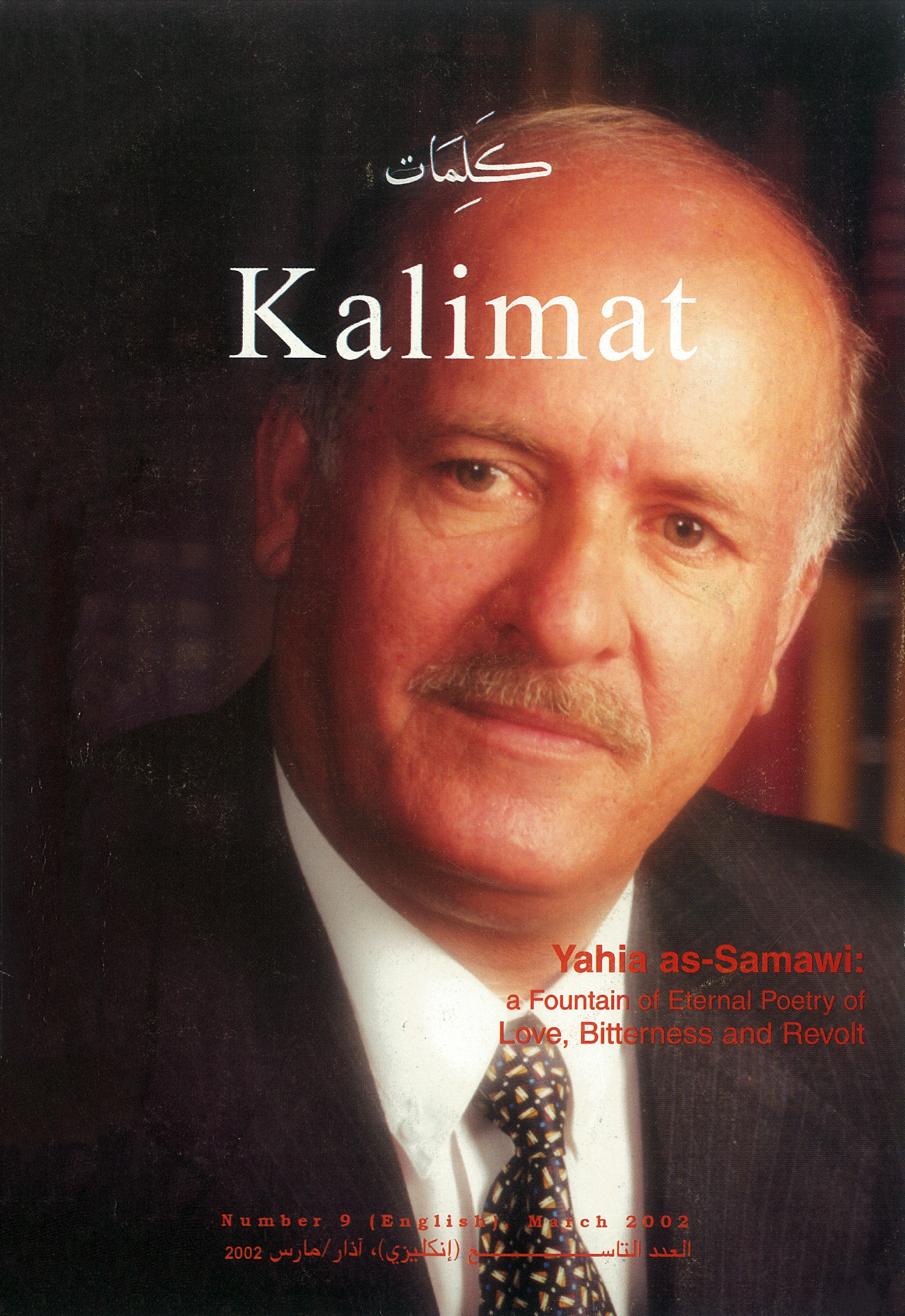

كلمات

Kalimat

Yahia as-Samawi:
a Fountain of Eternal Poetry of
Love, Bitterness and Revolt

Number 9 (English), March 2002
العدد التاسع (إنكليزي)، آذار/مارس 2002

كلمات

Kalimat

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Number 9 (English), March 2002

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Kalimat 9

الكلمة بابُ الإرث الحضاريّ، والكتابة مفتاحُ ديمومته
Words are the gate to cultural heritage, and writing is the key to its permanence

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Peter Indari and the Arab Press in Australia

Peter Indari, a Lebanese writer and journalist, is a veteran of Arab journalism in Australia. We are talking here about newspapers and journals published in Arabic in Australia.

Indari started his journey since he migrated to Australia back in 1957 at the age of eighteen. For over thirty years, and at different stages, he co-founded and edited some of the most prominent Arabic newspapers in Australia, including *el-Telegraph* (8 years), *an-Nahar* (20 years), *The Orient* (2 years) and others.

In 1995, Indari was invited by the *Arab Club* in London to lecture on Arab journalism in Australia. His lecture was then published in *al-Hayat* (a prominent international newspaper published in Arabic in London). On 30/1/2001, Indari updated his information and gave another lecture about the same subject at the Marrickville City Council Library, Australia. The following is extracted from Indari's Arabic article.

The Arab press in Australia is dominated by publishers and editors of Lebanese origin, due to the fact that the majority of Arabs in Australia are of Lebanese origin, but it is also due to the history of the Lebanese roots in searching for free thought and to the leading role that Lebanon played as "the publishing centre" for the Arab World, and as a country embracing freedom of press that allowed the emergence of leading newspapers.

Lebanese migration to Australia set forth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but it was limited in number and short of the educated. The number of migrants increased after the Second World War. In the mid nineteen sixties migrants from other Arab countries began to arrive. The possibility of increased readership prodded some to

play a role in publishing in Arabic, but those who pursued this objective were mostly considered as adventurers for not having any proper regard to the commercial reality of this venture. Between 1957 and 1969, there were five attempts to publish newspapers or periodicals, and in each case the project did not last long. Ghassan Malouf was the first to bring Arabic printing letters to Australia in 1965. He published *al-Hadaf*, a newspaper that expired a few months from its publication. Other attempts depended on the use of stencil and offset printing.

Early in 1970, Arabic newspapers thrived publication one to three times a week. Some newspapers started recently to appear daily. It is worth to mention that Arabic newspapers in Australia appeared three quarters of a century after the appearance of the first Arabic newspaper in the Americas.

While living in Australia, Salim Zabbal published a booklet about Arabic newspapers and periodicals in Australia up to 1989. He indicated that 76 publications were issued since 1957. Peter Indari counted 36 newspapers and periodicals published between 1989 and the end of 2001, rendering a total number of 112 ever since the first Arabic newspaper, *al-Watan wal Mahjar* was published in Australia in 1957.

Out of all of that, nine newspapers are now published in Sydney. These are *ad-Diyar* (5 times per week), *el-Telegraph* (3), *al-Mustaqbal* (3), *an-Nahar* (2), *al-Byraq* (2), *al Middle East Herald* (1), *al-Muharir*, *al-Masri* and *Akhbar Misr* (the last three are published once each fortnight). There are five monthly or seasonal journals, issued regularly: *al-Nujoom*, *Amira*, *al Middle East Times*, *Algethour* (literary) and *Kalimat* (international literary). There are some other journals that seem to have lost their regularity and became occasional, or stopped altogether.

Publishing is a very expensive business. One can imagine the money wasted on the hobby of newspaper publishing, when knowing that every project in this field would cost an average loss of $100,000 from the date of starting the project until its expiration.

Arabic press in Australia depends on advertising and selling. Thirty years ago, the Arab community used to spend on advertising in the range of $50,000 per year. Today, the figure shows it is in the range of one million dollars, including 25% in the said amount paid by the Australian Government in advertising matters related to multicultural communities.

About 130,000 of the Arabs in Australia are born outside Australia. The estimated available number of different Arabic newspapers circulated weekly is 40,000 copies. The figures show that the distribution is 30% of the population, whereas in Lebanon itself, considered the leading Arab country in newspaper readership, the corresponding figure does not exceed 18%. Nevertheless, the percentage of the number of readers and the yield from advertising are not sufficient to secure viable ventures. That is why Arabic press in Australia depends on cutting costs by importing most material from other newspapers in the Arab World, a task made easy thanks to the internet. Publishing of Arabic newspapers in Australia is mainly a task left for adventurers and amateurs

who often have to ultimately face the reality of financial and moral losses.

Arabic publishing in Australia is made difficult due to a number of factors. Some of these are:

- The lack of market research regarding readership, advertising and distribution.
- Most of the newspapers are published without a sound budget plan.
- There is no utilisation, or even a good background of the profession.
- Classification of themes are randomly done. Many a time newspapers cover 80% of the space by social events and advertisement notices.
- Disparity in concentrating on local events ranges from five to seventy percent from one newspaper to another.
- Responsible personnel in the Arabic press deal with their readership and advertisers in a primitive manner, often claiming they are the best and most widely read.

Indari cites recent migration figures indicating that about 14,000 Lebanese arrived in Australia during the past five years. We have also witnessed the influx of Iraqis who constitute a strong readership base. He estimates that for the next twenty-five years, Arabic newspapers in Australia will flourish and are guaranteed to continue and play an important role in assisting in the settlement of migrants, educate the community about the laws of the land and bridge gaps between different political and religious factions.

Kalimat indicates here that the task of producing "non-mainstream" literary journals is even more complicated due to a much smaller market segment, lack of government and community financial support, the necessity of publishing quality original material, the use of reviewers and referees, the higher costs of printing and posting and above all the lack of talented people willing to dedicate most of their time for such a task. These journals, are almost entirely dependent on personal initiatives whether as to sacrificing this time, contributing articles or providing finance. Advertisers prefer to use newspapers and social magazines rather than literary journals. Those who do are often culturally conscious and they advertise as a means of supporting the journal in question. These problems affect the quality and regularity of those publications reducing their effectiveness and bringing about their eventual stagnation and downfall.

MAHMOUD DARWISH

Translated by Adnan Haydar

A Moment of Silence for Gaza

It girds itself with explosives and explodes. It is neither death nor suicide. It is Gaza's way of demonstrating that it is worthy of life. For the past four years its flesh has been flying like shrapnel. It is neither magic nor miracle. It's the weapon with which Gaza defends itself and exhausts the enemy.

For four years the enemy has been reveling in his dreams and flirting with Time; except in Gaza, because Gaza is away from its friends and close to its enemies, because Gaza is an island. Every time Gaza explodes – and Gaza explodes all the time – it scratches the enemy's face, destroys his dream, and creates dissension between him and Time.

Time in Gaza is something else. It does not make people dream; it makes them explode and adhere to reality. Time in Gaza does not proceed from childhood to old age; it makes children men when they encounter the enemy. Time in Gaza does not slacken; it erupts in broad daylight, because values in Gaza differ. The conquered man's only value is the extent of his resistance to occupation. Gaza is addicted to this noble ideal, and its people compete only in resisting the enemy. They did not learn all this from books, schools, songs or propaganda; they learned it from experience and from unselfish deeds.

Gaza does not boast of its weapons, its revolution or its wealth. It offers its bitter flesh; it acts as it wills and it spills its blood. And Gaza is not versed in oratory; it has no throat; it speaks the language of sweat, blood and fire. This is why the enemy hates it and wants to destroy it. This is why the enemy is afraid of it and tires to drive it into the sea or the desert or drown it in blood. This is why its friends and relatives love it and are sometimes envious and fearful of it. Gaza is a horrible lesson and a shining model for friends and foe alike.

> Gaza is not the most beautiful city.
> Its coastline is not more blue than the coastline of other Arab cities.
> Its oranges are not the best oranges in the Mediterranean basin.
> It is not the richest city. (Fish, oranges, sand, smuggled goods, cheap labour, and tents made desolate by wind.)
> It is not the most cultured city.
> And Gaza is not the biggest city, but it is a whole history because the enemy finds it the ugliest, the poorest, the most miserable and most vicious.

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Because it is the enemy's nightmare,
Because it is booby-trapped oranges;
Children without childhood,
Women without desire,
Old men who do not age;

Because it is all this,
It is more beautiful,
Purer, richer,
And more worthy of love
Than all of us.

We slight Gaza when we look for its poetry. We should not mar its beauty. The most beautiful thing about it is that it does not have any poetry.

We, on the other hand, tried to vanquish the enemy with our verse. We believed ourselves, and we were happy when the enemy left us to our songs and we left him to his victory. Then poetry dried on our lips, and the enemy had already built cities, streets and fortifications.

We slight Gaza when we make it a legend, because we will soon hate it when we realize that it is nothing but a small city resisting occupation. When we wonder: 'What made it a legend?' We will smash our mirrors and cry if we have any dignity left; if we refuse to revolt against ourselves, we will curse Gaza.

We slight Gaza when we glorify it. Loving Gaza will tempt us to wait for it, and Gaza does not come to us. It does not set us free. Gaza has no horses, no airplanes, no magic wands and no offices in world capitals. Gaza sets itself free from our traits, our language and its enemies at one and the same time. And when we meet Gaza – in our dreams – it may not recognize us, because Gaza is the child of fire and we are children of defeat.

It is true, Gaza has its special circumstances and its special revolutionary traditions. We say all this not to analyze Gaza but rather to liberate ourselves. Yet Gaza is not a riddle. All its people are strongly united in their resistances. They know what they want: to rid themselves of the enemy. Resistance is to people what flesh is to bones. It is not a teacher-pupil relationship. It is not merely an assignment. It has not become an institution. It has not accepted anybody's patronage. It has not staked its destiny on anybody's signature. It does not care whether we know its name, whether we like its picture, or whether we are impressed by its eloquence. It does not believe that it is propaganda material. It does not pose in front of television cameras. It does not believe that it is photogenic. Gaza does not want all this, and we do not want it either.

Its gushing wounds have not been excuses for oratory. Part of its beauty is that we do not talk about it and that we do not embroider its dreams with our feminine songs.

This is why Gaza is bad business for middlemen. This is why it is a priceless, spiritual and moral treasure for all Arabs.

Part of Gaza's beauty is that our voices do not reach it. Nothing worries Gaza. Nothing can move its fist away from the enemy's face. Gaza does not worry about what form the Government will take in the prospective Palestinian State (which we shall found on the eastern side of the Moon or the western side of Mars), nor about the distribution of posts in the National Assembly. Nothing disturbs Gaza. It is bent on resistance – hunger and resistance, thirst and resistance, suffering and resistance, siege and resistance, death and resistance.

The enemy may vanquish Gaza. The turbulent sea may vanquish a small island, may cut down all its trees, break its bones, and plant tanks in the stomachs of its women and children. The enemy may drive Gaza into the sea or the desert, or drown it in blood, but Gaza will not repeat the lies. It will not say 'yes' to the enemy. It will keep on exploding. It is neither death nor suicide. It is Gaza's way of demonstrating that it is worthy of life.

محمود درويش

Mahmoud Darwish is a prominent Palestinian/international poet and thinker. He is Editor-in-Chief of the renowned quarterly *al-Karmel*. The above is the introduction to his book *Yawmiyat al-Huzn al-'adi*, al-Mu'assasah al-Arabiyah lil-Dirast wa-al-Nashr, Beirut 1979.

عدنان حيدر

Adnan Haydar is a leading academic who is currently the director of the Arabic Programme and Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature at the University of Arkansas. He is the author, co-author and editor of several books. His numerous articles about modern literary theory and oral poetry have appeared in premier literary journals in USA and the Middle East.

GREG BOGAERTS

Stories in the Air

In these days of economic rationalism there are few outlets for publishing short stories in Australia. The journal market has been all but decimated by cuts in Arts Council funding. Mainstream publishers persistently claim there is no interest in the short story in Australia. Big publishers refuse to have anything to do with short stories. This is a shame because there are many people, writers and readers, who believe the short story is far from dead.

Radio Adelaide FM 101.5's Short Story Programme (formerly Radio 5UV) is one of the few regular outlets for the publication of short stories. The team, led by Jenny Molnar and Alan Walden, broadcast one short story every week. The stories come not just from South Australia, but from all over Australia. They are read by Jenny or Alan or sometimes a trained actor. One of the refreshing things about this programme is its preparedness to publish stories that are closely connected to particular regions. The big publishers turn their noses up at anything set outside of Balmain and The South Bank, but not Radio Adelaide FM 101.5.

The South Australian Writers' Centre eventually became the sponsor of the programme, a turning point because the Centre's newsletter went to every literary organisation in Australia. This soon attracted contributions from all over the country.

Jenny Molnar and Alan Walden are the only remaining members of the original group that gathered back in 1989 to kick off the programme. Jenny, a poet and writer of many years, and Alan, an ex-actor with contacts in the theatre, bring out a programme of high quality every week.

Jenny Molnar has witnessed the artistic growth of many writers who have become regular contributors to the programme. This experience has given her great joy. Jenny is always prepared to discuss, by phone, a piece of writing that may need some work, and she is always ready to give praise to a writer who has written something exceptional.

Contributors to the programme vary from full-time professional writers to amateur scribes. Many writers have received their start through Radio Adelaide's short story programme; a legacy that needs to be recognized and praised.

Four years ago, Norman Athersmith, the well-known producer and actor, joined the team on the programme. He has been an enormous asset.

The programme team is always ready to receive stories up to fifteen hundred words in length. Any topic is suitable as long as it is a story and a story suitable for the radio. Jenny Molnar and the other readers accept previously published work if it has been

restricted in its distribution.

Radio Adelaide FM 101.5's Short Story Programme is a vehicle of publication available for all. This is something rare and quite wonderful that defies a publishing marketplace that is ironically a closed shop in a supposed open economy.

غريغ بوغارتس

Greg Bogaerts is a writer from Newcastle, Australia. He has had more than 140 short stories published. He is currently working on some novels.

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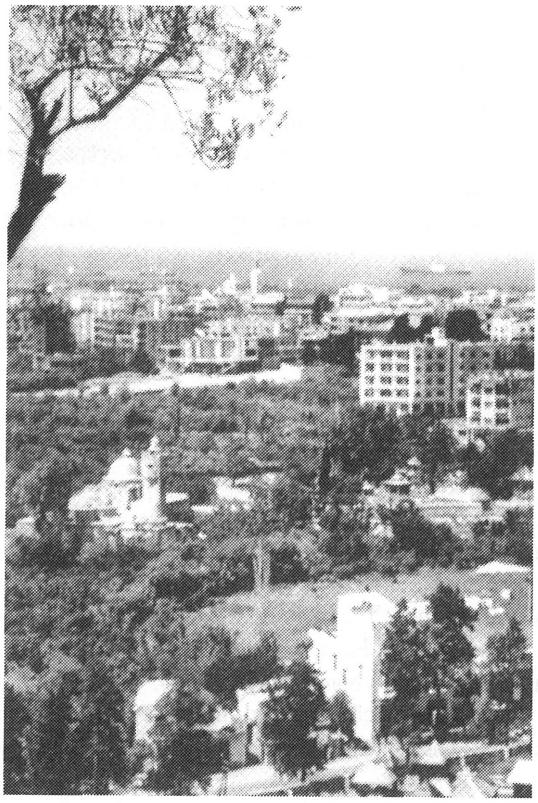
KHALID ZIADÉ

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

Translated by ***Raghid Nahhas***



البحر المتوسط

The Mediterranean

B O O K

The Mediterranean

I could see a long strip of the sea from our balcony. I could also see tankers waiting to be loaded with oil from the refinery north of the city. I often stood alone, silent, gazing at a departing ship until it completely disappeared beyond the horizon. Through the summer nights, and even during the winter, I used to count the lights coming from the fishing boats. The sea dominated the wide landscape behind the citrus orchards, producing a scene of blue and green shades. The sea was the sea, with no name or definition, until I reached grade four at school, when, to my great surprise, I learned that the "Mediterranean" that appeared in our school maps was the same sea I saw from our balcony.

The city where we lived was three kilometres from the shore, a distance that could be walked in an hour. My family, however, were not seafarers and had none of the seafaring traditions. Our city was a conservative one and it had surrendered its port (*al-Minaa*), which was almost a city in its own right, to the caprices of the sea. The city did not embrace the sea's customs, which occupied no part of its daily concerns or of its culture. There were no fishermen's songs, no tales or adventures that could be spoken of. Our plates seldom contained the fruits of the sea. We left all that to the inhabitants of *al-Minaa* who were very proud of their port, as if they were living in a different city in a different world.

Al-Minaa was a summer holiday spot for the city's inhabitants who used to hire horse-drawn carriages for the journey. Later, they took taxis, which could do the trip in five minutes. We used to visit *al-Minaa* during the two feasts, *al-Fitre* and *al-Adha*, if the weather allowed. Our main purpose in going was to ride the sea on the fishing boats that had been converted by their owners so they could ferry the children from the city to the nearest island. The next day, we wouldn't be able to stop talking about the immensity of the sea and the power of its waves. This was only one ritual of several that the children of the feast had to try at least once.

There were several seas in our young imaginations: the sea we saw from our balcony was different from the mythological seas in the stories of *Sindbad* and those of the pirates in the movies. It was also different from the sea near *al-Minaa* with its real fishermen, nets as blue as the sea, boats, ships, and anchors.

The seaside had only recently acquired its attraction as a place for recreation. It began when the French and the English, who built the refinery during the Mandate, introduced the habit of sunbathing and swimming in the sea. They built chalets in a few places along the coast, and some locals did the same.

The attraction the sea had for the boys of our city came later. They used to swim in the city's river, but a flood resulted in works to widen it, which ended the age-old tradition of river swimming, and made way for the era of sea swimming. This attracted

the young people, but not their elders who had never taken to this practice anyway.

During those youthful years, I used to walk to the sea with my friends down narrow roads, which passed through the citrus orchards and reached the beach where there was a row of unroofed stone cabins. We could hire one of these cabins for a small fee, but we often opted for changing our clothes behind the cabins, on the side facing a group of five bamboo shacks, which were allocated for use by families. We frequently passed by these shacks trying to steal a look inside through gaps between the compacted bamboo sticks. The very few women there, however, used to swim with their clothes on, so we would wait until they emerged wet from the water.

The five bamboo shacks were erected at a distance from the stone cabins. The grown-ups would avoid passing near them out of respect. Usually no one would approach the isolated area allocated for women, who normally occupied themselves with looking after their children.

It was a modest beach with its own character. The boys called it "*Gaskhana*", after the oil reservoirs that were there years before. The place kept this Ottoman name, even after the reservoirs had been abandoned, and it became synonymous with our summers of sun and swimming.

At the beginning of the century, the beach was neglected. It had no landmark, except for the crusader tower, which was a desolate place surrounded by tall trees making it fertile ground for our imaginary tales. We were awed by the tower and believed that it was a place for serpents and vultures. There were no vultures, but bats nestled among the tower's sandstones.

The beach where we bathed, with its cabins and bamboo shacks, stood between one side of the tower and the gate to *al-Minaa*. This is where the railway station buildings were erected during the Mandate. Even a quarter of a century after they were built, they kept all the tradition of that period: the yellow paint that covered their walls, the buttonwood tree in the middle of the cafeteria, the external showers, the wrought iron gates and the Latin letters *D.H.P.* above the entrance, an abbreviation of the railway company's name. The station's employees also retained some of the Mandate's influences. They often mentioned the English, their discipline and austerity, and their short-lived presence at the end of World War Two. I used to think that some French or English people secretly ran the affairs of the station, because the employees often used foreign words, particularly when speaking over the phone to other stations about work matters. Most of them were foreigners who had travelled from city to city until they settled here: Armenians, Greeks, Aleppans and others. There was a great mix of religions.

The station provided an oasis of life in that desolate environment, particularly when the train arrived from Homs or Aleppo. This was the express passenger train whose siren I was able to hear from home. Suddenly, the platform would fill with people and bags, but it would be empty again a few minutes later.

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My friends and I used to hang about the railway station during the summer holidays, on our way to the beach. My father was one of its employees. I used to move in and out of its offices as if they belonged to us; I climbed the buttonwood tree, and played inside the trains in the railyards. I preferred this to swimming. They were huge black trains with passenger compartments where we sat on wooden seats and played the travellers' game. We entered through back doors and exited through windows, and climbed the iron ladders until we reached the roof. We thought we owned those trains. When a teacher asked my sister on her first day at school what her father did, she answered that he was a train seller.

I enjoyed my city's environs, which stretched from our lane and the sandy hill on one side, to the railway station and the beach on the other. We considered the sandy hill a jungle where we fought with boys from neighbouring lanes to settle scores. During the summer, my mother used to take us to spend some days with her brothers in the nearby countryside, but I did not like the country life-style and the inhabitants were not much different from those in the city. I preferred the humidity of the city, the stickiness of its air mixed with the afternoon sadness of July and August, to the dryness of the country air. I was always happy to return to the city, where the trains, the sandy beach and the hill next to our lane were the subjects of my dreams.

The railway station was not the only legacy from the Mandate era, which had left its mark on towns all around the shores of the Mediterranean. All buildings of yellow colour belonged to that period, such as the army barracks on the hill overlooking the city and the refinery constructions at the northern entrance to the city. Some buildings from the last era of the Ottoman rule, such as the *Tal* Government House, the *Sultanyia* School, and our school, were dark yellow, the colour of official and governmental buildings. The colours gave an appearance of modernity to the city; a city that carried upon its shoulders relics from past ages.

The Mandate buildings kept more than their yellow colour and the Latin letters at their main entrances. The army barracks maintained their French system for a long time. When I went to the seaside early in the morning, it was possible for me to meet the return of a long row of soldiers with their metallic helmets, preceded by an officer on a horse and followed by wooden carriages loaded with gear and drawn by mules. The whole scene looked like a movie clip from a Second World War film, with no relation to the environment in which it was moving. Employees of the ABC, however, adhered more to the traditions they inherited from English administrators. They had built an enclosure outside the city, which was fenced by barbed wire so that it was inaccessible to anyone but themselves. Here, they practised their sports: swimming, golf and soccer. They also established a club inside the city that they went to on Saturday nights. Near the club, bookshops selling English books and magazines were available. In another corner of the city, near the *Rahbat* and *Frères* schools, some bookshops sold French books and magazines.

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Every European country had a resident consul in the city, usually chosen from the local Christian Orthodox community, or a Maronite from the neighbouring countryside. Since the early nineteenth century, French, Italians and other nationals have crossed the Mediterranean to come to our city. Nationals from Poland and Czechoslovakia, especially, arrived in large numbers. These travellers were military personnel, administrators and priests to run missionary schools, and others who had commercial or political reasons for coming. The Mediterranean influence came not only from the European shores, but also from islands such as Malta, Cyprus and particularly Crete.

Soon after the Mandate, a modern café was built in the city according to Ottoman style. It attracted Greek waiters who used to speak their own language as they worked. Locals who learnt the profession of hospitality from the Greeks, also picked up their language and Greek became the language of waiters around the city. Experienced Greek waiters later worked in hotels built during the Mandate. Italian and Greek families ran *khamarat* (liquor stores) on the outskirts of the Old City. Armenians, who arrived in the early twentieth century, specialised in sandwich shops, which were narrow and neat, and photography. Armenians wearing hats stood behind their box cameras fixed on tripods in the middle of the New City square, taking shots for passers-by and visitors from the neighbouring countryside.

