

I came to write a few words; on my way I stopped short. I put down Walid al-Khalidi's book (*All that Remains*), and opposite it—a photograph of a decorticated, dispossessed grave, letter remains on broken marble taken in Abu Kabeer's Sheikh Murad Cemetery in Tariq al-Lad (on Kibbutz Galuyot Road). I felt sorrow and heaviness pinning me to the ground.

*No fear of graveyards
Nor of shrieks
Or nightmares
Could
Hide my sorrow from me
A heartbeat:
My sorrow is old
Grizzly and tall
And is not
Of today's sorrows.*

Taha Muhammad Ali, "Sorrow," 2000²

In a single heartbeat I recall-reconstruct an entire culture that has been made to disappear: names, places, tastes, scents, stories; a culture which bursts forth from amidst the traces of names, in the light and darkness of memory and consciousness. The remainder that still remains remembers and reconstructs its past, lamenting that which was, and in-between all these—consciousness constructs a new, unique intermediate space.

A Palestinian, by essence, is made from the lost culture, from the dialectic relationship with memory and with the foreign culture on which he draws, and at the same time criticizes. The lost, expropriated time, like culture and as part of it, continues to exist in the consciousness and memory of life here and there, as if refusing to acknowledge the parting.

*We didn't cry
On goodbye.
We had
No time
We had no tears
There was no goodbye.*

*We didn't know
At the moment of goodbye
That it was a goodbye
Cry... how would cry?*

Taha Muhammad Ali, "There was none!," 1992³

Time is the past on the shadow of whose residues culture relies. Under its inspiration it is built and continues on to the present time in which it remembers, documents, reconstructs, and preserves; evolving toward the future while constructing a new time, like a snail whose spirals appear alike, yet they constantly grow and expand, in and out, building medium upon medium, layer upon layer.

Sixty years and another one, and perhaps another, the words crystallize, epitomizing a contemporary historical event in which consciousness changes place, and time in its motion—in the private and the public sphere—is expropriated by artists. Asim Abu-Shakra's sabra, imprisoned by the planter, erupts and breaks out, transforming into a threatening, dense thicket which refuses to remain in its pot. Ibrahim Nubani sketches route upon route, as in the Abu Kabeer cemetery, whose sloughing reveals an inner body-mass of concrete, and small stones under the residues of the marble covering from above, and a depression in the concrete instead of the *al-Fatihah* (opening Quranic verse) plaque. Asad Azi delineates the figure of an aged man, clinging

1 According to Khalidi, it is the village on whose land the city of Herzliya now stands; see: Walid Khalidi, *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), p. 235.

2 Taha Muhammad Ali, *Poems* (Tel Aviv: Andalus, 2006), p. 183 [Hebrew & Arabic]. The poems were translated from the Arabic by Roaa Translations.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

tenaciously and refusing to let go, at the heart of the commotion; holding himself inside the painting, grabbing the surfboard with his feet to hold on and remain present, not to become an absentee. Osama Said resurrects a new Nimrod from the ground, whose cry (like the ground's cry) reverberates within our silence. Abed Abdi remembers, so we do not forget, in black lines, like letters inscribed on a white paper.

And lo, here comes a new young generation, bringing to the fore questions and quandaries about the occupier, the occupied, and what's between them. Raafat Hattab contemplates and challenges the expropriation of culture and its symbols, its imprisonment and castration: is it not the seven-branched candelabra of the Temple depicted on Titus's Triumphal Arch in Rome, whose presentation the victor boasts? Who holds what: does the symbol support us, or vice versa? Fahed Halabi and Ala Farhat document a different, old-new type of expropriation; the expropriation of culture in the form of an individual and a structure that become foreign to the place and its culture, even though they share a single space, mutually-complementary; although both symbolize resistance and revolt, while emphasizing signs of distinction within a culture which strives to fuse everything into a uniform piece. Durar Bacri and Rani Zahrawi, each in his own work, freeze a moment before or a moment after in the urban sphere. The void as a form of being experienced for sixty years and another one, from Jaffa to Gaza through Tel Aviv. Michael Halak remains within the painting, his eyes shut, his gaze turned inward, and he draws us with him, into himself, into ourselves, within the light flooding his face. Scandar Copti and Rabia Buchari's *Truth* raises questions about the here and now, the past, and the rewriting of the words so as to enable us to live with the sixty years and one, and perhaps yet another.

