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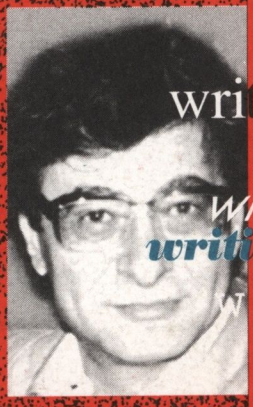

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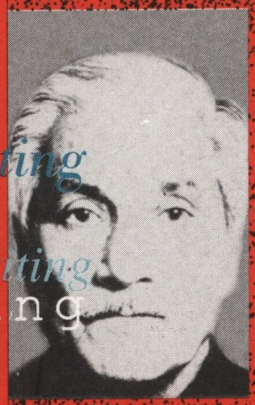



in the Middle East

VOICES

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Writers' understanding of their tasks and the role they should play in society is decisive for the nature of their writing: Will they indulge in mere *l'art pour l'art*, or should literature serve political, social, or moral ends? A prominent question also in the Islamic world, past and present.

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CONCEPTS OF WRITING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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CONSCIOUS VOICES

CONCEPTS OF WRITING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Proceedings of the Berne Symposium
July 1997



EDITED BY

STEPHAN GUTH
PRISKA FURRER
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FOREWORD

Johann Christoph Bürgel
(Berne)

The papers collected in the present volume were given during a symposium held at the University of Berne in July 1997. The symposium was financed partly by the European Science Foundation, and partly by three Swiss foundations: the Academy of Humanities, The National Fund and the Beer-Brawand Foundation. It formed part of the ESF program »Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim Word« (of which the author of this foreword is a member), but it was also a continuation of the three symposia on contemporary literature in the Islamic world, which had taken place at this university in the years 1980, 1983, and 1989 and were organised by the Institute of Islamic Studies, then still under my aegis.

The commitment of a writer, his understanding of his task, of the role he plays in society, is decisive for the nature of his writing: Will he indulge in mere *l'art pour l'art*, in all kinds of artistic play and display, or will he dedicate his gift to an attempt of improving the human society, perhaps by just criticising it, engrossing its mistakes, perhaps by propagating certain moral or religious tenets, certain ideologies, and, by so doing, perhaps diminish the literary value of his productions? All these questions fit very well into the framework of »Individual and society« and they touch upon many a prominent issue or even burning problem of contemporary writing in the Islamic world, where many writers feel their responsibility for the community and use their gift in a vehement struggle, often risking their

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freedom or even their physical existence, for the institution or the respect of the most elementary human rights.

In the name of the editors I should like to express our gratitude to Dr. Robin Ostle, Oxford, chairman of the workshop »Images and Representations« of the ESF project, who kindly allotted some of the budget at his disposal to the Swiss enterprise, as well as to the above mentioned Swiss institutions, all of which had already supported my former symposia. Furthermore the ESF is to be thanked for its contribution to the printing of this book. My sincere appreciation goes to my successor, Professor Dr. Reinhard Schulze, who not only welcomed the initiative and gave the necessary administrative backing, but also directed a vivid and interesting panel discussion with the three writers we had invited to join the conference. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Priska Furrer, who spared no pains in looking through the manuscripts and accompanying the whole enterprise with her most valuable comments, and to Dr. Stephan Guth, who, besides all the 'normal' duties of an editor, lent the project his long-standing experience and skill in computerised book-production. And I feel indebted to Mrs. Guth and to my wife Magdalena, who contributed with their hospitality to the success and the pleasant atmosphere of the conference (the party my wife gave in our home was her last, she succumbed a few months later to her cancer). Last but not least, I would like to thank the speakers, some of whom came from very remote places and some of whom agreed to contribute at very short notice. And again I express a feeling shared by all the participants in extending our warmest thanks to the three writers, all of them of international renown and each of them an outstanding representative of one of the three major literatures dealt with in this volume, Arabic (al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ), Persian (Hūshang Golshīrī), and Turkish (Nedim Gürsel), who gave us the honour and the pleasure of their presence.

To close with I would like to convey my warm feelings of gratitude to Professor Dr. Angelika Neuwirth, director of the Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft in Beirut, who from the very beginning took much interest in the

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realisation of this symposium and kindly offered to include the present volume in the *Beiruter Texte und Studien* series, where already the proceedings of the last of the three Berne symposia have been published. From the Orient-Institut's staff I would especially like to thank Dr. Hanne Schönig who carefully proofread the print-outs and paved the book's final way to the printers.

Berne, January 1999

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INTRODUCTION

Stephan Guth, Priska Furrer
(Berne)

An Arab writer is a fidā'ī, *a freedom fighter.* [...] *The intellectuals, everyone who is able to express himself, must offer resistance. As long as legally recognised and generally accepted political institutions are lacking, it is their task to tell people the truth, to point to what is right and what is wrong.*
'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf[1]

»If I really am a poet I must be able to prevent the war.«
Unknown poet, quoted by Elias Canetti[2]

Every commitment to the world must be given up in order to come up to the idea of a committed piece of art...
Theodor W. Adorno[3]

The above quotations represent just three examples out of a large variety of possible other positions *vis-à-vis* the problem whether authors should commit their writings to a political, social, or moral cause, or whether they should refrain from such a commitment – positions all of which range somewhere on the broad scale that stretches, in European literature, from the one extreme of *l'art pour l'art* to the other of *littérature engagée* à la Sartre or Camus.

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[1] From the epilogue of 'Abd al-Raḥmān MUNĪF's *Sharq al-mutawassiṭ*, German translation: Abdalrachman MUNIF, *Östlich des Mittelmeeres*, Basel: Lenos, 1995, 259.

[2] »Wäre ich wirklich ein Dichter, ich müßte den Krieg verhindern können.« Discussed by Canetti in his essay »Der Beruf des Dichters (Münchner Rede, Januar 1976)«, in: *Das Gewissen der Worte: Essays*, Munich & Vienna: Hanser, ²1976, 257-267, here 258.

[3] »Jedes Engagement für die Welt muß gekündigt sein, damit der Idee eines engagierten Kunstwerks genügt werde...«. From the essay »Engagement«, in: *Noten zur Literatur III*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1966, 109-135, here 129.

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Can the European spectrum also be of value for a classification of literatures in the Middle East? – Were we to systematise the concepts of writing studied in the contributions of the present volume according to the *l'art pour l'art – littérature engagée* track we would of course find a number of positions that can indeed be located somewhere in the pattern borrowed from Europe.

It seems that for the great majority of writers the motive to raise their voice is a feeling of moral responsibility towards their fellow human beings and the conviction that their work s h o u l d and c a n serve public enlightenment and/or bring about change in the(ir) world. Some of them have been influenced directly by Sartre's and Camus's ideas (↗V. Klemm's article). Others come very close to it in committing their writings to what they consider politically, socially, or morally useful ends, be it the propagation of an Islamic value system (↗C. Szyska), or the creation of a 'literature for all' that would serve the emergence of a classless society and a new national identity (↗E. Glassen), be it the necessity of countering a foreign occupier's efforts to appropriate one's homeland, to extinguish one's memories and to distort history (↗S. Enderwitz, ↗R. van Leeuwen), be it the self-assertion and self-defence amidst an atmosphere of total destruction through war (↗S. Weidner), be it the need to redeem one's society's identity by a kind of self-sacrifice (↗A. Neuwirth), or the wish to serve one's community as a neutral observer, a chronicler, an eye-witness (↗I. Stümpel). And there existed and exists, of course – in Nasser's Egypt, in Qaddhafi's Libya, in Socialist Algeria etc. – that kind of writing called in Arabic *adab muhaddaf* (dealt with in length in none of our contributions), a concept of literature close to what is known as 'Socialist Realism', refuted by many 'serious' writers who – like, e.g., Ṣādeq Hedāyat – oppose all kind of ideology in favour of a broad, all-embracing humanity (↗N. Kermani), or who, like Salīm Barakāt, doubt deeply in the official discourse of the regime in power (↗B. Roos). Thus, one result of trying to group the contributions of the present volume according to the *l'art pour l'art – littérature engagée* scheme would be the fact that committed literature in the Middle East too is obviously not restricted to the *littérature engagée* concept(s) of

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French existentialism but comprises a large variety of different positions and moral stances, positions distinct even from ideas such as the Arabic *adab multazim* that is still comparatively close to the 'original' from which it became adapted to the specific political and social realities of the 1950s and 1960s (↗V. Klemm).

It is in no way astonishing, then, that attitudes of committing literature to an extra-literary cause are to be found not only after Sartre and Camus and their oriental adaptations but of course already much earlier, e.g., in the whole 'mirror of princes' literature of the Middle Ages, including the great Persian epics like Neẓāmī (↗J.C. Bürgel), or in the raising of a critical voice by the public moralists of the 19th century *nahḍa* movement (↗N. Al-Bagdadi), and we could certainly add the creative writing of similar authors in other parts of the Islamic world, too, who used literature as a means to advocate social and political reform (see, e.g., the writers of the Tanzimat period in Turkey).

Assembling under one heading all articles concerned with some kind of committedness would of course grant one great advantage: it would encourage comparative approaches across the borders that are traditionally drawn up between the various 'national' literatures and facilitate looking for and making out common traits between the committed literatures of, e.g., Palestine (↗S. Enderwitz, ↗A. Neuwirth, ↗R. van Leeuwen), Turkey (↗E. Glassen) and Iran (↗I. Stümpel). It would also enhance studying the similarities and differences across another border that is usually seen to be rather distinctive: the breach between 'normal,' i.e., generally 'secularist,' committed literature and that other, relatively new, committed literature which is characterised by the use of an Islamic 'language,' or 'code,' and its striving for 'religious' ends (↗C. Szyska).

But what about the writings that cannot be grouped in the category of 'committed literature'? Are they all to be attributed to the *l'art pour l'art* type? – Certainly not. Actually, the present volume does not contain one single study dealing with a purely aestheticist concept of literature that would emphasise, as does *l'art pour l'art*, the 'autonomy' of writing and its having its end in it-

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self. This does not mean, of course, that Middle Eastern literary history has not known such a position at all, on the contrary: there have always been voices claiming the art's independence from extra-literary concerns and stressing the necessity of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, especially so when strong tendencies to popularise literature could be felt and let the then 'masters of the art' fear to lose their monopoly, and made them raise their voices in warning against the 'decay' of the fine arts. We have only to call to mind, for instance, in the late Ottoman period, defenders of the Divan poetic tradition, and advocates of uncompromisingly high technical literary standards who, like the Ṣervet-i Fünūn group, cherished a ban on non-literary considerations to prevent literature's 'corruption' and ensure a high quality of literary production. Similar cases are to be encountered in the Arab world, too – cf., e.g., the controversy about *l'art pour l'art* in Egypt, in the late 1940s, between Aḥmad Amīn, who pleaded for a literature intended for the whole nation, and ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, who held the elitist view that »an artistic and intellectual aristocracy were needed to lead the nation«, a dispute which also Ṭāhā Ḥusayn joined in and which covered whole institutions such as the Academy for the Arabic Language and Dār al-ʿUlūm.[4]

But does upholding the intrinsic values of literature necessarily imply a renunciation of commitment? – Th. W. Adorno's dictum quoted above defeats this assumption as clearly as do many of the Middle Eastern positions examined in this volume. Adorno turns everything upside down: 'In order to comply with the idea of commitment,' he says somewhat pointedly, 'every commitment to the world outside literature must be given up.' The Iranian writer Ṣādeq Hedāyat, too, holds that literature will be all the more effective the less it tries to offer its services to extra-literary aims (↗N. Kermani). The Syrian 'hermetic' poet Adonis may, at first sight, seem to come closest to a *l'art pour l'art* position; but his continued and uncompromising strive for change in literature is meant to be in itself a contribution to bringing about that overall »change« (*taḥawwul*) which he considers neces-

[4] Cf. Jan BRUGMAN, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, Leiden: Brill, 1984 (Studies in Arabic Literature; 10), 201.

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sary in order to overcome ossified traditions and to put progress, on all levels and in all fields, into operation in the Arab world (↗S. Weidner). On the other hand, since Hedāyat's and Adonis's times the belief in the effectiveness of literature as a tool to alter deplorable socio-political realities has still decreased and produced, in the 1980s and 1990s, attitudes displaying a withdrawal into the more 'purely' literary domains out of an insight into the limited revolutionary capacities of literature, attitudes that testify, on the part of their authors, at once to a more realistic and sceptical assessment of one's occupation and to a greater modesty (↗P. Furrer, ↗S. Guth).

Our considerations have made clear so far that a strict dividing line between *l'art pour l'art* and *littérature engagée* is not only very difficult to establish, but perhaps also lacks inner justification in many cases. *L'art pour l'art* mostly is not free from extra-literary concerns, and committed literature seldom disregards its own literariness. The Turkish poet Orhan Veli's call for a 'literature for all,' e.g., is committed to a certain socio-political end; nevertheless it attaches considerable importance to literary 'beauty' – which, of course, will only be achieved when art will have been liberated from the chains of its traditions and the concepts of what is 'beautiful' will have been re-defined (↗E. Glassen). Moreover, the dualistic model tends to be rather simplistic and exclusive. It does not offer, for instance, an appropriate place for autobiographical writings that may oscillate somewhere between intended exemplariness of the authors' lives and a stress on their individuality and subjectivity (↗S. Enderwitz), or reflect a process of constituting, in the realm of 'magic,' an identity for a minority through an autobiographical 'collective I' (↗B. Roos). Where on the bipolar scale is the ancient and 'classical' Arabic poet to be located? Is panegyrical poetry *l'art pour l'art* or committed literature? What about *fakhr*, *hijā'* and other categories (↗G.J. van Gelder) equally typical of the older times as genres like the *maqāma*, the *ghazal*, the Persian heroic and mystical epics, or the various subgenres of Ottoman Divan literature? Is the *l'art pour l'art / littérature engagée* system of classification sufficiently flexible and sophisticated enough to incorporate authors who regard

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themselves as inspired by demons (↗J.C. Bürgel), as 'prophets,' or as 'saviours'? How to classify a purpose of writing like late 19th century's »uniting heart and soul with the mind«, and depicting and reflecting 'reality' (↗N. Al-Bagdadi), where to group the existential quality of aims like Hedāyat's self-justification and self-exposure (↗N. Kermani), Adonis's self-assertion through poetry during the Israeli siege and invasion of Beirut, 1982 (↗S. Weidner), or Maḥmūd Darwīsh's »re-staging of the mystic lover's relation towards a super-human beloved« (↗A. Neuwirth)?

These questions may draw our attention to yet another point: It seems that the *l'art pour l'art / littérature engagée* model becomes increasingly unsuitable the further the literary phenomenon to be categorised is away from the times in which the two conceptual antipodes emerged and the terms were semantically fixed. Shouldn't we therefore give up our systematic approach in favour of a diachronic one? We would then have to pose the question whether or not a historical development can be detected (or suggested) in what Middle Eastern writers perceived as their mission, their duty, the purpose of their writing. One possible such construction would perhaps tie together the positions outlined in this volume's contributions and sketch the development as follows: It would start with the poet's being inspired by supernatural powers (↗J.C. Bürgel) and with literature conceived of as a means of immortalising man's reputation and in this way ensuring a kind of afterlife (↗G.J. van Gelder), as in ancient and 'classical' Arabic poetry, then following a path that would eventually lead, via the emergence of the modern-type author-intellectual and literature's instrumentalisation as a vehicle of progress in the 19th century (↗N. Al-Bagdadi) as well as positions of committed literature around the middle of the 20th (↗E. Glassen, ↗S. Enderwitz, ↗V. Klemm, ↗R. van Leeuwen, ↗C. Szyska), to attitudes in the second half of our century, tentatively to be termed 'post-modern,' in which the function(s) of literature, the 'duties' and possibilities of writing are being radically questioned (↗P. Furrer, ↗S. Guth).

One advantage of arranging the contributions historically would consist in drawing our attention to the fact that the great

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majority of studies included in the present volume focuses on phenomena of the 20th century. Problematising this obvious predilection of our contributors we become aware of the historicity of our own calling for papers on »authors' missions«. Inquiring about literature's 'purposes' and 'ends' or writers' 'duties,' 'tasks,' and 'missions' implies looking at literature from a rather moralistic point of view which, in the whole of literary history, appears to be only a relatively recent development. So, was writing before, say, the 18th/19th century at all subjected to such moral considerations? Does it make at all sense to speak of a poet's 'mission' in the Middle Ages, or in still earlier times? What about the 'mission' of an *adīb* who views his art as a handicraft rather than a vocation imposing on him a number of responsibilities towards his fellow human beings, or towards God? Is inquiring about a 'mission' not dependent on a concept that sees literature as part of a discourse in which acting publicly plays a decisive role, which in turn demands certain historical prerequisites like, e.g., the invention of paper and printing, or even scriptuality? And hasn't the question of a writer's moral responsibility lost, for contemporary authors, its former urgency and appeal, meanwhile either going without saying, or having been replaced by disillusionment and/or other, more aesthetical concerns (as the panel discussion during the symposium impressively showed and as ↗H. Golshiri's and ↗N. Gürsel's short papers seem to suggest).

Another advantage could lie in the construction of a history of literature's tasks itself, forming part of a history of Middle Eastern literatures in general. One phenomenon could be seen in relation to another, following it not only in time, but developing out of it, or as a consequence of specific historical influences, etc. We would become more attentive to the links between the various positions, the points or times of transition from one concept to the next, in other words: to changes and historical processes. Thus, one might perhaps observe how, in the 19th century, the old ideals of '*adab*' become filled with new meanings, how, under certain very specific historical circumstances, the author as a 'public moralist' emerges out of the former '*adīb*'

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(↗N. Al-Bagdadi). Or we could focus our attention on questions such as 'Is there something left, in a modern committed writer's self-image, of the ancient Arabian poet's belief in his being inspired by *jinns*?', 'Has poetry lost the immortalising function it had in classical times, and if so, when and why did that happen?', 'Is there any connection between certain phenomena, e.g., metafictional statements, from periods separated by nearly a century, such as *nahḍa* or Tanzimat writings on the one hand, and 'postmodernist' experiments on the other?'

Trying to put the contributions of our volume in an historical order would, however, not only grant advantages. It would suggest connections and 'historical developments' where perhaps there aren't any such connections or developments, or, even worse, it would allege a 'progress' in which earlier attitudes might appear to be more primitive than later ones (or *vice versa*). In short, we would have to face the same problem as does historiography in general: constructedness. How advisable it might be instead to stay sceptical about, and try to dismantle, such attempts at constructing 'historical developments' becomes self-evident, we would think, as soon as we call to mind that eminently important periods of Middle Eastern literary history are not covered by our book: the ancient Arabic and classical literatures are greatly underrepresented, the whole of *adab* and the *adīb*'s self-image are only touched in passing by only a few contributions, there is nothing on mystical poetry, or on Divan literature, nothing also on literature as the culture of elites and its social functionality in general, etc.

Add to that the old problem of the 'simultaneity of the unsimultaneous,' the question whether developments in different literatures may or may not be looked upon as being historically connected. If we were to try to establish historical links between certain 'tasks,' concepts of 'mission,' 'duties' etc., would it then not be necessary to examine the literatures r e g i o n a l l y, or b y l a n g u a g e s?

So, should we divide the corpus of articles into language sections according to the idioms of Middle Eastern literature, three of which – Arabic, Turkish, Persian – are represented in this vol-

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ume? This may of course sharpen the reader's attentiveness for continuities and changes, similarities and differences in the literature of each single language. It would facilitate, for instance, interrelating the four contributions on Turkish literature and let us detect more easily and clearly how Orhan Veli's position (↗E. Glassen) is still present, though in a modified form, with all of the later Turkish authors (↗P. Furrer, ↗N. Gürsel, ↗S. Guth), even if they do not explicitly refer to that famous predecessor of theirs.

A language-by-language arrangement would also point quite automatically to the fact that research in the field of Middle Eastern writing is still dominated by studies on Arabic literature, the other literatures living rather in its shadow. Our book, we are afraid, perpetuates this unbalanced distribution, reflecting of course not a state of affairs in Middle Eastern literatures whatsoever, but only European academic realities: Persian and Turkish literatures are surely not qualitatively minor, less vivid, less productive, or less interesting with regard to the variety of concepts of writing developed by their authors, than Arabic literature; the study of Middle Eastern literatures in Europe simply has not been able to emancipate itself from Islamic studies where Arabic traditionally is the most important language. The language-oriented grouping thus could teach us – to turn the malaise into something positive – modesty: it would immediately become clear how little research has been done so far, how much remains still to be caught up on, and how limited the result of every single study must remain (for the moment at least).

As other groupings, the language-by-language arrangement has yet other great disadvantages. Inherent in it would be the allegation that language is a stronger bond and creates a greater cohesion than other factors such as, e.g., a shared experience of social marginalisation as a minority, or an identical or similar situation, like exile. Would it not make more sense to view together the concepts of writing drawn up by Kurdish (↗B. Roos), Islamist (↗C. Szyska), and women writers (↗I. Stümpel) than to treat them as belonging to a certain language?

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Furthermore, is not a genre-oriented grouping to be preferred to a language-oriented one since the latter would impede to ask questions like 'Do Middle Eastern poets define for their art other purposes than what prose writers, or dramatists,[5] determine for theirs?', 'Will explicit, extra-literary theoretical statements on literature's tasks lead to conclusions that are essentially different from those to be drawn from implicit, or metafictional textual evidences?' (quite a number of this volume's contributions – ↗P. Furrer, ↗N. Gürsel, ↗S. Guth, ↗A. Neuwirth, ↗S. Weidner – are concerned with such self-reflexive and metafictional elements in poetry and prose alike, in this way directing our attention to the fact that writers, in order to reflect on what they are doing and to thematise the production and/or reception of literature, dispose of a large variety of 'internal' – and perhaps also more genuinely 'literary'? – devices that differ from statements made in literary manifestos, autobiographical or theoretical writings in that they integrate theorising about literature and its function into the literary text itself).

Furthermore, a separation along the languages would again split up what, according to the symposium's 'mission' as designed by its organisers and the present volume's 'duty' as viewed by the editors, should be treated as a unit and as belonging together.

The present arrangement – alphabetically by the authors' names – may seem to be a bit of a compromise then. In reality, however, it is meant to help establish the interdisciplinary approach which enables us to surmount the limitations imposed on us by the (sometimes over-) specialisation of single disciplines. It postulates the Middle East to be a cultural area that is homogeneous enough to make looking for common traits and developments a meaningful enterprise (without ignoring that at least one important language of the region, Urdu, is not represented in our volume).

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[5] For conceptions of theatre's and drama's tasks cf. the present volume's predecessor, *Gesellschaftlicher Umbruch und Historie im zeitgenössischen Drama der islamischen Welt*, ed. J.C. BÜRGEL & S. GUTH, Beirut: Orient-Institut / Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995 (Beiruter Texte und Studien; 60).

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In how far is this justified? And is it permissible to restrict our investigations to that specific region, the Middle East? Do not Indonesian, or the literatures of Islamic Africa, have as much (or as little?) in common with our three literatures as they have among themselves? And in how far does a territorial approach suggest essential vicinity within its boundaries where perhaps much stronger affinities could be made out between a Middle Eastern literature and Chinese, or Japanese, or Latin American, or even European literature? – All these points are worth discussing. But this will be another story...

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The Anthropological Turn in Some Nineteenth Century Arabic Literature*

Nadia Al-Bagdadi
(Beirut / Berlin)

1. I should like to approach the question of the writer and his vocation from a rather unromantic and sober point of view and open this essay with quite a pragmatic and dispassionate description on what an author's vocation is all about. The following definition points to the author's role and his conditions in contemporary society: it is a statement that is truly marked by traces of the author's own struggle and his experience of how, and also why, one became a writer at the end of the nineteenth century. Whether the mechanisms of medieval book production and its market are but a romanticism in reverse is not to be discussed here:

> This spirit of personal freedom prescribes – in contrast to earlier times – a change of the ways to earn one's livelihood by literature (*taḥawwul ṭarīqat al-irtizāq bi-l-adab*). Before the *nahḍa* a writer (*adīb*), poet (*shā'ir*) or author (*mu'allif*) wrote and composed in order to please himself and to do justice to his talents (*li-yurḍiya nafsahū wa-maylahū*) or to dedicate one's art to a prince or friend. Now literature (*al-adab*) came to be but a handicraft (*ṣinā'a*) or a business (*tijāra*). Only the acceptance and acknowledgement by the public (*al-jumhūr*) grants the author (lit. *aṣḥābuhā*) a livelihood.[1]

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* This paper is based mainly on findings of my dissertation, *Vorgestellte Öffentlichkeit – Zum Wandel der literarischen Sphäre und zur Genese moderner ägyptischer Prosaliteratur, 1860-1908*, Berlin 1996 (forthcoming).

[1] Jurjī ZAYDĀN, »al-Ḥurriyya al-shakhṣiyya«, in: id., *Tārīkh al-adab al-'arabī,*

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This quotation from a Lebanese polymath, the writer and scholar Jurjī Zaydān, is not only a manifestation of the extent to which nineteenth-century cultural innovations, i.e. means of communication and modernisation of cultural production, were constitutive for *the mission of the author as seen by authors themselves.* The privatisation of book-printing and the growth of the publishing market provoked a fundamental change of the relation and interaction between text, author and reader. On this basis and from this perspective, the capitalisation of literature which transformed the Egyptian book-market, from about the 1860s in particular, led to a new understanding of authorship and authority. Authors like Jurjī Zaydān fully realised that the privatisation of the book market implicitly brought along new rules and patterns for intellectual and literary debate and for artistic work. Being no longer directly dependent on and bound by traditionally personalised patronage, not a few writers praised the changing conditions of publishing as the new »personal freedom« of the author.

Far be it from suggesting that these material dimensions of literary production were irrelevant for the authors' self-understanding, I shall nonetheless leave this field now and move our attention to some more aesthetically oriented and more elaborate literary modes of reflection and representations of the writer's vocation. This dimension, however, is more than a technical background. It is, as will be shown, directly related to the question under consideration here. Thus the underlying and guiding idea of this approach will remain the following: How was this awareness translated into practice and how did this new mode of cultural production have an impact upon the idea of the author's vocation? For it happened precisely during the second half of the nineteenth century, and occurred in such a way that we clearly witness an increasing sense of an author's autonomy and individuality and of the artist's gifts, and in the way of recognising and depicting the social world.

2. The topic, however, of this volume – *Poets'/writers' mission as seen by themselves* – contains an ambiguity and proposes two stra-

Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1983, I, 426.

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tegies of investigation: are we to search exclusively for explicit *Selbstaussagen*, taking them at face value? Or are we to extract conceptions of the author's mission from more remote texts, narrative structures, and rather unspecified remarks?[2]

Hence in order to grasp the layers of this topic for the period dealt with here, I propose to disentangle the two sides and to differentiate between concrete textual evidence and conceptional strategies. Textual evidence in this context is provided by programmatic, symbolic or otherwise clearly set ideas, confessions, and statements. The conceptual strategy comprises here intentional narrative structures and the historical embeddedness of author and text. Over and above, both these textual grounds open up to a greater complexity of the author's self-image, echoing the multiple variations of the salient conflation of the artist with the intellectual.

3. Be this as it may, in the absence of revealing personal confessions exhibiting the writer's most intimate aspirations, and in the absence of a literary manifesto propagating explicitly the new aims, we are left with glimpses, fragmented passages, and vague artistic visions of the writers' self-image. The question, however, of one's own vocation as writer tackles one of the crucial albeit still obscure issues of the newly emerging prose literature at that time. This period witnessed not only the genesis of formerly unknown literary genres. It also resulted in the emergence of a changing literary sphere and thus coincided with a new understanding of the author's role. Although this constitutive era of modern Arabic literature was, at least on the surface, and unlike later periods, to a much smaller extent concerned with the role of the author (as prophet, critic, or saviour), and far more preoccupied with the function of literature, yet the acute awareness of one's own vocation did not only shape and inform writing, but it resurfaces constantly in all possible manners, as will be shown soon.

Together with this concern, literature as a means of education and instruction was frequently and intensively discussed on vari-

[2] Cf. Priska FURRER's and Stephan GUTH's articles enclosed in this volume.

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ous occasions, be it by learned circles or in textual locations such as the prefaces of literary works. It goes without saying that we find here continuity with the old *adab* ideal now loaded with new conceptions and themes of the time. In this way then, tentatively though effectively, a conscious view was expressed of the writer as social and cultural teacher. Or in other words, of the author as public moralist.

4. Bringing now into view more closely the conception of the author's self-envisaged vocation, I shall stress one particular strand marking this literature in transition. This is what I like to call the »anthropological turn«[3] which occurred eminently in some mid- to late-nineteenth century literary writings. It is my contention that the anthropological dimension concerns most significantly the self-perceived vocation of the first generations of modern Arab authors (i.e. from the 1850s until the end of the century). The centrality and the validity of this turn was reflected by literary means. Prime importance is attached to the relationship of the individual to society which we can detect from the choice and usage of a variety of different forms of narration and depiction. The tensions between the individual and society were felt as an urge to reformulate the position of the writer vis à vis his social environment – a motif with broad repercussions throughout the literature of that time. In addition to the textual evidence, the notion of the anthropological turn implies simultaneously a descriptive tool and an analytical approach. It will be used in this study to frame divergent trends and characteristics of some Arab prose writings related to the ideas and notions of the writers' vocation.

The principal argument, therefore, that I wish to set forth is that the more influential groups of writers envisaged themselves in the first place and in the broadest sense possible as social ac-

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[3] I owe this notion to Hilmar KALLWEIT, »Zur 'anthropologischen' Wende in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts – aus der Sicht des 'Archäologen' Michel Foucault«, in: *Geschichtsdiskurs*, Bd. 2: *Anfänge modernen historischen Denkens*, ed. Wolfgang KÜTTLER, Jörn RÜSEN, Ernst SCHULIN, Frankfurt/M. 1994, 17-47, esp. 26-33.

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tors agitating and moving with the flow of social and cultural change. This concern culminated in the figure of the public moralist. Forms of presentation sought at legitimising the authors' claim by virtue of the socially acquired position and of his *Bildungsgut.* Accordingly, modern authors did not conceive themselves as unique artists blessed by higher inspiration. This is not to say that there was no inclination at all for individualistic understanding, or even for eccentric forms of portrayals of the author as artist which, a fact that can be seen most clearly in the cases of Yaʿqūb Ṣannūʿ and Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq. Rather, it seems that the sense for the peculiar role and self-awareness as writer was fully-loaded by current notions of empiricism and positivism and thus a new conception of realism altogether in literature. From this perspective, then, the anthropological turn conflates two interrelated and intertwined features which are particularly indicative for the shifting conception of the author's mission: representation of the self and legitimisation of the author's view. Representation here refers to the manners of illustration and locating one's own position, while legitimisation relates to the realm of self-definition and depiction of the author's role. Whereas the first notion takes up the vehement attempts of searching and creating new modes of literary representation and cognition – repeatedly proclaimed by the vanguard of nineteenth-century writers and reformists alike –, the second notion takes up the writers' quest for their faculty and access to interpret, understand and thus change the actual world. At this junction, as I shall argue, there occurred the emergence of the intellectual artist or the artist-intellectual.

5. There is little doubt, and it has been repeatedly stated that, for the nineteenth century, the public educator still figured as the most conspicuous representation of the author's mission. Absorbing the overall mid-nineteenth century movements, journal titles like *al-Ustādh*, novel protagonists like ʿAlam al-Dīn and al-Faryāq, or a certain drive for encyclopaedic narratives, are more than just illustrations of new social actors of the time. They indicate the preoccupation of the literary field with its own function

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within this context. Reformism and education, the two major currents that were constitutive and indicative of nineteenth-century social and political debate, infiltrated, shaped and prescribed at the same time the sphere of literature. In the political and religious field, the quest for reform aimed not only at the change of institutions but equally of the intellectual equipment.

Prose writings targeted in the first place at the factual, social world. Factualism is the keyword here. Early writers were concerned with the individual as social person acting within a society in transition. Divergent as the literary paradigms might be, such as dramolette, essay, or novel, the quintessence of the dominant literary movements, and there was more than one, was inspired by the author's interfering and participating in the processes of a changing society. In an attempt to draw a line between them and the ordinary political reformer, a distinction is found in the author's faculty to perceive and depict the real world around him. While this faculty did not come up with any fully-fledged conception of a new aesthetics, it promoted nevertheless a core for a new mode of literary expression by the plenitude of significant though unrelated utterances.

It is then precisely in this way that the image of the writer as educator came to be the most prevalent image that poets and writers of the *nahḍa* literature formed and spread of themselves. This image likewise prescribed the direction that literature was to take later. This was long before the declarations of the Egyptian *al-madrasa al-ḥadītha* (The New School) and its social concern emerging during the early twenties of this century, and before the manifestos of committed writers and their *littérature engagée* (*al-adab al-multazim*) that dominated the cultural scene of the fifties. This vocation of the writer did not only embody the writer's own ambition. It laid ground for the fabric of literature and thus defined one of its main purposes.

But there was more to this idea of the pedagogical vocation. We may move into deeper layers of the authors' vocation digging into more personal and yet universal motives, thus touching upon the anthropological turn in literature indicated earlier. This

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turn, not by coincidence concurred with claims for an authoritative stance of the writer as intellectual.

6. In order to illustrate by way of example what has just been argued, three salient images will be recalled that could be identified as concrete and abstract applications. These were conveyed in the form of a metaphor, a topos, and a figuration. In spite of the fact that the following three examples display different layers and modes of texts, they indeed all convey, to a certain extent and within the limits of their field of meaning and expression, a similar idea.

a) The metaphor of the mirror of thought: Introducing her historical novel *Ḥusn al-ʿawāqib aw al-ghāda al-ẓāhira* (1899), the Lebanese writer Zaynab Fawwāz (ca. 1850-1914) identifies, by use of metaphor, the novel with a »mirror of thoughts« (*mirʾāt al-afkār*). Regarding the novelty of the new genre she states, not without the satisfaction of being among these modern novelists:

> Today, novels belong to the most important publications. Their appearance provide us with a mirror of thoughts.[4]

Continuing to explain more closely the benefits and virtues of the novel she converts, most remarkably, the world of thoughts into the world of sensual perception (*sinnliche Wahrnehmung*) – without herself using this notion. As she puts it in her own words, the novel's quality implies a specific form of sensuality:

> By their gaiety and pleasure, novels expel and disperse clouds of worry and distress. Souls (*al-nufūs*) absorb them for remembrance (*al-dhikrā*) and perception (*iʿtibār*).

In the medium of prose literature the metaphor of the mirror of thoughts is intended here, and has also been used in similar ways by other authors, to unite soul and heart with the mind.

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[4] Zaynab FAWWĀZ, *Riwāyat Ḥusn al-ʿawāqib aw Ghādat al-Ẓāhira*, Azbakiyya: Maṭbaʿa Hindiyya, 1316/1899, 2.

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Although this metaphor refers, strictly speaking, to the literary text, it brings in the author as well. In an effort to ascertain the new novel genre and its virtues, the above qualification is easily expanded to the author's own understanding of the function, and hence the vocation, of the author. Applying this metaphor then, an author like Zaynab Fawwāz injects an emergent sense for the need of depicting, or to hold up the picture, of a reflection of life as it is by the very means of prose writing.

While for a critic of our time this kind of *Widerspiegelungstheorie* seems to be an old-fashioned, rather simplistic theory of literature, for writers of that period it was loaded with a liberating and emphatic content. Referring to such a conception of reality implied an innate tool of social criticism. The underlying paradigm – and here the metaphor links up with the topos and figuration to follow – was a shifting notion of reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and the artist's capacity to grasp it. Furthermore and most important for our question, by referring to such a metaphor – and this is where its strength and emphasis lay – the novelist proves her or his openness to reality and the capacity to perceive it – since she or he is holding the mirror.

b) The topos of the seeker of knowledge: Whereas the first example illuminated and illustrated poignantly the metaphor of the writer as a reflector or interpreter of the actual and tangible, hence the real world, the topos of the seeker of knowledge consciously related to a common and widespread topos of Arab religious and profane writings and *Geistesgeschichte.* There are many examples for this usage, but I shall confine myself here to a most salient though polemic passage, to the Lebanese intellectual and writer Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1804-1887), who transformed the standard topos of the seeker into a central motif for his first, and only, novel, published in 1855. In the great farewell scene of his novel *al-Sāq ʿalā al-sāq fī-mā huwa al-Faryāq*, al-Shidyāq describes the author's task as being the task of transmitting, by way of

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novel or book writing, his own experience as an example, or even inspiration, to others.[5]

In this context, knowledge is confined as a realm that needs to be reevaluated by the individual, preferably by his own experience. In an outspoken manner, al-Shidyāq contrasts his conception of knowledge with an understanding of knowledge as static and absolute. The writer of such a travel-account therefore becomes not only a perceptive observer and chronicler of the world around him. By referring to the possible cleft between what is traditionally transmitted as truthful knowledge and the narrator's own verification, al-Shidyāq the author conceptually conjures his writing as a challenge to dogmatic confinements of knowledge.

For the purposes of displaying his own role of intellectual artist, this is a well chosen strategic site. Al-Shidyāq, who gave greatest credit and importance to study and reading, points to the ambiguous forces and possibilities of writing: The gravity and dignity of its educational purposes, but also the possibility of subverting their usage for manipulating and misguiding the reader or society. In the concrete case here, al-Shidyāq links up his own political experiences, fights, and struggles with journalistic and literary writing, and thus the search for knowledge and, equally important, of its dissemination. This effort and concern is depicted as the author's claim to legitimate opposition. Here emerges, by means of his publications and dissident, differing views, the figure of the artist as intellectual.

c) Finally, the embodiment and emblematic use of the author as social critic: This is a dimension of literature to which literary critics most often relate literature of the period. In a certain measure, it synthesizes the previously mentioned literary features. To point out only one aspect, the preoccupation of literature with its function as social criticism was pushed consciously and playfully to its extreme by some authors. These were staging

[5] See on this issue Nadia AL-BAGDADI, »From Bible Translation to Gospel Critique to Libertine Literature: Historical criticism and social critique in Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq« (forthcoming).

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themselves on the literary scene and thus literally illustrated their self-perceived role in society.

The embodiment of the author as a figure himself occurred most instantly in the iconographical metamorphosis of the author into his double, as in the case of the satirical figure of Abū Naḍḍāra in the satirical journal of the same name, as double or figuration of Yaʿqūb Ṣannūʿ, or similarly ʿAbd Allāh al-Nadīm's personification as *al-Nadīm* in different journals, firstly, in his *al-Tankīt wa-l-Tabkīt* and, more extensively, in his journal *al-Ustādh*.[6] In various settings of the public sphere, the double conforms to the author's political inclinations, with various *dramatis personae* shifting between social critic, public moralist, and political agitator. Duplicating in this way their often clandestine engagements in cultural and social questions, in politics and public affairs, they sought fully to merge aesthetic and literary writing with social criticism – in their very name and self. In the guise of literature and yet in this most mimetic sense, representation of the self and legitimation of the author's view culminate into figurations of the author's mission.

7. The anthropological turn invoked earlier resurfaces in all three forms of literary expressions, demonstrating the centrality of this turn for the author's mission and, consequently in alliance with this, for the genesis of modern prose literature. The principal motive, as exemplified here, consists in the ultimate claim to the validity of the writer's own experience. Furthermore, the authors set forth for their competence as authors whose capacity is to reflect the actual world, expressed by their specific means. Or, to put it differently, they vigorously sought to create literature as a specific sphere of an *Erfahrungswissenschaft*, to use Kant's expression. The commonality of all these instances is based on the explicit reference made to the priority of sensual perception of the soul over the intellect, of experience over dogma, of change over the normative. This preference, however, was not, as in later romantic movements, an absolute rejection or

[6] The whole volumes have been republished in 1985 as *al-Aʿdād al-kāmila li-majallat al-Ustādh,* Cairo: Dār al-Kitābkhāna.

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dismissal of the intellect, of dogma, and of the norm, but sought to sustain a claim for the validity of their literary production. Again, one might like to recall at the end the writer and scholar Jurjī Zaydān, who was one of the first to define the role of literature systematically. He realised that literature had always been distinguished by its nature of providing and possessing a reservoir of the non-official history and of daily life. In other words, he pointed out that literature was at all times, and continues to be, the other side of history.[7]

Conclusion

The mission of authors as seen by themselves reveals poignantly the deeper layers of the emergence of a new kind of literature. The link between the new literary genres and the new generation of authors was clearly and self-assuredly conveyed by means of literary representation as well as by means of didactic or scientific writings. The representation of the self and the legitimization of the authors' view that informed these writers and their vocation can not be abstracted from the cultural and social milieus in which they lived and thought. An abstraction of the history from their thoughts in general and their vocation as authors in particular acquires a false independence from the rest of their ambient culture. Thus it was fully reflected by these authors that the sphere of literature constitutes a specific place where the break of traditional and new modes of thinking was articulated. The function of literature and thus of the role of the author was to understand and depict new times: times that witnessed not only the emergence of new literary genres, but also of new perceptions of the social world.

[7] The whole conception of his masterly literary history (see fn. 1) is based on this contention. See in particular his introduction to the four volume œuvre where he displays this idea explicitly.

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THE POET AND HIS DEMON

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In pre-islamic Arabic tradition the poet was thought to be inspired by *jinns*, and he himself believed, or at least pretended, to be so. It was this supernatural source from where he derived his supernatural power. This applies in particular to the most outstanding and one of the earliest Arabic poets, Imru' al-Qays. A *qaṣīda* filled with powerful self-praise ends with the following line:

tukhayyirunī l-jinnu ash'ārahā
fa-mā shi'tu min shi'rihinna ṣṭafaytu[1]
The demons let me choose their poems
and I select from them whatever I like.

In another poem Imru' al-Qays states:

ana l-shā'iru l-marhūbu ḥawlī tawābi'ī
mina l-jinni tarwī mā aqūlu wa-ta'zifū[2]
I am the awe-inspired poet, surrounded by my suite
of demons, who transmit and sing my poems (or rather: accompany them on the lute).

I need not repeat here the well-known function of the pre-Islamic poet: He was the speaker and the defender of his tribe and the tribe is depicted by him as a bulwark of virtues. He defends these virtues not only with his word, but as a warrior, he boasts of the

[1] *Dīwān*, ed. N.A. Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1969 (Dhakhā'ir al-'Arab; 24), no. 77, u.

[2] *Dīwān*, no. 78, 7.

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lethal strokes of his sword or his lance no less than of the mightiness of his speech.[3]

The power of poetry and therefore its political role were enormous. In his well-known work on poetics, the 11th century writer Ibn Rashīq has a chapter on »Those whom poetry elevated and those whom poetry abated«.[4]

The question of demonic inspiration and therewith of the power of poetry is an important issue also in the very beginnings of Islam. As all of us know, Muḥammad's opponents tried to ridicule him by picturing him as a poet and as *majnūn* »possessed«, or »inspired by *jinns*«. He had to react and he did it by a revelation. In the well-known title-giving passage at the end of Surah 26, »The Surah of the Poets«, the text leaves little honour in the once powerful protagonists of pre-Islamic Arab society:

> 224. As for the poets, those who go astray follow them (*al-ghāwūna yattabi'uhum* meaning, according to a traditional interpretation, the demons),
> 225. Have you not seen that they wander distract in every valley,
> 226. And they say what they do not do,
> 227. Except those who believe and do the right.[5]

The verdict seems intended to minimize the power of the poets or perhaps, by ridiculing them, to undermine it: they roam about in valleys like those maddened by love, they follow (or are followed by) demons,[6] they are notorious liars, except those of them who are believers. Muḥammad's dislike for poetry appears further in a few statements ascribed to him such as »Poetry is the Koran

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[3] Cf. my »Qaṣīda as Discourse on Power and its Islamization: Some reflections«, in: Stefan SPERL & Ch. SHACKLE (eds.), *Qaṣīda Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, vol. i: *Classical Tradition and Modern Meanings*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 451-74.

[4] IBN RASHĪQ, *al-'Umda fī maḥāsin al-shi'r wa-ādābih wa-naqdih*, ed. M.M. 'ABDALḤAMĪD, [n.p.]: Dār al-Jīl, [4]1972, i, 40.

[5] *Al-Qur'ān: a contemporary translation*, by Ahmed ALI, Karachi: Akrah Publishing, 1984.

[6] Cf. the discussion of this verse by Irfan SHAHID, »A Contribution to Koranic Exegesis«, in: George MAKDISI (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, Leiden 1965, 563-80.

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of the devil«, and »Verily, it would be better for you to have your bellies filled with pus and be gnawed by it than to fill them with poetry.«[7] Yet, with all his grief about poets, the Prophet himself could not dispense with the powerful weapon of poetry and sorrounded himself by several bards, who sang his praise and the praise of the nascent religion. How consciously he reckoned upon this power is shown by what Ibn Rashīq reports:

> With regard to the poets who supported him and riposted the polytheists in his stead, like Ḥassān ibn Thābit, Ka'b ibn Mālik, and 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah, the Prophet would say: 'Verily this troup inflicts more damage upon the people of Mecca than a hail of arrows could do!' And to Ḥassān he would say: 'Make a mockery of them! For, by God, your mockery will lacerate them more severely than an attack with arrows in the dawn! And Gabriel, the spirit of sanctity, will be with you!'[8]

Together with the Koranic passage, this Prophetic instruction laid the fundaments for a new Islamic poetics, or rather »poetology«: The Koran attacks the poets for two reasons – their demonic source of inspiration and, as a natural result of the former, their lack of truthfulness, in other words, it undermines the pagan poet's ideology as well as his function. But on the other hand, the above-mentioned instruction points the pious poets to a new source of inspiration – the angel Gabriel – and a new function, the defense and the praise of Islam. This amounts to no less then the sacralization, the Islamization, of the power or »mightiness« of poetry.[9] How Ḥassān ibn Thābit understood his task in the service of the Prophet is evident from many a panegyric poem as quoted in Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*, poems praising the prophet's prowess and satirizing his slain enimies.

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[7] *Al-'Umda*, i, 31/32.

[8] *Al-'Umda*, i, 31.

[9] For the meaning of 'mightiness,' cf. my *Allmacht und Mächtigkeit: Religion und Welt im Islam*, München: C.H. Beck, 1991; for the 'mightiness' of poetry in particular cf. also my *The Feather of Simurgh: The 'Licit Magic' of the arts in medieval Islam*, New York: NYUP, 1988.

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In all likelihood no Arabic poet in Islam took seriously any longer the idea of being inspired by a *jinn*. There is, however, quite a lot of amusing rumour about and, as it were, intertextual playing upon this idea to be found in anecdotal material of Islamic times. Not only the names of the *jinn*s of some outstanding poets such as Imru' al-Qays, al-A'shā (al-Akbar, Maymūn ibn Qays) and others are mentioned. The anecdotes tell of strange and uncanny encounters with these poet-*jinn*s. Their generic name is *hājis*, »whisperer«. The name of Imru' al-Qays's *hājis* is said to have been Lāfiẓ ibn Lāḥiẓ, »Speaker Son of Spectator«, as we learn from the report of a man from Syria, who encountered this genie in the guise of an old man in the court-yard of a tent, when he was out riding on a very quick stallion in search of one of his camels. This *jinn* pretended to be the author of '*qifā nabki*,' the famous *mu'allaqa* by the roaming king of Kinda.

The name of A'shā's *hājis* was Miṣḥal ibn Athātha. In this case, the poet himself met him while on a journey to Ḥaḍramawt. This anecdote is not only moulded as an autobiographical report, it is also richer and more detailed than the anonymous one about Imru' al-Qays's *hājis*. I shall therefore briefly summarize it, notwithstanding its – in all likelihood – fictitious character.

Overcome by a rain, al-A'shā is looking for a shelter and beholds an old man standing in the door of a tent made of (goat) hair. He is well received, and after having learnt his name and that he is on his way to Qays ibn Ma'dīkarib, the old man asks him to recite his panegyric on that king. But no sooner has he ended the first line in which a certain Sumayya is mentioned, than the *jinn* interrupts him asking who this Sumayya is. A'shā answers: 'I don't know her, it is just a name that came into my mind.' The *jinn* shouts: 'Sumayya, come here!' whereupon a little girl of five years appears and the demon has her recite »my *qaṣīda* in which I praise Qays ibn Ma'dīkarib and in the outset of which I mention you!« The girl having recited the whole *qaṣīda* without making the slightest mistake, the *jinn* sends her away and the same procedure repeats itself with the famous satire that starts with the words *Waddi' Hurayrata*. Again the *jinn* asks him: 'Who is Hurayra?', again A'shā admits not to know her, and again the *jinn* has a little girl of that name appear and recite the satire »in which I satirized Abū Thābit Yazīd ibn M-s-h-r [Mus'hir, Mis'har, Musahhir?]«, and she recites it without the slightest mistake. A'shā is so upset that he begins to tremble and the *jinn* consoles him saying: 'Be

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without fear, o Abū Baṣīr. I am your whisperer Miṣḥal ibn Aʾthātha, who throws the poetry upon your tongue. – »So I«, al-Aʿshā continues his report, »calmed down and returned to my senses and it ceased raining.«[10]

The editor of the *Maqāmāt al-Hamadhānī*, Muḥyiddīn ʿAbdalḥamīd, who mentions these anecdotes and a few more (in one of them, the name of the *hājis* of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī is mentioned as Hādhir, »the Chatterer«[11]) closes his long gloss with the following remark:

> I think all these stories are nothing but superstitious lore. For otherwise, how is it that Zuhayr ibn abī Salmā, who is unique in the elegance of his style, the beauty of his composition and in his wisdom, spent a whole year with the refinement of his *qaṣīda*, and that the scholars of literature are agreed in calling four of his poems *ḥawliyyāt* (year poems). We can only wonder at this and find it strange and we must say: This is not the first instance of Arabic superstitions in the time of the *jāhiliyya*. But what is even stranger and confusing indeed is that this stuff has been transmitted by famous men of literature without any comment nor hint at its invalidity.[12]

For a western scholar, the interesting point in the anecdote about al-Aʿshā is rather the way it relates inspiration by a *jinn* with a fictitious – or as many a medieval scholar would have called it, an untrue – element of the poem's content. The *maqāma*, to which ʿAbdalḥamīd has provided this material, is entitled *al-Maqāma al-Iblīsiyya*, »The *maqāma* of the Devil«. In it, Iblīs himself appears as inspirer of poetry. While searching a lost camel of his, the narrator ʿĪsā ibn Hishām meets an old man who involves him in a conversation about poetry, at the end of which he arms:

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[10] *Maqāmāt al-Hamadhānī*, ed. M.M. ʿAbdalḥamīd, Cairo 1962, footnote on pp. 272-75.

[11] *Maqāmāt*, ed. ʿAbdalḥamīd, 274.

[12] *l.c.*, 275.

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fa-mā aḥadun min-a l-shuʿarāʾi illā wa-maʿahū muʿīnun minnā wa-anā amlaytu ʿalā Jarīrin hādhihi l-qaṣīdata wa-anā l-shaykhu Abū Murra[13]

There is no poet who does not have a helper from among us. I dictated the *qaṣīda* [part of which ʿĪsā had quoted] to Jarīr. I am the shaykh Abū Murra [*i.e.*, the Devil].

In difference to the poets mentioned before, Imru' al-Qays and al-Aʿshā, who belong to the pre-Islamic period (even though the Christian al-Aʿshā, who died in 629 or 630, is said to have composed a poem in honour of the Prophet[14]), Hamadhānī thus portrays an Islamic poet as inspired by a *jinn*. And he is not unique in doing so.

In one of his poems Abū Nuwās narrates how once, tortured by his beloved's rebuff, he adressed the devil (Iblīs), asking him for his help and threatening him

if you don't throw love into my friend's breast, while you are capable of doing it,
I shall no longer say any poem, nor listen to any song!
Instead, I shall study the Koran unceasingly,
yes, I shall pass every morning and evening studying it![15]

These verses show what emerges from every line in Abū Nuwās's *dīwān*: his complete lack of public responsibility. He resembles in fact what Hamori called him: a ritual clown.[16]

We may also briefly call into mind here that a number of outstanding musicians of the early Abbasid period pretended to receive their melodies from *jinns*.[17]

Unfortunately, we do not possess the book entitled *Fī ashʿār al-jinn*, »About the poetry of the demons«, written in the tenth century by a certain al-Marzubānī, a very prolific writer whose fifty or so works are enumerated in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*. Al-

[13] *l.c.*, 271.

[14] Cf. SEZGIN, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, ii, 130.

[15] *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, Beirut: Dār Bayrūt, 1406/1986, 291.

[16] A. HAMORI, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, 53.

[17] Cf. *The Feather of Simurgh*, 91.

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Marzubānī wrote a number of most voluminous books about poets, only a very few of which are extant.[18] His book about the poetry of the demons is also referred to in passing by Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī in his *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, or »Epistle on Forgiveness«.

Ibn al-Qāriḥ, the hero of *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, is walking around in paradise where, to his utmost surprise, he encounters not only a number of animals, such as an ass, a few geese etc., but also some outstanding pagan poets of pre-Islamic Arabia. When he asks them why they are there, he receives seemingly serious, but in fact ridiculous answers. All this serves of course to parody certain popular ideas about the here-after. The mockery takes a particular turn when the hero enters a quarter inhabited, as the text informs us, by »the Muslim demons who are mentioned in *Sūrat al-Aḥqāf* and in *Sūrat al-Jinn* ('The Dunes' = no. 46, and 'The Jinns' = no. 72)«.[19] In this quarter, the hero meets an old 'Ifrīt[20] named Khaytaʿūr Abū Hadrash from the tribe of al-Shayṣabān and asks him about the poetry of the *jinn*s, of which al-Marzubānī has made a collection. The answer the demon gives is condescending, even contemptuous. 'All this is unreliable nonsense,' he exclaims. 'Does man know more about poetry than what a cow knows about astronomy or geometry? They have their fifteen metres, beyond which hardly any poet did ever go. We, however, have thousands of metres, that are unknown to man. And only some of our naughty little children inspire them and spit into them of it as much as a few splinters of the *arāk* tree in the Nuʿmān valley. I, however, made *rajaz* verses and *qaṣīda*s thousands of years before God created Adam.' Then Khaytaʿūr mentions Imruʾ al-Qays's famous *qaṣīda 'qifā nabki'* pretending that he could dictate several thousand versions of it, all composed 'by one of our poets who died a heathen and is now working in the storeys of hell.'

For the 'Ifrīt thus, human poetry is mere rubbish, waste of the poetry of the demons, who are the true masters of that art – a strange contradiction to al-Maʿarrī's use of poetry as a means of moral education.[21]

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[18] Cf. SELLHEIM, in *EI²*.

[19] Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-MAʿARRĪ, *L'Epître du pardon*, traduction, introduction et notes par Vincent-Mansour MONTEIL, Paris: Gallimard, 1984 (Collection UNESCO d'œuvres représentatives, Série arabe), 135.

[20] Cf. l'article »'Ifrīt« de J. CHELHOD, in *EI²*, iii, 1050.

[21] Cf. my article »Les deux Poèmes autobiographiques du démon Khaytaʿūr dans 'L'épître du pardon' (Risālat al-ghufrān) d'Abu l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī«, in *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 2 (1999), 111-116.

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It is only in Andalusian poetry that the motif of being inspired by a demon has been used as a symbol for poetic inspiration in a Platonic or Neo-Platonic sense. I am talking of the well-known »Treatise of Familiar Spirits and Demons« (*Risālat al-tawābi' wa-l-zawābi'*) by Ibn Shuhayd (992-1035), which was edited by James Monroe. Ibn Shuhayd, who lived toward the end of al-Manṣūr's reign as member of an aristocratic familiy of Arabic stock, belonged to »a group of young Cordoban aesthetes who were attempting to create a more authentic Andalusian literature that would not only equal, but even surpass that of the east.«[22]

In his treatise the poet is visited by his personal genie, Zuhayr ibn Numayr, who takes him

> on a voyage through the land of the genies, where he will interview the familiar spirits of the major eastern poets and prose writers, as well as those of some contemporary teachers, critics, and pedants from Cordoba, whose spirits are amusingly portrayed in the guise of a herd of asses and a goose with literary pretensions.[23]

Actually he meets the demon of Imru' al-Qays (whose name however is here not Lāfiẓ ibn Lāḥiẓ but 'Utayba ibn Nawfal), of Ṭarafa and Qays ibn al-Khātim among the pre-Islamic poets, and those of Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī, Abū Nuwās and al-Mutanabbī among the modern and neoclassical poets. Every meeting consists of recitations of poetry both of the genie and of Ibn Shuhayd, at the end of which he normally receives an *ijāza*, i.e. is qualified as a good poet. One goal of this *Risāla* is thus self-defence of Ibn Shuhayd against critics among his contemporaries. The other is to show what he thinks is good poetry: In his choice of genies and his reactions to them it becomes clear that he »favours the poet of intuition over the craftsman«,[24]

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[22] MONROE, »Hispano-Arabic Poetry during the Caliphate of Córdoba: Theory and Practice«, in: G.E. VON GRUNEBAUM (ed.), *Arabic Poetry: theory and development: 3rd Levi della Vida Biennial Conference, May 14-16, 1971, Near Eastern Center, University of California, Los Angeles*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973, 138.

[23] *l.c.*, 139.

[24] *Risāla*, ed. MONROE, 22.

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> the few great poets whose work opened a new chapter in the development of Arabic literature are included in the *Risāla*, whereas the myriads of versifiers the medieval Arab world produced are omitted because in each of the poets chosen, talent and the ability to innovate predominate over mere craftsmanship.[25]

Ibn Shuhayd also composed a »Risāla on Poetry« dealing with the more theoretical aspects of poetic composition. From these two *risāla*s emerge the general outlines of Ibn Shuhayd's theory of literary composition. On the one hand, his

> system is based on the doctrine of *i'jāz*, for in it God and the Koran enjoy the supreme and central role. The Koran is the prototype of all literary perfection; from it derive beauty and eloquence.[26]

On the other hand, his theory is based on ideas ultimately enrooted in Greek philosophy, as we shall presently see. According to this part of his theory

> spiritual beauty is communicated to the gifted poet through the inspiration of a supernatural counterpart to his human soul, namely his personal genie, who, although purely spiritual, is sent down to the world of nature to inspire the gifted poet's soul and to reduce the conflicting emotions and chaotic experience of life to order, harmony, and beauty.[27]
>
> Furthermore, the best poet is the one who in composing is able to improvise, for at that moment his soul is in direct contact with the spiritual world, he is 'possessed' by his genie.[28]
>
> Poetry cannot therefore be acquired through instruction; it is the product of inspiration, not of rules.[29]

Monroe points out that this theoretical frame-work is derived from Neo-Platonic ideas, mainly from the so-called »Theology of Aristotle«, which in reality is an Arabic paraphrase of the last

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[25] *Ibid.*, 23.

[26] *l.c.*, 139.

[27] *l.c.*, 139/140.

[28] *l.c.*, 140.

[29] *Ibid.*

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three *Enneads* of Plotinus. He quotes the following lines from this text:

> He must put away and reject the sensory external hearing and employ the intellectual hearing that is inside him, for then he will hear the sublime, pure, splendid and melodious strains of which no hearer grows weary.[30]

One should however be aware of the fact that the idea of communication with the spiritual world is also reminiscent of Arabic Aristotelianism as expounded already in the works of Fārābī and later on in the writings of the Andalusian Aristotelians, in particular Ibn Bājja with his treatise on the union between the universal reason and man (*ittiṣāl al-ʿaql bi-l-insān*).

Now, the interesting thing is that very similar ideas about inspiration are to be found in the works of Persian poets, not of course in all of them alike but, e.g., in the works of Niẓāmī and Ḥāfiẓ, as I will briefly show with quotations taken from their works.

Niẓāmī, the most outstanding representative of Persian epical poetry after Firdawsī, liked to talk of himself and of his poetic vocation in the prologues of his five epics. The portrait he drew of himself clearly included inspiration. Already in his first epos, *Makhẓan ul-asrār* or »Treasury of Secrets«, a didactic work of an ascetical, world-despising attitude, Niẓāmī talks about his concept of true poetry in the prologue.[31] If Arabic tradition saw, whether seriously or jokingly, poets as inspired by *jinn*s, or even as mere speakers of their *jinn*s who were the true poets, Niẓāmī rather elevates the poets into the ranks of superhuman beings, comparing them with nightingales at God's throne, or even affiliating them to angels and prophets:

> Nightingales at the heavenly throne are the poets,
> How could they be compared with other people?

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[30] *Risāla*, 32, note 96.

[31] Cf. my »Nizami über Sprache und Dichtung: Ein Abschnitt aus der 'Schatzkammer der Geheimnisse' eingeleitet, übertragen und erläutert«, in: *Islamwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen Fritz Meier zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, hrsg. von R. GRAMLICH, Wiesbaden 1974, 9-28.

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Sublimated by the fire of their phantasy,
they become the kinsmen of the angels.
The veil of secrets that is poetry,
is a shadow of the veil of prophecy.[32]

In his later poems he often mentions dialogues between him and the voice of his heart, his *hātif* (the Persian word which was to replace the Arabic *hājis*!), or instructions given him by Khiżr. In other words, Niẓāmī's ideas about poetic inspiration resemble to some extent those of Ibn Shuhayd. One difference is, however, very conspicuous. Ibn Shuhayd emphasized the poet's capacity, gained by his inspiration, to create beauty in his verses. Niẓāmī, on the other hand, laid all the stress on the poet's being a mighty sorcerer, whose magic was *siḥr-i ḥalāl*, »legal, licit magic«, because his source of inspiration was divine. Niẓāmī apparently felt the same supernatural power that was being wielded by mystical saints when they wrought their miracles. In a long autobiographical *qaṣīda* he stated:

I am the Shahanshah of nobility by virtue of my noble ideas.
I encompass space and time, thanks to the celestial example.
I am a high-sounding song, a far-ringing bell,
a world-traversing pen, a world-conquering flag.[33]

More than once Niẓāmī asserted that his licit magic was superior to the black magic taught by the angels Hārūt and Mārūt according to the Koran.

All things existent, from old to new
are enthralled by the word-sorcerer that I am.
My art has discouraged the sorcerers.
My magic spell dazzles even the angels.

At dawn my licit magic is my food

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[32] NIẒĀMĪ, *Makhzan al-asrār*, ed. Dastgirdī, Teheran ³1334/1956, 41, 1-3.

[33] NIẒĀMĪ, *Ganjīne-i Ganjawī*, ed. Dastgirdī, Teheran 1335/1957, 116; cf. my »L'Autoportrait de Nizami dans sa qasida 'Roi des Rois'«, in: *La Signification du Bas Moyen Age dans l'histoire et la culture du monde musulman: Actes du 8ème Congrès de l'Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Aix-en-Provence, Septembre 1976*, Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1978, 45-51.

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it will expunge the recipe of Hārūt.[34]

However there is also one decisive difference between his contact with these supernatural beings and the Arab poet's contact with his demon. Niẓāmī would never pretend that his poetry was dictated to him by Khiżr. The role of Khiżr is reduced to an adviser who encourages the poet to take up writing, to tackle a certain topic, and to produce good and new poetry: »If you are potent enough to try virgins, don't content yourself with widows!«, so Khiżr admonishes Niẓāmī in the prologue of the *Iskandarnāma*.[35] He hardly ever gives him any moral instruction. And yet, Niẓāmī's moral engagement must be seen as correlative to these miraculous visits and visions which symbolize the contacts with the invisible world of that poet who said of himself:

The magic of my speech is so accomplished,
that I am called 'Mirror of the Invisible'.[36]

Furthermore, we have to recall the fact that in the *Iskandarnāma*, Niẓāmī starts every chapter by a short invocation of two lines, which are directed to the *sāqī*, or »cup-bearer«, in the first book, entitled *Sharafnāma* (»Book of Honour«), and to the *mughannī*, or »singer«, in the second book, entitled *Iqbalnāma* (»Book of Bliss«). In these invocations, Cup-bearer and Singer appear indeed as something like his muses, but they never talk to him. The wine Niẓāmī asks for is sometimes called the spring of Heaven, sometimes a healing draught for soul and heart, he also calls it the Zoroastrian wine; but from the very beginning he makes it clear that he does not mean real but metaphorical wine: He means the wine of ecstasy (*bīkhudī*) and his cup-bearer is the one promised by God (a clear hint to the Koranic verse *saqāhum rabbuhum sharāban ṭahūran*, »their Lord will give them a purest draught to

[34] *Makhzan al-asrār*, 45, 8.

[35] *Sharafnāma*, ed. Dastgirdī, Teheran ²1335/1957, i, 52.

[36] *Laylī ū Majnūn*, ed. Dastgirdī, Teheran ²1333/1955, 40, 11.

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drink«[37]). Similarly, the musician is asked to refresh, recreate, cheer on him by his tunes. So these addresses have the double function of something like a ritual reminiscent of the invocation of the muses at the beginning of Greek epics, as well as of an ornament the repetition of which serves structural goals as well.

An equally interesting verse is the one in which Niẓāmī compares his state of mind while in a creative phase to that of the virgin Mary awaiting the birth of Jesus:

> My mind is not a woman, but a fire-lighter,
> yet, like Mary, it is a pregnant virgin.
> Why should it need a husband,
> while it strikes (sparks) of stone and iron?
> Virgin-like words of such charming beauty
> cannot easily be borne from (mere) thought.
> To compose virgin-like poetry means to pierce one's soul.
> Not everybody is apt to create poetry.[38]

Jalāluddīn Rūmī has taken up this idea in a brillant quatrain which runs:

> When my talent found life through the spark of contemplation
> it ushered the bride of poetry into the tent.
> In every verse [*bayt*, also meaning »tent«] a thousand ladies appeared, each one like Mary a pregnant virgin.[39]

In both cases, what is the gist of the statement remains unsaid: the way the pregnancy of Mary comes about also for a Muslim believer. In other words, both poets compare the inspiration which engenders their poetry with the procreation of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

In the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, the unquestionably greatest master of Persian lyrics, the ideas about inspiration reappear in principle, even though with some noteworthy modifications, which are

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[37] Surah 76:21, transl. A. ALI.

[38] *Sharafnāma*, ed. Dastgirdī, 47, 5-8.

[39] RŪMĪ, *Dīwān*, ed. Furūzānfar, Teheran 1336/1957, *rubā'ī* no. 906.

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perhaps due to the generic difference. First of all, Ḥāfiẓ calls himself a »bird at God's throne«,[40] or a »bird of the rose-garden of sanctity (*ṭāyir-i gulshan-i quds*)«,[41] an evident allusion to Niẓāmī's nightingales at God's throne. Another metaphor used by Ḥāfiẓ for describing his contact with the metaphysical sphere is »sufi of the cloister of the world of sanctity«. But most important for our context is the way Ḥāfiẓ labels his inspirer by various names. He calls him (or it) the »voice of the invisible world (*hātif-i ghayb*)«,[42] but also the »angel Surūsh«, sometimes in the amplified form *surūsh-i ʿālam-i ghayb,* »the Surūsh of the invisible world«,[43] Surūsh being a relic from Zoroastrianism, assimilated by Islamic thought to Gabriel who in his turn had been identified with the active reason by Ibn Sīnā and other Islamic philosophers. In these verses, Ḥāfiẓ stresses the idea that the message of Surūsh requires a listener who is »initiated« (*āshnā*) and »intimate/trustworthy« (*maḥram*). But Surūsh in Ḥāfiẓ' poetry is also related to the Zoroastrian convent as a place where one drinks wine and Surūsh just brings the happy news that God is merciful and forgiving, also with respect to the sin of wine-drinking.[44]

Neither Niẓāmī nor Ḥāfiẓ thus connect their intrinsic message with the names of their inspirers. They just stand for their contact with the invisible world, for a new form of inspiration which I would like to call sacralized, even though Ḥāfiẓ steadily undermines this view by his apparent frivolities. Some remarkable ideas about the poet's divine or – in the negative case – demoniac inspiration and, accordingly, his either wholesome or disastrous role in society have been propounded in the writings,

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[40] *Dīwān*, ed. M. Qazwīnī/Q. Ghani, Teheran [n.d.], 332, 10 = ed. P.N. Khānlarī, Teheran 1359/1981, 324, 9.

[41] *Dīwān*, ed. Qazwīnī/Ghani, 317, 2 = ed. Khānlarī, 310, 2.

[42] QG 90, pu. = Khānlarī 96, 6.

[43] QG 37, 3 = Khānlarī 37, 3.

[44] Cf. my »Zarathustra – Hafiz – Goethe. Intuition, influence, intertextualité«, in: *Colloquium Helveticum* (forthcoming).

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and in many a *ghazal* – by the modern Muslim philosopher-poet Muḥammad Iqbāl.[45]

Finally, we should point also to a modern text which in a way continues the old tradition of sacralized inspiration. It is a text by the well-known Persian writer Jalāl-i Āl-i Aḥmad, entitled »Epistle of the apostle Paul to the writers« (*Risāla-i Pūlus-i rasūl be-kātibān*).[46] The epistle is presented as having recently been discovered by a Nestorian priest on the margin of a Syrian manuscript containing the gospel of Barnabas, all of which is of course mere fiction. The text comprises four short chapters and is written in a very particular style, reminiscent rather of the beginning of the gospel of St. John than of the style of St. Paul's epistles. I quote the beginning and a few lines from the last chapter:

> This is the epistle of Paul the Apostle, the servant of our Father, who is in Heaven, to the writers. Paul the Apostle, who was called to be apostle and selected for the gospel of God not by any man nor by human means, but by the father, who resuscitated the son from the dead, – (Paul) to the writers, authors and copyists, the clerks, inquirers and accountants, the panegyrists and *rajaz*-poets, the historians and translators, the traditionalists and the avant-garde:
>
> In the word of the Son of man it is written: [... – here follows the beginning of the gospel of St. John about the word that was in the beginning with God].[47]

Imitating the style of these verses about Jesus as the word of God, Āl-i Aḥmad gives a symbolic history of the word, the word that was betrayed and imprisoned. But the true writer is he who, even if he is imprisoned, will not betray the word, for the writer's life is brief, but the word is eternal.

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[45] For Iqbāl cf. A. SCHIMMEL's standard work, *Gabriel's Wing: A study into the religious ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, Leiden: Brill, 1963 (Studies in the History of Religions – Supplements to *NUMEN*; 6).

[46] Cf. A. SCHIMMEL, *Muhammad Iqbal: Prophetischer Poet und Philosoph*, München: Diederich, 1989 (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe; 82), 113 ff.

[47] In the volume *Zan-i ziyādī* by the same author, Teheran 1977, 9-22.

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In the fourth chapter, Āl-i Aḥmad implores his addressees to assume their responsibility as writers. In their breasts they should be open for every human grief, and in their hearts they should have ready an answer for every unknown heart's throbbing. They should never sell »the word« for the sake of bread. »If you have to sell, rather sell your arm, but not the pen, or even sell your body, but not the word!« The very last phrases run as follows:

> O writer, give the joyful message of beauty, goodness, brotherhood and peace. In your word console those in mourning, support the weak and keep a sword in the face of tyrants, be an angel of wealth for the poor and a demon of dearth and famine for the wealthy. For the more our pains grow in the word, our comfort will increase in the word (*dar kalām*). So it be for years to come, so it be for centuries. Amen.[48]

All this sounds remarkably old-fashioned when looked at from the angle of western contemporary writing. Perhaps a western writer should invent a similar recommendation and put it in the mouth of Buddha?

[48] *l.c.*, 22.

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The Mission of the Palestinian Autobiographer*

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Even as late as 1991, the majority of the contributors to a collection of essays entitled *Middle Eastern Lives. The Practice of Biography and Self-Narrative*[1] denied the existence of any Arabic autobiography worth the name, enumerating a number of factors working against it. They claimed that a) the Arabic autobiography lacked historical neutrality and detachment, b) the examplary and typical was to be regarded more important than the individual, and c) introspection and self-exposure were lacking. While it is certainly true that autobiography in the modern sense of the word – »a retrospective prose story that a real person relates about his or her own existence, in which he or she gives emphasis to his or her individual life, and to the history of his or her personality in particular«[2] – was invented in Europe, autobiography today flourishes in Arabic as much as in European and American literatures. Like Arabic literature in general, Arabic autobiography passed across a rapid development in the course of the 20th century. Starting with Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's *al-Ayyām* (The Days, 1929),

* I wish to express my thanks to the Volkswagen and the Minerva Foundations, the Wissenschaftskolleg (Berlin) and the Van-Leer-Institute (Jerusalem), which latter invited me for two academic years during which this study could be concluded.

[1] Cf. Martin KRAMER (ed.), *Middle Eastern Lives: The practice of biography and self-narrative*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991.

[2] Philippe LEJEUNE, *Le pacte autobiographique*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975, 14.

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which was to influence both novel and autobiography, it went through a number of successive, but sometimes overlapping stages. I will briefly recall them, as far as they concern the autobiographer, his concept of self and, linked with it, his mission.

I. Arabic autobiography

The first stage I would call the stage of exemplarity. Both in terms of an exemplary life and an example of one's generation, autobiographers, involved actively and passively in the transition from – as they conceived it – tradition to modernity, clearly wrote for didactic and historical purposes alike. Traditional modesty and modern milieu-theory, however, called for an emphasis on one's formation by rather than of society. »Why shouldn't I write the history of 'My Life'«, Aḥmad Amīn states at the outset of his autobiography *Ḥayātī* (My Life, 1950), »perhaps it may portray one aspect of our generation and describe one type of our life, perhaps it may benefit a reader today and help a historian tomorrow, for I have been concerned to describe my surroundings as they affected myself, and myself as I was affected by my surroundings.«[3]

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[3] Aḥmad AMĪN, *Ḥayātī*, Cairo: Maktabat al-nahḍa al-miṣriyya, 1989, 6-7. The didactic impulse is also apparent in Jurjī ZAYDĀN, as the translator of his autobiography, Thomas PHILIPP, points out: »Even though Zaidān was not planning to publish his autobiography just then, he was aware, while writing it, that it contained 'many lessons beneficial for the youth.' In other words Zaidān projected his belief in self-improvement with all its concomitant values of perseverance, hard work, discipline, etc., into the narration of his early life.« Thomas PHILIPP, *Ǧurǧī Zaidān: His life and thought*, Beirut 1979 (Beiruter Texte und Studien; 3), 15. In a similar vein, but already emphasizing his active participation in the creation of the new society, Salāma MŪSĀ claims: »In this autobiography I do not merely describe the story of my own life. In giving the story of my life, and in describing how my personality developed and how I educated myself, I intend to give prominence to my own rôle in the destruction of the bridges that linked our present to the Dark Ages that were our past, and in the effort to connect the history of tomorrow, full of bright progress and couragious vision... This is the history in which I lived, and the history of the generation of which I was a member.« Salāma MŪSĀ, *Tarbiyat Salāma Mūsā*, Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Khānjī bi-Miṣr, 1958, 2.

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The second stage is marked by a shift from exemplarity to individuality. Individuality goes along with a sense for uniqueness, but at the same time it implies a greater awareness of one's active role in history, if only at the margins of society. Salāma Mūsā, in his *Tarbiyat Salāma Mūsā* (The Education of Salāma Mūsā, 1947), displayed both, a clear awareness of his uniqueness as a Copt and a socialist as well as having a historical responsibility:

> The main motive for my writing this autobiography may well be that I am aware of standing, to a large extent, isolated from the society in which I live, aware of being out of step with the trend of its belief, its sympathies, and its prospects. In this respect, therefore, this life story will be the justification of my attitude over and again the society to which I belong, an attitude of protest and opposition. I am writing in order to settle my account with history.[4]

Individuality, however, reached its peak only in a third stage, when the ban over subjectivity was lifted.[5] This was achieved in *Sijn al-ʿumr* (The Prison of Life, 1964) of Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, who was the first to cut the link between autobiography and biography as a historical record. He gave up the linear, chronological form of narration, in order to adopt a radically subjective standpoint:

> This has been a portion of a life. I did not intend it to be a narrative of it, so I did not keep to the familiar way of relating a biography, following a chronological order of events. Rather, I have in most instances mingled times and occurrances in order to reach straight at the heart of the matter sought here – namely, the uncovering of something relevant to the formation of this nature of mine, behind the prison bars of which I have been thrashing all my life.[6]

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[4] MŪSĀ, *Tarbiya*, 3.

