored, co-authored and co-edited six books, including Naguib Mahfouz: *From Regional Fame to Global Recognition*, and published numerous translations and interpretations of poetry and fiction, including Khalil Hawi's *Naked in Exile*, and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's celebrated novels *The Ship* and *In Search of Walid Masoud*. His many articles on modern literary theory and oral poetry have appeared in premiere literary journals in the U.S. and in the Middle East. His fields of specialization and areas of teaching include modern and classical Arabic literature, Arabic language, folk literature, oral poetry, and European and Arabic poetics.

Michael Beard is professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Dakota. He has published literary criticism and edits *Edebiyat*, a journal of Middle Eastern literary criticism. He has published numerous studies on English, Arabic and Persian literature, and has translated with Adnan Haydar several works of literature from Arabic. His book on Hedaayat's *The Blind Owl*, published by Princeton University Press, has been hailed as one of the best studies on this esoteric Persian novelist. His writings span the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America.

Paula Haydar is a free-lance literary translator, and lecturer of Arabic language at the Summer Institute for Intensive Arabic Language and Culture at the Lebanese American University. She holds a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Literary Translation from the University of Arkansas. She has published translations of three novels by Lebanese author Elias Khoury, among them *The Kingdom of Strangers*, which was awarded the American Translators Award for Translation of Arabic Fiction in 1996, and the University of Arkansas Press Award for Literary Translation in 1997. Most recently, she published her translation of Lebanese novelist Rachid al-Daif's *This Side of Innocence*, and is continuing her work on Al-Daif's *Learning English*.

T R A N S L A T E D P O E T R Y

MAHMOUD DARWISH

Four Poems

Translated by Mohammad Shaheen

We Record our Life with the Butterfly

We record our days with the butterfly of the fields, descend the staircase of our days
Ascend the trees of the past, and leave it to imagination.
We turn to poetry, asking it to renew an earth for our inspiration.
But it muffled up our breath. It became the very self of our idols.
We will write so as not to die, we will write for our dreams.
We will write our names so that they will show how our bodies dawned.
We will write what the bird writes in the wilderness, forgetting the signature of our feet.
We pass on the wind, like the Messiah, like Judah, like the recorders of our generations.
We pass over the earth... we want no stone for our words, for our greetings to our Syria
We are bankrupt, poetry has made no profit, and collapsed the bank of our maturity.

And We Love this Life

And we love this life, if we can find the means
We dance between two martyrs; we raise a minaret of them for the hyacinth
or palm-tree
We love this life, if we can find the means
And we steal from the silkworm a thread to build up a sky and to fence this departure
And we open the gate of the garden to release a lovely river of jasmine on the roads.
We love this life, if we can find the means.
And we plant where we are quick-growing plants, and we harvest death
wherever we are.
We breathe into the reed pipe of colour of distance, of distance.
And we draw in the dust of the road the sound of neighing.
And we write our names on each stone. Lightening! Illuminate the night for us.
Show us a little?
We love this life, if we can find the means.

Kalimat 7

I Speak at Length

I speak at length about women and trees,
About the fascination of the earth, about a country which stamps no passport,
And I ask, 'Ladies and gentlemen, does the earth belong to men, to all men.
As you claim?' Well, then, Where is my little hut? Where am I? The conference hall
applauds me
Three minutes only. Three minutes of freedom and recognition accorded.
The conference conformed with
Our rights to return, like a hen, like a horse, to the stones we see in dreams.
Is shake their hands, on by one, and bow... resuming my journey.
To another land, to speak about the difference between mirage and rain.
To ask 'Ladies and gentlemen, does the earth belong to man, to all men?'

The Last Train has Stopped

The last train has stopped at the last platform; no one.
Will free the rose; no dove of words will settle in a woman's ear.
Time is over; a poem can do no more than can the foam of the sea.
Don't trust these trains. Love! Expect no more in the crowd.
The last train has stopped at the last platform; no one.
Can return, as the daffodils in the darkness will return.
Where shall I leave my last description of this body?
The end befell: where would it leave us? Where to dispose of my experience?
Don't trust these trains, love! The last dove has flown, the dove has flown.
The last train has stopped at the platform: no one...

محمود درويش

Mahmoud Darwish is a prominent Palestinian/international poet and thinker. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the renowned quarterly magazine *al-Karmel*.

محمد شاهين

Mohammad Shaheen is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Jordan, and teaches Criticism and Comparative Literature. He has recently acted in the position of Vice-President, University of Mu'ta.

GHADA SAMMAN

Five Dances with the Owl
Translated by Issa J. Boullata

An Envious Owl

You gave me a present, a statue you sculpted for me,
and I envied it.
My statue has two wings longer than mine,
and two eyes larger than mine,
and its marble has no wrinkles.
It never catches cold,
does not weep secretly in the dark,
and does not moan as it soars at night
in search of a true love.
Nor does it close its eyes when kissing!

A Realist Owl

Is it the Spring or your love
that beats the drums of madness
in the warm night?
O my poet: Don't treat me as if
I were an owl's myth,
and don't write me immortal poems,
and don't present me with gifts--
the sea, the stars, the moons.
All I wish is a human touch
like plucking a rose for me from the garden,
making me a cup of coffee with cardamon,
and saying to me 'Good morning'
at the moment the sun sets
in Beirut's sea of legendary beauty.

