



**An Arab Shepherd is searching for his Goat on Mount Zion - By Yehudah Amichai**

An Arab shepherd is searching for his goat on Mount Zion  
And on the opposite mountain  
I am searching for my little boy.

An Arab shepherd and a Jewish father  
Both in their temporary failure.  
Our voices meet above the Sultan's Pool in the valley between us.  
Neither of us wants the child or the goat to get caught in the wheels of the terrible Had Gadya\* machine.

Afterward we found them among the bushes  
And our voices came back inside us,  
Laughing and crying.  
Searching for a goat or a son  
Has always been the beginning of a new religion in these mountains.

**רועה ערבי מחפש גדי - מאת יהודה עמיחי**

רועה ערבי מחפש גדי בהר ציון,  
ובהר ממול אני מחפש את בני הקטן.  
רועה ערבי ואב יהודי  
בכישלונם הזמני.  
קולות שנינו נפגשים מעל  
לבריכת השולטן בעמק באמצע.  
שנינו רוצים שלא יכנסו  
הבן והגדי לתוך תהליך  
המכונה הנוראה של חד גדיא.

אחר כך מצאנו אותם בין השיחים,  
וקולותינו חזרו אלינו ובכו וצחקו בפנים.

החיפושים אחר גדי או אחר בן  
היו תמיד  
התחלת דת חדשה בהרים האלה.

**THE DIAMETER OF THE BOMB - By Yehuda Amichai**

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters  
And the diameter of its effective range about seven meters,  
With four dead and eleven wounded.  
And around these, in a larger circle  
of pain and time, two hospitals are scattered  
And one graveyard. But the young woman  
Who was buried in the city she came from,  
At a distance of more than a hundred kilometers,  
enlarges the circle considerably,  
and the solitary man mourning her death  
at the distant shores of a country far across the sea  
includes the entire world in the circle.  
And I won't even mention the crying of orphans  
that reaches up to the throne of God and  
beyond, making  
a circle with no end and no God.

*Translated by Chana Bloch*

**קטר הפצצה – מאת יהודה עמיחי**

קטר הפצצה היה שלשים סנטימטרים  
וקטר תחום פגיעתה כשבעה מטרים  
ובו ארבעה הרוגים ואחד עשר פצועים.  
ומסביב לאלה, במעגל גדול יותר  
של כאב וזמן, פזורים שני בתי חולים  
ובית קברות אחד. אבל האישה  
הצעירה, שנקברה במקום שממנו  
באה, במרחק למעלה ממאה קילומטרים, מגדילה את המעגל מאד מאד,  
והאיש הבודד הבוכה על מותה  
בירכתי אחת ממדינות הים הרחוקות,  
מכליל במעגל את כל העולם.  
ולא אדבר כלל על זעקת יתומים  
המגיעה עד לכסא האלוהים  
ומשם והלאה ועושה  
את המעגל לאין סוף ואין אלוהים.

### TRANSISTOR MUEZZIN - By Agi Mishol

The transistor muezzin rises from the orchard—  
Hussein barefoot and bound to my land  
kneads the evening dough from Jewish flour  
too fine, *ya Hagi* -- I  
close my sorting eyes after a day's harvest,  
crouch with him over the fire he kindles.

We plan tomorrow's peaches  
over *Europa*\* and a hand rolled cigarette.  
*Ya Hagi*, his Arab sigh slithers forth  
supported by the consonants of my castrated Hungarian name.

In these photosynthesis twilights his hands  
run over the tin  
casting a spell with pita.  
Hussein castles me legends  
Gaza's Thousand and One Nights,  
his body a supple viper,  
his eyes an answer to the fire.

\* Brand name of a cheap Israeli cigarette.

*Translation: 1999, Feminist Press/CUNY*  
*Translated by Linda Zisquit*

#### מואזין הטרנזיסטור - מאת אגי משאול

מואזין הטרנזיסטור עולה במטע –  
חסן יחף ומחבר לאדמתי  
לש את בצק הערב מקמח יהודי  
יותר מדי עדין יא חאגי – אני,  
שכבר עצמתי את עיני הממיינות אחרי יום קטיף  
שפופה אתו מעל לאש שהוא מבעיר.

אנחנו מתכננים את האפרסקים של מחר  
על "אירופה" וסיגריה ביתית.  
יא חאגי, ככה מגיחה אנחתו הערבית  
נתמכת על עצורי שמי ההונגרי המסרס.

בדמדומי הפוטוסינתזה האלה רצות  
ידיו מעל הפח  
עושות בפתה כשפים.  
חסן מארמן לי אגדות  
אלף לילה ולילה מעזה,  
גופו שפיפון גמיש  
עיניו תשובה לאש.