[5] Tetz ROOKE points to the fact that Salāma MŪSĀ was the first author to employ the term *sīra dhātiyya*. Cf. Tetz ROOKE, *In my Childhood: A study of Arabic autobiography*, Stockholm 1997 (Stockholm Oriental Studies; 15), 66-67.

[6] Tawfīq AL-ḤAKĪM, *Sijn al-ʿumr*, Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1990, 228.

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Al-Ḥakīm still believed to be able to reach »straight at the heart of the matter«, to reveal his inmost self or his »motor«, as he calls it. The next and fourth stage was achieved when Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, in his *al-Bi'r al-ūlā* (The First Well, 1987), implicitly acknowledged the Freudian concept of the subject or Ego, which is not even master in its own house. The rational, organized self with a stable identity is dismissed on terms of the functions of memory:

> Childhood stories are stories of events which have become a blend of memory and dream, of existential intensity and poetic trance, a blend in which the rational and the irrational intertwine.[7]

Shortly before, however, Idwār al-Kharrāṭ, in his *Turābuhā Za'farān* (City of Saffron, 1986) had already moved on to a fifth stage. He seems to have adopted not only the psychoanalytic theory with its denial of a stable memory, but rather the postmodern, Lacan-based denial of a subject or self. If, however, the Self is split into many from the beginning, autobiography, then, with its aim of giving a life a coherent meaning, is nothing but a self-invention:

> These writings are not an autobiography, nor anything like it; the flights of fancy, the artifice herein, bear them far beyond such bounds. They are illusions – incidents and visions – figures; the kernels of events which are but dreams; the clouds of memories which should have taken place; but never did. More perhaps a 'becoming' than a life; not my life.[8]

One critic has called Kharrāṭ's autobiographical novel a »biography of a city«[9] (Alexandria), and this, indeed, seems to be the latest trend in Arabic literature, judging not only from Mu-

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[7] JABRĀ, *Bi'r*, 14 (for bibliographical data see footnote no. 10).

[8] Idwār AL-KHARRĀṬ, *Turābuhā za'farān*, Cairo: Dār al-mustaqbal al-'arabī, 1986, preliminary remark.

[9] Cf. Mona M. MIKHAIL, »Man and the Sea: Intertextual perspectives in Idwār al-Kharrāṭ's *Turābuhā Za'farān*«, in: I.J. BOULLATA (ed.), *The Arabic Novel since 1950: Critical essays, interviews, and bibliography*, 191-203.

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ḥammad Shukrī's two-volumed autobiography, *al-Khubz al-ḥāfī* (For Bread Alone) and *al-Shuṭṭār* (The Rogues), in which his Moroccan native town Tanger plays a major part. There are other works, such as Khālid Ziyāda's *Yawm al-jum'a yawm al-aḥad* (Friday, Sunday) about his Lebanese home-town Tripolis, Liyāna Badr's *Nujūm Arīḥā* (The Stars of Jericho) about the Palestinian Jericho, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf's *Sīrat madīna – 'Ammān fī al-arba'īnāt* (Biography of a City – Amman in the fourties) about Jordan's Amman. In these, the protagonist is no longer at the center of attention, but is only part of the city's living body and the medium by which the city of the past is brought back to life. This, then, would be the fulfilment of what post-modernism has diagnosed as the disappearance of the subject and the end of autobiography, respectively.

II. Palestinian autobiography

But where, on this scale of six levels, is Palestinian autobiography[10] situated? Certainly, Palestinian autobiography, like the

[10] In the following, I give a brief list of the authors and their works I have consulted: 1. Fawwaz TURKI was born 1940 in Haifa into the family of a small shop-keeper. In 1948 the family fled to Beirut, where Turki was brought up in a refugee camp. After world-wide travels and several years in an Indian ashram, he moved to the USA and became a PLO activist there. Today he is a decided critic of the PLO. He published three versions of his autobiography: *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian in exile*, New York/London: MR Press, 1972, 1974; *Soul in Exile: Lives of a Palestinian revolutionary*, New York/London: MR Press, 1988; *Exile's Return: The making of a Palestinian American*, New York: The Free Press, 1994. – 2. Hishām SHARĀBĪ is the 1927 born son of a well-to-do family with origins in Jaffa. After his family had fled to Beirut in 1948, he himself had to leave Lebanon because of his ties with the Syrian National Party under Anṭūn Sa'āda. In the USA, he made a distinguished career as professor for political philosophy. His plans to resettle in Beirut in 1975 were frustrated by the civil war. He wrote two autobiographies: *Al-jamr wa l-rimād* (Embers and Ashes): *Dhikrayāt muthaqqaf 'arabī*, Beirut: Dār al-ṭalī'a, 1978; *Ṣuwar al-māḍī* (Images from the Past): *Sīra dhātiyya*, Beirut: Dār Nilsūn al-Suwayd, 1993. – 3. Fadwā ṬŪQĀN was born in 1917 into a land-owning family in Nablus. Revolting against most members of the strictly patriarchal household, she identified only with one of her older brothers, the nationalist poet Ibrāhīm. Starting with romantic poetry, later she became one of the leading Palestinian national poets. She still lives in Nablus today. Ṭūqān published her auto-

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autobiographies of the last and newest stage of Arabic autobiography in general, focuses on the place, be it Jerusalem, Jaffa, Bethlehem, Nablus or Akko. The »subject in crisis«, however,

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biography in two volumes: *Riḥla jabaliyya riḥla ṣa'ba* (Mountainous Journey, Difficult Journey), Amman: Dār al-shurūq li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī', 1985; *Al-riḥla al-aṣ'ab* (The Most Difficult Journey), Amman: Dār al-shurūq li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī', 1993. – 4. Hala SAKAKINI is the 1924 born daughter of the leading Palestinian intellectual in the thirties and fourties, Khalīl Sakākīnī. After her childhood and youth in Rehavia, the German Colony, and Katamon in Jerusalem, in 1948 she fled with her family to Cairo. In 1953 Hala and her sister returned to Palestine and started teaching in Ramallah. They are still residents of Ramallah. Sakakini's autobiography bears the title: *Jerusalem and I: A personal record*, Amman 1987, 1990. – 5. Jabrā Ibrāhīm JABRĀ was born in 1920 into a poor family in Bethlehem. After having received his education in Jerusalem, he studied English literature in Oxford. He spent all his adult life in Baghdad, where he taught English literature at the university. Jabrā is one of the most distinguished Palestinian writers of short stories and novels. His autobiography was published in two volumes: *Al-bi'r al-ūlā* (The First Well): *Fuṣūl min sīra dhātiyya*, London: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, 1987; *Shāri' al-amīrāt* (The Street of the Princesses): *Fuṣūl min sīra dhātiyya*, Beirut: Al-mu'assasa al-'arabiyya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1994. – 6. Yūsuf HAYKAL was born in 1907 into a wealthy family of merchants in Jaffa. After having finished his education in Jaffa and Jerusalem, he studied law and society in both France and England. In the forties, he was appointed mayor of Jaffa and remained in this post until 1948. Later he served the Jordanian government as an ambassador in several countries. Haykal wrote his autobiography in two volumes: *Ayyām al-ṣibā* (Days of Childhood): *Ṣuwar min al-ḥayāt wa-ṣafaḥāt min al-tārīkh*, Amman: Dār al-jalīl, 1988; *Rabī' al-ḥayāt* (The Spring of Life), Amman: Dār al-Jalīl, 1989. – 7. Iḥsān 'ABBĀS is the 1920 born son of a poor peddler living in a village near Haifa. Like most of the other male autobiographers, he went to a secondary school in Jerusalem. Being one of the leading Arab historians of classical Arabic literature, he has taught at the universities of Khartoum, Cairo, and Beirut. In 1986 he moved to Amman. He published his autobiography under the title: *Ghurbat al-rā'ī* (The Exile of the Shepherd): *Sīra dhātiyya*, Amman: Dār al-shurūq, 1996. – 8. Hanan ASHRAWI was born in 1946 in Ramallah into a middle-class family. She studied English literature in Lebanon and America, but also wrote about Palestinian literature. Being back in the Westbank, she found her way into politics and helped to shape the conference of Madrid in 1991. Today she works for the Palestinian Authority as its minister of education. Her autobiographical account bears the title: *This Side of Peace*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. – 9. Sumaya FARHAT-NASER was born in 1948 into a peasant family of Birzeit. After having accomplished her university education in Germany, she started to teach biology at the university of Birzeit. During the Intifada, she organized discussion-groups of Jewish and Arab women. Today she is the director of the Jerusalem Center for Women. With the help of a Swiss journalist she published her autobiography: *Thymian und Steine: Eine palästinensische Lebensgeschichte*, Basel: Lenos Verlag, 1995.

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which stands behind it, is not to be understood in post-modern terms. The crisis experienced by the subject is neither a philosophical nor a psychological crisis; it is political. In Palestinian autobiographies the place replaces the essence: thus, the original question of autobiography – »who am I and how did I become what I am?« – is turned into a modified »where am I and where do I belong to?«

Salma Khadra al-Jayyusi unequivocally distinguishes between two types of Palestinian literature, and doing so she directly refers to the question of place. According to her, there is a Palestinian literature from within and another from outside:

> When we speak of 'contemporary' Palestinian literature, we are, in fact, immediately faced with two literatures: that of writers still living on the soil of the historical land of Palestine, and that of writers living in the diaspora.[11]

What may be true for Palestinian literature in general, however, would lead only to a superficial division of autobiography in particular. All Palestinian autobiographers, whether they live on the Westbank or abroad, express a general feeling of a non-identity, a not-being-in-place, a not-belonging: exile.

Exile (*ghurba*) is a dominant notion used even on one of the title-pages – Iḥsān ʿAbbās' *Ghurbat al-rāʿī* (The Exile of the Shepherd). Yet, ʿAbbās disappoints in a highly ironical fashion the expectations of his readers. In other words, he does not refer to the factual exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians after the war of 1948, but to the virtual disappearance of the eternal Palestinian peasant during the British mandate. Already in the early fourties, the romantic figure of the shepherd turned into a salaried worker:

> I have to admit that I was very much attracted by the pastoral side in Latin and English poetry... In my eyes the peasants became shepherds and the countryside was 'Arcadia,' their allegorical dwelling place. Reality was something else, and of course I knew of the contradictions of rural life, which was not consistent

[11] Salma Khadra JAYYUSI (ed.), *Modern Palestinian Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 4.

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> with the allegory at all. It was a hard and uncomfortable life, endowed with restrictive rules, and the language of the people irritated by its monotony... But in the years of the Second World War I became angry with the peasants, when I witnessed them abandoning the soil in order to work for the British army...[12]

Other autobiographers, however, link the notion of exile directly with the wars of 1948 and 1967, respectively. Those who left Palestine in 1948 became Palestinians through exile:

> I just know [writes Fawwaz Turki] that for my own generation of Palestinians our last day in Palestine was the first day that we began to define our Palestinian identity.[13]

The same holds true in the opposite direction; those who stayed in the Westbank and Gaza became exiles by the Israeli occupation of the Six-day-war: »After the 1967 war«, Hanan Ashrawi states,

> the 'Palestinian Question' – whether we would ever have our land restored to us, or at least a portion of it – had become a personal issue. With the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, it had hit home, literally. It was no longer my parents' legacy or an abstract historical or political concept. It became my burden, my responsibility. Overnight, I had become an 'exile,' and most of my family remained under occupation.[14]

The awareness of exile does not only affect the perception of the self, but extends to the autobiographers' audiences as well. Whether the autobiographers write in Arabic, English, German, Swedish or Hebrew, they always address a public perceived of as indifferent to their cause and to be informed, convinced and won over. In the following I have therefore taken into consideration not only Palestinian autobiographies from abroad, mainly America, but also some autobiographies written in languages other than Arabic, mainly in English.

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[12] ʿABBĀS, *Ghurba*, 139-40.

[13] TURKI, *Soul*, 18.

[14] ASHRAWI, *Side*, 19. – Cf. also ṬŪQĀN, *Riḥla II*, 165.

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III. The mission of Palestinian autobiography

Unlike Egyptian autobiography, which goes back to the twenties of our century or to even earlier times,[15] Palestinian autobiography does not have a long history of its own. Together with other forms of literary personal account, Palestinian autobiography started to boom only in the second half of the eighties. Roughly at the time of the outbreak of the Intifada (1987), the declaration of Algiers (1988) and the conference of Madrid (1991), a whole number of individuals, independently from each other, set out to publish their personal life-stories in order to claim a distinct Palestinianness, a personal attachment to the place, and even a national consciousness.

According to the autobiographers, or at least some of them, a Palestinian intellectual after 1948 would pass through three different stages. At first, there was an identification with the Palestinian fighter of the thirties and fourties, long before the establishment of the Fatah and the glorification of the *fidā'ī*, the secularized version of the *mujāhid*.

It is especially Turki who refers to the myth which was built around the fighters and which seems to prefigure a Palestinian national consciousness:

> Though my father was never a *mojahed*, he transmitted their ethos to me. The mythology of the *mojahedeen* is an integral part of our oral history. Every Palestinian child who sits on his parents' knees listens, entranced, to the tales of men who defied the hated British and later the Zionists. How bands of *mojahedeen* came to the village during the 1936-39 revolt, with guns and checkered headdress, and the women came out to the square and gave them flowers and bags with food and the children pointed at them. Suddenly a woman would stand close to them, put her hand over her mouth, clasping her lips with two fingers, and start ululating. The other women joined in and the square, the whole village, reverberated with the resonant sounds. The men in the village became reverential, their voices hushed, as they greeted the *mojahedeen*. 'Ahlan Wa Sahlan, Ahlan Wa Sahlan fi el Abtal'

[15] Cf., for instance, Thomas PHILIPP, »The Autobiography in Modern Arab Literature and Culture«, in: *Poetics Today* 14 (1993), 573-604.

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(Welcome, Welcome to the brother heroes). And before leaving, the fighters were joined by some of the young men, who would leave the village fields to live in the hills with them.[16]

The second stage was reached when the autobiographers entered the arena of political activism. Sharābī, in the fourties, was a staunch supporter and close confidant of Anṭūn Saʿāda, the founder of the »Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party«, whose aim was a socialist regime in a rebuilt Greater Syria, including Palestine, Lebanon and Transjordan.[17] When the party was banned and, shortly afterwards, Saʿāda was captured and sentenced to death, Sharābī managed to escape via Damascus with the help of his influential father, who provided him with a Jordanian passport. From abroad, Sharābī continued to write articles on behalf of the party's cause, but after 1955 he lost his contacts. From 1967 onward he joined the Palestine Resistance Movement, especially during his one-year-stay in Beirut in 1970. Like many other Palestinian intellectuals, however, he stayed aloof from the inner, decision-making circles of the Movement.[18]

Turki, too, belonged in his youth to the »Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party« – obviously at a time, when Sharābī had already quit it –,[19] not so much because of his pro-Syrian, but rather because of his anti-Nasserist feelings. In the seventies, however, he became one of the staunchest supporters of the PLO in America and, in his own words, »the model activist and lecturer of choice, a kind of legend actually.«[20] Moreover, he published articles in American newspapers and Palestinian periodicals, edited the »Arab Report«[21] and was present at all major PLO-events.[22] After 1982, however, witnessing how the PLO tried to profit by the

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[16] TURKI, *Soul*, 30-31.

[17] Referring to her father, SAKAKINI, *Jerusalem*, 38, expresses a similar idea.

[18] SHARĀBĪ, *Ṣuwar*, 25-26.

[19] TURKI, *Disinherited*, 59.

[20] TURKI, *Return*, 10.

[21] *Ibid.*, 193-94.

[22] *Ibid.*, 190, 211.

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events of Sabra and Shatila, he adopted a rather cynical attitude towards his mission.[23]

At the third and final stage, writing personal account literature emerged as an appropriate means of self-expression, which obviously holds true for all of the autobiographers, but is only commented upon by Sharābī and Turki. For Sharābī the writing of his autobiography brought about relief from the strain of exile, whereby the use of the Arabic language itself was a political rather than a cultural manifestation. Having written most of his academic books in English, he confesses:

> For an exiled person like me, writing is the remaining homeland. Therefore I feel always in exile, when I have to write in English. Despite my constant struggle with classical Arabic, I love it deeply.[24]

Turki, on the other hand, stresses the political impact of writing his autobiography, but for him, too, writing has an existential quality:

> I supported the rebels in their drive against the mainstream leadership; that didn't work. I went to Mecca to do the Hajj; that didn't work. I called for a struggle of blood and fire against the enemy; that didn't work... Finally I withdrew to write... about the mythology of hope of my generation, its nostalgia for the absolutes of the battle of Karameh in 1968 and for the metaphoric necessity of the future tense in our life of struggle.[25]

Writing for the sake of »the future tense in our life« is, however, in both Sharābī's and Turki's autobiographies accompanied by the feeling that »our future has become our past«. In other words, writing one's autobiography is a highly ambiguous ven-

[23] *Ibid.*, 10. – On September 16, 1982, Christian Falangists murdered under the eyes of the occupying Israeli forces hundreds of Palestinian civilians in the two camps of Sabra and Shatila, which were located in the western part of Beirut.

[24] SHARĀBĪ, *Ṣuwar*, 32.

[25] TURKI, *Soul*, 202. The battle of Karameh on March 21, 1968, during which several brigades of Israeli troops crossed the Jordan River to attack Palestinian military bases in the abandoned town of Karameh, became one of the foundation myths of the modern Palestinian commando movement.

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ture. On the one hand, writing is not so much a political act but a statement of accounts, an act of self-justification. In both Turki and Sharābī a highly resigned and pessimistic tone is to be heard when they contemplate their political past. Sharābī:

> We wished to exchange the individual life in the stagnant family environment that we grew up in, for a life in the midst of society, wide and rich. So we followed the road of party work, and we paid the price for our meddling in politics dearly. I speak not only of the Syrian Nationalists, but also of the Communists, the Baathists, and all the others who joined the parties and ideological movements that appeared during those periods. Where are they now, my comrades and the children of that generation, the avant garde of that new generation? Their parties have been shattered and fragmented, and before all the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, which was the first to pay the price of revolution. Now we, the children of that generation, are in our forties and fifties. Our lives lie behind us and our future has become our past. What did we achieve with our struggle? Sometimes I tell myself that everything was our own fault, that we are the ones responsible for what happened. We had the opportunities to avoid the catastrophes that we experienced. But then I reconsider and say: there was no other way! Our fault was not that we made a revolution, but that we didn't prepare ourselves enough, neither with theory nor with arms.[26]

And Turki:

> There is nothing else to do [but to write]. I am forty-five years old and I find no emotional logic in my retrospections, no relevance in my dogmatic certitudes. A new generation, bringing with it a new order of reality, an alternative order of meaning, is emerging to supplant ours. No individuals who hold themselves responsible, as I do, and no generation that holds itself responsible, as mine must, for the monstrous evil of Sabra and Shatila can make their reality durable by any means other than final release from that evil.[27]

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[26] SHARĀBĪ, *Jamr*, 202.

[27] TURKI, *Soul*, 202.

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Resignation is, however, not the last resort of the autobiographers. At the same time a strong feeling for continuation prevails, for the necessity not to give up, to keep on struggling. This sense, however, expresses itself in images which are not taken from the political sphere, but are borrowed from nature and metaphysics. As these images point back to the natural characteristics of the landscape (the rocky soil) and to religious concepts of the region (biblical and gnostical elements), they seem to present steadfastness as an intrinsic part of the Palestinian personality.[28]

Turki, who in his personal classification of the Palestinians places himself among the »defeated«,[29] nevertheless keeps up his hope for the future:

> It seems only yesterday that I was twenty-five and the battle of Karameh thrust me and my generation into a life of struggle... Though we have failed in struggle, our failure is not a bastard mode of existence. Though we have died in life, this death is not a negation of our nexus of being. Nothing dies without leaving its seed behind... It matters not that we, the native people of Palestine, keep carrying bricks to Babel, year after year, generation after generation, in a desperate, monotonous reach for the heavens, although we know the tower may never be completed. What does matter is to proceed.[30]

In a similar vein, only with a more feminist aim in view, Ṭūqān claims:

> A seed does not see the light without first cleaving a difficult path through the earth. This story of mine is the story of the seed's battle against the hard rocky soil; a story of struggle, deprivation and enormous difficulties... I should like to add here that the struggle for self-fulfilment is sufficient to satisfy our hearts and give meaning and worth to our lives. There is no shame in losing the battle. The main thing is not to give up and lay down

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[28] This observation goes well with the fact that steadfastness (*ṣumūd*) indeed has become a catchword for the Palestinian experience. Cf. for instance Raja SHEHADEH, *The Third Way: A journal of life in the West Bank: Between mute submission and blind hate – I choose the third way. I am Sámid*, London: Quartet Books, 1992.

[29] TURKI, *Disinherited*, 9.

[30] TURKI, *Soul*, 203.

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> our arms. The powers of darkness, whether metaphysical, social or political, challenge us in order to destroy us. But, despite our weakness, we confront these powers with stubborn pride.[31]

Given the three stages of armed struggle, political action and autobiographical writing, the struggle with the pen is the armed struggle continued with different means. Therefore, the objectives of the struggle can be expected to remain the same. And indeed, if we look at the agenda of Palestinian writers – not only autobiographers –, we find several variations running around the theme of »nation and narration« (Homi K. Bhabah). In an interview, the Palestinian poet and activist Maḥmūd Darwīsh, for example, articulated the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in terms of a struggle over the construction of the master narrative of place, when he claimed: »Whoever writes the story [of the place] first, owns the place.«[32] The same holds true for the Palestinian autobiographers, who articulate a number of tasks which are meant to eventually serve the mission of Palestinian autobiography: the creation of a Palestinian nation state.

The first task of autobiography is to set right the distorted Palestinian history since, as Turki states, »the country I come from [is] now be paraded naked in the streets of Western history books.«[33] However, autobiography does not aim at the narration of big events; rather, it is a microhistory, a history from within, an intimate history. History writing proper, Muḥammad As'ad claims in his autobiographical novel *Atfāl al-nadā* (Children of the Dew), has focused on Israeli history and has overlooked the Palestinians, who in turn have to collect the scattered pieces of their historical experience by themselves:

> Our details have not been written yet. Have I not said before that it seems as if we did not belong to this world? We are alien beings, cut off from the earth.[34] [And again:] I feel so familiar with

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[31] ṬŪQĀN, *Riḥla*, 9-10.

[32] Cf. Josefa LOSHITZKY, *Exile and Anxiety*, draft, presented on May 30, 1997 at the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, 23.

[33] TURKI, *Return*, 140.

[34] Muḥammad AS'AD, *Atfāl al-nadā*, London: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, 1990, 43.

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> all these people. It is as if they were waiting for me to get them out of their darkness... But who am I to accomplish this enormous task? Can a single memory be enough to present millions of details?[35]

Intimately linked with the recollection of the past of Palestine is the second task of autobiography, a revaluation of the distorted image of its people. Turki states very clearly the relation between the past and the present as a history of displacement and alienation, when he refers to the word »terrorist« as »the ultimate expression of the sense of otherness that others have afflicted us with.«[36]

Therefore, the »human dimension« is introduced. Hanan Ashrawi, for instance, points to this concern of hers:

> Motivated neither by guilt nor by pride, but by a sense of responsibility and the exercise of honesty, I feel compelled to narrate that side of peace which the standard textbooks of history and political science tend to ignore – a personal account of one player and the human dimension of an impersonal process. While the fate of nations and the course of global politics are generally perceived in abstractions and sweeping moves, something remains to be said about the view from within.[37]

Said K. Aburish, in a biography of his family with the title *Children of Bethany*, similarly stresses the »human dimension«:

> For me, no complete understanding of the turbulent modern history of the Arabs is possible without the human factor. This is a book about one family, a family unfortunate enough to experience most of the dislocating events which began in Palestine and the Arab world in 1917. I am not particularly interested in the politics of those events in isolation, but I am interested in the

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[35] *Ibid.*, 46. – The historiographical character of Palestinian autobiography is further enforced by the fact that, unlike other Arabic autobiographies, most of them contain a section with documents, photos of families and dwelling places, schools and universities, certificates, attestations and maps. Moreover, letters and diaries are quoted.

[36] TURKI, *Soul*, 141.

[37] ASHRAWI, *Side*, 15.

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> people caught up in them, in the wounds of change rather than the winds of change.[38]

As Palestinian autobiography links the past of Palestine with its present, it is also concerned with the future of its people. Here, in the struggle for the »just cause«,[39] lies the third task of autobiography, namely, the need to raise one's voice, to appeal to the world for acknowledgement, and to bring about a lasting justice. Injustice, done already to the Palestinians by the Turks under the Ottoman rule, by the British during the Mandate and by the establishment of the state of Israel, is especially stressed with regard to the occupation of the Westbank in 1967. In the last section of her book, Sakakini summarizes the comforts she and her sister enjoy in Ramallah, for example their home, their neighbourhood and their friends, but then she adds bitterly:

> On these pleasant thoughts we went to sleep. But next day, going over the subject once again, we discovered that we had only drugged ourselves to sleep. We had not solved the problem, the causes of our unhappiness were still very much there. Injustice, injustice, injustice everywhere.[40]

Likewise, Ṭūqān, asked by an Israeli journalist whether the Arab forces, were they to occupy Tel Aviv, would exercise as mild a regime as the Israeli forces in Nablus, vigorously enumerates the evils done by them:

> My God, doesn't she know, what happened to us under the occupation... the dead, wounded and those arrested... the confiscation of land, the demolition of houses, the expulsion and deportation of people, the building of settlements... the seizure of natural resources like water... the politics of education... the dispersion of families...?![41]

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[38] Said K. ABURISH, *Children of Bethany: The story of a Palestinian family*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1988, 1.

[39] TURKI, *Disinherited*, 7.

[40] SAKAKINI, *Jerusalem*, 160.

[41] ṬŪQĀN, *Riḥla II*, 89-90.

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While the above mentioned tasks of Palestinian autobiography are directed towards the outside, the »self-righteous Western« and the »self-satisfied Arab« worlds,[42] the remaining task leads inward and thus links autobiography with the discussion about place and identity. The fourth – and main – task of Palestinian autobiography, then, is to create a comprehensive »collective memory« (Maurice Halbwachs) via the individual personal narrative. Therefore, of the two pillars of autobiography, identity and individuality,[43] the former is clearly more stressed than the latter.[44] Hanan Ashrawi is explicit in this regard when she emphasizes the Palestinianness of her name. Referring to her parents who, as she sees it, wisely refused to give their five daughters European names and, instead, chose their names with regard to the sound, to the meaning and to a positive nationalism, she claims:

> Hanan Daud Khalil Mikhail (Awwad)-Ashrawi is my personal and collective narrative. I am Tenderness, the daughter of David, who is the son of Khalil (Abraham) from the family of Michael (also the name of an ancestor), which is of the clan of Awwad (the one who inevitably returns), which is one of the original seven clans who are the descendants of the seven founding fathers of the town.[45]

The long series of Palestinian names, she claims, are

> »proof of lineage, of roots for a people uprooted, of continuity for a history disrupted, and of legitimacy for an orphaned nation.«[46]

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[42] TURKI, *Disinherited*, 7.

[43] Cf. Manfred FUHRMANN, »Rechtfertigung durch Identität: Über eine Wurzel des Autobiographischen«, in: Odo MARQUARD / Karlheinz STIERLE (eds.), *Identität*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1979, 686.

[44] Individuality, however, is not completely lacking in Palestinian autobiography. It is especially JABRĀ, *Bi'r*, 12-13, who states at the outset of the first volume of his autobiography: »I am not writing here a history of that era... Nor am I here to write a history of my family... I am also not writing a sociological analysis of a Palestinian town... What I have written is purely personal...«

[45] ASHRAWI, *Side*, 134.

[46] *Ibid.*, 132.

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The family with its name links the individual to the collective. With the exception of Turki and his rather individualistic way of seeing things, the role of the family is emphasized by all of the autobiographers. Family history is decisive in the formation of the individual and its identity, as becomes clear from the autobiographies of ʿAbbās and Sakakini. »Despite of what the school offered us«, states ʿAbbās, »the most important thing was the family and its [hi]stories«,[47] stories about avarice, passion and honour, which were told again and again. Sakakini, too, stresses the fact that she is very conversant with the history of her family:

> When I was born all four grandparents had been dead for several years. Yet I feel I know them all as I have heard a great deal about them from my parents, aunts, cousins and family friends.[48]

As the name links a person to his or her family, the family links the person to a certain place. The place of one's origin and upbringing is depicted in all the autobiographies with great love of detail, but Sakakini and Haykal add to that an outspoken local patriotism. Sakakini lays emphasis on »the natural reserve and dignity of the Jerusalemites, their sense of honour, their genuinness, their decency«, confesses »I was proud to be one of them and to belong to this ancient city,«[49] and compares with great nostalgia the Jerusalem of the past with that of the present.[50] At the outset of her personal account she states:

> Jerusalem is my hometown. Both my parents were born in that great city, so were my grandparents on both sides, and so were seven of my great-grandparents... Although I myself spent only the first twenty-four years of my life as a resident of Jerusalem, I rightly feel bound to that great city by centuries of family history. Wherever I may live I will always remain a Jerusalemite.[51]

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[47] ʿABBĀS, *Ghurba*, 36.

[48] SAKAKINI, *Jerusalem*, 2.

[49] *Ibid.*, 103.

[50] *Ibid.*, 104-6.

[51] *Ibid.*, 1.

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Haykal, too, is very enthusiastic about his home-town, Jaffa. He depicts the city as a lively centre with a flourishing economy and culture in the first three decades of the century, and as a residence for a complex, well established, urban middle and upper class. With a strong sense of belonging he exclaims:

> I will never forget this town so dear to all of us. We are her children, and the days we spent there were days of happiness. One day, I hope, history will restore her former glory.[52]

Haykal's sense of belonging is, however, embedded in an even wider frame than Sakakini's when he states:

> The things which are dearest for a person, are his home-land and his family. Part of the home-land is one's home-town... My home-land in general is the Arab world and in particular Palestine, and my home-town is Jaffa.[53]

* * *

Return (*'awda*) is no less a key word than exile; rather, it is its intrinsic counterpart, and both are linked with Palestine the land. The mission of the autobiographer which stands behind his or her numerous tasks is, therefore, to contribute to the achievement of return. Statements such as »I am like a traveller... waiting for the hour of return«,[54] »As we grew up we lived Palestine every day«,[55] or »Palestine did not leave my heart for a single day,«[56] abound.

Return has been a key word of Palestinian identity from the beginning. Sakakini, quoting again from her diary, this time with an entry from 1951, states:

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[52] HAYKAL, *Ayyām*, 178.

[53] *Ibid.*, 205.

[54] SHARĀBĪ, *Ṣuwar*, 21-22.

[55] TURKI, *Soul*, 36.

[56] JABRĀ, *Shāri'*, 31.

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> The idea of emigrating passed several times fleetingly through our minds since we came to Egypt, but we have always come to the same conclusion: We will never be able to love a country and people as deeply as we love Palestine and the Arabs. Therefore, wherever we go, no matter how successful we may be, we will not be happy.[57]

Turki explains that the hope to return from exile unites all the inhabitants of the refugee camp and thus provides a feeling of solidarity which he considers the most important part of their personality:

> While other Palestinians got lost in or melted into their host states, we continued to believe in *el awda*, the Return, and to mourn our fate in *el ghourba*, the land of others.[58]

In the very same text, however, he extends this »rootedness of an uprooted people« to all the other Palestinians as well:

> For almost half a century, the concept of the *awda*, the return to home and homeland, formed the pivot of an exile's inward life. The idea shaped the sensibility of Palestinians in whatever host state they happened to live. As the possibility of returning to Palestine faded over the years, the image of the *awda* still glowed vivid and real in their lives. If pressed, no sane exile would say that his expectation of returning to Haifa, Jaffa, or Lod was realistic. But Palestinians in the diaspora need to believe that one day they would return. Not to believe would have torn up the roots of their identity. Like the square root of minus one, the *awda* was a big lie, an imaginary notion, a state of fancy. But just as this imaginary value is integral to the order of mathematics, so was belief in the *awda* necessary to the lives of Palestinians in exile.[59]

When Turki wrote his third autobiography, the establishment of a Palestinian nation state was already under discussion and the return was no longer necessarily »the square root of minus one«. But Turki in the meanwhile had adopted an attitude which is not

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[57] SAKAKINI, *Jerusalem*, 137.

[58] TURKI, *Return*, 167.

[59] *Ibid.*, 271.

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far away from Edward Said's well-known defense of the voluntary exile[60] and which is consistent with his own development from a PLO activist in the seventies and early eighties to a vehement critic of the »neobackwardness« of the PLO. In his first autobiography he still refers to his living conditions as a kind of fate which was imposed on him:

> After twenty years in the *ghourba*, of growing up perpetually reminded of my status as an exile, the diaspora for me, for a whole generation of Palestinians, becomes *the* homeland.[61]

In his second autobiography, exile is already voluntarily adopted as a homeland of a special kind:

> It is as if being homeless has been my homeland, a kind of transnational place where I, along with other Palestinians of my generation, have felt the same sense of at-homeness that other folk, with a state of their own, have had.[62]

In his third autobiography, eventually, he even rejects his lifelong nourished Palestinianness in favour of the exile. There, he sketches a scene in which he is trapped in Ramallah during a short visit to Jerusalem for journalistic purposes in December 1990. Ramallah is under curfew, it is a bitter cold night, and the power is off. He watches the lights of Tel Aviv twinkling in the distance and continues:

> Again I'm reminded of how there is another world out there, and this world here. I don't know if the twain shall meet. I belong to neither world. Now I know it. I am not, or at least no longer am, part of the Palestinian world.[63]

In rejecting the return as a personal option, Turki is unique among the Palestinian autobiographers; at the same time, how-

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[60] Cf., for instance, Edward SAID, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith lectures*, London: Vintage Books, 1994.

[61] TURKI, *Disinherited*, 175.

[62] TURKI, *Soul*, 129.

[63] TURKI, *Return*, 102.

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ever, he is also unique in drawing a utopian scene in which the Palestinian state finally has been accomplished:

> I can see myself, ten years from now... In this dream, I fly to Palestine. My plane lands at Jericho airport. I am traveling light – some clothes, my notebooks, and a toothbrush. There is no need to bring anything else. This is a modern country, and I can buy everything I need here. I walk to the Immigration and stand in line. Outside, the sun, as usual, shines brightly. Awaiting me is a life among the olive trees in a town by the river Jordan. The official greets me effusively and asks how I feel. I tell him I feel great, and it is the truth. He stamps my passport and says, 'Welcome to Palestine'. As I walk out of the airport, I repeat the name to myself. I want to test the sound of it, to make sure it is real. I repeat it, once, twice, thrice, then utter it as if in babble, like an infant who has not yet mastered words. I hop in a cab and am driven along a paved road hugging the river. The cabbie tells me the road was completed just four years before, after the PLO lost the vote in a democratically contested election, and the new president, whom everyone calls Brother Zakharieh, took on the task of eliminating corruption and building the economy. The taxi driver turns on his car radio, and I hear Palestinian folk music, the lyrics simple and benign and not about struggle or death or sacrifice or steadfastness in the face of foreign oppressors. I reach out as if to touch the sounds, to grab them from the air, and rest them on my chest. I ask the driver how far it is to my destination and he points ahead of him. Right there, brother, he tells me, just behind those mountains in the distance.[64]

[64] *Ibid.*, 274.

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READERS AS WRITERS, FICTION AS THEORY, AND OTHER CONFUSIONS

The metafictional trickery of Bilge Karasu and Pınar Kür

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In the last two decades a considerable number of Turkish authors have turned to a type of literature that places the production and reception of fiction and the functioning of fictional systems among its central themes. What they have produced is a type of literary narrative that not only relates a story, but, at the same time, also comments on its own methods of construction and the very process of reading and writing. The level of theorizing about literature and the role of authors and readers becomes such an integral part of the literary text itself that there is actually a melting of the borders between literature and literary theory.

This 'reflexive' or 'self-reflexive' writing, or 'metafiction'[1] – which many critics equate with postmodernist fiction itself[2] – is

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[1] An overview of the various manifestations of metafiction and the theoretical debate being waged concerning the literary and political assessment of this writing style appears in: Wenche OMMUNDSEN, *Metafictions? Reflexivity in contemporary texts*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1993.

[2] Opponents of the uncritical equating of 'metafiction' with 'postmodernism' point to the fact that metafictional self-consciousness is nothing new. They claim that it has been part and parcel of the novel since its inception, *Don Quixote* and *Tristram Shandy* being the two illustrations repeatedly brought to the fore. (Some of the main proponents of this stance are mentioned in OMMUNDSEN, 24-28.) Despite such objections Linda Hutcheon considers »the particular concentration of these concerns in the practice and theory of today« as one of the principle

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one of the dominant trends in more recent European and American literature. In Turkey, Orhan Pamuk's much-discussed best-selling novel *Kara Kitap* has certainly played a significant role in the trend's popularization.[3] Earlier authors,[4] though, had already grappled with metafictional concerns and metafictional methods. The following discussion treats two examples: the novels *Bir Cinayet Romanı* by Pınar Kür and Bilge Karasu's *Gece*.

The struggle between reader and author: Bir Cinayet Romanı

Bir Cinayet Romanı (»A Crime Novel«) appeared in 1989.[5] It is simultaneously a crime novel and a book about writing crime novels as well as the genre's conventions.[6] The text consists exclusively of chapters in the first person, each ostensibly penned by one of the characters. These characters have been requested by a well-known author named Akın Erkan to keep diaries, whose

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elements of a »poetics of postmodernism« (Linda HUTCHEON, »Discourse, Power, Ideology: Humanism and Postmodernism«, in: Edmund J. SMYTH [ed.], *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, London: Batsford, 1991, 109). Regarding the controversy over the relationship between postmodernism and metafiction, see also: John MEPHAM, »Narratives of Postmodernism«, *ibid.*, 138-155, particularly 151-153.

[3] Cf. my article »Fenster zur Welt oder selbstreflektierender Spiegel? Referentialität und Textualität in der modernen türkischen Erzählliteratur«, in: *Asiatische Studien* 50/2 (1996), 321-338, esp. 331 ff. The metafictional strategies used by Pamuk have been the object of much discussion by Turkish critics. *Üstkurmaca* is the Turkish term that corresponds to 'metafiction', as used, for instance, by Berna MORAN in his article »Üstkurmaca Olarak 'Kara Kitap'«, in: Nüket ESEN (ed.), *Kara Kitap Üzerine Yazılar*, İstanbul: Can, 1992, 96-106. A further example for the use of the term can also be found in Gürsel Aytaç's analysis of Hilmi YAVUZ's *Fehmi K.'nın Acaip Serüvenleri* (Gürsel AYTAÇ, *Edebiyat Yazıları III*, Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1995, 123); in the same location Aytaç mentions *Oyuncu* by Erhan BENER and *Kurtlar* by Peride CELAL as further examples of metafiction in contemporary Turkish literature.

[4] Cf. note 3. – Another example is Ahmet ALTAN's novel *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar* (cf. Stephan GUTH's article in the present volume).

[5] Pınar KÜR, *Bir Cinayet Romanı*, İstanbul: Can, ^{3}1990 (^{1}1989).

[6] An informative analysis of the diverse aspects of the novel can be found in Berna MORAN, *Türk Romanı'na Eleştirel Bir Bakış III: Sevgi Soysal'dan Bilge Karasu'ya*, İstanbul: İletişim, 1994, 105-117.

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contents are to be given to her. Her plan is to transform the texts into a novel.

Only one of the contributors is aware that the product is to be a crime novel: Emin Köklü is a professor of mathematics. Honed by his profession in the art of logical thinking, he helps the police unravel criminal cases in his spare time. As it turns out, he has been fingered by Akın Erkan as the detective in her novel, but doesn't have a clue as to whom the roles of perpetrator, victim and witnesses have been assigned.

At first glance it appears that the reader is confronted with two narrative levels: that of the novel (from the point of view of the characters, this is the level of reality, the level of their interaction with the author Akın Erkan), and the other, the intertwined stratum of the planned novel-within-the-novel. However, Pınar Kür's work is constructed in a way that it gets impossible to maintain the distinction between the two ontological planes. The texts composed by the figures in the novel, from which Akın Erkan intends to construct a novel, *are itself* the novel that we read. The events do not (or not only) take place in a yet-to-be-written novel, but in the 'real' lives of the characters doing the writing. It is on this level that the 'real' murder occurs, or appears to occur.

Even this brief description should give a clear impression that the categories 'reality' and 'fiction' prove to be fully fickle in the literary world of *Bir Cinayet Romanı*. The confusion is omnipresent: for example, when Emin Köklü, the mathematics professor, deliberates about how the author will probably portray (*yansıtmak*: reflect, mirror) him. In doing so, he distinguishes clearly between himself and his literary likeness. This, however, does not prevent him – in another situation – from worriedly conjecturing about whether he is being lied to, and fearing that he has actually been selected as the victim rather than the detective. This fear for his own life and that of his son quite clearly relates to the level of the reality that he lives.

For Emin Köklü and the other characters in *Bir Cinayet Romanı* there is no unequivocal distinction between fiction and reality. There is no clear inside and outside, only positions that are

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simultaneously within both the fiction and the reality. The world projected by Pınar Kür is so logically contradictory that the author Akın Erkan can utter to one of the other characters: »This is *your* life. The character in the novel is you« (p. 60).

Such blurring of boundaries between narrative levels is among the most frequent metafictional techniques, used time and again to emphasize the fabricated nature of the fictional illusion.[7] The previously mentioned hobby detective, Emin Köklü, fulfills another important metafictional function in Pınar Kür's book. This too, though, is quite characteristic, since, in self-reflexive narratives, detective stories are frequently used as 'plot allegories' for the process of reading, which is conventionally seen as the search for the meaning of a text.[8] In equating detective and reader, however, Pınar Kür goes yet a step further and makes her detective a reader in the literal sense of the word: Akın Erkan hands over the notes of the other figures to Emin Köklü so that he can look for clues regarding the motive and murderer. Thus, all he has at his disposal to solve the case are texts, the very same texts that we, the readers of the novel, are given.

Indeed, the role of reader, character, and author are turned upside down in *Bir Cinayet Romanı*. The texts that it consists of stem from the characters, and Akın Erkan, the author, appears only as a figure in these texts. That occurs when the other figures discuss her or their relationship with her. In this way the characters actually become the writers, and the author the subject of their writing.

Emin Köklü, our reader/detective is also a writer. He too has been asked to jot down his thoughts and forward them to Akın Erkan. In the course of the novel, though, he distances himself increasingly from her and, in the end, stops giving her his texts altogether, because he finds it unfair that she alone is in the position to dictate the rules of the game. As it turns out, it is precisely

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[7] In regard to *metalepsis*, as this phenomenon is called by Gérard GENNETTE (cf. *Figures III*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972, 243-245), cf. OMMUNDSEN, 8, and Brian MCHALE, *Postmodernist Fiction*, London/New York: Routledge, 1987, 119-121. Other metafictional techniques can also be found in OMMUNDSEN, 6-10.

[8] OMMUNDSEN, 10.

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these undelivered notes that permit us to track the progress of the case, and ultimately lead to its cracking. If we were to believe them, a murder actually has taken place, and the murderer turns out to be none other than the author herself. She has concocted the whole project of writing a novel as a convoluted ruse to cover the tracks of her misdeed.

The struggle between the reader/detective, Emin Köklü, and the author, Akın Erkan, for the mastery of the novel culminates in a finale that is a parody of the classical detective novel where the bloodhound and culprit are pitted in a battle of wits. However, in keeping with the savor of *Bir Cinayet Romanı*, even this finale and the solution of the case is anything but pellucid. The reader can, to be sure, take the verbal duel between Akın Erkan and Emin Köklü as a confrontation between the wily murderess – who denies everything – and the even shrewder detective, who ultimately slices through the subterfuge to substantiate her guilt. It can also, however, be understood as a confrontation between the reader and the author concerning the 'correct' interpretation of the novel itself.

Yet another angle is proferred by the Turkish literary scholar Berna Moran who sees it as a conflict between the author and a reader who has appropriated the author's role.[9] The conflict is over whose story boasts the more convincing plot, since the eventuality exists that the murder never 'actually' occurred; it may have merely been a device in an alternative novel penned by the reader Emin Köklü contrary to the author's intent.

Akın Erkan finally confesses to a real motive for a murder, but the question of whether she has actually committed the crime remains open. Perhaps so, as the detective, reader, and would-be author Emin Köklü contends. It is also plausible, though, that writing a novel in which she has the target of her malevolence murdered has sated her spite. A definitive interpretation, however, is rendered impossible by the intricate way the narrative levels of the novel are interwoven. The verbal vendetta between detective and murderer, or reader and writer, appears perpetual. This, in fact, is indicated by the book's closing sentence:

[9] MORAN, *Türk Romanına...*, 113-115.

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We gave each other a long – perhaps eternal – dirty look. (p. 365)

What produced this power struggle between reader and author? It is the fact that Emin Köklü does not stick to the role usually assigned to the reader, that is, the role that fits the detective metaphor. He proves to be dissatisfied with simply revealing the pattern stuck behind the surface of the text, a plan (meaning!), stipulated by the author and implanted in the story. In fact he casts doubt over the very authority of the author over the text, and actually claims the role of text producer.[10]

This is reminiscent of those theoretical positions that dethrone the writer as the sole authoritative source of meaning, and see the act of reading not as a reconstruction of the author's intention, but rather as a process by which text is created.[11] As a result, *Bir Cinayet Romanı* can also be read as a dramatization of the current debate among literary scholars over the question of the predominance of the author or the reader in the constitution of meaning. The way the novel questions the existence of a clear dividing line between reality and fiction points in a similar direction: it confirms all the post-structuralist approaches that reject referentialist concepts of language and literature, and instead emphasize the fictionality of reality.

Bir Cinayet Romanı clearly points to metafiction's position at »the intersection between theory and fiction«[12]. The book – albeit with a few minor irritations – is a readable crime thriller, while simultaneously raising important issues in literary theory. This is achieved with remarkable didactic persistence. The numerous passages of varying length in which the characters, particularly Emin

[10] He states: »This author is not only incapable of making someone like me the victim of a crime, but can't even write a run-of-the-mill crime novel« (145). Also: »I'm afraid that I'm going to have to take control of this whole affair. I may even be forced to make the decision about where and when the murder is committed myself« (146).

[11] For an overview of the various reader-oriented approaches, from Wolfgang Iser and Umberto Eco to the feminist and deconstructivist practice of reading, see Jonathan CULLER, *On Deconstruction: Theory and criticism after structuralism*, New York: Cornell University Press, [6]1989, 31-83.

[12] OMMUNDSEN, viii.

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Köklü, ruminate explicitly over reading, writing, and the relation between a novel and life serve as stimulation for those readers who – without prompting – would not consider that the novel deals with the relation between fact and fiction or author and reader.

> A novel reflects life to the same degree as does mathematics. That is to say, the novel is more similar to mathematics than to life. Life is a series of coincidences. A novel, in contrast, is arbitrary, but the arbitrariness is based on rules (p. 97 f.).

Pınar Kür places this theorizing in the context of a well-known genre of popular literature. This could easily give rise to the accusation that the work is merely an intelligent game bearing no relation to the world outside the literary realm. This is not so in the case of Bilge Karasu's novel, *Gece*, which deals with an unmistakably political theme.

Rejected coherence: Gece

Gece (»Night«)[13] consists of 110 numbered chapters that average a single page in length; the longest is three. Immediate parallels with Pınar Kür's novel can be drawn from the fact that the work is written entirely in the first person, the chapters stem from various characters, and it is left to the reader to divine the identity of the originator of each of the texts. Furthermore, here too we are confronted with an author within the novel. In this case it is an author who relates nightmarish things that go on around him. There is a description of the gradual setting in of the night, which first takes up residence in hollows, works its way forward, and finally even ousts the last light from the hills. There are, too, the »nightworkers«, who pave the way for the night's arrival by

[13] Bilge KARASU, *Gece*, İstanbul: İletişim, 1985 (*Night*, translated by Güneli GÜN, with the author, Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994). The following English citations from *Gece* have been taken from this translation.

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digging holes, »where night may easily collect when it comes« (ch. 12).

Suggestive imageries like the setting in of the night or the struggle between darkness and light are frequently used symbols. In *Gece* they are clearly to be taken in a political context. Already the second chapter insinuates torture quite concretely: the job of the nightworkers is »to take young muscles« and »get them used to the longest night by penetrating their naked flesh with cold, thin metal rods or by burying red-hot buckshot within it«. For this task they carry tools that they use »to pound, tear, pierce, gouge, twist, and snap off. Also to burn and to break«. These tools »have been designed and specially made for use on young bodies« (ch. 2).

Staying by this political interpretation, the third chapter reveals the coarse characteristics of an anti-pluralist ideology: It depicts the nightworkers as liking only square loaves of bread, and surveying bakeries to see who purchases round, rectangular, long, or oval ones. They then mark the doors of the houses where other-than-square bread is consumed. We also discover that the nightworkers choose people arbitrarily whom they murder in the street, or upon whom they test their 'scientific methods' with which people can be made to speak. Paramilitary terror groups are quickly brought to mind. Other images render it hard to mistake the allusions to right-wing extremist rhetoric and pan-Turkist myths. These include the nightworkers' anti-individualism, their *Führer* cult, and mystification of »greatness«, »obedience«, »duty«, and »purification«. There is also the mention of »the land of felicity« lying in »a fairy-tale past« identified with a »dream of limitless ego embracing the universe, of galloping horses, of enemies vanquished, and of angers appeased only by the flow of blood« (ch. 12).

Despite the foregoing, Bilge Karasu's is anything but a political text, which, although symbolic, is easily decoded. As early as in the fourth chapter a character appears in the unfolding fictional world who doesn't seem to fit in. It is a »Corrector«, who regards – in solitude from the top of a hill – the pressing forward of the night. The Corrector, however, belongs to the level

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of text production, and not to the level of the »reality« projected by the text. His appearance is only the first of an increasingly frequent succession of elements that disturb the narrative hierarchy. The uncertainty about the status of the various narrative levels is repeatedly expressed explicitly, e.g., in the following footnote: »Time to pull it all together, to decide whether the author of all this is me or one of my creations« (ch. 10).[14]

As expected, the author-in-the-text is not the only figure writing in *Gece*. There is also one of his former school companions, who holds an important government post and is simultaneously the brain behind a secret society named the »Sun Movement«, behind which – to all appearances – the »nightworkers« are concealed. There is also Sevim, the companion's former wife and most important associate, and another agent named Sevinç, who becomes the author's lover. This despite the fact that the character's gender appears opaque and unstable.[15] All of them, too, stick strictly to their first-person forms.

Upon reading their texts, we discover the broad outlines of a political plot in which our author-in-the-text, a well-known figure in the political opposition, is obliged to join a government delegation to a conference abroad. While there, he is to be the target of an assassination, the blame for which is to be laid on the opposition. This scenario has been planned by Sevim, who surprisingly reveals the plan in a letter to the author even before his departure. Why she does so – whether she wants to withdraw from the cabal and warn him, or whether her letter is merely a decoy, a chess move in a subtle plot to manipulate him – is a question

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[14] *Gece* has an entire series of footnotes with comments on the text. Naturally here too it is not clear on which level the author, commenting on his text, is to be placed. Is it our author-in-the-text, or a narrator who stands one step above him and, in fact, has created him? Of course the very act of introducing a text element like a footnote into a novel – a genre in which footnotes are foreign – is also clearly a metafictional technique.

[15] When reading the Turkish text, I automatically thought of a woman when I encountered this name, as the author-in-the-text apparently did as well. However, in the English translation, done with Bilge KARASU's participation, I was astounded to find that Sevinç is referred to as »he«.

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that becomes increasingly urgent toward the end of the novel. It is, however, never answered conclusively.

That isn't, though, the only thing that remains unclear. In the last part of the novel the reader loses every vestige of sound footing. Even the most assiduous attempts to attribute coherence to the text end in new contradictions and futility. Who wants to murder whom, and why? Who, in the end, remains alive, and who has penned which texts?[16] Do the four figures in the novel, the four who write as »I« and whose texts we read, really live in the novel's world or are they merely inventions of one of the others, and if so, of whom? Is it impossible to unravel the puzzle satisfactorily because one of the »I«s writing here is lying for the purpose of political manipulation? Or are we dealing with a case of insanity, with a sole figure (which one?) suffering from a personality with multiple fractures?

Toward the end of the book the suggestions of psychiatric problems and clinic stays, as well as images relating to broken mirrors and fragmented identities become ever more frequent:

> Next to the shattered light, He, Sevinç, Sevim, and a deaf blond kid are all laughing at me as if they were all one face, covered with blood, looking back at me, perhaps in the mirrors, or on the floor, or in my mind. A viscous pain is all over me, and that very old, thick scent. As the light slowly dims, at last I am myself, reflected in every fragment. The self that I did not recognize in the mirror. Thousands of fragments that are no longer me at all. (Ch. 109).

With this disintegration of the »I« who is doing the writing, the penultimate chapter ends. The final chapter (ch. 110) consists of a single sentence:

> *Bunları yazmakla çıldırmaktan kurtulunur mu*? (Can writing all this keep one from going mad?)

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[16] Confusion is caused, for example, by the fact that both the author and his opponent, the brain of the Sun Movement, use the designation »N« when talking about each other.

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How it is with writing, I am unable to judge; but every time I have pushed myself to read to this point, I have asked myself about the connection between reading and going insane. This is because the text truly does not make things easy for the reader, and the writer – in repeated confessions – admits that this is a calculated strategy:

> Is it the author who cannot make up his mind, or the character? Is there only one character speaking in the first person in this notebook, or at least two? To what degree can I make use of the indefinite number of speakers or, to resort to a conventional expression, the inconsequence of the character? I *must* confuse the reader; he must be confused and scared. (Ch. 43).

But why does this have to be? It almost appears as if the author had viewed his task as forcing the reader to come to grips with the functioning of texts. At least this is the conclusion I have been able to draw from my own experience in reading *Gece*.[17] At a specific point in my reading I began – in order to keep from completely loosing an overview – to write down my thoughts and reflections, as well as all the frustrating contradictions, in which I was continually being caught up. Thus, without warning, my own reading became the object of my observation; from my notes I was able to track the uninterrupted process of speculating and inferring, of constructing and rejecting hypotheses of interpretation to which I was driven by the inconsistencies of the text. Among other things, I became conscious of just how much literary texts depend on the attempt of the reader to construct a consistent whole out of information that is both minimal and sometimes incoherent.

An example of this: when, in a text like *Gece*, among the various formless »I«-figures – whom we cannot distinguish with certainty from one another – we encounter one who is hard of hearing, it appears to be a meaningful clue, a welcome contribution that could bring order to an otherwise diffuse fictional world.

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[17] This is a story of reading in which the reader is not nearly as autonomous as Emin Köklü, who even lays claim to the status of text producer. Here the reader is much more a pawn in the manipulative strategy of an authoritarian text.

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This detail, which might play a role as an element of a psychogram (being hard of hearing makes one an 'outsider') at least provides a characteristic by which we can identify one of the figures with certitude, thus distinguishing him from the others. From this point on, every reference to the condition of the various »I«-figures' hearing will be minutely noted.

However, what in the case of a conventionally constructed text would lead to a successful reading strategy, winds up, naturally, at a dead end in the case of *Gece*: the reader is left with the eerie feeling that Bilge Karasu's figures do not even maintain their identities in regard to their hearing ability.

Involvement with a text like *Gece* demonstrates that it is not to be taken for granted that every narrative detail in a literary text is of significance and part of an overall meaning. In fact, to do so is an assumption based upon convention and established literary codes. Even the authenticity suggested by the diary form and reference to an »I« proves, with the increasing doubt about the trustworthiness and stability of the various writing »I«s, to be merely the effect of linguistic codes. It is exactly these codes that *Gece* apparently wants to place in question. This is achieved not only by refusing an unambiguous interpretation, and thus forcing the reader to deal with the conventional strategies of writing and reading, but also via countless explicit comments about language and literature. At one point the author-in-the-text seems to gently mock readers who, in the text, seek the author:

> How smart is it to go beyond the bounds of fiction and introduce my own views [perhaps more exactly: »... and that I as author interpolate some of my own thoughts into this fiction«, P.F.]? But why should such distinctions concern the reader? [...] There is no reason why the person who reads this should bother to keep the particular ideas of the writer, when he can make them out, separate from the rest instead of seeing and investigating all the different levels as a whole [more exactly: »...instead of seeking and grasping at various levels of the fiction«, P.F.]. Have I not had my fun teasing readers who look for traces of the author in his work? (Ch. 82).

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In *Gece*, this type of self-reflexive statement is tightly interwoven with parts of a text that discuss the struggle for political power, torture, violence, and contemplate the various ways in which people react to terror. Unlike Pınar Kür's entertaining detective story, here we are dealing with a text that sends the unmistakable signal that it also wishes to be understood – despite its self-reflexive introspection – in reference to a realm outside of literature, in fact, in a clearly political context.

The two main thematic focal points of the novel, the description of the activities of the nightworkers on the one hand, and the reflections about the essence of literature and language on the other, are so tightly integrated into each other that one conclusion almost suggests itself: that Karasu's novel postulates a relationship between both aspects, between discursive strategies and the sphere of politics.

Our author-in-the-text also reflects about the relation between literature and the world:

> The point of view – why not call it what it is? – the lunacy that thinks it possible to bring [omitted in the translation: »by means of writing«, P.F.] order to the chaos of the world, and the complexity of the human being, makes some of us, maybe all, imagine victory. It consoles us. We are confident that what we write next time will prolong the victory as well as enlarge it. When will we give up deceiving ourselves and others in this way? Having written this, have I given up the attempt myself? (Ch. 89).
>
> As I get to the end of this notebook, it comes to seem idle to offer explanations, to make connections, to worry about continuity and well-formed sentences. We must, perhaps, give up thinking that writing is a tool (or medium) for bringing order to a disordered world (that is, exterior to any order imposed by the human mind) or for engendering the fallacious notion that it can do so. Writing and speaking and doing will not reconcile us to the absence of order, an absence that we can no more than find strange. (Ch. 88).

»Connections« and »continuity« as characteristics that the world does not manifest, but which might be imposed on it by more conventionally constructed tales than *Gece*, this brings to mind more than remotely the post-structuralist discussion of »the con-

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structive acts we perform whenever we transform the contingency we experience into the formal coherence and unity of our discursive representations of reality«.[18] The literary text and the critical debate converge, and their proximity also occurs where more than mere individual attempts to create meaning are subject to question. This is because the practice of uncovering narrative strategies with which we construct coherent and meaningful pictures of reality has long since been driven outside the narrow confines of literature, and has penetrated the frontiers of political ideologies and 'history'.[19] The direction of Karasu's thrust appears to be the same: in the texts of the Sun Movement's leader, history, together with the »examples« taken from it, turns out to be »constructed«, and the exposure of this is a rather dangerous act of opposition.

> I think that either the past is a frozen state consisting of a set of unchanging elements when you take a cross-section of it (at most, it can be freshly interpreted: in order to explain it, we may examine it from other points of view), or it is a pure confection of selected elements of what has been – especially those elements we favor or disfavor – put together side by side. It is not impossible or illegitimate to take this construct as reality and to apply our current thoughts toward actualizing it. But no, we just cannot get that through their heads. More correctly, they don't want to grasp it. They insist on promoting their own constructs ... not that theirs have any clarity. Theirs are a hodgepodge, utterly eclectic. (Ch. 38).

> »Examples are fictions we create with this or that motive in mind – sometimes with yet another lurking behind it – out of the inexhaustible ocean we call the past. After convincing ourselves of the reality of such fiction, we try to convince others...«
>
> Which one of us wrote that? Neither. Yet either one of us could have, following it up differently, of course. I had the man

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[18] Bernd ENGLER, »The Dismemberment of Clio: Fictionality, narrativity, and the construction of historical reality in historiographic metafiction«, in: Bernd ENGLER/Kurt MÜLLER (eds.), *Historiographic Metafiction in Modern American and Canadian Literature*, Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zurich, 1994, 15.

[19] For the position of Roland Barthes and other poststructuralist literary critics in this regard, and their reception by Hayden White and other philosophers of history, see ENGLER, 14-18.

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> who wrote this definition given a beating three days ago. Right in front of the house, too. He must know by now that we take the business of conforming to examples, as we call it, very seriously [...] After we've created an example and convinced ourselves and others of its reality, how can they accuse us of molding our lives according to criteria that we have not forged ourselves? We do not try to emulate our fathers and our past; ours is the only way people can be forced to do many things that must be done. (Ch. 51).

Three attempts to find an ending

1. *The triumph of knowledge*

Metafiction is more than a mere narcissistic game-with-language-for-its-own-sake to Bilge Karasu. This is because fiction is not only at home in the confines of the narrow world of literature; it is also an instrument of power. When we recall that those who perpetrate terror in the world of his novel cling to nationalistic myths and refuse to tolerate pluralism, the scepticism of his author-in-the-narrative regarding the all-too-simple stories becomes a political position. Likewise, the discovery that such stories are nothing but fiction forges a means of resistance.

It seems to be Karasu's desire to point out to his readers that stories deny the complexity of the world and can, as a result, become dangerous political instruments. The incoherence of his texts has a didactic purpose, namely the reader's enlightenment. However, unlike 'social-realist' writers, Bilge Karasu does not seek to clarify the functioning of society, but rather to engender an awareness of the fact that the narratives with which we allocate meaning to the world are not to be taken for granted. On the contrary, these narratives, like his novel, are constructs, and thus must be subjected to the same type of inquiry, precisely when – unlike the tale he has told us – they appear to be particularly convincing, coherent, and meaningful.

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2. *Self-reflexive pessimism*

Even if the above section were a suitable ending for my study, it seems inconsistent for me to end a text that has been so concerned with literary self-reflexivity and discursive strategies without at least a few of my own self-reflexive comments.

What I have conveyed in this article has, of course, also been a type of story, a story that has doubtlessly reduced the complexity of the object of my investigation. The adventure of the courageous reader who has had to struggle through a complex and extremely confusing text has been rewarded – after trial and tribulation – with the discovery of the meaning of the text, as well as a deeper knowledge about our narrative codes and conventions.[20] At the end of this story is the optimistic conclusion that a text like *Gece* is meaningful too and serves a good purpose.

I do not believe that what I have said is incorrect, but it has not done complete justice to the complexity of Bilge Karasu's book. In coming to my conclusion and interpretation, I have had to omit a great number of details and text elements that can run counter to my way of reading, as is always the case when interpreting texts. One example: the activity of the nightworkers reaches a climax toward the end of the novel with them ripping up the city streets with massive building equipment, only to rebuild the city in a way that the levels of the main streets and side streets are no longer the same. As a result most of the streets end in nothingness. The result is ghostly:

> It was getting dark, and I was becoming worried. It was necessary to walk to the end of each street in order to see if it led anywhere and then to double back if it turned out to be a dead end. After that it was try another street, and then another. On my fourth try, a bit of sky stuck in the space between the old houses that lined the street I was on. That was the only spot around that held any light. (Ch. 98).

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[20] Regarding the trend of giving stories of reading the form of a *Bildungsroman* see CULLER, 84-86.

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With a text that devotes as much effort to discussing itself as does Bilge Karasu's, reading this picture of a labyrinth of dead-end streets as self-reflexive assertions, as an 'icon' for the novel as a whole, can hardly be prevented. Being lost in a labyrinth is actually an extremely apt description for the experience one has when reading *Gece*. Then, however, wouldn't this book, which leaves the reader groping in the dark, be something other than the product of a morally 'correct' posture, which is resistance against the nightworkers? On the contrary, wouldn't it then be completely consistent with their intention; wouldn't it be their work, or at least the product of their activities – maybe because this novel, with its attack against fictionalization on all fronts, also undermines the position of 'positive' narratives that are directed against oppression? Whether Bilge Karasu intended this type of reading, or perhaps whether the text has developed a life of its own is not at all of particular significance.

Also when we, in order to close the circle, leave the broader realm of the collective production of meaning and go back to the narrower framework of literature, the result suggested is not very positive. In the book, the result of the street chaos is that the inhabitants stop leaving their houses and no longer venture out onto the streets. Could it be that the statement the book makes about itself is to be understood as an indication that the reader, because of the many tricks of metafiction, might give up reading altogether?

3. *The triumph of story-telling*

Of course, even such an interpretation is not the final word. Bilge Karasu's work first appeared in 1984. Since then, neither in Turkey nor elsewhere, have writing and reading been given up. On the contrary, in Turkey it appears as though story-telling literature is experiencing a period of particular flourish at the moment. Interesting novels are being published in greater quantity than in a long time, and are apparently being read. Perhaps that

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is the product of a stance of which Pınar Kür's *Bir Cinayet Romanı* is an embodiment.

In regard to the theoretical point of view, the scepticism of traditional narrative forms and the insight into the constructedness of reality, this novel takes the same position as that of Bilge Karasu. However, the conclusion is different. Bilge Karasu's text ends pessimistically with a total dissolution of the narrative structure. Narration – in this analysis – appears no longer possible. Pınar Kür's response is different:[21] although narration, strictly speaking, is no longer possible, it can still be undertaken, albeit broken with irony. This, however, perhaps makes it all the more enjoyable.

[21] According to Umberto Eco's definition in his *Postscript to 'The Name of the Rose'*, this stance, in opposition to Karasu's modernism, is typically postmodern: »The postmodern response to the modern is based on the understanding and recognition that the past, after all is said and done, cannot be destroyed. Its destruction leads to silence, and so it must be looked in the eye in a new way: with irony, without innocence.« (Umberto ECO, *Nachschrift zum 'Namen der Rose'*, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, ⁵1986, 78).

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Das Recht auf Dichtung

Orhan Veli Kanık (1914-1950) und Garip

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Im Jahre 1941 erschien in İstanbul ein schmales Bändchen unter dem Titel *Garip* (»Fremdartig«), das auf 63 Seiten ein längeres Vorwort (11 Seiten) und 64 kurze Gedichte von drei jungen Dichtern enthielt. Deren Namen: Melih Cevdet Anday (1915),[1] Oktay Rifat Horozcu (1914-1988)[2] und Orhan Veli Kanık (1914-1950)[3] waren in der literarischen Szene nicht mehr unbekannt. Hatten sie doch bereits seit Mitte der dreißiger Jahre in verschiedenen Zeitschriften Gedichte veröffentlicht. Diese hatten durch ihre freche unkonventionelle Art unter den Literaten, die sich in den Kaffeehäusern und Kneipen İstanbuls und Ankaras tummelten, Aufsehen erregt und heftige Debatten ausgelöst. Die Publikation des Bändchens, das auch Gedichte versammelte, die schon in Zeitschriften erschienen waren und unter denen hie und da zwei der Dichternamen standen, also als Kollektivproduktion ausge-

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[1] Zu ANDAY s. die einschlägigen biographischen Lexika: İhsan IŞIK, *Yazarlar Sözlüğü*, İstanbul 1990; Şükran KURDAKUL, *Şairler ve Yazarlar Sözlüğü*, İstanbul 1989; Behçet NECATİGİL, *Edebiyatımızda isimler sözlüğü*, 13. Baskı, İstanbul 1989; Atilla ÖZKIRIMLI, *Türk Edebiyat Ansiklopedisi*, 4. baskı, İstanbul 1987.

[2] Zu HOROZCU s. die in Anm. 1 zitierten Nachschlagewerke.

[3] Zu KANIK, meist nur Orhan Veli, die in Anm. 1 zitierten Nachschlagewerke. S. auch *s.v.* »Orhan Veli«: »*Das lyrische Werk*«, in: *Kindlers Neues Literaturlexikon*, hrsg. von Walter JENS, München: Kindler, 1988 ff., Bd. 12, 749-751, mit Angaben über Ausgaben und Literatur. Orhan Veli KANIK, *Fremdartig/Garip: Gedichte in zwei Sprachen*, hrsg., übers. und mit einem Nachwort versehen von Yüksel PAZARKAYA, Frankfurt a.M. 1985.

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wiesen waren, sollte, besonders durch das Vorwort, das den Charakter eines poetischen Manifests trägt, der literarischen Öffentlichkeit die Etablierung einer dreiköpfigen Dichteravantgarde verkünden, die der literarischen Tradition den Kampf ansagte.

Diese Kriegserklärung gegen alles 'Alte' ist in dem Manifest radikal formuliert.[4] Die Grundgedanken und Kernsätze dieser Schrift werden im folgenden möglichst textnah in einer Mischung aus Paraphrase und Zitaten zusammenfassend dargestellt: Die Dichtung (*şiir*), d.h. die Kunst zu sprechen (*söz söylemek sanatı*) habe sich durch verschiedene Veränderungen im Laufe der Zeit von der normalen natürlichen Sprechweise erheblich entfernt und zeige eine gewisse Fremdartigkeit, Seltsamkeit (*garabet, acayiplik*). Doch die gebildete Schicht habe diese poetische Tradition so verinnerlicht, ja, empfinde sie geradezu als so normal, daß paradoxerweise der Versuch, in einer einfacheren, natürlicheren Sprache zu dichten, als fremdartig (*garip*) empfunden werde.[5] Es geht also um die Ablehnung der klassischen osmanischen Divan-Poesie[6] mit ihrem arabisch-persischen Erbe in Form und Inhalt und ihrer künstlichen Sprache. Orhan Veli und seine Freunde verwerfen Reim und Metrum und eine moderne Verteidigung die-

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[4] Der Text des Manifests liegt mir in zwei Fassungen vor. Eine nicht ganz vollständige Fotokopie der Ausgabe von 1941 und eine leicht überarbeitete Fassung in O. V. KANIK, *Bütün Eserleri* II, hazl. Asım BEZİRCİ, 14. basım, Ankara 1981, 15-36. Beide Fassungen werden bei auffälligen Varianten herangezogen.

[5] Dieser Gedanke gab nicht nur dem Gedichtband *Garip*, sondern auch der literarischen Bewegung, die er auslöste, den Namen. Dazu Hakan SAZYEK, *Cumhuriyet dönemi Türk şiirinde Garip hareketi*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 1996 (Kültür Yayınları, Edebiyat Dizisi). Im folgenden zitiert als SAZYEK (1996).

[6] Übrigens hat Orhan Veli die Divan-Dichtung nicht grundsätzlich abgelehnt. In einem Interview (1947) sagt er, daß er die Divan-Dichtung liebe und sie zur Weltliteratur gehöre. Sie sei aber nicht mehr zeitgemäß. S. Adnan Veli KANIK, *Orhan Veli için: Bir biyografi ve basında çıkmış yazılardan seçmeler*, İstanbul 1953, (Yeditepe Yayınları; 26), 32 f. Diese detaillierte Biographie Orhan Velis aus der Feder seines Bruders wird im folgenden zitiert als ADNAN (1953). Der spätere Erziehungsminister Hasan Ali (YÜCEL) hatte mit der Divan-Dichtung gründlich abgerechnet, s. Hasan ALİ, *Türk edebiyatına toplu bir bakış*, İstanbul: Remzi Kitaphanesi, 1932, 152 ff. Übersetzt wurde diese Schrift 1941 von Osman REŞER, *Ein Gesamtüberblick über die Türkische Literatur.* Diese Ablehnung der Divan-Dichtung als wurzellos und volksfern wurde eine in den türkischen Schulen verbreitete Lehrmeinung.

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ser formalen poetischen Mittel, nämlich, daß u.a. dadurch eine Art musikalischer Harmonie (*ahenk*) erzeugt werde; ebenso lehnen sie Vergleich, Metapher und Hyperbel (*teşbih*, *istiâre*, *mübâlağa*) ab und definieren den Klassencharakter dieser traditionellen artifiziellen Poesie, die sich in einer Form manifestiere, die dem Geschmack (*zevk*) der wohlhabenden herrschenden Klassen (*müreffeh sınıflar*) entsprochen habe, die sich aus Menschen rekrutierten, die nicht zu arbeiten brauchten, um zu leben.

Daran knüpft die entscheidende Passage an, die dieses Manifest als revolutionäres volksnahes ausweist: Der Geschmack, dem die neue Poesie entsprechen wolle, sei nicht der Geschmack jener wohlhabenden Klasse, die nur eine Minderheit bildete. Die Menschen, die die heutige Welt bevölkerten, fänden das Recht zu leben nur am Ende einer ständigen Plackerei (*Bugünkü dünyayı dolduran insanlar yaşamak hakkını mütemadî bir didişmenin sonunda bulmaktadırlar*). Wie alles andere gehöre auch die Dichtung zu ihren Rechten, sie müsse ihrem Geschmack entsprechen. Es gehe nicht darum, die Bedürfnisse einer Klasse zu verteidigen, sondern man müsse nur ihren Geschmack suchen, finden und ihn in der Kunst zur Herrschaft bringen. Doch zu diesem neuen Geschmack gelange man nur auf neuen Wegen, mit neuen Mitteln. Man müsse alles, was jene alte Literatur ausmache, verwerfen und das Gebäude vom Fundament her neu errichten. Ja, man dürfe beim Dichten möglichst nicht mehr in der alten Sprache denken, sondern müsse sich von der Unnatürlichkeit lösen, an die man sich gewöhnt habe, und zur Einfachkeit und Aufrichtigkeit zurückfinden. Die Menschen, derer sich die Geschichte wohlwollend erinnere, seien immer solche, die an historischen Wendepunkten lebten. Sie hätten jeweils eine Tradition zerstört und eine neue begründet. Zu solchem Fahnenträgertum gehöre auch Opfermut.

Auch die Vermischung der Künste wird verworfen. Jede Kunst habe ihre spezifischen Ausdrucksmittel. Der Wort-Künstler müsse die Eigenheiten der Kunst, der er sich verschrieben habe, entdecken und dürfe nicht listenreich Effekte aus anderen Künsten, wie Musik (*musiki*, *ahenk*) und Bildkunst (*resim*) beziehen. Dichtung sei ganz und gar Wortkunst. Das heiße, sie bestehe

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ganz und gar aus Bedeutung (*mâna*). Jedes Wort bedeute nur sich selbst. Die Bedeutung spreche aber nicht die fünf Sinne (*duygu*) des Menschen an, sondern seinen Verstand (*kafa*, in der Fassung von 1941: *ruhiyat* = die Psyche, das Seelenleben insgesamt). Die Wörter, die Elemente der Sprache, seien entweder direkt Ausdruck der Dinge (*eşya*) oder aber unserer Gedanken.[7] Dem Gedicht wesensfremde Elemente aus anderen Künsten werden als Taschenspielertricks (*hokkabazlık*), die nur ablenken, verworfen. Was das Gedicht zum Gedicht mache, sei der nur ihm eigentümliche Charakter, und der beruhe auf der Bedeutung. In diesem Zusammenhang wird ein Wort von Paul Eluard zitiert:

> Es wird ein Tag kommen, da wird man nur mit dem Intellekt, Verstand (*kafa*) lesen, dann wird die Literatur ein neues Leben erlangen.

In der Literaturgeschichte habe jede neue Strömung für die Dichtung eine neue Grenze (*hudut*) gesetzt. An dieser Stelle wird der historische Auftrag der *garip*-Bewegung klar formuliert, es heißt:

> Uns fiel das Los (*nasip*) zu, diese Grenze im höchsten Maße zu erweitern, oder besser, die Dichtung ganz und gar aus dieser Begrenzung zu befreien.