During the Mandate period, the city's streets were paved with black granite for the cars that were beginning to appear. A public park was established and planted with specially imported flowers. It had a fountain in its middle, so beautiful that one could not take one's eyes off it. This was a landscaped garden, with neatly planted odourless flowers that had no resemblance to the native roses, carnations and jasmine scattered among the old houses. Fast-growing evergreen trees surrounded the park. The main street filled up with hotels, cafés, photography shops, the Armenian sandwich shops and a lane frequented by people seeking recreation. Every evening when the souks in the Old City closed, life filled the New City, which lay under its Mediterranean sky. The street, clubs and cafés in the New City always had a few French ladies present, along with some local girls. Many of these girls had come from the countryside to live in the city, and they befriended the French or tried to mimic them.

This part of the city was a colonial district used by military and police commanders for their headquarters. They used its hotels and cafés for their leisure, and many stories were told about them. The Old City was not a venue for these imported novelties, but the New City was. It grew street after street until a totally modern city had developed on the outskirts of the old one.

Al-Minaa was the 'advance front' of the city and its window to the sea. It was more responsive to the cosmopolitan Mediterranean influences, and it surrendered to them. Its streets were akin to those in Greek ports. Its people, with their shorts and white hats, seemed like travellers arriving from other shores. The road connecting the old town and *al-Minaa* opened towards the end of the Ottoman era. It began a period of architectural

change and development and growth, until the city was like other Mediterranean towns, soaked by the sun during the day and filled with life during the night.

Some locals were attracted to the "Mediterranean" city. This attraction was not for ideological reasons, but rather for the way of life, which was adopted particularly by some segments of the city population according to their status, beliefs and level of education. The educated élite, the businessmen and politicians of the city thought they had found the ideal style of living. They felt that the life they had seen and so admired in other Mediterranean cities was now within their reach.

As I walked to the seaside or to the railway station, I used to cross the New City square, which encroached upon the citrus fields, and encapsulated the modern life that was dominated by the Mediterranean style. Everything was the same as it had been in the thirties and forties, about a quarter of a century before my summer crossings, and I gazed in bewilderment at the things around me. All Mediterranean nationalities, religions and cultures were there, coexisting in different proportions, and celebrating their particular festivals. It was a community of diversity, tolerance and happiness. Some local boys and young men used to participate in the celebrations of the Greek Club, the Armenian Club or the French Centre. We used to go out of curiosity and the desire to steal glances at the girls.

From one summer to the next, as I made my way to the sea, I passed by the shops in the business district, which gave an impression of calm despite the activity. Beyond, the residential streets were peaceful and the few passers-by appeared gentle. During that period, I was not aware that the Mediterranean ambience was beginning to retreat.

Although the nineteen-sixties added to the Mediterranean character of the city, they also introduced the influences that would eventually bring the Mediterranean life to an end. Hotels, the supreme symbols of that era, lost their grandeur and entered into a state of decline; eventually they were demolished and replaced with new buildings. Some of the cafés that witnessed the history of the first half of the twentieth century were transformed into garages, storehouses or gambling halls. The square that had struggled to maintain its neatness and integrity as the centre of the city started to harbour peddlers and wanderers; a congestion that could not reveal any specific identity. Rather, it was akin to the congestion of Asian cities and, under its pressure, the Mediterranean features disappeared.

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*.

ALA MAHDI

Yahia as-Samawi:
a Fountain of Eternal Poetry of Love, Bitterness and Revolt

I have only known him for the past few years, and met him on a few occasions, but now I feel that I have known him forever. When one talks to him one feels the warmth of a loving character, full of comfort and tranquillity. It leaves one with the impression that as-Samawi, the human, is a rare example of good nature and taste.

Since I accepted the mission of interviewing as-Samawi, many thoughts flooded in my mind. I imagined that our friendship would make it easier, but after reading some of the writings of the critics, poets and litterateurs who wrote about his literary work, I was overwhelmed by the feeling that no matter what I wrote it would not give justice to this giant poet laureate of our age.

In an article about as-Samawi, The Saudi writer Fawzi Khayat quoted the following verse of the Saudi poet Abdulla Bahaytham, published in the Saudi an-Nadwa newspaper, No. 10264, to characterise as-Samawi:

> May you be blessed, for whenever you compose a rhyme
> you turn the *fohoul* of poetry into little boys

Some might think that this is an exaggeration, comparing as-Samawi to the eminent Arab poets (*fohoul ashi'r*) throughout the Arabic cultural history, but the fact is that as-Samawi is a gifted poet, well-versed and backed by solid experience. This fact has been emphasised by many well-known critics and analysts.

The Journey to as-Samawi's Tent

On the plane taking me from Sydney to Adelaide, I browsed through two of as-Samawi's poetry collections out of the ten published so far. I also planned to read some of the articles written about him, I gathered over the years, in order to prepare myself better for the interview, but I found myself engrossed with his poetry until I felt the plane landing at the airport.

As-Samawi insisted on meeting me at the airport and taking me as his guest in his

home. On our way to his home, I asked him the first question and I gathered from his reply that his choice to reside in Adelaide rather than Sydney or Melbourne was merely a coincidence. The Secretary at the Australian Embassy in Athens, a poet himself, who interviewed as-Samawi before granting him a visa to Australia, suggested to him Adelaide as a better place be better for a poet to stay away off the fury of big cities. 'That encouraged me to accept the idea. I feel that I made the right decision.'

As-Samawi labels his home a tent. It is probably a tent as he sees it, because his imagination echoes back to the poetry of olden Arab times when the tent was the intimate home of the Arab. Perhaps through the warmth of that name he feels more at home. In reality, as-Samawi's tent, with its wedges planted in this spot away (geographically and historically) from the Arab homeland, imparts to one's feelings certain characteristics. No sooner one enters his tent than one feels he is visiting a home somewhere in south of Iraq. There is an atmosphere of comfort and delight as one is surrounded by the hospitality and courtesy of as-Samawi's family.

One room of the house leads to another, and the other leads to a third emphasising the feeling of a tent. This third one is a huge lounge with many framed photographs and documents adorning its walls. These are shots taken of as-Samawi with leading Arab and international figures, medals, certificates, statements and similar documents attesting to his achievements and the status he enjoys. Along with all these, we find his Australian citizenship certificate proudly exhibited in gratitude to the country that accepted him and provided him with the security and freedom he was deprived of in his motherland.

This wall exhibition reveals a person who warships poetry, literature and creativity. There are photographs of him with great Arabs no less than al-Jawahiri, al-Bayyati, Baland al-Haydari, Muzafar an-Nawab, at-Tayyeb Saleh, al-Faytouri, Farouk Shousha, Mohammad Mahdi Shamsuddine, Chawki Bazih, Saif ar-Rahbi, Soliman al-Issa, Hassan Fateh al-Bab, Ali Shalash and Abdulla at-Tayyeb.

There are also examples of official acknowledgements of the work of as-Samawi. One photograph shows the ex-Secretary General of the Arab League Dr. Issmat Abdulmageed handing him the Prize for Creativity in Poetry. Another shows him with the Egyptian Minister for Culture Dr. Farouk Husni. In a third, he appears with Prince Abdulla bin Abdulaziz in the Janadiria Poetry Festival in Saudi Arabia.

A Wound as Large as my Homeland

As-Samawi was born in the town of *as-Samawa* south of Iraq in 1949. He completed his school education there. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Arabic Language and Literature from the University of *al-Mustansyryya* in Baghdad in 1974.

He worked as a teacher and journalist. His poems and articles appeared in many newspapers and literary magazines in the Arab World.

He has so far published ten poetry collections and a collection of prose. The translation of their titles is as follows: *Your Eyes are a Universe, Poems in the Era of Captivity and Crying, Rituals of Departing the Body, My Heart Aches for my Homeland, A Wound as Large as my Homeland* (prose), *From the Songs of a Vagabond, Your Eyes are my Home and Exile, The Choice, Quartets, I Closed my Eyelids over you, This is my Tent... Where is Home?*

He currently has two poetry collections in print.

Many critics, poets and literary figures wrote about as-Samawi, including Ali Jawad at-Taher, Kamal Nashat, Abdulla Baqazi, Abdulatif Arnaout, Farouk Shousha and Ghazi al-Qussaybi.

Saleh Jawad Attoma in USA and Raghid Nahhas in Australia translated some of his poems to English.

As-Samawi speaks of himself through addressing his lover:

Now they ask you about my age and occupation?
Well... don't be shy to tell them
I am, my love, the-number-of-kisses-I-sipped-from-your-lips old
My profession? A rhyme-hunter who set his heart in the garden of flirtation
I wrote my history on my lips
and clasped two orchards in my eyes

Under the section "*A Word of Truth*" in his prose book "*A Wound as Large as My Homeland*" as-Samawi explains the reason behind those prose texts, but we learn more about him when he says: '...all I know is that they are self-projections I wrote after each failed attempt to capture the sparrows of poetry, since I opted for poems hoping to erect for me a homeland of words, after vagrancy was imposed on me making me a homeless gypsy, except for a few letters printed on my identity card, and proving that I have a homeland called Iraq.'

Torment and Explosion

Talking to me about the last ten years that witnessed the climax of his poetic and literary creativity, as-Samawi seemed to me revolutionary, recalcitrant, sad and tormented.

A prominent Iraqi critic and a teacher of as-Samawi's, the late Ali Jawad at-Taher mentioned in his book "*Wara' al-Ofuq al-Adabi*" (Beyond the Literary Horizon) how his student as-Samawi captivated his audience when he recited his poetry at a poetry

festival during his university years in Baghdad: 'The bewildered audience, mesmerised by his poem, listened again attentively then gave him a standing ovation... His images were amazing...'

As-Samawi's first two collections of poetry were published in 1970. Six years later he published his third collection. The political situation in Iraq did not allow him any further publishing. He passed through a very difficult period during which he was imprisoned, tortured and constantly exposed to the possibility of execution. He had no choice but to leave Iraq, a period that exploded his poetic potential.

Thirty years of poetry writing, enriched with the Iraqi tragedy, polished as-Samawi's poetry and prodded critics to write about him not only as a poet but also as a human. What has been written about him, his poetry and the Iraqi condition is enough to fill many a volume of valuable information.

As-Samawi is one of a few contemporary poets who skilfully wrote both according to the traditional and modern forms of poetry. His poetry is original, smooth, strong and effective, besides his distinguished capabilities in expression and imagery. He masterly grasps on terminology. The experiences he depicts combine in moving the reader in the event itself giving him the art and joy of reading and igniting at the same time all senses as to almost connect him with those of as-Samawi's.

Leaving behind him in his original homeland some remembrances he still yearns for, and loaded up with creative energy, his poetry burst out urging for revolution and glorifying struggle. The language, the style and the words he employed in a combined form of total creativity and exuded with pain that is exemplified by the pain of his town, people and country. His poems are dazzling, fresh, sincere, provocative, glowing and truthfully reflect the tyranny, subjugation and harshness associated with the nature of the Iraqi tragedy.

As-Samawi is a poet who almost depicts in his poems a sort of history good enough for future generations, and retails the story of Iraq and the love of Iraqis to Iraq. His art is that of an artist tinting with his brush the pure colours of the rainbow, creating thereby a stage, actors and events that even cameras could not capture.

Love and Patriotism

It is generally difficult to distinguish between love and patriotism in as-Samawi's poetry. The affairs of his nation are presented in most of his poems entwining the lover and the country and adding poetic value to his verses. This is what we see, for example, in the following verses selected from his poem *Tarnimatu Hōb* (Love Hymn)[1] that he

[1] As-Samawi actually dedicates the entire of his collection *Your Eyes are my Homeland and Exile* (Dar az-Zahiri, Saudi Arabia 1995), from which the above verses are selected to his wife:

dedicates to his wife who shared and is still sharing his concerns:

Yesterday at night when the moon
kissed his stars goodnight and slipped into slumber
I painted roses and a spike,
beneath the tent of darkness
but a bomb passed by our field
and when I woke up my darling
I glimpsed a guillotine
overlooking our window
and a bowel of water
brimming with blood.

In another poem titled *Tadhia* (Sacrifice), from his collection *A Wound as Large as my Homeland,*[2] he says:

What a toil is this?
In our homeland we prepare lists
of cities where we might escape to...
and in the cities of exile we prepare lists
of new cities we'd like to build
when we return,
and we prepare names for feasts unknown before
to the calendars in our homeland.

His magnificence and patriotic feelings are revealed in his poem *Alikhtyiar* (The Choice, from his collection with the same title).[3] After describing the long departure of his father during the war, he speaks of the return of the father who gives the son the following piece of advice:

Oh son who has been acquainted with trenches and gardens
with cells... and hotels...
with the eclipse of the sun in this disabled homeland
do swear by Allah that you will not betray Allah
or the milk of motherhood
you will not bargain when you starve
or stretch your hand to a tyrant
you will not sell the scarf of your sister
at political "auctions"

'To *Om ash-Shimaa*... my partner in the field, the tent and the dust of travel.'

[2] 1994.

[3] *Dar ar-Rifai*, Saudi Arabia 1994.

or the shops of "comrades"
You are to choose:
you are either with Iraq
or
you are with Iraq

Tradition and Modernity

The traditional form in as-Samawi's poetry has been a top priority interest for critics. This form of poetry is called in Arabic *Ashi'r al-Aamoodi* (where a poem is formed in columns of verses, each composed of a first hemistich followed by a second hemistich. They are metered and rhymed according to one of several metres known in Arabic poetry). In an article about as-Samawi's poetry, Professor of Critique at the University of *Um al-Qora* in Saudi Arabia, Abdulla Baqazi[4] indicated that due to as-Samawi's grasping at the vital ingredients of the language and its art, he was able to revive this type of poetry by his creativity and evolution of imagery.

Many critics agree that as-Samawi is not an imitator in his pursuit of traditional poetry, but rather a creator and innovator. His poems contain rare structures and imagery different from those constructed from spent words and repeated consumed expressions, often heard by poetry lovers. The following are selections from the last part of his masterpiece poem *Bohayratul Ishq* (The Lake of Passion).[5]

Oh lover with no woman to chat
to his heart in the night
but with books and an inkwell
that chat
Oh you the departed
a lantern of wish is your provision
and anger is your water
in the wasteland of your sadness
we strive to suckle the milk of our dreams
that turns elderliness into youth and life to normal
perhaps a darkness of the night, despite its lonesomeness,
is lit by a dream or adorned by literature
a sting from subjugation whips
draws us close to hope as the dawn approaches
I moan a homeland where palms are about to stumble
ripe dates forsake their opulence

[4] In Arabic in the Saudi newspaper *An-Nadwa*, No. 10597.
[5] *El-Telegraph* (Arabic newspaper), Sydney 20/11/2000.

Its planets embarrass the night
eyelashes embarrassed by their eyelids!

There is a long-standing association between as-Samawi and exile, greatly influencing his poetry. The following verse is from his poem *Safaqtu babal Amani* (I Slammed the Door of Hope):[6]

A stranger in exile is not a stranger from home
A stranger is the one whose own home has narrowed to smallness

In his poem *Inna al-Thawaba ala Qadaril Mashaqat* (Reward is Proportional to Toil)[7] we read:

As if being away from my family and
homeland or living in exile
has become a hobby of mine

He bases one of his love poems[8] on the famous Arab tale of *Majnoun Laila* ("Laila's Madman," referring to a famous poet whose love for Laila almost drove him crazy, but he revealed his passion through the poetry he composed for her that he became known as her madman).

I did not ask... but flirtation asked about my torment and my Laila
it thought that as before, my mouth was still a bee among lips and eyes

Then he admits that he had a lover of bedouin beauty, but her flirtation and inhibitions indicate urban love mentality. He then continues to say:

She was the rain that never fell on the garden of my passion
She poured fire and water together to keep me between flame and cold
She departed my eye's balcony to present herself at the window of my dreams
Then the kingdom of our passion collapsed on us, and each took a different route
Was there any wisdom in my madness?
Many a madman finds wisdom in loving his Laila

[6] ibid 23/07/2001.
[7] ibid 30/07/2001.
[8] ibid 22/11/2001.

The Wisdom Teller

Some of his verses and writings can be classified as proverbs or pieces of wisdom, for he is an experienced poet with years of eventful occurrences, but above all it is the smoothness of his language that seems to provide him with such ability. Here are some examples.

Reading the Bible and the Quran
I found no greater a religion
than the love of man to man
nor did I find any bliss equal
to that of the peace of mind[9]

Ay Emperor:
Whether the rooster crows or not,
the dawn is certain to rise![10]

The most beautiful fountains?
Are those that flow spontaneously.[11]

There is no key such as the poor
unlocking the impossible[12]

nation is like *truth*
as there is no half-truth
so there is no half nation[13]

Neither you are a doll
nor I a child...
why then I don't sleep,
unless I embrace, with my eyelids, you?[14]

When my nation caused me to suffer
I killed her...

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[9] From his collection *al-Ikhtiar* (The Choice), Dar ar-Rifai, Saudi Arabia 1994.
[10] From the poem *Ayyuhal Imbarator*, *El-Telegraph*, Sydney 08/05/2001.
[11] From the poem *Razaz* (Drizzle), ibid 25/06/2001.
[12] From the poem *Muftah Qiflul Mustahil* (The Key to the Lock of the Impossible), ibid 19/06/2000.
[13] From the poem *Liqa'* (Encounter), ibid 22/05/2000.
[14] From the poem *Alintima' Lilqalaq* (Belonging to Anxiety), ibid 21/05/2001.

and buried her in my heart!
where would I then
bury my heart?[15]

As-Samawi's creativity is not restricted to traditional poetry, free verse and the poetry of wisdom. One of his other creativities is his *mowashah* (similar to *terza rima*) poetry. This type of poetry flourished during the Arab reign of Andalusia, and is accessible for singing. He also has many literary and political contributions. The following are from a literary article titled *Hadikaton min Zuhooril Kalimat* (A Garden from the Flowers of Words):[16]

One lip does not make a mouth. One bank does not form the river sought after by our boats. Be the other bank of my river, so that I become the other lip of your mouth. You will thus sing for the others, and I will kiss with my mellow waves all the fields, until the lanterns are extinguished by silence and draught re-glow my friend.

Nothing is useless my friend. A wedge set up in the desert, might become a guide to caravans on their way to Utopia and to the fields pregnant with the trees of racemes of childhood.

A good word from you might thaw the ice in my veins.

I wonder which magnificent gardens of the flowers of words will bloom in our homeland, if every one of us started his morning steps by wishing a good word in the ears of others? What love book would our life become?

Why do I dream of the magic lamp of Aladdin, and of the ring of Solomon if the jinni is not going to appear before me and the hoopoe is not going to perch on my head?

Because I do not want to fall in the space of dreams on the rock of reality, I have gazed in the nation and its inhabitants... stretch your hand to me my friend and give me one flower, so that I give you a garden of blooming flowers... Give me one grain of the wheat of love, and I return to you a threshing floor of love and loyalty. Lest the dreams become diseases, we must rise together to erect the dream of our nation on the land of awakening.

One day, the wave had a fight with the shore. Becoming angry, the wave threw its pearls and coral, at the shore. Upset by a butterfly one morning, the rose spilled its scent at the butterfly. Branches had a fight one with another; they cast a tent of shade on the road. But when the tyrant had a fight with his ailments, he threw a lit wick in the nation's fields.

One spark can burn a large forest, but can a glass of water extinguish the fire that caught a small tree?

Why do we molest each other with the sparks of malice, when good words, scent and love cost us nothing?

Human beings are the only bashful creatures, because they are the ones whose deeds bring shame to themselves, particularly when scooping from the dirt of tyranny, and distance themselves from the fountain of freedom.

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[15] From the poem *Kaifa Asbahal Fannu Ghabah* (How Art Became a Jungle), ibid 18/06/2001.
[16] *Al-Iraqi* Internet Magazine, No. 10, September 1998.

As-Samawi, who was born and grew up in south of Iraq where the palm trees form a forest unique in the world for its breeze, mellowness and dates, cannot but reveal his concerns in his exile as depicted in his poem *Ya Nakhl* (O Palm):[17]

O weariness how you dwell in my life
sleepless is my night and my morning distressed
you walk with me like a shadow and share
my field where plants bleed with dearth
how come the seas close upon my face
except those with waves of blaze?
thirsty is the lip of love... its eye is sore
for no shooting star danced all around
may you rust O our mirrors, for our eyelashes
have never been smeared with the kohl of hope
my mouth is voiceless. my sails are broken
and the waves tremble
O palm! How are things in my homeland?
How are the banks and their pleasant river?
How are *al-Samawa* and its cream?
Does its morning still sob?
O palm what kept you in a land
when noble plains had left?
Iraq itself fled from Iraq... and away from
your garden of glory, the flight escaped itself
your roots slumber in our last breath
as if they are the nerves recharging our hearts
I weep and *Amoria*[18] is in my blood
It weeps until epochs feel sorry for us
O Baghdad, I am not complaining out of weakness,
but I have been wrecked by fatigue
and if I swear at you after a calamity
it is because some swearing is just a reproach

The Saudi writer Abdulla al-Hussain described as-Samawi in an article titled *Jirahul Outan* (Wounds of Nations) as follows:[19] 'This traveller has never been fond of departure, but he is a tormented lover...This man bleeds with the letters of exile. He is not a fugitive running from shore to shore, looking for a shack to protect himself from the heat of summer or cold of the winter, but he is a poet sketching a map of a nation

[17] *El-Telegraph*, Sydney 26/02/2001.
[18] Name of a city, important in Arabic heritage.
[19] *Okaz* (Saudi newspaper), No. 10013, 01/01/1994.

still settling on, in shackles...'

As-Samawi seems to confirm this in a letter he sent to Abdullah al-Jaffrey who published it with an article he wrote about as-Samawi:[20] 'All what it is Sir is that I have become a middle-aged man, so my rifle fell flat, and I am no longer fit for city wars, since my city, even my whole country, lost its maidenhood and the virginity of its scent! So...I opt now for writing, to make sure that I am alive, or at least to convince myself that I have a country, and that I am not a gypsy practicing vagrancy, or the profession of sadness, or dancing under the roof of a wound as big as my homeland looking for a window of awakening. These are the reasons behind my continuous panting, and my unremitting run among the knives of letter lines...I am, Sir, despite my addiction to sadness, anxiety, sleeplessness and crying...would like to laugh from the bottom of my heart even for one time only, and practice my rituals as a lover, a father, a son to the parents whom I was the cause of a lot of grief for them as they chew pain in their search for their eldest son, when he was moving from one detention centre to the other, or choosing his own exiles, and the caves of his disappearance. I was and still am the most dangerous criminal on earth, but what distinguishes me from all other criminals is that I am my only victim!'

The renowned Egyptian poet Farouk Shousha wrote:[21] '...but some of his poems were in the form of traditional poetry familiar to classical work. Here, he is an extension to the renowned Iraqi classical poetry exemplified by eminent poets such as ar-Rasafi, az-Zahawi, al-Jawahiri and other *fohoul.* In both cases [classical and free forms], poetry was at his command, reflecting his conscious and talent regardless of the form of the poem.'

Dr. Abdulla al-Haidari spoke of as-Samawi: 'This poet never gets bored with singing despite his wounds, He is remarkable in his poetry, his prose and his manners.'[22]

Dr. Abdulaziz al-Khowayter, the Saudi writer and member of several literary associations, wrote a letter to as-Samawi thanking him for sending him his latest poetry collection: '...some collections, or books, come to one and one puts them aside until the time comes to read them. Your collection, however, found the time for itself, and went ahead of all others in attracting me to deeply examine its aims, images, terms, meanings and the feeling latent in its secret hidings. We congratulate ourselves for you and the collection.'[23]

The Syrian writer Abdulatif Arnaout said: 'As-Samawi's words influence us with their strong sensual charges, shaking our conscious, showing that his understanding of poetry relates to the creativity of words, skilful at selecting them and arranging them in

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[20] *Al-Hayat* (an Arabic international newspaper), No. 11043, 08/05/1993, London.
[21] *Al-Bayan* (Arabic magazine), UAE, No. 74, November 1996.
[22] In an article in the Saudi newspaper *al-Massa'iya,* 1995.
[23] Published in *al-Majalla al-Arabyiah,* 2001.

an inspiring form. The world to him is not a real picture printed on a piece of paper, but an alternative image made of words, created by the poet who uses eloquence in an attempt to revive style. As-Samawi's poetry is a new rich addition to Arabic poetry, lighting the way for future generations to solve the difficult equation of choosing between surrendering to the norms of incoming modernity, or submitting to the charm of tradition.'[24]

Dr Hassan al-Omaraai wrote an article[25] in which he placed as-Samawi in the same rank as the greatest Arab poets in history.

The morning caught up with us. It had been a rich, effective evening, charged by the forces of poetry, of literature, and with the creations of the great Iraqi poet Yahia as-Samawi, creations with which he enriched the Arabic library, and augmented the gardens of Arabic poetry and literature in an age dominated by elements of tyranny, despotism and backwardness.

As-Samawi receiving the Literary Creativity Prize from Dr. Ismat Abdulmageed, in the presence of Sheikh bin Turki and Dr. Farouk Hosni.

علاء مهدي

Ala Mahdi is a political writer of Iraqi origins who lives in Sydney. He is the founder of *Aliraqi.com*, an internet discussion forum.

[24] *El-Telegraph*, Sydney, 16/04/1999.
[25] *Al-Madina*, Saudi Arabia, 20/08/1993.

KAMAL BOULLATA

A Pioneering Artist from Jerusalem: Zulfa al- Sa'di (1905-1988)[1]

During the summer of 1933, the First National Arab Fair was held at the Islamic High Commission on Mamilla Street in Jerusalem. Different traditional handicrafts were displayed in the pavilion of each participating Arab country. The event signalling the initiation of an official interest in the production of traditional handicrafts, proved to be a watershed in the history of Arab culture. On the walls of the *Palestine Pavilion*, the audience saw a series of oil paintings whose subtle means of expression reflected the mood of the historical moment Palestine was living during that period in history.

In the following article, I will attempt to introduce the artist of this series of paintings. Through a brief analysis of the displayed works, the importance of these paintings will be better understood in the context of the Palestinian history of contemporary art.