## WOMAN MARTYR - By Agi Mishol

"The afternoon darkens,  
and you are only twenty."  
Nathan Alterman *Afternoon in the Market*

You are only twenty  
and your first pregnancy is an exploding bomb.  
Under your broad skirt you are pregnant with dynamite  
and metal shavings. This is how you walk in the market,  
ticking among the people, you, Andaleeb Takatkah.

Someone changed the workings in your head  
and launched you toward the city;  
even though you come from Bethlehem,  
the Home of Bread, you chose a bakery.  
And there you pulled the trigger inside yourself,  
and together with the Sabbath loaves,  
sesame and poppy seed,  
you flung yourself into the sky.

Together with Rebecca Fink you flew up  
with Yelena Konreeb from the Caucasus  
and Nissim Cohen from Afghanistan  
and Suhila Houshy from Iran  
and two Chinese you swept along  
to death.

Since then, other matters  
have obscured your story,  
about which I speak all the time  
without having anything to say.

*Translated by Lisa Katz*

## שאהידה - מאת אגי משאול

את רק בת עשרים  
וההיריון הראשון שלך הוא פצצה.  
מתחת לשמלה הרחבה את הרה חמר  
נפץ,  
שבבים של מתכת, וכך את עוברת בשוק  
מתקתקת בין האנשים ענדליב תקאטקה.

מישהו שנה לך בראש שאת ההברגה  
ושגר אותך לעיר,  
ואת שבאת מבית לחם, בחרת לך דווקא  
מאפיה. שם שלפת מתוכך את הניצרה  
ביחד עם חלות השבת  
הפרג והשומשומים  
העפת את עצמך לשמים.

ביחד עם רבקה פינק עפת,  
וילנה קונריב מקוקז,  
ניסים כהן מאפגניסטן  
וסוהילה חושי מאיראן,  
וגם שנים סינים גרפת אתך  
אל מותך.

מאז כסו ענינים אחרים  
את הספור שלך  
שעליו אני מדברת ומדברת  
מבלי שיהיה לי משהו להגיד.

Taken from **A TRUMPET IN THE WADI** - By Sammy Michael

I was in the flourishing white city on the slopes of the Carmel. Tidy rows of homes with flowers. A model town. A stunning view of blue sea, clear skies and green hills. No unpleasant smells, no slum housing, no noisy crowds. And despite this, nobody is very keen to dwell here. They have to be killed before they can be settled in these beautiful homes of marble, which sparkle so in the sun.

Adina made inquiries for me and showed me the way between the symmetrical rows. She displayed great tact and kindness in leaving me alone. She herself feels very much at home here. In the white light she went to her husband, perhaps to plead for their son. Eyal is still immersed in the belly of the monster. She was right, there's no mistaking it. The names are engraved in black on the glittering marble.

There were also some living people. A woman, kneeling, embracing the marble as if she wanted to uproot the grave. Close by was a father, not more than forty years old, handsome and well-dressed. He stood unmoving in the roasting sun while his clothes absorbed its scorching rays. No doubt the fire had already taken hold of him. His streaming sweat attempted to extinguish it, darkening his clothes from his shirt to the cuffs of his trousers. He did not turn his head as I approached.. He neither saw nor did he hear. He did not move other than to blink away the salt sweat that stung his eyes. His entire being was focused on the marble that stubbornly refused to utter a word to Daddy.

On my left was another silent grave. A young girl seated by its side kept asking "Why? Why? Why?" With her white blouse, wide skirt and dainty sandals, her delicate face and spiritual air, she was a delight to the eye, just like this wreath. But her inner transmitter was stuck, repeating over and over again, "Why? Why? Why?" until her madness touched mine, and it was hard to stop myself from rushing over to press the button hidden somewhere in her shirt.

Everyone's mad here except for those who inhabit the little homes. An old woman in black was sitting on the edge of a grave, gnawing at a rusk, a thermos of coffee at her feet. She was completely at ease, as if she were striking outside the Minister's office. Perhaps it's for that reason that the protest of this mad citizen is so clamorous, as she picnics by the grave, demanding the return of her grandson. How can youth be restored to old age? No chance - God remains as mute as the inhabitants of the little homes.

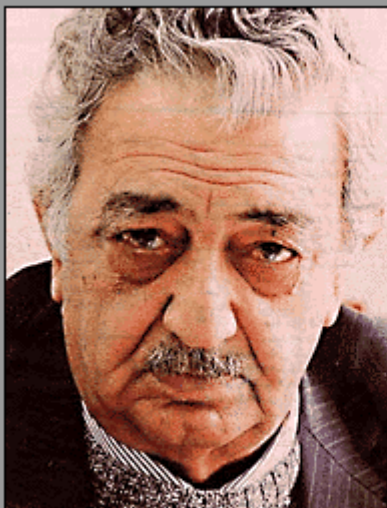
I, too, am among the partially mad. With the lucidity of madness I have come to explain things to Alex and justify myself to him. Adina was silent, the gynecologist was shocked - he himself is a bereaved father. Mother wept. Grandfather's green eyes flashed as he said: "From you especially I dream of a grandson." He's mad too - he understood me immediately.