Um diese Freiheit zu bewahren, lehne man es ab, eine Dichterschule (*mektep*) zu bilden. Was ihnen, den *garipçiler*, diese Grenzerweiterung beschert habe, seien Klarheit und Einfachheit (*safiyet ve besatet*). Der Wunsch, die Schönheit der Dichtung aus diesen Eigenschaften zu beziehen, habe sie in Berührung gebracht mit einer Welt, die den Menschen auf allen Ebenen seines Lebens errege, reize und das größte Schatzhaus der Dichtung sei, nämlich die Welt des Unterbewußtseins (*tahteşşuur*). Nur hier könne die Natur (*tabiat*) in dem Zustand gefunden werden, in dem sie noch nicht durch das Eingreifen des Intellekts (*zekâ*) verändert worden

[7] Dieser Abschnitt liest sich wie eine Antwort auf Ahmet HAŞİM's manifestartiges Vorwort zu PIYALE (1926), *Şiir hakkında bazı mulahazalar*, übersetzt von H. DUDA, »Ahmed Haschim: ein türkischer Dichter der Gegenwart«, in: *Die Welt des Islams* 11 (1928), 200-244. Das Vorwort: 209-216.

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sei. Ebenso lebe hier die Menschenseele in all ihrer Kompliziertheit/Verwobenheit (*giriftlik*) und mit all ihren Komplexen, aber in einem rohem und primitiven (*ham ve iptidai*) Zustand. Der Abstraktion (*tecrid*) der (einzelnen) Gefühle oder Erregungen begegne man nur in den Seelenkunde-Büchern. Die Klarheit und Einfachheit finde man in unseren Kindheitserinnerungen verbunden mit dem gleichen Reichtum, der gleichen Verwobenheit und der gleichen Feindschaft gegenüber der Abstraktion.

In einem Exkurs wird dann gleichzeitig Nähe und Distanz zum Surrealismus mit seinem »psychischen Automatismus« (*ruhi otomatizm*) betont. Das Verfahren (*ameliye*) der Entleerung des Unterbewußtseins (*tahteşşuuru boşaltma*), das (von den Surrealisten) akzeptiert werde als Hauptaufgabe der Dichtung (*şiirin esas işçiliği*, in der Fassung von 1941 französisch »*fonction*«), sei nicht automatisch von einem ekstatischen Zustand (*cezbe hali*) begleitet. Wenn das so wäre, würde jeder zum Künstler. Der Künstler sei vielmehr der Mensch, der außer Zuständen wie Träumen und anderem auch eine ihm verliehene Geschicklichkeit, Fertigkeit (*meleke*) benutzen könne. Ein Bewußtsein (*şuur*), das durch Training (*mümarese*) erworben sei, bringe in dem Menschen die Kraft hervor, die den Brunnen (*kuyu*) graben könne, den wir Unterbewußtsein nennen. Wenn diese Kraft kultiviert werde, könne die Fertigkeit (*meleke*) zwar nicht dazu dienen, das Unterbewußtsein zu entleeren, aber wohl bestenfalls es nachzuahmen (*taklit etme*). Was sind das nun für Dinge, die sich im Unterbewußtsein befinden? Welche Eigenschaften zeigt der Inhalt des Unterbewußtseins? Das fühle der Künstler besser und tiefer als der Wissenschaftler. Sein Werk sei nichts anderes als die Nachahmung dieses Fühlens (*bu hissedişin taklidi*). Der Künstler sei ein vollkommener Nachahmer, Imitator (*mukallit*, *taklitçi*). Doch der Meister-Künstler erscheine so, als ob er kein Imitator sei, weil das Ding, das er imitiere, das Original sei. Einfachheit und Primitivität (*basitlikle iptidailik*) sollten, wenn sie auf Realitäten anspielten, das Kapital (*sermaye*) der Kunst sein. Denn beide verschafften dem Kunstwerk die wahre Schönheit. Ein guter Künstler ahme sie sehr gut nach. Ein solcher Künstler könne die Schönheit nach jahrelangen Mühen und unendlichen Stationen in der Nachahmung

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der Unerfahrenheit, Ungeschicklichkeit (*acemiliği taklit*) finden. In dem Falle heiße das, er sei Meister in der Ungeschicklichkeit geworden. Doch das alles zeige, daß Kunst mit Automatismus nichts zu tun habe, sondern eine Anstrengung (*ceht*) und ein Talent (*hüner*) darstelle. Der Künstler müsse uns auch glauben lassen, daß alles, was er sage, ehrlich (*samimi*) sei.

Schließlich kommt das Manifest noch einmal auf formale Elemente zurück. Was man unbedingt bekämpfen müsse, sei die Halbvers-Mentalität (*mısracı zihniyet*), also die Geisteshaltung in Halbversen zu denken, sich mit einem auserlesenen Halbvers im Gedicht schon zufriedenzugeben. Das Gedicht sei aber ein solcherart (geschlossenes) Ganzes, daß diese Ganzheit gar nicht mehr bemerkt werde, so wie wir den Mörtel zwischen den Ziegeln eines verputzten und angestrichenen Gebäudes nicht sehen könnten. Nur wenn das Gebäude seine Ganzheit (*tamamiyet*) durch den Mörtel sichergestellt habe, erhielten wir Gelegenheit, die Ziegelsteine, aus denen es gebildet ist, einzeln zu sehen und über ihre Eigenschaften nachzudenken. Die Halbvers-Mentalität führe nun dazu, nicht nur die einzelnen Halbverse, sondern auch deren Elemente, die einzelnen Wörter, zu prüfen und zu analysieren. Für ein Gedicht aus hundert Wörtern gebe es dann hundert nach Schönheit suchende Menschen. Aber auch ein Gedicht, das aus tausend Wörtern bestehe, sei wegen einer einzigen Schönheit geschrieben worden. Nicht die Ziegelsteine, nicht der Mörtel seien schön, sondern nur das aus diesen erbaute architektonische Gebilde. Wenn wir uns nämlich ein Gebäude vorstellten, das aus Materialien wie Achat, Heliyotrop und Silber bestehe, könne es doch nicht als Kunstwerk betrachtet werden, wenn es über die Schönheit der Materialien hinaus keine umfassende Schönheit besitze. Das zeige, daß die Tatsache allein, für ein Gedicht schöne Wörter als Material zu verwenden, noch kein Gewinn für das Gedicht sei. Diese Wörter würden aber dem Gedicht auch nicht schaden, wenn sie nicht ihre Ausspracheweisen und Anwendungsformen mit sich tragen würden. Es sei schade, daß diese Wörter nur in einer ganz bestimmten festgelegten Form verwendet werden könnten und ihren Ausdruckswert (*eda*) selbst bestimmten. So sei das Spezifikum der alten Dichtung eben dieser Ausdrucks-

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wert, den man als »poetisch« (*şâirane*) bezeichne. Zu diesem Ausdruckswert (*edâ*) hätten uns die Wörter geführt. Aber der Mensch, der seinen Geschmack und seine Auffassung von Dichtung aus der heutigen Gesellschaft beziehe, gehe oft von der entgegengesetzten Seite aus, d.h. er kenne vor den Wörtern selbst ihren poetischen Gehalt (*şâirane*). Der Wortschatz (*lûgat*), der aus Wörtern bestehe, die diesen (artifiziellen) Ausdruckswert besitzen, tauche zwangsläufig in den Köpfen der Menschen auf, die beim Schreiben 'poetisch' sein wollten oder beim Lesen den 'poetischen' Stil suchten. Die Bemühung, einen neuen Wortschatz (*vokabüler*, in der neuen Fassung: *dil*) in die Dichtung zu tragen, sei aus dem Wunsch geboren, sich aus dem Rahmen dieses poetischen Wortschatzes zu retten. Wenn es Leute gebe, die es nicht verwinden könnten, wenn Wörter wie »Hühnerauge« (*nasır*) und »Süleyman Efendi« in einem Gedicht auftauchten, seien es diejenigen, die den poetischen Stil ertrügen oder gerade suchten.

Man müsse sich gegen alles, was zum Alten gehöre, stellen, doch besonders gegen den poetischen Stil (*şâirane*).

Damit endet das Manifest. Es stammt aus der Feder Orhan Veli's. Dafür sprechen zwei Indizien: 1) Größere Abschnitte hatte Orhan Veli unter seinem Namen bereits in den Jahren 1939-40 in der Zeitschrift Varlık veröffentlicht und sie nur mit leichten Änderungen in das Vorwort-Manifest übernommen.[8] – 2) Im Jahre 1945 wurde das Bändchen *Garip*, nun ausschließlich mit Orhan Veli's Gedichten, dem unveränderten Manifest und einer Vorbemerkung von Orhan Veli, in der er sich als persönlich Betroffener mit den Kritikern auseinandersetzt, neu publiziert. Wir können also davon ausgehen, daß wir es vor allem mit Orhan Veli's Gedanken zu tun haben.

Der Auftrag des Dichters wird klar als gesellschaftlicher Auftrag definiert. Denn es geht um die Adressaten, die Rezipienten der Dichtung. Während die traditionelle Poesie dem Geschmack der begüterten Klasse entsprach, die ein Leben ohne Arbeit führen konnte und an der artifiziellen Sprache der Dichtung ihr Vergnügen fand, muß nun den modernen Menschen, die andauernd um ihr Lebensrecht kämpfen müssen, durch die

[8] SAZYEK (1996), 55.

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Dichter auch zu dem Recht auf eine Dichtung, die ihnen verständlich ist und ihrem Geschmack entspricht, verholfen werden. Es fällt auf, daß es in der modernen Gesellschaft keine solche begüterte parasitäre Klasse zu geben scheint, für deren literarischen Konsum eine klassenspezifische Dichtung produziert werden müßte. Orhan Veli scheint in einer klassenlosen Gesellschaft zu leben, wie sie ja in der republikanischen Türkei der dreißiger Jahre proklamiert wurde. Daß trotzdem noch weitgehend an den Formen der alten Dichtung und dem traditionellen Geschmack festgehalten wird, hängt an der eingefleischten Gewohnheit der Menschen und an der Erziehung, die immer noch die alte Ästhetik tradiert. Die Dichotomie, die Orhan Veli in der Welt sieht, besteht primär zwischen dem Alten und dem Neuen, nicht zwischen den Armen und den Reichen, den Ausbeutern und den Ausgebeuteten, ja auch nicht einmal zwischen dem Orient und dem Okzident. In diesem Manifest kommen Begriffe wie 'türkisch', 'osmanisch', 'Türkei', 'Vaterland', 'national' usw. gar nicht vor. Es wird auch nur ganz allgemein von der literarischen Tradition und den Phasen der Literaturgeschichte gesprochen. Außer Ahmet Haşim wird kein türkischer Dichter mit Namen genannt und keine Literaturströmung charakterisiert, es wird aber ab und zu auf westliche Dichter, Maler, Musiker und Literaturströmungen Bezug genommen. Man spürt den anregenden Einfluß der französischen Surrealisten. Trotzdem ist dieses Manifest nicht epigonal, sondern bezieht sich auf die spezifischen formalen und gesellschaftlichen Aspekte der osmanisch-türkischen Tradition. Orhan Veli und seine Freunde sehen sich sozusagen am Endpunkt einer literarischen Entwicklung, in der es verschiedene Phasen gab, an deren Umbruchstellen jeweils vorsichtig alte Formen und Regeln verändert und durch neue ersetzt wurden. Das sehen sie nicht nur als Phänomen ihrer eigenen, der osmanisch-türkischen Literatur, sondern der Weltliteratur insgesamt. Das Schicksal hat nun ihnen die Aufgabe zugeteilt, die revolutionäre Tat zu vollbringen, alle einengenden poetischen Formen und Fesseln der türkischen Poesie zu zerbrechen und in absoluter Freiheit mit einer neuen Naivität, Einfachheit und Unbefangenheit, in einer Sprache zu dichten, die von jeder poetischen Pose frei ist, und

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damit einen neuen Geschmack zu prägen. Einfachheit und Natürlichkeit sind aber Eigenschaften, die von Dichtern, die noch in der Tradition der raffinierten Ästhetik verhaftet waren, erst mühsam erworben werden müssen. Das poetische Vokabular, das befrachtet ist mit der jahrhundertealten schweren Last festgelegter Bedeutungen soll abgeschafft werden und muß der normalen Alltagssprache Platz machen, die nun – und das ist das Paradoxon – den Gebildeten in der Funktion als Dichtersprache »fremdartig«, *garip*, erscheint. Aber nur mit dieser Sprache, die den Wörtern ihre einfache ursprüngliche Bedeutung zurückgibt, kann man den Geschmack der breiten Masse treffen und allen Menschen zu dem Recht verhelfen, am Konsum von Dichtung teilzuhaben.

Um zu demonstrieren, wie diese neue Sprache beschaffen ist, soll ein Beispiel zitiert werden. Es ist das Gedicht, dessen 'anstößige' Vokabeln Orhan Veli selbst am Schluß des Manifests erwähnt, und gehört zu seinen berühmtesten.

Kitab-i Seng-i Mezar	*Grabinschrift*
Hiçbir şeyden çekmedi dünyada	An nichts litt er in dieser Welt so sehr
Nasırdan çektiği kadar;	Wie an seinem Hühnerauge.
Hatta çirkin yaratıldığından bile	Sogar, daß er häßlich war,
o kadar müteessir değildi;	Störte ihn nicht sonderlich.
Kundurası vurmadığı zamanlarda	Wenn seine Schuhe zufällig nicht drückten,
Anmazdı ama Allahın adını,	Dachte er nicht gleich an den Namen Gottes,
Günahkâr da sayılmazdı.	Aber ungläubig konnte man ihn auch nicht nennen.
Yazık oldu Süleyman Efendi'ye.	Schade um Süleyman Efendi.[9]

Welche gesellschaftspolitischen Bedingungen waren es denn, die diese jungen Dichter zu ihrer revolutionären Mission führten? Man fragt sich, war es 15 Jahre nach Gründung der Republik, nach all den kulturrevolutionären Umwälzungen noch nicht gelungen, die türkische Literatur aus den Fesseln der osmanischen Tradition zu befreien? In welchen historischen Kontext haben wir dieses Manifest zu stellen?

[9] Zweisprachig abgedruckt bei KANIK/PAZARKAYA (1985), 82 f. – Dieses Gedicht war schon 1938 in der Zeitschrift *İnsan* erschienen. SAZYEK (1996), 52.

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Orhan Veli und seine beiden Freunde sind 1914/15 geboren. Sie gehören also zu der ersten Generation, die ihre höhere Schulbildung ausschließlich nach der Republikgründung in einer säkularistischen Atmosphäre erfahren hat. In ihrem Leben spielte die neue türkische Hauptstadt Ankara, an deren zukünftige Existenz zur Zeit ihrer Geburt noch gar nicht zu denken war, eine große Rolle. Sie lernten sich in Ankara am Ankara Erkek Lisesi kennen und führten ihre ersten literarischen Gespräche in der Schule und in Lokalen und Konditoreien in Ankara. Orhan Veli kam 1925 vom Galatasaray Lisesi aus İstanbul an die Gazi İlkokulu nach Ankara, wo sein Vater von 1923-1948 Chef des republikanischen Harmonie-Orchesters war. Orhan erlebte als Schüler also etwa das erste Republik-Jahrzehnt in der neuen Hauptstadt, wo er 1932 das Abschlußexamen machte, um sich dann in der Literatur-Fakultät in İstanbul einzuschreiben. In seinem kurzen Leben wird er künftig recht häufig zwischen Ankara und İstanbul hin- und herpendeln, wie sehr viele Literaten es damals zu tun pflegten. Denn İstanbul, die alte traditionsreiche Sultansstadt, blieb mit ihren landschaftlichen Reizen, kulturellen Institutionen im Buch- und Pressewesen und den Bildungseinrichtungen (die modernisierte Darülfünun wurde 1933 zur İstanbul Üniversitesi) lange viel attraktiver für die intellektuelle Elite als Ankara.[10]

Wenn wir etwas über die Atmosphäre der frührepublikanischen Hauptstadt Ankara während der Schulzeit der *garipçiler* erfahren wollen, mag es erlaubt sein, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's Roman *Ankara*, der 1934 publiziert wurde, zur Hilfe zu nehmen. Der Romancier Yakup Kadri (1889-1974) gehörte zu jenen İstan-

[10] Niyazi Berkes, seit seiner Schulzeit in Lefkoşe/Zypern ein aufrechter Kemalist, der 1932 eine Anstellung als erster 'Bibliothekar' am *halkevi* in Ankara angeboten bekam, war tief getroffen, als seine İstanbuler Freunde im Eminefendi lokanta ve kahvesi, darunter der Kritiker Nurullah ATAÇ (später *sıkı bir Ankaralı*, ein überzeugter Ankaraner), ihn wegen seiner Entscheidung, nach Ankara zu gehen, verspotteten. Er schreibt: »Ankara'ya karşı İstanbul aydınları arasında bu denli yabancılık vardı. İnanılması güç!« Niyazi BERKES, *Unutulan Yıllar*, yayına hazırlayan Ruşen SEZER, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997 (Anı Dizisi; 20), 70. Aber Berkes erlebt auch seine Enttäuschungen in Ankara. Seine Initiative, in Ankara einen Diskussionszirkel für Intellektuelle zu gründen, scheitert kläglich daran, daß die Ankaraner nicht zu einer fairen (*efendici*) geistigen Auseinandersetzung fähig waren, *a.a.O.*, 95-97.

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buler Intellektuellen, die als überzeugte 'Kemalisten' der ersten Stunde zusammen mit dem Republikgründer Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) an der Konstruktion einer neuen türkischen kulturellen Identität, die nicht in İstanbul, sondern in Anatolien verankert sein sollte, mitwirkte. Aus seinen Schriften erfahren wir aber auch, welch schwieriges Unterfangen das war.

Der Roman *Ankara* besteht aus drei Teilen, die drei Perioden aus der jüngeren Geschichte Ankaras zugeordnet sind. In der ersten Periode ist Ankara die kleine schmutzige Provinzstadt, die ausersehen war, im Befreiungskrieg das Hauptquartier des Feldherrn und seit April 1920 die Große National-Versammlung zu beherbergen. Nach der Niederlage des Osmanischen Reiches im Ersten Weltkrieg und während der Besetzung İstanbuls durch die Allierten seit 1920, die von den Türken als tiefe Demütigung empfunden wurde, übte daher das Städtchen Ankara als Symbol der Hoffnung eine geheime Anziehungskraft auf alle nationalgesinnten Türken aus, die zunehmend nach Anatolien pilgerten, um am Befreiungskampf mitzuwirken.[11] Damals, so schreibt Yakup Kadri in seinem Roman, herrschte trotz der harten primitiven Lebensbedingungen in Ankara der nationale Enthusiasmus vor.

Ganz anders in der zweiten Periode, also in der ersten Dekade der Republik, 1923-1933, den Schuljahren Orhan Veli's und seiner Freunde. Yakup Kadri läßt erkennen, daß es nicht glückte, den Enthusiasmus zu bewahren und ihn in die Kultivierung eines soliden Nationalbewußtseins und den Aufbau der Republik zu investieren. Die neue republikanische Elite wird von ihm – sicher übertrieben, wie man kritisiert hat – als eine egoistische, von westlichem Konsumdenken beherrschte Schicht dargestellt, die nur an der modernsten westlichen Ausstattung ihrer Häuser, an westlicher Mode, an Tanztees, Bällen und Spekulationsgeschäften interessiert war. Die Kluft zwischen der Mehrheit der Einheimi-

[11] Siehe dazu Erika GLASSEN, »Das türkische Gefängnis als Schule des literarischen Realismus (Nâzım Hikmets Weg nach Anatolien)«, in: Ingeborg BALDAUF u.a. (Hrsg.), *Türkische Sprachen und Literaturen: Materialien der ersten deutschen Turkologen-Konferenz, Bamberg, 3.-6. Juli 1987*, Wiesbaden 1991 (Veröff. der Societas Uralo-Altaica; 29), 129 ff.

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schen und der meist aus İstanbul zugewanderten Führungsschicht, die so oft wie möglich mit dem Zug aus Ankara nach İstanbul floh, blieb beängstigend tief. Eine der Hauptfiguren des Romans, der junge Journalist und Schriftsteller Neşet Sabit, als unabhängiger 'idealistischer Kemalist' das *alter ego* Yakup Kadri's, zeigt sich zutiefst frustriert. Verwestlichung bedeutet, wie er in Ankara beobachtet, nicht viel mehr als Nachäffen alles Westlichen und wird nicht als ein Lebensprinzip verstanden, das als Kraft und Motor in Dienst genommen werden kann, um die eigene türkische nationale Kultur und Identität aufzubauen. Dieser zweite Teil des Romans endet mit der großen Rede des Staatsgründers zum zehnjährigen Jubiläum der Republik, durch die er dem Volk neue Impulse zu geben versucht. Yakup Kadri beschreibt in einem dritten, utopischen Teil seine Vision von einer echten kemalistischen Revolution, die dann in gemeinsamer Anstrengung zum Aufblühen des Landes führt.[12]

Diese Stagnation, Frustration und Ernüchterung, die sich trotz der errungenen nationalen Unabhängigkeit in der türkischen Gesellschaft breitgemacht hatte und die Yakup Kadri in seinem Ankara-Roman diagnostiziert hat, ist keine literarische Fiktion. Man kann sie durchaus an vielen Indizien im gesellschaftlichen und literarischen Leben der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre wahrnehmen. Man darf nämlich nicht vergessen, daß, nachdem die Euphorie des Siegesrausches verflogen war, viele der alten Mitstreiter Mustafa Kemal's nicht bereit waren, alle die rigorosen Reformen mitzutragen, die er für notwendig hielt. Bei der Abschaffung des Sultanats (1. 11. 1922), aber besonders bei der Aufhebung des Kalifats (3. 3. 1924) gab es große Widerstände zu überwinden. Es existierte auch eine oppositionelle Presse in İstanbul. Wenig später waren es die religionspolitischen Maßnahmen im Zusammenhang mit den traditionellen islamischen Institutionen,

[12] In dem Vorwort zu der dritten Auflage des Romans 1964, abgedruckt in: Yakup Kadri KARAOSMANOĞLU, *Bütün Eserleri*, 10, hazl. Atilla ÖZKIRIMLI, 5. basılış, İstanbul 1981, 17, hat Yakup Kadri selbst seine Ernüchterung zum Ausdruck gebracht und festgestellt, daß innerhalb der vergangenen dreißig Jahre dieser erhoffte Aufschwung nicht stattgefunden habe. Er hat in dem Roman *Panorama*, 2 cilt, Ankara 1953-54, eine Fortsetzung zu *Ankara* geschrieben, in dem sein Held Neşet Sabit als Opportunist der DP beitritt.

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die breite Bevölkerungskreise irritierten. Die beiden Versuche, 1924 und 1930, zu einem Mehrparteiensystem zu gelangen, scheiterten. Das Gespenst der Konterrevolution zeigte sich 1925 in Gestalt des kurdischen Naqşibandi-Scheichs Sait, der im Südosten der Republik einen blutigen Aufstand im Namen der Religion anzettelte, und 1930 in Menemen, wo ein anderer Naqşibandi Derviş Mehmed als angeblicher Mahdi die Bevölkerung aufwiegelte, so daß schließlich der junge kemalistische Offizier Kubilay, der ihnen entgegentrat, geköpft wurde. In Izmir wurde sogar ein Attentatsplan gegen Mustafa Kemal aufgedeckt. Der Ausnahmezustand, der unter der Bezeichnung »Sicherung der (öffentlichen) Ruhe« (*takrir-i sükûn*) von 1925 bis 1929 herrschte, und das harte Durchgreifen der *İstiklal Mahkemeleri* (außerordentlicher Gerichtshöfe) gegen alle Feinde der Republik lähmte die freie Entfaltung der Demokratie, die Mustafa Kemal eigentlich anstrebte.[13] Er nutzte die verordnete Ruhe, um eine Reihe von Reformen einzuleiten und durchzuführen, die insgesamt den Charakter einer Kulturrevolution trugen. Er konnte dabei zwar weitgehend mit der Zustimmung der säkularistischen, westlich orientierten Intellektuellen und Künstler rechnen, aber wenn auch vor allem die religiösen Reaktionäre in Schranken gehalten werden sollten, wurde doch das geistige Klima allgemein als bedrückend empfunden, wozu auch die schlechte wirtschaftliche Lage beitrug. Der Ausnahmezustand und seit 1931 das erste restriktive Pressegesetz[14] behinderten die freie Meinungsäußerung und leiteten eine Entwicklung ein, die allmählich, öffentlich wahrnehmbar erst nach Atatürk's Tod, besonders unter dem Einfluß des Weltkrieges, aus dem sich die Türkei mit İnönü's Schaukelpolitik herauszuhalten verstand, zu einer Polarisierung zwischen 'rechten' turanistisch-nationalistisch-faschistischen und 'linken' sozialistisch-kommu-

[13] Eine gute Zusammenfassung dieser Ereignisse aus kemalistischer Perspektive findet sich in dem Schulbuch *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İnkilap Tarihi* (Verfasser: Mükerrem K. SU und Prof. Dr. Ahmet MUMCU), İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1981, 176-220. Siehe auch Feroz AHMAD, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London: Routledge, 1993, 52-101, und Fikret ADANIR, *Geschichte der Republik Türkei*, Mannheim 1995 (Meyers Forum; 32), 21-38.

[14] *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, 1. cilt, İstanbul: İletişim, 1983, 213-215.

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nistisch-oppositionellen Individuen oder Gruppen führte, die allerdings der republikanischen Sache nicht grundsätzlich feindlich gegenüberstanden wie die *şeriat*-treuen reaktionären Kräfte. Die staatsloyalen 'idealistischen Kemalisten', wie ich sie einmal nennen möchte, hatten es besonders schwer, da sie unabhängig von der Staatspartei und den Parteifunktionären bleiben, sich aber auch nicht mit den beiden extremistischen Haltungen identifizieren wollten. Man kann sie als Gruppe schwer definieren. Es handelt sich um Freundeskreise oder engagierte Individuen. Gemeinsam war ihnen die Akzeptanz der kemalistischen Politik des Laizismus und der Aneignung der westlichen Zivilisation. Sie wollten wie der Republikgründer einen eigenen nationalen türkischen Weg finden und mischten sich kreativ ein. Da der Begriff Kemalismus bis heute schwammig geblieben ist, will ich versuchen, möglichst viele frühe 'Kemalisten' aufzuspüren, um dem Phänomen näher zu kommen. Denn ich möchte beweisen, daß die *Garip*-Bewegung aus kemalistischem Ankaraner Geist geboren ist.

Das literarische Leben, das sich nach der finsteren Zeit des Despotismus (*istibdat*) unter Sultan Abdülhamid II. (1876-1909) seit der jungtürkischen Revolution von 1908 besonders durch die aufblühende Presse und die kulturellen Aktivitäten der Türk Ocakları relativ frei entfalten konnte, hatte sein Zentrum in İstanbul. Die Abwendung von der osmanischen Vergangenheit und die Hinwendung nach Anatolien, die Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) durch die Gründung der neuen Hauptstadt Ankara symbolisch und praktisch vollzog, konnte also nicht ohne Auswirkungen auf die Literatur und Presse bleiben. Auch andere rigorose kulturrevolutionäre Maßnahmen Mustafa Kemal's, zu denen die Einführung der Lateinschrift im Jahre 1928, die u.a. den Anschluß an die zeitgenössische westliche Zivilisation erleichtern sollte,[15] gehörte, hatten auf die türkische Literatur zunächst eher negative Auswirkungen, denn die junge Generation wurde damit weitgehend von der Tradition abgeschnitten.

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[15] Dazu mit Literaturangaben: Barbara FLEMMING, »Literatur im Zeichen des Alphabetwechsels«, in: *Anatolica* VIII (1981), 133-157.

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Doch es fehlte nicht an Literaten in der Türkischen Republik. Die alte Garde war, soweit nicht wegen ihrer oppositionellen Haltung emigriert oder verbannt,[16] im Lehrbetrieb und Journalismus tätig oder war von Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – dem großzügigen Mäzen – mit Abgeordneten- oder Diplomatenposten versorgt worden,[17] und auch die jüngere Generation, die studieren konnte, oft auf Staatskosten im Ausland, wie Oktay Rifat in Paris und Melih Cevdet in Belgien, fand, wie auch Orhan Veli, der sein Studium ohne Examen abgebrochen hatte, in staatlichen Einrichtungen und Ministerien ein Unterkommen, war wenigstens materiell versorgt. Dieser Trend hielt auch unter Atatürk's Nachfolger İnönü zunächst an. Die beruflichen Möglichkeiten, die die neue Hauptstadt bot, machten Ankara doch allmählich zu einer akzeptablen Alternative zu İstanbul, wobei auch im kulturellen Leben der beiden Städte eine gewisse Polarisierung zwischen nationalistisch-kemalistischem Geist im 'modernen' Ankara und einer oppositionellen konservativen oder linken Haltung im nostalgieträchtigen, bohèmehaften und kosmopolitischen İstanbul zu beobachten war.

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[16] Zu den Verbannten gehörte die bekannte Schriftstellerin und Mitstreiterin Mustafa Kemals im Befreiungskrieg Halide Edip (Adıvar) (1884-1964) und ihr Mann Dr. Adnan Adıvar, der der oppositionellen Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası (aufgelöst 1925) beigetreten war. Zu den 150 Verbannten, den *yüzellilikler*, gehörten auch die berühmten Schriftsteller Rıza Tevfik (1868-1951) und Refik Halit Karay (1888-1965). Siehe dazu İlhami SOYSAL, *150likler: kimdiler, ne yaptılar, ne oldular*, 3. Auflage, İstanbul 1988. Über Halide Edip s. D. GRONAU, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk oder Die Geburt der Republik*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, 243. Gronau's Buch ist gut recherchiert und lesbar.

[17] Adile AYDA, *Böyle idiler yaşarken (Edebî hâtıralar)*, Ankara 1984, schreibt in ihren Erinnerungen an den Lyriker Celâl Sâhir (Erozan) (1863-1935), den man den *Kadınlar şairi* (»Frauendichter«) nannte, 150: »Daß Atatürk die gebildete Elite (*bilginler*) um sich sammelte, mit ihnen arbeitete und sich von ihnen beraten ließ, ist bekannt, aber seine mäzenatische Seite, nämlich daß er wie Ludwig XIV., Friedrich II. und Fatih Förderer der Kunst und Literatur war, ist in unserer Geschichte noch nicht genügend hervorgehoben worden«. Um einen Abgeordnetenposten zu erlangen, sei wichtiger als die Wahl die Tatsache gewesen, ob man auf der Liste des Devlet Başkanı stand. So seien unter dem Einparteienregime Atatürks viele wirklich würdige Dichter und Schriftsteller *mebus* geworden. Ähnlich äußert sich Taha TOROS, *Mâzi Cennet*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., 1992, 191. Ein interessantes Thema, das sich zu bearbeiten lohnt.

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Es gab ein reges Literatenleben in Lokalen und Kaffeehäusern in İstanbul und Ankara.[18] Dort diskutierte man, trug Fehden aus und machte Projekte für neue Zeitschriften, die manchmal sehr kurzlebig waren und immer wieder von denselben Literaten beliefert wurden. Der erste heftige literarische Streit, der während der Republikzeit zwischen der jungen und alten Generation ausgetragen wurde, fand kurz nach Beendigung des Ausnahmezustandes in der Zeitschrift *Resimli Ay*, herausgegeben in İstanbul von den Linksliberalen Sabiha und Zekeriya Sertel, sein Forum. Nâzım Hikmet (Ran) (1902-1963), der 1928 aus Moskau vom internationalen Kommunismus geprägt in die Türkei zurückgekehrt war, arbeitete an der Zeitschrift als Korrektor und publizierte damals auch seine eigenen revolutionären Gedichte in freien Rhythmen. Die polemische Kampagne, die alle Gemüter bewegte, wurde unter dem Schlachtruf »Wir zerbrechen die Götzen« (*putları yıkıyoruz*) ab Juni 1929 über mehrere Monate hinweg geführt. Zur Zielscheibe wurden zunächst vor allem Abdülhak Hâmid (Tarhan) (1852-1937), der größte Genius (*dâhî-i âzam*),[19] und Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul) (1869-1944), der nationale oder türkische Dichter (*millî şâir, Türk şairi*),[20] der Kampf zog aber bald weitere Kreise.[21] Auch

[18] Über dieses literarische Leben in den Kaffehäusern und Lokalen in Istanbul und Ankara findet man reiches Material bei: Salâh BİRSEL, *Kahveler kitabı*, İstanbul 1975; ders., *Ah Beyoğlu vah Beyoğlu*, İstanbul 1976; MEHMED KEMAL (Kurşunluoğlu), *Acılı Kuşak*, 2. b., İstanbul 1977; und ders., *Türkiye'nin kalbi Ankara*, İstanbul 1983. Auch Orhan Veli wird in allen diesen Büchern häufig erwähnt.

[19] Siehe Petra DE BRUIJN, *The Two Worlds of Eşber: Western oriented verse drama and Ottoman Turkish poetry by 'Abdülḥaḳḳ Ḥāmid (Tarhan)*, Leiden 1997 (Research School CNWS), über Nâzım Hikmet's Kampagne, 116 f. Übrigens war Abdülhak Hamid für drei Legislaturperioden zwischen 1927-1939 *mebus* für İstanbul, so bei Süleyman COŞKUN, *Türkiye'de Politika (1920-1995)*, İstanbul 1995, 240. DE BRUIJN, 106: »Soon after the foundation of the Republic, in 1923, the Büyük Milli Meclisi (Grand National Assembly) honoured his services to the fatherland [...] by settling a monthly salary on him. The Istanbul Municipality rented an apartment for him on the first floor of the Maçka Palas [...] in Istanbul«. Dort hat ihn übrigens Nâzım Hikmet auf seine Einladung hin 1930 besucht und war sehr beeindruckt. Sabiha SERTEL, *Roman gibi*, 2. b., İstanbul: Belge yay., 1987, 120-131.

[20] Auch Mehmet Emin war *mebus* in 6 Legislaturperioden von 1923 bis zu seinem Tode. Siehe COŞKUN (1995), 260. Als Mehmet Emin 1921 nach Ankara aufbrach, begrüßte ihn in İnebolu ein Telegramm des Gazi als »milletimizin mübarek babası«. S. Şükran KURDAKUL, *Çağdaş Türk Edebiyatı: Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, İstanbul: Broy Yayınları 20, 1986, 117.

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Yakup Kadri, der durchaus noch nicht zum alten Eisen gehören wollte und Nâzım Hikmet's moderne Lyrik wegen der Sprengung der alten Formen zwar bewunderte, aber seinen linken Klassenstandpunkt für die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse in der Türkei als unangemessen ablehnte, mischte sich mit einer gereizten Replik ein und wurde dann selbst Adressat einer Satire.[22] Nâzım Hikmet avancierte auf der İstanbuler Szene zum Idol der jungen Generation. Er war auch berühmt als Rezitator seiner Verse bei den Versammlungen der Künstlervereinigung (*Güzel Sanatlar Birliği*) im Alay Köşkü, und eine amerikanische Firma produzierte 1929 zwei Platten mit seinen Lyrikrezitationen.[23] Selbst Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) wurde auf ihn aufmerksam und wollte ihn in den Dolmabahçe-Palast, seine İstanbuler Residenz, zu einer nächtlichen Tafelrunde kommen lassen, was der Dichter aber stolz ablehnte, er sei nicht die Nachtklubsängerin »Nixe Eftalia«.[24] Die Reaktionen zwischen den beiden literarischen Lagern waren sehr heftig, und es blieb nicht aus, daß Nâzım Hikmet als Handlanger des Bolschewismus denunziert wurde,[25] so von dem langjährigen Präsidenten der Türk Ocakları, Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver) (1885-1966),[26] und Mustafa Kemal's Hofdichter Behçet Kemal Çağlar (1908-1969).[27]

Man kann wohl sagen, das literarische Leben befand sich in einer schwierigen Übergangsphase, die nicht nur von der staatlich

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[21] Siehe dazu: SERTEL, *Roman gibi*, 116-138 u. 150-162; zusammenfassend mit reichem Anmerkungsapparat: Kemal SÜLKER, *Nâzım Hikmet'in polemikleri*, İstanbul: Ant Yay., 1968.

[22] SÜLKER (1968), 28-44.

[23] Siehe dazu SÜLKER (1968), 41 f.

[24] Dazu Dietrich GRONAU, *Nâzım Hikmet*, Reinbek 1991, 89.

[25] Die offizielle Außenpolitik der Türkischen Republik war damals nicht etwa antisowjetisch, sondern es gab im Gegenteil sehr enge gegenseitige Beziehungen, ADANIR (1995), 52 f. – BERKES (1997), 99 f., beschreibt, wie der Gazi mit dem höchsten auswärtigen Gast zur Zehnjahresfeier der Republik, dem sowjetischen Staatspräsidenten Woroschilow, das Ankaraner Halkevi besucht.

[26] Dazu M. BAYDAR, *Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver ve Anıları*, İstanbul: Menteş Kitapevi, 1967, 139-151.

[27] SÜLKER (1968), 158 f. – Über den 'Hofdichter' in Ankara s. AYDA (1984), 65 ff. Dazu auch BERKES (1997), 90, 99, 272.

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verordneten Schrift- und Sprachreform[28] geprägt war, sondern auch von einem sich wandelnden Nationalismusbegriff. Symptomatisch dafür scheint mir eine Anekdote, die Adile Ayda berichtet, deren Vater, der Kazan-Tatar Sadri Maksudi Arsal, zu den Führungsfiguren der Türk Ocakları und Tischgenossen Mustafa Kemal's in Ankara gehörte. In ihren Erinnerungen an den 'millî şâir' Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul) erzählt sie, daß Atatürk sich Anfang des Jahres 1930 bei Tisch nach den Aktivitäten der Türk Ocakları erkundigte und schließlich mit scharfer Stimme fragte: »Was macht denn eigentlich diese Wissenschafts- und Kulturvereinigung (*ilim ve hars heyeti*)?« Dann, seinen Blick auf Mehmet Emin Bey gerichtet:

> Was treiben denn unsere Literaten, unsere Dichter? »Ich bin ein Türke, meine Religion, meine Herkunft ist erhaben (*ben bir Türküm, dinim, cinsim uludur*)« haben wir jetzt verstanden. Aber inzwischen haben wir einen großen Befreiungskrieg, einen nationalen Kampf durchgefochten. Wo sind denn unsere nationalen Dichter und Gedichte, die das zum Thema genommen haben?

Mehmet Emin wurde verlegen, aber Hamdullah Suphi Bey fühlte sich verpflichtet, ihm zu helfen, und sagte, Firdausi habe für das Schahnama schließlich 30 Jahre gebraucht, ein Nationalepos lasse sich nicht so schnell schreiben, Mehmet Emin habe damit begonnen.[29]

Die Tage der Türk Ocakları[30] waren gezählt. Diese Institution, die sich große Verdienste um die Ausbildung eines kulturellen türkischen Identitätsbewußtseins erworben hatte, aber auch immer offen für panturanistische Ideen gewesen war, schien nicht mehr zeitgemäß. Ein neues 'kemalistisches' türkisches Nationalbewußtsein mußte geschaffen werden. Da der gescheiterte Versuch der Gründung einer Oppositionspartei, die von Mustafa Kemal

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[28] Dazu immer noch als guter Überblick gültig: Karl STEUERWALD, *Untersuchungen zur türkischen Sprache der Gegenwart*, Teil I: *Die Türkische Sprachpolitik seit 1928*, Berlin-Schöneberg: Langenscheidt, 1963.

[29] AYDA (1984), 25-27.

[30] Dazu: Yusuf SARINAY, *Türk milliyetçiliğinin tarihî gelişimi ve Türk Ocakları, 1912-1931*, İstanbul 1994; Füsun ÜSTEL, *Türk Ocakları*, İstanbul 1997.

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zunächst selbst gefördert worden war, die Unzufriedenheit breiter Bevölkerungskreise sichtbar gemacht hatte, brach der Republikgründer im November des Jahres 1930 zu einer Inspektionsreise durch das Land auf, die er bis in den März des folgenden Jahres 1931 ausdehnte. Zu seinen Begleitern gehörte damals Hasan Ali (Yücel) (1897-1961), der als einer der idealistischen Kemalisten sehr befruchtend auf das kulturelle Leben in der Türkei wirken sollte, besonders später in seiner Amtszeit als Erziehungsminister.[31] Die sechs Prinzipien des Kemalismus[32] wurden auf dieser Reise diskutiert und formuliert. Durch Gespräche unter den Reiseteilnehmern scheint auch die Idee für die Gründung einer Sprachgesellschaft damals herangereift zu sein.[33] Nach der Rückkehr Mustafa Kemals nach Ankara wurden die traditionellen Türk Ocakları aufgelöst und 1932 in Halkevleri (Volkshäuser) umgewandelt, die nun auf allen Gebieten des geistigen und gesellschaftlichen Lebens die Propagierung der kemalistischen Kulturrevolution übernahmen. Sie unterstanden der Aufsicht der Volkspartei (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi). Hamdullah Suphi Bey, der eigentlich seit ihrer Gründung die Türk Ocakları geleitet hatte, wurde auf einen Diplomatenposten abgeschoben.

Es begann eine Zeit der ideologischen Mobilmachung, an der sich auch Yakup Kadri beteiligte. Denn sowohl die gnadenlose gesellschaftskritische Bilanz im zweiten Teil als auch die effektvolle Zukunftsvision einer geglückten kemalistischen Revolution im utopischen Ausgang kennzeichnen den Roman *Ankara* als Produkt dieser ideologischen Mobilmachungsphase der dreißiger Jahre. Doch Yakup Kadri hat sich nicht mit diesem literarischen

[31] Siehe die Bamberger Magisterarbeit: Mustafa ÇIKAR, *Hasan-Ali Yücel und die Türkische Kulturreform*, Bonn: Kultusministerium der Türkischen Republik / Pontes-Verlag, 1994; über die Reise mit Mustafa Kemal: 42-44.

[32] ADANIR (1995), 44 f. – Die *altı ok* (sechs Pfeile): Nationalismus, Republikanismus, Populismus, Laizismus, Etatismus und Reformismus/Revolutionismus wurden zu Hauptpunkten des Parteiprogramms der CHP und 1937 in die Verfassung übernommen.

[33] Nach ÇIKAR (1994), 43-45, hat Hasan Ali (Yücel) den Anstoß dazu gegeben. Die Türk Dili Tetkiki Cemiyeti (später: Türk Dil Kurumu) wurde am 12. Juli 1932 gegründet. Nach der Schriftreform von 1928 begann nun die große offizielle Offensive, die Türkisierung der osmanischen Sprache. Klaus KREISER, *Kleines Türkei-Lexikon*, München: Beck, 1991 (Beck'sche Reihe), 146.

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Produkt dieser ideologischen Mobilmachungsphase der dreißiger Jahre. Doch Yakup Kadri hat sich nicht mit diesem literarischen Beitrag begnügt, er hat zusammen mit einer Gruppe von Gleichgesinnten, die sich als freiwilliges Kader (*Kadro*, so der Name ihrer Zeitschrift) der kemalistischen Revolutionsbewegung verstanden, gestützt auf die »Sechs Prinzipien« (*altı ok*), doch unabhängig von der Staatspartei, an der Ausarbeitung der Ideologie des Kemalismus mitgewirkt. Die von den *Kadrocular* vertretene Ideologie, die alle Gebiete des gesellschaftlichen Lebens einbezog, wurde im bewußten Wettstreit mit den zeitgenössischen Ideologien des Faschismus und Bolschewismus konzipiert und trat mit großem Selbstbewußtsein für eine klassenlose Gesellschaft und einen autarken anti-imperialistischen Nationalismus als Vorbild für die 'Dritte Welt' ein. Da einige der *Kadrocular* in ihrer Jugend Bewunderer der russischen Oktoberrevolution gewesen waren, wurden sie von den Rechten als Kommunisten denunziert, ihre ökonomischen Vorstellungen von der staatlichen Lenkung nach dem Prinzip des Etatismus paßten bestimmten liberalen Wirtschaftskreisen nicht, die der Staatspartei nahestanden, und sie mußten auf Atatürk's Wunsch ihre Zeitschrift nach 3 Jahren aufgeben.[34] Auch Yakup Kadri wurde als Diplomat[35] in die 'Verbannung' geschickt wie Hamdullah Suphi zwei Jahre vor ihm. Viele aufrechte Kemalisten erlitten ein ähnlich typisches Schicksal, sie wurden Opfer des Machtkampfes im eigenen Lager.

Diese ideologische Mobilmachung, die vom Republikgründer in Gang gesetzt wurde, nachdem er erfahren hatte, daß die von ihm verordneten Reformen im Volk noch nicht auf breiter Basis akzeptiert worden waren, machte sich als offizieller Impuls auch

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[34] Einer der *Kadrocular* hat diese Ideologie zusammenfassend dargestellt: Şevket SÜREYYA, *İnkilâp ve Kadro (İnkilâbın İdeolojisi)*, Ankara 1932; mit Literaturangaben: F. AHMAD, »Die Suche nach einer Ideologie in der kemalistischen Türkei 1919-1939«, und Fikret ADANIR, »Zur 'Etatismus'-Diskussion in der Türkei in der Weltwirtschaftskrise: Die Zeitschrift *Kadro* 1932-1934«, beide Aufsätze in: Linda SCHATKOWSKI-SCHILCHER und C. SCHARF (Hrsg.), *Der Nahe Osten in der Zwischenkriegszeit 1919-1939: Die Interdependenz von Politik, Wirtschaft und Ideologie*, Stuttgart 1989 (Veröffentl. des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz, Abteilung Universalgeschichte; Beiheft 22), 341-354 und 355-373.

[35] Yakup Kadri KARAOSMANOĞLU, *Zoraki Diplomat* (= *Bütün Eserleri*; 15), hazırlayan A. ÖZKIRIMLI, 2. basılış, İstanbul 1967, 21-48.

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auf dem Feld der Literatur bemerkbar. Es ging um die moralische Unterstützung der nationalen Sache durch die Intellektuellen, die Mustafa Kemal brauchte, um sein Ziel, die Anbindung der Türkischen Republik an die moderne westliche Zivilisation, zu erreichen, wobei der Bruch mit der osmanischen Tradition als unabdingbare Voraussetzung galt. Die Konstruktion eines türkischen Nationalbewußtseins, das der weisen Beschränkung der Republik auf das Territorium Anatoliens Rechnung tragen mußte, gehörte in das kemalistische Konzept. Ankara war ein aussagekräftiges Symbol dafür und wurde weitgehend so verstanden. Osmanische Nostalgie und extrem panturanistische Ideen paßten ebensowenig wie der bolschewistisch inspirierte Klassenkampf in die kemalistische Ideologie.

Das ehrliche Bemühen vieler Literaten, sich der Aufgabe zu stellen und eine neue türkische Nationalliteratur zu schaffen, die auch im internationalen Rahmen als Stimme der neuen Türkei wahrgenommen werden konnte, hatte bislang noch nicht zu fruchtbaren Ergebnissen geführt. Das wird immer wieder selbstkritisch festgestellt. Es war die Zeit der Diskussionen und Umfragen (*anketler*) in den literarischen Zeitschriften. Man stellte Fragen wie: »Stirbt die Poesie?« (*Şiir ölüyor mu?*), so 1937 in der Zeitung *Ulus*, oder »Können wir eine nationale Literatur schaffen?« (*Milli bir edebiyat yaratabilirmiyiz?*).[36] Es gibt viele solcher Beispiele, und der pessimistische Unterton ist hier schon in den Fragen nicht zu überhören. Ein interessantes Exemplum dieser Spezies ist der Band *Edebiyatçılarımız ve Türk Edebiyatı*,[37] gesammelt und herausgegeben von Mehmet Behçet Yazar (1890-1980). Er hatte im Jahre 1938, aus Anlaß des 15jährigen Bestehens der Republik 43 Literaten nach ihrem eigenen Werk und ihrer persön-

[36] Von Nusret Safa COŞKUN in Istanbul 1938 in Buchform herausgegeben.

[37] İstanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, 1939. Vom gleichen Autor: *Genç şairlerimiz ve eserleri (Edebi tetkik)*, İstanbul: Ahmet Sait Matbaası, 1936. In diesem Werk hat er in dem Kapitel *Fantastique Şiir* Mümtaz Zeki, Ercüment Behzad und Nâzım Hikmet als von den modernen europäischen Strömungen (cubism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism) beeinflußt behandelt, 36-42. Er erwähnt, 38, daß Marinetti 1932 in İstanbul einen Vortrag über den Futurismus gehalten habe. Ders., *Genç romancılarımız ve eserleri (Edebi tetkik)*, İstanbul 1937. Diese Werke geben ein wertvolles Resümee über den Stand der türkischen Literatur.

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lichen Einstellung zur Vergangenheit und Zukunft der türkischen Literatur befragt. Die jungen Literaten der Generation der Atatürk-Ära (*Atatürk devrinin neslinden olan mümessilleri*) sollten besonders herausgestellt werden, doch auch die ältere Generation kam zu Wort, mehr als ein Drittel der Befragten sind vor der Jahrhundertwende geboren. Auch in diesen Beiträgen überwiegen, trotz begeisterter Lippenbekenntnisse zur revolutionären nationalen Sache – fast alle distanzieren sich von der osmanischen Tradition, und die Anthologie enthält viel Atatürk-Panegyrik – unzufriedene Äußerungen zur gegenwärtigen Lage der Literatur. So beklagt Halit Fahri Ozansoy (1891-1971), der auch Atatürk's Rede zum zehnten Jahrestag der Republik als Ansporn für die Literatur zitiert, daß die neuen Türken, die durch ihre Revolution in 11 Jahren 6 Jahrhunderte übersprungen hätten und dafür von den Europäern bewundert würden, noch keinen diesem Phänomen angemessenen Beitrag zur Weltliteratur geleistet hätten. Um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, müsse man die neuesten europäischen literarischen Werke und geistigen Strömungen rezipieren. Doch da für die türkische Literatur die Heimat Anatolien immer noch ein Geheimnis geblieben sei, sei es an der Zeit, das eigene Land und seine Gesellschaft literarisch zu thematisieren und die 'nationalisierte' Sprache, das *öz Türkçe*, zu benutzen. Nicht nur die großen Dinge, wie der Befreiungskrieg, müßten besungen werden, auch das soziale Leben der arbeitenden und sich abplackenden Menschen, unter denen 1001 verschiedene Typen existierten, er nennt einen Schuster, müsse literaturfähig werden. Das sei künstlerisch vielleicht schwieriger zu bewältigen, aber der einzige Weg, um Anschluß an die Weltliteratur zu finden. Die wahre Revolutionsliteratur sei eine volkstümliche (*popülist*) Literatur.[38] Andere der Befragten hofften auf das Erscheinen einer großen Dichterpersönlichkeit, die, wie H. Nusret Zorlutana (1901-1984) in ihrem Beitrag überlegt, vielleicht noch auf der Schulbank oder auf dem Schoß der Mutter sitze. Sie sagt:

[38] YAZAR (1938), 152-162.

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> Es besteht kein Zweifel, daß unsere Revolution, die ein Meisterwerk war, auch eine Literatur gebären wird, die ihr ebenbürtig ist.[39]

Also, der erwartete Messias der neuen türkischen Literatur war 1937/38 noch nicht erschienen. Überall herrschte Unbehagen, man spürte eine geistige Leere. Es fällt auf, welche Namen in Yazar's Band, der 1938, noch kurz vor Atatürk's Tod, erschienen ist, fehlen. Über die Gründe kann man nur Vermutungen anstellen. U.a. fehlen Nâzım Hikmet und Orhan Veli. Das ist leicht erklärbar. Der streitbare kommunistische Dichter Nâzım Hikmet, der nicht nur seit Ende der zwanziger Jahre mit Gedichten in freien Rhythmen die türkische Lyrik revolutioniert hatte, sondern auch durch seine polemischen Angriffe auf die 'Götzen' der Literatur die literarische Szene in İstanbul in Aufruhr versetzt hatte, mußte 1937 vor Gericht und saß seit 1938 in anatolischen Gefängnissen, schrieb dort weiter Gedichte und ein nationales Epos, verfolgte das literarische Leben durch die Lektüre von Zeitschriften und diskutierte oder korrespondierte mit Schriftstellerkollegen, die z.T. auch im Gefängnis saßen, wie Orhan Kemal und Kemal Tahir.[40] Orhan Veli war aber 1937, als Yazar die Schriftstellerkollegen befragte, wohl noch nicht prominent genug, um hier zu Wort zu kommen, obwohl er gerade seine ersten Gedichte in Zeitschriften publiziert hatte.[41]

Doch auch Orhan Veli und seine Freunde diskutierten damals oft besorgt und unzufrieden über den Zustand der Literatur. Im Sommer 1937 saßen Oktay Rifat und Orhan Veli vor der Konditorei Özen auf dem Atatürk Bulvarı in Ankara (Melih Cevdet war in Belgien) und sprachen über Gedichte. Abfällig urteilten sie über die *Piyasa Şairleri*, die opportunistischen Allerweltsdichter. Ihre Sehnsucht verlangte nach einer anderen, ganz anderen Dichtung. Oktay hatte ein Gedicht in der Tasche, ein Gedicht ohne

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[39] YAZAR (1938), 146.

[40] GLASSEN (1991), 135-141. – Übrigens hat Nâzım die *Garipçiler* wahrgenommen und sich in Briefen über ihre Gedichte sowohl kritisch als auch wohlwollend geäußert. Siehe A. ÇALIŞLAR, *Nâzım Hikmet Sanat ve Edebiyat Üstüne*, İstanbul: Bilsan A.S. Bilim ve Sanat Kitapları, 1987, 326-330.

[41] SAZYEK (1996), 37-46. Über die Phase vor *Garip*.

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Metrum und Reim, nur ganz wenige Zeilen. Er wagt es zunächst nicht so recht, es dem Freund vorzutragen. Doch als er sich überwindet und es vorliest, reagiert Orhan sofort begeistert und zieht auch aus seiner Tasche einen Vierzeiler. Nun werden beide ganz erregt, sie wissen plötzlich, sie haben den ersten Schritt hin zu der ganz neuen Dichtung, die ihnen vorschwebte, getan. Das war die Geburtsstunde der *garip*-Dichtung 1937 in Ankara.[42] Damit gab es doch wieder ein literarisches Ereignis, das in den folgenden Jahren die Gemüter der türkischen Literaten und Zeitschriftenleser erhitzen sollte.

Wie wir oben gesehen haben, bezeugt das Manifest, daß Orhan Veli den Auftrag des Dichters als einen gesellschaftlichen begreift. Die *garip*-Bewegung gehört also in den Kontext dieser kemalistischen literarischen Aufbruchbewegung, nämlich der Suche nach einer neuen gesellschaftsbezogenen türkischen Nationalliteratur, die vollständig mit dem Alten bricht, den überkommenen Formen und Themen, und sich einer neuen volkstümlichen Sprache bedient sowie den Anschluß sucht an die modernsten westlichen Literaturströmungen, nicht indem sie sie blind nachäfft, sondern adäquat adaptiert.[43] Von dem literarischen Publikum wurden die einfachen banalen Verse ohne Metrum und Reim mit dem alltäglichen Vokabular zunächst als Provokation empfunden, als eine Verleugnung der Poesie. Doch gerade das oben zitierte Gedicht »Grabinschrift« und Süleyman Efendi's Hühneraugen waren bald in aller Munde und wurden selbst zum Gesprächsstoff beim Frisör. Der Literaturwissenschaftler Mehmet Kaplan, der zu den ehrfürchtigen Bewunderern Yahya Kemal's und Tanpınar's gehörte und Orhan Veli und seine Freunde zunächst nicht als Dichter akzeptieren wollte, berichtet in einer Anekdote von seinem Bekehrungserlebnis. Er begegnete eines Tages auf dem Bâbiâlî-Yokuş einem kleinen Beamten, dessen

[42] SAZYEK (1996), 47.

[43] Daß dieser Anspruch von der Dichtung der *garipçiler* erfüllt wurde, erkannte der französische Dichter Philippe Soupault, der 1949 Ankara besuchte und Orhan Veli traf. Er sagte: »Diese Dichtung hat eine Besonderheit. Sie ist ebensosehr, wie sie europäisch ist, national (*yerli, millî*), und obwohl sie europäisch ist, keine bloße Nachahmung der europäischen Dichtung«. Das ganze Zitat: SAZYEK (1996), 233 f.

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schäbige äußere Erscheinung ihn an Süleyman Efendi aus Orhan Veli's Gedicht denken ließ und Mitleid in ihm erweckte.

> Das Gedicht, über das ich mich vorher mit den anderen zusammen lustig gemacht hatte, warf plötzlich Licht in die Gesichter der Menschen, von denen ich zwar früher viele gesehen, für die ich aber keinerlei Anteilnahme empfunden hatte, und machte ihre leere und bedeutungslose Existenz zu einem Rätsel.[44]

Kaplan's Erfahrung zeigt, daß Orhan Veli's Gedichte durchaus den von ihm erhofften Effekt haben konnten. Sie eröffneten einen anteilnehmenden humanen Blick auf die gesellschaftlichen Realitäten des Alltags.

Doch Orhan Veli und seine Freunde standen bald im Kreuzfeuer der Kritik. Sie veröffentlichten ihre ersten »fremdartigen« Gedichte vor allem in der Ankaraner Zeitschrift *Varlık*, Orhan Veli auch unter dem Pseudonym Mehmet Ali Sel. Der unbestechliche Literaturpapst Nurullah Ataç (1898-1957), der ein echter Ankaraner und Kemalist geworden und überzeugt war, daß die İstanbuler Intellektuellen sich dem wirklich Neuen entgegenstellten, protegierte die jungen Dichter.[45] Es ist auch aufschlußreich, wer zu ihren Gegnern gehörte. In der Zeitschrift der radikalen nationalistischen Rechten *Çınaraltı* wird ihre Literaturauffassung als niedrig und gemein (*soysuz*) angeprangert.[46] Andererseits haben auch die Linken, die sich als die *acılı kuşak* (traurige Generation) der vierziger Jahre bezeichneten, da sie unter der Einparteienherrschaft der İnonü-Periode oft bespitzelt und eingesperrt wurden, Orhan Veli und die *garip*-Bewegung angegriffen, weil sie kleinbürgerlich und ohne echtes gesellschaftskritisches Engagement sei. Ja, es ging sogar so weit, daß man eine Verschwörungs-

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[44] M. KAPLAN, *Şiir tahlilleri*, 2: *Cumhuriyet devri Türk şiiri*, 4. baskı, İstanbul 1984, 130 ff.

[45] Mehmet SALİHOĞLU, *Ataç'la Gelen*, Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1968, 103. Über seine Beziehungen zu Orhan Veli: 243, 248, 252, 257 f.

[46] In der ersten Ausgabe der Zeitschrift *Çınaraltı* 1 (9. 8. 1941), 13, spricht Yusuf Ziya Ortaç (1895-1967) von der neuen Generation als *kitapsız, imlâsız, gramersiz* (ohne Bücher, Rechtschreibung und Grammatik). Er fährt fort: »Die türkische Literatur erwartet den neuen geistigen Führer (*mürşit*), der sie aus der Krise rettet«. Über *soysuzluk* und die *garipçiler* in *Çınaraltı* 4 (30. 8. 1941), 2.

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theorie aufbrachte. Der Staat würde die *garipçiler* dulden und unterstützen, weil sie ungefährlich seien, die Gesellschaft amüsierten und dadurch ein Gegengewicht zu dem gefährlichen kommunistischen Nâzım Hikmet und seiner Propaganda bildeten. Nurullah Ataç und Hasan Ali Yücel wurden dabei als Handlanger der İnönü-Regierung denunziert.[47] Beide, Ataç und Yücel, der seit Ende 1938 Erziehungsminister war, sind zu den aufrechten Kemalisten zu zählen, die unbeirrt, nicht ohne Gegner im Regierungslager zu haben, die vom Republikgründer eingeleiteten Reformen auf kulturellem Gebiet fortführten. Besonders Yücel's Verdienste sind nicht hoch genug einzuschätzen. Unter seiner Ägide wurden das Übersetzungsbüro und die Dorfinstitute gegründet.[48] Orhan Veli war 2 Jahre lang, 1945-1947, an dem Übersetzungsbüro mit Übersetzungen aus dem Französischen beschäftigt.[49] Das Übersetzungsbüro (Tercüme bürosu) hatte das Ziel, die humanistische Kultur des Westens in der Türkei zu verwurzeln, wobei die Übertragung der wichtigsten Werke der griechischen und lateinischen Literatur zunächst im Vordergrund stand.[50] Die Mitarbeiter an den von Yücel initierten Institutionen waren Idealisten und versuchten im türkischen Geistesleben, ausgehend von der antiken Geschichte in Anatolien, die sie als Teil der eigenen Geschichte kultivierten, den Humanismus (Türk Hümanizmi) oder das geistige Anatoliertum (Mavi Anadoluculuk) als Spielart eines neuen kemalistischen Nationalismus heimisch zu machen.[51] Besonders in der letzten Phase seines Lebens gehörten die Brüder Sabahettin (1908-1973) und Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu (1913-1975) und die Altphilologin Azra Erhat (1915-1982), die an der Propagierung des türkischen Humanismus wesentlich beteiligt waren, zu dem engen Freundeskreis Orhan Velis.

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[47] Über die Rezeption hat Sazyek sehr detailliert gehandelt. SAZYEK (1996), 253-307. Speziell über die Kritik der 40er Generation: 298-307.

[48] Dazu ÇIKAR (1994), 57-62.

[49] ADNAN (1953), 9, 12 f.

[50] Ausführlich handelt darüber: B. KRANZ, *Das Antikenbild der modernen Türkei*, Würzburg 1998 (MISK-Mitteilungen zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der Islamischen Welt; 2), 17-61.

[51] Dazu KRANZ (1998), 73-92, 163-182 und passim.

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Orhan Veli wurde bald ein bekannter vieldiskutierter Dichter. Er machte auch gewisse Wandlungen durch, so daß die Literaturgeschichte verschiedene Phasen in seinem schmalen Werk statuiert. Schon in dem Vorwort zu der *Garip*-Ausgabe von 1945 schwächt er seine überspitzten Angriffe gegen alles Alte und Tradierte etwas ab und betont, daß er ja keine Namen genannt habe. Später greift er auf die türkische Volkspoesie zurück, die in dem Manifest überhaupt nicht zur Sprache gekommen war. Es gerät auch allmählich ein entschiedenerer sozialkritischer Ton in seine Verse. Aber das alles entfernt ihn nicht wirklich von der *garip*-Bewegung, die sich im Laufe der Zeit etabliert und viele Anhänger findet.[52]

Orhan Veli blieb auch als engagierter sozialkritischer Kemalist ein Individualist. Das ist wohl auch ein Merkmal dieser Spezies. Er hat es anscheinend genossen, ein anerkannter Dichter zu sein. Er wollte Aufsehen erregen. Schon seine Art sich zu kleiden fiel auf. Nach einer amerikanischen Mode dieser Jahre, der anscheinend auch andere türkische Künstler folgten, wurde er Bobstil-Dichter genannt.[53] In Ankara trug er einmal einen Kranz, den er vom Atatürk-Denkmal genommen hatte, durch die ganze Stadt, um ihn seinen Gastgebern als Mitbringsel zu überreichen, oder er kaufte einem Luftballonverkäufer alle Ballons ab und zog damit durch die Straßen. Das wirkt wie eine Happening-Inszenierung seiner Gedichte.[54] Er war auch häufig in den Literatencafés und Lokalen in İstanbul zu Gast. Zu seinen Bewunderern in İstanbul gehörte der Erzähler Sait Faik (Abasıyanık) (1906-1954). Jedenfalls wird in der Caféhaus-Klatsch-Literatur überliefert, daß sie, beide starke Trinker, abendelang in den Lokalen herumzogen und gegenseitig ihre literarischen Werke lobten. Diese Affinität ist verständlich.[55]

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[52] Den Platz Orhan Velis in der modernen türkischen Literaturgeschichte, auch im Verhältnis zu Nâzım Hikmet, diskutiert in seiner umfangreichen Einleitung: Memet FUAT, *Çağdaş Türk Şiiri Antolojisi*, 3. basım, İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1987, 10-47.

[53] Dazu Mehmed KEMAL, *Acılı kuşak* (1977), 37, 56. Man trug einen Bart, langes gerades Jacket, enge Hosenbeine.

[54] SAZYEK (1996), 52.

[55] BİRSEL (1976), 181 f.

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Politisch verschlechterte sich das Klima für die Intellektuellen nach den Wahlen des Jahres 1946 und dem Ausscheiden Hasan Ali Yücel's aus dem Amt des Erziehungsministers im gleichen Jahr. Er war als Kommunistenfreund denunziert worden.[56] Auch Orhan Veli gab 1947 die Arbeit im Übersetzungsbüro auf. Die drei *garipçiler*, die nach der Publikation ihres gemeinsamen Bandes ihre eigenen Wege gegangen waren, ohne je ihre gemeinsame literarische Auffassung aufzugeben, versammelten sich Anfang 1949 nochmals um die Zeitschrift *Yaprak*, der Orhan Veli seine beiden letzten Lebensjahre widmete.[57] Es waren böse Zeiten für die aufrechten Kemalisten angebrochen, denn die anti-kemalistische Gesinnung vieler Leute, die sich als Demokraten bezeichneten, wurde offenbar. Die kemalistischen Bildungsreformen und die humanistische Aufklärungskampagne, für die Hasan Ali Yücel wesentlich verantwortlich gewesen war, wurden öffentlich kritisiert und z.T. rückgängig gemacht. Auch die religiösen Kräfte erstarkten. In ihren Artikeln in *Yaprak* prangerten Orhan Veli und seine Mitstreiter, zu denen vor allem auch Sabahettin Eyüboğlu gehörte, diese reaktionäre Entwicklung an. Orhan Veli schreibt gegen die *Türkçülük softaları*, Türkismus-Fanatiker, die einem falschen Nationalismus huldigen und gegen die Wiedereinführung des Gebetsrufes in arabischer Sprache, eine der ersten Amtshandlungen von Menderes. Es ist daher nicht verwunderlich, daß dieses entschiedene gesellschaftskritische Engagement die Zeitschrift bald in Schwierigkeiten brachte und sie ihr Erscheinen einstellen mußte. Zwei Wochen vor seinem Tod wird in der Zeitschrift *Yeni İstanbul* Orhan Veli's letzter Artikel veröffentlicht unter dem Titel »Die Dichtung im Republik-Zeitalter« (*Cumhuriyet Devrinde Şiir*). Es klingt wie ein weiser Rückblick auf eine Zeit, die nun vorüber ist. Er vermeidet jegliche Polemik und läßt auch der älteren Generation (Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Haşim) Gerechtigkeit widerfahren.

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[56] Unter anderem wurde ihm vorgeworfen, Nâzım Hikmet im Gefängnis als Übersetzer zu beschäftigen. Siehe ÇIKAR (1994), 80-86.

[57] SAZYEK (1996), 67-73. Es erschienen insgesamt 28 Nummern dieses Blattes (1. Januar – 15. Juni 1949 und 1. November 1949 – 15. Juni 1950). Im Juni 1950 – es war schon unter Menderes, der seit dem 22. Mai an der Macht war – mußte die Zeitschrift ihr Erscheinen einstellen.

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Er stellt ganz deutlich Nâzım Hikmet's Verdienste heraus bei seinem Bemühen, sich einer volkstümlichen Sprache in der Dichtung zu bedienen. Die Suche nach der Volksnähe der Dichtung war ja schon im *Garip*-Manifest als Auftrag des Dichters formuliert worden; Orhan Veli findet in diesem Artikel, der fast wie ein Vermächtnis wirkt, dafür die abschließenden Worte:

> Der heutige Dichter, dessen Thema der Mensch ist, spricht zu dem Volk über das Volk (*halk*). Er selbst gehört zum Volk. Er weiß, daß sein eigenes Wohlergehen an das Wohlergehen der Mehrheit gebunden ist und daß die Mehrheit nichts anderes als das Volk ist. Die ganze Welt ist wie ihre Dichter.[58]

Orhan Veli's Tod spielte sich auf sehr eigentümliche Weise zwischen Ankara und İstanbul ab. Er fiel in Ankara in einer dunklen Straße – wie man behauptet, betrunken – in ein Loch, das die Stadtverwaltung gegraben hatte, und starb drei Tage später, am 14. November 1950, in İstanbul an Hirnblutungen, die durch den Sturz verursacht worden waren. Er wurde unter riesiger Anteilnahme der literarischen Öffentlichkeit auf dem Friedhof bei Rumeli Hisarı bestattet.[59]

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[58] Abgedruckt in *Bütün Yazıları*, I: *Sanat ve Edebiyat Dünyamız*, derleyen A. BEZİRCİ, İstanbul 1982, 161-165.

[59] ADNAN (1953), 16-21.

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A Proposal*

Hushang Golshiri
(Teheran)

I know that writers are generally familiar with the 'story within the story' structure, and that many of them have used it in their work. The genealogy of this form can be found in India, reaching the Arab world through Iran. In such stories, there has always been present an element of dramatic tension, of which of course the most famous are the stories of the Persian Shahrzad in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. If the king can guess the ending of a story, she will be executed, at the same time, if she can not keep him in the state that Forester calls the suspense of 'then what?', again she will lose her life. All of this seems rather simple, of course, but I think we should still talk about it in some detail in the discussion following my presentation.

Lack of time precludes the possibility of sufficient discussion, at the moment, of my next point, too. Let us accept as only an axiom the proposition that the style of storytelling in the Old Testament – in the Pentateuch – is linear. The storyline follows the sequence of external events. In the *Qor'ān*, with the exception of the story of Joseph, events are deconstructed and narrated in a rather circular fashion, from the beginning to the end, from the middle back to the beginning. My second point, equally in need of proof, is that the stories in the Pentateuch are not only linear

* Translated from the Persian by Abbas MILANI. – The text is the paper the author made available to the participants of the Berne symposium as a basis for discussion at the open panel on Monday, July 14th, 1997. The phrasing has been altered in some instances, and footnotes inserted, by the editors for the purpose of publication.

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but composed of different layers. It must then be accepted that in the Old Testament and in the *Qor'ān* there are two different kinds of storytelling.

The first leads to realism, surrealism, even magic realism, or examples like *Tristram Shandy*. The *Qor'ān*ic tradition, on the other hand, is in my opinion a continuation of the Zoroastrian or Vedic heritages. My proposal in the realm of fiction is inspired by this tradition and can open new avenues in the techniques of writing. I myself have sometimes written in this tradition. Some of my stories, like »Innocence V«[1] or »The House of the Enlightened«[2] to which I will briefly allude at the end of my talk, are both written in this style. In Avesta, particularly in the hymns of Gathes, or Yeshts, there is often only a hint to an aspect of a story, a myth or an event. With the exception of the story of Joseph, the same style is used in the *Qor'ān*. Implicit in this style is the apparent assumption that the reader already knows the story. An allusion is all that is needed. With a mere hint, the story is recollected. It is as if the mere mention of the name of a goblin or a genie will make them appear, or a reference to the sleeve of a shirt can fashion a whole being or, as in magic, a person can be conquered through his clipped fingernails. It all of course reverts back to the strange story of the relationship between the whole and its parts.

On the other hand, it seems clear that this kind of storytelling is another instance of the Platonic idea of recollection (*anamnēsis*). The reader is immersed in a cycle of mythology. In order to allude to the totality all the storyteller needs to do is to hint at one part of the whole.

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[1] »Ma'ṣūme-ye panjom« is apparently the continuation of a series of other »Innocences« (nos. 1-4) which have been published in Hūshang GOLSHĪRĪ's collection, *Namāzkhāne-ye kūček-e man*, Teheran 1975. Where the story no. 5 has appeared is however not clear to the editors – probably in some magazine, not yet in a collection in book form. (We have not been able to contact Mr Golshiri in Teheran for some weeks now.) »Ma'ṣūme-ye panjom« is discussed, again without bibliographical reference, and its contents shortly summarized in Ḥasan MĪR-'ĀBEDĪNĪ, *Ṣad sāl dāstān-nevīsī-ye Īrān*, vol. 3, Teheran 1377/1998, 962-966. (We are most grateful for this information to Roxane Haag-Higuchi, Bamberg.)

[2] »Khāne-ye rowshanān«, in: id., *Dast-e tārīk, dast-e rowshan*, Teheran: Enteshārāt-e Nīlūfar, 1374, 65-97.

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There is of course another characteristic that can be deduced from narrative *qaṣīdeh*s in Persian and Arabic, or even sonnets that attempt to tell a story.

We know that every line of a *qaṣīdeh* is at once independent, and dependent on other lines. It is independent in that it has an independent beginning and end, and must, by necessity, carry within itself, free from other lines, parts of reality. A similar condition can be witnessed in those verses of the *Qor'ān* that seem to employ the tradition of the Platonic recollection. Such verses follow a kind of a recognizable metre that is broken only at the end of each verse, where it nearly takes the shape of prose. The pseudo-rhyme of each line takes on the characteristics of a line from a *qaṣīdeh*. On the whole, then, each verse is independent.

On the other hand, the same independent line is dependent on other lines on account of the fact that each line is part of the elaborate and rigid metric system. Thus each line is both independent from other lines and dependent on them as well.

Can this characteristic be of some use to us in the art of storytelling? If we break an event into small constituent parts, let us say, four or five minor events, and then consider the pieces independent of the linear logic of the event, and then proceed to construct from the pieces a totality based only on the logic of language, we will then have one verse from the collection of verses that together make a story. If this event, because of its contiguity, or of a shared aura, fits into the same cycle as another event, then every component of the story becomes at once dependent and independent and can, relying upon the common experiences of humanity, awaken in us the experience of a table, of death, or a street, and thus our mind can create that which is suspended between the writer and the reader, between the writer and the blank sheet of paper.

This style at the same time follows our traditions of carpet weaving, miniatures, fine woodwork, and printed fabric.

It is clear that such a technique of fragmenting reality into fragments befitting the reality of the story hardly fits in the Shahrazadian suspense of 'then what?', since from the beginning, the new kind of story divulges the ending and gives the king the

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choice of killing, or not killing, the storyteller, and it forces the reader to either close the book, or begin to search for something more than just 'then what?'. Thus the experience of reading becomes the experience of delving into the depths, every object is itself either a myth, or in the shadow of its mythical prototype: every act is eternal. Humans in the story move not in a line but in a circle, and the reader must, at every moment, hold the whole of existence in his mind's eyes. For example a tree, although seen by a narrator, is at once a tree and the eternal (Platonic) idea of a tree; the death of an individual is also at once the other death, and the death of all human beings.

The main event in my story »Innocence V« is the wait for a messiah. In centuries past, every twelve years, people tied a horse near a town's portal, so that when the messiah arrives, he will mount the horse. A narrator from the past has recounted this story. The contemporary narrator is using this old testimony, but the same old narrator reminds us that each epoch has produced a similar narrative, and in the novella, all the different narratives, from different times, move forward concurrently. Ultimately the whole of the narrative turns out to be a series of accounts of the same event.

In »The House of the Enlightened« the narrators are the atoms of a house recounting the story of the disappearance of the author, an author who refused to commit suicide lest his body be taken advantage of for unsavory purposes. In compensation, he writes, he describes a cave, or a grave, and then he disappears inside his writing and the objects in the house. The style of the narrative, the fragmentation of the reality in the reality of the story and the way it has chosen to recount each segment has both the independence of a line in a *qaṣīdeh* or a *Qor'ān*ic verse, and is dependent on other events.

I know that talking so briefly about two projects that each consumed a few years of my life can not explain much. The work itself, still available only in Persian, must be read to fully convey my proposal, and the writer behind it.