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An Owl with Insomnia

When the sun sets, my real day starts.
When it sinks in the sea with all its radiance,
I wake up with the shadows, the ghosts, the poets,
and the confused languages afflicted with secrets.
Only your love saves me from my nocturnal routine
with insomnia, when we bathe in the moonlight
and ride on the witch's broom in a mythical flight.
Since the day I first knew you
and bathed in the brilliant, silvery light
of your presence, I discovered that
the owl's poetic insomnia is a bathing
in the moonlight and an accompaniment
to the witches riding their brooms
that fly them toward mysteries.
And I discovered
that the most beautiful thing in Spring
is a love not yet realized
and blossoms not yet turned into fruit.
Isn't a postponed promise sweeter
than the disappointment of realization?

A Spring that Forgives not the Owl's Betrayal

Everything betrays me.
The rosy Spring of Paris betrayed me
and wore a fur coat,
the stars betrayed me on the night we met
and wore their clouds,
the sidewalks of moonlit sauntering
betrayed me and wept rain all night,
choked with lightning, and coughed thunder.
Even my own image with you in the mirror
betrayed me, and I didn't see you in it with me.
Ever since fingers betrayed their own hand
and one hand betrayed the other,
and each of us betrayed himself or herself,

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the gypsy joy that played the guitar for us
day and night abandoned us,
and Spring abandoned its own appointments.
Here are our memories, as though benumbed,
walking toward water without a life preserver,
and are gradually submerged by the waves.
Why does Autumn come to life only in the Spring?

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE OWL

When you treat me as though I were a ghost,
I do become a ghost indeed,
and your sorrows pass through me
as a car passes through a shade
without leaving any trace or memory in it.
Thus do the stories of my love
write their endings.
My heart is not a nail in a wall,
on which you hang notices of love
and take them down when you like.
My friend, remember me and I'll remember you,
forget me and I'll forget you--
the first to start is the greater wrongdoer.
This is the wisdom of the owl.

غادة السمان

Ghada Samman is a prominent Syrian writer, currently living in Paris, France. The above poems are from her forthcoming book, *Al-Raqs ma' al-Boom* (Dancing with the Owl). Source: *al-Hawadeth* 78 - 27/4/2001.

عيسى بلاطة

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

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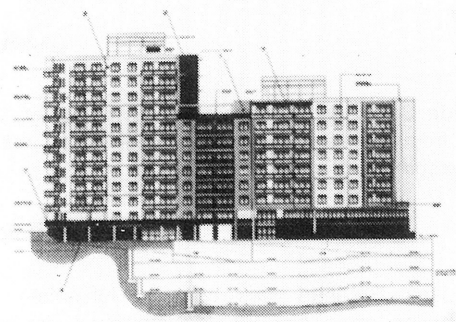
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ONSI AL-HAJJ

Two Poems

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

**Leave, Leave and
Let the Earth be Blessed**

Leave with the scent of the lemon trees
and do not return after the harvest.
Be unified to yourself.
Let not the flames of separation consume you.
Perfume yourself, spread yourself under the rays
and do not reflect your radiance.
Rise above, do not rain.
Make out of your cheeks two jonquils and be their stem.
Let your breasts be two lamps and you their darkness.
Let your hair be a cloud and you a storm.
Leave, leave and let the earth be blessed.
Rise above to the spirit, disappear in water and
loosen yourself in the spirit.
Reclaim me, I the little one, from your love.
Leave, for there is no rest under your reign but death.

Time is running out
I haven't unbuttoned a shirt for you yet.
In my country, borders are sparrows and borders have no end
between my face and yours.
In my country, flowers crack the rocks, and I am crushed by deprivation.
In my country, bulbuls perch and sing at windows and the sky is
on the verge of the earth, yet we are bound you and I
by the estrangement of the shadow from the body.

Faces lean on me and I can't see you.
I wish you stay with no despair, that I catch up with you.
Stay where you are, that I might arrive
together we shall leave with the lemon scent
and I shall win you over in the prime of death.

We Thought Space Was Wine

Your voice, a hill covered by water
our ships are black
our lands fallow
our candles rocks.

We committed small and grave mistakes
we thought space was wine,
layers of sand, gold and wheat.
We stocked up the leaves, not for any reason...
We worshiped the ruins just to worship
and just for fun we hid whatsoever fell in our grasp,
until you came
so we did not look at what was
in a different light!
And when the seas parted
and your voice rang
we rushed to it like a waterfall.
You became the water
the rain.
And time dipped down
like shepherds on the hill.

أنسي الحاج

Onsi al-Hajj is a prominent Lebanese poet. He published several poetry collections. The above poems are from his collection *Matha Sana'ta bil Thahab, Matha Faalta bil Wardah* (What Have you Done with the Gold, What Have you Done to the Rose), 2nd Edition, Dar al-Jadid, Beirut 1994.

ABBAS BAYDOUN

One Poem

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

Birth

1

some oil dripped on the edge
and I had not been born yet,
the big stone lay still inside the wall
a cold light, almost, passed by me
and disappeared in the glimmer of the pot
that turned yellow from negligence
and from the pain that escaped through it

2

the thick beards of grandfathers
the false beards of other people
and countless coloured evil sparrows
climb on the woman
whose hands were on the wheel

she had the waist of a little sister
coming out of the brier bush
she had the body of an aunt wrest the city in a sieve
and dreaming of a mouse in her belly

nevertheless, there was nothing
but a cast painting
for smuggling across the border

when the thinnest of the shadows extended itself
contemplating in the darkened studio

transformed into a worm
and was followed by full-size incoming shadows
of old men and animals
the blackness of the arch fell
frightened those who sat there
with the shadows of their goblets
and the intensive warm smoke
coming out of them

3

they showed up from the stones of the house
picked from abandoned barns and quarries
endured to serve the terraces and gardens
that deserted them

