

IACIS 3rd Conference. 16th July 2008

Literature of War and Peace.

Literature of the legacy of dictatorship, the aftermath of war and aspirations for peace.
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Bibliography

Introduction

This collection of literature on Iraq is an *anthology* of poems and prose in Arabic, Kurdish (Sorani) and English languages. The latter are quoted from English journals and the former two are mainly my own translations into English at the time of the events. The Arabic is both Modern Standard and colloquial Iraqi dialect. As well as written literature, there is some oral literature in the form of lyrics of popular songs and plays. Furthermore, there are samples of applied or hardware literature as manifested in calligraphy, posters and paintings. This interface in the arts is eloquently described in the current London Literature Festival's brochure at the South Bank as 'Cutting edge of literature: a fusion of words, music and performance', www.londonlitfest.com. Hence, there is cross referencing. *Fusion* is the buzz word as is the emphasis on *spoken* word. As can be observed from the contents, they are classified thematically and according to source language. The period covers the last twenty years from the end of the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, followed by the internal war, the infamous Anfal military campaign, culminating in two more external Gulf wars to the present date. *And, as they say, the rest is history. And what a bloody history! Literally speaking.* There is some overlap in themes, languages (Alphabets) and chronology (Roman numerals) and authors and their writings are identified by universal numerals. The selection is a result of my involvement in translation for the solidarity campaigns and my own interests. Source and target language documents are available mainly as hard copies and MS Word files, respectively with some overlaps, inevitably. Some of either reference are available as links to websites on the internet.

Definitions:

1. Culture: "is the sum of the answers to the typical questions and problems, which arise in a society, and are couched in the language of that society". Armstrong (1963). I was so impressed by this definition that I formulated it as a symbolic logic formula below. Thus, language is like an external cover or mirror that reflects culture.

$$C = \sum A (P + Q)$$

Where, C = Culture: (UNESCO) Mexico City declaration, 6th August 1982.
A = Answers. "Culture is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that
P = Problems. characterize a society or social group. It includes not
Q = Questions. only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the
L = Language. fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs". World Conference on Cultural Policies.

2. Language and Ethnicity (J.A. Ross, 1979): "Language becomes the most powerful single symbol of ethnicity as it serves as shorthand for all that makes a group unique".

3. Literature (?): "is the memory bank of culture".

4. Poetry (Chinese Proverb): "is the witness to history. If you do not study poetry, you will not be able to converse" (Confucius). An Arabic definition of poetry is: "Meaningful speech, which has rhyme and rhythm". In other words, the absence of rhyme renders the speech as prose, also known as 'free poetry'.

5. Vernacular (UNESCO): "is the mother tongue of a group, which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language".

6. Lingua Franca (?): "is a language, which is not the mother tongue of either of two speech groups in a communication event".

7. Education Paulo Friere (1972): "is the essence of practising freedom".

I) Iraq-Iran war 1980-1988.

A) Iraqi theme, Arabic language

1. 'Back from war' by Salah Niazi. Exiled ink, winter 2007-2008. 292 words.

Outside the barracks
Folk are waiting apprehensively
As if at the hour of the trumpet

The war is over,
The survivors are coming back,
At a distance, the military lorries are in sight
Guns are heaved up lengthwise
Above the soldiers' heads
As if floating up to their necks
These are the remnants of the still-alive-and-kicking
Shoulders are without epaulettes,
Uniforms without buttons,
Their arms are just like oars in a dry river
Plying from one arid wave to another
Crying Noah, Noah, Noah
remnants of those still-alive-and-kicking.

In an assembly like this
There is no grieving for lost limbs,
Any strap of a person is enough
The important thing is still to be alive,
lost limbs are of no concern.

Every soldier on the coming lorries
Is counted as alive and dead- both at once
alive and dead both at once
uncertainty and certainty
life and death
are interwoven now.

In a moment, the truth will be made plain,
The dead will be dead forever,
And the living will be in part alive.

Critical moments are, no doubt, shattering
They can save, or otherwise kill, in an instant
Like a flash of lightning, unawares it catches you
Like a flood, it does not give you time
To collect your belongings
Or put on your clothes half decently.

In such gathering
Joy and grief soon will be two separate things
And selfishness will show itself
As the most powerful element in man's nature

She is like a stricken boat
A woman searching for her son
Is like a stricken boat.
Inches away, an embrace
So strong that
There will be no dividing them.