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QUELQUES MOTS SUR *LE ROMAN DU CONQUERANT**

Nedim Gürsel
(Paris)

Dans mes livres précédents j'avais surtout parlé de l'histoire récente de la Turquie qui a connu, durant ces trente-cinq dernières années, trois coups d'état militaires. J'avais également parlé de ma propre histoire: exil, errances, nostalgies, amours perdus et, bien sûr Istanbul, ma ville bien-aimée. Dans *Boğazkesen* (*Le Roman du Conquérant*) j'ai voulu sortir un peu de moi-même, porter un regard sur une période reculée de l'histoire ottomane, le 15ème siècle, qui fut décisive dans l'évolution de l'empire vers une expansion universelle. La prise de Constantinople – cette cité mythique! – prédite déjà dans un hadith du prophète longuement évoqué dans le roman est, comme vous le savez, un grand tournant dans l'histoire du monde. Les réformes kémalistes, bien que méritoires à beaucoup d'égards, ont quelque peu occulté le passé ottoman. J'ai été élevé, comme la plupart des écrivains de ma génération, dans le culte de l'occidentalisation. Mes livres de chevet furent longtemps *Les Mots* de Sartre, les spécimens du Nouveau Roman, les nouvelles d'Hemingway ou encore *Ulysse* de Joyce.

Après avoir dépassé 'la moitié du chemin de la vie' pour reprendre les vers de Dante, j'ai voulu renouer avec le passé de mon pays, de savoir davantage sur la figure de Mehmed II que nous

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* Nedim GÜRSEL, *Boğazkesen: Fatih'in Romanı*, İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 1995. Traduction française: *Le Roman du conquérant*, trad. T. MUHIDINE, éd. Fata Morgana, 1997; traduction allemande: *Der Eroberer*, übers. v. Ute BIRGI, Zürich: Ammann-Verlag, 1998.

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appelons »Le conquérant« et qui reste encore une figure importante et emblématique de l'histoire ottomane. C'est un véritable personnage romanesque: épris de connaissance mais aussi de toute sorte de plaisirs, il était certes un despote éclairé en même temps qu'un poète sensible. Il a été le premier sultan ottoman qui s'est fait faire son portrait malgré l'interdiction de l'image dans l'islam. Son règne fut marqué par un début de Renaissance chez les Ottomans. Par contre son fils Bayezid II qui lui succéda était un conservateur. Il fit vendre aux enchères toute la collection de peinture de son père. C'est ainsi que le portrait du Conquérant, un élément important de mon récit, se retrouva en Italie où il resta jusqu'au 19ème siècle. On peut l'admirer aujourd'hui à National Gallery à Londres.

Sans connaître le passé, on ne peut comprendre le présent. Bien sûr il n'est pas question aujourd'hui, pour nous autres intellectuels turcs, de prêcher un retour au passé, de remettre en question les réformes kémalistes et de renier le processus d'intégration de notre pays dans l'Europe. Les islamistes, hélàs de plus en plus nombreux, s'en chargent. Mais l'histoire ottomane constitue une source inépuisable pour l'écrivain d'aujourd'hui. Pendant longtemps le discours officiel a codifié la connaissance de cette histoire, l'a réduite aux manuels scolaires et parfois aux anecdotes légendaires. J'ai essayé dans mon roman de contrecarrer cette mystification en insérant dans le récit le point de vue de l'autre, c'est-à-dire des personnages chrétiens qui observent, agissent et se battent. Comme ce capitaine vénitien par exemple qui finit sur le pâle, ou Nicolo, son secretaire de bord qui se convertit à l'islam ou encore Gentile Bellini, le peintre officiel du Palais des Doges. Mais après Mehmed, le personnage qui s'impose est indéniablement le grand vizir Çandarlı Halil, représentant de l'aristocratie turkmène au sein de l'appareil d'Etat. Mehmet le fit executer après la chute d'Istanbul pour se venger de ce grand homme d'état ottoman qui l'avait éloigné une fois du trône. Mais au-delà de cette vengeance, le lecteur découvrira une lutte pour le pouvoir entre 'les faucons' de l'époque, c'est-à-dire les mollahs, les derviches et les vizirs d'origine chrétienne (les *devşirmes*) d'une part et 'les colombes' comme le grand vizir Halil d'autre part. Ce dernier

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fut en fait victime de sa politique pacifiste et non seulement de la rancune du sultan qui par ailleurs instaura le fratricide comme politique d'état.

En écrivant ce roman qui relate les événements d'une époque violente, je me suis aperçu que celle-ci ressemblait drôlement à la nôtre. Je me demande si mes fréquents séjours dans les pays Balkaniques, notamment en Bosnie pendant la guerre, n'ont pas eu d'impact sur l'écriture des chapitres relatifs au siège de la ville. Il faut dire que le siège et la prise d'Istanbul ne furent certainement pas 'une partie de plaisir' pour les Turcs comme le laissent entendre certains manuels scolaires. A la lecture de ces passages il est vrai qu'une acre odeur de sang et de mort prend à la gorge. Mais la guerre fut atroce, je n'ai rien inventé. Toutes les chroniques de l'époque tenues par les témoins oculaires, qu'ils soient ottomans ou byzantins, le confirment.

Il y a dans le roman deux axes du récit. Un écrivain contemporain refugié dans une vieille maison ottomane au bord du Bosphore écrit *Le Roman du Conquérant.* Au fur et à mesure qu'il avance dans sa narration, nous lisons les chapitres relatifs à l'époque de Mehmed II. Mais il arrive aussi quelques aventures à cet écrivain. Une jeune militante recherchée par la police à la suite du coup d'état du 12 septembre 1980 fait irruption dans sa vie. Une passion amoureuse naît entre ces deux personnages qui s'aiment et se détruisent. Ne pouvant plus continuer à écrire son roman qui est sa seule raison d'être, le narrateur se trouve devant le dilemme évoqué tout au début du livre par une citation de Marcel Proust:

> Et Swann sentait bien près de son cœur ce Mahomet II dont il aimait le portrait par Bellini et qui, ayant senti qu'il était devenu amoureux fou d'une de ses femmes, la poignarda afin, dit naïvement son biographe vénitien, de retrouver sa liberté d'esprit.

Notre écrivain qui s'appelle comme son personnage Fâtih, c'est-à-dire »Le conquérant« (c'est un prénom très courant en Turquie) fera-t-il de même pour retrouver la liberté d'esprit? Dans ce sens, l'axe contemporain du récit raconte une véritable passion, je dirai même une obsession à la manière de Proust. *Le Roman du Con-*

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quérant n'est pas seulement l'histoire de la conquête d'une ville, mais aussi celle d'une femme ô combien rebelle!

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POSTMODERNISM, APOLITICALITY, 'SETTLING ACCOUNTS'
On Ahmet Altan's Dört Mevsim Sonbahar

Stephan Guth
(Berne)

I

This study deals with the mission of Turkish writers, especially novelists, of the 1980s, i.e. after the military take-over of the 12th of September 1980 – a *coup d'état* that has had far-reaching consequences in Turkish politics and society as well as in literature.

Berna Moran, a leading literary critic in Turkey (regrettably deceased in 1993), in his book entitled *Türk romanına eleştirel bir bakış* (»A Critical View on the Turkish Novel«), holds that the main characteristics of post-1980 Turkish novels is their abstinence in commitment to social criticism or a political cause.[1]

Gürsel Aytaç, another prominent critic, however thinks that the novel of this period has not necessarily become apolitical. She detects, among others, a tendency of what she calls »settling accounts« (*hesaplaşma*), i.e. a trend that radically questions the pre-1980s, including the wide-spread political commitment and social criticism of the 1970s, a trend that rejects those former

[1] Berna MORAN, *Türk romanına eleştirel bir bakış*, vol. III: *Sevgi Soysal'dan Bilge Karasu'ya*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994, 34, and also 51.

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tenets and, most likely from a superior ironical point of view, aims at settling accounts with the past in general.[2]

So, whereas – on the one hand – Moran suggests that novelists have been in a position where they could not act but only react, and that it has been a society fed up with politics together with the measures taken by the new regime against political activities of all kind that have brought about depoliticalization in novel-writing, Aytaç – on the other hand – gives the writers a more active part: they are not simply forced to refrain from commitment but do themselves engage actively in the process of depoliticalization.

In addition, Moran and others think that Turkish literature of this period has begun more and more to display certain features of postmodernism – but he does not relate these to political abstinence in any way.[3]

Apoliticality, depoliticalization in the course of »settling accounts« with an over-politicized past, postmodernism – how do these phenomena interrelate? Are they contradictory, or complementary? Can postmodernism in contemporary Turkish literature be better understood if we were to describe it as a phenomenon of apoliticality? Or of depoliticalization? And is the literature of *hesaplaşma* to be connected, in a way, with postmodernism?

It is certainly too early to expect comprehensive answers to these questions. For the moment, we can only take them as a guide in our study of single pieces of fiction, as well as of non-fictional statements as the case may be, and hope that this will lead us to some kind of concluding hypotheses in the future.[4]

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[2] Gürsel AYTAÇ, *Çağdaş Türk romanları üzerine incelemeler*, Ankara: Gündoğan, 1990, 103. – On pp. 368-371, Aytaç has a short review of ALTAN's *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar*.

[3] MORAN, *op. cit.*, 53.

[4] One of the studies falling into this very same domaine and to be seen complementary to my own is certainly my colleague Priska FURRER's analysis of Pınar KÜR's *Bir Cinayet Romanı* and Bilge KARASU's *Gece*, included in this volume.

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II

A text which seems to suggest itself for this purpose because it combines all the phenomena just mentioned is *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar* (»Autumn all over the year«, published 1982[5]) by Ahmet Altan, an author born 1950 in Ankara.[6] Unfortunately, this text is a novel, and I hesitated a lot to make use of it in a publication that, originally, was planned to be exclusively dedicated to n o n - fictional evidences. I must confess, however, that the scruples I had with regard to the moral legitimacy of my approach did not last very long – for several reasons.

The first is very personal. I had taken so much delight in reading and analyzing this text that I liked to share my experience with others and would probably have kept reproaching myself a long time with not having been able to find at least a few arguments fitted to somehow blow up a framework too narrow to allow the golden opportunity offered by this volume to be seized.

Secondly, there are of course stronger arguments than personal inclination. Originally, for instance, I had planned for the symposium to do a comparison between two different texts of the Egyptian writer Ṣun'allāh Ibrāhīm: the novel »The Star of August« (*Najmat Aghusṭus*[7]) on one hand, and on the other a confession-like statement on novel-writing (*Tajribatī al-riwā'iyya*, »My novelistic experience«) made on a literary conference in Morocco.[8] Already the first initial approaches in this comparison had suggested that, for the question of what this writer viewed as

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[5] I am using the Can Yayınları (İstanbul) edition of 1991 (4th print); references in brackets »( )« are to this edition. The novel was awarded the *Akademi Kitabevi Roman Büyük Ödülü* of 1983.

[6] On the author cf. İhsan IŞIK, *Yazarlar sözlüğü*, İstanbul: Risale, 1990 (= Risale Yayınları: Büyük Eserler Dizisi; 8), 37; Şükran KURDAKUL, *Şairler ve yazarlar sözlüğü*, İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, [5]1989, 62; Behçet NECATİGİL, *Edebiyatımızda isimler sözlüğü: 982 Türk edebiyatçısının hayatı ve eseri*, İstanbul: Varlık, [15]1993 (= Varlık Yayınları; 301 / Bilgi Dizisi; 13), 35-36.

[7] First published in 1974 by Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-'Arab, Damascus (translated into French as *Etoile d'août* by Jean-François FOURCADE, Paris: Sindbad, 1987).

[8] Included in *al-Riwāya al-'arabiyya: wāqi' wa-āfāq*, ed. Muḥammad BARRĀDA et al., Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Rushd, 1981, 291-302.

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his mission, the piece of fiction would have been much more valuable and richer in complexity than the author's plain non-fictional declarations.

The fact that »The Star of August« happened to be a novel with strong autobiographical elements led me to find myself supported by a third argument: Had the border-line between fiction and autobiography not since long been shown to be more of a broad, nebulous area of interferences than a sharp line of clear distinctions? So, if we were allowed, in our search for documents that would serve the symposium's purpose, to make use of autobiographies – a genre containing so much fictional elements – why shouldn't autobiographical novels not also be allowed? And we could even go a step farther and ask ourselves the deconstructionists' questions: Is there really such a fundamental difference between fiction and non-fiction in general? Is a novel not also a *Selbstäußerung*[9]? And does not a *Selbstäußerung* contain as many elements of fictionality and constructedness as any novel? At a close look, I would think, the difference readily fades away.

My forth reason is the most apt of all to justify my approach: It is the fact that *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar* itself raises the fundamental question just mentioned, the question about the difference between reality and fiction, in that its hero is a writer writing a novel entitled *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar*, suggesting that it is the very same that we are reading.

So, what I will do in the following is to describe and analyze the writer's mission as seen by the 'I' narrator of Altan's novel *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar* who is himself the author of a novel called *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar*, and I will therefore speak of an 'author-narrator' meaning the author, both real and fictional, of that novel which keeps oscillating between fact and fiction. As for the ontological status of what this author-narrator tells us about his mission I will not dare to draw any conclusion...

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[9] The German version of the call for papers asked for contributions on »Der Auftrag des Dichters/Schriftstellers in *Selbstäußerungen*«, a term generally used for non-fictional statements only.

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III

The few informations already given about the novel are enough to imagine that the author-narrator's main aim is deconstruction. He systematically calls into question what traditionally is labelled 'reality' or 'fiction', mingling both into a reality-fiction continuum in which everything has a double code, an ontological double status, dissolving however the vexing undecidedness of, or even the mental disturbance caused by, this double coding into a funny game. Zeynep, one of the novel's characters, may serve as an example. As the author-narrator's girlfriend she is given the status of a person who, in the inner-fictional reality of the novel, really exists, and is to be seen of course as a human being with her own free will. In all her actions, however, she is at the same time depicted as being a product of the author-narrator's phantasy; and when seen this way her actions are guided not by her own free will, but by the author-narrator's arbitrary desire. Thus, when he once reminds her of her own mortality, saying that she, too, will have to die one day and when she does not want to accept her fate, his answer is:

> – Well, of course you will die. You will die even within this book. (22)

And indeed: because he plans that she die of tetanus Zeynep, near the end of the book, 'really' dies of tetanus (249), her death at once resulting from an accident – she cuts herself with a rusty knife 'by mere chance' (246) – and at the same time from the author-narrator's will, i.e. not accidentally at all. – Other examples: It is raining because the author-narrator wants it to be raining, but it is of course also 'really' raining (156). Because he plans to let it snow he recommends the reader to dress warm now (79). Some of the novel's characters have dark blue eyes – because the author-narrator wants them to be dark blue, and they are in fact dark blue although nothing of the like does exist in nature (12).

The purpose of this puzzle-game is clear: Making use of the fascinating possibilities of metafiction, the author-narrator wants to draw the reader's attention to the overlapping of fact and

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fiction, the 'real' world being as much of our own linguistic creation as the imagined world of a novel is the product of an author's creative activity. In that, the reality-fiction continuum is like an electron which combines in itself two seemingly uncombinable characteristics – those of a particle and those of a wave, of materiality and immateriality –, or like matter itself which, the deeper we penetrate into its very heart the more it appears to be immaterial.[10] Fact and fiction, freedom and determination, truth and lie – his own position *vis-à-vis* all these ideas and notions is described by the author-narrator himself as being identical with that of the »Cretan philosopher« (i.e. Epimenides) who

> (...) is reported to have said: »All Cretan philosophers are liars.« He must have told the truth. Having told the truth however means that he was lying. Having told a lie, however, means that he was telling the truth. Having told the truth, however... and so on and so on. The Cretan philosopher actually must have been a novelist... (194).

The author-narrator's deconstructionist attitude has yet several other implications.

When aimed at himself it becomes self-ironical: Asked by his brother why he writes novels he answers: »Because I want to be like God« (12-13) – God who creates a world, God who calls into being and destroys as he wills.

When directed at the readers the author-narrator's attitude becomes tantamount to arguing against, or 'settling accounts' with, traditional mimetical realism. This arguing does, of course, in itself bear no political implications. Referring to the field of aesthetics and to questions such as the possibility of cognition and description of reality, it is of a philosophical, abstract, and therefore basically apolitical nature. But in his environment, the author-narrator who has realised that there is no absolute truth to be known or 'true' reality to be depicted, meets only the old position, that of modernity as inherited by Enlightenment, the

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[10] Cf., for instance, Jean-François LYOTARD et al., *Immaterialität und Postmoderne*, Berlin: Merve Verlag, 1985, 10 f.

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position that truth can be known and that knowledge more or less automatically leads to progress since the possibility of critically separating 'right' from 'wrong' allows, and also morally necessitates, changing the existing reality for a better one. For this position our postmodern author-narrator has nothing left but mockery:

> Two times two is five. It's so simple. You got it? If you got it, bravo... 'cause I didn't, you know... (124).

But this is exactly why his apolitical point of view becomes political and his arguing takes on the character of a depoliticizing attack. It is a settling of accounts with the modern Turkish intellectual of the 1970s and his commitment to social criticism and political activism, and at the same time again with mimetical realism, since the social realism dominant in Turkish literature already since the 1950s had assumed that literature would be able, and also was obliged, to change society.

In *Dört Mevsim Sonbahar*, the kind of political activism current in the seventies is represented in the author-narrator's brother, Ali, and his friend and mind-mate Hüseyin. Although the author-narrator himself is, as are the other two, opposed to seeing things through rose-coloured spectacles and tries as much as possible to destroy escapist illusions and unrealistic dreams, he cannot join Ali and Hüseyin in their convictions. Ali, for instance, declares:

> – I believe [...] that there is something called human dignity. I cannot stand the fact that millions of people are being oppressed and exploited and depraved of all the beautiful things which they are entitled to. I do not believe that in our times one may remain an impartial spectator. You have to take sides, either with the oppressor or with the oppressed. If you are on the oppressed's side you must get active, you have to do something. (78-79)

And Hüseyin, when asked what he considers to be the most important thing in life he answers – »like a pupil reciting [mechanically] something he has learnt by heart«, as the author-narrator observes –: »the struggle of the working class« (42). Whereas

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Hüseyin's and Ali's actions in the novel consist of nothing else but preparing and carrying out demonstrations (39 f., 146 ff., 181) where those mind-mates who lost their lives in the 'struggle of the working class' are extolled as martyrs, where you shout »Down with the murderers, down with the murderers« (20) or »We will not forget« (149), where everybody applauds each other and enjoys celebrating the memory of revolutionary heroes – whereas they commit themselves to a political cause the author-narrator has other priorities: »I want to live«, he tells us (20), and:

> What could there be more important in this world than love and novels? (42)

He looks down upon Hüseyin as simple-minded because he stylizes his proletarian background and his living in a *gecekondu* into something heroic and holds, according to the author-narrator, that the worse your living conditions are the more revolutionary you are yourself (31). Hüseyin contests the fact that Ali keeps a bird and likes flowers as a remainder of petty bourgeois thinking and holds that Ali has no right to breed such luxurious ideas as long as, he says, »our people are still suffering so much« (34). Our author-narrator however takes pleasure in demonstrating that Hüseyin himself is the real petty bourgeois: he is shocked, e.g., when the former calls his father not *baba,* but with his first name, Halit (43). He also smiles at his brother Ali and a certain Semra who get to know each other during political activities, but at the moment when they fall in love become petty bourgeois romanticists dreaming of an idyllic life as a married couple having plenty of children (182-183). And he also makes us laugh at the so-called revolutionaries who know only oppressors and oppressed, black and white, themselves and the others, when he shows Ali as introducing his bird and a tree to Hüseyin saying:

> – It's a good bird, it's on our side (33)
>
> – My tree, it's on our side (34).

He also reproaches his brother, who had had the opportunity of studying abroad (78) and could well have become a mathemati-

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cian, for wasting his talents with the leftists whom he joined, as the author-narrator thinks, only because this had seemed to him to be the easier way and he had been afraid of failing as a mathematician. On his brother's attacks, Ali defends himself:

> – You know well that I love mathematics. [...] But when there is so much suffering around us I think it would be escapist to devote myself to mathematics only because I love it.

And the conversation goes on as follows:

> [Author-narrator:] – When Descartes discovered analytical geometry, he was only a little older than you are now. Was he of no use for mankind? Why don't you choose such a way?
> [Ali:] – I am not Descartes.
> [Author-narrator:] – Are you not ashamed of not becoming a Descartes? So is it because you are incapable, because you are a failure in your real profession that you want to save the working class? Has saving the working class become the job of the incapable? (70-71)

In order to stress his point even more the author-narrator decides to let Hüseyin and Ali die as a result of their involvement in 'revolutionary' political activities.[11] It is right that he ironicizes himself for doing so when he first lets Ali be trampled down by the panicking masses on a political demonstration (150-151), but then, when 'real' Ali complains about this kind of death planned for his fictional counterpart in the novel, changes his brother's fate and lets him fall victim to the bullets of two rightist assassins shooting at him from on top of a motorcycle (227). But he is of course still convinced that it makes no sense to die for a political cause and that nothing is worth to give one's life away since life in itself is the most important of all (20).

His position however is not that of a mere hedonist or of – as Hüseyin calls him – »an opportunist petty bourgeois conformist« (41). It is the position of a radical faithfulness to his own principles. While the others mostly do not act according to what they say; while, e.g., the so-called revolutionaries like Hüseyin are not

[11] For Hüseyin's death cf. p. 123 of the novel; as for Ali see below.

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at all so unselfish as they pretend to be but long to be admired for their deeds and to be celebrated as a hero (41), and while people like Ali are ashamed of their proper talents, the author-narrator listens to his own voice only and tries to do nothing but what this voice tells him – without any compromise, even when he will appear to be a heartless egoist in the eyes of others. When Ali argues that novel-writing does not help to save people from hunger and death he says, yes, he knows:

> Books do not save people from hunger and death... But it is also not without books that they will be saved from hunger and death. (72)

This is obviously meant as a hit against committed literature as demanded by the leftists and also practised by a number of authors.

It looks, then, as if the author-narrator's *a*political attitude, when exposed to the social pressure of groups demanding to take sides, feels to be forced to 'settle accounts' and to take upon itself a task of *de*politicalization motivated by the postmodern insight into the constructedness of ideologies.

It is however not only on the level of politics that the author-narrator's attitudes run contrary to the attitudes and expectations of his surroundings. In the field of literature, e.g., he is opposed not only to the concept of *littérature engagée* but also to one for which his friend Mehmet serves as an example. Like the author-narrator, Mehmet too is an anti-realist – an anti-realist of a totally different kind however. He reproaches the author-narrator for dedicating too much space of his novel to 'normal' average characters (98 f.). This, he argues, is something you meet with everyday everywhere, and so you will dislike to find it again in literature – as much as you will dislike to be driven into deep pessimism. It must rather be, therefore, a writer's duty to provide his readers with a joyful outlook on life (131). And from that follows that an author should not be too much of a realist; on the contrary, he should jump over his own shadow, go beyond himself, start »flying«, as Mehmet calls it (152). And that is exactly why he, Mehmet, himself plans to edit a new magazine which will contain

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only nice and funny little stories (153). – The author-narrator, too, is an anti-realist, as we have seen. His anti-realism is, however, absolutely contrary to Mehmet's escapist concept of the rôle of literature; it could even be described as a radicalisation of realism (just as postmodernism sometimes is described as nothing but a totally radicalised modernity), and that is why the author-narrator, while laughing and mocking, always feels »as if there was still another person in myself« (131). He settles accounts with Mehmet the Escapist by including in his novel a parody of such a nice and funny little story, ironized not only through the exaggerated silliness of its contents but also by playing on it, again, the metafictional game:

> [One day, he goes to see Mehmet at his home and is astonished to find there a dog – astonished since he knows that Mehmet is afraid of dogs. Asked why he lives with a dog Mehmet answers that he bought it because of the author-narrator: he had thought, he says, that a dog would look nice in that novel! – The author-narrator still continues:]
>
> A week later, I meet the dog in the street.
> – What are you doing here? Have you fled from home?, I ask him, whereupon the dog answers:
> – Well, it's because of Mehmet, I disliked him.
> Oh, no no no, this shouldn't be like that, it isn't what Mehmet wanted the dog to say. He wanted him to answer:
> – Well, Mehmet does not like dogs, so he threw me out... (155)

We may then summarize the author-narrator's attitude towards literature calling it an intermediate one: On the one hand it should not simply offer the reader a world that is easier, more beautiful, and better than his own; it should not be there for mere entertainment and amusing diversion but correspond to life in a more 'realistic' way. On the other hand, this kind of realism must by no means be confused with traditional mimetic realism since this latter aims at making the reader forget the fictionality of what he reads, whereas the author-narrator does everything to stress it.

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The author-narrator's radical authenticity, or integrity, of which this stressing of fictionality is a part has yet other aspects. Some of them are related to women, love, and sex, others to the older generation as represented in his father.

The father objects to his son's writing novels for three reasons:

First, he says, the only thing that counts in Turkey is money, and in a country that is finished and rotten like Turkey is now you cannot earn money by novel-writing (51).

Secondly, he argues that the author-narrator lives on his costs, squandring the father's money on the luxury of something useless (52).

Useless it is, thirdly, because the son's aim with writing is no doubt nothing less than to save the country, but this has proven to be impossible: had it been possible, the father would long have done it himself (52).

The author-narrator defends himself by accusing the father of envying him, of having failed in life (210), of being a coward (cf. 66 ff.), of himself having been able to overcome only thanks to the money inherited from h i s father (69, 70), of suffering from a minority complex (141) etc. etc. In short, one of the thematic strings that is taken into the novel and in this way becomes closely connected with the other strings already mentioned is the conflict with the older generation and the process of settling accounts with them. By the way: Ahmet Altan is himself the son of another famous writer, Çetin Altan, who may indeed be counted among the former generation of – committed – writers.[12] (The father's name in the novel, however, is not Çetin but Halit.)

The conflicts that arise with regard to women all result from the fact that the author-narrator considers the ideal relationship with a female one that is based on nothing but pure sexual lust (*saf şehvet*, 95). He cannot feel in himself what women, his wife as well as his girlfriend, expect from him, and so his uncompromising reliance on the voice of his hormones alone becomes opposed to conjugal/matrimonial faithfulness as demanded by his

[12] On Çetin Altan see, e.g., IŞIK, *op. cit.*, 37-38; KURDAKUL, *op. cit.*, 62; NECATİGİL, *op. cit.*, 36.

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wife on the one hand, and on the other hand the girlfriend's claim that their love be reciprocal. A number of clashes occur between him and these two women; neither those clashes nor the author-narrator's psychologizing arguments must be given in detail here. What matters is, first, that they again belong to the category of settling accounts, this time with two types of women: the 'traditional' wife, and the emancipated girl of the seventies.

And what matters finally is that the author-narrator gets tired of having to argue with his environment and decides to let them all die in order to keep his superiority as well as his mental balance.[13] The more he lets the others die, however, the more he starts to hate himself because he cannot help to do so. Gradually his former superiority turns into a feeling of isolation and even reaches a point of resignation where he stops novel-writing, resuming it later only because he cannot find another reason to stay alive (229).

When, in the end, both his father and his little daughter are brought to death, too, the narrative suddenly shifts from the first to the third person, and this new author-narrator lets us know the reason for this kind of abstraction from himself:

> Because he has written so badly he hates himself to the point that he can no longer bear this self-hatred and therefore can give up being himself. (254)

When, in the last chapter, he comes to realize that although he finally succeeded in publishing his novel nothing has changed and everything starts to repeat itself – »autumn all the year, sir«, he tells a passer-by – the senselessness of his own existence as well as of novel-writing becomes too evident for him to go on with this Kassandra-like life. So he takes a revolver and shoots himself: »Bumm« is the last word in the novel followed by three dots (262) – 'settling accounts' not only with the others but also with himself...

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[13] On another level, his insisting on letting them all die may be seen as a result of 'settling accounts', too – a critical ironical playing on the motif of the protagonist's dramatic death that had almost become a must in the preceding period of *littérature engagée* with its at times quite lachrimose production.

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Der Auftrag des Dichters

Ṣādeq Hedāyat über Kafka und über sich selbst

Navid Kermani
(Bonn)

On ne doit plus dormir.
Pascal

Manchmal siegt die Literatur doch. Manchmal behauptet sie sich, obwohl Vernunft und Erfahrung lehren, daß man sie eigentlich hätte totschweigen, verbieten, verbrennen oder vergessen müssen. Manchmal hält sie den periodisch eintretenden Stürmen stand, bleibt einfach stehen, wo sie ist, und am Ende hat sie alle moralisierenden Mahnungen überdauert, sich gegen alle dogmatischen Einwände behauptet, und versammelt sie auch in der vierten und fünften Generation ihre Anhänger um sich, bis schließlich kaum noch jemand wagt, die Stimme zu erheben, nur hier und da einzelne Protestrufe sich verlieren, selbst die Zensoren ein Auge zudrücken, weil sie qua Publikumsentscheid zum Denkmal erklärt worden ist. Der iranische Schriftsteller Ṣādeq Hedāyat, geboren 1903 in Teheran, aus dem Leben getreten 1951 in Paris, ist so ein Fall.[1]

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[1] Zu Leben und Werk Hedayat's vgl. vor allem die Biographie von Homa KATOUZIAN, *Sadeq Hedayat: the life and legend of an Iranian writer*, London und New York: Tauris, 1991 (persische Übersetzung: *Ṣādeq Hedāyat: az afsāne tā wāqe'īyat*, Teheran 1372/1993); DERS., *Ṣādeq Hedāyat wa marg-e newīsande*, Teheran: Našr-e markaz, 1374/1995; Ḥasan ḤANĀ'Ī, *Ṣādeq Hedāyat dar zendān-e zendegī*, Teheran: Čāp-e Ofoq, 1343/1964; Vincent MONTEIL, *S.H.*, Teheran: L'Institut Franco-Iranian, 1952; Ḥasan QĀ'EMIYĀN (Hg.), *Yādbūdnāme-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat be-monāsabat-e šešomīn sāl-e dar-gozašt-e ū*, Teheran: Amīr Kabīr, 1336/1957; Vera KUBIČKOVA, »Die neupersische Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts«, in: Jan RYPKA (Hg.), *Iranische Literaturgeschichte*, Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1959, 339-393; Rudolf GELPKE, *Die iranische Pro-*

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Man hat Hedāyat als drogensüchtig und dekadent gebrandmarkt, als unverbesserlichen Pessimisten abgeschrieben und von seiten der Kommunisten, Monarchisten und Islamisten gleichermaßen zum politisch verdächtigen Nihilisten abgestempelt. Man hat seinen Einfluß auf die Jugend zu unterbinden gesucht und seine Bücher immer wieder verboten; aber studiert man die Hedāyat-Kritik der vergangenen sechs Jahrzehnte, so stößt man auf den erstaunlichen Umstand, daß die Qualität seiner Prosa so gut wie nie in Abrede gestellt worden ist.[2] In einem Land wie Iran, das sich mehr als alles andere seiner dichterischen Tradition rühmt und in dem die Literatur tatsächlich so etwas wie ein heiliger, aber sich immer erneuernder Kanon ist, kommt das fast einer Immunitätserklärung gleich. Anders ist kaum zu erklären, daß Hedāyat immer unter den ersten ist, die von einer temporären Liberalisierung der rigiden Zensurbestimmungen profitieren und gegenwärtig in Iran eine seiner regelmäßigen Renaissancen erlebt; die meisten seiner Bücher, die lange Zeit auf dem Index standen, er-

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saliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert, 1. Teil: *Grundlagen und Voraussetzungen*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962 (insb. 24-29, 33); Hasan KAMSHAD, *Modern Persian Prose Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966; Bozorg ALAVI, *Geschichte und Entwicklung der modernen persischen Literatur*, Berlin (Ost): Akademie-Verlag, 1964, siehe Index; HOMĀYŪNĪ, *Mardī ke bā sāye'aš ḥarf mīzad*, Teheran: Aṭā'ī, 1352/1973; Moḥammad GOLBON, *Ketābšenāsī-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran: Entešārāt-e Tūs, 1354/1975; AD-DASŪQĪ-ŠITĀ, »Muqaddimat al-Mutarğim«, in: Ṣādiq HIDĀYAT, *Qiṣaṣ min al-adab al-fārisī al-mu'āṣir*, Kairo: al-Mu'assasa al-miṣrīya al-'āmma li-l-kitāb, 1975, 10-42; Richard L.G. FLOWER, *Ṣadeq-e Hedayät 1903-1951: eine literarische Analyse*, Berlin (West): H.W. Hermann, 1977; Eberhard KRÜGER, *Zum Verhältnis von Autor und Werk bei dem modernpersischen Erzähler Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1977 (Islamkdl. Unters.; 42); 'Abd ol-'Alī DAST-E ĠEYB, *Naqd wa bar-rasī-ye āṯār-e Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran o.D., 196 ff.; Moḥammad Reżā QORBĀNĪ, *Naqd wa tafsir-e āṯār-e Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran: Žarf, 1372/1993; Mūsā r-Reżā Ṭ. ARDEBĪLĪ, *Ṣādeq Hedāyat dar goẕar-e zamān*, Teheran 1372/1993; Moḥammad F. FARZĀNE, *Āšnā'ī bā Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran: Markaz, 1372/1993; Ḥasan ṬĀHBĀZ (Hg.), *Yādbūdnāme-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat be-monāsabat-e haštādomīn sāl-e tawallod-e ū* (dt. Titel: *Gedenkschrift für Ṣādeq Hedāyat zu seinem 80. Geburtstag*), Köln: Bidâr, 1983.

[2] Vgl. hierzu DAST-E ĠEYB, *Naqd wa bar-rasī*, Teheran o.D., 196 ff.; GUITY INSTITUTE/ANĞOMAN-E GĪTĪ (Hg.), *'Aqāyed wa afkār dar bāre-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat pas az marg*, Teheran 1335/1956 (Entešārāt-e anğoman-e Gītī; 5); Maryam DĀNĀ'Ī BORŪMAND (Hg.), *Ṣādeq Hedāyat dar būte-ye naqd*, Teheran: Našr-e būm, 1377/1998.

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scheinen wieder, zahlreiche literaturwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen widmen sich ihm, während vieles von dem, was immer noch verboten ist, sich im Vergleich zu Hedāyat wie Erbauungslektüre ausnimmt.

Hedāyat's Anziehungskraft ist ein Phänomen.[3] Weder sind seine Texte leicht zugänglich, noch vermögen sie auf die seichte Art zu unterhalten. Sie sind sprachlich virtuos und nicht selten kühn in ihrer formalen Anlage. Sie laden nicht zur Identifikation ein, bieten keine sympathischen Helden, verstören durch die Unerbittlichkeit, mit der sie aus der Welt das Grauen destillieren. Das Bild, das sie von der Heimat zeichnen, ist abweisend und düster, provozierend in seiner Einseitigkeit und der Darstellung traditioneller Autoritäten. Seine bissigsten Attacken richtete der Autor ausgerechnet gegen den Islam, dessen Logik »das scharfe Schwert und die Bettelschale« sei, wie es in der 1930 geschriebenen Satire »Die islamische Mission in die Länder Europas« heißt. »Ist denn der Islam noch etwas anderes außer Raub und Mord?«[4]

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[3] Allmählich scheint Hedāyat, den André Mallraux und Henry Miller verehrten, auch im deutschsprachigen Raum bekannter zu werden, immerhin sind allein 1997 drei Übersetzungen veröffentlicht worden. Die wichtigste ist gewiß die von Bahman Nirumand übersetzte Neuauflage des Romans *Die blinde Eule* in der Bibliothek Suhrkamp. Bedauerlich ist, daß aus der 1990 bei Eichborn herausgekommenen Erstauflage nicht die neun zusätzlich übersetzten Erzählungen übernommen worden sind, die zu den stärksten Hedāyat's gehören. Bei *Beck* ist in der *Neuen Orientalischen Bibliothek* eine Sammlung erschienen, die insbesondere das realistische Werk Hedayat's vorstellt, darunter einige seiner bekanntesten, aber auch einige seiner schwächeren Erzählungen (*Der Feueranbeter und andere Erzählungen*). Unbefriedigend ist die von Dorothea KRAWULSKY in der *Edition Orient* vorgelegte Sammlung *Die Reise zum Imam: Kurzgeschichten und Satiren*, die unter ihrem biederen Deutsch, das mehr an eine Proseminararbeit als an Literatur erinnert, leidet und zudem durch zahlreiche Übersetzungs-, Tipp- und Orthographiefehler mißfällt.

[4] »Al-ba'ṭa al-islāmīya ilā l-bilād al-ifranǧīya«, erstmals vollständig erschienen in: Maḥmūd KATĪRĀ'Ī (Hg.), *Ketāb-e Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran: Ašrafī, 1349/1970; von dem Buch existieren nur einige wenige Exemplare, weil es 1970 gleich nach der Veröffentlichung zensiert und vom Markt genommen wurde; später hat es eine iranische Oppositionsgruppe in Paris als Faksimile herausgegeben; hier zit. nach: Ṣādeq HEDĀYAT, *Kārewān-e Eslām: afsāne-ye Āfarīneš. Ḥāǧǧī Āqā*, Stockholm: Nasīm, [?], 41.

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Seine arabische Sprache sei »erfunden«, seine »ganze Philosophie auf Unrat gegründet«, heißt es in der achtzehn Jahre später entstandenen »Morwari-Kanone«:

> Er ist ein Übelkeit verursachendes Gemisch aus unverdauten und sich widersprechenden Meinungen und Überzeugungen, die aus anderen Konfessionen, Religionen und dem alten Aberglauben in panischer Eile stibitzt und zusammengekittet worden sind.

Überhaupt gehe die Entstehung des Islams auf eine »Verschwörung« (*fetne*) zurück, welche jüdische Agenten »angezettelt haben, um das persische und byzantinische Imperium zu Fall zu bringen«; die Araber, »diese heuschreckenfressenden, aus dem Mund stinkenden Bettelkönige«, seien für eine solche Untat viel zu unbedeutend.

> Aber wie der Stock Mose, der sich in einen Drachen verwandelte, so daß Moses sich selbst vor ihm fürchtete, ist auch dieser siebzigköpfige Drachen [*sc.* der Islam] dabei, die Welt zu verschlingen.[5]

So schrieb der Mann, der bei Leserumfragen in der Islamischen Republik regelmäßig als populärster Erzähler der modernen iranischen Literatur ermittelt wird.

Schon zu Lebzeiten eckte Hedāyat an. Daß er den Islam und zumal die Schia kritisierte, erregte in den dreißiger und vierziger Jahren, als die Religion noch nicht von Denkern wie Āl-e Aḥmad, Bāzargān oder Šarīʿatī in den Diskurs der iranischen Intellektuellen eingeführt worden war und es geradezu zum guten Ton gehörte, sich über die religiöse Tradition zu erheben, zwar noch kaum Anstoß; aber auch von den beiden dominierenden Gedankenströmungen seiner Zeit mochte Hedāyat sich nicht mitziehen lassen. Den Nationalismus und Modernisierungseifer des Diktators Reżā Šāh, der zumindest in den Anfängen viele Intellektuelle

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[5] Die letzten Zitate allesamt aus Hedāyat's bitterbösen Satire *Tūp-e morwārī*, die in Iran, soweit ich weiß, nur einmal, 1979, erschienen ist, und zwar unter dem Namen Hādī ṢEDĀQAT, dem Anagramm Ṣādeq Hedāyat's, das er selbst zur Veröffentlichung der ebenfalls islamkritischen Erzählung *Ḥāǧǧī Āqā* verwendet hatte; hier zit. nach Los Angeles: Mazdā, 1986, 28-30.

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begeistert hatte, durchschaute er rasch als oberflächlich und totalitär. Zum dogmatischen Kommunismus der *Tūde*-Partei, der bis in die fünfziger Jahre hinein das intellektuelle Klima des Landes prägte, ging er nach anfänglicher Sympathie ebenfalls auf Distanz. Der Bruch war endgültig vollzogen, als Hedāyat vehement für Kafka eintrat, den die kommunistischen Intellektuellen als pessimistisch und weltfern ablehnten. Die Reaktion, die er bei ihnen auslöste, war heftig und der Art nach nicht so sehr verschieden von der religiös sich gebenden Entrüstung, durch die heutzutage kritische Geister in der islamischen Welt eingeschüchtert werden.

Es war eine andere Zeit. Es war die Zeit chauvinistischer oder linker Ideologien, der nationalen Selbstbehauptung und des Drucks der Kolonialmächte, des Aufbruchs und der Illusionen. Die Zeit Hedāyat's war es nicht. Eher lebte er mit Tschechow, Guy de Maupassant oder ʿOmar Ḫayyām, als sich auf die hitzigen Debatten unter den Intellektuellen einzulassen. Er flüchtete sich in das verklärte Bild einer vorislamischen Vergangenheit oder träumte von einem Iran, das einer transnationalen Weltkultur angehört. Mit seinem Land, wie es sich ihm darstellte, mochte er sich nicht identifizieren. In Anspielung auf das Martyrium des schiitischen Imams Ḥoseyn bei Kerbela im achten Jahrhundert notierte er Mitte der dreißiger Jahre: *Yek waṭan dārīm mānand-e ḫalā' / Mā dar ān hamčon Ḥoseyn dar Karbalā'* (»Wir haben ein Vaterland wie ein Klo / In ihm sind wir wie Ḥoseyn in Kerbela«).[6] Zu einer Zeit, als die offizielle Propaganda die große Nation der Arier hochleben ließ, hätte ihm der Spottvers leicht einige Jahre Zuchthaus einbringen können. Iran, so bemerkte er schon zehn Jahre zuvor, war ihm ein »schrecklicher und schmerzender Alptraum«.[7]

Hedāyat blieb Zeit seines Lebens eine Randfigur, geachtet von wenigen, unwohl mit sich und der Welt. Er fügte sich in die Anonymität, die ihm Menschenschicksal zu sein schien, und erregte sich kaum über die Mißachtung, die seinem literarischem Werk

[6] Zit. nach KATOUZIAN, *Sadeq Hedayat*, 51.

[7] Unveröffentlichter Brief vom 6. Oktober 1925; zit. nach: KATOUZIAN, *Sadeq Hedayat*, 21.

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entgegengebracht wurde. Zu einem vorzeigbaren Beruf, einer gesicherten Existenz brachte er es nie. Von seiner Familie sprach er selten, eine eigene zu gründen ergab sich, soweit es Zeugnisse hierüber gibt, nicht der Ansatz einer Gelegenheit.

> Der Nachfahre Adams ist einsam und allein, hilflos und ohne Zuflucht, namenlos fristet er sein Dasein in einem unwirtlichen Land, fern seiner gewohnten Umgebung,

spiegelte er seine eigene Existenz im Werke Franz Kafka's, dem er einen langen Essay widmete.

> Mit niemandem vermag er eine Verbindung einzugehen, niemandem sein Herz hinzugeben, und er ist sich darüber im klaren, weil sein Blick und seine äußeren Züge es nach außen tragen. Er sucht es zu verbergen und sich zwanghaft einzurichten im Leben, aber im Zweifel entlarvt er sich selbst, wissend, daß er überzählig ist.[8]

Hedāyat's Leben blieb provisorisch, im Praktischen wie im Emotionalen, immer im Aufbruch begriffen, nicht weil er hoffte, sondern weil nichts ihn hielt. Folgerichtig ist seine Biographie ein 'Buch der Unruhe'. Exemplarisch ist sein erster Aufenthalt im Ausland. Als er 1926 mit dem begehrten staatlichen Stipendium zum Ingenieur-Studium nach Europa reist, beginnt eine *tour de force*. In Brüssel ankommend, bricht er schon bald auf nach Gent, wo er – anstatt sich auf das Studium zu konzentrieren – einen Essay über den Tod schreibt. Doch schon im Sommer des folgenden Jahres befindet er sich in Paris, wo er immerhin bis zum Dezember 1928 bleibt. Dann treibt es ihn weiter nach Reims, das er aber schon bald verläßt, um nach Besançon umzuziehen. Noch einmal versucht er es in Paris. Unschlüssig ist Hedāyat während all dieser Jahre nicht nur über den Ort seines Studiums, sondern auch das Fach. Mal beginnt er ein Zahnarztstudium, dann entscheidet er sich für Architektur, bevor er sich doch wieder auf einen Ingenieursstudiengang besinnt, während er zur selben Zeit mit dem Gedanken spielt, Kunsthistoriker zu werden oder Maler

[8] *Payām-e Kāfkā*, Teheran: Amīr Kabīr, 1342/63, 12.

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(einige Federzeichnungen aus dieser Zeit zeugen davon[9]). Im Juni 1930 kehrt er vorzeitig nach Teheran zurück, gegen den Widerstand des Stipendiumgebers und der Familie, ohne Abschluß, ohne jede Perspektive.[10]

Es waren nicht nur die existentiellen oder politischen Probleme der Zeit, an denen Hedāyat litt. Schon die Infamien des Alltags überforderten ihn. »Meine Lage ist völlig kaputt«, heißt etwa in einem seiner Briefe nach Persien, die schon aufgrund ihres unnachahmlichen Sarkasmus das Zitat wert sind:

> Es ist viertel vor zehn hier im Wohnheim. Ein paar Leselampen sind an, die übrigen schlafen. Von allen Martern am schlimmsten ist dieser ungeheuerliche Türke, der fünfmal am Tag betet – auf den Rücken schlagen sollen sie ihn dafür – und während des Ramadans fastet – zum Teufel mit ihm. Gott steh' mir bei, um neun Uhr geht er ins Bett, und am frühen Morgen steht er auf, und in der ganzen Zeit schnarcht er, als ob man ihm in den Mund geschissen und einige Rührmaschinen angestellt hätte.[11]

Glaubt man seinen eigenen Bekundungen, hat er sich wegen einer Wanduhr in einer Pariser Pension, deren Läuten ihn nachts stündlich aus dem Schlaf riß, sogar das Leben nehmen wollen.[12] Von einer einsamen Brücke springt er, ein Nichtschwimmer, in die Marne, ohne zu wissen, daß sich genau unterhalb von ihm ein Liebespaar in einem Boot vergnügt. Es dauert nur wenige Sekunden, da ist Hedāyat schon von dem jungen Mann gerettet.[13]

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[9] Vgl. ALAVI, *Geschichte und Entwicklung*, 159.

[10] Zu Hedāyat's erstem Aufenthalt in Europa vgl. KATOUZIAN, Sadeq Hedayat, 32 ff.

[11] Brief vom 26. Februar 1929, in: QĀ'EMĪYĀN, *Yādbūdnāme-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, 459 f.; die veröffentlichten Briefe Hedāyat's mitsamt mancher Antwortschreiben und Erinnerungen ihm Nahestehender liegen jetzt auch in einem Sammelband vor: Moḥammad BAHĀRLŪ, *Nāmehā-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran: Ouğā, 1374/1995.

[12] Vgl. die Erinnerungen von Moḥammad 'Alī Ğamālzādeh in ṬĀHBĀZ, *Yādbūdnāme*, 30.

[13] Eberhard Krüger zitiert Ṣādeq's Bruder Maḥmūd Hedāyat, der von einem Selbstmordversuch durch Ertrinken berichtet. Obwohl sein Bericht sich nicht ganz mit Ṣādeq's eigener Schilderung deckt, meint er wohl den hier vorgestellten Vorfall (*Zum Verhältnis von Autor und Werk*, 105). Bozorg ALAVI berichtet noch von einem

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> Gewöhnlich sagt man einem Menschen, dessen Zustand aussichtslos ist: »Gib es auf, leg dich hin und stirb!«,

notiert Hedāyat nicht sehr viel später in der Erzählung »Lebendig begraben«.

> Aber was geschieht, wenn der Tod dich nicht haben will, wenn er dir den Rücken zukehrt, wenn er einfach nicht zu dir kommt, nicht zu dir kommen will?[14]

Vielleicht ist diese tragikomische Situation bezeichnend für das Leben dieses iranischen Künstlers: Es war ein fortwährendes Scheitern, aber es hatte – und das unter anderem mag es unterscheiden vom romantischen Bild des unverstandenen, an der Welt zugrunde gehenden Künstlergenies – rein gar nichts Heroisches. Niemand konnte darüber nüchterner Auskunft geben als er selbst:

> Insgesamt existiert in der Geschichte meines Lebens nichts, was es wert gewesen wäre, Aufmerksamkeit zu erregen. Nichts geschah, was hätte Beachtung finden können. Ich habe weder eine wichtige Position, noch ein beeindruckendes Zeugnis. Niemals war ich ein herausragender Student. Im Gegenteil: Mein Los war immer die Erfolglosigkeit. Egal, was ich tat, ich blieb unbekannt und unbedeutend.[15]

Zurück in Iran setzte sich die Irrfahrt Hedāyat's fort – mit dem Unterschied, daß nunmehr die Arbeitsplätze statt der Städte wechselten. Er begann bei der Nationalbank zu arbeiten, reichte aber schon 1932 seine Kündigung ein. Er wurde bei der Handelskammer angestellt und kündigte 1934 erneut. Sein nächster Arbeitsplatz war im Außenministerium, das er 1935 verließ, um auf Gänsejagd zu gehen. Anschließend bekam er einen Posten bei der staatlichen Konstruktionsgesellschaft, blieb dort aber nur zwei

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zweiten Selbstmordversuch mit Opium, der aber von KATOUZIAN nicht erwähnt wird (*Geschichte und Entwicklung der modernen persischen Literatur*, 160).

[14] *Zende be-gūr*, Teheran: Amīr Kabīr, 1942/1963; zit nach: Stockholm: Āraš, 1369/1990, 4.

[15] Zit. nach: ṬĀHBĀZ, *Yādbūdnāme*, 17.

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Monate, wechselte wieder zur Nationalbank, kündigte dort 1938 ein zweites Mal und arbeitete im Staatlichen Büro für Musik, bis es 1940 geschlossen wurde.[16] Zwischendurch, im Jahre 1936 nutzte er das Angebot eines Freundes, ihn in Bombay zu besuchen. Sicher hatte Hedāyat ein vages Interesse an der indischen Kultur und ein konkreteres am Studium des Pahlavi, dem sich zu widmen nahelag, weil in Bombay eine recht bedeutende parsische Kommune lebt; doch dürfte das nicht der eigentliche Grund für die Reise gewesen sein. Wie seine Briefe aus dieser Zeit erkennen lassen, war ihm daran gelegen, überhaupt wegzufahren, egal wohin, nur um von diesem »verfaulten und erstickenden Friedhof, der einem ein schlechtes Omen bringt«,[17] zu entkommen. »Immer wenn ich aus diesem Pissoir [*sc.* die *Bānk-e Mellī*] rauskomme, dreht sich mein Kopf«, hatte er bereits ein halbes Jahr nach seiner Rückkehr aus Europa einem dortigen Freund geschrieben.

> Während Du mit diesem kurzen, schmutzigen Stock, den Du Dir von einem *Rouże-Ḥānī* im Haus von *Ḥāǧǧī Āqā Ǧamā* geschnappt haben mußt, auf den Pariser *Égouts* Purzelbäume schlägst.[18]

Hedāyat, der aus einer angesehenen *Dīwānī*-Familie[19] stammte, fand in all den Jahren nicht die Mittel oder den Anstoß, sich vom Elternhaus zu lösen, war aber auch nicht bereit, aus den familiären Verbindungen berufliche Vorteile zu ziehen. Er mußte sich mit untergeordneten Stellungen begnügen, meist als Übersetzer, die er ohne Enthusiasmus absolvierte, um zu seinem Unterhalt wenigstens beizutragen. Eine Stellung als Dozent für Ethnologie an der Universität Teheran blieb ihm verwehrt, da er sich mit den Verantwortlichen überworfen hatte. »Von meiner eigenen

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[16] Vgl. KATOUZIAN, *Sadeq Hedayat*, 47.

[17] Brief vom 12. Februar 1937, in: *Maǧmū'e-ye āṯār-e Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, hg. von Moḥammad BAHĀRLŪ, Teheran: Taha-ye nou, 1372/1993, 707-712, hier: 709.

[18] Brief vom 13. Januar 1931; in: QĀ'EMĪYĀN, *Yādbūdnāme*, 463 ff. Ḥāǧǧī Āqā Ǧamāl od-Dīn Eṣfahānī war zu der Zeit einer der führenden Geistlichen von Teheran; *ǧamā'* (mit dem Buchstaben *'ejn*) bedeutet jedoch »Beischlaf«.

[19] *Dīwān* ist seit den Abbasiden die Bezeichnung für Angehörige der obersten Verwaltungsorgane, in gewisser Hinsicht vergleichbar der Mandarin-Klasse in China.

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Arbeit sollte man besser nicht reden«, heißt es in einem Brief vom Sommer 1931.

> Jeden Tag, das ganze Jahr lang, pressen sie einem in dieser gottverlassenen Bank den Saft aus dem Körper. Es ist ein mechanisches, schmutziges Leben.[20]

Lebensmittelpunkt war ihm mittlerweile die Schriftstellerei geworden, und in dieser erlebte er von 1930 bis 1936 seine bei weitem produktivste Phase, in der er seine wichtigsten Werke einschließlich der »Blinden Eule« (*Būf-e kūr*) verfaßte, eine verstörende, in ihrer Abgründigkeit erschreckende Novelle voller Mysterien, die zurecht als das Meisterstück der modernen persischen Prosaliteratur gepriesen wird.[21] Mehr noch: Wenn Iran in diesem Jahrhundert nur einen Text zum Kanon der Weltliteratur beigesteuert hat – dieser ist es.

1936 in Bombay als hektographierte Handschrift in einer Auflage von 50 Exemplaren erschienen, jeweils mit dem Vermerk versehen »Druck und Vertrieb in Iran verboten«, ist »Die blinde Eule« die Halluzination eines Verzweifelten, in der keine Logik gilt außer der des Alptraumes, gespickt mit Motiven aus unterschiedlichen geistigen Welten, vom Sufismus bis zur modernen Psychoanalyse. Hedāyat schildert einen Marsch durch die Seele, aber einen Marsch nicht auf abgetreteten Pfaden, sondern durch jenes Gestrüpp, von dessen Existenz die Spaziergänger unter den Menschen nichts ahnen. Zartbesaitete sollten es meiden: Nur mit Hilfe der Sense, dank übermenschlicher Kraftanstrengung kann es durchkämmt werden, hinter jeder verfaulten Pflanze, jedem verdorrten Baum hält es neue Schrecken bereit. Die im Buch geschil-

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[20] Brief vom 29. August 1931, in: QĀ'EMĪYĀN, *Yādbūdnāme*, 469.

[21] Speziell zu dieser Novelle vgl. Iraj BAHIRI, *Hedayat's Ivory Tower*, Minneapolis: Manor House, 1974; Michael Cragg HILLMANN (ed.), *»The Blind Owl« forty years after*, Austin: University of Texas, 1978 (Middle East Monographs; 4); DERS., »Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*: an autobiographical nightmare«, in *Iranshenasi* 1/1 (Frühjahr 1989); S. ŠAMĪSĀ, *Dāstān-e yek rūḥ: šarḥ wa matn-e Būf-e kūr-e Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran: Ferdous, 1372/1993; Michael BEARD, *Hedayat's Blind Owl as a Western Novel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; Ğalāl SATĀRĪ, *Bāztāb-e Osṭūre dar Būf-e Kūr (Ūdīp yā mādīne ğān)*, Teheran: Tūs, 1377/1998.

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derte Erfahrung hat etwas von den vierzigtägigen Reisen ins Innere, welche die islamischen Mystiker in der Klausur unternehmen. Bei Hedāyat jedoch gestalten sie sich als ein Horrortrip.

»Die blinde Eule« ist ein 'Buch der Bücher', wie es in der Bibliographie eines Autors notwendig singulär ist, weil er es nicht mehr als einmal aus sich herauszupressen vermag. Dies sollte den Blick jedoch nicht auf sein übriges Werk verstellen, das neben anderen surrealistischen Texten auch Satiren sowie realistische und sozialkritische Erzählungen aufweist. Sie fügen sich zu einem Kaleidoskop der Randgestalten: Die Protagonisten sind meist einsame, verschrobene, bisweilen lebensunfähige oder menschlich verkrüppelte Gestalten, die sich nach Nähe zu einem Mitmenschen sehnen, aber in ihren vorsichtigen Versuchen, sie zu erlangen, jämmerlich scheitern wie Dāwūd der Bucklige, Ḫodādād der Einsiedler, oder Pāt der verwahrloste Hund. Am Ende bleibt ihnen allen nur der endgültige Rückzug in sich selbst. Wieder öffnet der Kafka-Essay eine Tür: »Selbst in seinem Denken, Handeln und Verhalten ist er nicht frei«, charakterisiert Hedāyat den Menschen Kafka'scher Prägung und könnte damit auch denjenigen seiner eigenen Erzählungen meinen.

> Befangenheit prägt seinen Umgang mit anderen. Dauernd sucht er sich zu rechtfertigen. Er brütet über Ausreden, flüchtet sich von einer Ausrede zur nächsten, aber er ist ein Gefangener seiner eigenen Ausflüchte, weil er seinen Fuß nicht über die Linie setzen kann, die um ihn herum gezogen worden ist.[22]

»Die Botschaft Kafka's« ist nicht nur ein rezeptionsgeschichtliches Dokument von bemerkenswerter Originalität, verfaßt von einem iranischen Schriftsteller, der Kafka schon gepriesen und übersetzt hatte, als dieser in Europa noch längst nicht zum gängigen Thema von Abitur- und Diplomarbeiten geworden war. 1948 als letzter Text Hedāyat's überhaupt erschienen, ist es zum Vermächtnis seiner selbst geworden, Selbstentblößung und Selbstrechtfertigung zugleich. Indem er über Kafka schrieb, schrieb

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[22] *Payām-e Kāfkā*, 12 f.

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Hedāyat über sich selbst, indem er dessen Werk durchdrang, sezierte er sein eigenes.

> Man wird sagen, er war ein pessimistischer Schriftsteller und hat das Leben mit Absicht düsterer dargestellt, als es ist,

nimmt er die Rezeptionsgeschichte Kafka's und gleichzeitig seine eigene vorweg.

> Kafka läßt in seiner Kunst die räuberische Wahrheit seines Inneren einfließen, oder mit anderen Worten, die Wahrheiten seines Inneren sind so zahlreich, daß sie von selbst hervortreten und sein gesamtes Werk erfüllen. Er ist weder optimistisch noch pessimistisch. Alle Nöte des Menschen, die in seinen Schriften festgehalten sind, und das Unglück, das er ausgewählt und fortwährend verfolgt hat, sind Bestandteile seiner Untersuchung.[23]

Und Hedāyat sagt auch dies:

> Jene, die gegen Kafka den Knüppel der Verketzerung (*čūb-e takfīr*) erheben, sind die nicht zu zählenden Brautjungfern, die Schminke und Bleiweiß auf das seelenlose Antlitz jenes großen Götzen auftragen, der das zwanzigste Jahrhundert ist.[24]

Ähnlich wie sein Essay über 'Omar Ḫayyām[25] ist der Text über Kafka eine entschlossen persönliche Annäherung an den Gegenstand, die sich um Ausgewogenheit nur abschnittsweise und ansonsten nur der Form nach bemüht und faktisch vor allem auf diejenigen Momente geht, die Ḥedāyat selbst als Schriftsteller beschäftigen und die er in sich selbst wiederfindet. Wohl ist ein großer Teil seines Essays der Biographie und Wirkungsgeschichte Kafka's gewidmet, die er nüchtern und nach dem Stand des damaligen Wissens vorstellt. Von bleibendem Interesse sind jedoch gerade jene Abschnitte des Essays, die von der nüchternen Nacherzählung sekundärer Literatur ablassen und mit erkennbarer Anteilnahme geschrieben worden sind; sie sind in hohem

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[23] Ebd., 32.

[24] Ebd., 16.

[25] *Tarānehhā-ye Ḫayyām*, Teheran: Amīr Kabīr, 1342/1963.

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Maße subjektiv, gewiß, und sagen manchmal – etwa wenn er über die Religion schreibt – mehr über Hedāyat als über Kafka aus; aber gerade darin liegt ihre Bannkraft und wohl auch ihre Wahrheit.[26]

Mit Kafka teilte Hedāyat das Schicksal, von der linken Kritik für dekadent, von der rechten für subversiv, von beiden für pessimistisch gehalten zu werden.[27] In seinem eigenen geistigen Umfeld, unter den linksgerichteten Teheraner Dichtern und Intellektuellen der dreißiger und vierziger Jahre, denen die Zweckfreiheit der Kunst meist suspekt und das Engagement des Dichters oft selbstverständlich war, wurde ihm vor allem der Vorwurf gemacht, nicht politisch genug zu sein. Heute mag das ein wenig verwundern, sind doch nicht wenige seiner Erzählungen durchaus sozialkritisch, und machte Hedāyat aus seiner Kritik an den politischen Zuständen nie einen Hehl. Auch hat er mit dem Sozialismus und lange Zeit explizit mit der *Tūde*-Partei sympathisiert. Der ägyptische Iranist ad-Dasūqī-Šitā hat nicht unrecht, wenn er bemerkt, daß Hedāyat's »sozialistische Seele« auf alle seine Ge-

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[26] »Wer jemals aus der Kraft seines präzisen Reagierens im Ernst der Disziplin eines Kunstwerks, dessen immanentem Formgesetz, dem Zwang seiner Gestaltung sich unterwirft, dem zergeht der Vorbehalt des bloß Subjektiven seiner Erfahrung wie ein armseliger Schein«, bemerkte Adorno, »und jeder Schritt, den er vermöge seiner extrem subjektiven Innervation in die Sache hineinmacht, hat unvergleichlich viel größere objektive Gewalt als die umfassenden und wohlbestätigten Begriffsbildungen etwa des 'Stils', deren wissenschaftlicher Anspruch auf Kosten solcher Erfahrung geht«: *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (= Gesammelte Schriften; 4), Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1997, 78; vgl. auch »Der Essay als Form«, in: *Noten zur Literatur* (= Gesammelte Schriften; 11), Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1997, 9-33.

[27] Daß er ein Pessimist gewesen sei, wird Hedāyat in Iran bis heute einerseits zum Vorwurf gemacht und andererseits immer wieder vehement bestritten. Das hängt damit zusammen, daß das Wort «pessimistisch« (*badbīn*) im Persischen eindeutig negative Konnotationen hat und daher das Urteil, Hedāyat sei *badbīn*, in der Regel kritisch gemeint ist; vgl. speziell zum Vorwurf des Pessimismus: DAST-E ĠEYB, *Naqd wa bar-rasī*, 23 ff. – In diesem Zusammenhang besonders aufschlußreich sind Hedāyat's rechtfertigende Bemerkungen über den Pessimismus ʿOmar Ḫayyāms; vgl. *Tarānehhā-ye Ḫayyām*, 30 ff. – Allgemein zur Hedāyat-Kritik von rechts wie von links vgl. KATOUZIAN, *Sadeq Hedayat*, 166-172 und 269 f.

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schichten ausstrahle.[28] Doch sollte man die Betonung auf das Wort »Seele« legen. Seine Sympathien resultieren weniger aus ideologischen Überzeugungen als aus Liebe zu den Lebewesen dieser Erde, Menschen und, mindestens ebenso ausgeprägt, Tieren. Er war eher mit dem Herzen Sozialist, weniger mit dem Verstand. Er stand der sozialistischen Idee emotional nahe, weil ihm Besitzdenken unsympathisch, die herrschende Unterdrückung und Diktatur zuwider und die Ungerechtigkeit und Armut unerträglich waren, doch war ihm jegliche Ideologie und auch politischer Aktivismus wesensfremd. Sogar Bozorg Alavi, den in den 30er Jahren mit Hedāyat die Zusammenarbeit in dem Künstlerkreis *Rab'e*[29] verband und der später in Ost-Berlin dazu tendierte, das Sozialistische in Hedāyat's Werk herauszustreichen, räumt ein, daß sein Kollege »sich nicht zu einer politischen, wissenschaftlich fundierten Weltanschauung durchgerungen« hat.[30]

Hedāyat bewahrte seine Distanz zur politischen Praxis und war, im Gegensatz zu vielen seiner Freunde und Dichterkollegen, niemals Mitglied der *Tūde*-Partei. Die Abscheu vor der Politik, die er empfand und die der Hoffnung nur Anfang der vierziger Jahre, nach der Abdankung Reżā Šāh's, vorübergehend ein wenig Platz einräumte, bezog sich allerdings ausschließlich auf die politische Wirklichkeit seines Landes und steht nicht im Widerspruch zu seinem ausgeprägtem Patriotismus und seiner Liebe zur iranischen Kultur und dem – von ihm selbst mitunter glorifizierten – iranischen Volk, die sich auch in seinen heute noch beachtenswerten Studien zur persischen Folklore, Volkskultur und zum Mittelpersischen (Pahlavi) ausdrückt.[31]

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[28] AD-DASŪQĪ-ŠITĀ, »Muqaddima«, 31.

[29] Der Name *Rab'e* ist eine absichtlich verunstaltete Form des arabischen Wortes *arba'a* und sollte die sogenannten *odabā-e sab'e* verspotten, die damals als tonangebende Literaturfürsten galten; vgl. die Erinnerungen von Beteiligten in BAHĀRLĪ, *Nāmehā-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, 299-307; vgl. auch ALAVI, *Geschichte und Entwicklung*, 160.

[30] ALAVI, *Geschichte und Entwicklung*, 166.

[31] Ein großer Teil ist jetzt in dem von Maryam DĀNĀ'Ī BORŪMAND herausgegebenen Band *Neweštehā-ye farāmūš šode-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran: Negāh, 1376/1997, vereinigt.

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> Hedāyat hegt eine brennende Liebe zu seiner Heimat und bringt den historischen Feinden Irans eine heftige Feindschaft entgegen,

verteidigte ihn sein junger Dichterkollege Parwīz Ḫānlarī auf dem iranischen Schriftstellerkongreß von 1946.

> Der glorreichen und ruhmvollen Vergangenheit Irans widmet er seine besondere Aufmerksamkeit; das Erlernen des Pahlavi und die Übersetzung zahlreicher Werke aus dieser Sprache sind das Resultat eben dieser Aufmerksamkeit. [...] Aber Hedāyat ist nicht einfach betört von der Legende und der Historie. Er liebt Iran, und zwar das lebendige Iran, das existierende Iran. Die Sprache, die für ihn Bedeutung hat, ist die Sprache des Hier und Jetzt.[32]

Hedāyat war ein politischer Schriftsteller, insofern sein lebenslanges Thema die Wirklichkeit war, wie sie sich ihm – innen und außen – unmittelbar darstellte; er war kritisch, weil er den Schrecken dieser Wirklichkeit festhielt, ohne sich zu ängstigen und ohne Rücksichten zu nehmen. Aber er sah den Auftrag des Dichters nicht darin, seine Erzählungen an einem ideologischen Modell auszurichten oder ihnen einen Appellcharakter zu verleihen. Selbst in seinen eher sozialkritischen Erzählungen entsprach er nicht dem Typus des engagierten Dichters, weil er sich auf die bloße Schilderung des Unrechts beschränkte. Indem er sich jeglichen Kommentars, moralischen Untertons und aller Glorifizierung der Entrechteten enthielt, führte er in Iran eine neue, seitdem oftmals nachgeahmte Form, das Leben einfacher Leute zu schildern, ein. Die Literatur war ihm kein Manifest und nur in seinen schwächeren Erzählungen wie etwa dem »Feueranbeter« (*Ātešparast*) ein Vehikel zum Transport einer Botschaft. Im Beschreiben von Zuständen war Hedāyat überzeugender als im Treffen von Aussagen; was von ihm bleibt, sind jene Texte, in denen sich vermittelt, was er selbst über Kafka schrieb:

> Er hat eine Hellsichtigkeit und einen ungeheuerlichen Schmerz, und zwar auf eine Weise, daß die Hellsichtigkeit und der Schmerz eins werden und er seinen messerscharfen Blick tief in

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[32] Rede abgedruckt in: *Naḫostīn kongre-ye newīsandegān-e Īrān*, Teheran 1325/1946; zit nach: DAST-E ĠEYB, *Naqd wa bar-rasī*, 138 f.

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> die Wunde hineinführt; aber er glaubt nicht daran, daß der Mensch das Edle vom Bösen trennen kann. Er möchte eine persönliche Untersuchung vornehmen, um ganz sicher zu gehen.[33]

In seinen stärksten, düstersten Momenten bewegte sich Hedāyat an jener Schnittstelle von politischer und autonomer Literatur, die von *littérature engagée* und *l'art pour l'art* gleich weit entfernt ist. Theodor W. Adorno hat sie am Beispiel von Kafka und Beckett, die er von Sartre und Brecht abhob, markiert:

> Kafkas Prosa, Becketts Stücke oder der wahrhaft ungeheuerliche Roman »Der Namenlose« üben eine Wirkung aus, der gegenüber die offiziell engagierten Dichtungen wie Kinderspiel sich ausnehmen; sie erregen die Angst, welche der Existenzialismus nur beredet. Als Demontagen des Scheins sprengen sie Kunst von innen her, welche das proklamierte Engagement von außen, und darum nur zum Schein, unterjocht. Ihr Unausweichliches nötigt sie zu jener Änderung der Verhaltensweise, welche die engagierten Werke bloß verlangen. Wen einmal Kafkas Räder überfuhren, dem ist der Friede mit der Welt ebenso verloren wie die Möglichkeit, mit dem Urteil sich zu bescheiden, der Weltlauf sei schlecht: das bestätigende Moment ist weggeätzt, das der resignierten Feststellung von der Übermacht des Bösen innewohnt.[34]

Gewiß reichen längst nicht alle Erzählungen Hedāyat's an das heran, was Adorno radikale Kunst war; ebenso gewiß jedoch, daß Texte wie »Die blinde Eule« oder »Drei Tropfen Blut« (*Se qaṭre ḫūn*) nicht das Leid beklagen, sondern ihm dessen eigene Stimme verleihen und dadurch »den heute einzig menschenwürdigen Ruhm« genießen, den Adorno für einen Literaten gelten ließ:

> alle schaudern davor zurück, und doch kann keiner sich ausreden, daß die exzentrischen Stücke und Romane von dem handeln, was alle wissen und keiner Wort [sic!] haben will.[35]

Ihre Welt ist, wie Hedāyat selbst über die Welt der Kafka'schen Erzählungen schrieb,

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[33] *Payām-e Kāfkā*, 32.

[34] »Engagement«, in: *Noten zur Literatur*, 409-430, hier: 426.

[35] Ebd., 425.

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> die Welt des Schlafes, die den Menschen mit dem Schrecken und der Präzision ihrer Alpträume am Kragen packt.[36]

Adorno hat das Paradoxon benannt, daß Literatur nur dann dem Menschen helfen könne, wenn sie »nicht sich gebärdet, als ob sie ihm hülfe«.[37] An anderer Stelle bemerkt er:

> Um inmitten des Äußersten und Finstersten der Realität zu bestehen, müssen die Kunstwerke, die nicht als Zuspruch sich verkaufen wollen, jenem sich gleichmachen. Radikale Kunst heute heißt soviel wie finstere, von der Grundfarbe schwarz.[38]

Hedāyat hat die Notwendigkeit, daß Literatur sich dem Finstersten der Realität gleichzumachen habe, wohl gesehen (»Höher als schwarz ist keine Farbe«, heißt es in einem Brief kurz vor seinem Tod[39]), und auch das Paradoxon, mit dem Literatur zu tun hat. In seinem Werk ist das zu spüren, in seinem Essay über Kafka hat er es expliziert:

> Die Erzählungen Kafka's gehören zu den dunkelsten Erzählungen der Literatur; ihre Bewegung zielt auf die endgültige Niederlage, und fürchterlich ist es, wie sie die Hoffnung foltern – nicht weil in ihnen die Hoffnung verurteilt würde, sondern im Gegenteil: weil sie die Hoffnung nicht verurteilen können.[40]

Aber ähnlich Adorno, der von dem minimalen Glücksversprechen spricht, »das an keinen Trost sich verschachert«[41], gibt auch Hedāyat das Utopische der Kunst nicht ganz auf:

> Aber so vollkommen die Katastrophe ist, bleibt doch eine kleine Öffnung, von der nicht klar ist, ob in ihr noch Hoffnung übrig oder sie für immer aus ihr verschwunden ist.

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[36] *Payām-e Kāfkā*, 54.

[37] »Engagement«, 429.

[38] *Ästhetische Theorie*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1997 (= Gesammelte Schriften; 7), 65.

[39] Brief an ANǦAWĪ ŠĪRĀZĪ vom 14. Januar 1951, in: *Maǧmū'e-ye āṯār*, 741.

[40] *Payām-e Kāfkā*, 66 f.

[41] »Engagement«, 425.

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Er hält – nicht anders als Adorno – daran fest, daß ein Anderes existieren könnte, ohne damit zu trösten, daß es wirklich existiert, und ohne auszusprechen, worin es bestünde. Gleichzeitig aber weiß Hedāyat, daß ohne die Hoffnung auf ein Anderes Kunst nicht existierte.

> Mag die Botschaft Kafka's noch so hoffnungslos und gleich dem Schild einer Sackgasse sein, mag bei ihm jede noch so panische Suche und jedes Bemühen mit einer Enttäuschung enden, mag das Nichts einen aus jeder Richtung bedrohen, ein Zufluchtsort nicht existieren, einem bei jedem Zusammentreffen nur die Vergeblichkeit begegnen und kein Gebiet zu entdecken sein, in das man vor der Atemlosigkeit fliehen könnte – aber Kafka akzeptierte diese Welt nicht.[42]

Und dann schreibt Hedāyat, der bis dahin die Autonomie der Literatur und damit auch seiner selbst von der politischen Praxis begründete, im letzten Absatz seines Essays über Kafka:

> Diese Welt ist kein Ort zu leben. Sie ist erstickend, und darum begibt er sich auf die Suche nach »einer Erde, einer Luft und einem Gesetz«, mit denen es sich in Würde leben ließe. Kafka ist überzeugt, daß *diese Welt von Lüge, Betrug und Lächerlichkeit zerstört und auf ihren Ruinen eine bessere Welt errichtet werden muß.*[43]

In meiner Ausgabe sind die hier kursiv gesetzten Worte fett gedruckt. Ich weiß nicht, ob Hedāyat das selbst so wollte oder ob sein Herausgeber dafür verantwortlich ist. Aber es macht Sinn, weil sich erst mit diesem unvorbereiteten, überraschenden Schluß die Dialektik seines Essays, das bis dahin die Autonomie des Dichters begründet hatte, vollendet. Es ist eben jene Dialektik, die Adorno im Blick hatte:

> Jedes Engagement für die Welt muß gekündigt werden, damit der Idee eines engagierten Kunstwerks genügt werde.[44]

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[42] *Payām-e Kāfkā*, 74.

[43] Ebd., 74 f.

[44] »Engagement«, 425 f.

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Nicht anders als in Hedāyat's Essay über Kafka steht auch am Ende von Adorno's Absage an die sozialistische oder allgemein engagierte Literatur das fast unvermittelt wirkende Festhalten am politischen Gehalt der Kunst, wenn er schreibt, daß noch in den sublimiertesten Werken sich ein »Es soll anders sein« berge.