Kalimat 7

and when they were at last forgotten
they no longer recognised those who roved on them
whenever the rays of the sun touched down

perhaps the lantern was only an invitation
for the all-day visiting, ever burgeoning
spectra to emerge
out of their folly

perhaps the lantern was a terminal point of negligence
roads cross in the fog
so does the meeting of those asleep
senility liberates the regions
dead actions are revealed, now, by the light
whilst the wind moves the squares and the indices

4

the woman crosses now the brier bush
she points with her wheel
to the little sister
to climb down from it

it is the visceral hair
and the light peeping through the door-hole
engraves its shape there
and then,
the grain of sand and the animal

5

the lantern veils the room
that arches now like a ribbed light
blowing in it its dirty oil,
its steam seems to be seen as the back-side of the room
and the lining of its contents

the wall's hair appear a little, on the scene,
the men look with the eyes of their cattle and their abscesses
the smell of skin almost wafting out of their bodies
they sit there with their beards
and faces that have been licked by ghosts

the women are wrapped in a bundle wherefrom
a thin shadow parts every other moment
to turn the kettle

6

the chimney was a nest
and so were the cushions and the sheepskins
things were unwound and sleeping in their threads
did the one who carried the lantern
turn the room to the other side
leaving the straw, the insects' saliva and the threads mix altogether
leaving on the dark wall
people and animals

Kalimat 7

from the same road's hair?

7

the woman could feel them fall from her head
and immediately disappear
she herself did not know where her tunnel ends?
her side was surely in the whirlwind
from there they entered without her seeing them
without her knowing that they were also waiting in the brier bush

she knew that the rain was filaments in her innermost
each filament turning by itself
the hairs of the filament of the dawn were abundant
and so were the filaments of the tumultuous sea
her body was spinning as well
she could feel she could elapse.
the feeble light of the lantern availed her
and she passed silently

8

she was expecting those who derided her
to come up and leave at the door
the foundling who was shivered from their jesting
the lantern was now tucked to her midst
as she felt the eggs turning
in the roof's nest

they came many
they ran even in her breath.
the jinn of the well,
the servant of the lantern,
the servant of the arch
the demons of the kneading trough and the attic
they all disappeared in the brier bush
and were jolly in the trains
moved by the intermittent glow
or saliva

they splashed their laughter there,
where the stab left its mark.
The rain gushed out from the oak trees
and abundance of kernels.
Spectra suffused with tobacco and snuff
intercepted the air
they all came into the open,
swimming in the puffs of smoke,
and shed their disdainful garments
and their birds

9

they came too many
stuffed shadows
of those who dwelled on their folly
the beards grew longer because of their senility

Kalimat 7

are left there
on the instruments of killing
on the destroyed arches
and the many executions
that wiped off their footsteps
to still protect them from ever returning

shadows tired of coming out,
two eyes of a judging worm
and the sleepiness of fear
managed by a poison without shadows

they came too many
they threatened us
with a silly child

10

outside
the silent lightning
and the farmers' lanterns
split her on the hill
may be in the warmth of the soup
all these roads will become clear
and so will the small tremor
that had taken hold of her body
or of the stove
but she did not feel

the senility of the celebration
did not leave her body
where wolves had left something when they approached it
possibly the teeth of the ghost
or the threads of the clown
or the abuse of the grandfather
or the mouse of the aunt
that is still in her belly
maybe the tremor she did not feel
filled up her innermost
with a sideline of the room

it was not the mountain that gave birth
maybe the witches performed all that
perhaps those who traded in poison

when labour came to her from many directions
countless stones were stained

عباس بيضون

Abbas Baydoun is a prominent Lebanese poet. The above poem is from his collection *Hojarat* (Chambers), Dar al-Jadid, Beirut, 1992.

MUHYIEDDIN LAZIKANI

One Poem

Translated by Noel Abdulahad

The Galaxy of Delights

For the sake of the delight in your eyes
 all stars in heaven dance glitteringly
 all birds on earth chirp joyfully

You look out upon a new year
 an old year
 and a year to come
 coining time by its timeless wings
 minting place with its primordial nature
 sprinkling the universe with laughter, jest and joy
 with soul-moving harmony
 implanting my life with musk and scented trees

Muse of my muse
 inspiration of prose and poetry
 your excess of comeliness stills my tongue
 your loveliness frees my fettered soul

Flower of my love, most fair of all
 the merriment of the lakes is my revelation
Your love is a flock of white swans,
 but once it is gone
 the earth contorts with shivers of cold
 and craves the warmth of the sun

Your love is the music of the spheres
 the loving kindness of turtle-doves
 that links the tiny clouds to their mothers
 and returns titillating,
 grazing on the bounties of affection
 and sporting with never failing waves of gladness...

Most happy times of my life
 fall out at the process of your years
Your nectar wine of love
 intoxicates me
 calls me forth to outwit the emperor's grandeur
 and sparks off my excellence beyond its human limits

Kalimat 7

To love you, I become the consciousness of the world
the rhythm of harmony
the fantasy of splendid bliss
the apex of creation's glamour
the oyster in the bottom of the ocean
a love poem in a book of poetry
a bedouin's scarf furbished with silver adornment
a grove of almond trees in springtime
a lute in the hands of Ziryab¹
a mirth glowing in the eyes of a squirrel

To love you, I condense into utter happiness
and all the world becomes my disciple

Love completes itself
Joy gives birth to itself
and nothing resembles you
save all of my feelings for you...