Zulfa al-Sa'di was born in Jerusalem to an old Jerusalem household. Al-Sa'di's family name had, for centuries, been the name given to an entire neighbourhood within the Old City (*Harat al-Sa'diyya*) as well as to a graveyard (*Turbet al-Sa'diyya*) situated at *Bab al-Silsileh*'s entrance leading to the Noble Sanctuary. She was brought under the guidance of Nicola Sayigh (d.1930) one of the last master iconographers of the Jerusalem School and a primal pioneer of studio painting. With the implicit resonance to her background that may have helped bring to light her distinguished talent, al-Sa'di's painting exhibition proved to be a watershed. Her work impressed the country's major national figures who attended the inauguration, as their comments in the guest book that survives from that occasion underlines. Her exhibition was also received enthusiastically by an admiring audience who arrived from various Arab countries participating in the national fair. The wide appreciation of her talent marked the unprecedented public endorsement of an art form that was up to that point unrecognised as a means of personal expression. The 28 year-old unmarried woman may have displayed her paintings side by side with her own embroideries, as it is understood from the guest book, but most of the comments written in it showered the highest praise upon

[1] For further information on Palestine's history of art see my book, *Istihdar al-Makan: Dirasat fi al-Fan al-Tashkili al-Filastini al-Mu'aser* (Recovery of Place: a Study of Contemporary Palestinian Painting), ALECSO, Tunis 2000.

her painterly skills that made her 'images speak.'[2]

The dozen or so paintings that survive from that exhibition are all of oils on canvas each of which is of a moderate size that befits a private or some public interior. Realistically rendered with an academic figurative style, her subject matter included a couple of landscapes, a still life with cactus that was a favourite theme of her mentor, and a distinct series of recognizable portraits that were endowed with iconic characteristics. On the surface, her subject matter did not seem to differ much from those depicted by her own contemporaries of male painters. On a second look however one sees a woman's perspective that accentuated a different emphasis in handling popular themes of the period. Al-Sa'di's perspective may be better clarified, when one considers how some of these popular themes developed under the prevailing influence of the leading Jerusalem painter and iconographer Nicola Sayigh.

Not unlike the Orthodox Russian painters with whom he closely worked on a number of local church projects, Sayigh started painting portraits of native people without ever abandoning his icon painting of religious themes. Fellow iconographers and other local image-makers followed suit by trying their hands on portraiture painting before they ventured into landscapes and other local subjects. In a similar way, after Sayigh painted a narrative canvas of General Allenby's 1917 entry in Jerusalem announcing the end of the Ottoman rule and the joyful public anticipation of national independence, a number of younger talents have, over the Mandate years, painted historical occasions from the imagination in which Jerusalem was delivered. The Jerusalem native Daoud Zalatimo (b.1906) who fell under Sayigh's influence, repeatedly painted an imaginative rendering of the bloodless entry of the calif 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab to Jerusalem in 637 and his amiable encounter with Sophronius, the Arab Byzantine patriarch who personally guided him through the city. His fellow Jerusalemite Mubarak Sa'd (1880-1964) painted Jerusalem's Christian and Muslim Arabs celebrating the liberation of their city from the Crusaders in 1187 when upon his entry, Saladin ordered that all streets and prayer houses in the city be washed with rose water.

This backward turn in time reflected how the purpose of painting changed over a few years with the change of the political climate. Sayigh's painting was a direct expression of the early joy of Palestinians who rushed to Jaffa Gate to welcome General Allenby. He painted the jubilant celebration of his compatriots who naively thought that the General's arrival represented an embodiment of promises written by the British high commissioner in Egypt Sir Henry McMahon to Sharif Hussein, who lead the revolt against the Ottomans. The imaginative historical paintings created by Sayigh's

[2]Thanks to A. H. Shoman Foundation's Darat al-Funun in Amman that hosted during October and November 1998, an exhibition of a number of Zulfa al-Sa'di's paintings that survived from her 1933 Jerusalem exhibition. The Amman display also included pages from the guest book of al-Sa'di's original exhibition. I was thus able to read the people's comments and examine al-Sa'di's paintings.

followers were painted at a time when the British presence was being viewed as a mere pretext to realize Balfour's Declaration of setting a "Jewish Homeland" in the country. Thus, the narrative paintings of historical moments served as a visual equivalent to what the popular nationalist poetry of the period called for. On one level and through the artists' focus on Jerusalem, the paintings served as an allegorical means to assert the Arab national identity of the country. On another, the paintings sought to bring out the contrast with the hidden agenda that Allenby's entry to the city had concealed.

As for Zulfa al-Sa'di, she opted for a different artistic strategy by which to carry her political message. By choosing to centre her greatest attention on executing a chosen set of recognizable portraits, she was making a choice as it were between the tangibility and presence of a singular close-up face over a general long distance scene in which individual traits are dissolved. With her superior skills, al-Sa'di's range of displayed portraits included those of legendary heroes painted from the imagination and of popular political and cultural figures of the day copied from studio photographs. Thus with the solemn look of holy figures portrayed in the icons of her teacher, a characteristic portrait of Saladin in his battle dress was hung up next to portraits of Sharif Hussein, the leader of the Arab Revolt, and another of his son Faisal whose popularity was widespread among the Palestinians. Next to them, the exhibition included a portrait of Umar al-Mukhtar who two years earlier was executed by the Fascists after leading a twenty-year guerrilla warfare against Italian control of Libya. Along with these portraits of legendary and heroic figures, al-Sa'di paid tribute to the role of nationalist poetry by displaying a portrait of Ahmad Shawqi, who was titled 'the prince of poets'. In addition, al-Sa'di included two other portraits of turbaned men, one of the Islamic Reformist thinker Jamal al- Din al-Afghani and another of an unidentified man whose features recall those captured in a period photograph of the progressive Palestinian educator Shaikh Muhammad Sulaiman al-Saleh the founder of the Rawdah Girls' School in Jerusalem.

The impact of seeing this series of distinct portraits hanging side by side, must have been quite an unusual experience. The choice of combining the image of a legendary hero with that of a contemporary nationalist leader along with a cultural figure and each being from a different Arab country, reflected the artist's political message. Through that, al-Sa'di seemed to say that her portrait series represented the continuity between past and present and between history and culture. The home countries of men portrayed may be fragmented and subjected to colonial domination but national solidarity and resistance to foreign domination is what make these countries belong to a single body in which Palestine- whose Jerusalem landscapes are displayed in the exhibition- is the heart. More importantly, in her avoidance of painting the grand historical events that were popularised by the period's male painters, al-Sa'di seemed to say through her choice of portraits that history and culture are both made by individual human beings and not by faceless people. Her visual statement through her combination of these

portraits mirrored the voice raised by a number of Palestinian women of the period.[3]

At a time when photography was believed to be the ultimate reproduction of reality, an imagined portrait appeared more believable next to paintings directly copied from officially publicized photographs. Thus ancient and contemporary history assumed a human face. This allusion to photography was further emphasized as al-Sa'di alternated the painting of some of her imaginary and copied portraits within an oval format, the *dernier cri* of many photographs of the period. In addition, just as in the Byzantine icons that carried religious notations along with the name of the holy figure depicted, al-Sa'di's portrait often included calligraphy of either the name of the person or a verse of popular poetry in Arabic script within the frame of her painting. In her combination of these portraits each of which impressed its own legendary presence, the student of the leading Jerusalem iconographer created a national set of secular icons that were a pioneering contribution to Palestinian art.

Al-Sa'di's canvases that were exhibited in the halls of the Islamic High Commission in 1933 are among the few paintings that continue to survive from that period. Ironically, their survival was due to the artist's ability to dismount and roll the works in a manageable tube to flee with when the Jewish assault on the Arab residential quarters of her native city was intensified in the Spring of 1948. As for the inherited icons and paintings that were left hanging in homes of affluent urbanites and the different art collections that were accumulated over half a century by a handful of Palestinian collectors, little was salvaged; the main bulk was mostly lost during the looting that was widespread among members of the Jewish forces that were authorized to seize the Arab homes and expel their inhabitants.[4]

With her paintings rolled up, Zulfa al-Sa'di joined the stream of refugees that headed towards the Syrian borders. In Damascus where she took up residence, she dedicated

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[3] See for example the period's journalistic writings of Asma Touba (1905-1983) published in *Kul Shai'* and her book *al-Mar'a al-'Arabiyya fi Filastin* (Acre, 1948). In English, you may see Matiel Moghannam, *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (London, H. Joseph, 1937). Matiel Mughannam was a leading woman organizer who during the 30's initiated the urban women's protests against British colonial policies throughout Palestine. For further reading see also the text of speeches given by Arab women on the Palestinian national struggle in their May 15- 18, 1938 conference in Cairo in *al-Mar'a al-'Arabiyya wa Qadiyyat Filastin: al-Mu'tamar al-Nisa'i al-Sharqi al-Mun'aqid bi Dar Jam'iyyat al-Ittihad al-Nisa'i al-Misri,* (Cairo, al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya bi Misr, 1939).

[4] 'Looting by individuals was widespread, particularly in the cities, though less so in villages and rural areas: the home of the average *fellah* held out fewer temptations than the wealthy quarters of big cities...the looting constituted an additional covert motive...since it forged groups which had a material interest, either beforehand or *post factum*, in the expulsion of the Arab population'. Ephraim Kleiman, *Khirbet Khiz'ah and Other Unpleasant Memories* in Ian S. Lustick (ed.), Triumph and Catastrophe: the War of 1948, Israeli Independence and the RefugeeProblem, (New York, Garland, 1994, p.132).

the rest of her life to educating the children of Palestinian refugees. She taught art classes in primary schools set up by UNRWA for the refugee children. Later on, she became the head of Lydda School in a refugee camp. She died in Damascus without ever seeing her home again. There are no indications that al-Sa'di ever went back to painting.

كمال بلاّطه

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كمال بلاّطه

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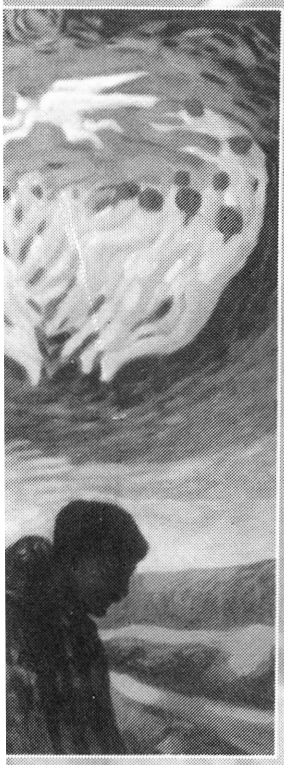

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HALSTEAD

ADEL BESHARA

A Partial Reconstruction of Butrus Bustani's Thought

The writings of Butrus Bustani constituted an important contribution to the secular intellectual awakening of the Syrians and Arabs in the nineteenth century. This study sheds light on the national and social ideas of the 'principal teacher' as he came to be known.

Syria at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

It is generally accepted that the idea of a distinctly "Syrian" nationalism was virtually non-existent in Syria in the earliest part of the nineteenth century. At the time, writes George Atiyah, it would have been very unconventional for anyone 'to contemplate or dream that a people or nation would rise against another and fight a conflict out as a people and not as [zealot followers of] an Amir or a feudal lord.'[1] Moreover, religious differences at the time were profound and varied. Each faith tended to coalesce into a compact social and political block whose first allegiance was not to the country but to the Empire or itself.

At that stage, hardly anyone called the country by its correct name. Instead of the name by which it has come to be known, ie., Syria, it was often called *Bilad al-Sham*, a loose term that did not always have the same geographical meaning. Sometimes it meant the whole of Syria, other times simply Damascus, and on occasions it referred to the stretch of the Syrian coast only. Whenever the need arose for the people of Syria to distinguish themselves from their counterparts in the Empire, they called themselves *awlad arab* (sons of Arabs) rather than Syrians. Thus Gregory M. Wortabet, a native of Syria, wrote: 'I was surprised to find, whilst traveling in Egypt some years ago, that all the Syrians, no matter where they came from, were called Damascenes, and the whole coast of Syria called *Barr-el-Sham*, the coast of Damascus.'[2]

It may be added that in Turkish parlance the country was known neither by its traditional name of Syria, nor by its Islamic designation of *ash-Sham*, but as Arabistan.

The evolution of a national identity based solely on Syria was hampered by the absence of a tradition of state independence. Situated at a crossway between three major

[1]Atiyah, George 1980. *Nushu' al-Fikra al-Suriya wa Tatawiruha* (The Rise of the Syrian Idea and its Evolution), *Fikr*, Beirut, No. 39, p62.
[2]Wortabet Gregory M. 1856. Syria and the Syrians, James Maddon, London, Vol.1, p198.

continents, the country has always been an important area. Here, from earliest times, populations have flowed back and forth and civilizations have risen and fallen. Also, its pivotal geographical location made it a desirable setting and a corridor for most of the great penetrations and conquests the world has seen. As Sir George Adam Smith once noted: 'The military history of Syria may be pictured as the procession of nearly all the world's conquerors: Thothmes, Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon, Sennacherib and Nebuchadrezzar; Cambyses and Alexander; Pompey, Ceasar, Augustus, Titus and Hadrian; Omar and Saladin; Tamerlane; Napoleon.'[3]

This constant subjugation of the country encouraged the growth of local identities and loyalties. At the same time, it created an atmosphere liable to foster confusion which in the end reflected itself in matters of national concern. In the absence of a central state, national matters became entangled with a variety of other issues of a religious, racial and/or clannish kind and, consequently, there developed a feeling that Syria lacked the ability to rule itself.

Bustani's National Thought

The image of Syria as a distinct Arab nation and a fatherland inhabited by one people began to have its first formal expression toward the middle of the nineteenth century. The man who took the initiative in publicly expounding this idea was Butrus Bustani (1819-1883), who is known in Syria as *al-mu'allem al-awal* (the principal teacher). Like many Syrian Christian scholars of his time, Bustani was educated at the Maronite seminary of *Ayn Waraqa* in the Lebanon. After completing his studies, he worked as a dragoman at the British and American consulates. A close friend of Cornelius Van Dyke and Eli Smith, two of the most influential foreign missionaries at the time, Bustani was a founding member of both the Syrian Society and the Syrian Scientific Society.[4]

Bustani first propagated the Syrian national idea in *Naffir Suriyya* (The Clarion of Syria), a broadsheet which he published in the wake of the sectarian unrest of 1860. In this short-lived publication, Bustani urged the people to brush aside their sectarian grievances and adopt patriotism as a principle of life. In a style of language designed to appeal to the patriotic conscience of the people, Bustani told his audience that it was against the "spirit of the age" to confine individual loyalty to religious sects or to substitute sectarian fanaticism for the love of the fatherland. His motto was "Religion belongs to God but the fatherland belongs to everyone."[5] According to Bustani

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[3]Smith, Sir George Adam 1918. Syria and the Holy Land, Hodder and Stroughton, London, p7.

[4]A short biography of Bustani is found in Jan Daye 1981. *Al-Mu'allim Butrus Bustani* (Butrus Bustani the Teacher), *Fikr*, Beirut, pp11-19.

[5]*al-Jinan*, 1, 1870.

Syria which is widely known as *barr ash-Sham* and Arabistan is our fatherland [*watan*] in all its diverse plains, rugged terrains, coasts and mountains. And the people of Syria, whichever their creed, community, racial origin or groups are the sons of our fatherland.[6]

This definition, the first and most succinct by a local thinker, is significant because it does not use socio-cultural factors (language, race, religion) as criteria of nationhood. Like-minded compatriots of Bustani who deviated from this theoretical axiom often found it difficult to maintain intellectual consistency. A good example in this respect was Jurji Zaidan: 'Indeed Zaidan never delineates exactly the territory that constitutes a particular *watan*. He mentions the Egyptian and Syrian fatherlands. On several occasions he explains that usually each particular fatherland is defined by the common language common to all its inhabitants, and he cites the European countries as an example. But we never find him using the concept of an "Arab fatherland". If he speaks of the love for the fatherland, *hubb al-watan*, he will usually enumerate various Arab areas such as Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and the Arab Peninsula.'[7] Bustani's definition is also significant because it was one of the first and earliest conceptions to focus on Syria as a unique geographical and historical entity.

Bustani was at pains to emphasize the importance of unity for a national revival in Syria. 'The backwardness of the Syrians,' he wrote, 'is the outcome of lack of unity and love among them, and of the lack in them of earnest concern for the welfare of their country, and of their surrender to the power of sectarian fanaticism.'[8] This was a significant intellectual breakthrough by common standards and one that Bustani would repeat to his fellow countrymen in the hope of stemming the tide of fanaticism and setting the country on the path of recovery.

Bustani also displayed great pride in the Arab character of Syria. Its pivotal place in Arab history, its Arab culture, and the fact that it spoke the language of the Arabs necessarily made Syria, in his eyes, an unqualified Arab nation. But there is nothing in his writing to suggest that he supported a broader Arab unity, with Syria a part of it. As Butrus Abu-Manneh notes: 'These were the main views of Bustani in 1860: The need to create internal unity, to forget the differences and emphasize the common aspects, to love Syria and to work for its welfare and progress. In this sense he was probably the first Syrian nationalist.'[9] This view of the man clearly contradicts Spencer Lavan's classification of Bustani as a representative figure 'in the evolutionary development of

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[6] *Naffir Suriyya*, Oct. 25, 1860.

[7] Philipp, Thomas 1973. Language, Histor, and Arab National Consciousness in the Thought of Jurji Zaidan (1861-1914), *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 4, p. 9.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Abu-Manneh, Butrus 1980. The Christians Between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus Bustani, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, II, p294.

the Christian, or non-Muslim, position in Arab nationalist development.'[10]

Bustani's Social Thought

Bustani's social philosophy, initiated by the civil crisis of 1860 and expressed mainly through essays and journalistic writing, rested on five basic premises:

- *Tolerance to all religions*: Bustani's message urged his countrymen to adopt a tolerant view under which all citizens professing different religions may function smoothly and in full liberty. In the same message we fmd a sharp condemnation of sectarian and religious fanaticism as a major threat to the political and moral dimensions of the nation (Syria).
- *Discouragement to bigotry*: like reform-minded intellectuals of his days, Bustani encouraged the creation of institutions that aim to undermine the influence of religious bigotry and protects the fundamental rights and liberties of every citizen.
- *Equality of rights*: this included social and political rights and the right of every individual in the nation to practice his beliefs without prejudice or coercion.
- *Separation of religion from politics*: a secular state, as perceived by Bustani, is a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religions, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his/her religion, and does not seek either to promote or interfere in religion. The underlying assumption of this concept is simply that religion and state functions are basically different areas of human activity.
- *Social unity:* In keeping with the secular historical approach, Bustani took great pains to point out the benefit of social unity. The term, *usba wataniyya* (patriotic solidarity), was a central theme in his writings and he used to always say 'unity is a fortress against the enemy.'

These basic ideas, which we take for granted today, represented one of the first intellectual breakthroughs of the Arabic literary revival of the nineteenth century. Herein lies the significance of Bustani's social philosophy: in forging a Syrian identity on the basis of a common history, culture and territory rather than on a particular sectarian or religious basis, Bustani actually lay down the theoretical foundations of the secular ideology of Pan-Arabism and Syrian nationalism that was to develop in the first half of the twentieth century.

Bustani's Methods

The practical side of Bustani tells us that he was also concerned with the creation of the criteria and tools of a national consciousness. Initially, this took the form of participating or creating intellectual societies to help Syria out of its cultural stagnation.

[10]Levan, Spencer 1989. Four Christian Arab Nationalists: A Comparative Study, *Muslim World.*

Bustani was involved in three literary societies, two of which carried the name "Syria" in their title. The third described its activity as an invitation for a better and more comprehensive understanding of "Syrian history." The three societies were: *The Syrian Society* (1847) which aimed to spread knowledge and general information about Syria; *The Oriental Society* of the Jesuits, which encouraged discussion of Syrian history from a purely religious perspective; and *The Syrian Scientific Society*. Established in 1867, this society attracted about 150 members from Syria's various sectarian communities, including some of the country's best intellectuals, who would later become the standard bearers of the national cause. It has even been suggested that Bustani was a member of the secret society which formed in Beirut in 1880 and is best remembered for the placards it plastered on the walls of the city urging the Syrians to independence and revolution.[11]

Bustani's contribution to the Arabic cultural revival of the nineteenth century was another means by which he tried to foster awareness. There is no need here to elaborate on his literary and scholarly works. This has been convincingly and amply done by a score of other writers. It is sufficient to say that his literary endeavour, 'by the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of Arabic,'[12] was undertaken 'for the benefit of the public at large.'[13] Bustani once declared that his deep and intimate involvement in the Arabic language and literature was motivated by the love of his fatherland (Syria) and by the desire 'to furnish the facilities of progress for its people.'[14] The Arabic language was therefore one of the political tools through which Bustani sought change without attracting attention.

Less obvious, but equally important, was Bustani's work in journalism. His first publication, *Naffir Suriyya*, by disseminating useful knowledge and the values of modern times, set a new standard in local political vocabulary. In 1870 he published *al-Jinan*, a periodical for which he adopted the motto "Love of fatherland is an article of faith." In the editorial of its first edition he wrote: 'We decided to publish *al-Jinan* because there is a shortage of similar publications in Syria and the neighbouring countries... Its purpose is to open the sources of true knowledge and to promote the progress of the fatherland (*watan*).' Bustani's other periodicals - *al-Janna* and *al-Junayna* - carried the same message and were just as instrumental as *al-Jinan* in informing and edifying the public.

Finally, there is the most obvious and yet most significant work undertaken by Bustani - the National School (*al-Madrasah al-Wataniyya*). Established in 1863, the

[11]Mansour, Hanna 1987. Butrus Bustani, *al-Thakafa*, No. 5, Beirut.
[12]*Hadiqat al-Akhbar*, Dec 22, 1862.
[13]Jandora , John W. 1984. Butrus al-Bustani, Arab Consciousness and Arabic Revival, *The Muslim World*, LXXIV, April, p. 78.
[14]From his forward to *Qutr al-Muhit*.

National School promoted the fundamentals of internal unity in two basic ways: (1) by adopting a strictly non-sectarian line in the admission of students and; (2) by following a policy that was geared largely toward the domestic needs of Syria. In sharp contrast to the schools of the missionaries and other institutions, Bustani's school adopted Arabic as the principal language of learning and offered the students courses in local culture and history.

Conclusion

Bustani's influence on the cultural and intellectual revival in Syria during the nineteenth century was pre-eminent. The intellectual foundation he layed down was a source of inspiration for intellectuals of Ottoman Syria and beyond. However, despite his best effort, Bustani did not have a great deal of impact on the social and political situation in Syria. A British travel guide wrote that in the Syria of the mid-nineteenth century '...Patriotism is unknown. There is not a man in the country, whether Turk or Arab, Mohammadan or Christian, who would give a para to save the empire from ruin; that is if he be not in government pay...The patriotism of the Syrian is confined to the four walls of his own house; anything beyond them does not concern him.'[15] By 1870, very little had changed and in the absence of a national sentiment it was difficult to make the ordinary people understand the changes that were taking place elsewhere in the Empire.

Whereas in Europe, and some parts of the Ottoman Empire, the movement for national independence had gained strong momentum, in Syria the notion of independence failed to take any root. The unrest of 1860, which 'claimed 12,000 lives in Mount Lebanon and nearly as many in Damascus,'[16] created a formidable sectarian feeling that ultimately superimposed itself on the entire social fabric in Syria. This, in turn, reinforced old loyalties, opened up old wounds, and pushed the country back into oblivion. As Bustani discovered, it also made it extremely hard to propagate ideas that stressed to the Syrians the common aspects of their lives.

عادل بشارة

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[15]Quoted in Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria*, p19.
[16]Bulus, Jawad 1973. *Lubnan wa al-Bouldan al-Mujawirah* (Lebanon and Neighbouring Countries), Abadran Publishers, Beirut, p388.

L. E. SCOTT

A Native Son

On September 7, 1947, I was born on Mr. Hays' farm in Arabi, Georgia, the last child in a family of 15 - eight girls and seven boys. Our father, like his father and his father (who had been 'freed' by Abraham Lincoln) was a sharecropper and our mother, like her mother and her mother (who had been 'freed' by Abraham Lincoln) was a sharecropper's wife. By all accounts, Mr. Hays was 'a good white man for his day'. My father worked Mr. Hays' farm for years and so did his wife and children. Every year Mr. Hays told my father that the farm had made no money (he showed my father all the paperwork – my father could neither read nor write) and my father got further and further into debt to this 'good white man'. By the time we ran away from Mr. Hays' farm in the middle of the night, life had hurt my father, as it had so many other Black men of his time. My father never healed.

James Baldwin told an awful truth, that some Black men of my father's generation believed what white men said about them. Everything around and about my father's life, including the air he sucked in, reinforced those white lies - that he came from nothing and that he was nothing and that he would be nothing. Just a black dot. My father doubted his worth. But within that cancer I, my father's son, did see days when his body stood tall and straight and he took the blows and didn't bend. There were so many other days, though, when self-hate ate the skin from his bones and self-mutilating rage drained every ounce of hope from him. His eyes took on a dusky red hue as his soul bled to death.

When my father slipped us away from Mr. Hays' farm, we went North - to "the Promised Land" - and arrived in Trenton, New Jersey in December 1960. My older brothers and sisters were no longer working the cotton fields of Georgia but the factories of New Jersey. In time, what New Jersey taught this southern Black family was that the 'good white people' of Georgia had close family ties in New Jersey. The face of racism now sometimes had a smile.

I was 13 years old and for the first time, it was not a matter of going to school only if there was no field work to be done. Not only did I go to school every day; it was an "integrated school". Junior High School Number 3. Here, there was a different teacher for each subject, a big swimming pool, a big gymnasium and school buildings made of brick. It seemed bigger than some of the country towns I had known in the days when I picked cotton. (Towns like Valdosta, Tifton, Arabi - names I don't want to remember but can't forget.) And Black and white students at the same school with Black and white teachers. I was only 13 but in Cordele, Georgia I had already seen a Black woman

killed by whites because she was 'in the wrong place' and a Black community too locked into fear to speak out. So it was a strange new world for this southern Black Boy.

To this day I don't know how it came about that I wrote my first poem. I don't know where it came from, but fear of this new environment surely would have been its father. And I don't remember what I wrote, but for some reason I left that poem in my school desk. A teacher found it and when I came to school the next day, I was sent to see the school's disciplinary officer. He was a Black man whose name was Mr. Smith. He said that I could not come back to school until my parents came to see him and that the school officials wanted to send me to the school psychiatrist. He was a white man and his name was Dr. Bird. I didn't know what was happening to me and neither did my mother when she came to the school the next day. I don't know whose fear was greater, mine or my mother's.

Mr. Smith told my mother that she had to take me to see Dr. Bird. Over the years my mind has blocked out what Dr. Bird looked like, beyond being white. What I carry with me is a profound sense that he treated my mother with total disrespect. I don't know how I knew this at the time, but I did. I don't know what evil he put my mother through or the depth of hurt he caused her. I still remember some of the questions this faceless man asked me: Did I masturbate often? Were my hands normally warm enough? Did I have any sexual desire for my mother? I barely knew the meaning of these questions but every instinct in my thirteen-year-old being told me that this grown-up was not a good person.

After I had seen Dr. Bird a few times, they let me back in school. My mother told me not to write anything but schoolwork and the other students, Black and white, made fun of the crazy kid who was sent to see Dr. Bird. Twenty-some years later, in a bitter twist of fate, I was invited to Junior High School Number 3 to read some of my poems to the English classes. No, the anger and the hurt didn't go away. I have hated few people in this world as I hate Dr. Bird. I understand that he is no longer on the face of this earth and I wish him no rest in whatever Hell his soul resides. How careless some grown-ups can be with a child's world.