> Als rein gemachte, hergestellte, sind Kunstwerke, auch literarische, Anweisungen auf die Praxis, deren sie sich enthalten: die Herstellung des richtigen Lebens.[45]

Man hat Hedāyat immer wieder den 'Kafka Irans' genannt;[46] wahr ist an dem Klischee, daß die Geschichte in ihren Texten dem Fallbeil einer Guillotine gleicht, die Menschen den Verurteilten. Wahr ist auch, daß ihre Lebensläufe sich merkwürdig ähneln: das Verhältnis zu den Frauen, der Angestelltenberuf, der frühe Tod, das Schicksal ihres Werkes. Falsch aber ist es, insofern es eine zu große Nähe ihrer Erzählungen suggeriert. Hedāyat's Helden sind keine Namenlosen; ihre Biographie ist offenbar, ihre Umwelt konkret und identifizierbar, ihre Sprache auf unnachahmliche Weise individualisiert. Diese Eigenschaft seines literarischen Stils widerlegt übrigens auch das Vorurteil, Hedāyat habe das Dasein eines weltabgewandten, versponnenen Eremiten geführt, der von den Dingen der Welt nicht viel versteht. Er war ein Außenseiter, aber kein Eremit. Andernfalls hätte er kaum die Vielzahl idiomatischer Begriffe, die in keinem Wörterbuch enthalten sind, aufschnappen und sie in den Mund seiner Protagonisten legen, hätte er nicht auf so vollkommene Weise den Schmerzen und Nöten der einfachen Menschen Ausdruck verleihen können.

> Sein Herz gehörte seiner Heimat und seinen Landsleuten, und diese Leidenschaft war es, die ihn zur Schriftstellerei zog,

berichtete ein Verwandter Hedāyat's.

> Sein ganzes kurzes Leben lang studierte er oder schrieb er, eins von beiden, und in seinen Schriften sind alle Helden Irans ent-

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[45] Ebd., 429 f.

[46] Vgl. hierzu FARZĀNE, *Āšnā'ī bā Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, 420.

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> halten. Er sagte immer, daß ein Schriftsteller, der mit seinen Mitmenschen nichts zu schaffen und der nicht der Teilhaber ihres Kummer und ihrer Freuden ist, nichts als ein Krämer sei.[47]

Der große Wortschatz, der zum Teil seiner Herkunft, zum Teil seiner überragenden Beobachtungsgabe und Neugier für die Sitten, Weisheiten und Ausdrücke des Volkes zu verdanken ist, verführt ihn aber nie dazu, mit seiner Sprachgewalt zu prahlen. Kennzeichnend ist im Gegenteil die völlige Schnörkellosigkeit seines Stils, der, bekannte Bozorg Alavi, »der Prosa Möglichkeiten der Entwicklung, die bis dahin unvorstellbar waren«,[48] verschafft hat. Es ist diese sprachliche Qualität, die auf der Vielfalt der Ausdrücke und Redewendungen beruht, die Hedāyat aus der Volkssprache übernimmt, um sie in das literarische Fārsī einzuführen, die selbst die schwächeren, weil zu absichtsvollen und symbolträchtigen Erzählungen Hedāyat's im Original lesenswert erscheinen lassen, während sie in der Übersetzung vollends verblassen, weil sie kaum zu übertragen sind (oder wie, beispielsweise, läßt sich *yek lenge kafšaš nouḥe mīḫānd wa yekīš sīne mīzad* adäquat wiedergeben?).

Hedāyat litt immer wieder für Monate unter schriftstellerischer Lähmung, aber wenn er ins Schreiben kam, arbeitete er fieberhaft. Neben dem erzählerischen Werk verfaßte er Theaterstücke, Essays, Reiseberichte, Übersetzungen, volkskundliche und alt-iranistische Studien. In den vierziger Jahren jedoch, als auch die politischen Hoffnungen, die ihn nach dem Abgang des Monarchen Reżā Šāh erfüllt hatten, sich verflüchtigten, wurden die schöpferischen Phasen immer seltener. Parallel zu seinem Drogenkonsum (Alkohol und Opium, später auch Kokain[49]) verstärkten sich Lethargie und Einsamkeit. Zu jener Zeit war Hedāyat als Übersetzer an der Hochschule der Schönen Künste angestellt.

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[47] In KATĪRĀ'Ī, *Ketāb-e Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, 293; zit. nach: DAST-E ĠEYB, *Naqd wa bar-rasī*, 141.

[48] ALAVI, *Geschichte und Entwicklung*, 159.

[49] Daß Hedāyat tatsächlich Opium geraucht habe, wurde allerdings von seinem Freund Abū l-Qāsem Anğawī Šīrāzī ausdrücklich bestritten (vgl. seinen Beitrag «Ešārāt wa- īżāḥāt« in: Qāsem ṢĀFĪ, *Mağmū'e-ye goftārhā'ī dar bāre-ye čand tan az reğāl-e adab wa tārīḫ-e Īrān*, Teheran 1357/1978, 191-203, hier: 203).

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»Jeden Tag kommt er hier für eine halbe Stunde vorbei«, berichtete sein Freund Ḥasan Šahīd-Nūrā'ī.

> Erst nimmt er seinen Hut ab und legt ihn in eine Ecke. Dann setzt er sich auf einen Stuhl und klingelt nach einer Tasse Tee mit Pahlawi-Kandis. Er beginnt dann eine Zeitlang an die Wände zu starren, und, falls es vorkommen sollte, daß eine Zeitung auf dem Schreibtisch liegt, schaut er auf die erste Seite (aber er liest sie nicht). Nachdem er den Tee getrunken hat, setzt er seinen Hut auf den Kopf und, ohne mit irgendwem ein Wort gewechselt zu haben, geht er auf die gleiche Weise wie er gekommen ist. Das ist Hedāyat's tägliches Programm. Es ist kein unwahres oder übertriebenes Wort in irgendetwas von dem, was ich gesagt habe.[50]

Ende 1950 fliegt Hedāyat noch einmal nach Paris. Mit seinem Leben in Teheran am Tiefpunkt angelangt (»Ich bin damit beschäftigt, meine Tage zu massakrieren«, heißt es in einem Brief[51]), in seinem künstlerischem Schaffen erlahmt (»[...] so sehr ich mich auch bemühe, ich habe nichts, was es wert wäre, darüber zu schreiben«[52]), deprimiert auch angesichts der politischen Entwicklung nach dem fehlgeschlagenen Attentat auf den jungen Schah und der sich anschließenden Verfolgungswelle,[53] versucht er noch einmal, dem Unentrinnbaren zu entkommen. Doch ist der Freund, der ihn von Frankreich aus zu der Reise bewogen hatte, todkrank, das Geld geht Hedāyat aus, und bei seinen iranischen Bekannten findet er nicht die erhoffte Unterstützung. Nach einigen vergeblichen Bemühungen, das Visum für eine Reise nach Genf oder London zu bekommen, ohne Geld, vor der Alternative stehend, zu seinem Arbeitsplatz in Teheran zurückzukehren oder entlassen zu werden (er hatte sich für vier Monate beurlauben lassen), kommt er am achten oder neunten April 1951 (das genaue Datum ist unklar) in sein ärmlich eingerichtetes Appartement, geht in die

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[50] Brief an ĞAMĀLZĀDE vom 19. August 1948, in: BAHĀRLŪ, *Nāmehā-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, 342.

[51] Aus einem Brief vom 27. August 1950 an Ḥasan ŠAHĪD-NŪRĀ'Ī, in: BAHĀRLŪ, *Nāmehā-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, 231.

[52] Ebd.

[53] Vgl. ALAVI, *Geschichte und Entwicklung*, 162.

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kleine Küche, dichtet die Tür ab, dreht den Gasherd auf, legt sich auf den Boden und stirbt.[54] »Er wurde zum Opfer seiner Hellsicht«, schrieb er über Kafka.[55] Es hätte Ṣādeq Hedāyat's eigener Grabspruch sein können.

[54] Zu den letzten Lebensmonaten Hedāyat's und den Umständen seines Todes vgl. Moṣṭafā F. FARZĀNE, »Āḫarīn rūzhā-ye zendegī wa-ḫodkošī-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat«, in: ṬĀHBĀZ, *Yādbūdnāme*, 68-74; DERS., *Āšnā'i bā Ṣādeq Hedāyat*; Esmā'īl ĞAMŠĪDĪ, *Ḫodkoši-ye Ṣādeq Hedāyat*, Teheran 1349/1970; KATOUZIAN, *Sadeq Hedayat*, 243-256; DERS., *Ṣādeq Hedāyat wa marg-e newīsande*, 10-64, 164-189; Abū l-Qāsem ANĞAWĪ ŠĪRĀZĪ, »Safar-e bī-bāzgašt-e Hedāyat«, in: DĀNĀ'Ī BORŪMAND, *Ṣādeq Hedāyat dar būte-ye naqd wa naẓar*, 129-138.

[55] *Payām-e Kāfkā*, 32.

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IDEALS AND REALITY

The Adaption of European Ideas of Literary Commitment in the Post-Colonial Middle East – The Case of 'Abdalwahhāb al-Bayātī[1]

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Literary commitment may well be regarded as one of the most central issues in Arab literary debate in this century. For many decades the tempers of authors, critics and publicists ran high when they discussed the question if and how the writer should take responsibility for his people and his nation.

Two important points should be mentioned at the beginning.

First, the discussions about literary commitment started in the period of national struggle in which Middle Eastern countries one after the other gained independence from the European imperial powers. This struggle was followed during the fifties and sixties by efforts to consolidate the young Arab nations and to merge them into a coherent political unity. The ideals of Pan-Arabism were however all buried in the ruins left by the lost war against Israel in June 1967.

Second, the discussions about literary commitment went along with the reception of European ideas. During this process socialist and existentialist conceptions were transferred into the

[1] A more detailed version of this article will appear as »Different notions of commitment (*iltizām*) and committed literature (*al-adab al-multazim*) in the literary circles of the Mashriq«, in *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, i (1998), no. 2, or ii (1999), no. 1.

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Arab world. There they were applied on the social and political issues of the region.

I will start my study with a review of the historical development and the content of this literary debate. After that I will shortly evaluate the significance of this discourse to individual writers of that time, and especially for ʿAbdalwahhāb al-Bayātī.

The Arabic term for *engagement* »commitment« is *iltizām* (meaning literally »obligation«, »duty«). Relating to literature the term first occurs in 1947. In that year the famous Egyptian critic Ṭāhā Ḥusayn acquainted the readers of his journal *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī* with the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre about *littérature engagée.*[2] Only a few weeks earlier, Sartre had published his conception of *littérature engagée* in a series of essays in *Les Temps Modernes.*[3] This was three years after the liberation of France from Nazi occupation. Against the background of his own experience with occupation and resistance, and in opposition to *l'art pour l'art*, Sartre tried to analyze the relation between author and reader. In that concrete historical situation he transformed his philosophy of the *être engagé* into an ethics of writing and reading. Above all he emphasized the significance of responsibility as well as the significance of freedom as a basis and message of committed literature.

The term *iltizām*, which Ṭāhā Ḥusayn used to render Sartre's *engagement*,[4] fell on fertile ground within the progressive circles of Arab authors. For already since the twenties of this century some journalists and writers in the cultural centres, Cairo and Beirut (Salāma Mūsā, Luwīs ʿAwaḍ in Egypt, since the thirties: ʿUmar Fākhūrī, Raʾīf Khūrī in Lebanon), had stood up against the elitist artistic attitude of the literary establishment in the ivory tower – an attitude that derived its esthetic values from the styles of writing of the Arab-islamic past. On the other hand, the pioneers

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[2] Ṭāhā ḤUSAYN, »Mulāḥāẓāt«, in: *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī* 3, vol. 6, no. 21 (June 1947), 9-21; id.: »Jān Būl Sārtr wa-l-sīnamā«, in: *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī* 3, vol. 7, no. 26 (November 1947), 179-202.

[3] Shortly later the essays were published under the title *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, Paris: Gallimard, 1948.

[4] »Mulāḥaẓāt« (see n. 2), 9; »Jān Būl Sārtr wa-l-sīnamā« (see n. 2), 179 f.

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advocated a literary writing that should be related to the present and be critical of political power and social defects. They defined this understanding according to the spirit of democratic socialism, which they had come to know during their studies in England or France with European artists like (in the case of Salāma Mūsā) Bernard Shaw. The author, so they proclaimed now, should work with responsibility and pedagogic skills in order to give the oppressed masses critical awareness of their alienated lives. Literature should enlighten them and mobilize them to participate in the creation of a modern and just society.[5]

Years later, in view of the worldwide threat of National Socialism, the ideological features of this literary trend became more and more clear. It acquired now a pro-Soviet notion. Some progressive writers now propagated literary writing suitable to the rules of socialist realism. These had been defined by the cultural ideologists of Stalin.[6] And no sooner had Ṭāhā Ḥusayn introduced the term *iltizām* to render Sartre's view of literary commitment in a neutral way than it was taken over by the Marxist cultural scene. A writer was now considered »committed« (*multazim*) only if he wrote according to the quite strict instructions of socialist realism.[7]

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[5] For S. Mūsā (1887-1958) cf. the study of Ghālī SHUKRĪ, *Salāma Mūsā wa-azmat al-ḍamīr al-'arabī*, Sidon & Beirut 1965. Mūsā's famous autobiography, *Tarbiyat Salāma Mūsā*, was translated into English by L.O. SCHUMAN, *The Education of Salāma Mūsā*. For L. 'Awaḍ (1915-1990) see Irmgard SCHRAND, *Louis 'Awaḍ: Ein ägyptischer Kritiker und Denker des 20. Jahrhunderts – Streiter für einen säkularen Staat*, Münster & Hamburg 1994. For 'U. Fākhūrī (1895-1946) and his pupil R. Khūrī (1912-1967) cf., e.g., M. DAKRŪB, *Khamsat ruwwād yuḥāribūn al-'aṣr: Qirā'āt fī a'mālihim wa-masīratihim*, Nikosia 1992. For R. Khūrī cf. also the critical evaluation of his work by Fayṣal DARRĀJ, »Ra'īf Khūrī wa-ishkāliyyāt al-naqd al-shāmil«, in: *al-Ṭarīq* no. 1 (February 1989), 45-67.

[6] The guidelines of socialist realism had been defined by Andrej ŽDANOV, the leading cultural ideologist of Stalin, and introduced by Maksim GOR'KIY during the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934.

[7] So the Syrian critic Shihāda KHŪRĪ in his book *al-Adab fī l-maydān*, Damascus 1950 (for the term *iltizām/yaltazimu* see the introduction by 'Abdalkarīm YĀFĪ, 1) and the Egyptian professor of literature, Muḥammad Mufīd al-SHŪBĀSHĪ [see, e.g., his article, »Wa-l-ān...mā risālat al-adab?«, in: *al-Thaqāfa* no. 271 (5.11.1951), 10 f.]. – In the middle of the fifties the two Egyptian professors Maḥmūd Amīn al-'ĀLIM and 'Abdal'aẓīm ANĪS became the leading critics of the trend of socialist

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In the early fifties, however, the advocates of this quite dogmatic understanding of commitment were to face serious competition. The literary magazine *al-Ādāb*, which was published in Beirut and distributed all over the Arab world, seized on the term *iltizām* and draw it from the margins of the literary scene into the centre of the general literary public. *Iltizām/multazim* became the literary slogan of the fifties and sixties. The magazine succeeded in giving a common platform to the advocates of commitment, who until now had been dispersed in several countries. There they managed to create a discourse, which was supraregional and heterogeneous. *Al-Ādāb* for its part advocated a very special understanding of commitment. For during his studies in France, the publisher Suhayl Idrīs had often visited the coffee-houses of St. Germain where he became fascinated by Sartre's ideas of literature (later he and his wife 'Ā'ida Idrīs would translate a lot of Sartre's books into Arabic). At the same time Suhayl Idrīs was a fervent adherent of Arab nationalism which, during the fifties and sixties, attracted Arab intellectuals as well as the Arab masses.

As soon as he returned to Lebanon in 1953, Suhayl Idrīs founded his literary magazine. With *al-Ādāb* he endeavoured to fill the term *iltizām* – which had been taken over by the Marxists, as we have seen – again with the meaning Sartre had had in mind when speaking about *engagement*. Of course he also wanted to bring it into line with the social and political necessities of his Middle Eastern homeland.

Suhayl Idrīs told me in Beirut in 1994:

> As for me, I did not understand existentialism as a philosophy, but as a social and political doctrine, which puts the values of liberty and responsibility, so urgently needed in the Arab world, into the centre of ethical behaviour.

And he continued with pragmatism:

> So we adopted existentialism and engagement to let Arab nationalism gain from it.

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realism in the Mashriq. Cf. their book *Fī l-thaqāfa al-miṣriyya*, Beirut 1955, for applied and theoretical socialist literary criticism.

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So, above all, he (and other writers of his staff) took Sartre's categories »liberty« and »responsibility« to fuse them with an idea of pan-Arabism, which was all-inclusive and non-partisan. On the other hand he considered the ontological basis of Sartre's theses unnecessary. And as a son of a great poetic culture he had to contradict very firmly the exclusion of poetry from literary commitment which Sartre carried through in theory.[8] Sartre's idea of the individual pact between author and reader was not interesting for him. In the cultural transfer initiated by Suhayl Idrīs, Sartre's *littérature engagée* therefore became a moral appeal calling upon poets and writers to embrace the cause of Arab nationalism, a nationalism that should be orientated towards social justice and democracy.[9]

The socialist-Marxist model of commitment on the one hand as well as the pan-Arab model founded on Sartre's view are the two prominent and competing conceptions of commitment in the post-colonial Mashriq. Comparing them one becomes aware of the wide range of understanding of the term *iltizām*. *Iltizām* could be understood as obligatory commitment according to the ideological and esthetic guidelines of socialist realism. And it could be understood as commitment in accordance with the social and political concerns of the Arab world, which finally was going to renew itself and grow together. Unlike Marxist *iltizām*, this *iltizām* should arise from the writer's individual sense of responsiblity. It was not bound to any esthetic guidelines and prescriptions.

Up to the seventies, the definition of the meaning of *iltizām* continued to be the subject of heated debates in the Arab literary scene. The meaning of the term kept changing all over these years: Under the influence of growing hostilities before and during the Arab-Israeli confrontation of 1967 the term became more and more militant and anti-Israeli in tone. Sometimes *iltizām* did not mean anything but a writer's duty to fight Israel with his esthetic

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[8] *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, chapter 1: »Qu'est-ce qu'écrire?«

[9] For a detailed analysis of this cultural transfer see my study, *Literarisches Engagement im arabischen Nahen Osten: Konzepte und Debatten*, Würzburg: Ergon, 1998 (forthcoming).

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weapons.[10] When Ghassān Kanafānī published his famous books about the Arab poets in Israel in 1966 and 1968[11] quite a few influential critics agreed with him that the commitment of the »poets of resistance« (*shu'arā' al-muqāwama*) was a shining example of true *iltizām* and should be a model for every poet in the Arab world.[12]

The war of June '67 however caused a lasting change. All political ideals of the post-colonial Mashriq collapsed. The last hopes of Arab solidarity would fade away in the outbreak of Lebanese civil war and the Egyptian solo effort to achieve a peace-agreement with Israel. For many progressive Arab intellectuals the fatal defeat stands for the failure of Arab socialism and Arab nationalism to which they committed themselves until then. The big words of the political leaders had proved to be empty phrases. Many intellectuals became sceptical. Looking for the roots of the desaster they began to examine the conceptional foundations of Arab politics and society. This intellectual enterprise was called »self-criticism« (*al-naqd al-dhātī*). In the course of this scrutinizing effort, many adherents of literary commitment became aware that the Arab governments themselves had prevented the ideals of commitment to become realized: For no honest literary work could be successful with nations ruled by authoritarian and repressive means. Only in Lebanon, where artists could work and speak more openly than anywhere else in the region, intellectuals stood up and denounced the fact that critical words were forbidden and suppressed everywhere else in the Arab world. In independant magazines (like *al-Ādāb* and *Mawāqif*) courageous and critical writers for the first time called for free expression and authors' rights.[13] These were now considered to be indispensable

[10] »Waqā'i' al-Mu'tamar al-thālith li-l-Kuttāb al-Ifrīqiyyīn wa-l-Āsiyawiyyīn: Kalimat Wafd Filasṭīn«, in: *al-Ādāb* 15, no. 4 (April 1967), 59, 60.

[11] *Adab al-muqāwama fī Filasṭīn al-muḥtalla 1948-1966*, Beirut 1966; *al-Adab al-filasṭīnī al-muqāwim taḥt al-iḥtilāl*, Beirut 1968.

[12] E.g. Iḥsān 'ABBĀS in *al-Ādāb* 18, no. 5 (May 1970), 34; Ḥusayn MURUWWA in *al-Ādāb* 16, no. 4 (April 1968), 52; Suhayl IDRĪS, *ibid.*, 1; Ṣabrī ḤĀFIẒ in *al-Ādāb* 17, no. 3 (March 1969), 70.

[13] This process started, though very slowly, at the 6th Conference of Arab Authors in Cairo, March 1968. During the 8th conference (Damascus 1971), the

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preconditions for any effective literary commitment. At least in the critical circles of the literary scene this discourse took the place of idealistic discussions about *iltizām.*

Thus, the meaning of the term *iltizām* evidently has changed against the background of the political developments. The discourse about commitment had been part of the visions of Arab political renewal after the end of colonialism. This discourse developped and became differentiated in the course of translating these visions into action. And it vanished and fragmented with the failure of the young nations whose former revolutionary ideals turned into violence and political weakness. During the seventies, *iltizām* or *adab multazim* became hollow words that could be used in many ways and meanings.

As for the influence of this literary debate on individual writers no one, of course, blindly took over the conceptions of commitment propagated by critics and publicists. However, the inherent call for a social and political justification of literary writing was so strong in those years of nation-building and new departures that almost no writer could escape it. The literary debate inspired individual reflections about the social and political role of literary writing. Studying the autobiographies, letters, and essays left behind by the great poets of the »Movement of Modern Poetry« (*ḥarakat al-shiʿr al-ḥadīth*) – as ʿAbdalwahhāb al-Bayātī, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbdaṣṣabūr, Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā[14] – one

problem of practising and realizing *iltizām* in view of official violence and repression was the main topic [cf. *al-Ādāb* 20, no. 1 (January 1972), and no. 2 (February 1972)]. At the 9th conference in Tunis 1973 opportunist and critical authors openly got into a violent controversy [Suhayl IDRĪS, »Jabha li-l-difāʿ ʿan ḥurriyyat al-taʿbīr«, in: *al-Ādāb* 27, no. 12 (December 1979), 2 f.]. See also Ḥalīm BARAKĀT, »al-Kātib al-ʿarabī wa-l-sulṭa«, in: *Mawāqif* 10 (1979), 18-44.

[14] Ṣalāḥ ʿABDAṢṢABŪR, *Ḥayātī fī l-shiʿr*, Beirut 1969; Jabrā Ibrāhīm JABRĀ, *Shāriʿ al-amīrāt: Fuṣūl min sīra dhātiyya*, Beirut 1994. Id., »The Rebels, the Committed and the Others: Transitions in Arabic poetry today (1967)«, in: Issa BOULLATA (ed.), *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, Washington 1980, 191-205. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb took his leave from ideological literary commitment already in the second half of the fifties. His disappointment after the revolution of 1958, when he had been harassed by his former communist companions, lead to a harsh rejection of communism and socialist literature: Iḥsān ʿABBĀS, *Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Dirāsa fī ḥayātihī wa-shiʿrihī*, Beirut ^{6}1992, 216-223. See also Badr Shākir al-

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finds that the problem of literary commitment was the central issue of their reflections and considerations. But one also finds that those poets became aware very soon of the limits of the literary word in real life. Enthusiasm changed into disillusionment, resignation and self-retreat in face of the failure of the revolutions and the persecution of critical writers on the part of regimes they had once sympathized with. Already years before 1967, quite a few poets and prose writers outgrew the limits of the term *iltizām*. This is evident in the literary works themselves: Frustration, fear, nightmare, alienation and exile are the subjects of many writers who had once been fervent advocates of literary commitment.[15] Idealism with regard to politics and belief in the effectiveness of the literary word had only been a stage for them. Having left this stage behind they saw things clearly and more realistically. But they still went on observing their societies, their nations, their epoch, although this observation was now sombre and pessimistic. Thus, the styles of magic realism and surrealism which appeared on the scene in the mid-sixties can be considered to be fundamentally critical towards social reality, for they uncovered its suppressed or forbidden sides and possibilities.[16]

So, as soon as European ideas of literary commitment were adopted in the Arab world, they underwent lasting changes and renovations. They were integrated into regional contexts where they became subjected to the dynamics of political and social events and developments. Though fragmented and in new combinations, they stayed alive. A good example of the independent flow of fragmented ideas can be observed with ʿAbdalwahhāb al-

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SAYYĀB, *Rasā'il al-Sayyāb*, Beirut 1975, 122, and his speach on the Conference of Arab writers in Rome, *La littérature Arabe contemporaine: Travaux du colloque de Rome du 16-22 Octobre 1961*, Beirut n.d., 46-51. For al-Bayātī see below.

[15] Sabry HAFEZ, »The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Aesthetic Response«, in: *BSOAS* 57,1 (1994), 93-112. In Egypt the emergence of the 'Generation of the Sixties' marks the end of referential literary writing and the beginning of a new literary consciousness. Edwar al-Kharrat, »The Mashriq«, in: Robin OSTLE (ed.), *Modern Literature in the Near and Middle East, 1850-1970*, London & New York 1991, 185-192.

[16] Ceza KASSEM (Sīzā QĀSIM), in Stephan GUTH, *Zeugen einer Endzeit: Fünf Schriftsteller zum Umbruch in der ägyptischen Gesellschaft nach 1970*, Berlin: Schwarz, 1992, 206 (interview).

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Bayātī. In his autobiography, *Tajribatī al-shi'riyya* (1968),[17] the Iraqi poet tells us how much he felt attracted by Jean-Paul Sartre's *littérature engagée* when he was a student in the fifties. He integrated these ideas into his socialist view of life. Here he found theoretical support for the mission of a committed poet in a country shaken by military coups. As a committed poet, however, al-Bayātī lived the experiences typical of his time: prison, expulsion, statelessness, exile. In the course of his experiences Sartre's idea of commitment lost its significance for him. He came to identify with the character of Albert Camus' *homme révolté*. With this character Camus had emphasized the necessity to stay a rebel even after political revolution. Political revolutions – this had been experienced by al-Bayātī, too – generally end up in increasing authority, in terror and official murder. As a symbol for his *homme révolté* Camus chose the hero of Prometheus, the thief of fire, who stole the knowlegde from the gods to bring it to mankind. However men ignored his message and despised him. Al-Bayātī too chose Prometheus in one of his poems entitled »Autobiography of the Thief of Fire« (*sīra dhātiyya li-sāriq al-nār*).[18] He chose this hero to express the new way he saw himself as a poet. This kind of consciousness had developped out of his experience in Iraq and in exile. It was the consciousness of a poet who had lost all illusions about politics and society but, on the other side, had not completely given up hope – for he was convinced, as Camus was, that a new, human civilization would arise in a distant future. Al-Bayātī now considered it a poet's responsibility to pave the way for this new culture in the midst of a cold and heartless time.

Al-Bayātī thus wove ideas of French existentialism with his own experience. In this way he created a new meaningful relation between his literary work and the reality he was living in.

Al-Bayātī is only one of many Arab writers who adopted socialist and existentialist ideas and fused them with his own experience.

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[17] In: *Dīwān 'Abdalwahhāb al-Bayātī*, Beirut 1971 f., ii, 3-138.

[18] In: *al-A'māl al-shi'riyya*, ii, Amman 1995, 347-351. For a detailed analysis see my forthcoming study (cf. n. 8).

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He is also one of many who felt enthusiastic about literary commitment and in the course of his own experience, created new and individual relationships to society and politics. In the autobiographical documents left by other poets of that time (see above) the same inner development from idealism to disillusionment is to be found, a development from collective enthusiasm about abstract conceptions to individual reflection about the difficult mission of the writer in his time. At least in the case of quite a few writers in the cultural centres this inner development went along with the political and social developments in the Arab world. So the ambitious ideal of literary commitment arose in the heat of the struggle for national independence, it increased during the early phase of nation-building and declined in the process of the breakdown of the great political aims of the post-colonial Middle East.

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Maḥmūd Darwīsh's Re-staging of the Mystic Lover's Relation towards a Superhuman Beloved[1]

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(Beirut)

0 *The problem*

An observation made by one of the most experienced poets of our time, Adonis, on the virtual linguistic plurality of poetical Arabic appears fit to serve as a motto for our discourse. Adonis claims that

> *al-lughatu llatī yaktubu bihā l-mubdi'u l-'arabī lughātun kathīra, qadīmatun wa-ḥadītha. Wa-l-'arabiyyatu shi'riyyan jam'un bi-sīghati l-mufrad.*[2]

An Arabic poem thus, by virtue of its very language, betrays intrinsic polyphony. This innate polyphony, of course, becomes particularly blatant when a complete work proves to be underlaid with a significantly older text. Then, that 'pre-text' through its very structure provides an additional key to decode the later work, leading the critic beyond the message conveyed by the 'lyrical I' or the narrator, deep into the creative process, where the

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[1] An extended version of this paper will appear in Arabic: »Iḥyā' 'alāqat al-'āshiq bi-l-maḥbūb al-muta'ālī: Qirā'at Maḥmūd Darwīsh li-Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb«, in a *Festschrift* dedicated to Sami Makarem on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.

[2] ADŪNĪS, *al-Naṣṣ al-qur'ānī wa-āfāq al-kalima*, Beirut 1993, 15.

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voice of the artist himself is audible. – Hardly anyone would guess that such a referential dimension exists in one of the most famous early poems by Maḥmūd Darwīsh, namely *ʿĀshiq min Filasṭīn*, written in 1966.[3] This poem, of course, also allows for a meaningful reading without any knowledge of an existing 'pretext,' simply as a love poem dedicated to the land of Palestine, an expression of utmost social awareness and commitment to political change, easy for the listeners to identify with. As such it has been read and studied until now.[4] When confined to such a reading it will, however, remain mute with respect to the unique creative process to which it owes its particular pathos. In the following I shall try, therefore, to read the poem in the more complex way: as part of an on-going poetic discourse, a dialogue not only between the speaker and his addressee, or the intellectual and his society, but also between a young Palestinian poet and his poetic ancestors, first and foremost his great Iraqi predecessor, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb.

1 *The poem read as a modern replica of the classical* qaṣīda

Structurally, Darwīsh's poem reflects the classical *qaṣīda*[5] beginning – after a short amorous invocation (vs. 1-9) – with a lament

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[3] *Dīwān Maḥmūd DARWĪSH*, i, Beirut 1981, 79-85. The poem was first published in: Maḥmūd DARWĪSH, *ʿĀshiq min Filasṭīn*, Haifa 1966, it was made known to a wider Arab public through the anthology prepared by Ghassān KANAFĀNĪ, *Adab al-muqāwama fī Filasṭīn al-muḥtalla (1948-1966)*, Beirut 1966. – English translations of the complete poem are given by A.M. ELMESSIRI, *A Lover from Palestine and Other Poems*, Washington D.C. 1970 (presently not available to me); B.M. BENNANI, *Splinters of Bone: Poems by Mahmoud Darwīsh*, New York 1974; of substantial parts by Khalid A. SULAIMAN, *Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry*, London 1984. Translations within the paper mostly draw on SULAIMAN; occasional emendations of his renderings have been put between »[ ]«.

[4] See SULAIMAN, *Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry*, 156-160; Angelika NEUWIRTH, »Das Gedicht als besticktes Tuch: Mahmud Darwischs Gedicht 'Ein Liebender aus Palästina'«, in: G. VOELGER et al. (eds.), *Pracht und Geheimnis: Kleidung und Schmuck aus Palaestina und Jordanien*, Köln 1987, 110-117.

[5] The *qaṣīda*-structure following the classical model has been suggested as underlying the poem in an earlier discussion by the present writer, see the preceding note. See for a recent evaluation: Stefan WEIDNER, »Maḥmūd Darwīsh«, in:

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about loss in the past, a kind of *nasīb* (vs. 10-39) (I), followed by attempts of the speaker to reassure himself of his current psychological and social stance – attempts pursued through a movement in space, a *raḥīl* (vs. 40-66) (II). This again leads over to the conveying of a message, a *balāgh* (vs. 67-95) (III); culminating in a praise of the addressee, a *madīḥ* (vs. 96-105), with an ensuing self-praise, a *fakhr* (vs. 106-123) (IV), entailing promises concerning the future. Of course, this overall structure, evoking as it does a particular constellation of *dramatis personae*, only makes the peculiarity of the modern poem with its staging of new protagonists all the more apparent. Thus, to touch only on the most striking differences between the classical *qaṣīda* and the modern poem: the Beloved in Darwīsh's *nasīb* has not definitely parted, she remains, on the contrary, a present absentee. She is, moreover, not an individual person, but rather a personification of the distant Other, i.e. the homeland. Nor do the scenes presented in the *raḥīl* in any way serve to distract the speaker from his loss, they rather pursue the lost Beloved herself in an endless sequence of encounters. It is not surprising then, that also the high-ranking recipient of the poet's offering, the *mamdūḥ* of the final section, is not a male third person, but can be no one else than the female Beloved again.

2 *The* qaṣīda *and its underlying mythical code*

2.1 *Metatextual elements reflecting a poetological discourse*

Read as a modern replica of the traditional *qaṣīda*, evoking an old Arab value system, the poem entails a collectively valid expression of commitment, particularly apt for circulation at semi-public gatherings, such as weddings, in the majoritarily rural Palestine where poetic communications served as an important medium to enhance cultural self-consciousness.

Heinz Ludwig ARNOLD (ed.), *Kritisches Lexikon zur fremdsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, 44. Nachlieferung, München 1997, 1-18.

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This reading, however, leaves not few striking devices of expression undecoded: in particular, an overtly metatextual section placed exactly in the centre of the poem which through a complex metaphor presents the process of poetry-writing as a production of a textile, made from parts of the body of the writer himself, thus constituting a kind of self-sacrifice. This daring metaphor of a most intimate interaction marks the culmination of several preceeding images of the all-pervading 'poetological relationship' between the speaker and his addressee whose »words he tries to perform« (vs. 10 f.). The crucial verses (vs. 60-66) read:

wa-uqsimu:
min rumūshi l-'ayni sawfa ukhayyiṭu mandīlan
wa-anqushu fawqahū shi'ran li-'aynayki
wa-sman ḥīna asqīhi fu'ādan dhāba tartīlan
yamuddu 'arā'isha l-ayki
sa-aktubu jumlatan aghlā mina l-shuhadā'i wa-l-qubuli:
Filasṭīniyyatan kānat wa-lam tazali.

I swear to you:
I shall weave a <scarf> [veil] – *mandīl* – from my eyelashes
embroidered with verses for your eyes
and a name, when watered with my heart
will make the tree spread its branches again.
I shall write a sentence on the <scarf> [veil]
more precious than kisses and the blood of martyrs:
'Palestinian she was and will remain'.

The 'verses' (*shi'r*) promised here, will follow a few lines later (vs. 96-102), forming a poem within the poem, orchestrating the Beloved's name, Filasṭīniyya. But already in the oath itself, the name is highly celebrated, being framed in a sentence (*jumla*) that clearly echoes the Qur'ānic creational imperative, *kun fa-yakūn*:[6] *Filasṭīniyyatan kānat wa-lam tazali.* Indeed, this newly created being, the poeticized name, receives breath of life through the poet's heart: the poet dedicating his soul (*fu'ād*) to her eyes (*'aynān*) by making her name a song. This new, poetic bestowal of identity, demanding the utmost extent of the poet's devotion, is

[6] *Qur'ān* 2:118, 3:47, 3:59.

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deemed comparable, even superior to a real, i.e. a bloody sacrifice: it is *aghlā mina l-shuhadā'*.

The daring poetologic claim implied here that poetry bears a relation to martyrdom and sacrifice certainly needs clarification. To find the clue to it we have to turn to the broader self-referential framework of the *qaṣīda*: Both, the beginning and the end display peculiarly expressive traits. Not only the end, presenting the speaker in the guise of a medieval warrior-poet, drawing on the folkloric ʿAntara: *anā zaynu l-shabāb wa-fārisu l-fursān* (vs. 111, 123) appears striking.[7] No less striking is the introductory statement of the speaker to have suffered violence through the powerful eyes of the addressee: *ʿUyūnuki shawkatun fī l-qalbi* (v. 1). His resulting extravagance, his defying everyday norms, his willingness to suffer: *tūjiʿunī wa-aʿbuduhā* (v. 2), in short, the condition of a *ʿāshiq* devoted to a Beloved endowed with superhuman powers, clearly evoke earlier literary models bearing far-reaching poetologic implications. The introductory, the central and the closing sections thus link the poem to a complex poetic discourse to which Maḥmūd Darwīsh is adding a new voice.

2.2 *The proemium and the 'nasīb' – references to Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb's »Unshūdat al-maṭar«*

For a classical poem, a Ṣūfī or mundane *ghazal*, there could have been no more efficient way to stress the dissimilarity, the hierarchic heterogeneity existing between the speaker and his addressee, than to emphasize the violence of the desire that causes the one to lose his composure through the mere gaze of the Other. But, is the modern poet seeking to project his particular relation to his Beloved Other into a remote past? – However close his commitment to classical models may be – his immediate interlocutor is much less distant: The *ʿāshiq* owes the intertextual matrix underlying it as a whole to a poem published no more than eight years before and celebrated in the Arab world as pio-

[7] For details about the reception of this figure in pre-modern and contemporary popular culture, see NEUWIRTH, »Das Gedicht« (like note 4).

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neering, a poem that also starts out with an invocation of the Beloved under the image of her eyes:

'Aynāki ghābatā nakhīlin sā'ata l-saḥar

Your eyes are two groves of palm trees at the hour of dawn,

namely, the *Unshūdat al-maṭar* by Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb.[8]

Again, roughly following the structure of the classical *qaṣīda*,[9] it begins with a kind of *nasīb* (vs. 7-41) (I), a lament about loss, preluded by an invocation of the eyes of a superhuman female figure. We may guess behind this figure a recollection of Sayyāb's early deceased mother hypostasized to become a personification of Iraq.[10] The invocation of the Beloved's eyes (vs. 1-6) may be said to fulfill the function of a proemium, an introductory section addressed to the source of inspiration. Indeed, it is through the mirror of these eyes that the speaker enters into the mythic world[11] of a poetically enchanted Iraq, a paradisical landscape[12] reminding strongly of the topical *locus amoenus* of *ghazal*-poetry. This scenario, however, soon changes abruptly when the eyes, the screen of the projection, cover themselves with a veil of dusk, of

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[8] *Dīwān Badr Shākir al-SAYYĀB*, Beirut 1971, 474-481. The poem was first published in the Beirut literary magazine *al-Ādāb* in June 1954. English translation by T. DEYOUNG in his study »A new reading of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb's 'Hymn of the Rain'«, in: *JAL* xxiv (1993), 39-61, 59-61.

[9] The structural relation between the *unshūda* and the classical *qaṣīda* which had been first suggested by Jacques BERQUE, »Diyāliktikiyyāt al-dhāt wa-l-ṭabī'a«, in: *al-Mawāqif* 10 (1971), 49-53, has been generally accepted, cf. M.M. BADAWI, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge 1975, 253, and M.A.S. 'ABDALḤALĪM, »Al-Sayyāb: A study of his poetry«, in: Robin OSTLE (ed.), *Studies in Modern Arabic Literature*, Warminster 1975, 81.

[10] See Iḥsān 'ABBĀS, *Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: dirāsa fī ḥayātihī wa-shi'rih*, Beirut 1969; Elias KHOURY, *Dirāsāt fī naqd al-shi'r*, Beirut 1979, 34 ff.; and T. DEYOUNG, »A new reading« (see note 8).

[11] The mythic quality of the Iraqi landscape becomes manifest not only through the cosmic processes symbolizing political developments as depicted in the *unshūda* – such as the dawn and the thunderstorm – but also through the reference to the myth of the Sinful City (Thamūd) established as a political signifier already in the Qur'ān.

[12] The paradisical image of Iraq is crucial for the interpretation presented by DEYOUNG, »A new reading« (cf. n. 8).

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sadness (vs. 7 ff.), and the anxiety-shaken scenery of the speaker's soul emerges, the scenario of a *nasīb*-like lament about loss (vs. 7-41) acoustically accompanied by the weeping of the heavens, the rainfall. It culminates in the discovery of the secret of the mother's death (vs. 29 ff.), the loss of the Beloved.

The hypostasization of the mother and ideal Beloved to become a superhuman partner of speech encompassing the nature of Iraq has rightfully been acknowledged as a poetically pioneering step of Sayyāb. The poem, which portrays a waste land suffering from dreadful grievances and spiritual desolation, but also betraying signs of impending revival, marks, it has been claimed, the beginning of modern mythic Arabic poetry.[13] But, is it true that it owes its mythic dimension primarily to the efficient use of powerful symbols of fertility – ideas that came into circulation through James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*,[14] as is often assumed? – Maḥmūd Darwīsh's reading of the poem, his poetical adoption of the mythic relation existing between a superhuman Beloved and a human speaker without showing much interest in the fertility imagery rather argues for the opposite: What is acknowledged by Darwīsh as revolutionary in the *Unshūda* is rather Sayyāb's novel interpretation of a *ghazal* topos. Sayyāb has developed the topical image of the Beloved that through her eyes enchants reality, into a figure integrating the physically lost mother and the politically lost Iraq alike, a mythic figure whose gaze bestows on him the prophetic faculty of a seer fit to realize signs of imminent change and upheaval in Iraq. The Beloved's eyes, thus detached from their conventional context as a device of enchantment causing the partner's decrease in power[15] now be-

[13] See particularly ʿABBĀS, *Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb* (cf. n. 10).

[14] Parts of this key work on ancient near Eastern myths were translated by Jabrā Ibrāhīm JABRĀ already in the later forties, but Frazer's work could not appear until thirty years later; for Jabrā's introduction to his partial Arabic edition of James Frazer, see: *Adūnīs aw Tammūz, tarjamat Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā*, 3rd edition, Beirut 1982. – Not finding a publisher for his translation, Jabrā lent the manuscript to several Iraqi intellectuals, among them Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb.

[15] See the numerous references to this topos in: Régis BLACHÈRE, »Les principaux thèmes de la poésie érotique au siècle des Umayyades de Damas«, in: *Analecta*, Damascus 1975, 333-378.

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come a source of inspiration for the speaker, a medium of his increase in power.

A similar role falls to Darwīsh's introductory section which also starts out with a proemium, an invocation of his 'muse' where he – like Sayyāb before – addresses the eyes of his Beloved, a personification of the lost homeland, as his source of inspiration (vs. 1-9). But the emotional mood is different. Whereas Sayyāb presents us with an animated, though at times apocalyptically troubled scenario of Iraq, the *locale* of Darwīsh's poem is an atomized panorama of Palestine, a scenario occupied exclusively by the speaker and the addressee, otherwise empty, it is the 'battlefield' (*mu'tarak*), as the mystic Ibn al-Fāriḍ has expressed it, 'where eyes encounter souls', a symbolic place of violent contacts between the heart (*qalb*) of the speaker and the gaze (*'aynan*) of the Beloved: with the words of Ibn al-Fāriḍ himself:

mā bayna mu'taraki l-aḥdāqi wa-l-muhajī
anā l-qatīlu bi-lā ithmin wa-lā ḥaraji[16]

where eyes encounter souls in battle-fray
I am a murdered man whom 't was no crime to slay.

What has taken extreme form in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's hyperbolic language: that the gaze is a killing gaze, that the lover lies dead on the ground and that the central legal norm has been invalidated: that violence is legitimate only in cases of revenge, when a delict (*ithm*) has preceeded, and that it always brings about the burden (*ḥaraj*) of a retribution[17] – has taken a milder form with Darwīsh:

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[16] See *Dīwān IBN AL-FĀRIḌ*, Beirut 1903, 72-75. The English translation is that of Reynold A. NICHOLSON, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Cambridge 1921, 175. The entire poem has been translated by J. ARBERRY, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, translated and annotated, Dublin 1956, 27-34.

[17] It seems that Ibn al-Fāriḍ refers to the introductory section of another extremely famous poem, included in the *Ḥamāsa* of ABŪ TAMMĀM, which relies for its particular pathos precisely on the validity of that basic legal norm, namely the *marthiya* of TA'ABBAṬA SHARRAN: *inna bi-l-shi'bi lladhī dūna sal'in / la-qatīlan damuhū mā yuṭallū*; see: *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa* li-Abī 'Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-MARZŪQĪ, ii, Cairo 1951, 827. – By claiming the annulment of that ancient Arab norm Ibn al-Fāriḍ presents a most pathetic antithesis to conventional expectations. Yet, it has to be noted, that 'the image of the woman who wounds and

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Here the gaze is only wounding, the lover is not dead, and the norm invalidated is only a behavioural custom, namely that the victim of violence should desire the end of his suffering whereas he here wishes the violence to continue. Still, Darwīsh's evocation of the mystic metaphor of the norm-deleting power of the gaze remains so forceful, that the speaker's mental state of being most deeply affected by the overpowering charisma of the Other, clearly attests a condition analogous to that of the mystic, whose fate – in legal terms – makes sense only when classified as a case of self-sacrifice. Darwīsh's speaker is, if though in a form more mitigated than that of the mystic lover, from the beginning a volontary victim of the addressee. In contrast, the speaker in Sayyāb's poem, though enabled by the contact with his superhuman Beloved to widen the scope of his experience far beyond an ordinary level, to become a seer that is, and endowed with the gift of poetic expression, remains devoid of any similar pathos and does not raise the claim to offer a sacrifice.

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kills without paying blood money or having to fear retaliation', has been a commonplace already since Umayyad poetry, see Susanne ENDERWITZ, *Liebe als Beruf: Al-'Abbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf und das Ġazal*, Beirut/Stuttgart 1995, 141, and the testimonies presented by BLACHÈRE in *Analecta*, 258, note 1. In Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem as well as in Darwish's modern *qaṣīda*, however, the annulment of legal norms is retranslated from a rhetorical device into a statement about an existential loss of balance, since the love for a superhuman, ideal Beloved leads to utmost alienation from reality, to *junūn*. This troubled state of mind certainly differs from the 'sickness of love' complained of by lovers in *ghazal* poetry since the beginning of its development; see the new pioneering assessment of that genre by Thomas BAUER, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts: Eine literatur- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Studie des arabischen Ġazal* (forthcoming in *Diskurse der Arabistik* 2, Wiesbaden). – For the modern poet's feeling of alienation see Angelika NEUWIRTH, »Identität und Verwirklichungsängste: Zu einer modernen Bearbeitung des Maǧnūn-Laylā-Stoffes bei Ṣalāḥ 'Abdaṣṣabūr«, in: Johann Christoph BÜRGEL / Stephan GUTH (eds.), *Gesellschaftlicher Umbruch und Historie im zeitgenössischen Drama der islamischen Welt*, Beirut/Stuttgart 1995, 205-234.

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2.3 *The 'raḥīl'-section (II)*

2.3.1 *The pervasive presence of the Beloved – realized through visual and auditive experience respectively*

In both poems it is the addressee, who in the second part moves the speaker to set out on a journey. In Sayyāb's poem she leads him with her eyes to perform a circular movement:

wa-muqlatāki bī tuṭīfāni ma'a l-maṭar

your eyes lead me around with the rain (v. 42),

which makes him halt at the Gulf coast, a particularly barren landscape which he tries to make speak by invoking its power to bestow life and death: *yā wāhiba l-lu'lu'i wa-l-maḥārī wa-l-radā* »oh giver of pearls, shells and desaster« (v. 48).[18] Although no answer reaches him except the empty echo[19] he is granted a sensual contact with his unreachable homeland: he is enabled to hear hidden voices, to realize diverse – hope-inspiring as well as frightening – developments: the accumulation of powers in Iraq, that will bring about a political upheavel (vs. 53-57):

akādu asma'u l-'Irāqa yadhkharu l-ru'ūd,
wa-yakhzunu l-burūqu fi-l-suhūli wa-l-jibāl
ḥattā idhā mā faḍḍa 'anhā khatmaha l-rijāl
lam tatruki l-riyāḥu min Thamūd
fi l-wādī min athar.

I almost hear Iraq storing up the thunder
and massing the lightning in the mountains and plains
until, when men tear away their seal
the winds <from> [of] Thamud will not leave
any trace in the valley.

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[18] The speaker's turning to a new representation of Iraq as his interlocutor, the 'Gulf', who appears rather ambivalent in his relation towards the speaker, converges with his realizations of several cosmic processes that also appear ambivalent: the elusive dawn, the thunderbolts that announce nothing but a lightning.

[19] It only resounds the negative or ambivalent elements of the invocation: *al-maḥārī wa-l-radā*, omitting the positive: *al-lu'lu'*.

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He also hears distant human voices, belonging to emigrants (*muhājirūn*) (vs. 59-61)[20] who courageously confront the waves of the Gulf to flee the Sinful City:

akādu asma'u l-nakhīla yashrabu l-maṭar
wa-asma'u l-qurā ta'innu wa-l-muhājirīn
yuṣāri'ūna bi-l-majādhifi wa-bi-l-qulū'
'awāṣifa l-khalīji wa-l-ru'ūdi, munshidīn.

I almost hear the palm trees drinking the rain
and hear the villages moaning, and the emigrants
struggling with their oars and sails
against the storms on the gulf, and the thunder, singing their hymn...

With this particular audition the mood of the poem changes; the poetic voice now passes to the emigrants whose song, a poem within the poem (vs. 85-91), expresses the firm belief in the meaningfulness of their endurance, the emergence of new life from self-sacrifice:

wa-kullu quṭratin turāqu min dami l-'abīd
fa-hya btisāmun fi ntiẓāri mabsamin jadīd
fī 'ālami l-ghadi l-fatiyyi wāhibi l-ḥayāh.

Every drop shed of the blood of slaves
Is a smile awaiting new lips
In the youthful world of tomorrow, the giver of life!

The speaker confines himself to communicating this credo of meaningful sacrifice – himself retreating from his function to interpret reality and thus from his authority to act as the primary speaker of society.

Contrary to the speaker in Darwīsh's poem. Here, again, it is the *raḥīl*-section that leads to a decisive change in mood. Darwīsh's speaker is granted the super-natural faculty well-known from the mystics, to realize the absent Beloved in visions. His journey, a prolonged visual pursuit of the Beloved, leads him through various scenarios of exile, suffering and misery: to the

[20] The designation *al-muhājirūn* evokes the image of the followers of the Prophet who left their homes to establish a new order of society as an antipode to the Sinful City.

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harbour, *locus* of unvoluntary emigration, to hill-tops grown with thornbushes, to the storerooms of poor peasant houses, to night-clubs, to refugee-camps:

ra'aytuki amsi fi l-minā'
musāfiratan bi-lā ahlin bi-lā zādī... (vs. 25 f.),
ra'aytuki fī jibāli l-shawki
rā'iyatan bi-lā aghnām... (vs. 40 f.),
ra'aytuki fī khawābi l-mā'i wa-l-qamḥi
muḥaṭṭamatan... (vs. 47 f.),
ra'aytuki fī maqāhi l-layli khādimatan... (v. 48),
ra'aytuki 'inda bābi l-kahfi 'inda l-ghār... (v. 53).

I saw you yesterday at the harbour
travelling without relations or provisions...
I saw you on the mountains covered with thorny plants
a shepherdess without sheep...
I saw you in jars of water and graneries
broken...
I saw you in nightclubs waiting on tables...
I saw you at the mouth of the cave...

The long sequence of visions of the Beloved[21] in the state of need and humiliation finally comes to a turn. All of a sudden, in

[21] The sequence of sensual perceptions of the absent Beloved reminds strongly of a passage in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's famous '*qatīl*-poem' already quoted above (vs. 29-34), where however not vision alone, but all of the five senses are evoked. Note also the frequent use of *mafā'il*-structures (*fī masāriḥ, fī masāqiṭ, fī masāḥib*) which may be echoed in Darwīsh's similarly sounding (*ra'aytuki*) *fi l-mawāqid, fi l-shawāri', fi l-zarā'ib* (vs. 55 f.):

Tarāhu in ghāba 'annī kullu jāriḥatin
Fī kulli ma'nan laṭīfin rā'iqin bahaji
fī naghmati l-'ūdi wa-l-nāyi l-rakhīmi idhā
ta'allafā bayna alḥānin mina l-hazaji
wa-fī masāriḥi ghizlāni l-khamā'ili fī
bardi l-aṣā'ili wa-l-iṣbāḥi fi-l-balaji
wa-fī masāqiṭi andā'i l-ghamāmi 'alā
bisāṭi nūrin mina l-azhāri muntasiji
wa-fī masāḥibi adhyāli l-nasīmi idhā
ahdā ilayya suḥayran aṭyaba l-arajī
wa-fi l-tithāmiya thaghra l-ka'si murtashifan
rīqa l-mudāmati fī mustanzahin farijī

Though he be gone mine every limb beholds
him / in every charm and grace and loveliness:
in music of the lute and flowing reed
mingled in consort with melodious airs;
and in green hollows where in cool of eve
gazelles roam browsing, or at break of morn;
and where the gathered clouds let fall their rain
upon a flowery carpet woven of blooms;
and where at dawn with softly-trailing skirts
the zephyr brings to me his balm most sweet;
and when in kisses from the flagon's mouth
I suck wine-dew beneath a pleasant shade.
(Translation by NICHOLSON)

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the last image the Beloved presents herself endowed with a clearly erotic emanation – she appears rising from the sea, displaying the notion of life in its most perfect aesthetic form:

ra'aytuki mil'a milḥi l-baḥri wa-l-ramli
wa-kunti jamīlatan ka-l-arḍi ka-l-atfāli ka-l-fulli (vs. 58 f.).

I saw you <in> [covered all over with] salt and sands,
your beauty was of earth, of children and jasmine.

2.3.2 *The creative power of the poet: Creation and 'investiture' of the partner, bestowing of a name*

With this vision the speaker himself achieves a new state of mind: Having been needy, helpless like an orphaned child running after a mother figure[22] he now becomes adult and thus legally capable: he swears. It is the oath of absolute devotion, we heard in the beginning (vs. 60-66):

wa-uqsimu:
min rumūshi l-'ayni sawfa ukhayyiṭu mandīlan
wa-anqushu fawqahu shi'ran li-'aynayki
wa-sman ḥīna asqīhi fu'ādan dhāba tartīlan
yamuddu 'arā'isha l-ayki

I swear to you
I shall weave a <scarf> [veil] from my eyelashes
embroidered with verses for our eyes
and a name, when watered with my heart
will make the trees spread their branches again.

Still, it has to be noted that whereas the mystic's experience allows for reiterations (*in ghāba – tarāhu*), in Darwīsh's poem the vision is presented as unique (*ra'aytuki amsi*) and leading finally to a turning point when the Beloved appears endowed with an erotic aura. Darwīsh in communicating his visions – as well as Sayyāb in relating his auditions – appears to present an unrepeatable autobiographical experience.

[22] Cf., e.g., v. 27: *rakaḍtu ilayki ka-l-aytām.*

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The veil, the poetic *mandīl*, that he weaves from his eyelashes[23] maybe meant to cover her – she arose from the sea naked, as we realized – it maybe meant as a garment, allowing her to become visible in public so to say. It serves as well, however, as a symbol of her 'investiture' into a new individual role, which in view of the traditional Palestinian custom to offer garments as wedding presents[24] appears to be that of a bride.

The speaker who through his offer bestows on her a new identity, and a new relation towards a personal partner, is well aware of his redemptive role. Thus, when judging his own offering he does not hesitate to rank himself typologically among the bearers of the highest standing in love: the martyrs, *al-shuhadā'*, to whom his volontary suffering declared in the beginning had already brought him close. Indeed, evoking the well-known *ḥadīth* legitimizing the philosophy of *'ishq*: *man 'ashiqa wa-'affa wa-māt, māta shahīdan* – he even judges his offering superior to self-sacrifice:

sa-aktubu jumlatan aghlā mina l-shuhadā'i wa-l-qubulī (v. 65)

I shall write a sentence on the veil more precious than kisses and the blood of the martyrs[25]

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[23] A comparable though less radical gesture of devotion is found in a poem by IBN al-MU'TAZZ where the speaker offers part of his body instead of a textile to equip his Beloved: *fa-qumtu afrushu khaddī fi l-ṭarīqi lahū / dhullan wa-aṣḥabu adhyālī 'ala l-atharī*, see: Michel NU'MĀN (ed.), *Dīwān Ibn al-Mu'tazz*, Beirut 1969, 219; instead of *adhyālī* the Ms traditions preferred by Bernhard LEWIN (ed.), *Der Diwan des 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Mu'tazz*, Teil III, Istanbul 1950, 50, read *akmāmī*. See for a structural analysis of that poem: Renate JACOBI, »Ibn al-Mu'tazz: Dair 'Abdūn«, in: *JAL* vi (1975), 35-56.

[24] See Shelagh WEIR, *Palestinian Costume*, London 1989, and Maḥmūd Mufliḥ al-BAKR, *al-'Urs al-sha'bī*, Beirut 1995.

[25] The evocation of the famous *ḥadīth* constitutes the link between the two main parts of the poem; it is worth noting that Ibn al-Fāriḍ draws on the same *ḥadīth* in a comparably central position of the poem already adduced twice as possibly being echoed in our *qaṣīda*: *man māta fīhi gharāman 'āsha murtaqiyan / mā bayna ahli l-hawā fī arfa'i darajī* »Whosoever dies in ardour for his sake, liveth evermore raised up / among the people of passion, even to the most exalted degree« (translation by ARBERRY).

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– a daring claim that should be reconsidered in the light of Sayyāb's approach to the notion of sacrifice. We thus come to the final sections of both poems.

2.4 *The 'balāgh' (III)*

2.4.1 *A revolutionary poetic manifesto and its genesis*

Sayyāb's *balāgh* starts out with the speaker's new attempt to invoke the gulf (v. 98):

> *aṣīkhu bi-l-khalīj*
> *yā wāhiba l-lu'lu'i wa-l-maḥārī wa-l-radā,*
>
> I cry out to the Gulf: 'Oh Gulf,
> O Giver of pearls, of shells, of death,'

which this time is answered with more than the empty echo. Indeed, a gift, a *hiba* (v. 102), from the Gulf is cast ashore; it is a victim, a drowned man from among the emigrants. Is this to be seen as the demanded offering, is it to announce the emergence of new life, so confidently expected in the hymn of the emigrants? The frame in which the idea of sacrifice is presented by Sayyāb is in blatant contrast to its life-ensuring, erotic context in Darwīsh's poem: it is the shocking realization of form-devastating death that confronts the speaker with the mystery of sacrifice. The scandalon of innocently suffered death serves to disclose fully the perversion of a reality, where the enduring oppressed suffers, 'drinks' death, desaster (v. 104), immanent in the *khalīj*, whereas the oppressors enjoy, »drink« (v. 106), the nectar of the paradisical landscape of the Euphrates. This tremendous paradox makes a neutral stance impossible: thus, it appears that the voice of the *khalīj* himself, the voice of Iraq, as such now 'authorizes' the idea of the meaningfulness of sacrifice, allowing the whole strophe of the emigrants' song to resound as an echo; the three voices, the emigrants', the *khalīj*'s and the speaker's, until then diverging, thus merge into one song (vs. 114-120):

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wa-kullu dam'atin mina l-jiyā'i wa-'urāh
wa-kullu quṭratin turāqu min dami l-'abīd
fa-hya btisāmun fi ntizāri mabsamin jadīd
aw ḥulmatun tawarradat 'alā fami l-walīd
fī 'ālami l-ghadi l-fatiyyi wāhibi l-ḥayāh.

And every tear of the hungry and the naked
and every drop shed of the blood of slaves
is a smile awaiting new lips
or a nipple growing pink in the mouth of a newborn babe
in the youthful world of tomorrow, the giver of life!

With this *unshūda* in nuce, a consensus-bearing poetical text has evolved, comparable to Darwīsh's poetic *mandīl*, a poem within the poem, pronouncing a revolutionary manifesto. Although the complete *unshūda* closes with a last projection of the continuously falling rain, the final image is that of a nursing mother with her child: the great female figure, who magically through her eyes had initiated the poetic process, now closes it in the guise of a nursing mother. The poetic speaker has regained his Beloved in a unique vision.

2.4.2 *Individuation of the poet and his pact with his female partner as his bride*

The speaker in Darwīsh's poem was induced to approach sacrifice through a substantially different vision, the erotic experience of life in its utmost perfection. The Beloved had emerged from mythic anonymity, no longer being herself *al-arḍ*, but manifesting herself as *jamīlatun ka-l-arḍ*, whereas he emerged from among the self-annihilating lovers, the *shuhadā'*, as a poet, bearer and bestower of collective identity. Dismissing the 'night' of his mischievous fate in a gallant Imru' al-Qays'ian manner[26] he announces his union with the Beloved (vs. 57-71):

[26] Cf. the *Mu'allaqa* of IMRU' AL-QAYS, in: Muḥammad Abu l-Faḍl IBRĀHĪM (ed.), *Dīwān Imri'ilqays*, Cairo 1969, 16, vs. 44 ff.: *wa-laylin ka-mawji l-baḥri arkhā sudūlahū / 'alayya bi-anwā'i l-humūmi li-yabtalī // fa-qultu lahū lammā tamaṭṭā bi-jawzihī / wa-ardafa arjāzan wa-na'ā bi-kalkalī // a-lā ayyuha l-laylu l-ṭawīlu alla njalī / bi-ṣubḥin wa-ma l-iṣbāḥu fīka bi-amthalī.*

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fataḥtu l-bāba wa-l-shubbāka fī layli l-aʿāsīri
ʿalā qamarin tasallaba fī layālinā
wa-qultu li-laylatī: dūrī
warāʾa l-layli wa-l-ṣūri
fa-lī waʿdun maʿa l-kalimāti wa-l-nūri.

One stormy night I opened the window
And saw a mutilated moon.
I told the night: »Be gone
Beyond the fence of darkness!
I have an appointment with light and words«.

The covenant concluded between the speaker and his Beloved in the following (vs. 72-81) through sublime sexual metaphors assumes the value of a marriage contract:

wa-anti ḥadīqati l-ʿadhrāʾu
mā dāmat aghānīnā
suyūfan ḥīna nashraʿuhā...

You are my virginal garden
As long as our songs
Are swords when we draw them.

It renders to the poet – in exchange for his emancipatory act – his hitherto lost sensual faculties and the capability to speak up, to sing triumphant songs, it finally allows him to transcend the limit of the previously restricted space between a harbour and the desert and to reoccupy his territory: *ḥudūda l-shāmi azraʿuhā / qaṣāʾida tuṭliqu l-ʿuqbān* (vs. 114 f.). He thus rises onto a common rank with the land, indeed acquires her as his partner.

The poem which had begun with a proemium introducing the idea of symbolic violence represented in the violating of the speaker's heart through the powerful gaze of his counterpart, closes with the triumphant assertion of the power commanded by an artist who has gone through such a violent initiatory process: his poetry proves a spiritual weapon, a sword (*sayf*) (v. 74), a fire (*nār*) (v. 104), enabling him – again through symbolic violence – to redeem his society's identity. So, to lead René Girard's thesis that sacrifice is the achievement of a domestication of violence somewhat further: in our text, sacrifice can be observed function-

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ing on a level even more distant from its bloody prototype, on the level of its own metaphorization: in the guise of a verbal piece of art.

3 *Conclusion*

Both poems, then, portray a similar development, the process of regaining speech (Sayyāb: *aṣīḥu bi-l-khalīj* / Darwīsh: *ṣiḥtu fī l-widyān*) after a devastating loss, culminating in the genesis of a poem. This poem within the poem, in both cases, projects the image of a young woman as the icon of a renewed world. In both cases also the metatextual – or in Sayyāb's case: the paratextual – framework of that genesis of a poem leaves on the entire *qaṣīda* a markedly autobiographical imprint. It gives the reader the impression of partaking in a unique event in the poet's career, indeed, in his experience of inspiration by a distinctly realizable ideal.

But there is an essential difference which shows the dialectic relation between the two poems and thus highlights Darwīsh's particular position in response to Sayyāb's approach: The speaker in the *Unshūda* remains confined to the verbal articulation of his visions of hope, to the inspired 'reading' of signs announcing a change and their communication to the listeners, being denied any active role, indeed, remaining in a close child-mother-relation towards his mythical Beloved, his homeland. Though not himself advocating violence, he thus has to comply with violence continuing to be suffered, being unable to offer a substitute. The mental and consequently the verbal transformation of violence into sacrifice is not his merit, but is achieved by others.

Darwīsh's speaker in contrast succeeds in freeing himself from the stifling child-mother-relation he initially entertained toward the mythic personification of the land. He thus suspends the hierarchic dissimilarity between lover and Beloved, reaching at visions of poetic self-assertion that create the beloved homeland anew out of his own essence, his *rumūsh*, and claim it as the partner in his strife. The strife for freedom is, thus, no longer left

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to the anonymous victims of political oppression, it is first and foremost a strife taking place in the individual consciousness of the intellectual. Real violence is replaced by sacrifice, but in a sublime, metaphoric manifestation: by writing poetry. Darwīsh thus performs the decisive step towards self-emancipation out of the mythic relation between the lover and his Beloved, the intellectual and his homeland, man and the Other, that Sayyāb still was not prepared to take. What takes place in Darwīsh's poem might be assessed as a creative artist's personal rewriting the history of salvation – from exile to redemption through creativity –, claiming for himself what is traditionally taken for divine prerogatives.[27] In the words of H.R. Jauß:

> To the very degree man strives for autonomy and begins to justify his true self through recourse to his individuality instead of searching it in the Other of his creator, aesthetical experience takes over the predicates of the divine identity and changes them into norms of man's self-experience, that again – in the realm of literature – manifest themselves in the forms and claims of the modern autobiography.[28]

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[27] The poem which has been discussed here primarily as a poetological document throwing light on Darwīsh's relation to his particular poetic tradition, has currently received new attention in a more general context: as the first representative of one of the two strands running through Darwīsh's work as a whole until the caesura marked by the event of the exodus from Beirut: namely, the poetic treatment of the catastrophic and almost hopeless situation of the Palestinians on the one hand, and the impulse to cope with this reality by exalting it and charging it with meaning, if only imaginary, on the other, see WEIDNER, »Darwīsh« (like note 5), 5.

[28] See Hans Robert JAUSS, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*, Frankfurt a.M. 1991, 232 f. – A very similar stance is taken by Jabrā Ibrāhīm JABRĀ in his autobiography, see Angelika NEUWIRTH, *Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā's Autobiography* Al-Bi'r al-ūlā *and his Concept of 'A Celebration of Life'*, published as *Zokak el-Blat(t)* [occasional papers of the German Institute for Oriental Studies], no. 5, Beirut 1996; second, corrected edition 1998.

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4 *Texts in translation*

4.1 Maḥmūd Darwīsh: [*ʿĀshiq min Filasṭīn*] »A Lover from Palestine«[29]

[Proemium]
Your eyes are a thorn in the heart;
It pains me, yet I adore it
And shelter it from the wind.
I plunge it into my flesh hiding it from night and sorrow,
And its wound ignites the lights of stars.
My present makes its future
Dearer to me than my soul.
When our eyes meet, I soon forget
That once, behind bolted doors we were two.

[*Nasīb*]
Your words were a song
I tried to sing.
But agony encircled the lips of spring.
Like swallows, your words took wing.
Led by love, they deserted the gate of our house
And its autumnal threshold.
Our broken mirrors shattered
My sorrow into a thousand pieces;
We gathered the splinters of sound.
We could perfect only our country's elegy.
We will plant it in the heart of a guitar
And play it on the terraces of our tragedy
To mutilated moons and to stones.
But I have forgotten... tell me, you of the unknown voice,
Was it your departure that rusted the lyre or was it my silence?

[*Raḥīl*]
Yesterday I saw you at the harbour;
You were a lonely voyager, without provisions.
I ran to you like an orphan

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[29] The translation was taken from: B.M. BENNANI, *Splinters of Bone*, 20-24 (see note 3); although it is, unfortunately, somewhat free and not always accurate, it has been reproduced here to convey an impression of the poem as a whole. Occasionally mistaken renderings have been put between < >, proposed emendations between [ ]. The internal disposition markers are mine.

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Asking the wisdom of our fathers:
»Why does the green orange grove –
Dragged to prison and port,
And in spite of its travels,
In spite of the scent of salt and longing –
Why does it always remain green?«
And I wrote in my diary:
»I love the orange, but hate the harbour«.
[And I write in my diary again:]
I stood at the harbor
And watched the world with eyes of winter.
Only the orange peel is ours. Behind me was the desert.

I saw you on briar-covered mountains
You were a shepherdess without sheep
Pursued among the ruins
You were my garden when I was away from home.
I would knock on the door, my heart,
For on my heart
the doors and windows, cement and stones are laid.

I <have seen> [saw] you in wells of water and in granaries
Broken. I <have seen> [saw] you in nightclubs waiting on tables.
I <have seen> [saw] you in rays of tears and wounds.
You [, who] are a pure breath of life;
You [, who] are the voice of my lips;
You [, who] are water... <you> [who] are fire.

I <have seen> [saw] you at the mouth of the cave,
Drying your orphan rags on a rope.
I <have seen> [saw] you in stores and streets,
In stables and sunsets.
I <have seen> [saw] you in songs of orphans and wretches.
I <have seen> [saw] you in salt and sand.
Your beauty was of earth, children and jasmine.
[So] I vow
To weave a veil from my eyelashes
And embroider it with verses for your eyes
And with a name which, when watered with a heart that was
melted with your love,
Would make trees grow green again.
I will write a sentence dearer than martyrs and kisses:
»Palestinian she was and still is«.

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[*Balāgh*]
One stormy night I opened the window
And saw a mutilated moon.
I told the night: »Be gone
Beyond the fence of darkness!
I have an appointment with light und words«.
You are my virginal garden
As long as our songs
Are swords when we draw them.
You are faithful as the seed
As long as our songs
Nourish the land.
You are a palm tree in the mind,
Felled by neither wind nor woodman's axe.
Your braids have been spared
By [the] beasts of desert and woods.

But I am the exile.
Seal me with your eyes.
Take me wherever you are –
Take me whatever you are.
Restore to me the color of face
And the warmth of body,
The light of heart and eye,
The salt of bread and rhythm,
The taste of earth... the Motherland.
Shield me with your eyes.
Take me as a relic from the mansion of sorrow.
Take me as a verse from my tragedy.
Take me as a toy, a brick from the house
So that our children will remember to return.

<Her> [You, whose] eyes are Palestinian;
<Her> [Whose] name is Palestinian;
<Her> [Whose] dreams and sorrows;
<Her> [Whose] veil, <her> [Whose] feet and body;
<Her> [Whose] words and silence are Palestinian;
[Whose voice is Palestinian]
Her birth... her death.

[*Fakhr*]
I carried you in my old notebooks;
You were fire for my verses,
Provision for my excursions.

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In your name I <shouted> [shout] to the valleys:
»I know the Romans' horses
Though the battlefield has changed.
Beware of the lightning
My song engraved on granite.
I am the fire of youth and the knight of knights!
I am the iconoclast.
My poems are eagles
Hovering over the Levantine borders.«

In your name I <shouted> [shout] at the enemy:
»Worms, feed on my flesh if I sleep.
The eggs of ants do not hatch eagles,
And the shell of an adder's egg
Conceals a snake.
I know the Romans' horses,
But I also know
That I am the fire of youth and the knight of knights!«

4.2 Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: [*Unshūdat al-maṭar*] »Hymn of the Rain«[30]

[Proemium]
Your Eyes are two groves of palm trees at the hour of dawn
Or two balconies from which the moon has begun to recede.
Your eyes: when they smile the vines put forth leaves
And the lights dance ... like moons [reflected] in the river
Ripped gently by oars at the hour of dawn,
As though, twinkling in their two depths, there are stars.

[*Nasīb*]
And they drown in a mist of transparent grief
Like the sea, stroked by hands of evening,
There is the warmth of winter in it, and the shiver of autumn,
Death and birth, darkness, and light;
Then it wakens, filling my soul: a tremor of tears,
And a wild rush of emotion embracing the heavens
Like the emotion of a child when he is frightened by the moon!

[30] The translation has been taken from DEYOUNG, »A new reading«, 59-61. The internal disposition markers are mine; occasionally mistaken renderings have been put between < >, proposed emendations are marked by [ ].

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As though the [rain]bows of the white cumulus clouds were swallowing up the dark misty clouds

And drop by drop they melt into rain...
And the children giggled among the vine trellises,
While the hymn of the rain
Tickled the silence of the birds in the trees
Rain...
Rain...
Rain...
The evening yawned wide, and the misty clouds still
Shed what they were shedding of their heavy tears
As though a child rambled deliriously before he went to sleep
That his mother – when he woke a year ago
He couldn't find her, then when he kept on asking [about her]
They told him: »She'll be back the day after tomorrow...« –
She must come back
Even though his playmates whisper that she is there
On the hillside sleeping the sleep of the tombs
Gulping down their soil, drinking the rain;
As though a sad fisherman gathers his nets
And curses the water and fate
And he casts wide a song where the moon is going down:
Rain...
Rain...
Do you know what sadness the rain arouses?
And how the gutter spouts sob when it pours down
And how, in it, the lonely man feels lost
Without ending – like blood shed, like hunger,
Like love, like children, like the dead – is the rain!

[*Raḥīl*]

And your eyes, with the rain, <encircle me> [lead me around]
And across the waves of the gulf the lightning bolts wipe
The shores of Iraq clean with stars and shells,
As though they were harbingers of sunrise,
Then night drags over them a cloak of blood.
I cry out to the gulf: »Oh Gulf,
O Giver of pearls, of shells, of death.«
Then the echo comes back:
Like a sob:
»O Gulf
O Giver of shells, of death.«

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I can almost hear Iraq storing up the thunder
And massing the lightning in the mountains and the plains,
Until, when men tear away their seal
The winds <from> [of] Thamūd will not leave
Any trace in the valley.

I can almost hear the palm trees drinking the rain
And I hear the villages moaning, and the exiles
Struggling with their oars and sails,
Against the storms on the gulf, and the thunder, singing their hymn:
»Rain...
Rain...
Rain...
And there is hunger in Iraq
And the harvest season scatters the crops there
So that the crows and locusts may eat their fill
<And the storehouses and the stones grind (the grain)> [And jars and stones alone]
<A mill turns> [The mill that is grinding is turned] in the fields... with men around it
Rain...
Rain...
Rain...
And how often we have shed, at the night of parting tears
Calling them, fearing that we should be blamed, rain
Rain...
Rain...
And since we were little, the heavens
Have grown dark with misty clouds in the winter
[And rain was pouring down]
And every year – when the earth grew green with grass – we hungered
Not one year passed when there was no hunger in Iraq
Rain...
Rain...
Rain...
In every drop of rain
Is a red or yellow flower budding
And every tear of the hungry and the naked
And every drop shed of the blood of slaves
Is a smile awaiting new lips
Or a nipple growing pink in the mouth of a newborn babe
In the youthful world of tomorrow, the giver of life!
Rain...
Rain...

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Rain...
Iraq will grow green with grass in the rain...«

[*Balāgh*]
I cry out to the gulf: »O Gulf...
O Giver of pearls, of shells, of death!«
Then the echo comes back
Like a sob:
»O Gulf
O Giver of shells, of death.«

And the gulf scatters its many gifts
On the sands; the salty spray, the shells
And the remains of a poor drowned man
One of the exiles, who remained drinking death
From the depths of the gulf,
<And> [While] in Iraq a thousand serpents drink the nectar
From a flower the Euphrates fed on dew
And I hear the echo
Ringing in the gulf
»Rain...
Rain...
Rain...
In every drop of rain
Is a red or yellow flower budding.
And every tear of the hungry and the naked
And every drop shed of the blood of slaves
Is a smile awaiting new lips
Or a nipple growing pink in the mouth of a newborn babe.
In the youthful of tomorrow, the giver of life!«

And the rain pours down...