Your triumphal look is the sweetness of a pitch night
bathing in the wine of the dawn
the joy of a bird washing itself in a river
the trilling of a skylark celebrating life

When you come over
the world trembles with joy
it follows in your footsteps...
When you raise your dainty hand to bid farewell
a dagger is plunged deep in the soul
the seas flare up,
they wrap their lapping rainbows under their billows
And roll up and down in blazing fury...

In your absence, the earth strains
the paths ignore my footsteps
the wineglasses and mirrors fall out in dispute

Besieged by disappointments
I bolt the door on both of us
and resort only to your glowing conquering eyes...

Benumbed by your nocturnal fragrance
I lie down among your letters
embraced by peace,
Float upon a lake of your passionate melodies
and rock a startled wave
seeking its father's lap
in fear of drying up...

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You flow along with artless ease,
dripping with marvellous femininity
You break upon my hunger,
glowing with wheat, with ears of corn
with wine and fragrance

You look out upon a new year
an old year
and a year to come
revive my worn waiting,
fenced with heavenly love

Your mere look melts down all of my cares
sweetens my bitter days and sour nights
seduces Time to reconcile with me...

The nights take off their sullen dark-coloured attire,
restore distress to life's fabric

For your sake, I erase the sins of the calendars,
and leave the public to their leisure

Flower of my love, galaxy of my delights
you are ever beloved by all...

¹Ziryab was one of the greatest Andalusian singers and musicians. He died about 845.

محي الدين لاذقاني

Dr. Muhyieddin Lazikani is a Syrian poet, writer, researcher, critic and journalist. He is the author of three collections of poetry, a play and three volumes of literary criticism. His writings and poetry won him a prize and a medal. He is currently the head of the cultural section of the international *Middle East* newspaper published in London where he lives.

نويل عبد الأحد

Noel Abdulahad is a writer living in Los Angeles, USA. He is an adviser to *Kalimat*.

MAY MUZAFFAR

Four Poems

Translated by Noel Abdulahad

The Silence of the City

The wall of the city is sealed,
but a sound, braided by the wind's garb,
is heard behind the wall,
 in the wide expanse
 in the depth of silence
 in the deaf-mute of stones...
And in the clouds on high:
 draining their water of sadness
 never revealing what they see.

The Expanse

Distance is an abstract form
it flies away like a butterfly
dreading to be near a dangerous range
I see it as a carpet
embellishing the rosy horizon
swooping around me
enmeshing my footsteps
becoming a tape muffling my voice
assassinating my sweetest words...

KAMAL KHAIR BEY

Three Poems

Translated by Noel Abdulahad

Consolation

I like to stand on the stage, alone...
stare at the empty seats
weep, laugh and sigh...

The applause of the audience tempts me no more
my kingdom sinks deep into hell
I am consoled when I speak courageously
setting my voice apart from the rumbling words
that fall on the dead walls of the silent hall...

Absence

Your absence resounds now
despite your invisible strings
Its resonance creeps slowly into my ears
like a phantom's steps
it stretches its head from the passageways
draws closer to me,
stops for a little while on the doorstep
like a leopard
and darts like a flying arrow
toward my heart
offering to me its coal-black furry coat
and glistening bared fangs

'Twixt us two now:
vast continents,

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unknown territories
and never-ending staircases

'Twixt us two now:
incommunicable thoughts
and dead sentiments...

The Prey

I cry for the growing lily of my desire
I weep, sob and sigh
to seduce you,
to sweep you up
and enlase you with my arms and legs
That my tiny germ will grow bigger...

I long for the sweet water of our union
when I am enveloped with silence
when I am stunned by the fury that isolates
and when the germ within me ferments with boredom
with the dust of sadness
with the pulse of immense solitude

I set out the bait for you
that you may kiss me and embrace me
that I may hunt you and lie mingled with you
in dense love
and save you for my pallid days that fret me
that wrap me with desolate bareness
and envelop me with the worm-eaten soil
and sulphuric stagnant water...

كمال خير بك

Kamal Khair Bey, a Syrian poet, was assassinated in Beirut in 1980. The Arabic originals of the above poems appeared in *al-Qasida*, Vol.1 (1), Fall 1999.

FADIL SALTANY

Burning with Water

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

Van Gogh

Go away!
How many times should I see you
dangling from the ceiling of hunger
from the nineteenth century till now
I see you every night
hanging from the ceiling of hunger... and I weep
as if I were your brother, though not borne to your mother.
I look at your empty chair
and feel guilty for not sitting in it,
I look at your yellow corncobs
and feel guilty for not picking them,
I look at your whore
and feel guilty
for not marrying her.
Go away!
I am the stranger coming from another land
a land you have not heard of.
Aren't you satisfied with a whole nation?
Take your empty chair,
your field of yellow corn,
your whore,
take even your cut ear, for who would need it?
And go away.
I am satisfied with my empty chair,
my field of yellow corn,
the whores of Babel,
and my sun with its throat cut
since birth.

That Thing

Strange and mysterious
was that thing
like your laughter breaking now in your throat

Strange and mysterious
was that thing
like your coat melting now in the ice

Strange and mysterious
was that thing
like my face disappearing now on a road of no return

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MORNING

Good morning... morning of losses
as you collect me
and spread me
over your balconies... a killed bird.
Morning of the dead stranger
Beautiful morning
Morning of a city crossing me
to the others
And I read *al-Fatiha*¹
at every bend
and corner
and a street hastening its steps behind that street.
Slow down a little
for after a short while
we shall raise a mast
and sail...
enter a river
and drink sweet waters
or... let us go fast
open a gate and enter...
little by little shall we calm down...
then sleep
long... long

¹*Al-Fatiha is the opening chapter of the Koran, often recited as a prayer*

The Statue

From sunrise to sunset
passers-by pass by you
where is everyone going?