When I graduated from high school in 1966, "they" had to know that I could barely read or write. But "they" needed the space I was taking up so that the next wave of functional illiterates could wash through. "Functional illiterate" – that's a hard term for me to own, but that was my reality.

In March 1967 I received a letter from President Lyndon Baines Johnson: 'Greetings, your country calls you...' I was being drafted into the Army of the United States of America.

In 1918, at the end of World War One, my father, Charlie Scott, was discharged from the Army. In March 1919, he married Autria Mae Wilson. Jeff, the first of their 15 children, was born in 1920 and served in the Army in World War Two. Charles, the 9th

child, born in 1934 and named after our father, served in the Army in the Korean War. Horace, the 8th child born to the family, served in the Air Force for 25 years and saw combat in the Korean War, the Vietnam War and was on standby for the Cuban Crisis.

The armed forces had served as an escape route from Mr. Hays' farm for my older brothers. So when I received my draft notice, no one in my family said, 'Don't go.'

I reported to the induction centre at Newark, New Jersey at the appointed time. After a long day of physical and written tests, I was taken by bus to Fort Dix, New Jersey with the other new recruits. Over the next few days I was put through more physical and written tests. At the end of this process, "they" told me that I was best suited to the Infantry.

From Fort Dix I was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for two months of basic training and after that to Fort Jackson, South Carolina for two months of advanced combat training.

It was at Fort Jackson that one of the young Black recruits began talking to the other Brothers about refusing to go to Vietnam to fight in this unjust war being waged by the white man on a people of colour. The F.B.I. and a bunch of other folks showed up and removed this light from amongst us. At the time I didn't understand what he was trying to teach us and besides, America was not finished with me yet. I had seen what America had done to my father and his father and his father and his father, but at 19 I didn't hate America and I didn't understand how much hate she had for me. But I would learn.

In September 1967, at the age of 20, I was flown to Saigon. From there I was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division at Cu Chi. While I was in Vietnam on "search-and-destroy" missions for America, the cities of my country were catching fire with the cries of 'Freedom Now! Justice Now!' And Black Americans were dying on the streets.

Still America was not finished with me, but my mind was now living in a strange world of doubt and fear. A book by James Baldwin was being passed from one Black G.I. to the next and when it reached me, I was ready: *The Fire Next Time*.

Then it happened. On April 4, 1968, eight months and two Purple Hearts into my time in Vietnam, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated by an evil that was eating well in the country of my birth. America had done enough to me now – Baldwin's words told me a TRUTH: 'It is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent.' I was finished with America. This Native Son was going to leave home.

In September 1968, my year in Vietnam came to an end. I returned to America and was sent to Fort Dix. For the last six months of my military service I was assigned to a unit in charge of military funerals in the Tri-State area of New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia. I will never fully understand the Army's decision to put me on funeral detail. Fresh out of Vietnam, burying G.I.s from Vietnam. Everyone in the unit had served in Vietnam. Were we presumed to have some greater inner resource to cope with this through having been there? Did the Army not know or not care that some of us were already insane with rage?

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Dead people are not strangers to me. I do not like being around dead people. But I did this "job". I don't quite know how I did it, but I did. The unit consisted of 25 G.I.s, of whom about half were Black and half were white. Depending on the rank of the dead soldier, there would be a Captain or a First Lieutenant working the funeral with us. The G.I.'s body was flown back from Vietnam and processed through a military mortuary centre, after which it was released to the family and taken to whatever funeral home they had designated. This is where we came in and from that moment on, it was "show-time". Show-time meant your uniform was always perfect and every movement you made around the family was considered and precise, even in casual conversation. Nothing was left to chance. At the funeral there was a 21-gun salute, the American flag draped over the coffin was folded, almost in slow motion, and a designated soldier (we rotated) walked over to the family and gave the flag to the wife (if he had been married) or to the mother (if he had been single). Then, in what must have seemed like a moment of sincere emotion, the soldier leaned towards her and said (in a voice that he had practised hundreds of times in front of a mirror): *On behalf of the President of the United States of America and a grateful nation, we present this flag to you with our sympathy for the honourable service your husband/son has rendered in time of need to his country. God bless you. God bless America.* If the dead G.I. was white, the white soldiers in the unit took centre stage. If he was Black, the Black soldiers ran the show.

Most of the men we buried were in their twenties. I'm not sure how long it was before "show-time" took over completely for me. It might have been after 15 or 20 burials. I could not weep or grieve with these families any more. I had to find a way to do this and not bleed. Show-time was the answer. Show-time meant you did everything you were supposed to do but without a trace of real emotion. It became a game.

For my unit, part of the game was trying to get as much pussy as you could from the women who came to grieve for their loved ones. The target could be the wife of the dead soldier or his sister or sister-in-law, or the high school sweetheart that he was going to marry when he came home.

The average funeral takes three days. We arrive at the deceased's home town and stay there until the G.I. is buried "with full military honours". The "pussy watch" starts the moment we hit town. At the funeral we meet the family. The dead soldier's wife is twenty-something years old and the husband she married a month before he left for Vietnam is dead as a doornail. The family (as they always do) invite us back to their home on the night of the wake. At some point, the young wife wants to speak to you 'in private' and as you make your way to some quiet place in the house she says, 'Were you there when John was hurt?' She can't say killed yet. You tell her no. 'Were any of the soldiers here with my husband when he got hurt?' You tell her no. It is a closed coffin, so she wants to know, 'Does he still look like himself?' You tell her yes. 'Did he say anything when he got hurt?' The questions go on and on and on and she doesn't know how it happens, but it does. For her it is about pain, fear, hurt, loss and a

suffocating need to be held by somebody who was 'near' her husband when he got 'hurt'. Somewhere in 'just' holding and comforting her, there is a kissing and you can taste the salt on her lips and you don't stop kissing her. She is no longer there. She is somewhere far away.

In April 1969 I was discharged from the Army and from then on I planned every day, as my father must have, to rid myself of "Mr. Hays".

September 1974: at the age of 27 and after five long years of planning, three years of night school and two years of college studies, I left the United States of America and headed for Paris, France. I was looking for the man who had saved me – James Baldwin. He had become my Spiritual Father and when I finally found him on a cold night in *Pigalle*, I told him so. I have never met any human being more beautiful.

Over the years I have travelled to many places in this world. I have seen places my father never knew existed and every time I travel to a new land I say to the Spirits of that land, 'My father's name was Charlie Scott and he married my mother, Autria Mae Wilson-Scott and they were here in the world. I just want you to know that.'

Many cultures in the world believe that no matter where you travel or how far away from your birthplace you go, as you get older, your spirit will start wanting to return to the place where its afterbirth lies. My spirit is beginning to feel this.

In September 2002, I will have lived outside of America longer than I lived inside of her. I have often wondered about this road I've taken and I have often wondered about my father's life. I have often wondered if I will ever return. I have often wondered about the children of Mr. Hays.

لويس إي. سْكت

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L. E. SCOTT

Maori Literature Week

From September 22-29, 2001, an incredible week of creative activity and debate took place in New Zealand's capital city under the auspices of Huia Publishers. Welcoming the hundreds of people who gathered for the opening of *Maori Literature Week*, Ms Robyn Bargh, Director of Huia Publishers, explained: 'As part of our tenth birthday celebrations, we have instigated *Maori Literature Week in the Capital*...During the next week, there will be over 25 events involving Maori writers, storytellers, illustrators, films, plays and poetry readings. The week will culminate with the *Maori Literature Awards Ceremony* at Te Papa Marae.'

Starting at the Pipitea Marae, the week kicked off with Sir Paul Reeves launching the book *The Silent Migration - Ngati Poneke Young Maori Club 1937-1948*. The book recounts the history of this culture group through the recollections of its original members, as told to writers Patricia Grace, Irihapeti Ramsden and Jonathan Dennis. And through their stories, the history of urban migration unfolds for the reader. The CD accompanying the book, *Ko Ngati Poneke Hoki Matou*, is a collection of classic concert party recordings of the Ngati Poneke Young Maori Club. Together they provide an incredible perspective of that time span.

In launching the book and CD, Sir Paul Reeves talked about his own experience growing up in Newtown with a Maori mother and Pakeha father. His mother did not embrace her Maori culture until after the death of her husband and with humour and insight, Sir Paul told of his mother's journey to reconnect with her culture.

During the course of *Maori Literature Week*, activities took place at venues all over the city: Te Papa, National Library, Wellington City Library, Victoria University, Unity Books and The Space. A wide range of Maori writers took part, from the well-known such as Patricia Grace, Hone Tuwhare and Apirana Taylor to new and emerging talent such as Awhina Arahanga.

Patricia Grace, whose book *Dogside Story* has won the Kiriyama Pacific Rim Prize for Fiction and was short-listed for the Booker Prize, spoke at an evening at the National Library Auditorium about how she became a writer. As a pupil at a Catholic school in Newtown, she was told to write stories by her teachers, but it became clear to her that the stories they wanted to hear did not reflect who she was. As the idea that she might become a writer grew stronger, so too did her belief that whatever she wrote had to be about things that reflected who she was and her cultural environment. Today, her message to students when she is asked to speak at schools and universities is: be true to yourself.

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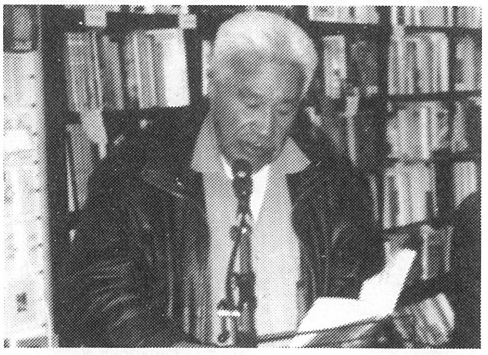
Joe Patea was one of the speakers in a panel discussion at the Wellington City Library on the role of oral literature. One of the issues he raised was the fear that as more Maori storytellers take up the pen, much of the essence that resides in the wondrous way that Maori storytellers have passed down the culture of their ancestors through the oral tradition will be lost.

At a reading at the Wellington City Library Jacqui Sturm, one of the first Maori women to be published in New Zealand and Apirana Taylor, a growing literary figure, presented a programme that reflected the concern to create and define the many voices of Maori. Sturm's poetry reveals a voice with the strength and persistence of time while Taylor accents a sense of urgency in his work through the use of voice, guitar, harmonica and flute.

One of the many keenly anticipated panel discussions was titled: *Telling Our Stories: the Politics and Considerations of Writing Maori History.* Contributors were Ranginui Walker, Irihapeti Ramsden, Paul Tapsell, Michael King, Aroha Harris and Te Taru White. At the core of the debate was the question of whether those of one race/culture can actually write about people of another. Michael King, who has written a number of books about Maori, spoke first. He explained that in whatever writing he did about Maori, he always ensured that he had the blessing of those concerned. While he believed that it was preferable for Maori to write about Maori, he did not accept that someone outside of a race or culture base could not write about that race.

Poet and dramatist **Roma Potiki** (left) talking with **Robyn Bargh**, organiser of *Maori Literature Week*



Poet **Hone Tuwhare**, one of New Zealand's living treasures, reading at Unity Books.

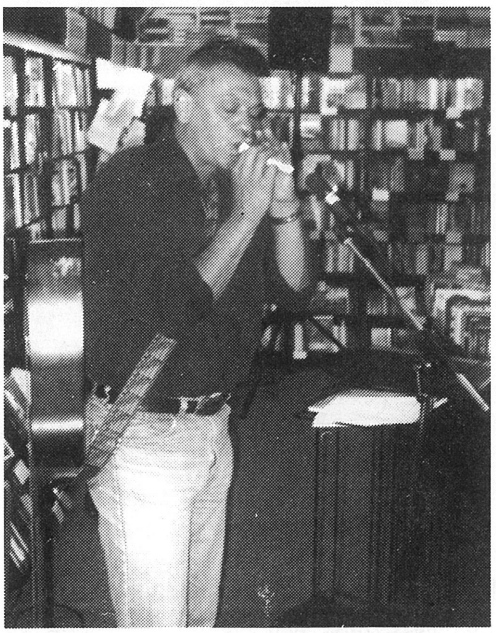
Michael King also expressed a concern that historical writing should not be about propaganda. Aroha Harris responded to that by suggesting that history is nothing but propaganda, or at least contains many elements of propaganda. She also challenged the view that Pakeha historians took up the role of writing Maori history because there were no Maori historians to do so, by pointing out that those who have a true understanding

of Maori culture know that there has never been a lack of Maori historians. Ranginui Walker provided yet another perspective on the debate, stating that he did not reject the idea that someone like Michael King could write about Maori.

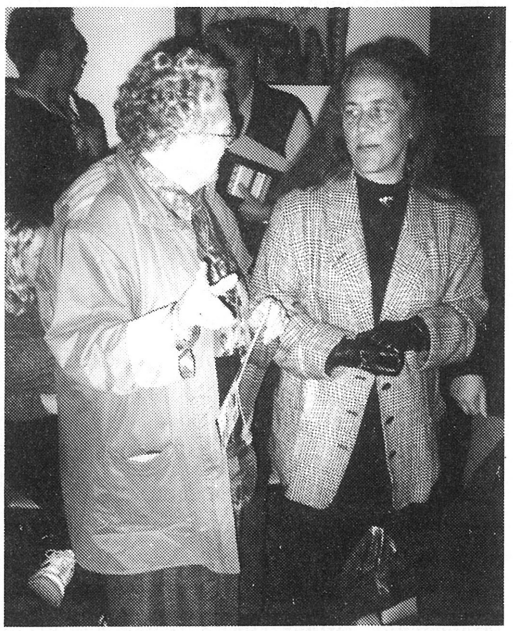
It is not surprising that a discussion of these issues threw up different views. The debate about who writes the history of a people and who has the right to interpret what that history is about can be found wherever there has been colonial oppression and wherever might has imposed itself.

One of the many performance highlights of the week was *Space for Words*, an evening at The Space in Newtown (Wellington) where Hone Tuwhare, a mountain of a man and one of New Zealand's major poets, Roma Potiki and other poets and writers read their work. The place was jammed and it was magical to see old and young coming together in such a celebration of words and the evolution of struggle.

All in all, Huia Publishers put together an amazing week. It was a week in which Maori poets, novelists, essayists, short story writers, scriptwriters and moviemakers showcased the talents of indigenous artists carving out their own stories. They spoke with a strength and clarity that makes the message unmistakable: it is the voice of Maori who must tell the story of Maori.



Apirana Taylor, poet, actor, playwright and musician performing his poetry using a traditional flute



Writer **Patricia Grace** sharing a moment with one of her admirers at *The Space* in Newtown.

THOMAS SHAPCOTT

Shenandoah

I was trying to tell my daughter about the river and the boats Jack made and how we would, finally, putter down the Bremer into the junction with the Brisbane and go a certain distance and then turn back. That was all we did.

That was not all, of course. Jack's first boat is the one I remember, simply because it was the first. He spent months on it, building and sanding and carefully measuring and then there was the business of the engine. He spent several more months with a friend converting an old Jeep engine and adapting it to propel the screw and power his beast smoothly. We had shipbuilding ancestors in Cornwall and Jack from somewhere deep within claimed heritage. It guided him as he freewheeled into his experiment. I looked on but this was not my territory. I did not intrude.

There were three motorboats he constructed over the years and I recall the first one best. I remember the day we all accompanied Jack down the river, at Colleges Crossing, for the launch. Slowly he backed his Willy's Knight Utility so the wheels of the trailer inched in over the river gravel a long way, and the water rose around it. The boat started to lift in its protective cage. We all gave a sigh of relief.

We took turns in with Jack. He had a Captain's Cap and looked debonair, his black Spanish curls poking out from the white material and emphasising his olive skin and the grin he could not help broadening further and further. It balanced in the water, we thought, admirably. It floated - it took our weight. The overhanging bottlebrush trees were curtains that we parted as we entered deeper water and Jack turned on the engine. The surge of movement and the splash of our wake. The instant gratification of power as Jack manipulated the wheel. No dinghy with an outboard motor, this was the professionalism of managed horsepower.

I remember even our mother took a turn, clambering carefully over the side, and there were willing hands to assist. She had a thick red jacket - it must have been winter. That first experiment involved only a mile or so downstream; we all wanted our turn. And I do remember my genuine admiration and pride: Jack had done it.

It was not the first boat in our family. After the War Dad bought from a Disposals Store the hulk of a landing vessel, 30 feet long, a hulk merely. We spent long weekends painting it with redlead, several layers, and the first attempt at a converted truck motor, after many false starts, finally was in place and we built an awning of plywood, and some benches along the sides. I remember then, in those schoolboy years, going downriver (you could not go up!), fishing (catfish mainly) and mooring under the shade of rivertrees to picnic. If we swam, it was a hard job to clamber back up on board. But

as we putted back after our excursion, in the late afternoon, I dreamt of water life, and all the farmland seemed different and framed by the perspective of water. There were few houses in sight, from down there. Sometimes kids fishing, or skinny dipping, or a sweaty farmer watering his horse.

The big floods of 1949 drowned that first boat and though we dredged it up, stinking of mud, the glamour had gone and we had other things to do on weekends. Dad must have sold it.

Jack's boat was smaller, faster, shaped like a bullet, and his own. I don't recall our father asking for a ride in it, though I am sure Jack must have offered. It was Dad's ancestry, after all, that had passed on the ship-building genes.

My daughter asks me: what did you do in the boat? You must have done something, Dad? Did you just go down the river, turn round, and come back up?

Were you just the passenger?

Something like that, I say. Oh, sometimes I bailed. After a while, I think, yes it did get boring. It was a confined space and Jack was interested, most, in movement. Water is a graph paper that you mark with directions and intentions and it measures your attempt.

If I looked forward, it was into the smooth surface that asked to be shattered, a mix of sky-shadow and green light from the reflections of trees or the nearer hills. Behind us, the wake turned its palms out and displayed the gifts of turbulence: sudden whiteness and powerful fanning waves and if we looked they would spread over and tousle the thick green-leaved native lilies along the banks or ruffle the bare patches where the cattle came down to drink.

It is strange, but I can hear the music of those weekend afternoons more clearly now than ever at the time. Shouts across water, laughter, an occasional Hoi! or some argument about whose turn is next or the half-jocular greetings to another intruding group with their own boat and party of skiers. The music always has a sunshine to it, just as the river is perpetually glinting with blue sky although it was always a brown water where you could not see your hands if you shoved them under too far. If I hear magpies yodelling I always am back on that riverbank, though magpies are a morning and evening bird. The breeze coming up from way over in the Bay, usually by three o'clock, was a regular accompaniment, though. I think I have imagined some more 'civilized' trees down by the bank, at this stage: the flood-twisted willows, perhaps, which had been all descended from a few cuttings souvenired from Napoleon's prison island of Elba. But by the time I am now thinking of they have become ubiquitous, (and in another fifty years are to be classified as noxious weeds). But for now they have a quiet music and help constitute that particular sense of place.

Adolescence is the time you discover boredom.

If, in retrospect, my perfect recipe for boredom is sitting behind Jack at the wheel of his second or third motorboat, skimming downstream past the same gum trees and the same paddocks and the same restricted close horizons rising around us to keep us in,

that is because my interest was not proprietorial. I was on Jack's time. I had nothing else to do.

My daughter who perhaps recollects her own adolescence and her own boredoms, tries to get me to remember how else the boat, Jack's boat, occupied a part in our youth and growing up. Power and movement, Dad, she says. Surely you got off on that?

Movement, yes. I think Jack enjoyed the power. I was always the mere passenger. I don't even remember swimming - not from Jack's boat. Endlessly up and down, I think. And getting sunburned, the river burn can be even more painful than the salt-air sunburn down on the Bay waters. It catches you out because you don't expect it. You are lulled into carelessness. You think you have it all worked out.

Jack became keen on water skiing. The broader reaches of the Brisbane, down near Redbank, were a perfect spot and there was a sand bank where beginners could clamber onto the skis and be helped to rise - or to tumble off - and to master the simple skills of balance and the way motion tugged that balance forward dramatically. Afternoons spent there. Picnics and flirtations, shady spots and soft-drink bottles kept cool at the water's edge. Yes, soft-drink bottles then.

I was never an ardent participant, though I came along enough times to be accepted as part of the scene. I was a dreamer and in my head I was involved with distance not place and with timelessness not any specific Saturday afternoon or Sunday. If Monday meant bookkeeping and accounts and lists of figures it also meant the first steps towards next week's pay when I could think of the savings and what long-playing record I had my sights set on.

I remember, my daughter says, the time we had to come and get you.

Ah yes. That was later. That was on Jack's final boat. It was the last time I was with him on the river.

I must have been six then, she says. Or seven.

That excursion, I seem to recall I did not want to go, not really. I knew everything about that river, up and down, too many years of my life. The more you go, the narrower it becomes. The more you rely on it, the less it has to give you. Not even the year when the hyacinth took over - it choked the Bremer and great islands of blue hyacinth with their green floating bulbs were swept right down into the Brisbane, which was much wider. Not even steering Jack's boat through that remarkable treacherous flowerbank made all that much difference finally. We knew the next floods would sweep it all down into the bay, but while it lasted the hyacinth was a navigation hazard, true enough. And that last time, it must have been that last time, we were glad when we got to the clearer waters. We went downstream further than I had ever been before.

All the way to Brisbane and the Storey Bridge?

Hardly. We got as far as Wacol, not that you'd know, really. From the river level we saw only the banks and the steep incline of rivergums and sometimes cliff-face. As the river grew wider the banks grew steeper. But we guessed that's where we were. Jack

pointed out the white fences of the Maximum Security Prison I think. And of course the chimneys of the Darra Cement Works are always a landmark when you get downstream that far. We were probably twenty miles from the city itself, you know how the river winds as it approaches the Bay.

I remember driving down a narrow dirt track to find you.

Yes, the motor conked out. We found ourselves floating downstream, at quite a pace as I remember. You do not realize how much the current begins to take control once the river gets to that size and depth. Took us some time to manage to steer it as best we could to the west bank where we could see a landing place. It was a spot where clearly other boats had been launched - lots of turning space and a boat trailer pulled up into the weeds nearby. We ended up paddling, if you can imagine it, from up high above the water. I was thankful nobody saw us.

And if they did? Surely they would have come to your aid? Surely you would have welcomed them?

Of course. Only in retrospect does the stupidity of it sink in. We did reach the bank and we dragged the boat half out of the water and hoped that the tide would not rise and lift it off. Jack would have known the details about state of the tides in the river. All I remember is we were covered in stinky river mud, it was like the time, earlier, with Dad's first boat. You never forget that smell.

Mud, my daughter says. River mud is pretty awful.

But I was remembering how, that day, the sun was already slipping a notch and how the river seemed to be trying to drag us back in, sucking the mud round our bare toes and somehow seeming to swell in the centre of the current, higher than where we were sitting at the edge, trying to clean ourselves up and discussing what to do next?

We knew we were in for a long walk, I tell my daughter.

There were four of us in the party. Someone suggested we start to sing, we were always singing in those days: pop songs, old ballads, it was the days before Rock and Roll. Smoky Dawson, Bing Crosby, Harold Williams and Peter Dawson, names you won't know.

I didn't know you used to sing, just for the fun of it I mean.

Well, not so much for the fun. We used to sing doing the drying up after meals, that sort of thing. Well, someone started the old sea shanty, Shenandoah, and we began striding up the dirt track until we might come to a house or a farm, which could have been miles. Oh Shenandoah we're bound to leave you, away you rolling river.

I know that song.

Uhuh. It made the trek uphill and through those overgrown paddocks seem even more tiresome. We should have picked a faster one. But then, perhaps we were deeply into slow trudging at that stage. It's funny; from the river, midstream, the banks look green and lush and beautiful and you dream of rolling in them and somehow almost floating over them, but in actual fact they are messy and the heat still rises even in the late

afternoon and we seemed covered in midges and mosquitoes and tiny grass-seeds that itched, and we hadn't so much as deviated from the centre of the dirt road. It was just the thought of it all. Lots of what we used to call cow-cane that grows about seven feet tall and is covered in itchy furze and with seed-heads that scatter at the tiniest breeze. We trudged all the long slow way always uphill singing that stupid song and, now I've got to be truthful, roaring it out full blast. It's funny how singing as a group seems to lighten the burden of things. We were hot and sweaty and stinking still with that clammy mud and yet we were joking among ourselves and singing the sorriest of all sea shanties as if we were off to the carnival.

How old were you then, Dad?

Young enough. Young enough still. And we did finally reach a house on that road. It had a big fence all around, and even bigger signs saying KEEP OUT! and WARNING: SAVAGE DOGS!

Were they, really?

Well, yes, as a matter of fact. But we were so jubilant to see the signs of settlement and human habitation we didn't pay all that much attention. Well, we did pause and consider our options, of course. But in the spirit of true castaways and shipwrecked sailors we didn't think guard dogs were such an obstacle.

You were brave.

We were fools. Oh, we did debate it, quite a lot actually. But I kept saying that we needed to get to a phone and make contact with home so that someone could come out and rescue us. I kept seeing that black phone inside and asking the owner to let us use it, just for one call. If he charged us a pound (it would have been pounds then, not dollars) I was prepared to pay. Jack, as I recall, suggested we offer two shillings first.

The wire fence was very tall. I kept thinking that those guard dogs must have been athletes or on loan from the Moscow Circus if they could get even half way up. There was no sound of barking, nothing at all.

Silence is always more dangerous.

Jack said: you go first. We'll be behind you. We hadn't even thought to bring the tool-kit with us from the boat. We were very trusting people; we even left three bottles of XXXX under a tarpaulin. Well, you can't carry everything and we all knew it would be a great hike. Nothing to protect ourselves with, in case there really were huge German Shepherds. Not that a spanner would go very far, come to that.

And you went in?

I went in. Tell you the truth, it was that black telephone kept to the forefront of my mind. It was a matter of urgency.

So I knocked on the door, very loud. That was when the sound started up. That sort of scraping cluttering sound a dog's claws make on linoleum. A heavy breathing sound. A sound like a spring tightening and about to burst out with a force like a bullet. I did start to get a bit apprehensive then.

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What were the others doing, Dad? They didn't let you go inside alone?

Can't remember. There was a sudden shouting and swearing and eventually the front door did open and this bloke, a truckie type with blue singlet and a beer belly, was peeking out at me with the door open only a crack. But it was enough to see the pair of big black Alsatians shoving between his knees and he was trying to hold them back and swearing at them and at me. Eventually someone else came behind him and seemed to help drag them back or away somewhere. Then he opened the door a little bit further.

You're a damned idiot. His first words. Can't you read the signs? Think I put them up for fun, and the fence too? he said. It took him a few moments to calm down and let me explain. Them dogs would have been at your throat, was the last warning he said before he turned his attention to our plight.

So he did help?