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»Zettelt eure Kriege an, bevor die andern es tun, und folgt mir!«

Auf den Spuren des Schriftsteller-Ichs in der Jugendautobiographie Salīm Barakāt's

Burgi Roos
(Genf)

I

Das Interesse an Autobiographien und an deren Erforschung hat in den letzten Jahren markant zugenommen.[1] Insbesondere, wenn es sich dabei um Autobiographien von Menschen anderer Kulturen handelt, im speziellen Angehöriger sogenannter minoritärer Gruppen oder Ethnien.[2]

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[1] An dieser Stelle soll eine kurze Auswahlbibliographie genügen: J. OLNEY (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays theoretical and critical*, Princeton 1980; M. SALZMANN, *Die Kommunikationsstruktur der Autobiographie*, Bern 1988; G. NIGGL (Hrsg.), *Die Autobiographie: Zu Form und Geschichte einer literarischen Gattung*, Darmstadt 1989, mit Beiträgen von W. Dilthey, G. Misch, W. Shumaker, G. Gusdorf, R. Pascal, J. Starobinski, P. Lejeune, etc.; *Autobiographie et biographie*, Colloque de Heidelberg: textes réunis et présentés par M. CALLE-GRUBER et A. ROTHE, Paris 1989; *Equinoxe*, Nr. 12, automne 1994, ganz der Autobiographie gewidmet; K. ASHLEY (ed.), *Autobiography and Postmodernism*, Boston 1994.

[2] Ich verweise auf das Projekt *Zeugnisse vom Mittelmeer*, das in mehreren europäischen Sprachen gleichzeitig Übersetzungen von Autobiographien o.ä. zugänglich macht. Außerdem z.B.: Martin KRAMER (ed.), *Middle Eastern Lives: The practice of biography and selfnarrative*, New York 1991; S. A. SHUISKII, »Some observations on modern Arabic Autobiography«, in: *JAL* xiii (1982), 111-123; *Edebiyât* vii,2 (1997) mit elf Artikeln zum Thema 'Arabic Autobiography'; Tetz ROOKE, *›In My Childhood‹: A study of Arabic autobiography*, Stockholm 1997; R. OSTLE / E. DE MOOR / S. WILD (eds.), *Writing the Self: Autobiographical writing in modern Arabic literature*, London 1998; R. ROSENBLATT, »Black Autobiography: Life as the death

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So ist es nicht erstaunlich, daß die Theorien und Ansätze, die zum Studium der Autobiographie erarbeitet wurden, sehr zahlreich sind und zum Teil im Widerspruch zueinander stehen. Deshalb seien hier zunächst kurz die methodischen Grundlagen dargelegt, auf die ich mich in meiner Untersuchung der autobiographischen Texte Salīm Barakāt's beziehe.

1. Wie vielleicht kein anderes literarisches Genre steht die Autobiographie im Spannungsfeld zwischen 'Realität' und 'Fiktion'. Im Zentrum meines Interesses stehen weder die historischen Tatsachen noch die biographischen Fakten, auf die die Texte verweisen, noch deren Wahrheitsgehalt und Nachprüfbarkeit. Salīm Barakāt's Kindheits- und Jugendaufzeichnungen sind als literarische Texte Objekt meiner Lektüre und Analyse. Ich schließe mich Fedwa Malti-Douglas an, die in der Einleitung zu ihrer Studie über Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's Autobiographie *al-Ayyām* (»Die Tage«) klarstellt:

> My study will examine *al-Ayyām* as a classic of modern literature and not as a guide to the life of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. [...] What I will be discussing here is the literary text, *al-Ayyām.* I will not be concerned with verifying the truth of the statements in the autobiography.[3]

2. Auch Salīm Barakāt selbst geht es nicht in erster Linie um die 'Wahrheit der Aussagen' in seiner Autobiographie. Pure Mimesis und direkte Abbildung sind seiner Meinung nach in der Literatur weder möglich noch wünschenswert. In der Zeitschrift *Horizonte*, die in Deutschland erscheint, erläutert der Autor:

> Vielleicht habe ich mit nachsichtiger Beredsamkeit das Leben und das Schicksal der Menschen etwas verschönert. Es war nicht genau

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weapon«, und P.J. EAKIN, »Malcolm X and the Limits of Autobiography«, beide in J. OLNEY, *op. cit.*, 169-180 und 181-193; Barbara HARLOW, *Resistance Literature*, New York 1987, besonders 117 ff.; und auch Toni MORRISON, *Im Dunkeln spielen: Weiße Kultur und literarische Imagination*, Essays, Hamburg 1994 (engl. Original: *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination*, 1992); etc.

[3] Fedwa MALTI-DOUGLAS, *Blindness and Autobiography:* Al-Ayyām *of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn*, Princeton 1988, 4-5.

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> so. Schreiben ist die Angst davor, den Dingen Nachdruck und Gewißheit zu verleihen. Gewisse Begebenheiten des Nordens habe ich schreibend mit Prunk ausgestattet.
>
> Dies ist kein Geständnis, sondern Anerkennung dessen, was das Schreiben vom Rand des großen, blutigen, ironischen, unerträglichen Textes, der das Leben ist, zu rauben vermag.[4]

In einem Interview mit der Tageszeitung *al-Ḥayāt* nimmt Salīm Barakāt Stellung zu seinem Verfahren, die Vorfälle seiner Kindheit »aus der Perspektive eines Kindes« darzustellen. Er erklärt, daß die »Weisheit eines Kindes« die Erwachsenen nicht so erschüttern und bedrängen würde wie »Fatwas«. Im Gegenteil, sie könnten getrost darüber lachen. In diesem Zusammenhang spricht er von seinen Figuren als »Personen, die klein sind im Königreich der Tinte, mit der ich diese Worte niedergeschrieben habe«, und von der »Maske der Tinte«, die er ihnen »übergestülpt« habe.[5]

Salīm Barakāt trennt also klar die 'erzählten' Personen von den in der außertextuellen Realität existierenden Menschen. Sie seien als verschiedenen »Königreichen« zugehörig zu verstehen und zu würdigen.

3. Was den Prozeß der Selbst-Darstellung in der Autobiographie betrifft, mache ich mir den Ansatz von Paul John Eakin zu eigen. In seinen beiden Studien über die Autobiographie, *Fictions in Autobiography*[6] und *Touching the World*,[7] lauten die Hauptthesen und die Basis der Ausführungen:

> ... autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-invention[8]

und

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[4] Interview mit Salīm Barakāt, in: *Horizonte*, Nr. 2, 1997, Frage 2.

[5] Interview mit Salīm Barakāt, in: *al-Ḥayāt*, Nr. 11362, 27. März 1994, 17. – Falls nicht anders angezeigt, stammen die Übersetzungen von mir.

[6] P.J. EAKIN, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the art of self-invention*, Princeton 1985.

[7] P.J. EAKIN, *Touching the World: Reference in autobiography*, Princeton 1992.

[8] P.J. EAKIN, *Fictions in Autobiography*, 3.

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> ... the self that is in the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure.[9]

Ich werde also mein Augenmerk darauf richten, auf welche Art und Weise der Autobiograph sein »Ich« darstellt. Die reale Person Salīm Barakāt steht in diesem Zusammenhang nicht zur Diskussion.

4. Es mag nun erstaunen, daß das 'Selbst' des Ich-Erzählers in den autobiographischen Texten Salīm Barakāt's relativ wenig hervorgehoben wird und oft gar nicht im Zentrum zu stehen scheint, wie dies üblicherweise in Autobiographien der Fall zu sein hat.[10] Erklärungen für diese relativ periphere Rolle des 'Selbst' findet man wahrscheinlich in der Geschichte der arabischen Autobiographie,[11] auf die ich hier nicht weiter eingehen möchte, und in der Vermutung, die ich schon an anderer Stelle[12] zu äußern Gelegenheit hatte: Der Ich-Erzähler versteht sich sehr stark als Teil eines Kollektivs. An unzähligen Stellen findet sich die Formulierung *naḥnu aṣ-ṣibya* (»wir Knaben«) o.ä. Daraus kann man schließen, daß der Ich-Erzähler bewußt seine eigene Existenz als Teil eines Kollektivs und quasi exemplarisch zum Thema macht. So rückt er eben dieses Kollektiv ins Zentrum des Interesses.

Ohne nun die unbestrittene Individualität des sich manifestierenden Ich-Erzählers zu verwässern, folgere ich im Anschluß an P.J. Eakin: Wenn das Selbst, das im autobiographischen Text als Fiktion 'entdeckt' und 'geschaffen' wird, teilweise für ein größeres Kollektiv steht und wirkt, dann folgt daraus, daß eben dieses Kollektiv 'entdeckt' und 'geschaffen' wird.

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[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Z.B. I. AICHINGER, »Probleme der Autobiographie als Sprachkunstwerk«, in: G. NIGGL (Hrsg.), *op. cit.*, 170-199.

[11] Vgl. z.B. die Ansicht Franz ROSENTHAL's (»Die arabische Autobiographie«, in: *Analecta Orientalia* 14, *Studia arabica* I, 1937, 1-40), nach der es in der arabischen Autobiographie mehr um die Sache als um die Persönlichkeit gehe, oder auch Nadja ODEH, *Dichtung – Brücke zur Außenwelt: Studien zur Autobiographie Fadwā Ṭūqāns*, Berlin 1994, 6, wonach es in arabischen Autobiographien wenig im westlichen Sinne Autobiographisches gibt.

[12] Burgi ROOS, »Zum Autobiographischen bei Salīm Barakāt«, in: *Asiatische Studien* 50,2 (1996), 407-429.

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Dieses Ziel, nämlich durch Literatur ein Kollektiv zu konstituieren, verfolgen – so verstehe ich auch R. Rosenblatt in seiner Studie über die Autobiographie von Schwarzen[13] – alle Autoren und Autorinnen, die Minoritäten oder sogenannten 'Randgruppen' angehören. Zu einer solchen Gruppe gehören, wie N. Odeh[14] in ihrer Monographie über die palästinensische Dichterin Fadwā Ṭūqān ausführt, z.B. auch Frauen (hier Fadwā Ṭūqān) und Blinde (im Fall von Ṭāhā Ḥusayn). Für beide Gruppen gelte, daß ihr Lebensschema vom Körper vorgeschrieben sei, was beide als unfreiwillige Gefangenschaft und lästigen Zwang empfinden:

> Blindheit und weiblicher Körper gelten als *'awra* – Scham, als ein Mangel, den es zu verdecken und verhüllen gilt.[15]

Nun sind aber weder Fadwā Ṭūqān noch Ṭāhā Ḥusayn bereit, passiv und schicksalsergeben die Regeln zu akzeptieren, die die Gesellschaft für ihren Lebensplan vorgibt, sondern rebellieren gegen die sozialen Barrieren:

> Der Konflikt zwischen Selbstverständnis und Rollenzwang ist ein bestimmendes Thema nicht nur der *Ayyām*, sondern auch der *Riḥla ǧabaliyya – riḥla ṣa'ba*.[16]

Auch bei Salīm Barakāt steht am Anfang seines autobiographischen Schreibens die schmerzliche Erkenntnis des Knaben, sich zwar nicht körperlich, aber doch ethnisch von der herrschenden Gesellschaft zu unterscheiden, und daß sein Kurdisch-Sein Benachteiligung bedeutet. Und auch bei Salīm Barakāt liegt der Schluß nahe, daß er sich schreibend gegen die Macht wehrt, die ihn unterdrückt.[17]

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[13] Vgl. ROSENBLATT, *op. cit.*

[14] ODEH, *op. cit.*

[15] *Ibid.*, 13.

[16] *Ibid.*, 14.

[17] »Etwas Neues wurde mir bewußt, das mir bis dahin nicht aufgefallen war. Es war unerbittlich und schreiend: 'Du bist Kurde. Die Kurden sind gefährlich. Du darfst in der Schule nicht kurdisch sprechen'« (21), und »Dies war der Anfang der Gewalt, mein Freund, ein Anfang, der mich dazu trieb, in der Schule farbige Kreiden zu stehlen, um damit auf die viereckigen Steinblöcke der Mauer des

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Nun unterscheidet sich Salīm Barakāt aber deutlich von jenen Autorinnen und Autoren, die einem einfachen ideologischen Diskurs folgend ihrer Leserschaft in didaktischer und simpler Form bekanntgeben, was denn nun das 'wahre Kurdentum' oder gar der 'echte Kurde' sei. Und er behandelt weder die Kurden, noch ihre Kultur oder Geschichte als quasi unantastbares und unkritisierbares Heiligtum.[18] Befragt nach seiner Identität als Kurde äußert er sich in einem Interview von 1994 folgendermaßen:

> Ich denke, daß »Identität«[19] (*huwiyya*), dieser sehr vage Begriff (*lafẓa*), für gewisse Leute Sich-Beziehen auf einen ethnischen Kontext (*siyāq ʿirqī*) bedeutet, wie verwässert dieser auch immer sein mag. Er [*i.e.* dieser Begriff] bedeutet auch »mögliches« Widersprechen und Grenzen, um sich von den andern loszulösen und sich selbst zu bestätigen innerhalb einer Einheit von Verwandten (*waḥda mutaǧānisa*), einer Gesamtheit (*kulliyya*). Darin liegt ein gewaltiges Potential an Fabuliererei (*qadr hāʾil min al-ḫarāfa*).
>
> Es gibt niemals Homogenität innerhalb einer menschlichen Gruppe, wie stark auch immer die kulturellen, religiösen und geschichtlichen Charakteristika den Eindruck von Isolation geben können. Der Unterschied erscheint durch Interpretationsbemühung (*iǧtihād*), durch die Besitzverhältnisse (*mulkiyya*), durch [das Recht auf] Selbstbestimmung (*siyāda šaḫṣiyya*) und durch die Machtübernahme (*taǧlīb al-ḥukm*).[20]

Seine Skepsis vor dem Wort »Identität« hält ihn also davon ab, irgendeine essentielle Definition davon abzugeben. Er fährt vielmehr sehr pragmatisch weiter:

öffentlichen Parkes die Buchstaben meines Namens und die Anfangsbuchstaben der Marke meines Bleistiftes, HB, zu schreiben. Diese beiden Wörter waren der Auftakt zum Brechen der allgemeinen Anstands- und Verhaltensregeln« (16). Salīm BARAKĀT, *al-Ǧundub al-ḥadīdī*, Bayrūt 1980.

[18] Vgl. Barbara HARLOW, *Resistance Literature* (cf. n. 2), 18 ff. – Harlow führt hier aus, daß 'Kulturen', die im Spannungsfeld zwischen »inherited past and its cultural legacy« einerseits und Kolonialmacht andererseits stehen, der Gefahr der »fetishization of traditional culture« ausgesetzt seien, »which transforms that culture into museum pieces and archeological artefacts«.

[19] Hervorhebung auch im Original.

[20] Interview in *al-Ḥayāt*, s.o. Anm. 5.

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> Bin ich Kurde? Ja. Es soll mir auch in einer schreienden Einfachheit erlaubt sein, zu sagen, daß ich Kurde bin. Mein Vater hatte einen kurdischen Namen. Wir unterhalten uns auf kurdisch. Wir sprechen mit unseren Hühnern, den Schafen, den Kühen, den Bienen und den Feldern kurdisch. Das ist alles.[21]

II

Nach diesen Präliminarien nun zur Jugendbiographie Salīm Barakāt's aus dem Jahr 1982! Zwei Jahre nach der Kindheitsbiographie *al-Ǧundub al-ḥadīdī* (»Der eiserne Grashüpfer«)[22] erschien *Hātihi ʿāliyan hāt an-nafīr ʿalā āḫirih* (»Blas sie laut, blas die Trompete zum Angriff!«) in Beirut.[23] Drei ungleich langen Kapiteln mit den Überschriften *an-nafīr al-awwal* bis *an-nafīr aṯ-ṯāliṯ* (»Erster« bis »Dritter Trompetenstoß«) geht ein *īḏān* (»Ankündigung, Vorrede«) voran. Ich werde mich vorerst dieser Vorrede zuwenden.

Ein nicht näher spezifiertes »Ich« will diese Ausführungen einem Hahn und einem Maultier widmen. Den Menschen soll das Keuchen genügen. Dann aber wendet sich das »Ich« an »Knaben«, die ebenfalls nicht näher bestimmt sind. Diese Knaben nun werden aufgefordert, nicht den Leuten zu gehorchen, denen sie normalerweise unterworfen sind. Sie sollen sich vielmehr auflehnen, nicht schlafen, hinaus in die Nacht und in die Natur fliehen. Das »Ich« erklärt sich bereit, sie zu führen. Sie bräuchten also keine Angst zu haben. Erst dort draußen gebe es für sie

> eine üppige Weide, wo wir nicht gegen die Mauer des Regierungsgebäudes oder die herausgeputzten Bäume im Garten des *Qāʾimmaqāms* stoßen.[24]

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[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Op. cit.* (s. Anm. 17).

[23] Salīm BARAKĀT, *Hātihi ʿāliyan, hāt an-nafīr ʿalā āḫirih: Sīrat aṣ-ṣibā*, Bayrūt 1982.

[24] *Hātihi ʿāliyan*, 6.

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Erst dort draußen werden die Knaben angstlos wirklich frei sein können und ungeahnte Kräfte in sich selbst entdecken:

> Ich werde euch an einen Ort bringen, den nur wir sehen, den Ort des Magischen (*ǧihat as-sāḥirī*), der großen Maskierung, wo die Jahreszeiten Menschenlarven tragen, wo Wolken und Kaninchen aus den gleichen Bauen kommen.
>
> Glaubt mir, Knaben, wenn wir Freunde der Dunkelheit werden, bedeutet dies: wir sehen durch kleine Spalten in den Särgen unserer Seelen Königreiche, die noch nicht untergegangen sind, an den Grenzen des freien Landes, in Seligkeit schwelgend, vergessen zu sein.[25]

Das »Ich« beteuert außerdem mehrere Male, es würde die Knaben nicht in die Irre führen, nein, es sei der Ort, der dies tue.

Am Schluß steht der Satz:

> Zettelt eure Kriege an, bevor die andern es tun, und folgt mir![26]

Das »Ich« schreibt sich also eine klare Führerrolle zu. Es ist bereits wissend, hat die die Knaben unterdrückenden Leute durchschaut und weiß auch, wie man ihnen entrinnt. In der Natur nämlich, draußen, wo keine lügenden und Freiräume beschneidenen Menschen ihre Macht ausüben, in der Dunkelheit, wo erst das eigentliche, bereits vergessene Wesen der Knaben sich austoben kann und darf. Dort, wo auch das Magische herrscht.

Das »Ich« ist der Überzeugung, daß es mit seinem Aufruf und seinem guten Beispiel den Knaben helfen und nützen kann. Klar also, daß das »Ich« nach außen gewandt ist und in seiner Gesellschaft eine Rolle zu spielen gedenkt. Diese Interpretation deckt sich, so scheint es, mit dem Postulat des sogenannten »engagierten« (*multazim*) Schriftstellers, das die links geprägte Ideologie aufstellt.

So hat sich die Schriftstellergeneration, die gerade vor Salīm Barakāt in Syrien den Ton angab, und zum Teil heute noch angibt, fast ausschließlich dem sozialistischen Realismus (*al-wāqi-*

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[25] *Ibid.*, 6.

[26] *Ibid.*, 7.

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ʿiyya al-ištirākiyya) verschrieben. Ḥannā Mīna beschreibt die Ziele dieser Strömung folgendermaßen:

> Dieser Realismus [*i.e.* jener Gorki's], dem anzugehören ich mich rühme, zeichnet sich durch eine historische Hoffnung und durch eine Sehnsucht auf die Zukunft hin aus [...]. Es handelt sich um eine 'künstlerische Schule', die eindeutig das höchste ästhetische und intellektuelle Ideal besitzt. [...] und es ist offensichtlich, daß solche Literatur [...] zu konstruktiver Arbeit drängt und zu mutigem Kampf auf dem Weg der Befreiung und des Fortschritts und gegen jedwede imperialistischen und reaktionären Feinde.[27]

ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Munīf formuliert die Rolle, die der Schriftsteller dabei zu übernehmen hat, wie folgt:

> Ein arabischer Literat ist ein Fidai, ein Freiheitskämpfer. In Ländern, in denen es keine Meinungsfreiheit gibt, keine Parteien zugelassen sind, wo vielleicht nicht einmal eine Verfassung existiert, müssen die Intellektuellen, müssen alle, die sich ausdrükken können, Widerstand leisten. Ihre Aufgabe ist es, die Menschen aufzuklären, sie auf Recht und Unrecht hinzuweisen, solange es an legalen und allgemein anerkannten politischen Institutionen mangelt.[28]

Vor allem seit 1950 spielte, laut Fayṣal as-Sammāq,[29] der sozialistische Realismus als *die* Art schlechthin, Literatur zu produzieren, in Syrien eine immer dominantere Rolle. Nur zwischen 1959 und 1963, also in der Zeit des Scheiterns der Vereinigten Arabischen Republik (VAR) bis zur Machtergreifung der Baʿṯ-Partei, habe sich der Realismus etwas abgeschwächt. Von 1963 an aber – und das ist nun hier sehr wichtig –

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[27] Die Übersetzung dieses und des folgenden Zitats folgt Hartmut FÄHNDRICH, Nachwort zu Hanna MINA, *Bilderreste*, Basel 1994, 328-9. – Weitere ähnlich lautende Äußerungen finden sich auch bei Hānī ar-RĀHIB, Ṣalāḥ ḌIHNĪ, Fāris ZARZŪR und Adīb an-NAḤAWĪ.

[28] Aus dem Nachwort der Übersetzung von: Abdalrachman MUNIF, *Östlich des Mittelmeeres*, Basel 1995, 259.

[29] F. as-SAMMĀQ, *ar-Riwāya as-sūriyya*, Dimašq 1984, 29.

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> spielte die politische Macht (*as-sulṭa as-siyāsiyya*) in Syrien eine sehr positive Rolle zugunsten einer Literatur für die Massen (*adab ǧamāhīrī*), die sich für die Probleme der Menschen interessierte und ihnen half, sich zu entwickeln und sich auf den richtigen Weg zu begeben für den Aufbau (*binā'*) der neuen Gesellschaft.[30]

Hier ist nicht nur der Auftrag des Schriftstellers im Sinne der oben angeführten Zitate klar formuliert, sondern auch noch die bestimmende Rolle der staatlichen Macht im Prozeß der Literaturproduktion genannt.

Genau dagegen aber wehrt sich nun das »Ich« im *īḏān* von *Hātihi ʿāliyan* deutlich. Alles, was staatliche Macht ist (Mauer des Regierungsgebäudes, Bäume im Garten des *Qā'imaqām*), ist zu meiden. Von dieser Macht geht, wie von aller Macht der Erwachsenen, Unheil aus. Sie beschneidet die Freiräume der Knaben, ist lügnerisch.

Außerdem schreibt Salīm Barakāt keinen *adab ǧamāhīrī* (»Literatur für die Massen«). Dazu ist sein Arabisch viel zu anspruchsvoll. Und auch der ganze politische und ideologische Diskurs geht ihm völlig ab.

Nicht zuletzt findet sich wenn (noch) nicht gerade offene Kritik, so doch Zweifel an der *wāqiʿiyya* (»Realismus«). Der Ort, der ausschließlich den Knaben vorbehalten ist und ihnen Unbeschwertheit, Freiheit und Spaß gewährt, ist der des *sāḥirī*, des Magischen, nicht des Realen (*wāqiʿī*).

Im folgenden werde ich versuchen, dem schreibenden »Ich« von *Hātihi ʿāliyan* auf die Spur zu kommen. Zwei Fragen stellen sich in unserem Zusammenhang: Wer ist das »Ich«? Und auf welche Weise erhält es von wem seinen Auftrag als Schriftsteller? Für die Antwort auf diese Fragen sind hauptsächlich zwei Textstellen relevant. Die erste befindet sich auf der drittletzten Seite des Textes. Nachdem der Erzähler schon vermehrt von einem Knaben namens Sülo berichtet hat, erfahren wir:

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[30] Idem, *op. cit.*, 29.

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> Sülo ist ein Mann. Sülo, der ich bin. Sülo, Salīmo, Bawē Ġazzo, der Sohn des Mallā Barakāt, das bin ich.[31]

Jede Art von Text ist bemüht, möglichst von Beginn an mit dem Leser/der Leserin einen bestimmten 'Pakt' abzuschließen. Wenn der Leser/die Leserin auf den 'Pakt' eingeht, sollte es ihm/ihr möglich sein, einen Kriminalroman von einer Fabel, eine romantische Liebesgeschichte von einem Gruselmärchen usw. zu unterscheiden und den entsprechenden Konventionen des Genres gemäß zu lesen. Zum autobiographischen Pakt gehören nun z.B. Aufrichtigkeitsversprechen des Autors an die Leserschaft, gattungsbezeichnende Titel bzw. Untertitel, verschiedene explizite und implizite Äußerungen usw., die eine Vertrauensbeziehung zwischen Autor-Erzähler und Leser/in schaffen. Nach Ph. Lejeune ist das Kernstück dieser Vertrauensbeziehung, die dann auch zum 'Vertragsabschluß' führt, die Bestätigung der Identität von Autor, Erzähler und Protagonist. Somit haben wir es beim oben erwähnten Zitat aus *Hātihi ʿāliyan* mit dem Grundpfeiler des autobiographischen Paktes zwischen Autor/Erzähler/Held auf der einen und Leser/in auf der andern Seite zu tun.

> Der autobiographische Pakt ist die Bestätigung dieser Identität [*i.e.* Autor-Erzähler-Figur] im Text, in letzter Instanz zurückverweisend auf den Namen des Autors auf dem Titelblatt.[32]

Obwohl der Name des Autors in diesem autobiographischen Text erst so spät schwarz auf weiß erscheint, drängt es sich auf, daß man das »Ich« im ganzen Buch als »Salīmo, Sohn des Mallā Barakāt«, versteht und sich somit vollends auf den autobiographischen 'Pakt' einläßt.

Die zweite wichtige Passage befindet sich am Ende des zweiten *nafīr* (pp. 83-87). Der Ich-Erzähler ist zusammen mit seinem Freund Fawzī unterwegs mit dem Fahrrad zu einem weitentlegenen Dorf. Es ist schrecklich heiß und die beiden laben sich an den Melonen, die ihnen am Wegesrand zulachen. Das letzte Wegstück wollen sie miteinander um die Wette rennend zurücklegen. Dabei

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[31] *Hātihi ʿāliyan*, 116.

[32] Philippe LEJEUNE, »Der autobiographische Pakt«, in: NIGGL, *op. cit.*, 231.

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kullert der Ich-Erzähler in eine Erdfurche und will da sein Rennen fortsetzen. Plötzlich sieht er sich aber in eine völlig andere Landschaft versetzt, schlüpft durch eine Bresche in der Flanke der Furche und sieht sich umgeben von riesigen Böcken mit türkisfarbenen Hörnern. Auch eine Gruppe von in Schaffelle gehüllten Männern ist anwesend, von denen der eine den verwirrten Knaben in ein Gespräch verwickelt, dem der Junge nicht folgen kann:

> Nur einer trat vor, ganz ruhig, als nähme er Rücksicht auf meine Verwirrung. Er setzte sich auf den Boden und bedeutete mir, ich solle mich auch setzen. Ich gehorchte. Er schaute mir in die Augen, und ich schaute ihm in die Augen. Er fragte mich: »Bist du allein gekommen?« Völlig durcheinander antwortete ich: »Fawzī... wir haben die beiden Fahrräder versteckt..... nach Herem Scheicho.« Es war klar, daß er nichts verstanden hatte. Ich redete wie ein Idiot mit den Händen, nicht mit der Zunge. Er ließ seine erste Frage und murmelte: »Ihr wartet auf uns, nicht?« Jetzt verstand *ich* nicht, antwortete aber auf eine Frage, die in meinem, nicht in seinem Innern sich wiederholte: »Fawzī hat mich mit Wassermelonen beworfen..., schau!« Ich zeigte auf meine Kleider und auf mein Gesicht. Er runzelte die Stirn und wiederholte seine Frage: »Wartet ihr auf uns? Ihr schiebt das reichlich hinaus.« Dann wandte er sich zu den Männern hinter ihm. Einer von ihnen trat vor. Der mir gegenüber Sitzende sagte zu ihm: »Sag den Böcken, sie sollen ihre Fragen verschieben. Der Horizont ist sauer heute.« Der Stehende nickte und ging. Der mir gegenüber Sitzende fuhr fort: »Auf der Ostseite dieser Steppe gab es eine Bresche.« Er zeigte mit der Hand nach Osten. »Dort, wo der Blitz in das Wasserbecken des obersten Hirten einschlägt.«
>
> »Ich begreife nichts von dem, was du sagst, Herr.«
>
> »Du wirst es schon noch erfassen. Eure Regierungen verstehen es. Eure kleinen Böcke verstehen es und auch eure Hähne.« Die Erwähnung der Hähne ließ ihn erzürnt fragen: »Warum krähen eure Hähne die ganze Zeit? ... Bei Gott, warum krähen sie? Schlaft ihr so lange, daß sie euch wecken müssen?«
>
> »Ja, wir schlafen.«
>
> »Nun ja, ihr habt noch genug Zeit, um uns die Mühe zu kommen zu ersparen.«
>
> »Ich verstehe dich nicht, mein Herr.«[33]

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[33] [illegible]

Der Mann stellt ihm Fragen über eine Reihe von Personen, die bei den Leuten der Stadt als Irre gelten. Erstaunlicherweise aber werden sie nicht zum Opfer der sonst alles umfassenden Zerstörungswut der Kinder, sondern genießen sogar so etwas wie Achtung.

»... Kennst du Blēro?«
»Ja, er spinnt, er bildet sich ein, er sei beauftragt, die Brücken zu bewachen.«
»Kennst du ʿAbbāsse Quzō?«
»Ja, er spinnt, er bildet sich ein, die Straßen seien voller Getreidesäcke, und hievt sie mit seinem Haken hoch.«
»Kennst du Sēfe?«
»Ja, sie bildet sich ein, sie sei die Bewacherin der Bäche.«
»Kennst du Dawūd Kōt?«
»Ja, er spinnt. Er begleitet eine eingebildete Herde Schafe.«
»Kennst du den Ṣūfī?« Ich schrie: »Mein Onkel! Er ist mein Onkel. Er ist in den Brunnen gefallen und gestorben.«[34]

Als der Knabe merkt, daß es sich bei seinem Gesprächspartner um den allbekannten mysteriösen Mēro handelt, fällt er in Ohnmacht. Als er wieder zu sich kommt, ist die seltsame Landschaft verschwunden und mit ihr die Lebewesen darin. Der Junge rennt Richtung Dorf, wo er seinen auf ihn wartenden Freund wiedertrifft. Auf dem Rückweg ist weder von der seltsamen Begegnung noch von der fremden Landschaft die geringste Spur geblieben. Fawzī kann an der Stelle nichts Ungewöhnliches finden.

Im folgenden wird das Erlebnis nicht mehr erwähnt.

Wer nun ist dieser Mēro? Als einzige Figur des ganzen Buches scheint er nicht 'real' der Welt des jugendlichen Protagonisten und seiner Zeitgenossen anzugehören. Dennoch ist er von den ersten Seiten des Buches an präsent und übt sogar erheblichen Einfluß auf die Leute aus, vorerst vor allem, weil er sie so sehr ängstigt, daß sie seinem Kommen Militärjunten und andere nicht weniger zimperliche Regierungen vorziehen. Mēro nämlich

[34] *Ibid.*, 76.

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würde keinen Stein auf dem andern lassen und die Leute in den Wahnsinn treiben. Er würde die Erde wieder so machen, wie sie gewesen war: öde, karg, auf der ein Mensch den andern häuten würde, um dessen Haut sich selbst anzuziehen.[35]

Die Knaben erfahren hauptsächlich von den Erwachsenen, wer Mēro ist, oder vielmehr, warum seine Ankunft zu verhindern sei.

»Es lebe also die Zerstörung, weil sonst Mēro käme.« Das sagten sie uns jedenfalls und fügten hinzu: »Wenn auf der Erde fünfzig Jahre Frieden herrscht, ohne Stürme, Überschwemmungen oder blutige Putschs, dann kommt Mēro. Mēro erträgt keine festgefügte, fünfzigjährige Ruhe. Er lebte schließlich während seines irdischen Lebens keinen einzigen Tag ohne Blut oder Katastrophe.« Wir fragten: »Ist Mēro denn gestorben?«

»Nein, er zog mit einer Herde von teuflischen Böcken eines Abends bei Sonnenuntergang weg und drohte damit, die Erde zu erstürmen. Er ging hinein in die Dunkelheit, in jene Richtung, die Finsternis bleibt.«

Ach, Mēro! Wer bist du denn, bei Gott? Wer bist du, daß wir die Jahre zählen? Wer bist du, daß wir der Erde die Jahre der Ruhe übelnehmen? Ruhst du dich nicht aus, Mēro? Wir möchten uns erholen!

Dennoch zählten wir die ruhigen Jahreszeiten: ein ruhiger Sommer, ach! Ein ruhiger Herbst, ach! Ein ruhiger Winter, ach! Ein ruhiger Frühling, ach! Ein Jahr war vergangen. Welch ein Schrecken! Es blieben also nur noch neunundvierzig Jahre. So lebte Mēro unter uns.[36]

Dennoch regt sich bei den Jungen leiser Zweifel, ob die Erwachsenen ihnen wirklich alles über Mēro erzählt hätten.

Die Zerstörung war allgegenwärtig, Gott sei Dank! Mēro soll nicht kommen!

Doch, wer bist du, Mēro? Wer bist du, daß wir die Zerstörung preisen, nur damit du nicht kommst? Sie teilten uns nicht mit, was die Erde mit dir gemacht hatte und welches deine Tage waren, die kurz vor und kurz nach der Katastrophe kamen. Sie berichteten uns nicht, wogegen sich deine Drohung richtete und wo du warst. Kennen sie Mēro tatsächlich? Alles, was wir wußten,

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[35] *Ibid.*, 15.

[36] *Ibid.*, 16.

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war, daß du jeden Abend im März an die Grenzen der Stadt kamst. Du rittest auf deinem Bock, der so gewaltig war wie ein Stier. Dann standest du auf dem Hügel, von dem man über die Weizenebene im Süden sah, schweigend wie ein Gespenst. Deine Lumpen flatterten in der leichten Brise der Luft, die mit ihrem Keuchen das Gras überschwemmte, das endlos hin und her wogte. Langsam, langsam schloß sich um dich herum ein weiter Kreis von anderen Böcken, die aus der leichten Finsternis tauchten. Sie waren schweigsam wie dein Bock. Als der Horizont angefüllt war, traten sie Herde um Herde aus den Wolken. Ihre Hufe berührten die Luft, nicht die Erde. Sie verströmten einen Duft von Regen, der noch nicht gefallen war.

Seit wann kommst du zu jedem Sonnenuntergang des Monats März heraus, Mēro? Seit wann scharst du diese Böcke um dich, die durch dich die Finsternis prüfen? Es ist, als ob es keine Finsternis gäbe, in der du nicht wärst. Oder finden deine Böcke keinen Zorn in der Dunkelheit, die der Sehnsucht des Tieres nach seinem Weibchen gleicht?

Bleib dort, Mēro, bleib![37]

Niemand weiß eigentlich genau, um wen es sich bei Mēro handelt. Oder zumindest werden die Jungen nicht ausreichend über ihn informiert. In diesem Ausschnitt wird auch Mēros Beziehung zu wichtigen kurdischen Symbolen deutlich: z.B. die Böcke, die für mutige und tapfere Männer stehen; der Monat März, in dem das kurdische Neujahrsfest *Newroz* gefeiert wird; der Duft des Regens, der in kurdischen Volksliedern besungen wird, usw.

In der Szene, in der der Ich-Erzähler Mēro begegnet, verliert dieser hingegen seine furchterregenden, negativen Eigenschaften. Er bezieht sich ausdrücklich auf seine 'Vorboten', die von den Leuten der Stadt zwar belächelt, aber doch respektiert und geschont werden. Einer davon, der Ṣūfī Maḥmūd, ist sogar ein Verwandter des Ich-Erzählers! Mēro ärgert sich hingegen sehr über die Tatsache, daß die Leute so tief schlafen, daß sie seine Ankunft hinausschieben. Er verwirrt den Jungen zwar gründlich, erscheint ihm aber eher als gutmeinender, ermahnender, väterlicher Tutor denn als destruktive Gewalt. Sein Kommen wäre also vielleicht gar nicht so katastrophal?

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[37] *Ibid.*, 17-8.

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Die Gestalt des Mēro wie auch die Begegnung und der Dialog zwischen ihm und dem Ich-Erzähler scheinen sich demnach einer eindeutigen Festlegung zu widersetzen. Mēro will sich offenbar gar nicht definieren lassen. (Andere Figuren in anderen Werken Salīm Barakāt's teilen mit ihm diese Unfaßbarkeit.) Aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach liegt es also in der Intention des Autors, uns gekonnt innehalten und Dissonanz spüren zu lassen.

Während meiner Deutungsversuche stieß ich auf einen Ausschnitt aus Michail Bachtins Dostojewskij-Buch, und zwar auf das Kapitel »Der Held im polyphonen Roman«.[38] Darin vertritt Bachtin die Ansicht, daß es Dostojevskij nicht darum gehe, den Helden (oder andere Figuren des Romans) als festumrissenen und beharrlichen Charakter zu schaffen; das Ziel sei vielmehr, das Selbstbewußtsein des Helden darzustellen:

> Die ganzheitliche Gestalt des Helden bleibt unvollendet, die Frage »Wer ist er?« unbeantwortet. Wir bekommen nicht zu sehen, wer er ist [...].[39]

So begann ich, meine ursprüngliche Fragestellung der Anregung Bachtins folgend zu modifizieren und z.B. zu fragen: Für welches Bewußtsein steht Mēro?

Als Arbeitshypothese versuchte ich Mēro als eine Art kollektiven Bewußtseins und/oder Unbewußtseins zu interpretieren. Viel Aggressionspotential liegt in Mēro (er würde aus der Erde eine Wüste machen), aber auch Verdrängtsein vom Zentrum (Mēro erscheint an der Peripherie der Stadt), Armut (Mēro ist in Lumpen gekleidet) und Heimatlosigkeit (Mēros Aufenthaltsort ist die Dunkelheit). Mēro dient auch als Projektionsfläche für die Ängste, aber auch Hoffnungen und kaum auszusprechenden Sehnsüchte der Menschen (z.B. Macht ausleben zu dürfen; den andern Angst zu machen, ohne sich selbst zu fürchten). Dieses Wesen wäre in der Tat allgegenwärtig, allerdings nicht als greifbare Person, sondern als eine Art Phantom. Es könnte gar keinen abgerundeten, in sich schlüssigen und kohärenten Charakter ha-

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[38] »Der Held im polyphonen Roman«, in: M.M. BACHTIN, *Literatur und Karneval: Zur Romantheorie und Lachkultur*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990, 86-100.

[39] *Ibid.*, 87-88.

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ben. Seine Unfaßbarkeit und Heterogenität gehörten zu seinen Grundmerkmalen.

Bei dieser Interpretation kann man die geheimnisvolle, ja fast phantastische Begegnung zwischen Mēro und dem Ich-Erzähler als Kontakt zwischen dem Jungen (und späteren Schriftsteller) und der Verkörperung des kollektiven Bewußtseins und/oder Unbewußtseins lesen. Der Protagonist lernt hier draußen in der Umgebung des Dorfes Herem Scheicho die positive Seite Mēro's kennen, die verkannte, verleugnete, vergessene, und kommt sich selbst näher, da er ja Anteil hat am kollektivem Un-/Bewußtsein.

Wie auch immer man diese Begegnung und das Verhältnis der beiden Akteure Mēro und Protagonist zueinander interpretiert, es scheint klar, daß der zukünftige Schriftsteller dadurch eine starke Individuation erfährt (Mēro erwählt *ihn*, Fawzī bemerkt seine Präsenz nicht einmal). Er bezieht daraus auch viel (literarische) Inspiration, Auftrag (*er* wird die Knaben auffordern, nicht zu schlafen) und Legitimation (einer seiner Verwandten ist ein 'Vorbote' Mēros; *er* ist es, dem Mēro erscheint).

Und so komme ich am Ende wieder zum Anfang zurück: Kraft seiner Autorität als inspiriertes und legitimiertes Ich ruft der Salīm Barakāt von *Hātihi ʿāliyan* seine Altersgenossen zum zivilen Ungehorsam auf (»Zettelt eure Kriege an, bevor die andern es tun...«) und stellt sich ihnen als zuverlässigen Anführer zur Verfügung (»... und folgt mir!«).

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ZEUGIN, CHRONISTIN, AUFKLÄRERIN?

Zum Selbstverständnis einer zeitgenössischen persischen Autorin

Isabel Stümpel
(Frankfurt/Main)

> [Ich erklärte,] daß die Darstellung dieser Probleme für die Gesellschaft notwendig sei und viele der Unglücke, die jetzt passieren, verhindern wird.[1]

Mit diesen Worten rechtfertigt die Schriftstellerin Šahrnūš Pārsīpūr (geb.1946)[2] vor einem Untersuchungsgericht ihren 1989 erschienenen Erzählband *Zanān bidūna mardān* (»Frauen ohne Männer«),[3] der als 'anti-islamisch' verurteilt wurde.

Deutlicher kann eine Autorin ihre 'Mission' wohl kaum formulieren. Auch wenn sie hier, in die Defensive getrieben, den gesellschaftlichen Nutzen ihres Werkes übertreiben mag, spricht aus ihrer Argumentation doch der Glaube an die Macht des geschriebenen Wortes, ja den gesellschaftsverändernden Einfluß von Literatur. Dies bringt Pārsīpūr auch auf der Ebene der Fik-

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[1] *Ḫāṭirāt-i zindān* (engl. Nebentitel: *The Memoirs of Prisons*), Spånga: Našr-i Bārān, 1996, 401. Im folgenden kurz als *Ḫāṭirāt* zitiert.

[2] Zu ihrer Biographie s. meinen Aufsatz »Raum und (Frauen-) Realität in einem zeitgenössischen persischen Roman«, in: *Asiatische Studien* 50,2 (1996), 445-462, bes. 447 f.

[3] Teheran: Našr-i Nuqra, 1368/1989. Zweite Auflage Spånga (Schweden): Našr-i Bārān, 1370/1991. Das Buch enthält mehrere, zum Teil miteinander verknüpfte Episoden um fünf Frauenfiguren. Eine erste Version davon stellte Pārsīpūr bereits im Sommer 1357/1978 in Paris fertig. Die gedruckte Version ist eine überarbeitete Fassung vom Frühjahr 1368/1989.

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tion zum Ausdruck, in einer Episode des kontroversen Erzählbandes: Dort streift die schüchterne Mu'nis durch die Buchläden und wagt zunächst kaum, die angebotenen Titel zu studieren, bis ein Buch über die menschliche Sexualität ihre Aufmerksamkeit erregt. Sie kauft es schließlich und gewinnt durch die Lektüre ein völlig neues Selbstbewußtsein.[4]

In ihren Romanen und Erzählungen setzt sich Pārsīpūr mit Problemen der iranischen Gesellschaft auseinander, ohne Patentlösungen zu suggerieren. Ihre Helden repräsentieren zwar verschiedene Gesellschaftsklassen, sind aber, weit entfernt von Schwarzweiß-Typisierung, psychologisch differenziert porträtiert. In ihrem ersten Roman *Sag-o zimistān-i buland* (»Der Hund und der lange Winter«)[5] etwa geht es um den Widerspruch zwischen der traditionellen Gesellschaft und der heranwachsenden Generation, die versucht, aus einem Klima politischer Unterdrückung und gesellschaftlicher Kontrolle auszubrechen. Der ständig drohende Schatten der Zensur, der Leerlauf des staatlichen Verwaltungsapparates, Arbeits- und Perspektivlosigkeit der Jugend werden drastisch, bis hin ins Absurde gezeichnet.[6]

In Interviews und Vorträgen hat sich Pārsīpūr explizit zu ihrem Beruf, dem Schreiben, und ihrer 'Mission' geäußert.[7] Besonders aufschlußreich in dieser Hinsicht ist jedoch ihre rezenteste Veröffentlichung, *Ḫāṭirāt-i zindān* (»Gefängnismemoiren«), um die es daher im folgenden gehen soll.

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[4] *Zanān bidūna mardān* (zweite Auflage), 39 f.

[5] Teheran: Amīr Kabīr, 2535/1976.

[6] Ḥasan ʿĀBIDĪNĪ kritisiert in seiner Besprechung des Romans, daß Pārsīpūr bei der Entwicklung ihrer Helden zu große Betonung auf die Rolle der Familie statt auf gesellschaftliche Faktoren lege: *Ṣad sāl-i dāstān nivīsī dar Īrān,* Bd. 2, Teheran: Tundar, 1368, 327. Er berücksichtigt dabei aber weder die Rolle der Zensur bzw. Selbstzensur im restriktiven Klima der 70er Jahre noch die Tatsache, daß im Mikrokosmos der Familie ja wiederum soziale und politische Probleme gespiegelt werden. Vgl. hierzu PĀRSĪPŪR selbst in *Ḫāṭirāt,* 20 f.: »In diesem Roman versuchte ich, das Problem der Linken in Iran zu untersuchen (...). Gleichzeitig war ich gezwungen so zu schreiben, daß das Buch durch die Zensur kam, und das war sehr schwierig.«

[7] So in »Pāsuḫ-i nivīsandagān-o šāʿirān ba pursiš-i 'Barā-i či mīnivīsīd'?«, einem Interview zum Thema 'Warum schreiben Sie?' mit der Literaturzeitschrift *Dunyā-i suḫan* 17/Farvardīn 1367 (März 1988), 9 f.

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Pārsīpūr's Gefängnismemoiren

Aufgrund unglücklicher Zufälle – und nicht etwa wegen ihrer schriftstellerischen Aktivitäten – im Sommer 1981 verhaftet,[8] verbrachte Pārsīpūr über vier Jahre im Gefängnis. Dort begann sie (1983) mit den Vorarbeiten zu ihrem Roman *Ṭūbā va ma'nā-i šab* (»Ṭūbā und die Bedeutung der Nacht«),[9] mit dem sie Ende der achtziger Jahre bekannt wurde und der innerhalb weniger Monate mehrere Auflagen erreichte.[10] 1996 veröffentlichte sie in Schweden ihre Gefängnismemoiren. Diese kann man einerseits zum in Iran relativ jungen Genre biographischer und autobiographischer Literatur,[11] andererseits zur Exilliteratur[12] rechnen. Unter den weni-

[8] Zu den Umständen ihrer Verhaftung s. *Ḥāṭirāt*, 62-71.

[9] Teheran: Ispark, 1368/1989.

[10] Zur Entstehung und zum Publikumserfolg von *Ṭūbā* s. auch *Ḥāṭirāt*, 241, 373, 383, 396, 405. Zu einem wesentlichen Aspekt des Romans s. »Raum und (Frauen-) Realität...«.

[11] In ihren Beiträgen zu Afsaneh NAJMABADI (ed.), *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990, konstatieren die Verfasser übereinstimmend, daß dieses Genre in der modernen persischen Literatur bislang unterrepräsentiert ist und diskutieren mögliche Gründe, insbesondere für die Zurückhaltung weiblicher Autorinnen. Sie räumen allerdings ein, daß Biographie und Autobiographie in einem anderen kulturellen Kontext als dem westlichen auch andersartige Ausdrucksformen haben können, die sich einer Definition nach westlichem Muster entziehen. S. besonders 61 ff. – Vgl. hierzu auch Marvin ZONIS »Autobiography and Biography in the Middle East: A plea for psychopolitical studies«, in: Martin KRAMER (ed.), *Middle Eastern Lives*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1991, 61 f. – Dennoch ist eine steigende Tendenz zu verzeichnen. So haben inzwischen etliche Politiker des früheren Regimes ihre Memoiren veröffentlicht. Bekannte Intellektuelle und Künstler haben z.T. in englischer Sprache Erinnerungen verfaßt wie Abbas MILANI, *Tales of Two Cities: A Persian memoir*, Washington: Mage Publishers, 1996, oder Shusha GUPPY, *The Blindfold Horse: Memories of a Persian childhood*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1988. Eine eigene Gruppe bilden die im Exil vermarkteten Berichte von Frauen über ihre Flucht aus Iran wie z.B. Sousan AZADI / Angela FERRANTE, *Out of Iran: One woman's escape from the Ayatollahs*, London: Warner, 1995 (repr.).

[12] Zur persischen Exilliteratur nach 1979 s. u.a. Michael BEARD & Hasan JAVADI, »Iranian Writers Abroad«, in *World Literature* 60,2 (spring 1988), 258 ff.; Faridoun FARROKH & M.R. GHANOONPARVAR, »Portraits in Exile in the Fiction of Esma'il Fassih and Goli Taraghi«, in: *Iranian Refugees and Exiles since Khomeini*, ed. Asghar FATHI, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1991, 280-93;

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gen iranischen Frauen, die bisher Memoiren vorgelegt haben, ist Pārsīpūr die einzige Schriftstellerin.[13] Die große alte Dame der modernen persischen Prosaliteratur, Sīmīn Dānišvar (geb. 1921), hat vorläufig nur ihre dahingehende Absicht erklärt.[14]

Ordnet man ihre Memoiren jedoch der gesonderten Gattung 'Gefängnisliteratur'[15] zu, steht Pārsīpūr in einer bis ins Mittelalter zurückreichenden Tradition.[16]

Mohammad Mehdi KHORRAMI, »Qiṣṣa va qiṣṣa-nevīs dar tab'īd: Tārīḫča-i istiqlāl-i adabī«, in: *Iran-shenasi* 5,1 (spring 1993), 183-94.

[13] In ihrem Beitrag zu *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran* nennt Farzaneh MILANI lediglich drei persischsprachige Veröffentlichungen: 1) Parvīn NAUBAḪT, *Daryāča-i Marīvan: Sā'at šaš*, Teheran: Sipihr, 1981; 2) Marḍiya AḤMADĪ USKŪ'Ī, *Ḫāṭirātī az yak rafīq*, o.O.: Sāzmān-i Fadāyān-i Ḫalq, o.J.; 3) *Ḫāṭirāt-i Tāǧ us-Salṭana* (Taj os-Saltaneh's Memoirs), ed. Mansureh ETTEHADIYEH u. Cyrus SA'DVANDIYAN, Teheran: Našr-i Tārīḫ-i Īrān, 1982. – Kürzlich veröffentlichte Munīra BARĀDARĀN (M. RAHĀ) im deutschen Exil ihre Gefängnismemoiren unter dem Titel *Ḥaqīqat-i sāda: Ḫāṭirātī az zindān-i zanān-i ǧumhūrī-i islāmī-i Īrān*, Hannover: Tašakkul-i mustaqill-i dimūkrātīk-i zanān-i Īrān dar Hānūfar, 1376/1997. Keine dieser Autobiographinnen hat sich jedoch bisher über ihre Memoiren hinaus schriftstellerisch betätigt. – Autobiographisch gefärbte Erzählliteratur wie etwa *Ḫāṭira-hā-i parākanda* (»Verstreute Erinnerungen«) von Gulī TARAQQĪ oder *Dar ḫaḍar* (»Zuhause«) von Mahšīd AMĪRŠĀHĪ zählen wir hier nicht zum autobiographischen Genre im engen Sinne.

[14] S. *Hunar va adabiyyāt-i imrūz. Guft-o šanūdī bā: Parvīz Nātil Ḫānlarī – Sīmīn Dānišvar ba kušaš-i Nāṣir Ḫarīrī*, Bābul: Kitābsarāy-i Bābul, o.J., 35. Farzaneh MILANI weist darauf hin, daß eine Figur in Dānišvars berühmtem Roman *Savūšūn*, Fräulein Futūḥī, ihre Lebensgeschichte schreibt. S.F. MILANI, »Veiled Voices: Women's autobiographies in Iran«, in: *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*, 7. Sie übergibt ihre Aufzeichnungen der Protagonistin Zarī mit der Bitte, sie dauerhaft in einem Safe aufzubewahren. S. *Savūšūn*, Teheran: Ḫvārazmī, 1363 (13. Aufl.), 108 f. – Auch auf der Ebene der Fiktion bleiben die Lebensgeschichten iranischer Frauen also den Augen der Öffentlichkeit weitgehend verborgen!

[15] Hierzu s. Sigrid WEIGEL, *Und selbst im Kerker frei...! Schreiben im Gefängnis: Zur Theorie und Gattungsgeschichte der Gefängnisliteratur (1750-1933)*, Marburg/Lahn 1982.

[16] So schrieb der aus Lahore gebürtige persische Dichter Mas'ūd b. Sa'd b. Salmān, gest. 515/1121-2, der unter zwei verschiedenen Herrschern in Ungnade fiel und jahrelang eingekerkert war, *Ḥabsiyyāt* (»Gefängnisgedichte«). S. STOREY, vol. v: *Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period*, 412-6, und *HdO* I, IV, 2, Lfg. 2, 40 f. – In unserem Jahrhundert veröffentlichte der bekannte Autor und Professor für Persisch an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Bozorg ALAVĪ (1904-1997), der aufgrund seiner kommunistischen Überzeugung unter Reza Schah vier Jahre im Gefängnis verbracht hatte, eine Sammlung von Kurzgeschichten unter dem Titel *Waraq pāra-hā-i zindān* (»Blätter aus dem Gefängnis«) sowie *Panǧāh-o sih nafar* (»Dreiundfünfzig

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Natürlich bilden Gefängnismemoiren eine ganz besondere Kategorie der Memoirenliteratur, insofern sie einen extrem begrenzten, von der Gesellschaft ausgegrenzten Mikrokosmos darstellen, der freilich als charakteristisch für die gesamtgesellschaftliche Situation verstanden werden kann.[17] Wenn Autoren autobiographischer Schriften besonders explizit die Tätigkeit des Schreibens thematisieren,[18] gilt dies umso mehr für die Verfasser von Gefängnismemoiren, die zwischen der Angst, von der Erinnerung überwältigt zu werden, und der Hoffnung schwanken, sich das Grauen von der Seele schreiben zu können.[19]

Der Schriftsteller hat zudem in den Augen seiner Mitgefangenen wie der Gefängnisautoritäten eine besondere Rolle inne,[20] kann er doch als Chronist mit seiner Feder Ereignisse und Personen dieses ausgegrenzten Mikrokosmos auch über ihre physische Vernichtung hinaus verewigen und außerhalb seiner Mauern bekanntmachen. Darüberhinaus vermag er als Fabuleur und Visionär der räumlichen und geistigen Abschließung des Gefängnisses unbegrenzte Welten entgegenzusetzen. Die impliziten und expli-

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Personen«), die autobiographische Schilderung der Verhaftung und des Verhörs einer Gruppe iranischer Kommunisten. S. RYPKA, 396 f. – Aus anderen Ländern des nahöstlich-islamischen Kulturkreises sei an den Ägypter Ṣun'allāh Ibrāhīm erinnert, s. Nada TOMICHE, »L'œuvre de Ṣun'allāh Ibrāhīm ou la 'littérature des prisons' (*adab al-suǧūn*)«, in *Annales Islamologiques* 18 (1982), 255-71; unter Frauen, die 'Gefängnisliteratur' schrieben, ist die türkische Schriftstellerin Sevgi Soysal (1936-1976) zu erwähnen, die ihre Erinnerungen an ihre Untersuchungshaft im Militärgefängnis von Ankara veröffentlichte, s. Priska FURRER, *Das erzählerische Werk der türkischen Autorin Sevgi Soysal (1936-1976)*, Berlin: Schwarz, 1992, 94-99 u. 170-186.

[17] Vgl. hierzu Massimo PAVARINI, »The Penitentiary as a Model for the Ideal Society«, in: Dario MELOSSI & Massimo PAVARINI, *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System*, transl. Evans Glynis COUSIN, Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1981, 149: »Prison assumes the dimension of an '*organized project for the subaltern social world*'.«

[18] Vgl. Madeleine SALZMANN, *Die Kommunikationsstruktur der Autobiographie*, Bern etc.: Peter Lang, 1988, 149.

[19] S. hierzu Mūnīrā BARĀDARĀN, *Ḥaqīqat-i sāda*, 5 f. – Vgl. auch FURRER, *Das erzählerische Werk*, 170 f.: »Gefangenschaft ist eine Extremsituation, die [...] offensichtlich geradezu danach drängt, schreibend verarbeitet zu werden.«

[20] Vgl. Barbara HARLOW, *Resistance Literature*, New York & London: Methuen, 1987, 131.

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ziten Äußerungen Pārsīpūr's zur Rolle des Schriftstellers in ihren Gefängnismemoiren sind sicher nicht zuletzt auf die Erfahrung dieser existentiellen Bedeutung des Schreibens in der Haft zurückzuführen.

Pārsīpūr schrieb ihre *Ḫāṭirāt-i zindān* – nach ihren eigenen Worten ohne sich dabei auf Notizen zu stützen – innerhalb von zwei Monaten (Dezember 1994 bis Februar 1995) in ihrem Exil in Los Angeles nieder. Zu jenem Zeitpunkt waren vierzehn Jahre seit ihrer ersten Verhaftung und etwa zwei Jahre seit ihren am Ende der Memoiren geschilderten Vortragsreisen in Amerika und Europa vergangen.

Die Gliederung

Nach einem einleitenden Gebet – hierzu später – sowie skeptischen Überlegungen zum Wert und Nutzen der Niederschrift ihrer Memoiren und Danksagungen beschreibt Pārsīpūr die Szene, in der ihr im Gefängnis zum ersten Mal der Gedanke kam, nach der Freilassung die Erinnerungen an ihre Haftzeit niederzuschreiben.

Hiernach beginnt Pārsīpūr ihre Memoiren mit einem Rückblick auf die Vorgeschichte der Iranischen Revolution, die gleichzeitig die Vorgeschichte ihrer Verhaftung ist. In mehreren kurzen Abschnitten schildert sie dann die sich jagenden Ereignisse in den Monaten unmittelbar vor ihrer Verhaftung und Abtransportierung ins Evin-Gefängnis im Mordad 1360 / August 1981.

Es folgen die eigentlichen »Gefängnismemoiren«, die zusammen mit der 'Vorgeschichte' etwa zwei Drittel des Buches ausmachen. Sie sind chronologisch angeordnet und in Abschnitte gegliedert nach den verschiedenen Gefängnissen bzw. Abteilungen, in denen sie inhaftiert war,[21] bis zu ihrer Freilassung im Esfand 1364 / März 1985.

Im letzten Drittel des Buches berichtet Pārsīpūr von ihren (schriftstellerischen) Aktivitäten nach ihrer Freilassung und den

[21] *Ḫāṭirāt*, 13: »Nun versuche ich, die Linie der Erinnerung (*ḫaṭṭ-i ḫāṭira*) auf dem Wege dieser vier Gefängnisaufenthalte zusammenzufügen.«

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Problemen, mit denen sie dabei konfrontiert ist. Anschließend beschreibt sie ihren erneuten Haftaufenthalt (1368/1989) infolge von Hetzkampagnen gegen ihr Buch *Zanān bidūna mardān*. Im folgenden schildert sie die kurze Zeit, die sie in Freiheit verbringt, und im nächsten Abschnitt ihre Einlieferung ins Untersuchungsgefängnis sowie die dortigen Zustände.

Hierauf gibt sie eine Zusammenfassung der Vortragsreisen, die sie 1992 auf Einladung verschiedener Organisationen nach Amerika, Schweden, Deutschland, Norwegen, Österreich und England führten, und bringt zuletzt wieder die Widrigkeiten im Alltagsleben zur Sprache, mit denen sie bei ihrer Rückkehr nach Iran zu kämpfen hat.

In einem sogenannten »Resumee« (*natīǧagīrī*), das den letzten Abschnitt ihrer Memoiren bildet, kommt Pārsīpūr auf ein Thema zurück, das sie bereits in mehreren essayistischen Exkursen behandelt hat: die geographische und klimatische Lage Irans und die daraus erwachsenden Probleme der iranischen Gesellschaft. Schließlich wendet sie sich mit Ratschlägen zur Lösung dieser Probleme an die iranische Jugend.

Das Buch endet mit nochmaligen Danksagungen und einer Widmung an die Opfer der Hinrichtungen und die Opfer des irano-irakischen Krieges.

Pārsīpūr's Selbstverständnis als Schriftstellerin: Bekennerin und Anwältin in eigener Sache

Pārsīpūr eröffnet ihre Gefängnismemoiren auf feierliche Weise mit einem mystisch gefärbten Gebet:

> Heute ist der erste Tag des Winters. Der Aufstieg des Lichtes beginnt. Ich habe mich zum Gebet verneigt. Ich glaube, daß das Sein insgesamt bewußt ist. Ich glaube, daß jedes Staubkörnchen auf eine Weise – nach Art des Staubes – denkt. Ich glaube, daß man keine zwei Wasserstoffatome finden kann, die einander vollkommen gleichen. Ich glaube, daß auch die Wasserstoffatome

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> – auf eine Weise – denken.[22] Daher sprach ich, als ich mich zum Gebet verneigt hatte: Gott, ich bete dich in allen Manifestationen (*tağalliyāt*) an. Du bist es, der sich in Schleiern (*parda*) verbrennt, um in anderen wieder zu erscheinen (*mutağallī šavī*). Du bist es, der nicht sein will und das Nichtsein befiehlt, um plötzlich wieder über die Maßen zu sein. Du bist es, der wollte, daß ich deinen Tod und deine erneute Geburt in einem Meer von Blut sehe. Ich bitte dich nun um Erlaubnis, mir die Kraft zu geben, das, was ich im Gefängnis gesehen habe, zu schreiben. Du weißt, daß mein Ziel kein Heldenkult ist,[23] und daß ich keiner Gruppe oder Fraktion anhänge. Du weißt auch, daß ich weiß, daß die Dritte Welt an der Schwelle des Todes steht und vielleicht alles für immer verloren hat. (...) Aber Arbeit ist immer rettend. Möglicherweise öffnet stetige Arbeit, in Verbindung mit Geduld und Fleiß Türen. Und meine Arbeit ist das Schreiben. Ich habe schlimme Jahre hinter mir und leide in den letzten zwei Jahren an starken Nervenbeschwerden.[24]

Wenn man voraussetzt, daß sich der Mensch Gott gegenüber zu absoluter Aufrichtigkeit verpflichtet fühlt,[25] bewirkt dieses einleitende Gebet beim Leser größtmöglichstes Vertrauen in die Glaubwürdigkeit unserer Autorin. Pārsīpūr schließt hier also höchst wirkungsvoll den von Philippe Lejeune sogenannten »pacte référentiel«.[26] Am Ende ihrer vorangestellten Danksagungen bekräf-

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[22] Ähnliche Vorstellungen legt sie dem Vater ihrer Romanfigur Ṭūbā in den Mund: »(...) Und wie steht es mit der Erde, dachte er. Kann auch sie denken? Daher kam es, daß sich der Planet Erde mit allem, was sie enthielt, drehte. Alle Dinge, die sie enthielt, konnten separat und für sich denken und drehten sich vielleicht ebenfalls, so wie ihr großer Ursprung, die Erde. (...) bildete doch ein Baum eine Ganzheit, und mußte in seinen Grenzen über einen angemessenen Verstand verfügen. Und seine Bestandteile, all diese Teilchen, konnten in ihrer eigenen Ganzheit ebenfalls selbständig denken.« *Ṭūbā va ma'nā-i šab,* 23 f.

[23] Die Ablehnung der Heroisierung (der eigenen Stärke) scheint ein Merkmal weiblicher Gefängnisliteratur überhaupt zu sein. Vgl. FURRER, *Das erzählerische Werk*, 180 f.

[24] *Ḥāṭirāt*, 3 f.

[25] Vgl. hierzu Jean STAROBINSKI, »Der Stil der Autobiographie«, in: *Die Autobiographie: Zu Form und Geschichte einer literarischen Gattung*, hrsg. v. Günter NIGGL, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989, 206.

[26] *Le Pacte autobiographique,* Paris: Seuil, 1975, 36: »Im Gegensatz zu allen Formen der Fiktion sind die Biographie und die Autobiographie referentielle Texte: genau wie die wissenschaftliche oder historische Rede geben sie vor, eine Informa-

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tigt Pārsīpūr den »Pakt« ein weiteres Mal, indem sie verspricht, die Ereignisse wirklichkeitsgetreu zu rekonstruieren.[27]

Neben dieser leserbezogenen Funktion beinhaltet die Eröffnungspassage bereits zwei wichtige Merkmale, bzw. Funktionen der folgenden *Ḫāṭirāt-i zindān*.

Im Hinblick auf die darin viermal wiederholte Formel »Ich glaube (...)« (*bāvar dāram*) kann man sie als individuelle *šahāda* (»Glaubensbekenntnis«) bezeichnen. Ähnliche 'Bekenntnisse', zu religiösen wie säkularen Werten, finden sich im gesamten Text. Besonderes Gewicht legt Pārsīpūr darauf, ihren Glauben an Demokratie und (Meinungs-)Freiheit zu bekräftigen:

> Im Grunde war ich froh, in diesem schrecklichen Moment im Gefängnis zu sein, denn wenn ich in Freiheit gewesen wäre und nichts getan hätte, wäre ich aufgrund meiner Überzeugungen von der Freiheit und Verteidigung der Demokratie mit mir unzufrieden gewesen (...).[28]
>
> Als jemand, der (...) überzeugt ist vom Lebensrecht aller Menschen, darunter auch vom Recht der sexuellen Freiheit, hatte ich das nicht ernstgenommen.[29]

Außerdem beteuert sie ihren Respekt vor allen Religionen, bzw. vor dem Islam: »(...) Ich glaube an Gott, betrachte alle Religionen mit Ehrfurcht (...).«[30]

Solche Erklärungen dienen, so dürfen wir unterstellen, in starkem Maße ihrer Rechtfertigung. Immerhin lastet auf Pārsīpūr der Ruch mehrjähriger Haft und die Anklage der Islamfeindlichkeit, bzw. der destruktiven politischen Opposition, die sie ins Gefängnis brachte. Ein großer Teil ihrer Mitgefangenen hatte sich tatsächlich dem bewaffneten Widerstand verschrieben. Um sich

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tion über eine außerhalb des Textes liegende 'Realität' zu geben (...) Alle referentiellen Texte enthalten implizit oder explizit, was ich einen *'referentiellen Pakt'* nennen werde (...) Die Formel hierfür wäre (...) Ich schwöre, daß ich die Wahrheit sage, die ganze Wahrheit, nichts als die Wahrheit.«

[27] *Ḫāṭirāt*, 6: »(...) *qoul mīdaham* (...) *dar bāzsāzī-i vaqāyi' durustkār bāšam*.«

[28] *Ibid.*, 108. – Vgl. auch 377.

[29] *Ibid.*, 208. – Vgl. auch 137 u. 333.

[30] *Ibid.*, 34. – Vgl. auch 105.

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von ihnen abzusetzen, betont Pārsīpūr daher mehrmals ihre Ablehnung des bewaffneten Kampfes.[31] Mit ebendieser distanzierten Haltung zog sie ihrer Darstellung zufolge während ihrer Haft die Mißgunst von Mitgefangenen auf sich und bildete eine Zielscheibe von Verleumdungen,[32] gegen die sie hier sicherlich auch anschreibt. Im übrigen fühlte sich Pārsīpūr auch in Freiheit und selbst unter ihren Berufskollegen wegen ihrer individuellen, unabhängigen Haltung häufig verkannt, insbesondere während des 'politischen Frühlings' unmittelbar vor und nach dem Sturz des Schahs, als die Sitzungen des iranischen Schriftstellerverbandes zu Foren verschiedener politischer Gruppen wurden.[33]

Pārsīpūr's Ziel ist es also, zumindest vor dem 'Tribunal' ihrer Leser eine Revision ihrer Verurteilung und Anerkennung für ihre Haltung zu erreichen.[34] Zu diesem Zweck versucht sie, über ihre (politischen) Aktivitäten möglichst erschöpfend Auskunft zu geben und jegliche Mißverständlichkeiten auszuräumen:

> Bevor ich auf meine Verhaftung eingehe, muß ich noch einen Punkt erwähnen, damit meine politischen Orientierungen restlos geklärt werden: Ich habe in Paris mehrmals an den Sitzungen der Kommission zur Verteidigung der Menschenrechte in Iran teilgenommen, ohne aber Mitglied zu sein.[35]

Pārsīpūr gibt jedoch nicht nur Deklarationen zu ihrer politischen Einstellung ab. Entgegen dem Trend in der autobiographischen Literatur iranischer Autorinnen[36] hat sie den Mut, auch

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[31] S. *ibid.*, 29 f., 137.

[32] *Ibid.*, 333.

[33] »Ich nahm an den ermüdenden und chaotischen Sitzungen des Schriftstellerverbandes teil und fand heraus, daß ich keinen Wert hatte, da ich keiner Gruppe angehörte und nicht revolutionär war.« *Ibid.*, 56. – Vgl. auch 47.

[34] Vgl. hierzu F. MILANI, derzufolge ein Hauptanliegen bisher erschienener Frauen-Autobiographien die Richtigstellung eines »falschen Bildes« ist. »Veiled Voices«, 12.

[35] *Ḫāṭirāt*, 57.

[36] William L. HANAWAY, »Half-Voices. Persian Women's Lives and Letters«, in: *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*, 56: »For Persian women, however, there is a barrier to making direct autobiographic statements. Perhaps it is

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intime Regungen und Nöte zu bekennen. So gesteht sie ihre emotionalen und sexuellen Bedürfnisse während ihrer Haftzeit ein und spricht über ihre unerfüllte Sehnsucht nach einer Liebesbeziehung.[37]

Der Bekenntnischarakter gilt als typisches Merkmal autobiographischer Schriften überhaupt und wird aus der Tradition der öffentlichen Beichte abgeleitet.[38] In dieser religiösen Bedeutung, als Sündenbekenntnis, tritt er am deutlichsten in der folgenden Passage zutage, in der Pārsīpūr schildert, wie sie zwei Gefangene verleumdete, die zum Schaden der übrigen Mitgefangenen mit der Gefängnisleitung kollaborierten:

> (...) in diesem Moment war ich gemeiner als gemein geworden und rächte mich an den beiden für die ganzen Dinge, die ich in diesen sechs Monaten gesehen hatte (...). Und so wälzte ich mich in Gemeinheit.[39] (...) Ich hatte einen schmutzigen Sieg errungen. (...) Wenn ein wenig von der Natur und dem Charakter Jesu in mir gewesen wäre, hätte ich die Ohrfeige schlucken müssen und die andere Wange hinhalten.[40](...) Und nochmals bitte ich den Herrn der Wahrheit um Verzeihung, daß ich mich zu Gemeinheit habe hinreißen lassen.[41]

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the fear of what might be revealed (...) that brings about the veiling and the selfcensorship.«

[37] *Ḫāṭirāt*, 209, 374:. »Ich fühlte mich zutiefst allein. Ich hatte ein starkes Bedürfnis nach einer emotionalen Beziehung, aber (...) die Angst, verfolgt und als ehrlos und unzüchtig verleumdet zu werden, führte dazu, daß ich nicht daran dachte, einen männlichen Freund zu suchen [wörtl.: 'zu finden']. Trotzdem war der Traum, mich an einen Mann anzulehnen, immer gegenwärtig.« – Vgl. 430.

[38] Vgl. T. C. ZIMMERMANN, »Bekenntnis und Autobiographie in der frühen Renaissance«, in: *Die Autobiographie*, 343-366.

[39] *Ḫāṭirāt*, 207.

[40] *Ibid.*, 208.

[41] *Ibid.*, 210.

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Zeugin (šāhid) *und Beobachterin* (nāẓir)

Als weiteres, durchgänges Merkmal der *Ḫāṭirāt* scheint bereits in ihrem einleitenden Gebet der Zeugnischarakter auf. Pārsīpūr bittet Gott um Kraft, damit sie schreiben kann, was sie gesehen hat.

Daß sie sich weniger als Betroffene, sondern in erster Linie als (Augen-) Zeugin bzw. Beobachterin sieht, bringt sie immer wieder zum Ausdruck – auch, wenn sie Ausnahmen von dieser Regel schildert: »Hier trat ich zum ersten Mal aus meiner Rolle als Beobachterin (*nāẓir*) heraus (...).«[42] Dies hängt vor allem damit zusammen, daß Pārsīpūr keiner bestimmten politischen Gruppe angehört und sich daher auch nicht an den ideologisch motivierten Aktionen der übrigen Gefangenen beteiligt, ja sich grundsätzlich als Fremdkörper fühlt: »Leute wie ich waren entweder nicht im Gefängnis, weil sie nie in den bewaffneten Widerstand eingetreten waren, oder hatten das Land für immer verlassen.«[43] Dank ihrer Unabhängigkeit hat sie aber das Privileg, in alle diese Gruppen Einblick nehmen zu können und ist somit zur Zeugin prädestiniert. So sagt sie über eine Aktion der Muǧāhidīn im Gefängnis: »Ich sah zu und nahm es als Exempel (*'ibrat mīgiriftam*).«[44] An anderer Stelle schreibt sie über eine rituelle Trauerfeier (*'azādārī*) der Gefangenen:

> Während die Menge schrie, durchforstete ich mein Gedächtnis, wo ich eine solche Szene schon einmal gesehen hatte (...).[45]

In dieser Rolle als neutrale Beobachterin bemüht sie sich, ihren Blick vor nichts zu verschließen. So läßt sie sich die Foltermale einer Gefangenen zeigen[46] und sieht sich auch politische Propagandasendungen des Regimes an, im Gegensatz zu ihren Mitgefangenen, die solche Programme demonstrativ boykottieren.[47]

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[42] *Ibid.*, 182.

[43] *Ibid.*, 178.

[44] *Ibid.*, 177.

[45] *Ibid.*, 129.

[46] *Ibid.*, 92.

[47] *Ibid.*, 255.

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Pārsīpūr ist freilich, wie sie betont, ganz und gar unfreiwillig zur Zeugin geworden:

> In diesem Moment wurde ich, ob ich wollte oder nicht, Zeugin (*šāhid*) und Gefährtin (*šarīk*) des bitteren Schicksals dieser Kinder.[48]

> (...) eine Hand hatte mich ins Haus gezogen, daß ich Zeugin dieses tödlichen Kampfes würde.[49]

Natürlich sind auch alle anderen Gefangenen unfreiwillig zu einer Zuschauerrolle verurteilt.[50] Doch haben sie sich aus Pārsīpūrs Sicht durch ihre oppositionellen Aktivitäten selbst in diese Lage gebracht. In der Rolle des passiven Zuschauers befindet sich im übrigen auch die gesamte iranische Gesellschaft in ihrem Verhältnis zum Westen, was in zwei Szenen, in denen Pārsīpūr schildert, wie sie mit ihren Mitgefangenen Fernsehberichte aus dem Westen verfolgt, symbolisch zugespitzt zum Ausdruck kommt.[51]

Die Zeugenrolle versucht Pārsīpūr jedoch auch als Privileg und besondere (Auf-) Gabe zu betrachten, gerade weil sie im Gegensatz zu ihren Mitgefangenen nicht die Ehre einer politischen Widerständlerin beanspruchen kann:

> Ich war keine große politische Kämpferin (...) war auch keiner schweren Folter ausgesetzt, daß ich aufgrund meines Widerstandes zu preisen wäre. Aber vielleicht, weil ich sah, und klar war, daß ich sehe und nicht mit den Folterern zusammenarbeite... [d.h., setzten ihre Mitgefangenen Vertrauen in sie][52]

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[48] *Ibid.*, 103.

[49] *Ibid.*, 158.

[50] Vgl. *ibid.*, 205: »Die Menge der Zuschauer war in vollkommenem Schweigen Zeuge der Szene. In Abwesenheit eines entwickelten Kinos und glanzvoller Theater konnte man das Leben einer Anzahl von Menschen, die im Gefängnis festsaßen, in den Dreck ziehen und sich am Zusehen ergötzen.«

[51] S. *ibid.*, 12 u. 148. – Vgl. auch *Sag-o zimistān-i buland*, 11: »'Alī sagte: Gehst du denn nicht sieben Tage in der Woche ins Kino, um das Leben dort [d.h. im Westen] mit den Augen zu verschlingen. Geh und lebe mit ihnen. Das ist doch besser. (...) Du willst, aber du kannst nicht (...).«

[52] *Ḥāṭirāt*, 226.