From sleep to rise
weeds grow beneath you
and dust gathers on your shoulders.

What is left of you?
Two fingers looking over
passers-by
and a shadow looking over you.

Your Hands

When you open your palms
the deity falls
frozen in the corners
with unusual passions...
Where did you learn this prayer?

فاضل السلطاني

Fadil Saltany is an Iraqi poet living in London. He published books of poetry and translations. The above poems are from his poetry book *Burning with Water*, al-Warrak Publishing Ltd., London 2000.

CHAWKI MOSLEMANI

Eight Poems

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

Window to the Sea

The river submerges me
I am the passionate fruit of the earth
the winds write melodies on my face
my sight is cast over the expanse
the earth turns for my hand that happily holds the seasons
with winds and rain and flowers and fields
and with my hand, I raise the stars
launch them in the heavens
to celebrate the distance

Once
I was the branches of the forest
a master in the plant kingdom
carrying the tops of the trees upward
and sleeping like a bird
guarded by the breeze

Once
I was the caves and the rocks and the valleys
And preceded my caution in the animal kingdom
with my fire, which I lit with a stone
to change my voice

And once
I was the fields on the plains of the world
blossoming with my slender fingers
and upright back
lashed by whips, and I fed them bread
so that they became fatter
and I became thinner
and avenged myself

Now
I complete the cycle of my life
cracked by steel wheels
filled by oil
clotted by carbon
overwhelmed by mud so that
lead sleeps in my blood
stones pull me

I complete the cycle of my life
to open a window to the sea
and race the winds

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Smoke

you haven't said a word yet
you have made no step
there is no cloud to cast a shade on you
no gazelle following you

all the names you know
shimmer and disappear
and you remain alone in the night
watching names that fall
to their cosmic dust.

all your life is a cigarette
tiner than a needle
burned by a passer-by

Cities

I will fill my eyes with cities
that rise amidst their fires
and neigh

I will shake the hands
of those whom I defeated
and those who defeated me
and those who will laugh

From every tavern
I will pick some clatter
a laugh
a rose
a small glass
and I will embrace in the night
someone other than you
and shiver
for the discoveries of the traveller
in the real cities

Robot

He said: 'I am going.'
He went
in all directions at once
his soul fell on the road
his memory fell
his lower jaw, his tongue
his feet
his hands
his heart
his guts
and he disappeared.

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Life

behind the cigarette smoke
you watch your life:
a seat with no bird to peck bread from it
and a passer-by
who does not turn his head

Another Herb

Their opium is the herb of the other isthmus

Drop by drop they drink their delusions
Intoxicated by waking,
lightning becomes
ashes in their hands

Departure

We are the bleeding of the mountains
we drew silver dreams on the shores
of the city that sheltered us,
then we slept.
We did not know
that the ship we beckoned
carried us.

Beirut

In a far-away country
sun-heated breezes blow
memories simmer in my head
and from a cloud
two drops
fall...

شوقي مسلmani

Chawki Moslemani is a poet, writer and editor of Lebanese origins. He lives in Sydney. He authored three books of poetry in Arabic. The above poems are from his book *Papers of Solitude*, Ajniha Publications, Australia 1995.

KHALID AL-HILLI

Two Poems

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

A Deferred Matter

The road did not expect from me a silence like tonight's
my throat did not expect that I would cry like rain
and the wound stretching across my hand
perpetual wound
I fall in forests and in the sleeping darkness
and sing over the wounds of dreams
this I did not know some years before...
I did not know the tune of this song,
or the tune of this enchanting voice
or the tune of my voice
I did not know that I was a voice
overwhelmed by all my wounds:
this is why I deferred my screams.

The Many Faces of the Same Matter

A Face

For those who suddenly appeared in my way one morning
splitting my life into two seasons: autumn, then summer
For those who awaited salvation from me
then got disappointed and fired bullets at me
I will come, death is my sea... and my heart is my boat

They sprang in my hand, and rested in my blood
I descended from the forests of my death
crossing all distances... dying on my way
They moved my voice, desecrated history's desire
they trod on my foot... stepped on my head
and died on my death
they left behind a thousand garments...
near my home

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they narrowed all distances, making them a finger
interlocking two hearts
in their coming they have become a moment for all things...
and I have become their focal point
They put their crown on my head
and when they regretted it...
they took off my head and went
I did not know where to

They left in my hand a white paper,
with a thousand gypsy voices
a thousand stone gates
in my voice
in

my voice
in my vo...
voice that is searching for me...
will remain searching for its voice
floating in its death

A Second Face

They quickly passed through my blood
dropping a step of a whole generation
then they returned, planting the impossible
then they became a thousand generations
they told the truth during the night... and lived their lies at dawn...
in the morning they struggled to see themselves
their mirror committed suicide
when it received their falsity
their voice

A Third Face

They taught me that things had two faces...
but they did not say
that humans had two lives and died
and because the first wisdom was inscribed on my chest
I said nothing...
and had already wasted two lives
and gave away my veins for a time on the road
I yearned to know who had died...

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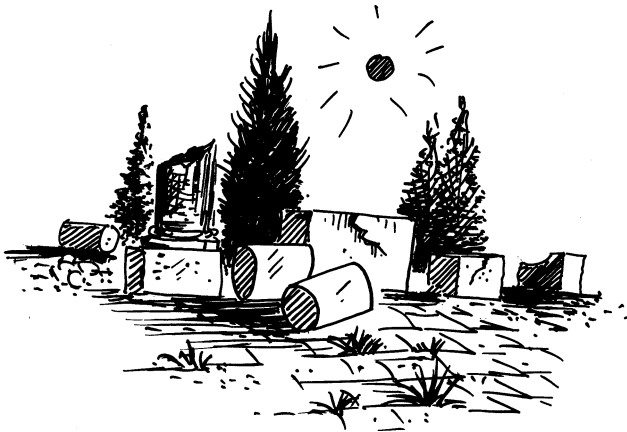
knowing nothing...
 about death in life
or life in death
and when...
 or how...
 or where...
 why did he die?