I didn't bring flowers for Alex. The wreath I carry within me may yet be cast into the sewer. It's difficult to explain myself to him when he's lying down and I'm standing up. I would gladly sit, if only they would distribute folding chairs for crazy people at the entrance. That's why I couldn't tell him everything. I stood by the grave in silent justification like a mutinous criminal.

Boaz said the interest on the loan he and Adina gave me had grown to a considerable sum, as a result of his investments on the stock exchange. Added to my salary, it could ensure my future and that of the child.

"Alex," I said to the grave, "The future of the child may be the deciding factor. If I raise him in an Arab street will I be able to tell him, before he hears from others, that he was born out of wedlock to a Jewish father? And if I raise him in a Jewish street, eighteen years from now I won't be beautiful and strong, surrounded by the affection of a lover and the care of my parents. Your mother even took your trumpet before giving the room to Abu-Nahla. So you can imagine my situation when the time comes for me to deliver your son to another war. He'll want to join an elite unit. All his life he'll be driven to prove himself because of his Arab mother, and he'll be a stranger to both Arabs and Jews."

The old woman with the thermos washed her grandson's grave with water from a small plastic bucket. Perhaps it's the same bucket he played with as a child at the seashore. Adina was already waiting by the gate. She called urgently: "I must rush home. Perhaps Eyal will call....."



**Emile Habibi**

\*Born in Haifa in August, 1921, where he remained until his death in May 1996.

\*Joined the Communist Party in the 1940s and was member of the Israeli Knesset from 1953-1972.

\* Began writing short stories in the 1960s, and was editor-in-chief of the Communist Party's Arabic newspaper, Al-Ithad, in the 1970s. Resigned from the Knesset in 1972 to write his first novel: *Saeed the Pessoptimist*, depicting the life and fortunes of an Arab citizen of the state of Israel. Published in 1974, it was an instant success, and remains one of the greatest of modern Arabic novels.

Jerusalem Journal; To a Novelist of Nazareth, Laurels and Loud Boos

**By JOEL GREENBERG**

Published: May 07, 1992

*When Israel marks its independence day on Thursday, it will award its highest literary honor for the first time to an Israeli Arab writer, an act of cultural recognition that has set off fierce debate in Arab intellectual circles. The dispute centers on whether the writer, Emile Habibi, a 70-year-old novelist from Nazareth and chronicler of the quandaries and conflicts of Arabs in Israel, should have agreed to accept the annual Israel Prize, given for scholarly or cultural achievement.*

*Winners -- there are 10 this year, in several fields -- are chosen by a committee of academicians appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, and they receive the award from Israel's President and Education Minister.*

*Mr. Habibi's writings, often fraught with bitter irony, enjoy wide popularity among Palestinians and other Arabs, and have been translated into several languages, including Hebrew. Considered one of the Arab world's leading writers, he was awarded the Jerusalem Medal for Culture, Literature and Arts by Yasir Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in a ceremony in Cairo in 1990. Better Than Bullets?*

### **HAIFA: WADI AL-NISNASS & ABBAS STREET - By Emile Habibi**

I claim to be one of those people who cannot see the moon except for its luminous side. It is thus I justify those Jewish friends with sensitive souls who claim they do not believe it when we declare that we want a lasting peace based on a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli one. I find excuses for their mistrust, telling myself and my people that perhaps their suspicion of our intentions comes from their sense of guilt at everything they have committed against us, expressed once in Moshe Diyan's phrase: "If we were in their place..."

There is no place for "if" in actual history. However, if one wants to argue using such logic, then I would say that if we were in your place we would not have allowed our reactionary forces to do to you what your forces of reaction have done to us. Furthermore, I would add that if you combined all the "ifs" in all the languages of the world, you would be unable to justify a single harm -- not even the minutest -- that you have wreaked on what you call "the other people"...

Umm Wadie [Habibi's mother] was unable to overcome the shock of those days [1948]. By then her life was behind her, and most of her sons and grandchildren were scattered in the diaspora. Once she came down to the premises of our old political club in Wadi Al-Nisnass to participate in a joint Arab-Jewish women's meeting. Those were days of a raging general election campaign. The Jewish speaker was emphasizing our struggle for the rights of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. Umm Wadie interrupted her saying: "Will my sons and daughters return?"