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Chronistin und Aufklärerin

Aus dem Zeugesein erwächst die Aufgabe des Bezeugens, aus der Beobachter- die Chronistenrolle.[53] Pārsīpūr bemüht sich, ihre Beobachtungen möglichst exakt festzuhalten, indem sie beispielsweise Statistiken über Alter, Zahl und Herkunftsmilieu ihrer Mitgefangenen erstellt.[54]

Diese Rolle wird auch von außen an sie herangetragen:

> Das kurdische Mädchen sagte: Weil du Schriftstellerin bist, wäre es nicht schlecht, wenn du sie sähest, damit du weißt, zu was ein Mensch werden kann.[55]
>
> Man erklärte mir, daß diese Gefangene wahnsinnig in eine Frau verliebt ist und ein interessantes Schicksal hat und sie mich gern treffen will, weil ich Schriftstellerin bin. (...) Sie führten mich in einen Raum, damit ich Zeuge einer Liebe sei zwischen einer Mörderin und einer Prostituierten.[56]

Ihre Mitgefangenen rufen sie als Zeugin und vertrauen ihr ihre Lebens- und Leidensgeschichten an, weil sie Schriftstellerin ist. Sie appellieren damit an ihre professionelle Fähigkeit und Aufgabe, das Gesehene und Gehörte aufzuzeichnen und für die Nach- bzw. Außenwelt zu bewahren.[57] Pārsīpūr selbst bemerkt in

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[53] In diesem Sinne äußert sich Pārsīpūr in einer Rede, die sie 1992 auf einer Reise durch Deutschland hielt, über Inhalt und Motivation ihrer Arbeit: »Ich bezeuge (*šahādat mīdaham*), daß ich einen Menschen gesehen habe, der unter den schlimmsten Schlägen Mensch geblieben ist«. Abgedruckt als »Šināsnāma-i yak nivīsanda«, in: *Āraš* (Lognes) 35/36 (März/April 1993), 27. – Vgl. auch ihren ersten, 1976 erschienenen Roman, in dem sie Hossein, den älteren Bruder der Ich-Erzählerin, sagen läßt: »Aber ihr habt wohl eure Augen geschlossen und seht rein gar nichts. Ich habe dort Menschen gesehen, die schier zerdrückt wurden, ihre Knochen wurden zermalmt, doch sie gaben keinen Laut von sich. Wie seid ihr nur so geworden? Etwas in euch ist gestorben, ihr seid alle Konservative.« *Sag-o zimistān-i buland*, 36.

[54] *Ḫāṭirāt*, 215 u. 428.

[55] *Ibid.*, 96.

[56] *Ibid.*, 455.

[57] Der Spärlichkeit bisher veröffentlichter autobiographischer Zeugnisse zum Trotz zeigt sich hier, daß es durchaus Frauen gibt, die bereit sind, mit autobiographischen Erinnerungen sehr persönlicher Natur an die Öffentlichkeit zu gehen!

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diesem Zusammenhang: »Ich bin gezwungen, die Geschichte Schritt für Schritt zu verfolgen, damit ich keine wichtigen Punkte dem Vergessen anheimgebe.«[58]

Aufgrund der Autorität ihres Alters – während ihre meisten Mitgefangenen Schülerinnen und junge Studentinnen sind, ist Pārsīpūr bei ihrer Verhaftung bereits Mitte Dreißig – der Autorität ihres Standes als Schriftstellerin sowie ihres überparteilichen Standpunktes betätigt sich Pārsīpūr nach ihren eigenen Worten in mannigfachen Situationen als Lehrmeisterin: »Da die Gefangenen wußten, daß ich (...) ihnen freundlich gesinnt war, diskutierten wir darüber und ich erklärte, daß jeder Mensch ein Recht auf persönlichen Besitz habe.«[59]

Als Pārsīpūr in eine Abteilung mit gewöhnlichen Straftäterinnen verlegt wird, die zum großen Teil Analphabetinnen sind, spielt sie geradezu die Rolle der Aufklärerin: »(...) Dann erläuterte ich, daß die Wolken positive und negative elektrische Ladung tragen und erklärte den Grund für das Geräusch [des Donners].«[60]

Auch mit der Niederschrift ihrer Memoiren selbst verfolgt Pārsīpūr über die bloße Aufzeichnung der Ereignisse hinaus didaktische, bzw. aufklärerische Ziele. Sie schildert vor allem, was ihr lehrreich, oder – um eine von ihr bevorzugte Vokabel zu gebrauchen – »nachdenkenswert« (*qābil-i ta'ammul*) erscheint:

> Sie [d.h. die jungen Gefangenen im Drogentrakt des Evin-Gefängnisses] erzählten viele Geschichten, die zu einem Roman taugen würden, aber allein die Erwähnung eines Punktes bezüglich des ersten Mädchens ist nachdenkenswert.[61]

Diese Bereitschaft ist vielleicht gerade bei den nicht-intellektuellen, ja analphabetischen Frauen anzutreffen, die von der Möglichkeit fasziniert werden, mit Hilfe eines Mediums aus ihrer Anonymität und Isolation heraus ins Licht der Öffentlichkeit zu treten.

[58] *Ḥāṭirāt*, 209.

[59] *Ibid.*, 132. – Vgl. 182, 222, 328, 453.

[60] *Ibid.*, 453.

[61] *Ibid.*, 451. – Vgl. auch 409: »Das Mädchen erzählte mir (...) sein Schicksal, und ich denke, daß es aus gesellschaftspsychologischer Sicht, im Fegefeuer zwischen Stadt und Dorf, interessant sein muß.«

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Beobachtungen einzelner Ereignisse und individueller Verhaltensweisen benutzt sie »als Exempel«[62], aus denen sie allgemeine Schlüsse über die iranische Gesellschaft ableitet:

> (...) Ebendiese traditionelle Erziehungsmethode ist es, die diesen außergewöhnlichen Sturm in Iran entfesselt hat. Ich werde nach und nach versuchen, die verschiedenen Dimensionen dieses Problems mit der Erwähnung von Ereignissen, deren Zeugin ich war, zu untersuchen.[63]

Häufig nimmt sie auch ihre Selbstbeobachtung zum Ausgangspunkt für solche Verallgemeinerungen:

> [Da war] Die Einsamkeit, das Schwanken zwischen verschiedenen Gedanken und das ständige Gefühl beobachtet zu werden, das in den Gefängnisjahren und danach in mir verwurzelt wurde und überhaupt die Wahrheit, daß Iraner immer das Gefühl haben, unter Kontrolle zu sein. Eine solche Empfindung begleitete mich von Kindheit an, und ich hatte immer das Gefühl, daß ein Auge mich beobachtet.[64]

Mehrmals spricht sie den Leser direkt an, um seine Aufmerksamkeit auf eine bestimmte Schlußfolgerung oder ihrer Meinung nach typische Situation zu lenken:

> Ich ergreife die Gelegenheit, die iranischen Leser dieses Buches darauf aufmerksam zu machen, daß es eine der Beschäftigungen der zurückgebliebenen Gesellschaften ist, (psychische) Krankheit mit dem Übersinnlichen in Verbindung zu bringen.[65]

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[62] Vgl. o., Anm. 44.

[63] *Ibid.*, 161.

[64] *Ibid.*, 390 f. – Vgl. 338: »Ich bedaure immer noch, nicht mehr zu dieser Sache gesagt zu haben – aus Angst vor den Berichten der »Bekehrten (*tavvābīn*) [d.h. der Gefangenen, die ihrer oppositionellen Ideologie abgeschworen haben und mit den Gefängnisautoritäten zusammenarbeiten]. Die Iraner sagen aus Angst nie das, was man in einem bestimmten Augenblick sagen muß, und dann wird es immer zu spät.«

[65] *Ibid.*, 392.

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An einer anderen Stelle gibt sie eine Diskussion wieder, »deren Kenntnisnahme vielleicht für die Linken Irans nützlich ist.«[66] In ihrem Resumee schließlich wendet sie sich speziell an die junge Generation ihrer Landsleute, »diejenigen jungen Iraner, die diese Zeilen lesen.«[67]

In diesen ihren eindringlichen Schlußworten versucht Pārsīpūr mit geradezu 'missionarischem' Eifer, ihre Erkenntnisse zu vermitteln. Zum wiederholten Male insistiert sie auf der Bedeutung der geographischen Lage Irans:

> (...) Je mehr also die Geographie studiert wird, desto mehr wird es (...) dazu beitragen, die Wirklichkeit zu verstehen,

und mahnt:

> Die jungen Iraner mögen das Bevölkerungswachstum nicht vergessen. (...) Es gibt keine Lösung außer einer strengen Geburtenkontrolle, damit zwischen der Bevölkerung und den Möglichkeiten ein Gleichgewicht hergestellt wird. (...) Zwei Prinzipien dürfen also bei der Untersuchung nicht vergessen werden, die Geographie und die Bevölkerungsdichte.[68]

Einen ähnlichen Drang, ihre Stimme zur Lösung der brennenden nationalen Probleme erheben zu müssen, legte Pārsīpūr im übrigen auch schon vor ihrer Haft an den Tag. So mahnte sie den bekannten linken Dichter Aḥmad Šāmlū in einem Brief, sich in seinem Exil nicht zu scharf gegen das ohnehin im Sturz begriffene Schahregime zu äußern, da es »zum Untergang führt,

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[66] *Ibid.*, 247. – In einigen Fußnoten gewinnt man den Eindruck, die Autorin wende sich auch an Leser, die mit iranischen Verhältnissen nicht vertraut sind. Entweder meint sie Landsleute, die im Exil geboren oder bereits in jungen Jahren ausgewandert sind, oder aber, im Hinblick auf eine spätere Übersetzung ihrer Memoiren, nichtiranische Leser. So gibt sie Erklärungen zur Identität so bekannter Politiker, bzw. politischer Gruppen wie Muṣaddiq, Rafsanǧānī, Muǧāhidīn und Fidāyin und kommentiert die iranische Sitte des auf dem Bodensitzens: »Bedenken Sie, daß dieses Gefängnis in einem islamischen und nicht in einem europäischen Land ist und es Brauch ist, daß die Leute auf einem Teppich (...) sitzen.« *Ibid.*, 99.

[67] *Ibid.*, 511.

[68] *Ibid.*, 512 f.

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wenn alle Leute zusammen mit dem Schah fallen.«[69] Später setzte sie ein Schreiben an Rağavī, den Führer der 'linksislamischen' Muğāhidīn, auf, in dem sie ihn beschwor, seinen Aufruf zum bewaffneten Widerstand zurückzunehmen, um die Jugend nicht ins sichere Verderben zu führen.[70]

Mit der Niederschrift ihrer Memoiren legt Pārsīpūr also nicht nur Bekenntnis bzw. Zeugnis ab, sondern versucht auch, eine Analyse der iranischen Gesellschaft und Anstöße zur Lösung ihrer Probleme vorzulegen. Aus ihren Beobachtungen im Mikrokosmos des Gefängnisses und außerhalb greift sie 'Exempel' heraus, um die 'Wirklichkeit' der iranischen Gesellschaft zu illustrieren, deren intime Kenntnis sie für vital für die Zukunft ihrer Landsleute hält.

Moralisches Vorbild und Vordenkerin

In den einleitenden Worten nach ihrem oben zitierten Gebet nimmt Pārsīpūr indes zunächst einmal das eventuelle Scheitern ihrer 'Mission', d.h. das Desinteresse ihrer fiktiven Leserschaft, vorweg. Gleichzeitig reiht sie sich mit ihrem intendierten Werk in eine lange Tradition ein, jedoch nicht etwa in eine spezielle Tradition der Autoren von Gefängnismemoiren,[71] sondern von Buchautoren überhaupt:

> Ich denke an die Millionen Bücher, die in den großen Bibliotheken verstauben. Ich denke an die Millionen Menschen, die auf dem Gipfel der Genialität und des Talents in den Staub gesunken sind. Welchen Wert kann meine Arbeit unter allen diesen haben?

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[69] *Ibid.*, 40.

[70] S. *ibid.*, 56.

[71] Hierzu s. Barbara HARLOW, *Resistance Literature*, 148: »(...) the prison memoirs of Third World detainees do suggest a collective history and a selfconsciousness about that literary and ideological solidarity. Ngugi, for exemple sees himself writing already within a tradition and cites exemplary predecessors.« Pārsīpūr dagegen, die großen Wert darauf legt, sich von politischen Aktivisten jeglicher Couleur zu distanzieren, wurde ihrer eigenen Darstellung zufolge völlig grundlos verhaftet und konnte sich demnach allenfalls als kritische Schriftstellerin, jedoch niemals als politische Gefangene verstehen.

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Sie antwortet mit einer zweimaligen, an sich selbst gerichteten Aufforderung:

> Ich sage zu mir selbst Schreib! und was kümmert es mich, wenn es nicht gelesen wird (...) Aber was kümmert es mich, Schreib! vielleicht liest es einer.[72]

Mit dieser Passage, die an den zweifachen Imperativ »Trag vor!« in der koranischen Berufungsszene Muḥammad's denken läßt,[73] verstärkt Pārsīpūr die 'heilige' Aura um ihre Arbeit, das Schreiben, die sie bereits durch ihr eröffnendes Gebet heraufbeschworen hat.[74] Zwar beansprucht sie keine göttliche Inspiration, sondern ermutigt sich selbst zur Arbeit,[75] doch ist die Parallele zum Koran, zumal im Kontext des vorausgehenden Gebets, sicher nicht unbeabsichtigt.[76]

Mehrfach bringt sie ein magisch-religiöses Verständnis der Schriftstellerei als einer widerruflichen, an moralische Verpflichtungen geknüpften Gabe zum Ausdruck:

> Ich war (...) zu dem Ergebnis gelangt, daß ich, wenn ich aus Angst am [obligatorischen] Gebet [für die Gefängnisinsassen] teilnahm, mein schriftstellerisches Talent verlieren würde. Ich glaubte (...), daß eines der Geheimnisse der Schriftstellerei die Aufrichtigkeit

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[72] *Ḥāṭirāt*, 4 f.

[73] Sure 96, Vers 1 und 2.

[74] Vgl. hierzu auch den Anfang einer Rede, die sie 1992 in Deutschland hielt: »Als ich Kind war, hatte man uns gelehrt, wenn wir ein Stück beschriebenes Papier auf der Straße sahen, es aufzuheben und in eine Nische zu legen. (...) Etwas Geschriebenes bringt immer eine heilige Bedeutung mit sich. Natürlich wurzelt eine solche Anschauung in einer Epoche, als das Schreiben als besondere Arbeit einer beschränkten Gruppe galt und diese automatisch Hüter des Heiligen Wortes waren. Wir wissen auch, daß die Heilige Schrift mit dem Lob des Wortes beginnt: Am Anfang war das Wort und das Wort war Gott. Doch jetzt können seit zwei, drei Jahrhunderten alle – wenn sie wollen – schreiben. Auch ich bin also eine Schriftstellerin.« »Šināsnāma-i yak nivīsanda«, 24.

[75] Vgl. dagegen die bekennende Islamistin Parvīn NOUBAḤT, die beansprucht, ihre Memoiren aufgrund eines göttlichen Auftrags zu schreiben. Zit. in F. MILANI, »Veiled Voices«, 13.

[76] Wie sie berichtet, hat Pārsīpūr im Gefängnis die dort angebotene religiöse Literatur, darunter auch die persische Koranübersetzung sowie Korankommentare gelesen. S. *Ḥāṭirāt*, 339.

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> sich selbst gegenüber ist. (...) Ein Schriftsteller kann gestehen, daß er die schlimmsten Sünden begangen hat, (...) aber wenn er zum Lügner wird, begibt er sich auf einen Weg, [der dazu führt], daß das Licht seiner Feder (*nūr-i qalamaš*) für immer verrinnt und sein Geist sich verdunkelt.[77]
>
> Ich hatte mir fest versprochen, daß ich sicher sein wollte, auch nicht einen Menschen verletzt zu haben, wenn ich aus dem Gefängnis käme. Ich bin Schriftstellerin und verpflichtet, eine Grenze/ein Tabu (*ḥarīm*) zu wahren. Wenn ich sie verletze, wird meine Feder austrocknen.[78]

Ihre Umwelt teilt Pārsīpūr's Darstellung zufolge dieses Konzept und hegt demnach besonders hohe moralische Erwartungen in sie, eben weil sie Schriftstellerin ist: »Die Bekehrte schwieg. Sie glaubte nicht, daß ich lüge.«[79] »Der Untersuchungsrichter konnte nicht verstehen, wie es möglich war, daß eine Schriftstellerin moralisch dermaßen heruntergekommen war.«[80]

Eine der grundlegenden Verpflichtungen des Schriftstellers ist, wie Pārsīpūr mehrfach hervorhebt, die Bewahrung strikter Überparteilichkeit: »Als Schriftstellerin muß ich versuchen, abseits dieser Art von Bindungen zu leben.«[81] Dies wiederum prädestiniert ihn, wie erwähnt, zum idealen, weil unvoreingenommenen Zeugen.

Ein weiterer Anspruch, den Pārsīpūr an ihren Berufstand stellt, besagt, daß ein Schriftsteller in seinem Heimatland leben sollte, wie Pārsīpūr mehrmals im Zusammenhang mit ihren eigenen Auswanderungsplänen betont:

> (...) ich dachte, als Schriftstellerin muß ich im Land bleiben und schreiben. Wenigstens, solange ich nicht alle meine Werke ge-

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[77] *Ibid.*, 136. Diese Formulierung, insbesondere »*nūr-i qalam*«, weist wiederum auch auf ihr Verständnis des Schriftstellers als Aufklärer hin. Zur religiösen Konnotation von *qalam* vgl. auch Sure 96, 4-5: »(er) der den Gebrauch des Schreibrohrs (*qalam*) gelehrt hat [*Fußnote:* oder: der durch das Schreibrohr gelehrt hat] den Menschen gelehrt hat, was er (zuvor) nicht wußte« (Übersetzung von Rudi PARET).

[78] *Ḫāṭirāt*, 315.

[79] *Ibid.*, 193.

[80] *Ibid.*, 333.

[81] *Ibid.*, 400.

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> schrieben hatte, sollte ich nicht auswandern. (...) ich dachte, (...) man kann nicht an einem weit entfernten Ort sitzen und dieses Land zum Blühen bringen.[82]

In den letzten Worten deutet sich ihr Bild von der gesellschaftlichen Rolle des Schriftstellers an, das noch deutlicher in folgenden bitteren Bemerkungen zum Ausdruck kommt:

> Noch eine andere, dumme Vorstellung ist tief in der iranischen Kultur verwurzelt: daß der Literat, der Schriftsteller und der Gelehrte arm sein müssen. Reichtum ist gewissermaßen Händlern, Kaufleuten und Ladenbesitzern vorbehalten, während der Gelehrte und Schriftsteller [nur] dann akzeptiert wird, wenn er sich von trocken Brot und Wasser ernährt. (...) Als Schriftsteller bist du also, weil du einen neuen kulturellen Geist vorgelegt hast, oder weil du das Gesicht der Gesellschaft durch Erfindung und Originalität veränderst, verpflichtet, in Armut zu leben (...).[83]

Diese Rolle geht weit über die einer Zeugin, Chronistin und Aufklärerin hinaus. Pārsīpūr sieht sich und ihre Kollegen vielmehr als Visionäre und Wegbereiter des Fortschritts, die das »Land zum Blühen bringen«. Wie in der eingangs zitierten Verteidigung ihres kontroversen Erzählbandes »Frauen ohne Männer« unterstreicht sie hier die gesellschaftliche Relevanz des Schriftstellers bzw. seine Dienste für die Gesellschaft. Pārsīpūrs Selbsteinschätzung spiegelt sich u.a. auch in der Formulierung ihrer Danksagung: »(...) und der Grund ihrer Hilfe war: Das ist jemand, der Bücher geschrieben hat, wir müssen unsere Wertschätzung zeigen.«[84]

Als Schriftstellerin erwartet sie also Wertschätzung, die ihr jedoch in ihrem Heimatland, und insbesondere im Gefängnis, weitgehend verweigert wird:

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[82] *Ibid.*, 374. – Vgl. 52 u. 55.

[83] *Ibid.*, 407. – Vgl. »Pāsuḫ-i nivīsandagān...«, 10: »Ich lege ein hohes geistiges Gebäude bezüglich der Zukunft vor. Ich hoffe, daß ich durch Schreiben mein Brot verdienen kann, daß ich keine Zeit mit Kniefällen verschwende (...), weil ich wirklich Dinge zu sagen habe (...)«

[84] *Ḥāṭirāt*, 517.

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> In meinem Land wurde ich als Schriftstellerin immer gequält und schikaniert und hier, in der Londoner Klinik, als Fremde mit äußerster Freundlichkeit behandelt.[85]
>
> Statt mit meinesgleichen zu sprechen, Versammlungen zu organisieren, den Gedankenaustausch zu pflegen und schöpferisch tätig zu sein, wanderte ich ins Gefängnis für Drogensüchtige.[86]

Zwar stand ihre über vierjährige Haft nicht in direktem Zusammenhang mit ihrer Schriftstellerei, und sie wurde, wie sie selbst sagt, im Unterschied zu anderen politischen Gefangenen auch nicht gefoltert.[87] Nach ihrer Freilassung wurde sie jedoch erneut für mehrere Monate inhaftiert. Dieses Mal war das Erscheinen ihres besagten Erzählbandes der Grund. Er wurde als »anti-islamisch«, seine Autorin als »schamlos« angeprangert und folglich in die Abteilung für »Glaubensdelikte« (*monkarāt*) eingewiesen.

Als sie sich nach ihrer Freilassung nach Ramsār, einen Ferienort am Kaspischen Meer, zurückzieht, um in Ruhe an ihrem neuen Roman zu schreiben, wird sie dort von Nachbarn und 'Sittenwächtern' schikaniert. Man legt ihr eine tote Maus vor die Tür, auf der Straße wird sie ständig ermahnt, ihre Kopfbedeckung zu korrigieren, während die einheimischen Frauen, die ihr Haar nur flüchtig bedeckt haben, nicht beanstandet werden.[88]

Märtyrerin (šahīd)

Die Schriftstellerin Pārsīpūr ist also letzten Endes nicht nur *šāhid* (»Zeugin«), Chronistin und Aufklärerin, sondern in gewissem Sinn geradezu *šahīd* (»Märtyrerin«).

Sie steht unter dem Druck der Zensur,[89] wird wegen eines Buches verhaftet, das sie nach ihren eigenen Worten geschrieben hat,

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[85] *Ibid.*, 494.

[86] *Ibid.*, 430.

[87] Vgl. o., Anm. 52.

[88] S. *Ḫāṭirāt*, 385-390.

[89] S. *ibid.*, 21 u. 388.

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um zur Lösung gesellschaftlicher Probleme beizutragen,[90] und hat wegen ihrer Vergangenheit als politische Gefangene nach der Freilassung größte Mühe, Verleger für ihre Bücher zu finden, um ihren Lebensunterhalt zu sichern.[91] Zudem wird sie noch heftig kritisiert, als sie einen Artikel über ihre finanzielle Not veröffentlicht, da iranische Schriftsteller zwar »selbstverständlich über die Armut des Volkes sprechen, doch niemals über ihre eigene (...).«[92] Sie leidet wegen ihres Berufes und ihres Bemühens um Aufrichtigkeit, die sie ja zur Bedingung der Schriftstellerei erklärt.[93]

Mitunter ist sie daher nahe daran, ihre zukunftsgestaltende Mission aufzugeben:

> Ich hatte die Gedanken an die Menschheit, die Zukunft des Menschen, die Rolle des Schriftstellers (*naqš-i nivīsanda*), den Bau einer besseren Gesellschaft etc. aufgegeben und dachte nur noch an Geld.[94]

Zu den Schwierigkeiten bzw. der Mißachtung, mit denen sie als Schriftstellerin konfrontiert ist, kommen noch die Repressalien, die sie als Frau erleidet.[95] Diese Zustände darzustellen und gleichzeitig Visionen einer neuen, insbesondere für Frauen hoffnungsvolleren Gesellschaftsordnung vorzulegen, macht jedoch gerade den Inhalt ihrer Mission und ihre spezielle Motivation zum Schreiben aus:

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[90] Vgl. o., Anm. 1. – Vgl. auch *Ḥāṭirāt*, 408: »Aufgrund des Verbrechens, daß ich in einigen Sätzen etwas über die Jungfräulichkeit gesagt hatte und mein Ziel dabei war, all den Mädchen und Frauen zu helfen, die sich im Laufe des Lebens bei mir darüber ausgesprochen hatten (...), mußte ich nun in einem kleinen Hof mit Drogensüchtigen und Schmugglern leben und ein anderes Gesicht des Monsters der Tradition (*hayūlā-i sunnat*) zu sehen bekommen.«

[91] S. *ibid.*, 372 f.

[92] *Ibid.*, 407; vgl. o., Anm. 83.

[93] Vgl. o., Anm. 73. – Vgl. *Ḥāṭirāt*, 333: »Da ich nicht betete, eine offene Gegnerin des Schleierzwangs war und als einzige unter allen Gefangenen mit ihren verschiedenen Überzeugungen einen geschwächten (...) Begriff namens Demokratie verteidigte, bildete ich eine leichte Zielscheibe für Verleumdungen.«

[94] *Ibid.*, 439.

[95] Vgl. *ibid.*, 470 u. 474.

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Erst in neuerer Zeit (...) begannen die Frauen an sich selbst zu denken (...) Ich schreibe, weil ich zu denken angefangen habe (...) Ich will wissen, ob die Tatsache, daß Frauen kleiner sind als Männer, eine gesellschaftliche Regel ist oder ein Imperativ der Natur. (...) Ich will (...) das alles denken. Ich will nicht, daß andere für mich denken (...) Ich bin sehr hoffnungsvoll, was die Zukunft der iranischen Frauen angeht. Das sind die Gründe, weswegen ich schreibe.[96]

[96] »Pāsuḫ-i nivīsandagān...«, 9 f.

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NAJĪB AL-KĪLĀNĪ ON HIS CAREER

or

How to Become the Ideal Muslim Author

Christian Szyska
(Bonn)

»Najīb al-Kīlānī[1] can be regarded as the author of Islamic Literature par excellence«. These are the words of Najīb Maḥfūẓ when he was asked, in 1989, by the Egyptian journal *al-Muṣawwar* to comment on the importance of the prominent writer and physician, Najīb al-Kīlānī. And indeed, for the past thirty years, al-Kīlānī's short stories, novels, plays, and poems have enjoyed great popularity not only in Egypt but in many Muslim countries as

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[1] For the biography of al-Kīlānī see: ʿAbdallāh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿARĪNĪ, *al-Ittijāh al-islāmī fī aʿmāl Najīb al-Kīlānī*, al-Riyāḍ: al-Ḥaras al-Waṭanī al-Saʿūdī (al-Mahrajān al-waṭanī li-l-turāth wa-l-thaqāfa), 1989; Suhayl Yāsīn TAWFĪQ, *Najīb al-Kīlānī riwāʾiyyan*, Amman 1985 (unpublished magistral thesis submitted to Jordan University); Najīb al-KĪLĀNĪ, *Lamaḥāt min ḥayātī*, 5 volumes, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1985 ff. – Some biographical data in short:

born 1st June 1931 in Shirshāba near Ṭanṭah
1949 joins the Muslim Brotherhood
since 1951 study of medicine at Cairo University
1955 sentenced to 10 years of prison and forced labor
1956 writes his first novel *al-ṭarīq al-ṭawīl*
1957 wins the governmental novel contest
1958 release from prison
1959 married to Karīma, the daughter of Shaykh Maḥmūd Shāhīn from Shirshāba
1960 graduates from Cairo University
1960-1965 works as a physician in Gizeh
1965-1966 imprisoned anew in the course of the persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood
1966 ff. work as physician in Dubai
1990 retires and moves back to Cairo
1995 dies in Cairo.

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well.[2] Apart from being a prolific writer, al-Kīlānī ventured into literary criticism and emerged as a leader in the establishment of the so-called 'Islamic Literature'. Several of his works propose a basic theory of what is 'Islamic Literature' and what its goals should be. According to al-Kīlānī and his followers 'Islamic Literature' entails a conception of the world in terms of a specifically Islamic outlook on society which is called 'Islamic world view'.[3] The main goals adjudged to 'Islamic Literature,' aside from its aesthetic dimensions, are to promote this Islamic world view and to support the establishment of an Islamic society. With this in mind, al-Kīlānī and others can easily define 'Islamic Literature' as *littérature engagée*, emphasizing its importance on the struggle for an Islamic society, an ideal requiring the establishment of a higher level of justice and humanity. Al-Kīlānī would strongly disagree with Gottfried Benn's assertion of a poet's inability to change the world through his texts. Throughout his life time, al-Kīlānī appeared as a public person – through articles in journals and magazines, broadcast interviews and his own books. He chose to present himself as a good Muslim and as an Islamic author whose literature aims at changing society in favour of a better, religiously based ideal. His committed literary contribution to the achievement of this goal is shown throughout his writings as a natural consequence of his beliefs confirmed by his daily conduct. An author, al-Kīlānī states, should embody the ideals presented in his or her works. The emphasis on the necessity of a correspondence between an author's conduct in life and his or her text makes al-Kīlānī report extensively on his personal experiences, his political and literary career, and his reflections on literary theory.

This study is based on al-Kīlānī's autobiographical and theoretical writings in order to expose his attitudes towards the mis-

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[2] Al-Kīlānī published around 30 novels, short stories, and poetry. Some of his novels are translated into Urdu, Turkish, Persian, Russian and Italian. Cf. 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ BADR, *Maktabat al-adab al-islāmī*, 'Ammān: Dār al-Bashīr, 1989, *s.v.* »al-Kīlānī«.

[3] Cf. Sayyid QUṬB, *Khaṣā'iṣ al-taṣawwur al-islāmī*, Cairo 1960.

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sion of a writer and, more important still, the background of these attitudes.

Whether or not a writer ascribes a mission to his activity depends on his or her concept of authorship. In Western literature we discern three major authorship tropes which can be imagined as a triangular field, each of its angles representing an ideal concept of authorship.[4] The concept of the *poeta vates* whose creativity depends on inspiration goes back to Platonist ideas. The second concept, opposing the Platonist, is the idea of the *poeta doctus* whose capabilities derive from his/her skill in the art of writing. The poet or author perceives his/her tasks as a vocation. According to the third concept the author orientates toward the audience and therefore relies on reality. Generally a writer's individual poetics of authorship show characteristics oscillating between those three poles. Rudolf Selbmann's analysis of the poetics of authorship leads further to a multi-dimensional approach which takes into consideration the idealized concept's interrelations as well as each concept's inherent development to the antithetical, visible e.g. in the case of the third concept. The *poète maudit* inverts the role of the feudal *Dichterfürst* or the writer who faces the public in guise of a hero whilst rejecting the positive and activist role of the hero writer. The latter authorship trope prevails in politically committed literatures.[5]

Due to the social and political transition in Egypt during the colonial and post-colonial era writers felt a strong commitment to social and political issues related to nationalism, decolonization and the role of Islam. The new reading public and the role of authors in the development of the new public sphere were and still are interrelated and therefore defined the role of writers and poets who perceived their tasks as a vanguard of liberation, anti-

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[4] This model refers to Rolf SELBMANN, *Dichterberuf: Zum Selbstverständnis des Schriftstellers von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994, 246-254 (quoted as SELBMANN), and Gunter E. GRIMM, »Zwischen Beruf und Berufung: Aspekte und Aporien des modernen Dichterbildes«, in: idem (ed.), *Das Rollenverständnis deutscher Schriftsteller vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart*, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1992 (Literaturwissenschaft), 7-15.

[5] SELBMANN, 252-253.

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colonialism, nationalism and social reform.[6] Besides journalists, authors became the heralds of the new urban classes when expressing their world-views and creating their public sphere which increasingly spread due to multiple changes and developments such as increasing literacy, new publishing media, urbanisation, and contacts to and translation of foreign, especially Western literatures etc. Consequently writing as such partly replaced or added to oral literary culture. Having this in mind, it is easy to understand that many authors in Egypt perceived their position as vanguards and forerunners of those developments, a process which prepared the path for the enthusiastic adaptation of the Sartrian notion of *littérature engagée*.[7]

In order to analyse al-Kīlānī's commitment in literature, his poetics of authorship, and the 'mission' he propagates, I will refer to the concept of 'minor literatures' suggested by Franz Kafka.[8] Kafka and, building upon his ideas, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari distinguish between 'major' and 'minor' literatures.[9] The first characteristic of a 'minor' literature is literature, which »a minority constructs within a major language«.[10] The language of Kafka, i.e. German, is »affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization«.[11] Certainly this characteristic does not apply to Arabic literature; however, scrutinizing the situation of Arabic literature and the place of al-Kīlānī's 'Islamic Literature' within it, we find that his endeavour of 'Islamic Literature' implies a construction of a 'minor literature' within a 'major,' i.e. Arabic – or Middle Eastern literature. Considering the interrelations be-

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[6] For the interrelation of social transition and the development of Arabic literature compare Sabry HAFEZ, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A study in the sociology of modern Arabic literature*, London: Saqi Books, 1993.

[7] Cf. Verena KLEMM, *Literarisches Engagement im arabischen Nahen Osten: Konzepte und Debatten*, Würzburg: Ergon (forthcoming).

[8] Franz KAFKA, *Tagebücher*, ed. Max BROD, Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer Vlg., 1951, 206-210.

[9] Gilles DELEUZE & Félix GUATTARI, *Kafka: Toward a minor literature*, transl. Dana POLAN, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 (Theory and History of Literature; 30), 16-27. (Quoted as: DELEUZE/GUATTARI)

[10] DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 16.

[11] DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 16.

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tween Arabic and/or Middle Eastern literatures in general and canonical texts and modes of expressions in world literature which became meaningful as referential and/or hegemonial texts in colonial and postcololonial societies, one could attempt to describe this relation as a dichotomy of 'minor' and 'major' literatures as well. Since al-Kīlānī uses Arabic in his writings language does not appear as an obvious distinctive feature at first sight. Nevertheless his choice and usage of language plays an important role in his writings and his self-construction as an author.[12] In minor literatures, however, the individual concern, due to 'cramped space,' is directly connected to politics. The Oedipal triangle joins with other triangles, among them the economical, bureaucratic, juridical,[13] and of course the religious. The second characteristic of 'minor' literature is that everything in it is political. Deleuze/Guattari explain that in 'major' literatures the »individual concerns join [...] with other no less individual concerns, [...] the social milieu serving as a mere background«.[14] The issues which are merely a background in 'major literatures' thus »here absorb [...] everyone no less than as a matter of life and death«.[15] Consequently everything takes on a collective value and literature »finds itself positively charged with the role and the function of the collective and even revolutionary enunciation« and creates an »active solidarity in spite of skepticism«.[16] This collective claim is the third characteristic of minor literature. The writer, from his position on the margins, may express another possible community »and forge the means for another con-

[12] Compare for the relation of dominating and dominated cultures and the literary relations of oppressed and oppressor communities: Bill ASHCROFT, Gareth GRIFFITHS, Helen TIFFIN, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*, London & New York: Routledge, 1989, 32 ff., and the references given there.

[13] DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 17.

[14] DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 17.

[15] KAFKA, 210. Quoted in DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 17.

[16] DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 17.

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sciousness and another sensibility«. So literature becomes the relay for a revolution to come.[17]

On becoming an author

Al-Kīlānī reflects on his career as a writer in a book titled *Tajribatī al-dhātiyya fī l-qiṣṣa al-islāmiyya*, which is the published proceedings of a 1990 conference on Arabic literature held in Tunis.[18] Al-Kīlānī explains that his successful writing career was the result of a long process of development. He acknowledges that social background, tradition, and personal experiences were instrumental in shaping his persona both as an author and as a human being. If tradition supplied him with values and attitudes towards life, experiences from his daily life complemented his objective. What made him an author, however, were »narrative experiences« (*tajribatī al-qaṣaṣiyya*).[19]

Having grown up in a village whose inhabitants were mainly illiterate, al-Kīlānī's first literary world was that of stories his relatives told him. This oral tradition is not uncommon at all, considering the place and time of his youth. However, his portrayal of this early phase of »narrative experience« follows a certain pattern which helps to understand his self-construction as an author. He describes the stories of his grandmother as his first encounter with literature. These were the stories of the Koran: little Moses left alone in a box on the Nile, the story of Noah and the Flood, the imprisonment of Joseph in Egypt, and finally the life of the Prophet of Islam. He intersects stories about the miracles performed by Mohammed. Al-Kīlānī emphasizes that these stories were told to him in the vernacular. What is more, he reports us about the place where his grandmother told him her stories: she used to hold him in her arms while sitting on the prayer-carpet.[20]

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[17] DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 17-18.

[18] Najīb al-KĪLĀNĪ, *Tajribatī al-dhātiyya fī l-qiṣṣa al-islāmiyya*, Beirut: Dār Ibn Rushd, 1991. (Quoted as: *Tajribatī*).

[19] *Tajribatī*, 8.

[20] *Tajribatī*, 10-11.

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The selection of the material presented marks the onset of al-Kīlānī's commitment and dedication to the practice of an 'Islamic' *littérature engagée*. Spatially his first »narrative experience« is placed in the family milieu connected to the sacred; an infantile perfect world void of alienation. Unsurprisingly, the protagonists of his first stories are the Prophets. Two out of the four acted in Egypt and are regarded as the opponents of the unjust Pharaoh; Noah survived the Flood; and Mohammed, needless to say, founded according to Muslim legends the *ummah* of Islam. His conduct of life, the *sunna*, is observed by his followers. These characters and their stories, such as the scenario of the end of time, emigration or their efforts to reform society in accordance to Islamic religion, are mythomotoric subjects used in the discourse of modern Islamic thought. On the level of topics the connection of his first »narrative experience« to the mythical, the depiction of archetypes, is an attempt at reterritorialization in sense.

The second set of stories recounted by al-Kīlānī are those told to him by his father. These are the tales of the old Arab heroes. Evidently this second step in his »narrative experience« tackles the aspect of nationalism. As opposed to his grandmother, al-Kīlānī's father uses a melange of vernacular and classical Arabic in his storytelling.[21]

Furthermore, we can discern a distinction of gender according to specific subjects presented. While al-Kīlānī's father devotes his stories to nationalist subjects, the aunt, his mother's sister, tells him stories about the irrational and the negative: frightening ghosts, devils, and the Jews.[22] The same is true for his mother's stories. She particularly enjoys tales of crime, women's ruses and treachery, as well as stories about kings, viziers and landlords who rule through terror, treason and injustice.[23] A quick examination of the subject matter evidently reveals an assortment of certain virulent stereotypes comfortably nestled in Middle Eastern societies and literature.

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[21] *Tajribatī*, 11.

[22] *Tajribatī*, 12.

[23] *Tajribatī*, 12-13.

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Another interesting characteristic of his autobiographical selection is that al-Kīlānī seems to rank the stories in accordance to their narrator: those stories passed on to him by his father and grandmother are retold in a more positive light than the others. The primary reason for his esteem of these particular stories is that al-Kīlānī was well aware that these were foundation texts of Islam and Arab nationalism, and that these very same texts would be politically semioticized in Islamist discourse to serve a political purpose.

The narratives of al-Kīlānī's aunt and mother are perceived as negative. The irrational threatens the order established by the former texts, which are, of course, transmitted by women. Women threaten the patriarchal order of Islamic society. Admittedly the grandmother seems to disturb this gender-specific dichotomy when narrating Koranic material. However, as the oldest member of the family, she may be beyond these boundaries of gender and may in turn be the most credible transmitter of holy texts precisely because of her age. Presenting these narratives as his first encounter with literature certainly guarantees a high degree of autochtonous flavour in the process of his narrative experience. Indeed, many of the heroes in his later novels follow the stereotypes found in these stories. Moreover, the order in which he arranges the narratives roughly corresponds to the historical developments of both the literary and political history of his own culture. Islam had been a tool of liberation and development in the era of Islamic reform, which was followed by the period of nationalism, partly replaced now by recently emerging Islamic world-views.

As we have seen, al-Kīlānī emphasizes the various levels of language used in the conditioning narratives. We can discern a development from the maternal vernacular, the paternal melange of vernacular and classical Arabic to *al-fuṣḥā* – the sacred language of the Koran. He regards the holy scripture of Islam as the most perfect narrative, which shows his subscription to the theory of the literary inimitability of the sacred text which stays as an eternal model to be emulated in literature but can never be reached

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by humankind.[24] To promote the usage of *al-fuṣḥā* in public life becomes the task of an Islamic writer.[25] Following Gobard's model of tetraglossia,[26] al-Kīlānī emphasizes the usage of a language referring to both, the national and the sacred. The referential language binds the text and the speaker to cultural and historic traditions which implies a cultural reterritorialization; however, striving for a sacred language, though unattainable for humankind, discloses the writers' activity's implied attempt at reterritorialization in a sacred dimension. Interestingly al-Kīlānī's linguistic references to the mystic or sacred which one can also find in his fictional works where he often alludes to the language of the Koran and tradition, correspond to the function of language of Jewish writers in Prague whose Zionist attitudes lead them to a »hypercultural usage of German with all sorts of oneiric or symbolic or mythic flights«.[27]

Moreover it has become clear that al-Kīlānī constructs his first fictional worlds in a way that joins them to his family milieu. Each family member appears as a transmitter of well defined topics according to the role attributed to him or her by gender

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[24] Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-RĀFI'Ī is the most eminent thinker who persued the idea of the literary inimitability of the Koran. In his history of Arabic literature he regards the Koran as the aesthetic model for literature. Cf. Mattityahu PELED, »The Controversy over Concepts of Literary History«, in: idem, *Aspects of Modern Arabic Literature*, Louvain et al.: Peters, 1988, 22. Al-KĪLĀNĪ elaborates this argument in *al-Islām wa-l-madhāhib al-adabiyya*, Tripoli (Libya) 1963, 80 (quoted as *Madhāhib*).

[25] *Madhāhib*, 78.

[26] Henri GOBARD proposed a tetralinguistic model which discerns four functional levels of languages. The following scheme might explain his idea in short: Spatio-temporal assessment of tetraglossia according to Henri GOBARD, *L'Aliénation linguistique*, Paris: Flammarion, 1976, 37:

Language	*Space*	*Time*	
Vernacular	Here	Now	Maternal
Vehicular	Everywhere later	Later	Urban
Referential	Over there	Long ago	National
Mythic	Hereafter	Always	Sacred

[27] DELEUZE/GUATTARI, 25.

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and age – both of which are obviously charged with meanings transcending the boundaries of the family milieu and coinciding with similar topics in religious as well as political discourses. As Deleuze and Guattari indicate in their analysis of Kafka's 'minor literature' al-Kīlānī's individual concerns overlap with the collective due to the 'cramped space' caused by his marginal position.

In the following al-Kīlānī tells us about stories from the mosque, the Koran-school and primary school, which encompass the next major step of his literary apprenticeship. As many of his fellow writers have done, al-Kīlānī undermines the didactic capabilities of his teachers, thus emphasizing his autodidactism and self-discipline in his search for knowledge.[28] He developed an insatiable passion for reading, including Arab as well as Western texts.[29] Among the eleven Arab writers cited by him, the following figure prominently: al-Manfalūṭī, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, al-Muwayliḥī, and Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq ar-Rāfi'ī.[30] Interestingly, the list of Western writers is slightly longer than the former, including among the fourteen cited such eminent figures as Dostojewski, Dumas, Zola, Gorki, Sartre, Camus and Hemingway.[31] On the one hand, this 'name-dropping' shows his familiarity with both modern Arab and modern Western literature. He shows that he experienced a transition from oral to written literature, thereby being more apt to conquer a new mediatized literary public. Portraying this process as a development attests to his ability to bridge the gap between those two literary publics and that this transition will also be palpable in his texts. On the other hand his examination of Maksim Gorki's work in particular leads to a further understanding of his concept of authorship. Al-Kīlānī reports that when reading his novel »The Mother« in 1953 he was fascinated with Gorki's way to employ the written word in order »to promote his convictions and his philosophy and to spread the seeds of resist-

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[28] Najīb al-KĪLĀNĪ, *Lamaḥāt min ḥayātī*, i, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1985, 42 ff. (quoted as *Lamaḥāt* I)

[29] *Tajribatī*, 15-17.

[30] *Tajribatī*, 16, 38-39.

[31] *Tajribatī*, 38-39.

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ance and protest«.[32] The commitment of Gorki as perceived by al-Kīlānī provides him with a new concept of authorship – the commitment to his cause. Al-Kīlānī writes that, being a student at Cairo university,

> our dreams were focused on the idea of freedom, and in the mind of many of us it was clear that the way to freedom was Islam since Islam was our history, our heritage, and our life.[33]

Thus relating himself to Gorki, among other 'Western' writers, underscores al-Kīlānī's concept of authorship. The writer and the text accompany and prepare the revolution leading to a better and more human society to come.

The political activist and the writer

Consequently Najīb al-Kīlānī was involved in the political scene after World War II. Following his fascination for Egyptian nationalism as expressed by the Wafd Party, he became a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition to the organization's struggle for Islamic ideals, al-Kīlānī admired its fight for decolonization.[34] This is evident in his pan-Islamic approach to decolonization rather than endorsing a regionally limited Egyptian nationalism. Taking into consideration his political commitment, the narratives which supposedly forged his identity from an early age appear as a scenario for his later activities and experiences. He explains that only in retrospect these narratives appeared to him as Islamic Literature.[35] By 'Islamising' these narratives from the vintage point of the present, he constructs an Islamic continuity of what he describes as the influence of Islamic Literature upon his life as an *homme de lettres*. Accordingly

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[32] Najīb al-KĪLĀNĪ, *Āfāq al-adab al-Islāmī*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2. ed., 1987, 23-24. (Quoted as *Āfāq*)

[33] *Āfāq*, 24.

[34] *Tajribatī*, 21; *Lamaḥat* I, 110 ff.

[35] *Tajribatī*, 14-15.

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al-Kīlānī emerges from this process of narrative experience as a good example for the effect of such 'Islamic' literature.

His political commitment leads to imprisonment, a period which is extensively described in the third volume of his autobiography.[36] During this time, he also writes his first novel *al-Ṭarīq al-ṭawīl*, a *Bildungsroman* about the childhood and youth of an Egyptian, whose remarkable talents qualify him for studying medicine in Cairo University.[37] While being marginalised in society by the regime, al-Kīlānī's creative writing becomes a tool for subverting the system. He submitted the novel to an annual literary contest organized by the government, and it won the competition.[38]

Evidently, al-Kīlānī interprets this event on the base of his self-image and regards the award as an acknowledgment of the value of his text and his writing capabilities.[39] Furthermore, read against his ideas about the writer/text relation explained above, it constituted a victory for the writer himself. The authorities were forced to accept the excellence of al-Kīlānī's text according to the verdict of a neutral jury; an action that, in spite of the government's disposition, gave him instant notoriety and prompted his release from prison. Although health reasons were cited as the sole reason for his release, al-Kīlānī insists that such pretext only underscored the government's cowardice, aimed at masking the real reason for his liberation: intense pressure from his national and international public.[40]

Al-Kīlānī, however, tries to avoid the corruption that usually accompanies such high honours. He describes how he refused to share the meal served during the reception organized on the occasion of the award. Prison fare was good enough for him.[41] On his

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[36] Najīb al-KĪLĀNĪ, *Lamaḥāt min ḥayātī*, iii, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1988. (Quoted as *Lamaḥāt* III).

[37] Najīb al-KĪLĀNĪ, *al-Ṭarīq al-ṭawīl*, Cairo 1957. Al-Kīlānī writes about his work on the novel in *Lamaḥāt* III, 199-217, and *Tajribatī*, 25-27.

[38] *Lamaḥāt* III, 212 ff.

[39] *Lamaḥāt* III, 214.

[40] *Lamaḥāt* III, 276 ff.

[41] *Lamaḥāt* III, 240-241.

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return from the reception his fellow prisoners applaude. He's the hero of the day.[42]

Literature, we can conclude from the writings of al-Kīlānī, thus serves as an effective political tool. On the one hand, reading motivates social action and, on the other hand, writing becomes an act of liberation, subversion and resistance against injustice.[43] He sees writing as an essential part of the nationalist struggle, even as an avant-garde endeavour.

Theorizing in Islamic Literature

Taking into account his personal experiences, it is not surprising to find that al-Kīlānī had incorporated a great deal of theoretical precepts into his writings. In his first publication related to a theory of Islamic Literature,[44] he expanded upon earlier ideas of Sayyid and Muḥammad Quṭb, adhering to their definition of Islamic Literature as an exercise based on the Islamic world view.[45] As mentioned in the beginning of this study, the writer's conduct of life should concur with his literary worlds which in turn emerge from his or her own experience, i.e. the writer must strive for perfection as defined by Islam in order to increase the credibility of his texts.[46] Considering the background of al-Kīlānī's early narrative experience as well as the subjects of his first narratives, one can compare this development to the *insān kāmil*, the Muslim concept of a 'perfect man,' a state that can only be reached through the *imitatio Muhammadi*.[47] Contrary to this tradition, however, is the significance accorded to texts in his devel-

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[42] *Lamaḥāt* III, 240.

[43] *Tajribatī*, 22-23.

[44] Najīb al-KĪLĀNĪ, *al-Islāmiyya wa-l-madhāhib al-adabiyya*, Tripoli (Libya): Dār al-Nūr, 1963.

[45] Muḥammad QUṬB, *Manhaj al-fann al-islāmī*, Cairo 1960.

[46] *Āfāq*, 20-23.

[47] Cf. Hans H. SCHAEDER, »Die Lehre vom vollkommenen Menschen, ihre Herkunft und ihre dichterische Gestaltung«, in: *ZDMG* 79 (1925), 192-268, and R. A. NICHOLSON, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Cambridge: CUP, 1921.

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opment as a writer: There are no mystical experiences or initiatory visions marking the path to the ideal. Instead, struggling with the texts through individual effort leads to perfection. These traits can be found among many of the characters portrayed in al-Kīlānī's novels. They repeat, in different times and places, models of the prophets mentioned and others. Moreover, references to the traditional pattern of the perfect man make the phenomenon of a writer readable from a traditional perspective.

In his theory of Islamic Literature, al-Kīlānī uses a language adapted from Western literary theory.[48] We can describe it as an adaptation passing through two stages and depending, of course, on the discourse of *littérature engagée* that emerged among Arab critics and writers in the fifties, instigated by the concept formulated by Sartre. In al-Kīlānī's concept *littérature engagée* appears as its Islamized form. Using these notions al-Kīlānī addresses the literary discourse in the Arab world and claims there a place for Islamic thought.

Theory of Islamic Literature formulates a second aspect of committed Islamic Literature. Islamist intellectuals perceive Western literature and thought, especially ideologies such as communism and materialism, as the fifth column of imperialism. Western thought has had a destructive influence on Muslim societies. The blind adaptation of Western institutions to non-Western nations has led to the physical exploitation of these societies.

[48] It is beyond the purpose of this study to discuss al-Kīlānī's concept of committed literature. As an example might serve his discussion of commitment in world literature. Al-Kīlānī quotes Norman Mailor's statement that committed literature is the lifebelt in the ocean of values fighting each other until the limits of the chaos. Commitment therefore connects the subject to the exterior world which enables the subject to develop a comprehensive worldview. Al-Kīlānī concludes that an author should pursue a political position. He acknowledges Sartre's commitment towards the cause of the Algerian people, although he can not accept his existentialism. Consequently, he considers Sartre's commitment to be false. Also al-Kīlānī admits that Russian writers, such as Tolstoy, Dostojewski, and in particular Maksim Gorki became famous due to their role in the processes leading to the Russian revolution and the emerging Socialist Realism in literature. Despite his criticism he resumes that commitment is an acknowledged phenomenon in literature. That Islam goes along with commitment is a well-known fact, al-Kīlānī states. Islamic commitment is human and comprehensive and neither depends on regional conditions nor on historical or economic factors. Cf. *Madhāhib*, 39-46.

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Literature was, and still is, one of the most important channels through which these destructive thoughts spread in the Muslim world.[49] While seeing a causal relation between both, Western texts and Western hegemony, Islamic texts counter the hegemonial claim of the Western culture and become a tool of decolonization. This, of course, heavily legitimizes the discourse of Islamic Literature: the more these Western or Western-influenced texts are regarded as meaningful and authoritative in the colonized society, the more increases the importance of its countering force: the Islamic text.

From an Islamic point of view this importance in turn gives literature – aside from other discourses such as preaching or religious treatises – a discursive space meaningful for the Islamic cause. Since, as Muslim theorists say, it goes along with basic human needs, this new writing might prove more efficient than those other – more traditional – forms of discourse, since it also meant the emergence of a discursive field until then neglected and occupied by forces countering the Islamic world view.

To sum up: We have found that al-Kīlānī perceives his mission as writer as an avant-garde fighter for a better, alternative Islamic society. As an author of a 'minor' literature expressing the concerns of a minority his texts about the self as well as his fictional works produce heroes acting *vis-à-vis* the audience. The family milieu overlaps, due to the minority position with the collective, which in turn prepares the commitment of the author in the field of politics as well as of literature. Accordingly he has proven writing to be an effective tool for the motivation and promotion of liberation on multiple levels: personal, national and international. His concept of authorship refers to various concepts such as traditional ideals of the human being in a Muslim society as well as to concepts from the 'West' which become meaningful in the new literary public. By achieving this balance between intellectual and political activism, a writer approximates the ideal of a Muslim who, in modern times, is able to become a true *homme de lettres*.

[49] Cf., e.g., *Āfāq*, 24-25.

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Persons as Texts / Texts as Persons in Classical Arabic Literature

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Man being the measure of all things, it is not strange that personification is one of the most common, and often most striking, literary techniques. When classical Arabic poets talk about poetry they may compare their hitherto untouched conceits to virgins, their poems to beautiful brides or to their own children; they may even address their own poetry. Conversely, there are many statements in poetry and prose that do not personify a text but turn a person into a text, in the sense that someone's reputation and his survival in this world is wholly dependent on what people (and especially poets) say about him.[1] Here I intend to discuss these two basic metaphors and their possible interactions. The links between texts and humans are obvious and basic. Aristotle's definition of man as a speaking being was known to the Arabs (*ḥadd al-insān al-ḥayy al-nāṭiq al-mubīn*).[2]

Let us begin with a poet who, more than any other Arabic poet known to me, is obsessed with the poetic process and speaks about his poetry. In a short poem of ten lines on an unknown »ignorant man (*jāhil*)«, Ibn al-Rūmī says that he has ignored him until his hand, eager to write, complained; he speaks to his inner self (*najwā l-nafs*) and continues:

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[1] Or her, of course; I shall use masculine forms in their unmarked function.

[2] See e.g. al-JĀḤIẒ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, Cairo 1968, i, 77, 170.

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> ... I said to poetry, »Come on, help me fight a misguided man who has long erred!«
>
> It answered, »Your opponent is finished. Such people do not have to be attacked.
>
> If I had space for such a man, I would leave him as a tale that is told (*uḥdūthatan turwā*).«[3]

This poem combines the two sides that I referred to: Poetry speaks as a person, about a person that is to be reduced to a tale, a text, in particular a poem, since the text is to be produced by Poetry.

The idea that a person, particularly after death, is to be equated to what is said about him is an ancient one. In Arabic we find it in the Koran; God says about the peoples of the past (23:44), »We caused them to follow each other, and made them into stories (*wa-jaʿalnāhum aḥādītha*)«, and (34:19) »They wronged themselves, so We made them into stories (*fa-jaʿalnāhum aḥādītha*)«. The commentators take *aḥādīth* to be the plural of *uḥdūtha* or of *ḥadīth*. Although in principle it should be possible that one person is to be equated with more than one »story«, this is not how it was interpreted, for in numerous versions of this idea in poetry and prose, to be quoted below, a single person is said to be a *ḥadīth* or *uḥdūtha*, never the plural *aḥādīth*.

It is obvious, in view of the important function of poetry in pre-Islamic tribal society, that the idea must have been known that poets, almost like God in the verses quoted, were able to turn people into stories, although there are not all that many early Arabic lines of verse that clearly express this idea in these terms. That only legends and stories remain of people of the past (... *wamā minhumū illā l-aḥādīthu wa-l-dhikrū*) was said by al-Ashʿar (Nabt) Ibn Udad, who is himself a legend, being the eponym of the tribe of the Ashʿariyyūn.[4] ʿUrwa Ibn al-Ward, the *ṣuʿlūk* poet, said, »Tales that remain, but a man does not live forever« (*Aḥādī-*

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[3] IBN al-RŪMĪ, *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār, Cairo 1973-1981, i, 59.

[4] Al-ĀMIDĪ, *al-Muʾtalif wa-l-mukhtalif*, repr. Beirut 1982, 47.

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thu tabqā wa-l-fatā ghayru khālidin).[5] The following saying is attributed to the legendary pre-Islamic wise man Aktham Ibn Ṣayfī: »You are nought but reports, so make your reports favourable (*Innamā antum akhbār, fa-ṭayyibū akhbārakum*)!«[6] The pre-Islamic poet Dhū l-Iṣba' said of his tribe 'Adwān: »They have become tales (*aḥādīth*), by the raising and lowering of words«[7] – perhaps the last few words mean that words raise or lower their reputation.

Instead of the word »tales« one finds, for instance, »praise«. Since one's reputation or praise is expressed in words, tales, or poems, the difference is not very great. If one is not praised, one might as well not have been born, says the pre-Islamic poet Yazīd al-Ḥārithī: »When a man meets his death, unless he is praised, it is as if he had never been born (*lawlā l-thanā'u ka-annahū lam yūladī*).«[8] Al-Ḥādira, who died perhaps in the early 7th century, before Islam, said, »Praise us, damn you, for our merits, for praise is eternal life (*inna l-thanā' huwa l-khuldū*)«.[9] Does this mean that he thinks that dispraise is not a form of living forever, too? An unknown poet from Asad said: »I would love living forever, if only I could! But to die and not being blamed is as good as living forever to me (*wa-ka-l-khuldi 'indī an amūta wa-lam ulam*)«.[10] This,

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[5] *Al-Aṣma'iyyāt*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir & 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, Cairo 1979, 44; IBN MAYMŪN, *Muntahā l-ṭalab*, facs. ed. Frankfurt a.M., 1986-1993, i, 235; Alan JONES (ed., tr. and comm.), *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. I: Marāthī *and* ṣu'lūk *poems*, Reading 1992, 129. – Compare an anonymous line in al-MU'ĀFĀ al-JARĪRĪ, *al-Jalīs al-ṣāliḥ al-kāfī*, Beirut 1993, iv, 183: »Don't you see that, after people have passed away, their tales live on forever (*takhludu ... aḥādīthuhum*), but a man (*al-mar'*) does not live forever«.

[6] IBN 'ABD RABBIH, *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, Cairo 1948-1953, i, 232.

[7] ABŪ L-FARAJ al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *al-Aghānī*, Cairo 1927-1974, iii, 92.

[8] Al-MARZŪQĪ, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn & 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, repr. Beirut 1991, 1756; anonymously in al-MU'ĀFĀ al-JARĪRĪ, *al-Jalīs al-ṣāliḥ al-kāfī*, iv, 183.

[9] Al-JĀḤIẒ, *al-Ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, Cairo 1965-1969, iii, 475; al-JĀḤIẒ, *al-Bayān*, iii, 320 (*bi-aḥsābinā* instead of *bi-iḥsāninā*); al-MUBARRAD, *al-Kāmil*, Cairo AH 1355, i, 222 (*bi-af'ālinā*); IBN QUTAYBA, *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, Cairo 1925-1930, iii, 161; al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Aghānī*, iii, 275; ABŪ HILĀL al-'ASKARĪ, *al-Awā'il*, Beirut 1987, 6.

[10] Al-JĀḤIẒ, *Ḥayawān*, iii, 475; *Bayān*, iii, 320; al-'ASKARĪ, *Awā'il*, 6, al-RĀGHIB al-IṢBAHĀNĪ, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'*, Būlāq AH 1287, i, 234; cf. the

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too, implies that being not mentioned at all, neither negatively or positively, amounts to living forever. Others would rather be mentioned as bad than not at all: »It were better for me to be remembered for ill than not to be remembered for ill or for good.«[11] Interesting is also the line by a poet from Ghaniyy: »When you reach your people, tell tales! For in tales lie perdition and eternal life (*fa-taḥaddathū / wa-min al-ḥadīthi mahālikun wa-khulūdū*)«.[12] Obviously, *khuld* and *khulūd* have positive associations; having a bad reputation does not count as life even when it survives.

Of course, calling post-mortem reputation »life« is no more than a comforting metaphor, a self-deluding figure of speech to those for whom death offers bleak prospects, or no prospect at all. This idea is heard towards the end of a *qaṣīda* by Zuhayr. Literally living forever is impossible, lasting deeds can only be called one's legacy:

> If praise could make people live forever, they would not die. But praise does not make people live forever (*wa-lākinna ḥamda l-nāsi laysa bi-mukhlidī*).
>
> But lasting deeds serve as his legacy. Therefore, bequeath some of those to your sons, and provide a store for yourself![13]

* * *

Zuhayr's lines, if not Islamic, well express Islamic ideas: praise after one's death does not really count as eternal life. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī distinguishes in his *Risālat al-ḥayāt*, »Treatise on Life«[14], between eight meanings of the word *ḥayāt* referring to

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»prosified« version in al-MUBARRAD, *Kāmil*, i, 221-22 (*Innī uḥibbu l-baqā'a wa-ka-l-baqā'i 'indī ḥusnu l-thanā'*).

[11] Anonymously, in prose, al-'ASKARĪ, *Awā'il*, 6.

[12] Al-JĀḤIẒ, *Ḥayawān*, iii, 475; IBN QUTAYBA, *'Uyūn*, iii, 161; al-MUBARRAD, *Kāmil*, i, 222; al-'ASKARĪ, *Awā'il*, 6.

[13] W. AHLWARDT, *The Divans of the six ancient Arabic poets*, London 1870, 81; al-JĀḤIẒ, *Ḥayawān*, iii, 475; al-'ASKARĪ, *Awā'il*, 6.

[14] Ed. by Ibrāhīm al-KĪLĀNĪ, in *Rasā'il Abī Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī*, Damascus: Dār Ṭalās, n.d., 269-318.

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humans, such as the life of sense perception, the life of knowledge, understanding and reflection, the life of pious deeds, or the life of the Hereafter. The seventh of these different kinds of life he calls »the life of supposition and delusion (*ḥayāt al-ẓann wa-l-tawahhum*)«, which he explains as follows:

> I mean the dominant reputation, prestige or renown of a person, in whatever manner. That is why an early [poet][15] said that »praise is living forever (*al-thanā'u huwa l-khuldū*)«. Since a human being is aware of an eternal life, he strives to attain it in every manner, hopes to find it everywhere, dreams of it whenever he slumbers, and desires it whenever he is awake.[16]

It should be obvious that this is not the true eternal life that awaits man in the Hereafter according to Islam. Al-Tawḥīdī says that striving after this kind of afterlife may distract one from the quest of true survival; it is related to another kind of illusory survival: living on through one's posterity.[17] Nevertheless, a good reputation is in itself a good thing in Islam too, as al-Tawḥīdī says clearly in another work, his notorious *Mathālib al-wazīrayn*:

> Two kinds of persons are called »living forever« (*mukhlid* or *mukhallad*) by the Arabs: someone who is slow in getting grey hair, and someone who is praised after his death ... He who is averse to praise is averse to the religion of Ibrāhīm, the Friend of the Merciful [... a reference to Q 26:84 »Make for me a tongue of truth (*i.e.* a truthful reputation) amongst the later generations«] ... A poet said, »Being praised by the living amongst those alive is life to the dead (*Wa-thanā'u l-ḥayyi li-l-am-/-wāti fī l-aḥyā'i 'umrū*)«.[18]

In Islamic times there are many instances of the equation of people and stories. It became, apparently, proverbial, since al-Maydānī lists »*al-nās aḥādīth*« among the sayings of the *muwalla-*

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[15] *al-awwal*; cf. the line by al-Ḥādira, above.

[16] 285.

[17] *Ibid.*, 285-86.

[18] Al-TAWḤĪDĪ, *Mathālib al-wazīrayn*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Kīlānī, Damascus 1961 (date of preface), 244-45.

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dūn.[19] I will quote some sayings in prose and lines of poetry, at the risk of considerable monotony. It will be seen that in several of them the equation is said to be valid »among the living«, or »in this world«, or »to others«, as if to stress that there is another, unearthly afterlife.[20]

> A wise man said to his son, »My son, a human being is nothing but a tale (*innamā l-insāna ḥadīth*). If you can be a good tale, do so!«[21]
>
> A wise man was asked, »What is the most praiseworthy of things?« He answered, »That there remains for a man a good tale (*an tabqā li-l-insān uḥdūtha ḥasana*).[22]

A Khārijite bedouin:

> Man, I see, is to others a tale (*ḥadīthan*) once he no longer answers a caller,
>
> So be the tale you desire to be; do not be like what enemies desire you to be.[23]

Anon.:

> A man, after death, is a tale (*uḥdūtha*): he perishes and his traces/reports/works (*āthār*) remain.
>
> His days will be folded up in due course; but his secrets/essential characteristics (*asrār*) will be unfolded.
>
> That man is most fortunate whose reports (*akhbār*) after his death are favourable.
>
> He perishes and his memory/renown/report (*dhikr*) remains after his death, when his house is empty of his person.[24]

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[19] Al-MAYDĀNĪ, *Majmaʿ al-amthāl*, ed. Naʿīm Ḥusayn Zarzūr, Beirut 1988, ii, 422.

[20] It is possible that some of the anonymous lines may turn out to be pre-Islamic.

[21] Al-JĀḤIẒ, *Kitmān al-sirr wa-ḥifẓ al-lisān*, in *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, i, 160. Attributed to Buzurjmihr in al-MUʿĀFĀ al-JARĪRĪ, *al-Jalīs*, iv, 183, and al-RĀGHIB al-IṢBAHĀNĪ, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 234.

[22] IBN ʿABD RABBIH, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, i, 232.

[23] Al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, Cairo 1958-1965, ii, 36; *al-Ḥamāsa al-Baṣriyya*, Hyderabad 1964, ii, 421.

[24] Al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, ii, 37; IBN QUTAYBA, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, iii, 195.

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Anon.:

Race for glory, you people of glory, for the world is nought but tales (*innamā l-dunyā aḥādīth*)![25]

Anon.:

Be a tale that is good, for I have seen that all people are a tale (*Wa-kun ḥadīthan ḥasunat fa-innī / ra'aytu l-nāsa kulluhumū ḥadīthū*).[26]

Anon.:

Nothing lasts: so be a tale good to mention, for the world is a tale (... *fa-kun ḥadīthan jamīla l-dhikri fa-l-dunyā ḥadīthū*).[27]

Anon.:

A lasting mention among the living is life to the dead (*Wa-baqā'u l-dhikri fī l-aḥyā'i li-l-amwāti 'umrū*).[28]

Anon.:

His deeds gave him back his life:

It was as if by their spreading he was resurrected (*fa-ka-annahū min nashrihā manshūrū*).[29]

Abū l-Jahm (?):[30]

A man is linked with his deeds; people are reports and parables (*wa-l-nāsu akhbārun wa-amthālū*).[31]

Al-Akhṭal (?):

There will remain a tale (*ḥadīth*) after your death; so see which tale you may be, and be it (*fa-nẓur ayya uḥdūthatin takūnu fa-kunhā*)![32]

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[25] Al-JĀḤIẒ, *al-Bayān*, ii, 104; al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, ii, 38.

[26] Al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, ii, 38; al-RĀGHIB al-IṢBAHĀNĪ, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 234 (rhyme-word *ḥadīthā*).

[27] Al-ṬURṬŪSHĪ, *Sirāj al-mulūk*, ed. Ja'far al-Bayātī, London 1990, 380.

[28] Al-RĀGHIB al-IṢBAHĀNĪ, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 234; cf. the line quoted by al-Tawḥīdī, see above.

[29] Al-'ASKARĪ, *Awā'il*, 5.

[30] There was an Abū l-Jahm 'Āmir (or 'Umayr or 'Ubayd) Ibn Ḥushayfa, contemporary of the Prophet; a variant has Ibn al-Jahm, so perhaps the well-known poet 'Alī Ibn al-Jahm (d. 249/863) is meant.

[31] Al-TAWḤĪDĪ, *al-Baṣā'ir wa-l-dhakhā'ir*, Beirut 1988, i, 12-13.

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A prose saying attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767):

The world is a tale, so be one of its best tales! (*Al-dunyā uḥdūthatun fa-kun anta min aḥsani aḥādīthihā*).[33]

Abū l-Qāsim Yūsuf Ibn al-Qāsim *al-kātib* (d. after 170/786):

You are, among people, a tale (*uḥdūtha*), so be the best (tale) that you would prefer.[34]

Al-ʿAbbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf (d. c. 188/804):

We have become a tale (*ḥadīth*) for those living after us; the centuries will tell one another about us.[35]

Aḥmad Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Ṣabīḥ *al-kātib* (d. 213/828):

People in this world are tales (*aḥādīth*) that remain, while inherited property will not remain:

Therefore may God's mercy be upon someone deceased about whom good tales are told in it.[36]

Abū Tammām (?) (d. 231/846):

A human being is nought but the mentioning of a good deed or of a bad deed, spread by words (*dhikru ṣāliḥatin aw dhikru sayyi'atin yasrī bihā l-kalimū*).[37]

ʿAbd al-Ṣamad Ibn al-Muʿadhdhal (d. c. 240/854):

Let me ransom glory by spending my wealth – what a fair price!

I see that people are a tale (*uḥdūtha*), so be a good tale (*ḥadīth ḥasan*)![38]

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[32] Anonymously al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, ii, 37, attr. to al-Akhṭal in *al-Ḥamāsa al-Baṣriyya*, ii, 421, but not found in the *Dīwān*.

[33] *Mufīd al-ʿulūm wa-mubīd al-humūm*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, Beirut 1985, 205. The edition attributes the work wrongly to Zakariyyā Ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī; another (Cairo, 1327/1909) to Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī. The probable author is Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Qazwīnī (fl. 551/1185), see C. BROCKELMANN, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, I, 499, Suppl. I, 914.

[34] Al-ṢŪLĪ, *al-Awrāq* (*Qism akhbār al-shuʿarā'*), Cairo 1934, 150.

[35] Al-ʿABBĀS IBN al-AḤNAF, *Dīwān*, Beirut 1965, 303.

[36] Anonymously in al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, ii, 37; see al-ṢŪLĪ, *al-Awrāq* (*Qism akhbār al-shuʿarā'*), 216. The poet is the son of Yūsuf Ibn al-Qāsim quoted above.

[37] IBN QUTAYBA, *'Uyūn*, iii, 195; IBN ʿABD RABBIH, *'Iqd*, i, 232 (in both sources attributed to Ḥabīb al-Ṭā'ī; not found in Abū Tammām's *Dīwān*).

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ʿAlī Ibn al-Jahm (d. 249/863):

There is no good in the life of a man when he is obscure: but mentioning a man favourably is a life renewed (*wa-dhikru l-fatā bi-l-khayri ʿumrun mujaddadū*).[39]

Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 283/896):

I see that poetry revives people and glory (*arā l-shiʿra yuḥyī l-nāsa wa-l-majda*), made to last by fragrant breaths.

What else is glory, but for poetry, except things of the past; what else are people but rotting bones?[40]

Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933):

Man is nought but a tale after his death; so be a good tale for those who understand (*innamā l-marʾu ḥadīthun baʿdahū / fa-kun ḥadīthan ḥasanan li-man waʿā*).[41]

Al-Nawbakhtī (?):[42]

I see that tales (*aḥādīth*) remain for doers of good and evil,

So be a fair tale (*fa-kun ḥadīthan jamīlan*), that you may win a splendid destiny![43]

Al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965):

Man's renown is his second life (*dhikru l-fatā ʿumruhu l-thānī*).[44]

Ibn al-Naqīb al-Fuqaysī, al-Ḥasan Ibn Shāwar (d. 687/1288):

We are nought but a story, an imagined vision, a tale for dwellers

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[38] Al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓāʾir*, ii, 37; al-MUBARRAD, *al-Kāmil*, i, 237; al-THAʿĀLIBĪ, *al-Tamthīl wa-l-muḥāḍara*, n.pl. 1983, 87; al-RĀGHIB al-IṢBAHĀNĪ, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 234.

[39] Al-ʿAMĪDĪ, *al-Ibāna ʿan sariqāt al-Mutanabbī*, Cairo 1969, 182.

[40] Al-ḤUSRĪ, *Zahr al-ādāb*, ed. Zakī Mubārak, repr. Beirut 1972, 59; al-THAʿĀLIBĪ, *al-Tamthīl wa-l-muḥāḍara*, 189. The *Dīwān* (391) reads *yuḥyī l-majda wa-l-baʾsa* (and *wa-l-nadā* instead of the following *alladhī*).

[41] From his famous *Maqṣūra*; al-TIBRĪZĪ, *Sharḥ al-Maqṣūra*, Damascus 1961, 185 (line 182); IBN ʿABD RABBIH, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, i, 232; al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓāʾir*, ii, 38; al-THAʿĀLIBĪ, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, repr. Beirut n.d., 3.

[42] Probably ʿAlī Ibn al-ʿAbbās Ibn Ismāʿīl (d. c. 327/939).

[43] Al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓāʾir*, ii, 38.

[44] Al-MUTANABBĪ, *Dīwān*, ed. F. Dieterici, 711; al-ʿAMĪDĪ, *Ibāna*, 183 (deemed inferior to its model, the line by ʿAlī Ibn al-Jahm quoted above). Cf. a prose version: *dhikru l-rajuli ʿumruhu l-thānī*, al-ʿASKARĪ, *al-Awāʾil*, 5.

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of towns and deserts (*Naḥnu illā ḥikāyatun wa-khayālun wa-ḥadīthun li-ḥāḍirin wa-li-bādī*).[45]

* * *

In Islamic times, it is still in poetry that reputations are immortalized most eloquently and memorably, although other genres have come to claim their share. ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, the great critic, used the line by al-Mutanabbī quoted above, in a passage on the power of poetry, or more precisely of poetic similes and metaphors: poetry is able to represent a thing or a quality as its opposite, a living person as being dead or *vice versa*.[46]

If people are tales, and these tales are best represented as poems, then one could turn the metaphor around and say that poems are people. This has been done; but it could mean different things. It is one thing to say that a person lives on in the form of tales and poems, but quite another thing to identify a particular poem as the person it describes. Rather, a poem is personified because in a sense it is the offspring of the poet, or simply because it is something that »speaks« and may travel the earth. »Poetry will speak of his days/his feats (*ayyāmihī*), with a tongue that is not tied«, said Ashjaʿ al-Sulamī (d. end of 2nd/8th century) in an elegy on Muḥammad Ibn Manṣūr Ibn Ziyād.[47]

A poet may die, but his (or her) poetry does not; an idea expressed already by al-Khansāʾ:

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[45] IBN SHĀKIR al-KUTUBĪ, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Beirut 1973-1974, i, 329.

[46] ʿABD al-QĀHIR al-JURJĀNĪ, *Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, İstanbul 1954, 121, transl. RITTER (*Die Geheimnisse der Wortkunst*, Wiesbaden 1959), 149. ʿAbd al-Qāhir quotes the citation anonymously and incorrectly (*dhikratu l-fatā*). See on this power and function of poetry also al-MUẒAFFAR al-ḤUSAYNĪ, *Naḍrat al-ighrīḍ*, ed. Nuhā ʿĀrif al-Ḥasan, Damascus 1976, 293 ff.