A Fourth Face

When they died waiting...
 I was alone with her
contemplating her nakedness
and courting her yearning
When they died waiting...
 I alone died on her

خالد الطي

Khalid al-Hilli is an Iraqi poet living in Melbourne, Australia. He is an adviser to *Kalimat*. The above poems are from his collection *Cloudy Cities*, Babil Publications, Morocco 1988.



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KHALID ZIADÉ

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

Translated by Raghid Nahhas



الليل

B O O K

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The Night

We were used to the night coming early, shortly after sunset. The nights fell quickly in winter, just after our return from school. Winter was an ally of the night. In the summer, however, we were able to stay up longer and enjoy the lingering twilight evenings. Night gave us the security of family togetherness, but it was also a source of fear due to the darkness and its frightening fairy tales. One distant relation of my mother's was of Turkish origin. Her visits to us lasted a few days at a time and were full of horror stories that crept up on me in the night. She was the first person to impart to me the sense of fear. The vast endless darkness allowed myths and jinn stories to intermingle and disturb our nights.

Relatives' visits in those days lasted a few days, even when they were living in the same town. During every visit the order of the house was turned upside down, particularly in relation to sleeping arrangements. The visits also enlivened our evenings. We were allowed to stay awake longer and we heard unusual news. We loved those visits. They gave us all the excuses we needed to neglect our homework.

Generally, the black dark night of fear and myth remained outside the house - buildings and lanes drowned in endless murkiness. In reality, our fear of the night contrasted with the peace enjoyed by the city. Fear has its own independent structure, fed by a conservative attitude fearful of adventure. Thus the city surrendered to the night and completely subjugated itself without resistance.

The long nights were interrupted by the sounds of whistles and sirens coming from ships anchored nearby, or those announcing the departure of trains from the station. Sometimes the whistles of the night patrol guards, equipped with their pistols and batons, woke us up. They would send repeated signals to each other for a time, then they would stop suddenly and we would go back to sleep.

The early evening saw the return of the men after their day's work to the *hara* (lane) where their homes were located and for a time the neighbourhood was a hive of activity. The main markets closed for the day and the corner shops prepared themselves to receive the night customers. There was a lot of coming and going between the houses and the *hara*. Some men would go into the street in their pyjamas to purchase their needs. This continued until nine o'clock, when things usually quietened down. Then the darkness of the *sook* (market place) extended to the *hara*, particularly after the café closed its doors. The square, the road and the lanes became empty except for some late passers-by. The only café that remained open for tea-drinkers in the early evening closed to be ready for a dawn start.

The night started early and finished early. The minarets announced the end of the night two hours before the first gleam of dawn could be distinguished from the surrounding blackness. Holy recitals were broadcast before the Dawn Prayer. Among the first to stir were those who left their homes at four in the morning to attend prayers, outdone only by the bakery workers. The café was ready to receive its customers with the early light of the morning - casual workers awaiting a chance or workmen preparing themselves for a long day. About six, shops and markets were opened and a new day began in the city.

The night brought its unavoidable flood of darkness as if it were an enemy's army, against which we were defended by those guards and their batons. They started their shift with the fall of darkness. They were the sentinels of the streets, the lanes and the market place, checking locks and examining the faces of passers-by. With this, they continued rituals as old as civilisation itself, inheriting the tradition of the town night-

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watchers of olden times. The city's evenings were as they had been for hundreds of years; with the closing of its doors and gates, walking became an act of bravery.

The rhythm of our city revealed how generations of citizens endured the night through prayers. Actually, the night was trapped between the Evening Prayer and the Dawn Prayer; a span of seven or eight hours deliberately reduced by those who prayed by extending the Evening Prayer by one hour or more and attending the Dawn Prayer at least one hour before it was due. Celebrating the Prophet's birthday and other occasions such as the mid-point of the month of *Shaban*, in addition to the Sufi rituals invoking the name of Allah, were all ways of overcoming the night and dissipating its melancholy.

During the month of Ramadan each year, the city dared the night and belittled it. It filled the night with the calls of the *mossahereen* and the sounds of their instruments inviting the sleepers to wake up and take the *sahoor*, the last light meal before daybreak, after which no food was to be taken until the next sunset. The nights of Ramadan were also full of the noise of peddlers and those spending the night in cafés or awake at home. There were those who snipped at the sides of the night by staying awake between breaking the fast at sunset and the *sahoor*.

Going out at night was done only if necessary, except for drunkards and tramps - or so we imagined. Who would dare to pass by some of those desolate buildings, even during the hours of daylight? The night was a time for weaving every fabric of imagining about these buildings. Children whispered what their elders told them: "haunted".

There was another night beyond the grasp of our childhood and youth. It was to be found in the new part of the city; a lit night, ridden of our fears and not visited by the jinn that terrified us. The reality was that our parents and the inhabitants of the old city did not immerse themselves in the nightlife of The Mandate created by the colonial authorities. So the night during that period reflected the separate modes of living: that of the French and those who shared their ways, and that of the citizens of the traditional city. The colonial night centred around the modern city where hotels, bars and parties mixing men and women flourished. The inhabitants of the old city mixed myth and reality when they talked about that other life existing a few metres away from their own.