The others had come inside the gate by then and Jack explained about the boat and the engine and how the carburettor flooded and all that. Whatever it was. I hadn't paid much attention to all of that, only that we had stopped. And anyway after he calmed down a bit he let us use the phone and I called your mother and I told her where we were. The truckie helped with the road descriptions and how she was to take the left hand turn just before Wacol Station. And he didn't charge us for the call. I don't know where the dogs were by then. Out of our way.

It's a high security prison just out there, Dad. There've been enough break-outs and prisoners escaping. Think I can see why.

Yes, just so. That's what he explained. But we didn't stay to talk much. Tell the truth the feeling about those dogs increased rather than diminished the longer we stayed. I kept thinking what would have happened if.

After the event.

The event in itself is often enough only at the beginning. It's at night, later, that the nightmares come.

You had nightmares about those savage dogs, Dad?

The nightmares were about being cast adrift in a small boat on the swollen river and the banks too far away to swim for or to steer towards. And the current getting stronger, and Jack calling out that he cannot start the motor, that he cannot for the life of him start the motor and we have left our lifejackets behind and the steering's gone and this was the maiden voyage of his new boat and now it will be crashed and there's nothing we can do, and it's the panic that comes late which is the true panic. And I wake up in a sweat and it's then the dogs creep up silently, they are lined up on the riverbank and are moving in packs now, their heavy tails low and their heads pressed forward and they are waiting for the first move and the boat is slowly, inexorably, moving towards the bank where they are crouching low and pacing in packs, ready for us. And I am alone.

But you weren't alone. Uncle Jack says you were the brave one, who marched in and was the one who knocked at the front door.

I was never a realist. It was in the days before mobile phones. I didn't rush in wanting to be the big Boy Scout to the rescue. I was just tired of walking, I was tired of the boat and the river and sometimes exasperation drives you.

Did you and Jack quarrel? Did you ever quarrel?

No. We're twins. Sometimes it's one's turn, sometimes the other. Jack owned the boat, he made the boat. I was not much use to him. Except to prove something to me.

Did you have to prove anything to him, then?

Just that I was there, I suppose. Or sometimes, just sometimes, I would barge ahead, Aries the Ram. That was my star. It wasn't a question of taking the lead. It was something in the balance of things. My patience is not infinite.

I can't work you out. I know you're not very practical with things, Dad. When we were kids I remember that changing a light-bulb was a major drama for you. But I always thought the river was something special. I always thought you envied Jack for making his boat, his boats, and proving something: himself, was it? Or was it that Jack had a certain get-up-and-go?

Well, Jack was the practical twin, I was the unpractical twin. It was always like that. We simply didn't question it. In that sense, we were not competitive. We had our own worlds.

You both had the river.

Yes, we grew up together.

What happened to Jack's boats, in the end?

He sold them, each one of them in the end. Perhaps they had served their purpose. Perhaps Jack had made his point. I was not on the scene.

Did you really have that nightmare? You're not making it up, are you, Dad?

Ask Jack. The dogs were real.

That's no answer.

I look at my daughter, but our landscapes are different. I want to speak about the river, my river, but I can see the savage dogs are what has caught her imagination. When I have spoken to Jack recently, he remembers those dogs, too, and that final incident. He had to remind me. Perhaps that's why I used the concept of the nightmare. After all, I call myself a dreamer. My daughter, I fear, sees me as a father, and competitive. The nightmare makes me human, and vulnerable.

That's why I am making it up.

توماس شابكوت

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BRUCE PASCOE

Embrasure

She couldn't remember seeing a tree.

Even though every stone and gate, window and tile could be raised in her mind as clearly as a brother or sister's face.

Eighteen years she'd lived in Rosecastle Street until the man had come and taken her away, and now, although she could see the uneven stitches trimming the coarse ruche to her mother's apron as clear as the veins in the back of her own hand, she couldn't remember a tree. In the whole length of Rosecastle Street and even Hedley Road, not one. She roamed the streets of the old town in her mind, turning down this lane and that until, yes, the common, the three elms in the common, the three trees of her entire life until now.

Oh, she'd read about trees, and tigers, ostriches, elephants, pyramids, everyone had in those days, they featured in the sentences on every blackboard, the exotic, the enthralling, that's how they got you to read, even the daughters of coal miners. Everyone was a coal miner or a coal miner's wife or daughter, everyone. No, she couldn't remember a tree or any man who wasn't a coal miner. Except perhaps Edward Carmody at the shop.... and Father Williams the priest.... and old Fitzgerald at the school.... but he died.

And now there was this man. He should have been a coal miner, but he'd come into her street one day and said he didn't intend to be a coal miner, no, he was going to be a ... landowner...on the other side of the world. She presumed he meant Africa and thought of the monkeys and elephants in the garden, elephants cleverly spurting water from their trunks onto the flower beds. There was a story like that in their reader and she couldn't remember wondering why the elephant didn't eat the flowers or tread on them. All the children, it seemed to her, had believed the story about the elephant.

And then this man came along and said to hell with the coal mine and she'd said to hell with Rosecastle Street and so here they were.

She watched his back. It was nothing to see a man with his shirt off in this country, often it was too hot otherwise, especially with the work they had to do. At first she'd blushed fiercely and turned away from any half naked farmer or builder's boy, but gradually she'd learnt about backs.

And this back. She knew this back. Knew how the muscles corded beside the spine, plaited and hard like salted rope. She'd run her hands along these ropes and felt him squirm, run her thumb around the blade of the shoulder, along the collar bone, into the cavity of the neck and let her fingers drift across his lips and found them wetted by the

tip of his tongue, and then that was it, his back exploded into an arch and he swung around and grabbed her by the waist, lifted her and brought her whole body down on himself. Naked and brown. You could do that in this country. It was so warm. No one to look in the window, no one to tell your mother, no one to see it wrong.

Tonk, the mallet struck the wedge into the clefted log and the sound echoed off the trunks of red gum and wilga by the river. Tonk, he struck again, and tonk again, the wedge popping the log, springing a fence post clean away from the timber, hard and solid and yet moistly pink like a filleted salmon.

She looked across to where Violet was lying on her back in the cane basket, arms flung behind her head, legs splayed, boneless as a tulip. Just a nappy on. You could do that here. Not in summer, but in autumn, what they called autumn, in the dappled light beneath the tree, beneath the tree she'd begged him to spare, her baby slept naked and tea coloured, not at all like the babies at home who all looked like unhealthy whey.

With the red dog asleep on the step those little birds had come to creep amongst the twigs and leaves, piping to each other so quietly you could miss it if you didn't listen, not at all like the sparrows of Rosecastle Street. These were timid little birds, secretive, innocent little things, finnicking with insects so small they were invisible to her. And not at all like the red and blue lorikeets whose military plumage and three note bell songs seemed to promise a complete tune, but perhaps they knew the whole symphony and only needed to remind each other of the opening bars so that they could return immediately to slicing tart gumnuts with their pincer bills, dropping the fragments, astringent and lemony all around her. And on the baby once or twice so that she made a mew with her tiny bright lips but returning to sleep again without opening an eye or disturbing her dream of running milk and warm pressed breasts. You could do that in this country.

When she brought him a couple of scones and cup of tea he drank it standing up, keen to get on with his work. She slid her hand across the tight curve of his waist and a finger between the top of his trousers and his skin, let it slide into the hollow of his groin to feel his body tighten, as hard as a barge hawser straining against the tide, his eyes flaring at her like a horse and she, she shimmied at him harlot depraved. What would her mother have said if she'd seen that sliding finger, the shameless shimmy. But there was no one to see, no one to say it was wrong.

He drew her to him and showed her how he was going to plane the flitches of timber to make the frames and shutters for their windows, and then he whispered a promise into her ear, so hot it burnt her cheeks. But you could do that in this country.

He was clever. A clever horse. She watched as he put a bevel on opposite corners of the timber, planing the sweet scrolls of wood from the plank so that the air became heady with eucalyptus. Without a word he held two pieces together at a right angle, looking up at her to see if she understood how they worked, that the bevel would set the frame out at an angle from the stone and make a slightly flared aperture. Oh, a clever

horse. A beautiful, strong and clever horse.

All day he worked like that and before the afternoon had passed he had framed up the two tall and narrow windows and fitted shutters to the other two. He'd cut the shutter timbers with a small notch so that when brought together they formed a heart just like those in a Swiss village she'd seen on the Wasser biscuits her mother used to buy at Christmas

She stood back and admired the completeness, the neatness they leant to the front of the house, her own house. But the sun was getting low now, almost below the crowns of the great trees by the river and so he'd taken the red dog and brought up the flock of sheep and the cows with their calves at foot and penned them in the yard beside the shed. She'd already pitched in forkfuls of the sweet wild hay they'd cut from the river bank in their first summer here. And they looked at each other then with the first hint of uncertainty either had felt that day.

Magpies and kookaburras watching from the trees seemed to accept the yarding as the cue to roll out their impossibly wild and heedless songs, ending the day with bawdy riot, flagrant pipers of a contemptuous army.

The shutters brought darkness to the house earlier than before causing them to light lamps and polish chimney glass even before dusk had purpled the valley. She turned her back as he took the gun from the shelf and set it by the narrow aperture he'd fitted earlier, the timber still oozing with sweaty sap.

They prayed perfunctorily over their plates and then looked up at each other briefly before dropping their gaze to the meal. She'd braised chunks of lamb, such big chunks she felt shame lest her mother find how profligate they'd become, her own onions and carrots thickened the sauce, a chutney from the tomatoes that had sprung up of their own accord beside the pig's sty. Bread, a stack of bread and butter that threatened to topple from the plate. But you had to feed the horse, he'd laboured from before dawn with barely a moment's rest, for they were hurrying, preparing the house.

Despite the hot promise of the day, they lay in bed, naked but for the sheet, and held to each other, she with an arm crooking his neck and the other straddling his back and he likewise except that one hand cupped her breast, the nipple standing out between his fingers fat and proud, dimpled and gauzy with its own dew. But they were listening.

Violet's breath was regular and sweet. No catch of croup or congestion, no muffled splutter from bedclothes too close. She, like them could do with just a sheet, sleep resplendent with tossed limbs. You could do that here. But they weren't listening for her breath, they'd come to expect its unbroken regularity, but still they listened.

He had settled himself in a posture where he could look across her shoulder at the dog so that when it lifted its muzzle, ears slowly pricking, he slid his arms from around his wife, heedless of the indecent fruits of her body and crept from the bed to the tall window slot and levelled the gun through its aperture.

Still they listened. A cow coughed, a sheep gave a bleat, they could here the stamp of

her defiant foot, the one the others saw as their leader. Again she stamped, bravely facing whatever there was to face, her yellow eyes swivelling about the moonlit yard, knowing but not seeing. And then the gun blasted silence off the blades of leaves, tore it from the mouths of sheep, caused cows to duck their heads to their calves, troubled, knowing but not seeing. Again the blast of the gun and again. Not another noise. The moonlight resuming its delicate silvering of leaf edge, shovel blade, cheek bone and silent air.

She lay in bed staring toward the man at the window, Violet sucking at her breast, surprised to find herself in her mother's arms.

What did they want these people? Why did they keep coming back? Couldn't they see they meant no harm, that all they wanted was to run a few sheep and cows, enough to raise their child, well children soon, if she knew what was happening inside her.

He stood by the window, the gun arcing back and forth, the flanging of the fortification allowing him to cover most of the yard. Listening, waiting. Why didn't they leave him alone? Unconsciously he rested the fingers of one hand on the frame before becoming aware of the workmanship in it, the pride he'd invested in its construction. It was his, his window, his house, he'd made them and he'd keep them, he meant no harm to anyone, so why didn't they leave him alone?

All night he stood by the window, occasionally resting his weight on one leg, easing the tension in the muscles of the other, resting his forehead against the sweet timber, gleaming from his plane, mouthing thanks that he'd got the job finished, windows shuttered, door secure, and the embrasure from which to defend his right.

بروس باسكو

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SUSAN BEINART

The Cockroach Lair

'In Australia,' my mum used to say, 'cockroaches scuttle in the kitchens. They never did that in South Africa. Except in *unclean* houses.' No matter how often Mum said this, my auntie hummed and nodded in chorus. I was their captive then, listening with a child's ear while they chatted and tried to roast chickens in our early model microwave oven.

In those days, home was an old pink double storey. It perched on a hill amongst a cluster of avenues that ran down to the edge of a seaside cliff. North of that cliff, around a bend or two, I used to take off my shoes, skip down concrete and plunge my toes into sand.

Dad lived elsewhere, in a gaudy suburb that gleamed with silver cars. Whenever I visited him, I peered out of his window down onto a restaurant's patio. There, suited men drinking at tables lit cigarettes for ladies with lacquered nails. Which one of those ladies, I used to wonder, was currently blowing smoke at my father's greying hair?

After Dad left, Mum's voice would hurtle over the fence where my sandpit lay and drop down the chimney of our Italian neighbours. 'Why your mother she is so angry again last night?' Mrs Giussepini once asked me, as she swept leaves off the common footpath. Dressed in a velvet frock with a bow on the afternoon of my eighth birthday, I gazed down at a redbrown leaf, veined and brittle, curled as if in anger. I had no answer.

The day before my eighth birthday, cockroaches had plundered Mum's old slice of wedding cake. The slice came from a cardboard drum, iced and packed with fruitcake pieces, which had formed the layer at the base of her three-tiered wedding cake. It was one of those pre-sealed slices South African wedding guests took home and placed wistfully under their pillows. 'Cardboard wedding cakes are a custom back there,' Mum once told me, her brown eyes moistening as she recalled her counterfeit cake.

Long after she came to Australia, when she considered me old enough, she handed me the slice she'd kept so I could look after it. I used to hold it against my cheek, treasuring her gentleness when she gave it to me.

But cockroaches crawled into my gaping drawer, nibbled at the cellophane and swarmed over its stale contents. They vibrated over the icing sugar's grey-tinged whiteness. Tight-chested, I watched them until, with a sock protecting my hand, I tipped that piece of cake out my drawer. I raised my shoe to punish the cockroaches but they disappeared, escaping into cracks between dusty floorboards.

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'You can't be trusted,' Mum raged. 'Everything you get your paws on ends up ruined.'

'Since it's your birthday,' Mum was frowning, 'why don't we go down to the beach for a while before supper?'

'*Tea*,' I corrected. The word sprang from my lips. '*Tea's* what they call it at school you know.'

'Oh, this is TOO MUCH – I feel so out of place in this country,' Mum said. She turned to my auntie with a sigh. 'I can't even speak my own language in my own house any more. *Supper*,' she said, flicking sharply to me like a knife, 'is, when I say it, the same as *dinner* or *tea* –' Then, back to my auntie, 'How can I stop feeling so tired, Harriet, with my next law exam coming up in a week?'

'Don't exhaust yourself, Esther,' Auntie Harriet said. She spoke in that flat accent they both have. Her thick mouth smiled at me. 'Run upstairs now,' she said, 'and fetch that huge pink beach ball I gave you – be extra nice to your mother,' she whispered, following me to the doorway. I flounced off, hating her at that moment, her imposing elbow, the breath that smelled of cigarette smoke.

When I came back, I found Mum placing two white candles into silver candlesticks on the sideboard. Her huge brown eyes seemed to fill the room. Later, she would light the candles, make soothing circles in the air, cover her eyes with her palms and say a prayer over the flame. As I lumbered out the front door, I wished I was one of those Friday night candles, lovingly worshipped by Mum's fingers. But all the way down the avenue her hands gestured along with words that sprang back and forth between her and Auntie Harriet. By the time we reached the walkway, my wish had extinguished itself.

At the edge of the concrete, I peeled off my pumps. My toes melted into the mountain of sand below. The velvet dress, though thin and short-sleeved, felt hot and prickly over my skin. 'Can't I take it off?' I begged, 'I've got my swimmers on underneath.'

Mum chose a spot and stretched her blanket over the sand. She blew a few grains off her arm. 'No,' she said, lowering herself onto the blanket's blue squares. 'It's autumn now. You'll catch yourself a terrible cold.' But all around us I saw people strolling, exposing their semi-nakedness to blinding autumn rays. 'When you were young, Harriet,' Mum chirruped, pointing her Polaroids past me in my auntie's direction, 'did your mother worry about your catching polio at the beach?'

Auntie Harriet draped her skinniness over the tasseled cloth she'd brought from Africa. She fingered, as usual, its rough native weave. 'Except for once, I always went with *Lily*,' she said.

'Oh, *maids*,' Mum smiled. 'I can't imagine how I've managed all these years without *Katie*.'

There was no immediate answer. Their glasses twinkled at each other. It was another electric moment when their memories seemed to be connecting, like a plug into a

socket, back in those mystery rooms of their past. 'We should have got to know each other better back then, when there was more time to,' Auntie Harriet said.

'Now here we both are,' Mum cleared her throat, 'floundering together in a strange land.'

I'd heard it all before, whether crouching under the kitchen table or standing here with my body feeling sticky, wanting my dilemmas to be rising to the surface instead of the boredom of theirs. But before I could hang my head and plead once more for relief from velvet, they'd escaped, this time around a more sinister curve. Mum was moaning, 'At least you've got your husband and still have your teaching. I've only my foreign law degree and the house and cockroaches my husband left me.'

Auntie Harriet frowned. She lit a cigarette. Smoke billowed from her nose. She glanced at me sadly, as if to tell me not to worry since I, as well as the law, roaches and house, had well and truly been left. 'You know,' she said, 'the day you finish your last law exam, Esther, is the day you'll be casting all this aside.'

Then she turned to me with her look of conspiracy. 'Here, run along and play with the ball, lovey. I'll join you later, after your mother and I finish our chat.' Tears dribbled down my cheeks as I waded across sand. I felt even less needed than those vicious cockroaches my father had left behind.

Reaching my favourite boulder, I climbed its rocky staircase. I clambered over rock pools, leaving the beach ball floating in the slimiest one. On the way up, I stubbed my toe and my tears turned into whimpers. From the top of the boulder, nursing my foot, I could see the ocean lathering. It was easy, hurting inside and out, to imagine being out there. I would be gobbled by a wave and dashed to pieces against a rock while Mum flapped about like a fish on her blanket. I was sobbing. A gulp caught in my throat as if I'd swallowed that wave and was already drowning.

'You 'right, dear?' The quavery voice came from the sand below. I moved forward, peeped over. My sobs stopped at the sight of a wrinkly face in a plastic beach cap fastened with a buckle under the chin. I nodded and pointed at my foot, which I dangled over the edge. The woman crinkled her eyes, shrugged in mute sympathy and went, bathers shimmering, on her way. Her leathery skin wobbled in folds behind her as she marched with vigour towards the sea.

Beyond her, on the side of the bay where teenagers dived and rode surfboards, I spied *her*, Terryl Murphy, a blond upstart I played with when I was small. The rock she pirouetted on, which I'd so often patted, was crusted all over with dried-out periwinkles. A T-shirt, shorts and pair of thongs lay tossed together at her feet. She was glowing, her blue eyes potentially scathing, her pinkness made rosy by two dark lycra strips.

Suddenly, her pirouetting stopped. She stretched her arms towards the ocean. The old woman halted and scratched her swimming cap as she watched that marzipan figure dive into the sea. I, incongruous in velvet, looked down at my own comparative

brownness. 'You're just olive-skinned,' my dad had once said in his medical voice. 'Under the Aussie sun it's better to have your type of skin.' As he spoke, he twisted his stethoscope and his accent, like my mum's, separated me from his words. My mum's accent was embarrassing. Terryl's mum's, I remembered, wasn't.

Meanwhile, Terryl's head rose above the water. She swam back towards the rock. Seeing her towel spread wide and shoulders surfacing, I remembered my cave at the bottom of the boulder. There, I would hide away and fossick in the sand for shells.

Before I slid back down over pools and ledges, I raced to the other side and looked across at the stepsisters. Auntie Harriet stood smoking at the water's edge, my mum lay flat to her blanket. Mum was flicking through a shiny-paged magazine, her bushy eyebrows pushed together. When my toes reached sand, I raised the velvet over my head, knowing I was mocking that crevice between Mum's eyebrows.

Dropping the dress, trampling the bow into sand, I walked up to my cave's magical opening. A narrow mouth in the rock. It seemed impossible to slide through its narrowness. I pulled in my stomach so I could squeeze through the gap. Sandwiched between its grey sides, knees scraped to a pinky whiteness, I knew soon I would be too grownup to slither into my hiding place.

Inside it was stuffy. The sand was damp. There was a chimney where sunlight filtered through. I could only stand in the centre of the space. Its smoothed walls jutted into overhanging ledges. Kneeling, I dug, unearthing a length of seaweed and a staring crab shell without pincers.

The crab reminded me of a cockroach I'd once found under the kitchen table as I crouched between shadows made by grownups' knees. I'd found it on its back, its feelers fluttering, while Auntie Harriet's voice droned on above the tablecloth. 'But at least you've still got this house with its view. It's pleasant in this beachside suburb, isn't it, Esther?'

Listening to Mum moaning back, seeing how her fingers with their rings gnawed at her stockings, I snapped off the cockroach's leg, delirious over its hairy twiggishness. As Mum's body began to heave, the cockroach came back to life. Its remaining back leg vibrated along with her. I tore off that leg too and both wings, in case it might fly and beat against me. As I watched over the cockroach, the kettle hummed and Mum's sob vanished in her throat as she rose and clinked coffee mugs together.

Now I crawled to the middle and reached for my shells, curling a hand over an overhanging ledge. The light from the chimney suddenly dimmed as my hand groped unsuccessfully. My precious shell collection was missing. In the semi dark – I could almost see her – I imagined Terryl Murphy bouncing into my cave, reaching for my shells, diving out the opening, clutching them. Or maybe it had been the rising sea, reclaiming jewels lost from its bed.

Light returned. My fingers sank into sand. I dug furiously. At last, I found my first shell – white, blue and pink, the coil of a sea snail. As I scooped on, evening draped its

shadow over that patch of dampness. I was wiping the sand from a favourite shell, one I fancied looked like a doll's bonnet, when I heard a groan echoing through, a bellow of pain from the forgotten outside.

'Oh my God.' It was Mum's voice. 'Here's her dress lying on the sand. Over there, in front of you, Harriet.'

'Don't jump ... to conclusions ... Esther.' Auntie Harriet sounded breathless. 'The poor thing was hot ... hot as hell ... practically suffocating in that silly outfit.'

'Oh my God, Harriet,' Mum said. 'It was that owl. I told you how I spotted one in the crepe myrtle this morning.'

'That's untrue, Esther. An old wife's tale. Now stop staring at the sea. Let's make sure we've asked everybody.'

But Mum, I wondered if her chest was heaving, was calling for me. 'Dani, where are you? Come here – here – here – '

'I'm here in my cave,' I answered silently. I threw back my head and lapped up the sweetness of her pain. As I listened, her bellowing became louder. She roared like a sealion. I rose and stretched my strengthened arms up the craggy chimney, shivered and thought of my velvet dress.

Then I heard a third voice wafting in: the old woman with the swimming cap. I recognised her interfering quaver. 'Haven't you found her yet, your little girl? No, I s'pose you haven't. Oh dear, is the father nearby? Bangkok, did you say? That'd be right. Life is hard nowadays. Still, you do the best you can. I've asked everyone on the beach you know. There's only one or two of us left. You wait here, dears. I'll go have another look for your angel.'

'*Angel*,' Mum said, '*angel!*' She hiccuped a string of sobs. I trembled. I remembered the day when a kitchen tap glinted while she mewed behind it in the same mournful way.

At our kitchen sink, Dad, before he left us, used to wash his glasses under a trickling tap. Then he'd dry the lenses, rubbing each one separately with a cloth. On the day he left, he threw ties, trousers, shirts and jackets into new crocodile skin suitcases, then dragged them downstairs to the front door. Finally, he leaned against the sink and rubbed his glasses over and over. Mum, hugging one of the Australian law books she studied, wept, shaking, behind his back.

Dad had said, 'Let me go, damnit, let me go!' Mum's weeping, the same sound I was hearing now, followed me down to where I'd crept under cover of our huge wooden kitchen table.

Now I slithered from my cave. With my new power I wanted to hold Mum, soothe her tears away.

Mum sat kneading her brow in twilight, legs spread out along the sand. She looked at

me, eyebrows hidden, eyes two lifeless grapes staring out from that bowl of a face. She squealed, her eyes unchanging, their deadness connected, I saw, to other things: candles, my dad's suitcases, left-behind law books, fatigue, Africa, even Auntie Harriet in a way I didn't yet understand. Mum's world, I was realising, was composed of things other than myself.

I stumbled to her. She covered me with velvet. I saw Auntie Harriet waving from the boulder's peak.

Mum half-carried me up the hill to the house, then hurried me upstairs to the bathroom and into bed. She fed me chicken soup, laughed about unlit candles, mumbled, 'Thank God,' and blew me kisses as she left my room.

Downstairs, the front door shut gently behind Auntie Harriet and I heard the strange sound of Mum humming as she spritzed cockroaches with a menthol-smelling spray. Finally, she pulled out a chair and I heard her big blue law book bang open, smelled sweet dark coffee.

The next day, Mum hummed that same foreign tune to me as I navigated the surf, her body behind mine. Wading strongly, her palms supported me. Another gesture that heralded a small but permanent change.

On that same day, as I raced Mum to shore, I glimpsed my secret rock cave nestled on the sand. Its smooth and ageless face. Sunrays lit up its wide and approving mouth.

سوزان باینارت

Susan Beinart was born in South Africa. She spent her first 20 years in Australia teaching English to migrants and refugees. Since then she has published stories and articles in literary magazines and newspapers, and is presently working on her first novel. *The Cockroach Lair* won the 1995 Joseph Furphy Commemorative Literary Prize.

GREG BOGAERTS

Michelangelo's Unfinished Sculpture

Marlene struggled through the tour with her daughter, Angeline. It was winter in Florence and the wind was bitterly cold. Rain fell in great icy sheets. Marlene wondered whether it was worth it. Whether it would have been better to stay on the bus with Angeline in the warmth rather than battle with the slippery cobblestones and the inclement weather.

Angeline had wet herself before the guide turned up and Marlene had to find a toilet to change her adolescent daughter before the tour of Florence's art treasures began. Not an easy job what with the staff of the expensive glass shop looking daggers at Marlene and Angeline when they occupied the toilets for a good half an hour.

A difficult thing, for Marlene, taking her brain-damaged daughter on a two-week tour of Europe. Especially when Angeline didn't speak, hadn't uttered a word in three years after her father walked out when he'd had enough.

'I can't stand it any more Marlene. The shitty and pissy nappies at her age and her manners aren't getting any better. We can't even have any one over for drinks,' Roger told his wife as he packed his bags. Angeline heard every word and hadn't spoken since.

And that was one of the reasons Marlene had ventured on the European tour with her daughter. She thought perhaps there would be enough stimulation to be found in ten countries to bring Angeline out of her shell because it wasn't just a matter of Angeline not speaking anymore. There were some days when Marlene's daughter couldn't or wouldn't walk. There were some days when Angeline wet herself three or four times and lay curled on her bed with her crooked safety pin smile half hidden by one hand.