[47] Al-MUBARRAD, *al-Taʿāzī wa-l-marāthī*, ed. Muḥammad al-Dībājī, Beirut 1992, 190; IBN ʿABD RABBIH, *ʿIqd*, iii, 292 (with *sa-yanṭabiqu* wrongly for *sa-yanṭiqu*).

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> A rhyme like the edge of a spearhead that remains (*tabqā*), while he who said it will perish.[48]

Here the metaphor of »undying« poetry is still lacking; it is present in an often-quoted line by Di'bil (d. 246/860);

> When I say a line of verse; he who said it will die and so will he on whom it was said. But the verse will not die,[49]

and, again by Di'bil, in a line where poetry is made capable of dying like humans:

> Bad poetry will die before its people (viz. those mentioned in it); good verse remains even when he who said it dies.[50]

In *muḥdath* poetry, it is not rare to find that poetry has been given human features. Abū Tammām gives it a face and a body:

> How come poetry's face is dust-coloured, dark?
> ... Poetry shook its sides expectantly ...[51]

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[48] Al-KHANSĀ', *Dīwān*, ed. Ibrāhīm 'Awaḍayn, Cairo 1985, 50; IBN ABĪ 'AWN, *al-Tashbīhāt*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān, London 1950, 228, al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, i, 225.

[49] DI'BIL, *Dīwān*, ed. 'Abd al-Ṣāḥib 'Imrān al-Dujaylī, Beirut 1972, 154; al-MUBARRAD, *Kāmil*, i, 237; IBN 'ABD RABBIH, *'Iqd*, v, 317; al-QĀLĪ, *Dhayl al-Amālī*, Cairo 1926, 112; al-MARZUBĀNĪ, *al-Muwashshaḥ*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, Cairo 1965, 576; al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, i, 225; al-TAWḤĪDĪ, *al-Baṣā'ir wa-l-dhakhā'ir*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī, Beirut 1988, ix, 208; 'ABD al-KARĪM al-NAHSHALĪ, *al-Mumti' fī ṣan'at al-shi'r*, ed. 'Abbās 'Abd al-Sātir, Beirut 1983, 174; al-SHARĪF al-MURTAḌĀ, *al-Amālī* (*Ghurar al-fawā'id*), ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1954, ii, 270; IBN RASHĪQ, *al-'Umda*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo 1955, i, 77 etc.

[50] DI'BIL, *Dīwān*, 256; IBN ABĪ 'AWN, *Tashbīhāt*, 229; al-MUBARRAD, *Kāmil*, i, 238; IBN QUTAYBA, *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo 1967, 851; al-MARZUBĀNĪ, *Muwashshaḥ*, 556, 576; al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, i, 225; IBN 'ABD RABBIH, *'Iqd*, v, 317; al-'ASKARĪ, *Dīwān al-ma'ānī*, ii, 238; al-MURTAḌĀ, *Amālī*, ii, 270; al-THA'ĀLIBĪ, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*; idem, *al-Tamthīl wa-l-muḥāḍara*, 188, 120; IBN RASHĪQ, *'Umda*, i, 114, etc.

[51] ABŪ TAMMĀM, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abduh 'Azzām, Cairo 1976, iii, 182-183; cf. al-ĀMIDĪ's criticism: a gloomy face and merrily shaking sides do not go together, *al-Muwāzana*, iii (ed. 'Abd Allāh Ḥamd Muḥārib, Cairo 1990), 680-81.

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As for the comparison of a *qaṣīda* with a body, in a remarkable passage by the critic al-Ḥātimī, I refer to an earlier essay of mine.[52] Poetry may be sick, as in a line by Ibn Abī Salama (early 3rd/9th century):

> Some people's poems may be ill, but some wholesome and healthy verse is coming to you.[53]

A poem may have youth and old age, according to Ibn al-Rūmī:

> A poem is like life: in it, together with youth, there are grey hairs.[54]

Poetry itself may take pride in its subject. Al-Buḥturī says:

> Some may be proud of poetry in which they are praised; but poems boast because of you [since you are mentioned in them].[55]

Abū Tammām begins a poem with:

> You in whom self-glory (*fakhr*) glorifies, and in whom poetry is delighted![56]

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[52] »The Poet as a Body-Builder: On a Passage from al-Ḥātimī's *Ḥilyat al-muḥāḍara*«, in: *JAL* 13 (1982), 58-65, and G.J.H. VAN GELDER, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic literary critics on the coherence and unity of the poem*, Leiden 1982, 82-89.

[53] Al-ṢŪLĪ, *al-Awrāq* (*qism akhbār al-shu'arā'*), ed. J. Heyworth Dunne, Cairo 1934, 253.

[54] IBN al-RŪMĪ, *Dīwān*, 203, adopting, like Schoeler, the variant *ka-l-'ayshi* for *ka-l-sha'ri*; cf. Gregor SCHOELER, »Ibn ar-Rūmī's Gedicht über die Dichtung und seine Gedankenlyrik«, in W. Heinrichs & G. Schoeler (eds.), *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag*, Bd. 2: *Studien zur arabischen Dichtung*, Beirut 1994, 318-336, see 320; idem, »On Ibn ar-Rūmī's Reflective Poetry: His Poem about Poetry«, in: *JAL* 27 (1996), 22-36, see 23.

[55] Al-BUḤTURĪ, *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥasan Kāmil al-Ṣayrafī, Cairo 1972-1978, 958; IBN ABĪ 'AWN, *Tashbīhāt*, 226; al-ṢŪLĪ, *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, Cairo 1937, 76; idem, *Akhbār al-Buḥturī*, ed. Ṣāliḥ al-Ashtar, Damascus 1958, 150; al-ĀMIDĪ, *al-Muwāzana*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr, Cairo 1961-1965, i, 327; ḌIYĀ' al-DĪN IBN al-ATHĪR, *al-Istidrāk*, ed. Ḥifnī Muḥammad Sharaf, Cairo 1958, 63.

[56] *Dīwān*, ii, 183.

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The life of poetry is intimately linked with that of the person eulogized in it; as Abū Tammām says,

> The life of poetry is the life that you give to generosity; when generosity dies, so does poetry.[57]

The comparison of poems and lines to pretty girls is commonplace in *muḥdath* poetry and is in no need of illustration here. They are virgin, of course, since the motifs, *maʿānī*, are virginal, never yet touched by man. As for poems being the children of the poet, there is an anecdote about Abū Tammām being urged to scrap a line, whereupon he said, in prose,

> It is like a man with a number of sons, all of them handsome and promising, except one who is ugly and backward. He knows this son and knows what he is worth, yet he does not wish him to die.[58]

The poet Khālid al-kātib (d. c. 262/876) was asked by ʿAlī Ibn al-Jahm to renounce his claim on a particular line, but Khālid replied, »Do you think that anyone would give away his child?«[59] An obscure *adīb* called Abū ʿAmr al-Razjāhī (d. 426/1035) elaborated this in verse:

> They said, »It grieves us to see you old, without children female or male.
>
> Yet a man's memory remains after his death.« I replied, »Leave me alone! That is all twaddle.
>
> My offspring, when I am dead, will be brilliant necklace-like poems that I have spread around, consisting of verse, knowledge and reports,

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[57] *Dīwān*, ii, 292, transl. by M.C. LYONS, »Notes on Abū Tammām's Concept of Poetry«, in: *JAL* 9 (1978), 57-64, see 59.

[58] Al-ṢŪLĪ, *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, 114-15; cf. Abū Tammām's line »... not as someone who is infatuated with his own son and his own poetry«, *Dīwān*, iii, 331 (cf. variant in IBN ABĪ ʿAWN, *Tashbīhāt*, 228).

[59] Al-JARĪRĪ, *Jalīs*, i, 271; al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Aghānī*, xx, 279.

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> Everlasting (*khawālid*), no need to be afraid that they will die, whereas one may fear that humans may die or be recalcitrant.«[60]

Panegyric or invective poems may ensure the worldly afterlife of those praised or blamed in them. At the same time, being the poet's offspring, poems give a kind of immortality to the poets themselves. An unknown poet expressed this as follows:

> Although I shall die, I have made to last, after my death, rhymes that please those who quote them.[61]

Or an anonymous *rajaz* poet:

> Many a word, spread by him who said it,
> Will outlast him, while he will not outlast it.[62]

Perhaps the most grandiloquent version of this is a line by al-Mutanabbī, who, as so often, reserves the highest praise for himself in the course of a poem ostensibly in praise of someone else. In a poem for Sayf al-Dawla he says:

> Eternity is merely one of the reciters of the gems of my verse (*wamā l-dahru illā min ruwāti qalā'idī*): when I speak poetry, Eternity is declaiming.[63]

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[60] Al-BĀKHARZĪ, *Dumyat al-qaṣr*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw, Cairo 1968-1971, i, 263.

[61] Al-JĀḤIẒ, *al-Bayān*, i, 222; al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, ii, 210; al-ʿASKARĪ, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 8; attrib. to Ibn Mayyāda in IBN al-SHAJARĪ, *al-Ḥamāsa*, Hyderabad AH 1345, 238; IBN AYDAMIR, *al-Durr al-farīd*, facs. ed. Frankfurt a.M. 1988, i, 174; attrib. to Abū Shurayḥ al-ʿUmayr in ʿABD al-QĀHIR al-JURJĀNĪ, *Dalā'il al-iʿjāz*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo [1984], 513; to ʿAmr Ibn Hind in ABŪ ṬĀHIR al-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Qānūn al-balāgha*, in *Rasā'il al-bulaghā'*, Cairo 1954, 435. Compare the similar anonymous line in al-KHĀLIDIYYĀN, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓā'ir*, i, 225: »Although I shall die, I have made to last, after my death, rhymes that will not be affected by extinction«.

[62] IBN AYDAMIR, *al-Durr*, i, 174.

[63] Al-MUTANABBĪ, *Dīwān* (with the comm. of PS.-ʿUKBARĪ, *al-Tibyān*), ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā *et al.*, Cairo [1956] i, 290; idem (with the comm. of al-WĀḤIDĪ), ed. F. Dieterici, Berlin 1861, 534; cf. A.J. ARBERRY, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī*, Cambridge 1967, 82-83.

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The commentators may explain, correctly, that the words »Eternity is declaiming« is an ellipsis for »people living in *al-dahr*«, but the fact remains that the poet plainly says that *al-dahr* is nothing more or less than the poet's *rāwī*, thus putting himself literally and almost blasphemously above Time and Eternity. Al-Mutanabbī also turns mankind as a whole into a poem, singling out his patron at the time, a certain Abū Ayyūb Aḥmad Ibn ʿImrān, as the best line in this poem:

> Mankind was mentioned to us and it became a *qaṣīda*, of which you were the (most) splendid single verse.[64]

In an amusing passage by Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, in *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, he imagines that the poems of Abū Tammām, at his death, will attend his funeral. The *qaṣīda*s are represented, of course, as women, in groups according to their rhyme-letter, bewailing the poet who may have been cast into Hell because of his alleged neglect of the ritual prayer.[65] Remarkably perhaps, some of the poems mentioned specifically are not, as might be expected, elegies; yet they wail »like the two daughters of Labīd«. It appears, however, that their function is merely to bewail: they do not testify either for or against their maker, whose fate, whichever it may be, is fixed by the Almighty. In al-Maʿarrī's view, poems survive but are, in the end, powerless; although one should never rule out the possibility, when discussing al-Maʿarrī, that he says the exact opposite somewhere else.

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This last remark could be made of any poet, of course. Qudāma and others found it perfectly possible and allowable for a poet to contradict himself; and if there are poets who do not contradict themselves, they are likely to contradict one another. This does not make it easy to generalize about the task or mission of the poet as expressed by the poets themselves, if one does not limit

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[64] *Dīwān* (al-WĀḤIDĪ) 283; (PS.-ʿUKBARĪ) i, 235.

[65] *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, ed. ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Cairo n.d., 484-87.

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oneself to one poet or a limited number, but roams widely over pre-Islamic and Islamic poetry, as I have done just now. It is clear, at any rate, that earthly survival and substitution count as two major functions of poetry: survival both of the poet and the person mentioned in the poem; the potentially limitless life of the poem being a substitute for the brief lives of poet and person. In pre-Islamic times this kind of survival was the only or at least the only important kind; in Islamic times the Hereafter offered another kind of survival in which making poetry played no role or only a very minor one. Although one must assume that the reality of this afterlife was not seriously denied by anybody except some very few, this did not completely overshadow the earthly afterlife made possible by poetry. Poetry remained valuable for those many who wanted the best of both worlds.

The two related metaphors that I have briefly discussed here both serve a major function of poetry: poetry as perpetuation, both of those whom it sings and those who make it. This is, of course, a very common theme, present for instance in ancient Greek, Latin and western mediaeval poetry,[66] and no doubt elsewhere. *Monumentum aere perennius*, »a monument more lasting than bronze«, as Horace (*Odes* III, 30) described his verse. The Arabic contribution, it seems to me, lies in the abundance of the metaphorical equation of texts and persons, of discourse and people, which now strikes a strangely modern, or rather postmodern, note.

Since the Berne conference on »The Writer's Mission« was part of a larger project on »Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim world«, a few words, finally, ought to be said on the subject. To what extent can or should a poem or a text effect the survival of a person as an individual, distinct from other individuals? Arabic panegyrical poetry, on the whole, does not stress the individuality of the *mamdūḥ*, the patron, nor does poetic criticism or theory encourage it. It is true that the caliph ʿUmar is said to have admired Zuhayr »because he praises a man

[66] See the brief excursus »Poetry as Perpetuation«, in: E.R. CURTIUS, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. by Willard R. Trask, Princeton, N.J. 1973, 476-77.

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for what he is worth (*bimā yakūn fīh*)«;[67] but there are other versions of this saying which seem to suggest that it was interpreted differently, implying that a man should be praised for manly qualities.[68] Similarly, a king should be given kingly qualities, a cadi those befitting a cadi, and so on. A poem presents an ideal, as is clearly expressed by a 13th-century critic:

> Whenever a poet describes one of the traits of his patron, such as his noble-mindedness, his knowledge, his excellence, his courage, his noble descent and lineage and all the other things for which he extols him in his verse, he ought to aim at the limit, and not to be content with anything falling short of the utmost degree.[69]

The person is to be idealized in verse, which is not in itself incompatible with individuality, yet pushes it into the background. Panegyrical poetry, therefore, is the worldly counterpart of Paradise, in which the faithful will live on, perpetually free from blemishes and defects.

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[67] IBN SALLĀM, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu'arā'*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo 1952, 52; al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Aghānī*, x, 289; cf. IBN QUTAYBA, *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*, 138; IBN 'ABD RABBIH, *'Iqd*, v, 270; IBN RASHĪQ, *'Umda*, i, 98.

[68] See Geert Jan VAN GELDER, *The Bad and the Ugly: Attitudes towards invective poetry* (hijā') *in classical Arabic literature*, Leiden 1988, 64, with more references.

[69] Al-MUẒAFFAR IBN al-FAḌL al-ḤUSAYNĪ, *Naḍrat al-ighrīḍ*, 449.

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THE POET AND HIS MISSION

Text and Space in the Prose Works of Maḥmūd Darwīsh

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In his early novel *Shame* the Anglo-Pakistani author Salman Rushdie writes in the second chapter:

> The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centring to be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan.[1]

Elsewhere in the same novel Rushdie states:

> All migrants leave their past behind, although some try to pack it into bundles and boxes [...], because it is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon which they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging.[2]

These two quotations sum up a distinct relationship between a human being, a defined space and the movement of time, a relation which is characterized by disruption: the place about which the author writes is not a real place, it is, as it were, an image detached from its original, a picture taken from an

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[1] Salman RUSHDIE, *Shame*, New York: Vintage International, 1989, 23-4.

[2] *Ibid.*, 64.

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eccentric point of view, which results in a discrepancy between the real country and its artificial reflection in the story. This segregation of the two spaces and their interaction, which are essential to the interpretation of the novel, are parallelled by a fragmented notion of time. The spatial disruption implies a breach in the development of time, a loss of continuity, a segregation of man from his past. Time and space are no longer part of a coherent whole and in his œuvre Rushdie assumes the task of displaying this integration and to explore ways to find new forms of unity, a new »sense of belonging«.

In this article I would like to show that a similar theme can be perceived in the prose works of the prominent Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh. Of course, what connects the two authors and what produces the parallels between their works is primarily the experience of exile, the feeling of displacement from which their sense of spatial and temporal disruption derives. It is exile, in its different guises, which forces them to look at a country from an 'off-centred' position and which severs them from their past. Various aspects of exile permeate their literary work and they both consider it their task to find responses to the alienation that results from it.

To illustrate this, I have chosen two prose works, which are characteristic for two phases of Darwīsh's life. Maḥmūd Darwīsh was born in the Galilean village al-Barwa in 1942 and fled with his family to Lebanon during the 1948 war. He came back to Israel secretly, however, although this implied that he could not receive any official civil status and, even legally, lived in exile in his own country. His confrontations with the Israeli authorities increased when he started writing poetry, which from the beginning had a clear political dimension. He was imprisoned several times and put under house arrest. In 1971 Darwīsh left Israel and from 1973 until 1982 he lived in Beirut, until the Palestinians were forced to leave the city by the Israeli invasion army.[3]

The two works to be discussed here reflect the two main

[3] Biographical data can be found in Ibrahim Muhawi's introduction to: Mahmoud DARWISH, *Memory for forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1995.

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periods dividing Darwīsh's life: *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī*, first published in 1973 and containing texts written when Darwīsh was living in Israel; and *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* (1985),[4] an account of one day in Beirut, in August 1982, during the Israeli siege and bombardment of the city. Both texts deal with themes that are crucial for Darwīsh's œuvre as a whole, and, what is relevant here, in them he philosophizes explicitly about the function of poetry with regard to the cultural and political challenges facing the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular. Since Darwīsh is a prolific writer, whose œuvre contains numerous collections of poems and essays published in journals, it would be too pretentious to claim that an analysis of the two prose works could result in a definitive reconstruction of Darwīsh's thoughts on the role of the poet. Much of what we are interested in here may be found concealed in poems or explained in articles. It is important to note then, that the conclusions arrived at in this paper apply in the first instance only to the two texts that are analyzed and not to Darwīsh as a person or to his poetical works. The two texts are interesting in more than one respect, however, since they combine explicit statements with implicit applications of theoretical views, and this is why they have been chosen here. To elucidate some points of our argument, some references will be made to other texts, especially the collection of interviews which was published in French.[5]

The conclusions will be evaluated by relating them to in my view the only theoretical framework relevant to the general question of the task of the author within a specific social context: the model of literary production as part of a »field«, as conceived by the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu. As we will see below, this model is not only significant for the role of literature as a socio-cultural phenomenon, but also for the way in which

[4] The Arabic editions used here are, for *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī*, Bayrūt: Dār al-ʿAwda, 1978; and for *Dhākira li-l-nisyān*, Bayrūt: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Dirāsa wa-l-Nashr, 1990; there is another edition which is slightly different: al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: Dār Tūbqāl li-l-Nashr, 1989. Quotations are taken from the English translation by Ibrahim Muhawi (see note 3).

[5] Mahmoud DARWICHE, *La Palestine comme métaphore: Entretiens*, Arles: Sindbad/Actes Sud, 1997.

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authors construct their own roles, their place in society and their position *vis-à-vis* each other. Literary production is seen as part of a process which is organized structurally and which is ultimately shaped by power relations. We hope to show that this approach is particularly relevant to the role of the author as expressed in the two prose works of Maḥmūd Darwīsh.

The first phase of estrangement: Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī

Neither *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī* nor *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* can be considered an unambiguously constructed, homogeneous and generically unequivocal text. They rather consist of a mosaic of texts of diverse genres, bound together by their thematic content and the perspective of the author. The »essays« in *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī* are sometimes personal recollections, connected with contemplations on the various dimensions of the Palestinian-Israeli struggle, and sometimes more detached documentaries on specific subjects, such as questions related to poetry, ideological discussions, historical issues, the Jewish nationalist discourse, or a reconstruction of the massacre of Kafr Qāsim in 1956. In several cases the different types of text are mingled into a single, multi-layered text in which the documentary component merges with personal memories, poetry with political statements, and ideology with history. The result is a very personal account, whose generic technique enhances the impression that the texts together should be seen as a set of autobiographical notes. It is perhaps this autobiographical dimension which enduced Darwīsh to prefer the prose genre to poetry on this occasion, to be able to explore the links between personal experiences, political issues and literature in a more explicit way. Whatever may have been the case, it enables us to interpret certain passages of the texts as referring to personal experiences and opinions of the author.

The autobiographical component is very prominent in the first essay of the collection, entitled »The moon hasn't fallen into the well«, in which images are revived of the author's exodus from his native village during the zionist campaign of 1948 and

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his subsequent return to find the village destroyed. The intertwining motifs foreshadow and summarize the themes which return in many other essays of the collection. The memory of the exodus is the starting point of an almost mystical voyage to the author's childhood, which, in turn, is at the origin of the ties between the author and his land. The memories of childhood determine the author's relation with his spatial environment: the tales of his grandfather about his attachment to the soil, the metaphoric meanings of the land as the »flesh and blood« of the childhood, as the embodiment of a mental disposition and, especially, of a specific identity. The resuscitation of this complex of reminiscences is a precondition to stay alive, to acquire some form of continuity and to find the resources for a struggle for the recuperation of the land.

The land thus becomes the central symbol, firstly as the destiny of a metaphoric journey; secondly as a material domain which determines the boundaries of gratuitous dreaming and fantasizing; and thirdly as an incentive to resist and to counter humiliation, de-humanization and inequality. The land is the basis for human dignity, both individual and communal, and as such it contains the seeds of the future. Finally, the land is the arena in which the struggle between justice and injustice takes place. The exile of the child was a forced and systematic expulsion and the right on the land was usurped by the use of violence. The occupier has no 'natural' right, which is symbolized by the relation between the child and the land. The memories of childhood provide the weapons to fight this injustice, to create a sense of continuity and, ultimately, to reconquer »paradise«. This paradise is not definitively lost as long as the identification of the material space with a specific mental disposition is upheld, as long as the search for the combined identity and land continues.[6]

This complex of symbols, which is of course not uncommon in Palestinian literature, provides only the raw material for the metamorphosis which is, in my view, the essence of the work, a transformation which recurs throughout the texts of *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī* and, as we will see, also in *Dhākira li-l-nisyān*. It is

[6] *Yawmiyyāt*, 27-48.

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summarized in the paragraph in which stones are changed into words, »words through which I maintain the dialogue with the distant country. We become a language of flesh and blood«.[7] After endowing the land with its metaphoric values, here comes the final phase of the abstraction of a defined material phase into words, or rather into a complex structure of speech, language and texts.

In this first essay Maḥmūd Darwīsh sketches the outline of a metaphoric system which is further elaborated in the second essay, entitled »The homeland between memory and the suitcase«. Here the identification of the homeland with a concept of identity is confirmed, but especially the relationship between land and text is emphasized. In the essay two nationalistic poems are cited, one sung by a Jew in Russia and another by an Arab in Palestine. Darwīsh juxtaposes the two poems and observes that whereas the Palestinian poem is banned in Israel, the Jewish poem is, on the contrary, adopted as recommendable. He concludes from the treatment of texts such as these, that it is the Israelis who determine how the identity of the land is to be expressed. This assumption is confirmed by the treatment of another domain of the nexus between texts and the land, a domain which, as we will see, is central to Darwīsh's thought: that of history. Darwīsh notes that the Israelis demand from the Palestinians to relinquish their past and to adopt instead a new version of the past which is based on totally different experiences and on a cultivation of the memory of the holocaust.[8]

In this way, the struggle for the land is epitomized by a struggle between two memories, which are so different that they seem to be irreconcilable. The Israelis derived their rights from 'history and memory,' but these have turned into 'land and power,' simultaneously depriving the Palestinians of their 'history, land and rights'. The usurpation of history is depicted as a form of violence, which effectively transforms the identity of a spatial territory:

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[7] *Ibid.*, 29.

[8] *Ibid.*, 49-70.

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> They have also occupied the mental space, the mental disposition and all relations between you and your homeland, so that you have started to ask about the meaning and significance of the homeland.

This homeland is not a theory, not a map, and it does not consist only of »the graves of the forefathers«, it is rather a relation which is expressed in a convergence of material and textual components, of the land, memory and history. In order to preserve this relation, history should not merely be written down and defined, it should live on in the form of memory and struggle.

The connection between the land and texts is treated in a different way in the essays entitled »Diary of daily sadness«, and »When joy deceives«. Here the emphasis is laid on the way in which names of any kind affect the organization and control of spaces. Names of streets and towns and descriptions of the land are together seen as signs of a community's relations to the land. Giving a name is a mechanism to appropriate reality, to impose a certain version of reality on the material environment. The land is appropriated by changing its names, by redrawing its boundaries dividing it and by restricting and regulating the freedom of movement of the citizens. This usurpation is an act of force, as becomes clear when Darwīsh describes his efforts to visit the ruins of his native village, to obtain travel permits and to rent a room, and when he is once and again confronted with the fact that he is not recognized as a regular citizen. The land around him has turned into a foreign country, subjected to the power of a new language and new names.[9]

History, but especially poetry and memory, are the means to preserve the original names and keep the original land alive:

> Suddenly you remember that Palestine is your land. The lost name leads you to lost times, and on the coast of the Mediterranean lies the land like a sleeping woman, who awakes suddenly when you call her by her beautiful name. They have forbidden you to sing the old songs, to recite the poems of your youth and

[9] *Ibid.*, 71-104 and 129-152.

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> to read the histories of the revolutionaries and poets who have sung of this old Palestine. The old name returns, finally it returns from the void.[10]

Poetry is one of the essential mediums to counter the efforts to appropriate the land in this textual way and to strengthen the bonds with the original land, as it is preserved in memory:

> Poems are your language. Poetry says everything and nothing; she says the truth without explaining it. This is your land and the answer to the conqueror is still greater love for your land, because every weakness that clouds your relation to your country is a pretext to attack for the conquerors.[11]

Poetry, then, is a powerful medium in the system of symbols and texts which is shaped by the contesting efforts to possess the land in the most comprehensive way, especially as a means to record a vision of history which derives from a genuine, »natural« attachment to the land. In the account of the Kafr Qāsim massacre, entitled »Whoever kills fifty Palestinians pays one penny«, a version of the events is given which not only denounces the perpetrators, but also the dubious ways in which the events were incorporated into the Israeli ideological system, which refused to admit any responsibility for the crimes and even cleared the Israeli soldiers involved. It is this fundamental dichotomy between oppressors and victims which inescapably and consciously divides the Israeli society into two opposing camps. Israeli nationalist discourse has usurped the events of Kafr Qāsim, by the force of its predominance, but the Palestinians should integrate them into the history and poetry of the land, as part of their epic.[12]

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[10] *Ibid.*, 140.

[11] *Ibid.*, 150.

[12] *Ibid.*, 105-128.

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The ultimate exile: Dhākira li-l-nisyān

Although at first sight the structure of *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* is less fragmentary than that of *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī*, as far as the generic characteristics are concerned the two works are remarkably similar. Digressions into political debates, excursions into the past and fragments of historical texts alternate with poetic passages and personal memories and contemplations. Because the text as a whole is more cohesive, it seems that fragmentation is used as a deliberate device to convey a sense of confusion and estrangement. Moreover the historical fragments lend the account of the events of a single day a depth which shows their many layers of meaning and their roots in the past. Many tracks have led to this day; the text is not merely an account of a day in 1982, it is the archaeology of that specific day. As in the case of *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī*, this complex structure increases the autobiographical, even novelistic character of the text.

The setting of *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* seems to be fundamentally different to that of *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī*. In the latter there is a confrontation between the occupier and the occupied, which is based on force, but which in the course of time has become abstract as a struggle between texts. In contrast, in *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* the author is directly confronted with violence and the threat of death, Beirut being continually shelled, attacked by aeroplanes and encircled by Israeli troops. The city is completely in the grasp of violence, death and destruction and there seems to be no way of escaping it. The sheer force of the mechanisms of destruction stifles the poet and undermines the power of his words:

> If only I knew how to organize the crush of this death that keeps pouring forth. If only I knew how to liberate the screams held back in a body that no longer feels like mine from the sheer effort spent to save itself in this uninterrupted chaos of shells.[13]

Then a comparison is made with the birds in the sky, which create their own space for their songs, but which are now silenced by the invasion of the aeroplanes into their domain. Still, there is

[13] *Memory*, 4 (*Dhākira*, 7).

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some fixed point in this bizarre chaos, which is vested in language:

> From now on we have nothing to lose, so long as Beirut is here and we're here in Beirut as names for a different homeland, where meanings will find their words again in the midst of this sea and on the edge of this desert. For here, where we are, is the tent for wandering meanings and words gone astray and the orphaned light, scattered and banished from the center.[14]

What is expressed here is the quintessence of exile, not an exile imposed by circumstances only, but an existential exile, which invades the poet in his lonely confrontation with an absurd, anonymous death. The space of Darwīsh is, as he says, »reduced from the homeland to his body«, and even this minimal space is not wholly under his control: finally he admits that he »only exists in words«.[15] The experience of exile is even more painful for the younger generation, those who are resisting the Israeli invasion with weapons, although they have come to know the homeland only through a »mighty memory« and a tireless seeking. They are the children of exile, bereft of their identity by the enemies, who have changed the names of the homeland in order to affirm their victory. Names are the signs in place and time against forgetfulness and the Palestinians have become the victims of forgetfulness. They are required to forget the past and Darwīsh asks himself who will be capable of creating a new memory for this new generation?[16] Here exile, space and text come together.

Again, the notion of history is of crucial significance for the interpretation of present events. The main reference in *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* is to the crusades, as a parallel war waged against the Arabs by a foreign, invading army, and to the Bible, providing the inspiration for a combined Israeli-Lebanese effort to gain predominance in the Near East. This history is manipulated, it is a history of false meanings, which have been inscribed on the

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[14] *Ibid.*, 11 (16).

[15] *Ibid.*, 51 (65).

[16] *Ibid.*, 13-15 (18-23).

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land. This manipulation is the »right« of the conqueror, who imposes a version of history upon memory. The conqueror determines the roles which derive from their possession of the land. They appropriate the historical roles which confirm their relations with the land and the integrity of their identity. The inversion of roles is one of the central themes throughout Maḥmūd Darwīsh's works: he accuses the Israelis of monopolizing all the roles available in the conflict, the roles of the criminal and the judge, of the murderer and the mourner, of the perpetrator and the victim. This leaves no role for the Palestinians, who are thus, by force, eliminated from the historical scene, without even the right to bewail their dead. The only recourse is to fight back. The fighters, therefore, are

> defending the lineages of this coast against the mix-up of meanings, that history shall not be made docile and the place a mere estate to be inherited.[17]

Fighting back is not restricted to guns, however. For the poet there is another recourse, which consists of sheltering and ordering functions of language, which can be opposed to the irrationality of violence:

> Yet I want to break into song. Yes, I want to sing to this burning day. I do want to sing. I want to find a language that transforms language itself into steel for the spirit – a language to use against these sparkling silver insects, these jets. I want a language that I can lean on and that can lean on me, that asks me to bear witness and that I can ask to bear witness, to what power there is in us to overcome this cosmic isolation.[18]

Darwīsh quotes the story of creation in the version of Ibn al-Athīr, in which God first of all creates the Pen and says: »Write!«, after which the world was written into being.[19] Writing, or, more precisely, poetry, is a means to fill the emptiness of the horrible and unbearable reality. However, just like the birds have stopped

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[17] *Ibid.*, 51 (64).

[18] *Ibid.*, 52 (66).

[19] *Ibid.*, 42 (54).

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singing, the war has deprived the poet of his language. There are no words for the language of war. The poet keeps silent as long as the guns speak and he will only speak when the guns quiet down, when he finds the appropriate language:

> There is no role for poetry now. My role is outside the poem. My role is to be here, with citizens and fighters.[20]

Some ask for poems that will

> match air raids or at least upset the balance of forces. If the poem is not born 'now,' then when will it be born? And if it's to be born later, what value has it 'now'?[21]

The answer is that

> a poem may be born in a certain place, in a certain language and body, without reaching throat or paper.[22]

Darwīsh refuses to comply to the demand for 'war-songs' which directly interfere with the struggle. Still, even when the poet is silent, poetry is being born, a poetry which is different and transformed by the events:

> [The fighters] are the genuine founders of a writing that for a long, long time will have to search for a linguistic equivalent to their heroism and their amazing lives. How can the new writing – which needs time enough for leisure – crystallize and take form in a battle that has such a rhythm of rockets? And how can traditional verse – and all verse is traditional at this moment – define the poetry now fermenting in the belly of the volcano?[23]

It is clear for Darwīsh that the events mark a turning point in literature. After this, no text will be the same.

While in *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī* the connections are examined between material space and texts with regard to the home-

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[20] *Ibid.*, 62 (79).

[21] *Ibid.*, 63 (81).

[22] *Ibid.*, 63-4 (81-2).

[23] *Ibid.*, 64 (82).

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land, in *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* Beirut, the place of exile, is described as a city of speech-acts, of texts and various forms of communicating. Beirut is a symbol, the city of posters and slogans; Beirut is vulnerable »like an open text«,[24] usurped by all kinds of intellectuals and political refugees. Their relation to Beirut has become an addiction which rendered language so metaphorical that they could imagine themselves to be full citizens. The Palestinians too made this mistake:

> We did not understand Lebanon. We saw in Lebanon only our own image in the polished stone – an imagination that re-creates the world in its shape, not because it is deluded, but because it needs a foothold for the vision.[25]

The imaginary identification with Beirut led to a distortion of their vision of reality:

> Memory assumes the shape of the city's chaos and takes up a speech that makes you forget words that went before.[26]

The boundaries between reality and illusion fade:

> Is it because disjointed reality cannot be grasped, or because disjointed consciousness is unable to grasp?[27]

The material and mental displacement leads to a fragmentation of the Palestinian sense of identity, not only because the ties with the homeland become more complex and diverse, but especially because perspectives on the self and the homeland are multiplied and diversified into a multi-dimensional optic play. Beirut may have been an illusion, but the homeland should remain real.

Although the activity of the poet – or his inactivity – is clearly linked to the spatial environment, Beirut as a place of exile, and to the events of the moment, poetry is not limited to a reality situated in a well-defined context of »time and place«. On the

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[24] *Ibid.*, 134 (167).

[25] *Ibid.*, 45 (58).

[26] *Ibid.*, 91 (115).

[27] *Ibid.*, 46 (59).

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other hand, Darwīsh rejects the »dictatorship of the text«, which claims sanctity for the poetic text that

> allows no tool for its analysis except self-reference and, at the same time, reserves the exclusive right to load itself with all the ideology exterior to this claim that it can manage to disguise.[28]

Evidently, the relation between text and reality is a complex one and poetry is potentially powerful partly because it is more than just an account of events, or a commentary on events. It also reveals the universal essence of these events, their relation to a context which is deeply rooted in human existence and history.

When evening has fallen, at the end of August 6, 1982, when it is clear that the Palestinians will concede to leave Beirut and that the city is at the mercy of the Israeli troops, the poet sighs:

> What is poetry? Poetry is to write this cosmic silence, final and total. He was alone, without an idea, a woman, a poem, a promise. Was there anything left after Beirut fell under siege? Any horizon? Any song?[29]

Exile and the text

Maḥmūd Darwīsh has repeatedly stressed that his sense of exile is not incidental and not related to his residence inside or outside Palestine. The two texts discussed here show that exile is a consciousness which is imposed by external forces, but which has been internalized and transformed into an emotional and intellectual disposition which affects every experience and every thought. In the first instance, it gives rise to an almost obsessive preoccupation with questions of identity, both as an abstract idea, and as a political phenomenon. Identity becomes an almost mystical concept in which matter, feelings and thoughts melt into a unified whole, which simultaneously pervades and transcends reality. Palestinian identity has been denied and become

[28] *Ibid.*, 139 (173-4).

[29] *Ibid.*, 154 (193).

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disrupted, and among the tasks of the poet is to reconstruct this identity by reintegrating it into the two domains from which it was evicted: time, or the continuity of history, and place, the possession of the homeland. This reintegration can only be achieved in one way: by recreating the two domains in texts, by enabling their essence to transcend a distorted reality and to return to their natural course of deployment.

According to Darwīsh, one of the main priorities of the zionist movement was to deprive the Palestinians of their history. By the dispossession of their land and the subsequent efforts to re-write the history of Palestine, the Palestinians were so to speak exiled from history and prevented to take part in the regular development of events. They were cut off from their past and were denied a new historical role inside Israel, since they were not only not accepted as an integral part of society, they were even denied an existence. In Israeli nationalist ideology the Palestinians are non-existant in the versions of history which serve to strengthen the Israeli ties with the land and the creation myth of the Israeli state. It is this to which Darwīsh refers when he speaks of a distortion of history, the willful falsification of the meaning of words and the monopolization of historical roles by the Israelis. The only moment when the Israelis tolerate the presence of the Palestinians is when they would sign a treaty in which they officially confirm their non-existence.[30]

To prevent being totally driven out of the historical scene and to assure some historical continuity for the Palestinian people, the breach with the past has to be healed. This implies, firstly, that a history has to be constructed which re-establishes the ties between the experiences of the Palestinians and the historical process, and, secondly, that the formulation of a historical identity affords them a commonly accepted place on the historical platform. The displacement and the tasks it entails are extremely relevant to poetry and the poet. In one of his recent interviews Darwīsh says:

Je cherche une place dans l'Histoire et je suis loin de l'avoir

[30] *Ibid.*, 149 (186).

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> trouvée. Je suis hors de l'histoire des autres et hors de ma propre histoire.[31]

And, for poetry:

> Le problème de la poésie palestinienne est qu'elle s'est mise en marche sans forces d'appoint, sans historiens, sans géographes, sans anthropologues; aussi a-t-elle dû s'équiper elle-même de tout bagage nécessaire pour défendre son droit à l'existence.[32]

Poetry has a significant task in restoring the links with history and formulate the historical component in the Palestinian identity. Darwīsh says that essentially poetry is to strive to rewrite or to create its own Book of Genesis, to search for beginnings and to interpret myths of creation. It is through these myths that the poet can return to his origins and ultimately touch upon daily life in the present. Palestinian poets in particular write »à proximité du livre de la Genèse«, since it is here that their mythical and social roles converge. History and myth have become an unavoidable detour to comprehend the present and to mend the gaps created by the violent usurpation of the land and its textual representations.

The various versions of history are inscribed on the land, both by the occupier and by the Palestinians. The relations of power however, imply that the Israeli version is dominant and that the Palestinian 'textual' homeland is threatened by elimination. What remains for the Palestinians is not so much 'history' as 'memory,' consisting of recollections of childhood and of the exodus, emotions symbolizing the attachment to the land and the 'natural' right of the Palestinians to the land. By its contribution to a reconstruction of Palestinian history, poetry has the important task of transforming the domain of memory into the domain of history, of reintegrating individual and collective experiences into a discourse which is embedded in a historical structure. In this way poetry helps to restore and preserve the relations with the homeland, but, conversely, the

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[31] *La Palestine comme métaphore*, 159.

[32] *Ibid.*, 27.

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land also becomes the main inspirational source of poetry. Here the converging of the text and the land is completed:

> La terre est une synthèse: elle est à l'origine de la poésie et elle en est aussi la matière et le langage. Parfois la terre et la langue sont inséparables. La terre est l'existence physique de la poésie.[33]

Conclusions: Palestinian poetry and the field of literary production

Being fascinated by texts, Darwīsh often describes the Palestinian-Israeli struggle as a struggle between representations, not only of the struggle itself, but also of history, of the homeland, even of the world. In doing this, he is acutely aware that this struggle is intimately connected with relations of power and the use of force. He repeatedly states that the Israeli versions of history have been imposed by force, that the Israeli interpretations of justice have been imposed by force, and that the Israeli meanings of words and concepts have been imposed by force. The predominance of one representation over the other is ultimately dependent on power configurations. It seems obvious, then, to link the analysis of Maḥmūd Darwīsh's works to a theoretical model which is concerned with the structuring of speech and texts within the context of power hierarchies: the concept of the »literary field« developed by the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu.

In the model of Bourdieu a field is a more-or-less stable set of social relations covering specific domains of economic, social or cultural activities. The relations within a field are shaped by the competition between the participants to dominate the field and to profit from the assets which are at stake in every domain: material gain, social status, political, juridical or 'symbolic' power. The power struggles within the field are regulated by official and unofficial rules and codes, which are ultimately the reflections of power relations among the participants. In the course of time, fields are restructured by the revision of rules, by the rise to power of new groups and new generations and by the changing

[33] *Ibid.*, 117.

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functioning of the field within society. In the domain of language and texts too fields are formed which structure linguistic hierarchies within a society, which sanction the priority of one dialect over another, one literary genre over another, one historical representation over the other, one cultural outlook over another, and one ideology over others. The status of forms of speech or texts is related to the status of the speaker or writer within the field, and this is in turn related to the power structure within the society as a whole.[34]

In one of his studies Bourdieu describes how in Europe literary activity became structured in such a way that it is possible to speak of a separate field of literature, in which material and immaterial profits were at stake and in which statuses were distributed according to more-or-less autonomous criteria. Writers, critics, the press, publishers were all inclined to judge literature according to standards developed within the confines of the field, thus separating the field to some extent from other, social, ideological, domains. It is clear that in the case of Maḥmūd Darwīsh there is no clear boundary between the domains of political and ideological discourse and literature. There exists a combined field in which politicians and writers operate and strive to dominate and appropriate its stakes: who is authorized to speak for the community as a whole, who determines which textual representations are in the centre of the field and which ones are in the margin, or even excluded? It is ultimately power relations that determine the dominant versions which are tolerated as 'official,' 'true,' or 'appropriate' and that allow certain writers rather than others to speak.

It is clear from his prose works and his interviews that Maḥmūd Darwīsh sees himself as being engaged in a struggle over the authority to define and interpret concepts and words within the field of literature and ideology and that he considers this field

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[34] For an introduction to Bourdieu's theories, see: Pierre BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993; *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992; *Les règles de l'art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992; Richard JENKINS, *Pierre Bourdieu*, London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

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to be almost totally monopolized by the Israelis. As a consequence, the Palestinians are living in a world which does not really exist, but in an »imaginary Israeli world«, whose boundaries are defined by the Israelis.[35] It is the Israelis who determine what the Palestinians are allowed to say and write:

> Le Palestinien n'aurait-il pas le droit de chanter sa patrie comme l'Israelien son expansionnisme? Non. L'Arabe n'a pas le droit de forger son langage en dehors de limites que l'Israélien lui a fixées. Ce qui déborde de ces limites est décrété hors de l'humain. L'humain, en nous, doit quitter son espace propre pour se confiner dans le 'ghetto' de l'autre. Il doit se faire le gardien de sa propre absence, au profit de la présence de l'autre.[36]

This quotation lays bare the essential competition within the field, but since Israeli society is divided and participants from both camps are competing within the same field, the two rivals are also inescapably linked to each other, even condemned to each other, because their statuses are defined in relation to the other. The dominant discourse is from the beginning defined as the antithesis of the marginal discourse, to such an extent that the denied existence of the other becomes the essence of the ideological system. Thus, in the words of Darwīsh, the Israelis say that they cannot live with the Palestinians, but their problem is rather that they cannot live without them, since they need them in a certain role:

> Ils ont fabriqué leur ennemi, un ennemi dont ils veulent dicter la conduite, le langage, les réactions et même la forme des rêves.[37]

The concept of the field visualizes the relation between poetry and power, which is explored by Darwīsh on several occasions. Poetry is the medium of the weak, of the vanquished, of those erased by history. However, it is also a weapon which can be effective within the field of literature and ideology, where it can affect

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[35] Mahmoud DARWICH, *Palestine mon pays: L'affaire du poème*, Paris: Minuit, 1988, 64.

[36] *Ibid.*, 61.

[37] *Ibid.*, 67-8.

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existing power balances and challenge the status quo. This became clear, for instance, when a poem of Darwīsh, entitled, in French translation: »Passants parmi des paroles passagères«,[38] stirred up a sharp controversy among Israeli intellectuals and politicians. The poem, or at least its interpretation by the Israelis, was outside the boundaries of ideological correctness set within the field of literature. Darwīsh reacted sharply to the turmoil and concluded dryly: »Nous leur proposons un marché: qu'ils suppriment les colonies, et nous supprimerons le poème.«[39] This remark is more than just irony, in fact it epitomizes the functioning of Bourdieu's concept of the field, in which in the Palestinian-Israeli case the stakes in the literary field are not only statuses and texts, but ultimately also the control of the land. The land as a political asset and the land as a literary asset are unseparable. It also illustrates that, as far as power is concerned, poetry somehow operates at least partially on the same level as politics and ideology and that poetry has its own sources of power:

> La poésie ne peut se concilier avec la force, car elle est habitée par le devoir de créer sa propre force, en fondant un espace vital pour la défense du droit, de la justice et de la victime. La poésie est l'alliée indéfectible de la victime, et elle ne peut trouver de terrain d'entente avec l'histoire que sur la base de ce principe fondamental.[40]

This does not mean that poetry is prescribed by historical events or political struggles. It has its own autonomous relation with reality, but from this reality it has to develop its own power resources.

With this final characterization of the function of poetry as an autonomous power factor we come to the essence of the task of the poet as seen by Darwīsh. Seen from the perspective of Bourdieu's concept of the field, one can say that Darwīsh is struggling to carve out an autonomous field for Palestinian literature and ideology, to construct a field which consists of a

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[38] In: *ibid.*, 47-9.

[39] *Ibid.*, 68.

[40] *La Palestine*, 78.

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new system of symbols, forms and language which challenges the institutionalized versions of the Israelis, to build a new version of reality within texts, which will ultimately prove to be more 'true,' more just and more real than the existing ones. It seems that a separate, fictive reality is the only way to preserve the ties of the Palestinians with history and enable them to return from their temporary banishment from history. Since texts are so intimately connected with power and the land, for Darwīsh this textual 'revolution' will certainly coincide with a strengthening of the Palestinians' control of the land. Texts are a weapon for the Palestinians to force themselves back into history, or, as it is summarized by Darwīsh:

> J'ai construit ma propre patrie. J'ai même fondé mon état, dans ma langue.[41]

[41] *Ibid.*, 119.

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A Guardian of Change?

The Poetry of Adūnīs between Hermeticism and Commitment

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I

> The poet, when he talks or writes about poetry, has peculiar qualifications and peculiar limitations [...]. What he writes about poetry, in short, must be assessed in relation to the poetry he writes.[1]

This dictum by T.S. Eliot is particularly true with respect to the Lebanese poet Adūnīs (ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd, born in 1930).[2] Adūnīs is a prolific writer of essays, manifestos and studies on poetry, but seen from the point of view of Western readers who have been familiar with revolutionary poetical theories since the age of romanticism, his poetics lack originality. Much of his theoretical writing served to acquaint the Arab reading public with the theoretical background of his poetry which is rooted mainly in French post-romantic poetics. Often sounding apologetic, it mainly aims at defending his poetry against political and aesthetical charges. Being probably the most controversial Arab writer of our time,

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[1] Thomas Stearns ELIOT, *The Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank KERMODE, London: Faber and Faber, 1975, 107. The quotation is from Eliot's essay »The Music of Poetry«.

[2] For a general overview of Adūnīs's work cf. Stefan WEIDNER, »Adonis«, in: Heinz Ludwig ARNOLD (ed.), *Kritisches Lexikon zur fremdsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, München: Edition Text und Kritik, 1996, 41. Nachlfg., 1-11.

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Adūnīs was constantly forced to display his political correctness according to the changing ideological fashions. After having written for Anṭūn Sa'ādah's (1904-1949) Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP)[3] in the fifties, he then developed into a rather apolitical, elitist writer with some affiliations to the *Tammūzī* movement. In the late sixties he became a Nasserist, and in the seventies he again metamorphosized and became communist. Today, he may be regarded as a liberal. All these changing ideologies were reflected in his writing and it is very difficult to extract Adūnīs's actual, genuine beliefs from his criticism.

For all of these reasons, it seems preferable to me to study how Adūnīs's poetry reflects the mission of the poet rather than to study his non-poetical works.[4] This seems appropiate as his poetry is to a large degree self-referential and self-reflexive. In plenty of Adūnīs's verses the poet tells us what he thinks he is doing and what he wants to do.

II

In his essay »The profession of the poet« Elias Canetti[5] mentions an unknown poet who, on the verge of the Second World War,

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[3] Adūnīs's affiliations to the SSNP are treated in Joseph ZEIDAN, »Myth and Symbol in the Poetry of Adūnīs and Yūsuf al-Khāl«, in: *JAL* x (1979), 70-94.

[4] It would be repetitive to expose Adūnīs's theoretical stance here. His critical writings have been extensively treated by several Ph.D. theses in the U.S. Cf. Mohammed Mahmoud KHAZALI, *Modernity: A study of Adūnīs' theory and poetry*, Austin 1983; Atif Y. FADDUL, *The Poetics of T. S. Eliot and Adunis*, Beirut: al-Hamra Publishers, 1992; and Ahmed Saleh AL-TAMI, *The Poetic Theories of the Leading Poet-Critics of Arabic New Poetry*, Indiana 1987. It is a curious fact that Adūnīs's theoretical work has been more thoroughly studied than his poetry, at least in the West.

[5] Canetti, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1981, was born in 1905 in Rustschuk/Bulgaria into a family of Austrian-Jewish origin. He went to Vienna in 1924 to study chemistry and started writing. In 1938 he emigrated to London, where he lived until he moved to Zurich for the last years of his life. He died in 1994. Among his most famous works are his autobiography in three volumes (1974-1985), the study *Masse und Macht* (1960) and his early novel *Die Blendung* (1935). The essay I am referring to can be found in his collected essays: *Das Gewissen der Worte*, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1982, 279-289 (referred to as »CANETTI« in the following notes).

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demands from himself that he should be able to prevent the war if he really were a poet. Most of us, I would venture to guess, would share Canetti's first assessment of the unknown poet's claim towards poetry: It is hard to think of a definition of the poet's mission which is more unrealistic than this. Moreover, this definition of the poet's mission raises the question whether there is a difference between such a »bombastic« (to take up Canetti's words) notion of the poet's powers and the equally 'bombastic' use of words which instigated the war.

It may be illuminating to examine Adūnīs's poetry in the light of such a definition of the poet's mission. Like most contemporary Arab writers, Adūnīs has been confronted with war several times in his life. He first experienced war in his youth when Syria was struggling for independence. Then there was the Lebanese Civil War in 1958, the June War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990 and, more recently, the Gulf War of 1991.[6] With his long history of witnessing war, we have to conclude that the experience of war has influenced him and his work. Yet war, in the Middle East, was not always *per se* the evil thing it has become for the average Middle European after two disastrous world wars. Quite to the contrary, war was often regarded as a means of liberation, for example of Palestine, from the Mandate Powers or from a dictatorship. For all of these reasons, metaphors relating to war and violence are rather common in Adūnīs's poetry as well as in modern Arabic literature in general. A famous and most significant example for this is what might be considered the 'refrain' of Adūnīs's long poem »Hādhā huwa smī« (»This is my name«, 1970), a poem written in the aftermath of the Arab defeat in 1967. There he writes:

Qādirun an ughayyira: lughmu l-ḥaḍārati – Hādhā huwa smī[7]
I am able to change: the mine of civilisation – this is my name[8]

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[6] The Gulf War of 1991 forms the background of Adūnīs's poem »Wardatu l-as'ilah« in his volume *Abjadiyyatun thāniya*, Casablanca: Dār Tūbqāl, 1994, 151-162.

[7] In: ADŪNĪS: *Hādhā huwa smī: Sīra nihā'iyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1988, 28. The whole poem »Hādhā huwa smī« is analyzed in: Usaima DARWĪSH, *Maṣār al-taḥawwulāt*, Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1992.

[8] I am using the translation of the poem by S.M. TOORAWA, which has been

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There are several points in this short phrase which are interesting for our purpose. First of all, there is the self-reflexivity. In this case, the self-definition consists of one of those martial metaphors. The poet claims to be (or to be called) a mine. This claim comprises an emphatic notion of poetry, virtually a bombastic one. With Canetti we may think that this is an inflated notion of the poet's abilities. However, at least for the Arab world, this might be contendable. Poetry in the Middle East can very well be explosive under certain circumstances (in a metaphorical sense, of course). It can constitute a real danger to the rulers, and poets are therefore subject to persecution and censorship. It can serve to rally resistance, like the poetry of the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh. With respect to the whole of »Hādhā huwa smī«, however, it is clear that it is not in this sense that this poem can be a mine and it is obviously not in this way that Adūnīs wants to be understood. The main difficulty to understand Adūnīs's claim to be (or bear the name of) a mine is not due to the high ambition of such a claim, but rather due to the text where it figures. »Hādhā huwa smī« is so full of difficulties on the level of language, especially syntax, and meaning that it is hard to believe it will ever have any impact comparable to that of Darwīsh's poetry. Thus, the question we have to ask here is how Adūnīs, or, more precisely, the poet, can claim for himself to be »the mine of civilisation« with the backdrop of a poem as cryptic as »Hādhā huwa smī« and his other poems of the seventies.

III

Adūnīs's antagonistic stance towards 'civilisation,' combined with an emphatic notion of poetry and a cryptic style, puts him in the tradition of hermetic writing. Hermetic writing represents an important stream in modern Western literature and has also had a long tradition in Oriental thought. This tradition has been so widespread that its name has become a synonym for difficult or cryptic writing in general. We call hermetic texts those which

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do not allow for an immediate understanding. In this sense, it seems naturally fitting to include Adūnīs's poetry in this tradition. More specifically, the term 'hermetic' helps us to explain how Adūnīs can claim that his poetry has a mine-like quality. Traditionally, hermetic writing, in modern Western as well as in classical Arabic literature, aims at a radical change in *Weltanschauung* and also very often at a change in the social and political order of a given society. In the Islamic world, the hermetic tradition was conveyed mainly in Shī'ī milieus. Quite obviously, Adūnīs is not a dogmatic adherent to these Islamic-hermetic schools; he only takes from these traditions what he deems valuable; for instance, he playfully alludes to alchemic traditions in his cycle *Zahratu l-kīmiyā'* (»The Flower of Alchemy«, 1965) or revives the memory of the Qarmaṭiyya movement in his collection *Mufradun bi-ṣīghati l-jam'i* (»Singular in the Plural Form«, 1975), in effect expressing his beliefs in the need of a new socio-political order of the Oriental societies.[9]

In modern literature, hermetic traditions also exist. In fact, hermetic thought in a modern outfit dominated a large part of Western poetry in the first half of the twentieth century. I am referring not only to the Italian school of poets known as the *L'ermetismo* movement, whose most famous members were Montale and Ungaretti, but also to comparable movements in other countries. There are also ties to surrealism, which, not limiting itself to the domain of literature, fought for a complete change in life and society. Analogous traits can be found in poets as different as the Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa, the American Ezra Pound or German writers like Stefan George, Gottfried Benn or Ernst Jünger. All of them, while practising a difficult kind of writing, felt unhappy in modern civilisation and craved for a radical break with the established socio-political order.

The question which will guide us now is how Adūnīs's plea for change is meant to be understood. For there are two crucially divergent interpretations of change in our context. The one which

[9] It seems noteworthy that Adūnīs himself is an 'Alawī by birth and therefore might feel naturally affiliated and close to Shī'ī traditions. It would be exaggerated, however, to call him a Shī'ī or 'Alawī activist.

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has marked the hermetic traditions across the board struggles to replace the existing order by a new one which is usually based on chiliastic expectations. This is the case with the hermetic Shīʿī movements in Islam like the Qarmaṭiyya or the Ismāʿīliyya. In modern times, those traditions became to a certain degree the intellectual precursors of the twentieth century dictatorships, most of which held chiliastic claims. Not surprisingly, most of the writers I have mentioned sympathized with those regimes for a while, and some of those regimes liked to pick up ideas expressed by these writers, although in most cases on a popular level.[10]

There is, however, a second, different understanding of change which is worked out in detail by Elias Canetti in his essay. Having dismissed the unknown poet's definition of the poet's task as exaggerated, Canetti nonetheless admires his »sense of responsibility towards life«, as he puts it. This responsibility towards life is regarded by Canetti as the most noble mission of the poet. The poet has to fulfill his mission by striving to be what Canetti calls »a guardian of change«. The purpose of change here is twofold. It not only warrants the poet's opposition to the »growing powers of death«, as reflected in the violent history of the 20th century, but also against a widespread attitude towards life and existence which only cares for productiveness, record marks and sensational events. 'Change' for Canetti means the attention the poet has to pay to what usually is neglected or discarded as being worthless. The poet, we may summarize Canetti's attitude, has to be an equilibrating force, healing the defaults of a

[10] Montale (1896-1981) lost his job when he refused to become a member of the Italian Fascist party. Ungaretti (1888-1970), however, had Mussolini write a preface to a re-edition of his volume of poetry *Il porto sepolto*. Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) tried to revive the Portuguese chiliastic myth of the return of Don Sebastião, the Portuguese king who disappeared in a desastrous battle against the Arabs at Alcácer-Quibir (Morocco). Salazar's totalitarian *Estado Novo* (»New State«) picked up this myth. Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda, tried to make Stefan George (1868-1933) an icon of German Social Nationalist culture. Between 1933 and 1936 Gottfried Benn wrote several essays which befitted the Nazi ideology. Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) served as an officer in the Wehrmacht until he was dismissed in 1944 because of his opposition to the Nazi regime. Ezra Pound (1885-1972) sympathized strongly with Mussolini and lived in Italy until the end of the Second World War.

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given society and defending the life-keeping forces against the temptation of nihilism.

IV

I am now going to try to position Adūnīs's poetry between these two opposing concepts of change, paying special attention to what Adūnīs himself claims for his poetry. For this purpose, I will examine a poem which is marked more by the experience of war than any other of Adūnīs's poems: the poem »Al-Waqt«,[11] written under the impression of the Israeli siege of Beirut in the summer of 1982. Although »Al-Waqt« is a highly complex poem, it is not as violently avant-garde as »Hādhā huwa smī«. It has a metre (*ramal*, though in free verse lines, of course), a comparatively clear syntax and a meaning which is rather easily detectable, at least on a superficial level.

In many respects, this poem is self-referential. The speaker describes his own state of mind and his alleged powers and goals in plenty of verses. In the second stanza, he says:

> The shreds of history in my throat
> And on my face the signs of the victim

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[11] »Al-Waqt«, in: ADŪNĪS, *Kitāb al-ḥiṣār*, Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1985, 5-19. *Al-waqt*, literally »the time«, is a term in Ṣūfī literature denoting the moment of inspiration when the Ṣūfī, who is therefore also called *ibn al-waqt*, is in a *ḥāl* (»state«, »ecstasy«). Cf. Annemarie SCHIMMEL, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam*, München: Diederichs, 1992, 190. 'Umar al-Suhrawardī explains *al-waqt* as follows in his *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* (chapter 62.17): »*Al-waqt* means what surprises man without his activity and what governs him and decides over him.« Cf. Richard GRAMLICH, *Die Gaben der Erkenntnisse des 'Umar as-Suhrawardī ('Awārif al-ma'ārif): Übersetzt und eingeleitet*, Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978, 453. AMYUNI (cf. next note) does not mention (or notice?) the Ṣūfī background of the expression. The title »Al-Waqt«, however, also hints at the apocalyptic tendencies of the poem. In the Koran, the root *w-q-t* is used to denote the time of the final judgment (e.g. 15:38; 38:81), and the Apocalypse of John quite often mentions that the time of the final judgment has come or is about to come (e.g. 1:3; 22:10). Furthermore, the expression *al-waqt* might be used as a synonym for *al-ān* (»now«). Maḥmūd Darwīsh uses *al-ān* as a synonym for *al-waqt* when he alludes to Adūnīs's poem in his autobiographical prose work *Dhākiratun li-l-nisyān* (cf. note 19).

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How bitter has language become, and how narrow is the alphabet's door![12]

The self-referentiality of these lines, i.e. their talking about the difficulties of talking, appears as the midwifery of the poetic speech: the poem seems to create itself by talking precisely about its own traumatic birth. The difficulties of finding one's voice in the presence of destruction are emphasized by the sophisticated use of rhyme. The rhyme, here, is not only a musical corollary of the meaning, but its carrier: »the signs of the victim« (*amārātu l-ḍaḥiyya*) form a rhyme with »the alphabet's door« (*bāba l-abjadiyya*), thereby establishing a relation between the state of being a victim and the difficulties of speaking.

The very first verse of the poem also deserves special attention. Like a refrain, it is repeated eight times in the poem. It says: *Ḥāḍinan sunbulata l-waqti wa-ra'sī burju nārin:*« (»Embracing the ear of time my head a tower of fire:«). According to Amyuni this line is about »the poet's fiery brain [which] announces an imminent explosion, namely, the poem which is about to be composed«.[13] This psychological interpretation is sustainable, but another reading could also be suggested: *burju nārin* makes one think of a lighthouse (*manāra*) as well as of a minaret (the word minaret stems from the Arabic *manāra*). This would mean a platform for speech and announcements or even an oriflamme, an interpretation which is underlined by the colon following *nārin*. The line, then, would not be a description of the poet's state of mind, but the description of what the poet is or serves as when »embracing the ear of time«. But there is still another reading possible. Adūnīs, as we know, lived in West Beirut when the Israeli invasion began and his apartment was destroyed by the bombs. It could very well be possible that the poet identifies with

[12] The translation of the verses I quote is based on M.T. AMYUNI's translation which was published together with her analysis of the poem in *JAL* xxi (1990), 172-182 (referred to as »AMYUNI« in the following notes). I also adopt Amyuni's numeration of the verses. As I disagree in some points with her translation as well as with her interpretation, however, I took the freedom to change her translation where it seemed necessary to me (without further notice).

[13] Cf. AMYUNI, 179.

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the city and uses his voice to express the city's sufferings. The modern Arab poet's connection to his homeland is traditionally very close and the unity of the poet's body with his country is often stressed in the poetry of Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb. Keeping this in mind, those familiar with the topography of West Beirut may be tempted to consider the famous lighthouse of Beirut and the quarter named after it, al-Manāra, as well as the neighbouring quarter Ra's Bayrūt, as places to which the poet is alluding. In this case, West Beirut would have its own voice in the poem's polyphony. Furthermore, the poet's adopting the stance of the suffering city would be a striking example of Canetti's notion of change.[14] Doubtlessly, such an interpretation may be subject to discussion, but the sheer possibility of it is haunting enough to bestow a particular thrill upon this refrain.

The poet's stance in these introductory lines is far from the boasting, powerful position he holds in »Hādhā huwa smī«. The remaining 200 verses, however, describe the poet's struggle to re-establish his former powerful stance in the face of war and desperation. The poet does so in a two-part movement.

V

The first movement consists of a description of the devastating impact of the war and the attempt to establish a close and sometimes causal relation between war and the traditional Arabic-Islamic history and culture.

This procedure to establish a relation between tradition and destruction already appears in the fourth line: »the shreds of history in my throat«. War has destroyed history so that now history has become an obstacle for speaking. It is by no means evident that the Civil War shatters history – the only evident thing is that the Civil War is a part of history. What a Civil War is able to destroy, however, are conceptions or preconceived ideas of history. Hence, history, *as traditionally conceived*, and Civil War are

[14] »The poet should be able to become everyone, even the smallest, the most simple, the weakest.«, i.e. in this case beleaguered West-Beirut. Cf. CANETTI, 286.

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closely connected, although the poet does not distinguish between history as such and its representations.

A link between (Arabic-Islamic) history and the Lebanese Civil War is also drawn by the mentioning of Hulagu, the Mongolian conquerer of Bagdad, in the following passage (lines 8-9): »Was it a neighbour who said / How slow is Hulagu?«, in effect suggesting that one cannot rely on his neighbour anymore, for he might wish the enemy to come. It is remarkable that this is expressed by mentioning Hulagu. The poet could have quite easily found other means of saying this, but he chose to refer to one of the greatest catastrophes of Arabic-Islamic history, the final breakdown of the Abbasid Califate in Bagdad. The notions of time and place are blurred by the reference to Hulagu, as the poet seems to maintain that he describes an experience which is not limited to the Israeli siege of Beirut.[15]

The religious tradition is also linked to war: »Is your killing coming from your God I wonder / or is your God coming from your killing?« (lines 14-15). Death, the result of war, is most pungently connected to the belief in God. The question is purely rhetorical: it is not important what the answer will be. It is decisive, however, that »God« and »killing« appear as interchangeable in this question and thus become synonymous or at least related by a causal relationship, regardless of which element is subject and object. This very strong rhetorical divice definitely discards the personal belief in God.

The anti-clerical, if not anti-religious stance is perpetuated in the following stanza, when it is said: »Shall I complain to the prayer rug«. This is also a rhetorical question denoting the senselessness of religious devotion. Men of religious learning can only provide snuff tobacco against dizziness for relief in the world: »His head swam, hasten to revive him with a pinch of the holy men's stuff«. The poet discredits the relief that religion is supposed to provide as worthless.

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[15] In fact, the siege is only referred to indirectly in the end, when the date »June 4 – October 25, 1982« is mentioned. It was precisely June 4th that the Israelis started to bomb West Beirut.

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The same holds true for the following strophe. The minaret serves as a platform for the screams of a »diviner's owl«. In the Islamic (as well as Western) tradition the owl is a symbol of doom and death, while the ant which is a symbol for a true believer in God asks to whom it should give its lessons (line 30).[16] The minaret is occupied by false priests, the reader is led to conclude, and nobody is willing to listen to a true believer (the ant).

Things of actual importance for the soul are forgotten (line 53: »forgotten are all loves«, according to Amyuni's translation; the Arabic reads: *nasiyat nafsiyya ashyā'a hawāhā*). These are, according to the poet-speaker, nature and a heritage hidden in the »house of images«, an obscure expression which might mean the personal memory in contrast to the collective heritage (line 54: »forgotten the heritage of my soul hidden deep down in the house of images«). To the poet-speaker, God and the poet are twins (line 62: »God and the poet are two children sleeping on the stone's cheek.«); such a God, however, is certainly different from the God as conceived by the Islamic theological tradition, as one of the most important attributes of God, according to Islam, is his uniqueness.

The poet refuses to become a propagandist of heaven, i.e. to justify his misery with a religious reason: »I refuse to turn my grief into a drum for the sky« (line 73). Buhlūl, the wise fool, discredits the epoch of the poet and its values even further by revealing »his secrets« (line 38 and later). Neither poets nor prophets or the ideas of homeland and revolution – all of them being highly venerated notions in the discourse about Arab identity – seem trustworthy anymore. History and present are doomed altogether, and darkness, the new master of the epoch, is finally

[16] Cf. the articles »fourmi« and »hibou« in: Malek CHEBEL, *Dictionnaire des symboles musulmans: Rites, mystique et civilisation*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1995, 176 and 200. For Amyuni, however, the ant and the owl »are creatures in close contact with the elemental forces of the universe. They scream and choke with joy, they flirt [sic!] with the rainbow and stand high on minarets [...]«. Cf. AMYUNI, 180. It seems misleading to me to put the ant and the owl together (»they«). It is only the owl who »wove a rainbow with its voice / wept choking with joy« (lines 35/36). The owl is joyful precisely because it is the bird of death and darkness in a time of death and darkness: »glory to you O darkness« (line 129).

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hailed, as if accepted as the ultimate force: »a muddy epoch a shattered history / and the master is mastered, glory to you, O darkness« (lines 128-129).

VI

In the second movement the poet overtly rejects the forces of doom. Subsequently, he emerges triumphantly out of his (alleged) speechlessness.

As tradition has been linked to destruction in plenty of verses before, the refusal of tradition means an emancipation from the destructive forces. The description of suffering and destruction, thus, has an important side-effect: it serves as a means of differentiation, singling out and discrediting tradition and religion as being responsible for and connected with destruction. This is reason enough for them to be discarded.

Furthermore, this refusal generates speech. It wants to be cried out, to be known, even, closer to the end (line 165), to be sung: »I sing the desire of refusal [...] my consolation is that I dissent – I call out for acts of dissention.« It may be noteworthy that the refusal here is not a real act, but a speech act (»I sing«, »I call out«). By speaking, it seems, the »signs of the victim« (line 5) are erased from the speaker's face and his passive stance of the beginning is replaced by the most active role of the poet-speaker.

The poet claims that he refuses his »Semite ancestor« (line 139: »O ancestor I now reject you«), who is not so much described as having a causal relationship to war, but as being a passive victim of what »blind fate unravels« (line 131). This exempts the »Semite ancestor« from the part of tradition which has been linked to war, and it has similarities with the poet-speaker's own victim-like stance in the beginning of the poem. From my earlier discussion, it seems striking that the »Semite ancestor« is not wholly rejected. The poet-speaker claims to tear the bonds, but in fact he does not completely so. Apart from nostalgia and appreciation, there is at least one thing which ties the speaker to the ancestor, the »vestiges sunk in my soul«: »nothing will tie me to

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you anymore / except vestiges sunk in my soul – which weep over me, and make me weep over you« (lines 140-141). The allusion to classical and pre-Islamic Arabic poetry does not need to be explained here.[17] It seems to be precisely this poetic heritage which is not only not discarded, but still at work, like the habit of weeping which is still practised. Furthermore, when it is said that the »vestiges [are] sunk in the soul«, they become part of the *ashyā'a hawāhā* (line 53) and the »heritage of the soul«. Thus, the rejection even seems to revive this 'private' heritage, which was said to be forgotten before. It befits this interpretation that »Al-Waqt« shows a lot of the traits of traditional poetics, like rhyme and metre, and is by no means as violently avantgarde as »Hādhā huwa smī«.

The poetic heritage, the act or attitude of refusal and the personal heritage which is represented by the village of Qaṣṣābīn (mentioned in line 77 and later), where Adūnīs spent his childhood, are the main ingredients to the poet-speaker's restored identity and, seemingly, the basis of a new beginning: »History is slaughtered the slaughter is but the beginning« (line 172). Consequently, the poet associates his own stance with the future: »I embrace the coming epoch and walk« (line 188). He sketches his country in a dreamlike, visionary manner anew (line 189-194: »defiant, with a captain's gait, I sketch my country, – / Rise O men to its loftiest summits / descend to its furthest depths / you will meet no fear no fetters – as if the bird were a branch / and the earth a child, and fables woman / a dream?«), expressing his close connection to the land. Then the poem reaches its climax (lines 198-203): »my lineage is refusal, my weddings the grafting / of two poles; this epoch is mine / the dead God, the blind machine (...) I am / the Alpha of water and the Omega of fire – the mad lover of life«.[18]

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[17] Amyuni, however, writes: »He [i.e. the poet] keeps within him mere vestiges of the past, ruins among ruins (174). With compassion he weeps over present and past.« Cf. AMYUNI, 181.

[18] Strangely enough, none of the three translations of »Al-Waqt« which I have come to know realizes the allusion to the Apocalypse of John 22.13. For the English translation cf. AMYUNI 179. For the French translation (by Anne Wade MINKOWSKI) cf. ADONIS, *Le Temps les villes*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1990, 225. For

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The poet pretends to bring together even the most contradictory elements (water and fire) by the means of language. He has opened the »alphabet's door«, which was described as being narrow in the beginning, to such a degree that it can comprise the whole world, however torn it may be. The poet claims that he is now able to talk about everything and, consequently, to defy the haunting presence of war by means of language and poetry.

VII

A guardian of change? Doubtlessly, the apocalyptic situation depicted in the poem is taken by the poet-speaker as an opportunity to argue, though in an indirect and poetical manner, in favour of his world-view. Seen from this perspective, the poet instrumentalizes the war. The (alleged) speechlessness of the beginning appears as a concious stance chosen to build up an even more striking contrast to the end, where the poet presents himself as the language of the contradicting elements: »the Alpha of water and the Omega of fire«. In the Apocalypse of St John it is God who says »I am the Alpha and the Omega«. In »Al-Waqt«, it is the poet. He now obviously remembers what he has forgotten before, that he is like a twin to God (line 62). The poet-God, it is implied, is much more appropiate to the »epoch« he embraces than God as traditionally conceived.

The poem »Al-Waqt« is an attempt to replace other notions of redemption and spiritual as well as intellectual orientation by poetry. The poet tries to revive the traditional appreciation in the Arab world for poetic speech and the belief in the special powers that belong to it. This is why the »Semite ancestor« is not wholly discredited. For if we still believed in the power of language and still venerated poets as they were venerated in former times, poetry indeed might have the power to prevent war; but – according

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the German translation (by Ludwig AMMANN) cf. ADONIS, *Der Baum des Orients*, Berlin: Edition Orient, 1989, 98. As none of these translations is accompanied by useful notes, a reader who is not familiar with the Arabic language will not be able to recognize the allusion.

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to Canetti's scepticism, at least – it also would have the power to bring about a war.

»Al-Waqt« quite obviously expresses a feeling of responsibility towards life, for example when it discredits those forces which are said to be destructive, or when the poet-speaker calls himself a »mad lover of life« (line 203). It must be stated, however, that Adūnīs tends to monopolize this responsibility. He excludes other voices from participating in it, voices which could very well adopt this role too, like religion, for instance. According to »Al-Waqt«, it is the poet who has the key to defy war and who alone is entitled to determine the discourse and decide about the appropiate world view that would beat back the powers of death. The poet in »Al-Waqt« thus claims to be much more than only a guardian of change. He wants to be much more than merely an equilibrating force.

Canetti's definition of the poet's mission tries to safeguard a special role for the poet in a given society, while taking into account that the poet's role has become untrustworthy or is even regarded as dangerous when his mission gets too »bombastic«. In this sense, Canetti is a son of his century: On one hand, he has inherited the concept of the poet's special mission from the literary atmosphere in the first half of the 20th century, when the hermetic movement played an important role. On the other hand, Canetti experienced first hand the catastrophes and devastating ideologies of this century and developed a scepticism towards overestimating the poet's abilities.

Adūnīs, however, seems to have drawn quite a different lesson from the wars which have shaken the Middle East in the second half of our century. According to the poet's mission as exposed in »Al-Waqt«, the experience of violence has brought about an even stronger emphasis on the importance of poetry, which appears as the only force which is able to cope with violence.

In adopting this stance at the end of the twentieth century, our poet runs a high risk of alienating his readers. Despite the amazing aesthetical qualities of Adūnīs's poetry, this stance transforms the question, if this poetry has an impact on its readers or not, into a question of belief. Those readers who do not strongly

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believe in the powers of poetry to improve the world – and they are not few, in the West as well as in the Arab world[19] –, are most probably far less captivated and moved by Adūnīs's words than by a poetry which does not demand the belief in the powers of poetry as an important prerequisite for accessibility and enjoyment.

Every reader of this poetry should feel free to think about it precisely according to his private, subjective taste. As far as the 'objective' research on Adūnīs's work is concerned, it is a cool eye and a good dose of disbelief what I would recommend.

[19] A striking example is Maḥmūd Darwīsh's scepticism towards such a stance in his autobiographical prose work *Dhākiratun lil-nisyān*. There he writes: »Some intellectuals [...] demand a poem that outweighs the attack [...]. If such a poem is not born 'now,' when will it be born at all?« (note that »now« [*al-ān*] is put in quotation marks!). Darwīsh then calls these discussions *tharthara* (»chatter«). Cf. Maḥmūd DARWĪSH, *Dhākiratun lil-nisyān*, Beirut: Dār al-'Awda, 1994, 58-59. Cf. also the contribution of Richard VAN LEEUWEN in this volume.

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☞ Transliterated titles are given in the *English* transliteration system only.

☞ Turkish *ç, i, ö, ş* and *ü* follow *c, ı, o, s* and *u* respectively. German *ä, ö, ü* are handled as being equivalent to *ae, oe, ue,* and *ß* equals *ss.*

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