The modernisation that had occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century gradually conquered the night and shortened it by the means available to that era. Oil lamps with their pale spreading light, placed on timber posts erected on corners and at the entrances to lanes, were lit in the evening and extinguished in the morning by the torch lighter using a long cane. But the oil lanterns and the electrical lamps that later replaced them on the same timber posts were too faint to allow pedestrians a sure footing.

Electricity crept into the space of the city and eliminated some of the desolation of the night. And under the light of the lamps that became brighter, western modernity crept insolently like a thief into that side of the city it had created for itself. For years after the departure of the French, the citizens remained cautious about the modern colonial city that maintained its 'Mandate'-style night and except during feasts, we were not allowed to venture into that side of the city.

During the nineteen fifties, young men, particularly those who were employed by the government, were able to establish links between the night of the modern city and that of the old one. They started exploring the nightlife that had grown up during the days of The Mandate. For them, staying awake and hanging around extended till dawn.

The city did not unify its night, but new formulae emerged. The impact of radio during the nineteen fifties was decisive in breaking the isolation of the city and its

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preoccupation with its own stories and news. Evening habits changed rapidly and the silence of the night was broken by the voices of broadcasters and singers who became familiar 'visitors'. The huge radio set on its special table occupied a respected and permanent corner of the sitting room. In its golden age, the radio received more attention than any other piece of furniture. Part of the wall that divided generations within families had been demolished along with the wall that divided night and day.

The radio was a political and linguistic instrument, promoting national slogans. It was also a vital tool for women to discover a world that existed outside the boundaries of family and home. Women listened to radio series and to recorded Egyptian stories about love between men and women. Radio assisted women in particular in learning a vocabulary hitherto unknown to them and it made them more ready to leave the confined world of the home. Radio conquered the market place as well, occupying a prominent place in shops, and its voice prevailed over all other voices that distinguished the market place of the city.

The city did not unify its night. The inner markets and the old lanes preserved the quietness of their nights, whilst the citizens answered the call of modernisation illuminated by city lights in wide streets and expanding suburbs.

Modernisation, well equipped, was usurping the night, transforming it from an enemy into an agent to promote its style. The new city plans presented an architecture that resisted the darkness. Wide, straight streets were lit by fluorescent and neon lights with white radiance. Shop windows, kept lit during the night, started to amuse passers-by and people who gathered in cafés, restaurants and cinemas that used coloured lights to attract attention. Night wardens also roamed these modern streets and we used to mock their appearance as they walked among us as if they had mistaken the night they were guarding.

Our traditional night, embodying family togetherness around the dinner table, or the fireplace in winter, had given way to another night that had to do with going out and staying awake in public places. And those ever-spreading, ever-gleaming lights encouraged occasions and rituals to which we quickly became habituated. The night-lights expelled the myths that had surrounded the news of the night and swept away the darkness of the streets like a thin layer of dust. The invasion of women into the night with its mixed parties mirrored what we had watched with amazement in the movies and was the precursor to a decisive change in the values of family and society and an explosion of a style of living that seemed to have come suddenly, without introduction.

Nothing hitherto had signalled such change as did the transformation of the night that we witnessed during those years of childhood and early youth. It was as if the modern city had been elevated on the wings of darkness tamed by the electric lamps of the builders. The night, so crammed with lights and brightly lit shop windows that pieces of day were created amidst the night, rearranged time - or perhaps invented another time. The traditional night was outside time, each night resurrecting the ancient past and taking us back to it. But the night of spellbinding lights had already replaced the horrifying fairy tales with engaging promises.

خالد زيادة

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

JEANNETTE HOURANI

The Translator's Guide

by

Ali Darwish

Writescope, Melbourne, 2001. 450 pp. Language: Arabic. ISBN 0-957-751-109

Not only is this book an academic textbook, but also the author, Ali Darwish, devotes a great deal of effort to provide practical examples through contrastive analysis of Arabic and English passages on the semantic, pragmatic and rhetorical levels.

Darwish writes in the opening lines of his book that his work is a practical guide for students and practising translators, providing a practical framework and a clear methodology for translation, so the reader can be clear about what to expect from the book.

In Chapter One, the author discusses language and its function. Stressing the importance of translation as a communication tool, in Chapter Two he outlines the process of monolingual and bilingual communication. Writing is at the heart of any translation endeavour. An effective translator is essentially an effective writer, the author confirms. Consequently, chapters three and four are dedicated to the fundamentals of writing, and since translation is about transfer of meaning, in Chapter Five, Darwish discusses its meaning, types and levels, asserting the notion that the ultimate goal of translation is to preserve the meaning of the original in its totality – notwithstanding the constraints and restrictions the limits of translatability impose on the process.

For teachers of Arabic translation, the task of preparing students to become professional translators is foiled by the lack of a clear teaching methodology and serious textbooks about the subject. For students, the situation is even worse. Arabic translation books are not available and students often have to struggle with abstruse English language sources.

Chapter Seven constitutes the centerpiece of the book. Aptly titled *Translation Dynamics*, the chapter discusses translation techniques, approaches and the constraints that drive the process of translation. In this chapter, a great deal of energy is dedicated to providing practical solutions to translation problems specific to Arabic. In Chapter Eight, translation problems are discussed in three areas of the translation process: comprehension, processing and production.