Taken aback, the Jewish-Hungarian speaker replied: "They will return when peace is achieved." "Lies," shouted Umm Wadie, "my son Emile never lies to me. He told me that their return -- if ever they return -- will take a long time. By then I won't be here to see them: I'll be in my grave."

Ever since that meeting, and without me knowing, it became her custom to go secretly to a corner of Abbas Garden near our house. She would lean against a stone shaded by an olive tree and bemoan her destiny -- lonely and separated from children, especially her youngest son Naim.

"Naim, where are you now? What has happened to you without me?"

Little did I know of her newly acquired habit until one day I overheard my two daughters playing at being Granny Umm Wadie bemoaning "O Naim".

That year Umm Wadie left us, crossing the Mandelbaum Gate on her way to her children who had taken refuge in Damascus. It was there, in Damascus, and not in Shafa Amre [her native village, now part of Israel] that her soul returned to its maker.

"As for you, you can stay. Your life is before you, and you can afford to wait until they return."

Those were the last words of my mother, Umm Wadie, when we parted on the Israeli side of the Mandelbaum Gate.

I remained. I returned to Haifa and wrote my very first story as a citizen of the State of Israel. It was entitled "Mandelbaum Gate".

And I remained. But, until this day, and for as long as I live, I think of my mother as having remained with me, for mothers are of the roots.

*Translated by Mona Anis and Hala Halim*



**Ghassan Kanafani**

*Born in Acre in April, 1936. Spent his childhood in Jaffa where he received his education in a French missionary school. Left Jaffa in 1948, first for Lebanon then Syria and Kuwait.*

*Moved to Beirut in 1961, where he wrote novels, short stories, film scripts, political articles and edited a number of political and literary publications, including Al-Hadaf, the organ of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Appointed official spokesman of the Popular Front in 1970. Was blown up in a car explosion, which also killed his niece, on July 1972. Amid the wreckage a scrap of paper from the Israeli Embassy in Copenhagen was found, a reminder of the fate awaiting those who fought Israel.*

### **JAFFA: LAND OF ORANGES - By Ghassan Kanafani**

When we had to leave Jaffa for Acre there was no sense of tragedy. It felt like an annual trip to spend the feast in another city. Our days in Acre did not seem unusual: perhaps, being young, I was even enjoying myself since the move exempted me from school... Whatever, on the night of the big attack on Acre the picture was becoming clearer. That was, I think, a cruel night, passed between the stern silence of the men and the invocations of the women. My peers, you and I, were too young to understand what the whole story was about. On that night, though, certain threads of that story became clearer. In the morning, and as the Jews withdrew threatening and fulminating, a big truck was standing in front of our door. Light things, mainly sleeping items, were being chucked into the truck swiftly and hysterically.

As I stood leaning against the ancient wall of the house I saw your mother getting into the truck, then your aunt, then the young ones, then your father began to chuck you and your siblings into the car and on top of the luggage. Then he snatched me from the corner, where I was standing and, lifting me on top of his head, he put me into the cage-like metal luggage compartment above the driver's cabin, where I found my brother Riad sitting quietly. The vehicle drove off before I could settle into a comfortable position. Acre was disappearing bit by bit in the folds of the up-hill roads leading to Rass El-Naqoura [Lebanon].

It was somewhat cloudy and a sense of coldness was seeping into my body. Riad, with his back propped against the luggage and his legs on the edge of the metal compartment, was sitting very quietly, gazing into the distance. I was sitting silently with my chin between my knees and

my arms folded over them. One after the other, orange orchards streamed past, and the vehicle was panting upward on a wet earth... In the distance the sound of gun-shots sounded like a farewell salute.

Rass El-Naqoura loomed on the horizon, wrapped in a blue haze, and the vehicle suddenly stopped. The women emerged from amid the luggage, stepped down and went over to an orange vendor sitting by the wayside. As the women walked back with the oranges, the sound of their sobs reached us. Only then did oranges seem to me something dear, that each of these big, clean fruits was something to be cherished. Your father alighted from beside the driver, took an orange, gazed at it silently, then began to weep like a helpless child.

In Rass El-Naqoura our vehicle stood beside many similar vehicles. The men began to hand in their weapons to the policemen who were there for that purpose. Then it was our turn. I saw pistols and machine guns thrown onto a big table, saw the long line of big vehicles coming into Lebanon, leaving the winding roads of the land of oranges far behind, and then I too cried bitterly. Your mother was still silently gazing at the oranges, and all the orange trees your father had left behind to the Jews glowed in his eyes... As if all those clean trees which he had bought one by one were mirrored in his face. And in his eyes tears, which he could not help hiding in front of the officer at the police station, were shining.

When in the afternoon we reached Sidon we had become refugees.

*Translated by Mona Anis and Hala Halim*