But Marlene was determined and pulled her daughter from historic square to historic square looking at the statues, the bronze door mosaics, the marble arches of antiquity. Occasionally, Marlene would lose patience with her child but her outburst of temper was as much a defiance of Angeline's stubborn adherence to her disability.

Mother and daughter stood in a cobblestone square with the rain drenching them through. Marlene looked at the giant marble statue mounted on stone steps in the middle of the public space. She looked at her daughter, huddled, unmoving, eyes unblinking, and she wondered if there was any difference between the statue and her daughter. She wondered if it would make any difference if she left her daughter with the man of stone,

in the square, because Marlene, in her exhaustion and exasperation, felt Angeline was determined not to notice the efforts of her mother to keep her human.

Marlene felt guilt whenever she saw her daughter as less than human. Something that hardly ever happened and only when Angeline had driven Marlene to the end of her tether.

Marlene looked around at the other statues, the bronze sculpted doors, the finely-made stone churches, the footpaths of cobblestones, ancient antiques of beauty in themselves, but there was no sense, no likelihood of any rebirth for her daughter in this Renaissance city. It seemed unlikely to Marlene that her daughter could learn to be human again

The tour continued and Marlene and Angeline followed on behind their dogged guide, who seemed determined, despite the rain, the cold and now the fine sheets of sleet that were falling, to drag these foreigners through the artistic wonders of his city.

Marlene half expected the man to turn around and berate the stragglers who were put off by the hard going. In fact she half expected him to take hold of an ear or two of the reluctant tourists, who were like recalcitrant children, and frog march them into following him.

Marlene's guide was the opposite of Roger, her ex-husband. Roger left only a year after the car accident that damaged Angeline's skull and bruised her brain beyond repair. It didn't take much to put Roger off. He barely had any contact with his daughter and that was something that Marlene came to accept after the first months of silence and her snow-blind fear and anger with her husband.

But Angeline hadn't accepted it and the words she heard, when her father was leaving, were made worse when he wouldn't have any thing to do with her. Angeline thought, Marlene had finally deduced, that if she refused to talk, if she soiled and wet herself, if she refused to walk some days, then those actions would bring her father running to her side.

She expected him to arrive to wash her clean, to help her from the bed and support her while she walked her first steps in days. She thought Roger would come back and live with them again because he wanted to be with his daughter even if he didn't love Angeline's mother anymore.

And it was these expectations, these hopes of her daughter, as much as anything else, that made Marlene take her daughter away to Europe.

The tour was almost at an end and Marlene, resigned to the continuing silence and bovine indifference of her daughter, was looking forward to getting back to the warmth of the motel where Angeline would take herself straight to bed and sleep fourteen of fifteen hours until the dawn of the next day.

Sometimes it was an eerie life of loneliness for Marlene; hours by herself while her daughter shut herself away in the refuge of sleep. Angeline made the daylight hours as short as possible for herself.

'This is the final part of our tour ladies and gentlemen,' the guide announced and indicated the museum that held many of Michelangelo's finished and unfinished sculptures.

The guide looked at Marlene, smiled at her, and said, 'Michelangelo said that the stone always contained the art. That his job was merely to knock away a few pieces of stone. The work of art, the human form, would always emerge no matter what.'

Mother and daughter followed the man through the doors and beheld the nude statue of David at the far end of the museum; as close to a perfect work of art in stone that any mortal could come up with. Dazzling in its artistry, its immense size. But it seemed far away to Marlene as though she was observing a superhuman form of humanity, of maleness, through binoculars turned the wrong way around.

She looked at Angeline, looking at the perfect man, at the other end of the building. A snort of disbelief escaped from the young girl. She turned away, was about to leave, thought her mother, but the first of Michelangelo's statues, just inside the door, stopped Angeline. Stopped her mother.

The sculpture was unfinished. The muscular torso of a man arched out of the stone as if the figure was trying to tear itself free from the dumb stone. Half-finished arms struggled in the square well of marble. Feet and leg calves wrenched at the prison of the marble. It was as if the man was trying to create himself, trying to make himself human by freeing himself of the mass of marble.

But there was no head to be seen. It was lost in the block of stone. A mouth unfound, the words, that might have been said, stopped by stone.

Angeline uncurled her bent body, walked up to the unfinished sculpture.

'H...h..he's got no head. He can't speak,' Angeline said.

غريغ بوغارتس

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

DAMIAN BOYLE

Captured at Nowra - 1977

Darkness descends over the river and the Little House. The roos camp for the night, giving tenure of the bush to the possum gliders with their infra-red eyes and to the boo-book owls who keep sentry from their posts along the gravelled road. It's quiet, save for the sound of a motor which carries on the wind. Down river. The wind embraces this noise, foreign so late at night, and whistles it along the tops of trees. An urgent message for someone. A warning. Fly away Jimmy Smith, fly away.

And Jimmy Smith hears the warning, if not the engine. His instincts tell him all is not right so, rather than go to bed, he stays dressed and listens to the night for sounds of intrusion. He also listens to a radio. He lies atop the bed twiddling the dial, with Val beside him and Debbie fast asleep in her room. The house concealed by the night, lights off, Jimmy Smith moves easily from window to window looking for signs of movement. Nothing out there. The pups are snoring in the corner of the lounge-room.

He returns to the radio. Picks up snatches of conversation, the static a meaningless babel to anyone but a wanted man. Yeh, we're in position . . . any sign of . . . the river . . . cars at the intersection . . . dogs . . . await the boats . . . fer chrissakes, don't speak over the radio, go to the phone. Something's afoot and doesn't he know it.

He stays put. No one knows who I am . . . they're not lookin' for me. Until he hears the noise of the motor travelling up-river. He knows the sound of a boat from so many times on the water himself, swimming the horses in the Shoalhaven. Who'd be fool enough to navigate the river by night? With the flood tides still receding and dragging flotsam from the bush.

He slips a gun down the front of his strides just like an old-time gunfighter. This is the business he knows. He calls softly to the pups who waken and bound towards him. Come on boys, he whispers, let's see who's out there. They pad behind, obedient and keen for adventure, their black skins shimmering momentarily from the light inside the car when the door is opened. Jimmy Smith starts the motor and glides down the driveway with the lights off.

Once on the road he flicks on the high beam, hoping to scan not just the gravel road but the adjoining scrub as well. Up ahead, near the bend where Val collects the mail, a diamond flickers briefly in his lights - the glint of a headlamp maybe or a chrome relic on the side of the road. No time for chances. He slows the car and a pair of bright lights come out of nowhere and blind him. Jimmy Smith hits the skids and throws into reverse. He's not waiting to see who's there. Floors the accelerator and speeds backwards towards the house - with a pair of lights in pursuit.

He grinds to a halt just the other side of his driveway and hits the juices again. Tears down the drive to the house, flees the car and races inside. The dogs follow. They're out there, he screams at Val. The bastards are out there. Val doesn't know what to do. There's nothing she can do. Jimmy Smith grabs some cash and takes off across the lawn to where the bush begins; a car pulls up across his driveway. I'm buggered, he thinks, trapped in this rathole where the only escape is the river and the road which already belongs to the coppers. Go for the river. And he

crosses the road just fifty metres down wind of the police car waiting outside his driveway.

The dawn raid.

Jimmy Smith and Val Hill tuned into the police frequency on a Realistic brand radio some time before 4 a.m. on 14 September 1977 and realised a covert police operation was in progress. They weren't sure exactly what it was but Smith wasn't about to sleep with police activity in the area. The radio operator cautioned his troops, 'Don't speak over the radio. Go to the phone'.

Around this time a neighbour, Alan Walker, was awoken by sounds outside his front gate. He was a shift worker, had come home after midnight and gone straight to bed. 'About four hours after I went to bed, I was awoken by vehicles coming down McMahons Rd. They stopped at my gate and I could hear a wireless going.' Mr Walker was curious; two police vehicles had stopped at his gate but drove off towards Smith's house. 'There was no wind that night and the noise carried. The police radio was loud and the officers at the car outside my gate, particularly a woman officer, were talking loudly.'

At that moment police were motoring rapidly along the Shoalhaven River in preparation for a dawn raid on the Little House. They were in two boats. Richard Clever was in the lead boat with another officer from Nowra and four detectives from the New South Wales Crime Squad. The other boat, driven by a Nowra detective, carried a landing party of Sydney detectives. Negotiating the river in darkness was problematic but Clever managed to find the beach selected the afternoon before and land his party. The second boat followed. When detectives landed, the local officers withdrew the boats to positions up and down stream of Smith's house where they were to wait should Smith attempt a crossing of the river.

But Smith was uneasy. Suspicious, he bundled his two black Alsatian pups into one of the cars and drove out to investigate. Alan Walker's property was about two hundred metres from the Little House and Smith had covered less than half that distance when he picked up the police car travelling towards him in the high beam of his Holden sedan.

Meanwhile, the river landing party was in disarray. They had instructions outlining the direction to take. Instead, they were disorientated by darkness and unfamiliar territory. Even before the two boats had motored out of sight, the dogs at the house (the second house on the property) close to their landing beach began barking. The house lights came on and detectives knocked at the door to ask directions. They were either given the wrong directions or failed to heed them because, instead of travelling the steep road which led upwards to Smith's house, they took a left fork and followed the farm track along the river to the Coorong Farm retreat where Mr Churcher, his children and friends were holidaying. It was 'a total cock-up' according to local officers. The river landing party surrounded the wrong house, the one occupied by the holidaying Churchers. They were met by a group of detectives who were supposed to make position behind Smith's house but who'd already passed by it in the night and carried out their raid on Mr Churcher and his family screaming 'Hit the floor' and waving guns everywhere. It fell to Mr Churcher to guide the crime squad to the place from which Jockey Smith had already fled.

When confronted by the police car coming his way Smith slammed the gears into reverse and sped backwards towards home. Police followed and, when Smith jumped from his car, the officers stopped their vehicle across the driveway, effectively blocking escape by road. They radioed for assistance. The raid was on. Smith raced inside screaming, 'They're out there. I'm

going'. And he fled. A pudgy little man in a race for his life.

Hmph, hmph, hmph, hmph . . . he sucks in moisture from the cold night air. It doesn't relieve the burning in his lungs. No time to think about that. Gotta get away. Fly Jimmy . . . and a cooling breeze brings with it the sounds of pursuit. Voices on this side of the road, on the opposite side to the Little House. Voices carrying from the river. Dogs barking. Car engines in the distance and getting closer. A split second to decide on doubling back through the scrubby barrier of blackberry, lantana and blackboy. He crosses the road again, still downwind of the car blocking his driveway but aware this time of voices walking up the steeply graded track which leads down to the river. He knows that whole side of the river is blocked off. So is the road. There are two options - either chance the dangerous descent to the river on his side of the road or keep to the ridge and make his way into town.

Alan Walker was able to follow the ensuing chase by listening to the police radio in the car stationed at his front gate and, as someone who'd spent most of his life in the bush, by reading the signs of flight carried on the night air.

His memory of the incident is still vivid. 'They thought he had gone over to the opposite side of the road and were looking for him there.' This was the southern edge of the river that eventually led down to the place where the boats had landed. 'Apparently, he doubled back, went passed them in the bush and returned to his side of the road.' The police continued their search oblivious to the signs Alan Walker was reading from the bush. 'You could hear where the chase was going by the noises. A neighbour's dogs started barking on the opposite side of the road to the police and I knew he must have been there. Not long after that, the geese from the next property along started to cackle. Then it went quiet just as daylight was coming.' Except for the police who continued to roar up and down the road.

The raid was bungled with most officers hopelessly out of position and completely unfamiliar with local geography. No sooner had patrol cars arrived outside Alan Walker's home than the action started. From his perspective, it was all over within ten minutes and Smith was gone, leaving the police to flounder through the surrounding bushland looking for ghosts.

What happened next highlights the absolute frustration felt by at least one police officer. Police converged on the Little House and took Valerie Hill and her daughter into custody. The place swarmed with detectives toting guns and yelling orders. Hill's daughter began screaming which set the two young black Alsatian pups barking. A detective, Brian Harding, shot one of the dogs, Spider, in the paw in full view of Hill's daughter, claiming the dogs were vicious and about to attack. Incensed, Hill's daughter sprang at Harding, screaming and beating him on the chest with her fist.

Hill and her daughter were ordered to dress and told to wait in a patrol car while the premises were searched. Police hoped to find a cache of weapons and a part or all of the $180,000 stolen during the South Hurstville bank robbery - they figured Smith was the mastermind. The contents of the house were splayed about the lounge-room and piled onto mattresses in the bedrooms. Police were preparing to rip up floorboards when the owner's son arrived and suggested there was plenty of room underneath the house for a thorough inspection. A suitcase containing wigs, masks and other items of disguise; a large, green bag holding a quantity of hand guns including air pistols, automatic pistols, a revolver, a Sten gun, ammunition and several pairs of handcuffs; and a bullet-proof vest were found in and around the house.

Detective Senior Constable Harding retrieved Valerie Hill from the police car, showed her the

weapons and said she would be charged with possession of illegal weapons as the legal tenant of the property. He also told her she would be questioned in relation to the South Hurstville bank robbery. Hill and her daughter were taken to the Nowra Police Station where she was cautioned and further questioned.

As police ransack the Little House, Smith takes to the ridge above the Shoalhaven River. He evades police. He presses on, thick bush whipping arms and legs, and smacking him in the face. He's on a bush track, little used and grown over, littered with fallen eucalyptus leaves and debris from ant-infested branches. The track meanders through the undergrowth around large trees and the blackened butts of huge gums that fell decades earlier when timber was plentiful. Jimmy Smith travels with practised footsteps padding the dirt softly and avoiding the crack of twigs that might telegraph his whereabouts.

His terror is real, his heart thumping while he stops briefly to catch breath and listen for pursuers. The initial run had been frantic. Now, he is able to make a plan of sorts. To work through the bush to Bomaderry where he might lift a car and make good his escape.

He moves on. The way is rough, despite the old track, and he stumbles more than once in the half-light of approaching dawn as the knot of a protruding root or a fallen limb catch his foot and trip him up. For a while, he follows the course of the river but from the safety of the ridge that looks over it. He is thirsty but to move down towards the river is risky; the noise of the motor-boats carries upstream and he knows that way is cut off.

As the sky lightened Mr Walker saw a bevy of police vehicles converge on the Little House, including a large white utility with a cage of iron bars covered by canvass. Members of the Special Weapons Operation Squad (SWOS) arrived. They were dressed in black. 'About forty or fifty cars stopped in the paddock adjoining my house. There were a hundred police, maybe more. They formed a line six to eight feet apart and worked their way through the bush. But they were still looking for him on the wrong side of the road.'

Had the police asked Mr Walker, they might have tracked Smith but they 'never came to my house at all'. He did meet police later that day. On his way to work about 2 p.m. he was stopped at a roadblock on the corner where Coorong Rd meets with McMahons Rd. 'They wanted to know where I'd come from. I was stopped again at the next intersection where McMahons Rd crosses Rockhill Rd. The police were everywhere and they were armed with rifles.'

Police had roadblocks throughout the district and twenty-one local officers had been called in to assist with the search. Many of these officers were amazed at the bungled raid. There is the feeling even today that, had local police been involved from the outset, Smith would have been prevented from escaping into the bush. Local officers felt indignant at having been left out of the planning and execution of the raid; to them, it was a further slight from the Criminal Investigation Branch towards uniformed officers.

During the day, the decision was made to call in helicopters from the HMAS Albatross, the naval aviation base on the outskirts of Nowra. This decision caused some kafuffle; naval policy excluded the use of its equipment to assist civilian authorities in situations where defence forces' personnel could be fired on. Pilots from the 723 Squadron flew two Iroquois helicopters in shifts and airlifted several police officers including Detective Sergeant Ken Webster, from the Armed Hold-up Squad and one of the officers in charge of the operation to capture Smith.

While helicopters scoured the countryside, members of the highway patrol and officers on general duties in marked and unmarked police cars drove the streets of Nowra and Bomaderry.

There were a couple of sightings of Smith during the day but each time he managed to elude his pursuers, including two tracker dogs which failed to pick up his scent.

Local radio station 2ST was alerted early and broadcast bulletins throughout the day warning residents to stay inside, to lock car doors and to keep children away from school. Police feared Smith would take hostages. Reporters and photographers from Sydney invaded Nowra. The Daily Mirror reshuffled its front page; the manhunt was major news, one of the biggest in New South Wales' history. **HUNT FOR PUBLIC ENEMY NO 1** headlined over a photograph of a surly-looking Smith, a photograph taken some years earlier; it was a poor likeness. The story started with a boxed warning to residents of Nowra.

> **URGENT POLICE MESSAGE... URGENT POLICE MESSAGE...**
> **All school children have been instructed to stay away from school and all people in the search area have been told to remain indoors.**

'Residents of a south coast town were warned to lock themselves and their children indoors today as police with shotguns, rifles and teargas try to flush out Australia's most wanted man.

'Police fear the man, Edward James 'Jockey' Smith, 34, might try to grab hostages or shoot his way out of the town of Nowra.'

By mid-morning, news of the manhunt featured in bulletins across the country. Nowra and Jimmy Smith were on the lips of the nation.

Jimmy Smith is running hard again. Crossing open country behind new homes in North Nowra. He's panicky, still hyped from the dash across Illaroo Road where he came out from the bush just as a police car whizzed by. Whose occupants didn't see him plummet groundward and flatten his body like a lizard feigning dead or melting into its surroundings.

It's midday. He's been running for seven hours, is hungry . . . and thirsty. Very thirsty. Water in the Bomaderry Creek . . . far enough ahead to think, for the moment. And he reaches the creek which skirts the back of Bomaderry, the creek running parallel to the Princes Highway, the highway he is certain is swarming with coppers. No point trying to cross the narrow iron bridge into Nowra, the bridge overlooking the Nowra Wharf where the two police boats were launched earlier that morning. No point because it'll be cut off too. The plan, if he had one, is fraying as he nears Bomaderry.

He's not thinking straight anymore. Has some cockeyed notion he'll get help in Bomaderry. Find a phone box and call a friend to come pick him up. Whizz him out of the place before the coppers even know he's there. But it's no plan for a man on the run, no serious plan.

Should've stayed in the bush. At home in the bush. No shortage of water in the bush. Might go a little hungry for a couple of days but what's that compared to capture? If he could stop long enough to make a decent plan he might think to head north, through the bush, towards Kangaroo Valley where friends'll help him out. The longer he stays in the bush the harder it will be for police to find him. He's not thinking straight at all. He's not thinking that twenty-four hours after the chase begins, police will scale down their effort if they haven't caught him by then.

It's a mistake to head for Bomaderry but he doesn't seem to know it. He crosses the creek where the water is shallow. He is tired and hungry and scared of what will happen to him if

captured. He doesn't want to be captured. He doesn't want to die. To die, to die. And he realises why he is heading to Bomaderry . . . and not deeper into the bush. He doesn't want to die. He knows, he believes, he will be shot on sight if he happens across police anywhere away from public eyes. He's heading to Bomaderry because he knows he can't escape this time and he's trying to position himself somewhere with lots of people.

Once across the creek Smith comes up hard against the Princes Highway.

At the Princes Highway, he was exposed to police patrolling the area. Local resident, Dianne Studdert, was waiting outside a veterinary surgery on the highway while her son, Mark, had gone inside to collect a bird. Her two-year-old son, John, was in the back seat of her car. 'Jockey came up to the car, opened the passenger door and asked me if I could give him a lift to Nowra. He had notes in his hand, rolled up as a wad and offered me the money. I said, "No, I'm not going to town". He hesitated and then closed the door.' Mrs Studdert was unaware the man who had just asked for a lift was Smith but, in the meantime, the vet had phoned police.

Mrs Studdert is philosophical about her meeting with the man painted as notorious and dangerous, Australia's most wanted man. 'I don't believe he was as bad as they made out. He would have had no better hostage than me and a two-year-old if he had wanted to get away. Yet, when I told him I couldn't help him, he just closed the door and went away. The police frightened me more than Jockey Smith because they weren't dressed in uniforms and one of them came up to my car with a gun out. I believe, had they caught him in the bush, they would have shot him.'

Shortly after Mrs Studdert refused to help, Smith entered the Bomaderry Tourist Information Centre across the highway. He was exposed now. It was mid-afternoon and Chris Beverly, the manager, was on duty. 'A man came into the tourist centre and stood at the brochure rack reading leaflets. It was just as the primary school across the highway was finishing for the day. Helicopters were flying overhead and a news' bulletin announced his whereabouts. We always had the radio on in the centre and never really took much notice of it. It was just a background noise. When the man heard the radio he bolted. We didn't really know it was him until then. We rang the council switchboard and asked them to inform the police. They arrived in minutes.'

Smith was desperate, sensing imminent capture. He was in open territory and the options were diminishing with each passing minute. He ran from the tourist centre, sprinted across Bunberra St. to the ambulance station, stole a bicycle from the attached residence and pedalled for his life down Bunberra St. Charlie Francis, who worked at the ambulance station, takes up the story.

'I was good friends with Superintendent Tony Heslin who was in charge of the ambulance station and lived next door. The bicycle Jockey stole belonged to Tony's son, Brendan. I lived further down Bunberra St. and was sitting in the lounge with my two daughters and son when my wife, Wendy, returned home from town and came inside with an armful of parcels. She'd only just got inside when the kids yelled out that a bloke had ridden into our carport on a pushbike and was looking inside Wendy's car. He must have seen her pull up and was checking to see if she left the keys in the ignition.

The son, Garry, looked out the window and said, "Hey dad, that bloke's got Brendan's bike". Jockey hopped on the bike and rode towards the Bomaderry shops. The youngest daughter, Leanne, yelled out after him, "Hey you, bring that bike back". She was only five.'

Charlie and his son, Garry, flew to the car intent on following Smith as he pedalled down Bunberra St. They lost sight of him after he turned into Tallyang St., a dead-end and only a few

streets from the Bomaderry shops. 'I continued slowly down the road and passed a police car heading in the opposite direction. At that stage, I didn't know it was Smith. We finished up in Karowa St. and came in behind him.' Smith was dressed in blue jeans and a blue denim jacket and, as Charlie and Garry Francis drew closer, Smith's coat flapped back and the pair noticed a revolver in his belt. 'I told my son to say nothing because this was the bloke the police were looking for. We passed him, saw him turn into Coomea St. and into the back of the Bomaderry Hotel.'

Charlie Francis took off after the police car he'd passed moments earlier. 'I had the lights flashing and the horn blaring before I could get their attention. Finally, the police car stopped and I said, "Are you looking for a fellow in jeans, denim jacket, dark hair and beard?" and told them he'd parked his bike at the back of the hotel and gone through to the main street. They radioed for help and we returned home.'

Back home, Wendy Francis phoned the Heslins to see if Brendan knew his bike was missing. He answered the phone and was speaking with Wendy when a man appeared at the sliding doors of the residence. The man had a gun. Brendan Heslin relayed this to Wendy Francis who told him to hang up so she could phone the station to organise some help for the young lad. But, there was no need; the man disappeared as quickly as he came and was, in fact, a detective in pursuit of Smith.

Who arrested Jockey Smith?

The official police version of events and the one subsequently tendered in court goes like this. It is supported by headlines like: *How I Stopped 'Jockey' Shooting - Detective tells of struggle and 'Battle for life' in a phone box.*

Shortly before Smith pulled up at the phone box outside the Bomaderry Post Office, a squad of Sydney detectives drove into town acting on radio information that the suspect had been sighted there. Detective Senior Constable Gary Beaumont from the Observation Squad drove the unmarked police car. According to testimony given under oath at the subsequent committal hearing, trial and appeal, these detectives saw Smith riding his bike along the footpath at the Bomaderry shops before stopping near the post office. Beaumont executed a U-turn, drove back to the shops and double-parked his car outside the phone box. With him were Detective Senior Constable Robert Godden and Detective Sergeant Dennis Gilligan, both from the armed hold-up squad, and Detective Senior Constable Ivan Lloyd, also a member of the Observation Squad. All were attached to the Criminal Investigation Bureau in Sydney. Detective Godden was the first to leave the vehicle. It was 4.15 p.m. The four officers approached the phone box, service revolvers still in their shoulder holsters.

Bob Godden takes up the story. 'I approached the phone booth and saw Smith standing there with the phone in his right hand. Smith said, "This phone doesn't work also". I said, "We are the police, what is your name?" He said, "Mike Daniels, what do you want to know for?" I said, "You fit the description of a man we are looking for. Have you any identification?" He said, "My father works in the post office there, go and see him". I said, "You are Jockey Smith".

Detective Gilligan and I went to take hold of Smith but he brought up a fully loaded .38 Smith & Wesson revolver and thrust the barrel into the right side of my stomach. As he did this he said, "Fuck you two, back off or you're gone". I immediately pushed down on the revolver with both hands and Smith tried to fire but he was unable to do so due to my left thumb jamming the firing

hammer. I shouted, "Look out, he's got a gun".

I shouted at him, "Jockey, cut it, or you'll be shot". He hesitated for a moment and I managed to wrestle the gun from him. With the aid of Detective Gilligan, I managed to place my handcuffs on him. We forced him from the phone box and wrestled him to the footpath outside the phone box, searched him and found a .25 calibre automatic pistol, a quantity of money and a bag.

Smith continued to struggle and he yelled out, "Fucking dogs, fucking cunts". A short time later a police vehicle arrived. Smith, still struggling, was placed in the vehicle and shouted out, "You fucking cunts, I'll shoot the lot of you, you're nothing but dogs".'

Within minutes of the arrest, police vehicles converged from all directions and pulled up outside the Bomaderry shops. Smith was taken to Nowra Police Station.

The arrest was the finale of an operation begun more than twenty-four hours earlier. Detective Gilligan had been on duty more than twelve hours when Smith was arrested. He'd been called into the Kogarah Police Station for a conference around 3.30 a.m. With Detective Sergeant Roger Rogerson and other police he had raided the Canterbury home of Neil Collings at 5 a.m. and found a black attache case containing 'a large amount of money'. The exact amount was not disclosed. From there, he returned to the armed hold-up squad office before leaving Sydney around 7.30 a.m. and driving to Nowra.

Detective Godden was fortunate when Smith threatened to shoot him. Grabbing the gun with both hands was a split second thing; the gun could have discharged even as his hand made contact. But the webbing between his thumb and forefinger managed to connect with the back of the hammer before Smith could pull on the trigger and fire.

While Detective Godden did go into a nearby shop and ask for a plaster strip to cover wounds to his hands, there was little contact between any investigating police officers and the public at that time. Two witnesses were interviewed on the day but neither made written statements at the time. Several locals witnessed fragments of the arrest but it was not until about ten weeks later, and after the committal hearing had already commenced, that CIB detectives advertised in the local media for witnesses to the arrest.