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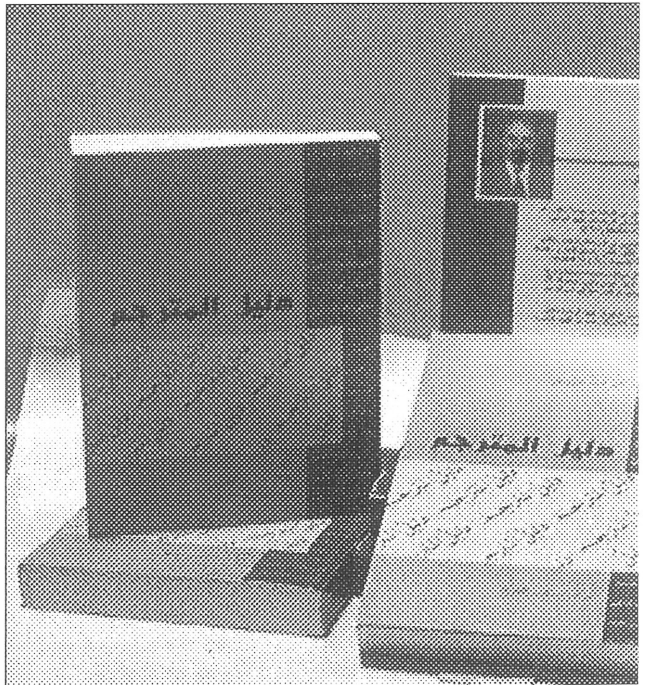
Long neglected in translation books and translation courses, terminology and the centrality of the translator's role in Arabic terminology occupy a space in the book. Terminology and word formation techniques are explained in Chapter Nine, while transliteration and transcription are discussed in chapter ten. Chapter Eleven provides a comprehensive set of practical steps for translation. In chapter twelve, Darwish discusses interpreting types, prerequisites and situations.

Throughout the book, Darwish returns to the assertion that translation is a process of approximation and that optimal approximation is driven mainly by the purpose of translation task. He makes a distinction between legitimate intervention and illegitimate interference stressing the importance of preserving the information integrity of the original text in terms of its information content and informative and communicative intentions.

In Chapter Thirteen, Darwish discusses body language and its importance in interpreting. In Chapter Fourteen, he covers machine translation while in Chapter Fifteen, *Translation Matrices*, he provides ready-made translation examples of proverbs, idiomatic expressions and United Nations phrases.

The professional integrity of translators and interpreters has been a hot issue in Australia recently. In Chapter Sixteen, the author outlines the code of ethics of the profession. The three appendices provide a set of passages for translation, linking devices in English and Arabic and a glossary of translation terms.

The book provides a framework for teaching the subject of translation in a structured and practical fashion.



جانيت حوراني

Jeanette Hourani is a journalist and broadcaster with the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS Radio), Melbourne, Australia.

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كلمات

Kalimat

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

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

تنشر كلمات النثر والشعر والدراسات والقصة والفنون باللغة العربية أو الإنكليزية وفق طريقتين أساسين:
أولاً – المواد الأصلية التي لم يسبق نشرها مطلقاً بأية لغة.

ثانياً – المواد المترجمة، أو التي يتقدم بها المؤلف لتقوم كلمات بترجمتها. وهذه يجب أن تكون منشورة سابقاً بلغتها الأصلية، ولم تسبق ترجمتها إلى الإنكليزية. وتقدم كلمات خدمة الترجمة مجاناً للذين تقبل أعمالهم. (الأعمال التي تأتي مترجمة سلفاً قد يتوفر لها حظ أكبر بالنشر نظراً لضغط العمل لدينا). يجب تزويدنا بالمرجع الذي تم النشر فيه، بما في ذلك اسم الناشر، والسنة، ورقم المجلد، والعدد في حال الدوريات. جميع المواد المقدمة للنشر تخضع لتقييم قبل قبولها، كما أن الدراسات الأكاديمية ترسل إلى مُحكمين مختصين.

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

الرعاية (المؤازرة المادية)

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

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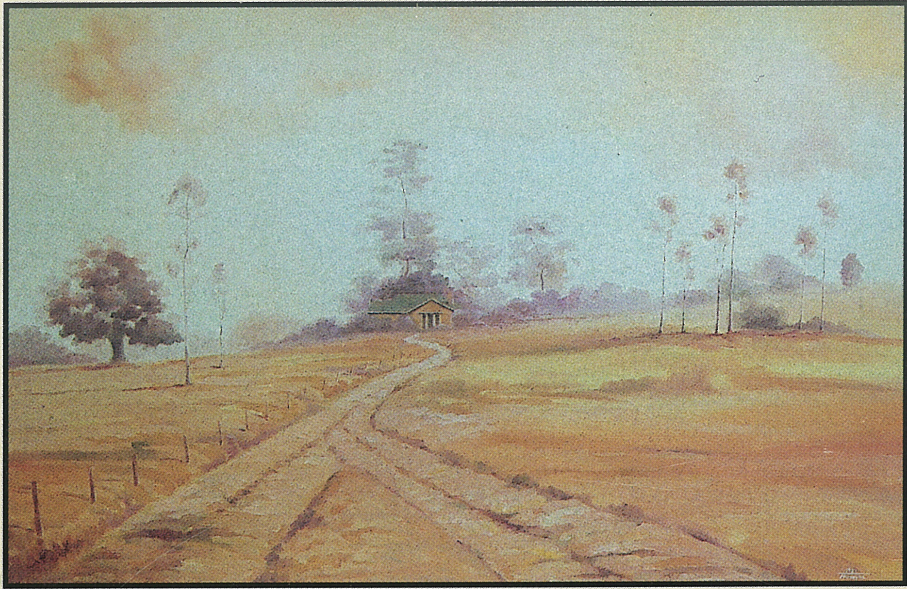
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