The Shoalhaven & Nowra News published the following article on the front page of its 30 November 1977 issue under the headline *Smith inquiries continue*. 'Police are anxious to interview anyone who saw the recent arrest of Pentridge Gaol escapee, Edward James 'Jockey' Smith, at the Bomaderry shopping centre. Smith, 34, Australia's most wanted man . . .' A similar article made the front page of the South Coast Register on the same day.

Exactly why police failed to take statements on the day of the arrest remains a mystery. Certainly, there was no shortage of officers to interview the many spectators caught in the action at the Bomaderry shops. It's conceivable there was no clear leader at the scene, no officer-in-charge, and that the order to interview witnesses was not given. But the four detectives who claimed the arrest were experienced officers used to operating according to procedure. Perhaps they were overcome by the nature of the arrest. Perhaps, in the pandemonium which followed, they simply forgot to take statements. Perhaps they realised they needed witnesses' statements once the case got to court and their version of events had all the hallmarks of collusion.

Several witnesses came forward following the articles in local newspapers.

Local school boys, Graeme Henry and Jeff Willsher, saw two men get out of a car and run to the phone booth. Both noticed a gun raised in the air but their recollections were 'hazy'; they

might have mistaken the telephone handpiece for a gun because subsequent newspaper reports said Smith was threatening with a gun in the phone box. Smith was pulled outside and the boys saw a gun fall to the pavement. It was kicked into the gutter by another person. They were both aware of a second gun, indicating they had seen a larger hand gun and smaller, silver pistol, but were unable to say where either gun had come from.

Willsher's memory of events seemed to be more detailed. He recalled the officer who kicked the gun into the gutter was in uniform. He recalled Smith being searched and some money found. There was another uniformed officer 'just around the other side telling everybody to get back into their shops and to move away'. This officer was armed and, as more police arrived, further detectives arrived 'with big rifles'.

The lapse in time between the event and the taking of statements meant the boys had time to compare stories and to hear, and perhaps accept as their own, the recollections of others. They also had time to digest copious newspaper reports and media coverage.

George Madge was standing at the door to his shop. He saw three people struggling in the phone booth; they were shortly joined by two others. Smith was dragged out and, once on the footpath, a gun fell to the ground. Mr Madge believed this gun fell from Smith's hand and was kicked away by one of the men he assumed was a detective. At first Mr Madge thought it 'was two men fighting, although I did know the hunt was on in the area'.

Bob Brooker was in the post office serving a customer when he noticed a man ride a push bike along the street, lean it against the front of the post office and go into one of the phone booths directly outside his front window. 'While I was watching him, a car drove past, stopped and reversed back. Two men got out and one opened the door of the phone box and spoke to the man in the phone box. I could hear one man speak, I could hear voices, and one man tend to say, "Edward Smith, I place you under arrest" or words to that effect. He (Smith) replied, "I'll fucking shoot you". A struggle took place with the two men in the phone box.' Two more men went to the phone box while a uniformed police officer sang out, 'Get down behind the counter. Get inside and shut the door'. Like other witnesses, Mr Brooker was not asked to make a statement on the day or soon after. More than two months elapsed before police questioned him and, when they did, he was asked to identify both Smith and the guns he allegedly had in his possession from photographs. He did not see a gun in Smith's hand and, like other civilian witnesses, did not testify that Smith had a gun pointed in Detective Godden's stomach and was trying to fire it.

Harold Hessenberger was a Private Inquiry Agent. He was sitting in his car at the back of the Bomaderry Hotel, having a quiet beer, when he noticed Smith pull in. 'He was pushing a bike and had some sort of bag. He leant the bike against the pub wall and I noticed a few marks on the side of his face. He looked at me and at the car. He looked at the aerial and picked the push bike up and walked away. I seen the police patrol, the Charger, coming around the corner.'

At this point, the police officer driving the Charger left his car and spoke to Hessenberger who followed the police car into Meroo St. By the time he arrived there, the police officer was standing in the middle of the road in front of the telephone booth, waving his service revolver and telling everyone to lay down. Hessenberger spoke with the officer again and ran across to the phone booth and saw two men wrestling with a third man on the ground outside the booth. 'I seen one police officer get hold of Jockey Smith's hand and belt it against the footpath. The revolver sort of skidded out of his hand. I kicked the revolver out of the road with my foot, just

away, towards the gutter. I got hold of Smith's leg and held on to it. By that time, one of the local policemen got there and then took hold of his other leg and the two detectives, the one with the bullet proof vest on, had hold of one of his arms and he just sort of held him there or tried to hold him there. Before that, we rolled him over.' A policeman searched Smith and produced another gun, like 'a starting pistol', from Smith's back pocket.

According to Hessenberger one of the officers asked, 'Are you Jockey Smith' and Smith replied, 'I'm not saying anything'. Smith was swearing and, when the van arrived, Hessenberger helped police officers put Smith in the back. He identified the local police officer who came in towards the end of the fracas as Mark Powderly, now a sergeant with Police Rescue in Sydney.

Jimmy Smith was convicted on the charge of *maliciously attempting to discharge a loaded firearm with intent to do grievous bodily harm*. He was sentenced to fourteen years jail. There is no doubt he was convicted on the strength of the detectives' evidence who offered identical testimony claiming Smith had tried to shoot Detective Godden. And, he didn't help himself by refusing to cooperate with his barrister, Mr Wynyard, when asked to provide a detailed account of his version of events.

Did the four detectives arrest Jockey Smith?

Today, many uniformed officers stationed at Nowra in September 1977 say the arrest was made by uniformed officers and the four detectives came along after Smith was subdued. Officer Lunney, now a sergeant at Chatswood Police Station on the northern side of Sydney, was on highway patrol and recalled seeing Smith in the phone box. 'I was two metres away and told people in the shops to get inside.' Many of his fellow officers at the time felt it was Peter Lunney who had taken hold of Jimmy Smith in the phone box and disarmed him. But Lunney was vigorous in his denial of any involvement in the arrest.

Fellow officer, Bruce Jackson, now a sergeant and commander at Tenterfield Police Station, claims the four Sydney detectives played no part in the initial stages at the phone booth. He arrived on the scene with Peter Lunney and ordered people on the street to take refuge inside shops. 'Smith did have the gun in his hand but he never had the chance to point it at anyone because he was set upon immediately. It was a grab him type situation. The other guy beat Peter and I to the phone box; we were second and third going in.' That other guy might have been Harold Hessenberger who now says he was the first to the phone box and was talking to Smith when police came along.

According to Bruce Jackson police commendations were likely. 'We sent off reports and later got a phone call from one of the guys in the Armed Hold-up Squad. It was a threatening call. What we had to say was at odds with their story and we were told, "If you persist, we'll make you out to be liars in the witness box."'

Alec Field was employed by News Limited as bureau chief for the *Daily Telegraph* at that time and based in Nowra. He lived a kilometre from the Bomaderry Post Office.

With Sydney reporter, Bill Jenkings, he headed to McMahons Rd. where the search was in full swing. A call came over the radio about 4 p.m. announcing the sighting of Smith in Bomaderry. Police and media formed a cavalcade down McMahons Rd. Alec Field and Jenkings left the convoy as it hit Bomaderry because Field, being a local, knew a quicker way to the shops. 'We got to the post office as Smith and the police officer were struggling outside the phone box. He was arrested by a highway patrol officer in uniform. The cavalcade arrived thirty to forty

seconds later. I can recall seeing a weapon but there were people crowded around. It was like something out of Hollywood, sirens blaring, red lights flashing.'

Whatever happened at the Bomaderry phone box that day not one civilian witness testified to seeing Smith point a gun at Detective Godden. In fact, that version of events is supported only by the four detectives themselves whose stories are the same and told almost word for word.

The celebrations began soon after Smith was locked away at Nowra. The boys from Sydney town took to the local pubs. It was a major arrest, the talk of the town. Someone forgot to tell Richard Clever and the men on the boat patrols who were still anchored on the Shoalhaven River. They had been directed to wait there until further notice and wait they did until Fred Waldren did a check on the whereabouts of his men. As it was, Officer Clever still had to front up for night shift at 11 p.m. and guard Smith until seven the next morning. According to police on duty that night, Smith was like a caged and frenzied animal, spitting and swearing at those who took turns to sit in the cold and exposed exercise yard while keeping an eye on his cell door.

Constable Reg Norwood, now a sergeant and still stationed at Nowra, accepted the charges and also guarded Smith that night. Smith was charged with the attempted murder of Constable Ambrose and firing his weapon while fleeing, armed robbery of the CBA Bank in South Hurstville, possession of gelignite, possession of various weapons including a sub-machine gun, assault on four officers at the Bomaderry phone booth, attempting to shoot officer Godden and attempted bribery. Detective Brian Harding alleged Smith had offered him $2000 during an interview with 'plenty more to come' if he'd allow him to escape. Reg Norwood counted the money Smith had on him; it was $1700 in notes. The allegation that Smith had made an attempt to bribe his way out of jail made spectacular headlines, especially in the tabloid newspapers. The Daily Mirror in its final issue the day following Smith's arrest made every attempt to gain mileage out of the alleged bribe with the headline: **$2000 TO LET ME GO!** underneath a smaller heading: *Jockey tries to bribe police*.

Following his involvement in the arrest of James Edward Smith, Detective Godden was awarded a commendation for 'Good Policemanship, Excellent Teamwork and Devotion to Duty'. He has been involved in several notable police inquiries including the Granville Rail Disaster in 1977 and headed up the investigation into the NSW Backpacker Murders which eventually saw the arrest and conviction of Ivan Milat. Dennis Gilligan rose to the rank of Assistant Commissioner in the NSW Police Force and retired from active duty on 31 March 1997. Gary Beaumont is still a serving officer stationed at Northern Rivers District on the NSW far north coast while Ivan Lloyd left the service on 23 April 1981.

داميان بويل

Damian Boyle is a journalist and teacher living in Geelong, Victoria, Australia. He was editor and publisher of *Gathering Forces*, a literary journal. His first short story was published in *Kalimat* 5. He is an adviser to *Kalimat*.

The above chapter is from an unpublished non-fiction manuscript. It is from the story of notorious (media and police description) criminal, James Edward "Jockey" Smith who was shot dead by police at Creswick in 1992.

NEVILLE ANDERSEN

Three Poems

Cyclamen

Each day you greet me.
You stand on the kitchen window sill aflame,
translucent in the sun, blood red;
where petals rest upon each other, shade darkens
as if their life fluid clots.
You have bloomed and bloomed for months,
is there no end to your display?
You entice like a woman's lips, waiting.
I sit, eat, read, write - you are still there,
splashed bright on dark leaves.
Still life, still living.

Today I wait,
surrounded by rising and falling voices of the queue;
my gaze lingers on you again.
You are not here, but I see your lips
calling me home.

Dreams of an Urbanized Man

I must leave, go up to the mountains,
look down the valleys as they flood with darkness.
The cold will seep through my blankets
while I lie by the embers of a dying fire
but I will be content.
I will see through the depths of the universe
with the clear sharpness of a god
as the haze of my city's night falls away.

Bird songs will bring me back to day.
I shall journey on over the mountains,

through rolling grain fields to the grazing country,
find a stream and a clump of eucalypts, there make my camp.
I shall write and sing songs to a lonely land.

In the morning, feeding kangaroos will pause,
will wonder why I have come to take their shade.
As the day grows old, I shall write and sing songs
in praise of aloneness.

To the City

Our train arrives.
People crowd doorways,
jostle to enter,
stand bunched together
in unwanted intimacy.
the air punctured
by coughs and sneezes.

Arriving, we press to exit,
stumble like cattle,
seek steps, escalators,
ticket barriers,
spill out to jammed streets.

I try to set my own pace,
am swamped on the pavement.
People hem me in,
come from all directions
faster, slower.
Unexpectedly
a mother pushes her pram
across my path.
Breathless,
I swim against the current.

نيفِل أندِرْسُن

Dr. Neville Andersen began writing poetry after his retirement from medical practice. He published a small selection *The Crow's Threefold Amen* in 1998.

JOHN L. SHEPPARD

Three Poems

The Fall

A wall of mist barred her way,
seeming solid as brick.
Her eyes lost focus, staring unseeing
as if sleepwalking, unknowing.

She walked into the cloud,
found only damp, stretched her hand,
touched vapour and nothing,
stepped out the other side.

She was standing above a huge precipice,
twenty-foot waterfall, over which she leapt,
plunged feet-first into the pool,
plummetted to depths she'd never seen.

Her empty mind now was filled. She knew.
Rose to the surface, arms raised.

Firezone

Doors tight to keep in heat, we share
our memories at the fire, add logs
as each story needs more body-warmth.
We listen as if these tales were never heard before.

Sparks shoot up the chimney, specks crackle to the floor.
Animated and expressive as an action movie,
our faces coals on the fire itself, our blaze leaps,
touches us with a heat that sears.

Later the flames lick laggardly
at the cut timber in the grate
as we speak friend to friend
of burnt-out love and scorching embers,

slide deeper into our chairs, watch the night close,
fire die, time consume. All that remains is ash.

Alpha and Omega

I walk on frosted air,
breathe a cloud on the window pane,
step carefully, conscious not to disturb
the shuttered rooms atmosphere,

absorb the soft and vulnerable inner shell,
but hope that soon
someone will come to open
all those windows,

let in the freshness of the souls outside,
who can seep into the soul inside,
turn the inside out and the outside in,
make reversals of reality,

upset the downhill torrent
where the mud sticks.

جون شرد

Dr. John L. Sheppard is a retired Associate Professor of Psychology, active in poetry groups.

MARGARET BRADSTOCK

Three Poems

Heading North

Heading north, ever north,
shedding the cities for the great forests
driving by the old highway
you leave upland farms, country townships,
the past flagging you down.

At truck-stops the forests dwarf you,
rising against the sky
like primordial cycads
as you splash through mountain streams
where the sun sets early

or never penetrates.
Sometimes you follow the railway track
with its glimpses of timber towns,
half-sawn tree-trunks, abandoned machinery,
lighted windows after dark,

in the wake of the train whistle
a curlew's plaintive cry.
Sometimes you camp in rainforest clearings
beyond winding roads and paddocks,
gates shuttered by brambles,

listening to the sound of the forests,
ritual flight of cockatoos at morning,
the pistol-whip of birdsong.
Homeless everywhere,
you are at home here.

Millennium Sundial

Descending Basser steps
riding the dip and swell of the noonday exodus
sucked into the still space,
today I'm dividing past from present
like the bronze gnomon, crane-lifted
to the South Tower wall,
time's shadow on the dial face.

I think about all the clocks, watches
and sundials I've known:
the clock-tower in Brisighella,
my water-resistant watch
that can't be opened to change the batteries,
the part-time alcoholic friend
who made his own sundials.

Vertical or horizontal,
whichever way you look at it
time's not on our side.

Spaced out

No shy traffickers
these lotus-eaters
pour into Byron for New Year's
festival, camp on beaches
and side-walks, accessorised
by Barbeques Galore. It's hard to see
how they're getting away from it all.
They're bringing it all with them.
The Hare Krishna float's
on the prowl, a juggernaut,

and market-stalls spring up
like magic mushrooms,
practising shamans, snake-spirit men,
the more-Buddhist-than-thou
keen to make a crust.
Masters of fire ceremonies
are drumming on pavements,
twirling fire-sticks, swallowing flames,
but never, say the locals,
their dole-supported pride.

You negotiate all this
with a long white curtain rod
like a blind woman's cane
or a divining fork
(this year tenants have destroyed
the vertical blinds, it's curtains all round).
Soon street-parades, a flurry of
fireworks at midnight,
clink of broken bottles
act like an analgesic, jump you

like a dead battery.
Dawn will break, as it always does,
grey with old-year regrets,
to the neighbourhood sound of skateboards
and early morning mobile phones.
Outside your window, the parrot
who thinks he owns the tree
harangues the wattle-birds,
squatters or illegals there,
incessantly.

مارغريت برادستوك

Dr. Margaret Bradstock is an Australian academic, writer and poet. She lives in Sydney. Her latest collection of poetry is *The Pomelo Tree*, Ginninderra Press 2001.

LOUISE WAKELING

Two Poems

breakdown

she stays in bed
hugs the coastline's vague promise
scans the reef for a passage
into open sea

my father treads the deck
between sofa and t.v.
outside the murderous workmen
are at bay
one by one their shadow-puppets
lurch backwards on the blinds

I want to tether this wanderer
to dry land fend off the darkness
she is roped to
you're a good girl she says
her words are bodies
dragged underwater

balancing a tray
on bony knees
she is a Pears cherub
tapping a soft-boiled egg
her eyes round
like a watching dog

but I know she'll ride the tide
out again when I've closed the door
and gone circumnavigate these rooms
in a lithium haze
lashed to the wheel

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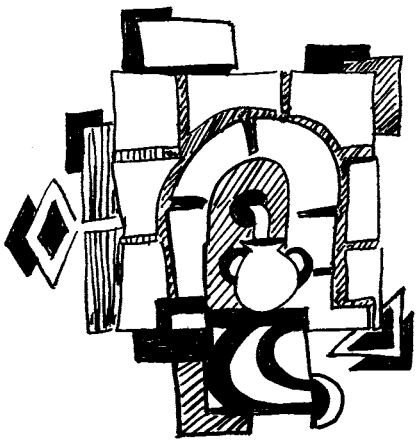
and for all her ears are stuffed
with wax against voices
soaring in the wind
she still hears them

her feet drag anchor
across the grubby lino
and on the kitchen table
the pill-bottles attend
like a naval salute
she fumbles at their caps

voices lash like wind
in torn rigging



the not-Donald Bradman[1] Poem

if I write about Sir Donald Bradman
have I constructed or am I in the process
of constructing or intending to construct
have I read or am I in the process
of reading or intending to read
a poem in New South Wales at Mascot
or Glebe or West Ryde or Bellevue Hill
and will I be using his name in vain?
can his name be protected like a forest
or a Wollomi pine
or a green and gold frog
our hero icon idol
saint in the absence of saints?
will he suffer and continue to suffer
loss and damage from the exploitation
of his name? can poets be accused
of exploitation?
do poets make money?
is a poem loss or damage?
or is it just not cricket?

لويز ويكلينغ

Dr. Louise Wakeling is an academic, fiction writer, biographer and poet from Sydney, Australia.

[1] In 2000 Sir Donald Bradman submitted an application to prevent a number of New South Wales companies from using the Bradman name. The sportsman has been described by the Bradman Museum, Bowral, as a hero and icon of the Australian public, and a person whom 'men and women aspire to be in their personal and sporting pursuits',

THOMAS SHAPCOTT

Balkan Poems

Wine at Lake Ohrid

Across the lake last night the thunder rumbled
testing the water like a drummer's fingernails
and feeling the echo vibrate right up to the hills --
what was the old message? The god who must have humbled
the likes of us with any amount of storm has ambled
off to the winefields where this morning he distills
like a poet himself the earth and the grape and the spoils
of patience to concoct a wine that now waits to be sampled.

Spirits of wine and agriculture need one further
component to make the god feel satisfied --
our tongue, our taste and the singular unalloyed
capacity for thirst that is mark of man. What other
creature did the gods have in mind when wine was planned?
We feel like gods ourselves, with a glass of wine in the hand.

Chekhov in Montenegro

The language is Serbian but the performance is theatre
in the open air. I understand nothing but I see
everything and I hear Chekhov's Ivanov must be
coiled in the tripwires of family and custom. No matter
what language, idiom's the same once you enter
the otherworld of performance. Conflict, degree
of tight pressure, degree of wit that can only set free
more anguish... amazing how few words you need to get there.

This performance, under the olive trees and the night sky
was clearly designed for the climax of the Second Act:

instead of the offstage fireworks display, in fact
we are given the real thing. Rockets fly
and crumble above us. What were the words again?
A card game, dull neighbours, desperation. The gun.

The Singer in the Church, Budva

Third Sunday in August,
time of the grape blessing.
Yesterday women and men
prepared the baskets:
dark grapes, plumping,
symbols of the crop.
This morning at the church
with its earthquake scars
and the partly restored frescoes
after the sacrament the priest presides
blessing of the grapes.
The faithful kneel
to receive a small bunch
wreathed in leaves. All this while
alongside him the singer
repeats and repeats her psalm
in an old voice strident
with its own purity.

What is she singing, I ask?
'This is a hymn against smoking
and tobacco. God will lead you away.'
Her old husband picks up
their belongings, there is another church.
'The chant is an old song
peculiar to this area'
my guide tells me. Outside
the Verger chases Gypsy children
squatting by the door
with its gold mosaic.
'The words are not her own,
the old woman has told me
they are from God.'
We munch plump sanctified grapes.

The Gypsies are already back.

توماس شابكوت

Thomas Shapcott is Professor of Creative Writing at Adelaide University, Australia.

HIKMAT ATTILI

Translated by Noel Abdulahad

The Lad and the Sea

No, O sea...
I didn't abandon you,
only the winds blew against the direction of my boat.
Your desolate clamouring winds aggrieved me
and brought bitterness to my throat.
Gale winds stirred worries in my heart...

Oftentimes, the mirage of the lighthouse dazzled my eyes
that I lost my way to your shore
Pursuing my goal,
I drew close to you
but yet not reaching your shore...
Would that I didn't pledge set sailing
nor abode by, to ceaseless fares

O sea...here I am again:
a roving and a lover-lad
have you heard me calling?
Listen well, even for a moment
perhaps you'd pity my state
and set me free.

It's just the same to me
whether your winds persist in shrieking
or your boisterous waves deafen me...
it's equal to me, as well
whether you ignore me
or wear your loving smile, saying:
'welcome back, dear friend...'

O sea of my longings and aspirations...
your love, yet fresh and kind

your firmament, stretched flat,
is my playful ground
I am that ever loving child
coming to you dreaming, night after night
to enjoy your cherished smile
and adore your tender care
no matter how I age?

When playing together
you joyfully approve my naughtiness
but when your turbulent waves rise
I stay quiet and silent
caress you with the sympathy of a grandchild
to his old grandfather

Not complying: the sea receded from its bank
resorted to silence
lost in thought
and wept silently...

I stayed in awe, dumbfounded.

حكمت العتيلي

Hikmat Attili is a poet, translator and publisher. He lives in USA. The original Arabic of the above poem *Assabi wal Bahr* was published in *Kalimat 8.*

نويل عبد الأحد

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

NOURI AL-JARRAH
Translated by Noel Abdulahad

The Token of Ascent

You are my sister[1]
your body, where I nestle, is my brother.
Your voice: granules of light ingrained in brownness.
Your stately form: a glowing flame of the harvest.
The wild torrent of your hair: a thicket of virginity.
Let us roam the city with our offering.

You are a sky of dazzling colours
I, an opaque heavy metal.
When silence reigns, the night takes you as its mantle
and wanders inflamed by your love.
The doors of the chambers are flung wide-open
abducting you ahead of the mirrors
that crave to be mirrored
by the flowing beauty of your charms.
A star slipping along the hands
compels even the timber to suffer and sigh.

Come on...
step into this forest of darkness
so that I become its granules of light.

I carve your breasts with a chisel.
And close my eyes and carve in,
plunging myself into a trance
to see a real angel roaming with a cherry
portraying the splendour of the night.

[1] The poet employed in this poem the endearment term employed by poets and poetesses of ancient Egypt (1550-1080 B.C.) in their love lyrics: in which the words "brother" and "sister" imply no blood relationship (*The Translator*).

Kalimat 9

Sliding into the cup, I drink and drink up
until my thirst is quenched.
Your dazzling beauty keeps my eyes sleepless,
but I drift to drowsiness.

You are my wide desert.
You are a sporting child, and
your body that I carried at the foot of the mountain
is my child.

You are my fib!

With muddy boots I ascend the marble, laden with laurel and
wave my hand to a sleeping maid.

On high shadows of lying maids stretch
I ascend to where the air neighs and splits the apple of the night
with its furious blows.

With the two palms of my hands I offer the glistening water
to the fairest of all maids sleeping beside her sleeping mates.

At midday, you are the wound of time: a woman reclining at noon.
Tracing you down in its ascent, the eye wanders east, west and high
and catches a unique colour -
my eyes discover you.

When you tread on my doorstep,
the wheat flutter and grieve.

You are my fathomless desert...
your fleeing mouth: a mirage in a cup.

نوري الجرّاح

Nouri al-Jarrah is a Syrian writer, poet and publisher. He lives in UAE. The above poem was published in *Kalimat 8*.

GHALIA KHOUJA
Translated by Raghid Nahhas

A Reading in a Hurricane

1

My secret
re

fra

cts

a light
that awakens me.

You are as far away as the salty clouds...
betraying the virtue of my text in your exiled planet.
Often has the lightening beckoned me onto you
despite your suspicion persisted in staining me
allowing your neighing to read in the hurricane
but denying it reading me.

2

Topless trees migrate...
The fruits of the first years are impure.
A woman, in the sludge of a nightmare,
before her engagement to the river,
imparts to her charm the first ember,
imparts the wonder of her redness
to a possessed god.

3

Between the blaze of water
and the screeching of the fire
I release my colour
the puzzlement of my absence is
a burning ambiguity
a loss of inspiration
and a fear of the swelling sea...
The puzzlement of my absence is the echo
of the hellish dreams,
a union made violet
by poetry
Are we to become the sorrow of the resurrected light
when settling beyond these meanings?

4

Who will wash the night of fire with my colour
when its dawn peeps out wet with my resounding
and flutters in my language with the chirping of fire?
Who will run with the whiteness
between the path of the grass and the prayer of the wind
and ignites his turmoil with the scent of myth?
Inventing me with his folly...
I, with the neighing of his space
and my horses
will open wide the song of the trees
and with a thundering lantern
we seek freedom
in my homeland...

The Clouds of the Senses

And I start
from a point
unseen
and blow away
off me and from a froth
in the mist of darkness
a face...
I call it a last text
to my soul...
and my conquest to you
Have you then conceived
the clouds
of my senses?

I am now
on a roaming planet
and the book is air
So take me...
the dream is water
and water
is poetry,
after the gasping of song...

غالية خوجة

Ghalia Khoja is a Syrian writer from Aleppo. She writes poetry, prose, fiction and critical reviews. She won several prizes for her work, from Syria and other countries. The above poems are from her collection *Nushorul Azraq* (The Resurrection of the Blue), Dar al-Marsat, Latakia, Syria 1998.

HAYAT J. MOHAMMED
Translated by the author

A Baghdadi Love Song

'I will wait for the bus
bringing you to me,
dewier than a butterfly.'

Sunday, third of February,
a sunny winter day,
the bus takes her to him, at three o'clock.
First steps on an unknown road.
A love flower on her lips,
Flowers in her thirsty heart,
and elated visions in her eyes,
rocking the longings of her nights.

Her lover waits at *Bab al-Sharqi*
he is the warmth of the laughing *South*.
His eyes are the invitation of the *Shatt*,
the talk of its joyful nights.
She flies to him,
dewier than a butterfly.
The world is a burning love poem.

Her hand is in his hand,
and *Nuwasi of Basra*[1] is in Baghdad,
embraces *Dijlah*[2],
invites all lovers of the age.

O'*Dijlah*, you are the memory treasuring epochs
of enduring poetry and love tales

[1] A poet of the Abbasid age.
[2] The main river in Baghdad.

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Her hand is in his hand,
the trembling of the hands is a love talk,
silencing all languages of the world.

O' her hand...
a confession that her lips do not utter,
a nectar dripping from a flower,
carried by snowy winds
from the magic peaks of poetry.

O' his hand, snow is burning,
igniting the heart with love poems
not yet written.

Her hand is in his hand,
the warmth is a song echoing
a rainbow in her eyes.

O' his hand, a cup willing to glow
O' her hand, a lip thirsty to meet it

Her hand is in his hand,
a butterfly of dreams, throbbing for light
and burning as it embraces it.
The light burns, dreams of the light burn too.
The Universe is a white flame,
the world begins!

O' pain of memory in her ribs,
O' sleeplessness that the eyes love and dwells in the heart,
the present is a delusion, and so is the future,
but you, alone, are the reality of her existence!

حياة جاسم محمد

Dr. Hayat J. Mohammed is an academic, translator, writer and poet who currently lives in USA. She is the author and translator of several books. The above poem is from her collection *Kharij al-Itar Dakhil al-Lawhah* (Outside the Frame, Inside the Painting), *al-Mawjah Publications*, Rabat, Morocco 2000.

AKL AL-AWEET
Translated by Raghid Nahhas

The Room

The room is the book of the body.
Its bricks are the soul-mates and the diary of a woman
its page is a beginning and its day is fashioned by a window
ex-angels play music
a creature converses with its life on the walls,
retires to his clothes and does not sleep.

There is nothing here but a place.

A home for the offering and the pain of the priest
an isolation craving the night to last
its light wears quivers
its darkness is a glow of desire
its silence is constricted looks
its hymns are the praise of the flight to the self
a eulogy for solitude and fear
a goblet for rest and a plague for contemplation.

No visitors.
A delusion of friends and life.

Here, time does not take its course
a river glows among thoughts
a tear waters the balcony and the rose beds
and a mirror recovers from its pain.

The place talks to itself
a room twin for another
paintings water the garden of the wall
a song imagines others
a heat that is the stove's desire
a rug peeled in the wool of its colours

giving warmth to the bed of the head.

And what else?
A coffee which is the morning talk
followed by books
then boredom opens the way for more details
a sparrow and bread for instant tedium
a conversation immersing its water in the void.

An Indian servant silent-smiling in the hallway
speaks about her family
waters truthful in their warmth
a mirror hosting a face and clothes for camouflage.

Here is a table, a jug and a suicide case.

A priest seeps out from the body of the sacrifice
a bell nearby tolls for a Sunday mass
people promenade within their prayers
a road takes itself to the elusiveness of the river
the outside fury resonates faintly from a distance
a phone rings
nothing is here but a place.

عقل العَويط

Akl al-Aweet is a Lebanese poet who lives in Beirut. He published several books of poetry, the last of which is *Sarahul Qateel* (The Release of the Slain), Dar an-Nahar, Beirut 2001, from which we selected the above poem *al-Ghurfa*.

WIDAD TAWEEL ABDUNNOUR

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

From a Travel Notebook

I enamoured your love a basil-scented support
for my heart had no support but you...
As soon as the waves carried me ashore
they set a stir deep in my heart and never settled down.
I thought that passion had aged with me,
but the budding of my heart stood fast against the wind.
My yesteryears are drawn on my heart, but
how do I abandon this ever-burgeoning spring?
These are our pledges in the book of love
in fulfillment to its covenant.
Everyday we have a new sun, a blooming language,
the shades and the promised vineyard.
We are faithful who believe in the values of love,
despite the mighty blows of the sea-waves.

Without your sun, the Sun seems setting,
the universe's light fading,
the morning colours paling
and the coolness of the spring evenings
no longer soothes the tired and sleepy.
We no longer see the rainbows as scented letters
or promises as a blessing to our thoughts and patience...
I got used to the worn dress of sorrow,
is there no one who provides me with a dress that cheers me up?
How do I bring back the prime of my days,
and my heart abstains in the worldly heavens as an ascetic?
You have planted fields of roses
in my books for my heart to pick.
You are the poems and the writing of their passion:
the purest poetry is that dedicated to love.

وداد طويل عبد النور

Widad Taweel Abdunnour is a Syrian poet living in Damascus. She started writing poetry at an early age. She has published two collections of her poetry since 1997. She won several prizes and distinctions, and some of her poems were sung. She is the Vice-President of the Women's Literary Club in Damascus.

ZAHI WEHBE

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

Fraternity

Once my father adopted a tree
he encountered in the street.
He brought it to our garden,
watered it with the water we drink from...
I started shielding it from the wind
and calling it my sister.

Secret

You will soon know
that I was a tree in the yard of the house
when a wicked witch transformed me into a man.
She said:
'May you die in her love three times
and thou shall be transformed into a tree.'
This is my sole secret, known to your tiny hand
and the sparrows that catch my shadow in the garden.

Maybe

Whenever my face touches your navel
I hear a voice I know
as though I return after an absence,
to a city I visited before
and meet again a woman
whose navel I always used
to wipe my face with.

Yesterday

I see a picture of a woman
adorning herself
on that old rug.
An empty glass
a suffused fragrance
a small metallic earring
confirming a night that passed
but where is the other glass?

Salute

As you step out of water
waves cling to your body
some distant boats light their lanterns
for you
and raise their sails
saluting the harbour which is
your body.

A Smile

From that frenzied evening
I only remember your smile
It was brighter than
all women's ornaments.

Souvenir

Now,
as soldiers slumber over
the butts of their rifles
and fires abate in distant camps
and a flight of doves flutter
over the city...
Now,
I return with shattered dreams,
discharged without victories or medals,
not even bringing any souvenir
from that country
except your laughter.

زاهي وهبي

Zahi Wehbi is a renowned Lebanese/Arab television host. The above poems are from his book *Fi Mahabin Nissa'* (In Women's Direction), Dar Aljadeed, Beirut 1998. (The title of the book is actually a clever play on wards. He substitutes "wind" for "women" in the Arabic equivalent of "windward".)

ZAKI AL-JABIR

Translated by Noel Abdulahad & Raghid Nahhas

Our Homeland

O friend of mine
Our homeland is our eyes
the throbbing of our hearts
the flapping of the wind around our gowns
Our homeland is when silence reins
when tears flow down
when clouds don't burst out into rain
Our homeland is the light, the stars, the sky
the dance of rain in the streets,
the resting point of a sparrow on a tree,
the laugh of the moon peeping out of the shades of darkness
the smile of the clouds in a flinch of eyes wet by tears
the elegant twist of your wondrous neck
the warmth of your whisper in my ear

O passionate friend of mine...
Our homeland is the quiver of our dates
in the warm embrace of a wintry night
Our homeland is a story we tell,
a break we take
until the earth embraces the sky!

And there is a homeland for the butterflies we follow
and for the waters flowing in the evening garden...
and you O friend of mine
you are my only and only homeland...

زكي الجابر

Dr. Zaki al-Jabir is a prominent Iraqi poet, academic, administrator and journalist, living in USA.
The above poem is from his collection *Alwuqoof fil Mahatat alati Ghadarahal Qitar* (Standing at the Platforms where Trains have Departed), Iraqi Ministry of Information Publications 1972.

BASSAM HAJJAR

Translated by Raghid Nahhas

A Candle

Do strangers come
with night wrapped with their coats
similar to the night we light
with fear and candles?

Redeem your perfume from the air
from the breeze of tender sweat
your body is the candleholder that I hide in fear
your body is the sequel of the night.

Do strangers come
to take my candle
and make me cry!

or do we together sleep in a bed:
two frightened brothers?

بسّام حجّار

Bassam Hajjar is a Lebanese poet, writer, translator and journalist. The above poem is from his collection *Faqat Iao Yadaki* (Only if Your Hand), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1990.

HUNADA HOSARI

Ghada Samman's *The Square Moon*
Women amidst the conflicting values of modern society

Ghada Samman is a distinguished Syrian writer, novelist, poet, essayist and auther of thirty-one books. She was born in Damascus, Syria, then moved to Beirut, Lebanon, before settling in Paris, France.

Samman consecrated most of her creative writings to Eastern/Levantine women and is considered now as the most influential female figure on modern literature; and a leading advocate of justice for them. She refused to play the role of the victim; surpassing all restrictions and revolting against conditioned mentalities.

Most of Samman's works were translated into French, English, Spanish, Italian, Russian and several other languages. Her all-encompassing outlook to life with her writings truly depicting the pains, sorrows and happiness of human beings, won her the status of a Universal writer.

Al-Qamar al-Murabbah (The Square Moon) is a book of short stories published in Arabic in Beirut in 1994. It was translated into Spanish and French. Its English translation was rendered by the renowned Issa J. Boullata, Professor of Arabic Literature and language at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

the stories of the book are a combination of the ordinary and the supernatural. They reflect the conflict between the values of the West and those of the East. On this basis, Samman records the discord and contradictions between the conservatism of the older generations and the attitudes often adopted by the new generations. The stories of the book uphold, in general, a social and a philosophical message.

I would like to focus in my review on three of its stories: *I am not an Arab*, *Cutting off the Cat's Head* and *The Conspiracy Against Badee*.

These stories share to a great extent the same framework, as they all depict the state of the oppressed woman who cannot express in words, her feelings or her innermost thoughts. Samman speaks on behalf of her characters. She tackles the male's insistence on exercising his inherited patriarchal authority, despite that he yearns, deep in his heart, to reject such practices. He, however, convinces himself that he is compelled to adopt the long established norms of his society. On the other hand, women succumb to this predetermined role despite their sporadic rebellious attempts against this situation, and thus the social rules and traditions prevail.

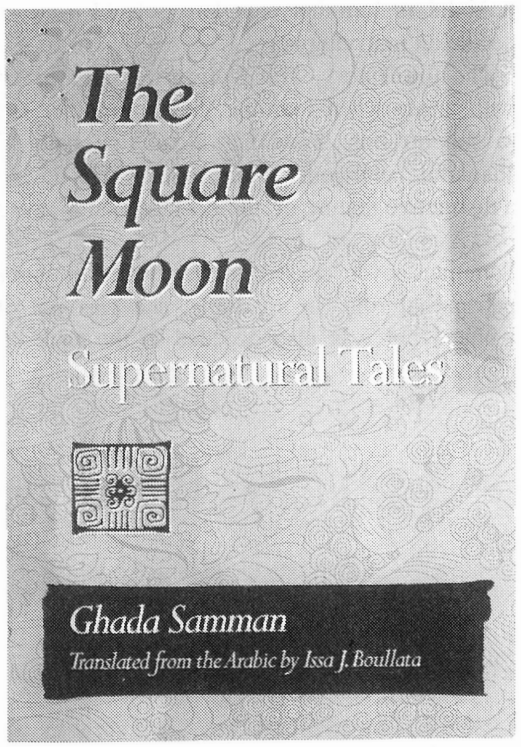
I am not an Arab is the story of a girl with a dual name. Her French mother named her Gloria. Her Algerian father, a miner who categorically refused to apply for French

citizenship, named her Zakia.

Gloria-Zakia becomes a housemaid, cleaning some family houses in Paris. She accompanies her father during his holidays to his village in Algeria where his family receives her warmly. There, she meets Al-Safi, a jobless young man whom she subsequently marries. Al-Safi harps on repeating the title of a song 'I am an Arab', making her prefer to keep the name Zakia over Gloria.

Happy with Al-Safi for a short while, Zakia soon starts to hate him when he beats her and she discovers that he is a drug addict. He also lays claim to the wages she earns and taunts her simply because she is French.

Al-Safi is a typical Eastern man, an impulsive, who takes sudden decisions, such as ordering her to put on the veil. He walks ahead of her when they go out, despite his submissiveness to other women whom he brings to their flat or those who do not like him.



Al-Safi refuses to divorce her, and when she resorts to her father, he advises her to be patient, as he believes a woman should tolerate the cruelty of her husband.

When Gloria falls in love with Salladine, sh moves to live with him, illegally despite her awareness of the laws in force, in the Arab world, where a husband can bring his wife to the "House of Obedience" and force her to meet with his sexual needs, in compliance with matrimonial laws and despite the husband's rights of marrying up to four women. Fearing the worst, Gloria becomes haunted by ghosts in her home.

Samman aimed to depict the suffering and sorrows experienced by Eastern women through the plight of Zakia. This attempt is further enhanced in *Cutting off the Cat's Head.* The title of this story is derived from a myth relative to Eastern marriages. The myth says that a groom cuts off the head of a cat at the view of his bride on the evening of their marriage, so as the bride learns her lesson; that she has to be in total submission to the will and wishes of her husband.

Abdul aspires to marry Nadine, a girl totally different from the others he is acquainted

with. He recalls the words of a matchmaker about a prospective wife: '...not talkative in the least, for the sole function of a woman's mouth is to eat and not to talk...whose mouth has only been kissed by her mother...who gives birth to males only...who can tolerate seeing her husband marrying as much women as he likes and up to four women.'

Nadine, however, poses a dilemma to Abdul. She left Lebanon for France when she was a little child. Practically, she is of a different culture and mentality. She is totally free and independent. She tells him she is fully aware of his shortcomings, yet she loves him and considers him a part of her life, but definitely not its centre.

Abdul is torn between two sets of values, and, though he adores Nadine, but cannot decide on marrying her.

The third story, *The Conspiracy Against Badee*, tells the reader how Badee is flared with anger when learning that his mother is a prostitute. Although poverty and the need to support him drove her along that path, Badee fails to reconcile his values with the shameful behaviour of his mother. He develops a schism which is, as Samman implies, a distinctive feature of the Eastern man at present.

Samman never ceased in her work to unmask the false values concerning the male's patriarchal role. In so doing, she was not only able to speak on behalf of the Eastern women, but was also acceded to the rank of a faithful and devoted defendant of human rights.

هنادة الحصري

Hunada Hosari is a Syrian poet living in Damascus. She has published three poetry collections. Her poetry won her *The Rabia Raqqi* first prize for 2000. Her poems have been translated to English and French.

RAGHID NAHHAS

Liat Kirby's *Curving my Eyes to Almonds*

The Poetry of Fire and Water

At last we have Liat Kirby's first collection of poetry *Curving my Eyes to Almonds*, published by Papyrus Publishing, Victoria, Australia 2001.

The book comprises seventy poems brimming with sensuality in its brightest peaks and darkest depressions. Each of these poems is a fragment of a complex painting one feels depicts Kirby the poet. One thinks that by putting them together one might be able to discover the true features of Kirby the human. The problem is that every fragment, by itself, is so enriched by some of the deepest colours of the human condition one ever sees. Our usual two-dimensional jigsaw puzzle construction is too limited to lead us anywhere in compositions that have more dimensions than the five we can invoke through all of our senses put together. The marvel is that Kirby does this with the simplest of words. In *Redemption*, for example, we read 'I am ripe. I am wild / and grave; joyous as a bride. / My skirt shifts in the breeze. / My bangle slides to my wrist / ready for the dance.'

The above lines are dynamically confusing in the sense that one loses awareness of whether one is looking at a painting or listening to a symphony. I have never used the word 'confusing' with such a positive sense. Admittedly, this is a result of an outstanding pleasure I feel when reading such poetry. This ability to invoke all senses is further climaxed by "shock treatment" when she says 'ready for the dance.' One can feel this either like a piece of music ending in the usual finale, or a painting depicting a wild face, a smile, a shifting skirt, a sliding bangle and a dance position combining to leave the observer with a space for his or her imagination to figure out the consequences of this readiness for the dance.

Kirby paints with words. Her canvas is a violin and her brush is its bow. But these are only her tools of creation. The creature is often outwitting the mistress, sliding from beneath her eyelids only to repossess her: 'You live beneath / the almond curve / of my eyes // and when lids lift after / sleep, you emerge / to stride through me.' (***Curving my Eyes to Almonds***, p20). This is a further dimension invoking a journey into the landscape of the mind (is the mind the master or the creature of all senses?). From here, one can shoot to the cosmos or to eternity. Nay...to both!

What we see in Kirby's poetry is Liat as Liat is. She selected the words of Albert Camus, 'In the depth of winter / I finally learned / there was in me / invincible summer.' to adorn the dedication page of her collection.

I am personally delighted at this choice because the contrast between the winter and

the summer that Kirby uses to describe her strong determination in life confirms my thoughts about Kirby when I only knew her through a number of her poems I had the privilege of publishing and translating a few years ago. My first comment after reading those poems was that they were poems of fire and water. 'They make one's body and spirit alternate entwined in the joy of being burned and cooled repeatedly. The words chosen are each by itself so concrete and familiar, yet the combination is so abstract and ethereal. And so is water: a couple of simple atoms creating one of the most complex chemicals. And so is fire: an ultimate expression of energy latent in unassuming matter. It does not surprise me that the physical and the spiritual are so entwined in Kirby's expression. You do not read Kirby's poems; you feel them. You enjoy burning in them, only to swim in their fluidity of passion. And you burn again.' (*Joussour*, II(III), August 1999).

In ***Winter*** she writes, 'The sun drops a single jewel / in the empty room; / its shape simple, intricate, / slowly disperses, seeps honey / into my heart; my eyes flicker.'

In ***Green Eyes*** she writes, 'I would like you to reach / inside me and take what stirs, / for my eyes are turning / green and I am ready.'

In ***Firestone*** she writes, 'The moon is a stone in the sky, / tight against my eyes. My eyes / are alive while my heart dies.'

Kirby's poetry can also be described as a poetry of hunger for love and of suffering. Her words ring out as blatant cries that no ear can hear, resounding and simultaneously striking the deepest depths of the senses with a combination of concrete and intellectual states. The sound strikes the pulses of the spirit and the body, becoming the shape of arcs making love to the sky, and limbs bending under the command of body and passion, and eyes turning greener in anger and love. There is no "or" in the feelings of Kirby, but an eternal existence of the "and" conjugating body and soul and hunger and suffering and yearning and love together. For example in ***To Love*** (p17), we find that silence has a dialect, quietness a wildness and lopped fingers feelings when love is carved as an eternal song in the soul of the loved one, leaving him to bless the reaches of the Universe with the breath of the winds.

Yearning is intrinsic to her poetry. In ***Gypsy Love***, the woman of the poem leaves her body to bend and swirl with the embrace of the night asserting her energies to make love to the whole Universe. So much so that when she strikes the moon, drawing her bare fingers across it, her energies continue the rhythm of love unabated. With her dance around closed blossoms she seems to want to enhance life in this universe, inviting, almost challenging, its inhabitants to join in the frenzy of the dance. Her green eyes glance with peculiar heaviness. She is hungry and at one with the wind and its power.

I Love What I Cannot Have (p89), paradoxically suggests embracing life through loss. The yearning for what cannot be possessed reveals itself by harmonious dancing

with nature. By a femininity that falls softly on petals. By poetry within which the colour of life is formed. Colours and shapes of the Universe: pieces making up one soul planted firmly in its existence. When the soul is emptied as many fragments into the Universe, there are always tears. There is a fear of loss and fragmentation. Yet there is this "homing" instinct: an innate knowledge that the harmony that will bring all pieces into one body again is going to be quick and almost as predictable as a flock of birds unified in their purpose.

Oppression (p50) is an example of the poet's philosophy that reflects, in my opinion, a belief in the union of matter and soul. This is why her images, despite being still frames, are very lively. Kirby has an immense ability to portray the material down to every physical atom without dryness. The wall is tongued, the insect is splay-legged, the limbs are bent, the eyes burn, the clock ticks and even time has elongated seconds. Time has a spatial dimension, and space has a time dimension. Soul is the peak of the body; the body is the peak of the soul. She is warning her oppressor that her green eyes are ready to eat him. She is also aware that any softness on her part would provide victory to her oppressor.

The winds that carried the love tales of some of Kirby's poems, making of them songs for every time and place, carry in ***Do You Hear?*** tales of pain. These are centuries-old tales. The cries of the dead still echo from the oppression of Romanian jails, Nazi concentration camps and the atrocities in Sarajevo, etc.: 'The silence shrieks a crack in the void. / The spirits of the dead lean / on the wind curve, arc and flow. / Do you hear the pain carried on the wind?'

Kirby's preoccupation with history is not simply a product of Jewishness. I prefer to think that it coincides beautifully with our intellectual, geological and biological evolution. History cannot be denied, and I read in Kirby's poetry an appreciation of the past so that the present is lived to its fullest, albeit with sorrow or happiness. I read analysis rather than preaching. I feel an invitation to share the intricacy of life on a universal level: 'to dance on stones / with bare feet / and grip the earth / with fingers finely fluted / to the rhythm of wild reed pipe, / the sob of the oboe, / to find the pulse of a word, / is to touch centuries. (***To Dance on Stones***, p11).

To Dance on Stones is the first poem of the book. In this poem, flesh, rocks, words and music are there, each with its distinctive space and characteristics, yet they are playing in concert providing the universal harmony alluded to above.

I would like finally to revisit the manner in which Kirby tends to end a stanza or a poem, because her technique is most intriguing for its disarming simplicity and profound effect.

Often this ending is a physical and/or mental state such as the readiness for dance mentioned earlier. In ***Change*** she writes ending the poem: 'like rain drops / that hesitate to fall / lest the soil / yield a wild flower.' In using 'yield' we have a dynamic word revealing an optimistic outcome. However, 'wildflower' confirms the hesitancy of the

rain to fall, the moment of fear of change.

These endings are intense with their physical, psychological and cultural contents. After describing her appearance and her interiority in ***Storm*** (p74), this poem ends with 'my cheekbones hold up the heavens.'

As she reads ***The Letter*** (p63) she sensually remembers its writer and at the end of the poem says, 'Yet my eyes still burn / as my fingers give flesh to your letter.'

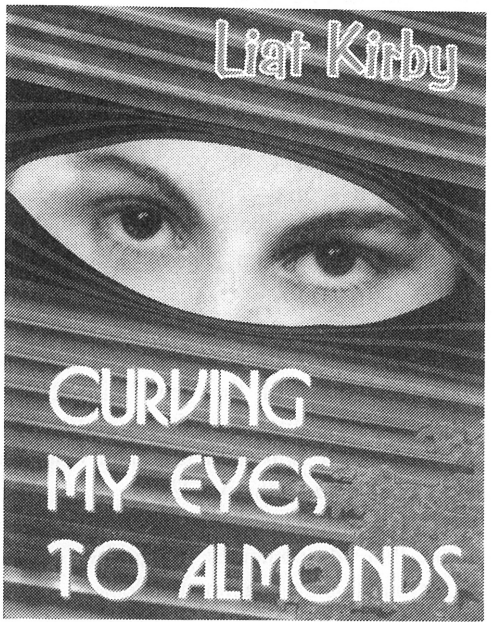
Lamentation (p32) ends with:

'I am rooted to the ground.
My heart is bleeding.
And the sun rises yellow red
in my eyes.'

'in my eyes', with all the power and connotations of the eyes, is positioned strongly at the end to sum up this process of grief.

Similarly the positioning of 'between sheets' in ***What is Left*** (p30), which also evokes the intensity of erotic love:

'At night
you curl up
in my brain
and I lie
hammered
between sheets.'



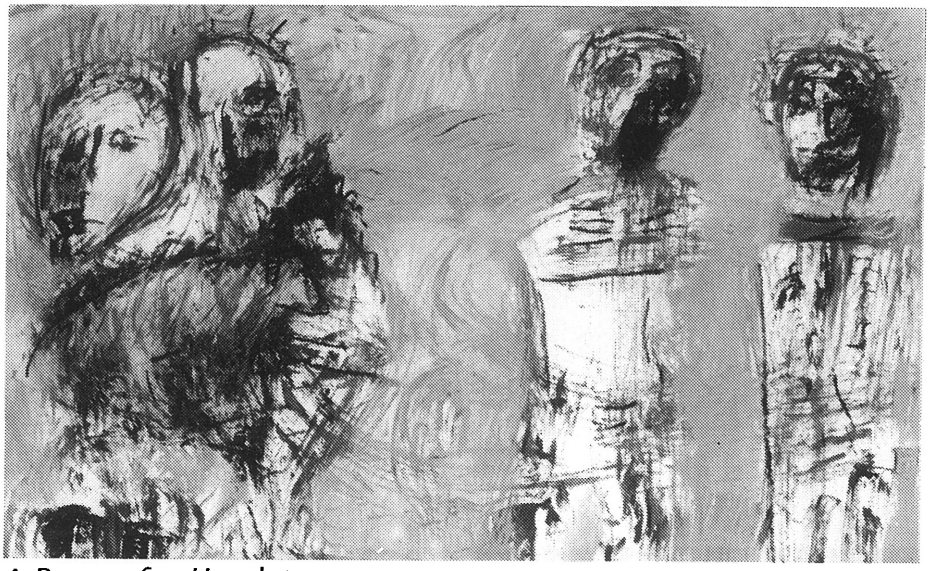
Furthermore, I read in Kirby's endings a sense of deep understanding of human sexual psychology and biology. In ***Quicksilver*** (p15) we find fingers turning to the moon (stretching, pointing up...?) at the climax of an intimate moment remembered: 'You move through me / like quicksilver / as I turn my fingers / to the moon.'

Indeed the combined use of dynamic terms such as 'turn', 'linear', 'descent' and 'curving' with other strikingly concrete terms such as 'almond', 'moon', 'circle', 'pebble' and particularly 'belly' (with all the curvature implications), is a further indication of the talent of Kirby in entwining the stone and the flower, the dead and the living, the artful and the sexual, the joy and the suffering.

There is a lot of obvious suffering and oppression depicted in Kirby's poetry, but the more enduring effects among the lines and curves of her poems/paintings bring to mind Albert Einstein, Yehudi Menuhin, Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin and Nizar Qabbani. One senses a carpenter and a love-maker. One senses life. One curves towards the universe and touches centuries.

Samih al-Basset

Gilgamesh



A Poster for Hamlet

O I L O N C A N V A S

The Face of the Female Crescent – by Samih al-Basset

O I L O N C A N V A S

كَلِمَات

Kalimat

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

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

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

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

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

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

المؤازرة (الرعاية المادية)

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

الأسعار والاشتراك للأفراد (القيم أدناه بالدولار الأسترالي)

سعر العدد **$10** ضمن أستراليا، أو **$20** بالبريد الجوي إلى أي مكان

الاشتراك السنوي (٤ أعداد) **$40** ضمن أستراليا، أو **$80** بالبريد الجوي.

(نصف القيمة للاشتراك بإحدى اللغتين فقط.)

للمنظمات والمؤسسات والمصالح التجارية ضعف القيم أعلاه في كل حالة

الإعلانات: نصف صفحة $100، صفحة كاملة $200

ترسل كافة الدفعات من خارج أستراليا بحوالة مصرفية بالعملة الأسترالية
(يحرر الشك باسم Kalimat)

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

Sydneysiders (top)
Sydneysider (bottom)

Photographs by
Raghid Nahhas

from his
unpublished collection:
Sydney Supremely