Feasts and obsequies
Are two neighbouring trees
Their fingers are interlacing now
But how different they are.

Translated by Salah Niazi, who participated with a poem on the Kurdish theme in the literary evening, Poetry Across The Gulf, part of the cultural event, Out of Iraq, 22-24 April 1992. www.exiledwriters.co.uk/publ.shtml.

II) The legacy of dictatorship: Internal Wars. The infamous Anfal military campaigns. Anfal is the name of a verse in the Quran, which justifies 'to the victor the spoils', or in other words, '*All is fair in love and war*'.

A) Kurdish theme, Arabic language.

1. Children of Kurdistan, I disclaim my nationality...

*Hadi AL-'Alewi/Syria. Excerpts out of 1094 words.

It is neither fair nor logical for this river of blood to flow unabated without anyone trying to stem the tide. What a mania for killing people overcomes this man, who can no longer survive outside this river? As if power to him only means decreeing death warrants arbitrarily. Any professional psychopathic murderer may undergo a rest period, experiencing feelings of guilt, remorse and repentance. After some soul searching, he may even question his choice of victims but not so with our crafty killer. Alas, he refuses to have such a break, denying us all a respite...

Believe you me that my Arabic language failed me in retrieving the appropriate vocabulary...

Ironically, were it not for Iraqi army's cowardice and fear of Turkish reprisals, these Kurds' tents would have been blown up like their village homes before.

Even their thieves and highwaymen adhere to a code of conduct, which is not to be found in the most civilised modern army...

I hereby declare my dissociation from any collaboration in your murder. I offer you this as blood money, pledging you never to drink a toast to the so-called glories of the armies of this **Stone Age**, nor to extend my hand of friendship to any of the regimes of the Stone Age...

I beg you, innocent victim, to accept this apology. It is my disavowal from my national identity...

The late author was an Iraqi Arab scholar, whose famous disclaimer in protest at the chemical bombing of Helebje town on 16th March 1988, was published in the Lebanese journal Al-Safir on 23rd of September 1988. It was translated at the time for the Iraqi Democratic Writers, Journalists and Artists League (IDWJAL), U.K Branch By M T Ali (MCIL). Not surprisingly, the late author is arguably the most popular Arab, like the late great poet Muhamad Mehdi Al-Jawahiri, in Kurdistan.

2. An Open Letter by a Kurdish Woman to the World Public Opinion

Excerpts out of 2506 words.

To whom it may concern

Mrs Shahnaz Meghdeed

My ref. SOS

August 1988

Dear sisters,

Whoever you are and wherever you may be in whatever country of the world. I address this letter to you because I regard you as my sisters, whatever your language, colour or creed. As women or as mothers, we have a lot in common and share special feelings, which unite us...

I am a Kurdish woman in my forties, married with several children. My homeland is Kurdistan in Iraq. I achieved literacy from childhood in both Kurdish and Arabic languages. I have spent most of my life in rural communities. The village, where I live, lies in the Kurdish county of Dohouk, which is situated in the very north of Iraq. It used to be a very beautiful village surrounded by mountains overlooking a wide valley cut by a large river. About 500 families used to live there happily and in complete harmony. A few years ago, the Iraqi regime closed down the village's only school and clinic...

Ladies, I shout in agony, in silence and sometimes in consternation; why on earth did this happen? Is there no **David** to defeat this **Goliath**, the cowardly criminal Saddam Hussein? When I was a child my parents taught me that the world was full of good people. In turn, I have taught my own children likewise. Now, with me in this situation, I draw on the same belief in those good people to strengthen my will to live.

In their groaning, my children keep asking me, **mummy, why don't the good people kill Saddam Hussein to rid us of him? Mummy, had Saddam Hussein been killed, Bereavan wouldn't have died, would she? Mummy, why does Bereavan look so dreadful? Is it cyanide? Mustard gas is better, isn't it so, mummy?** Imagine, my children and my neighbours' children are actually saying things like "**Mustard gas is better than cyanide!!**"...

I am **confident** that our cause will be **victorious** despite our current situation as my trust in the future is unlimited. All the good people of Iraq struggle against Saddam. I draw strength from my memories of Semeare and all other opponents of tyranny. Didn't she, too, get killed because she was one of them?

I greet you warmly in the pursuit of a just peace all over the world.

Yours sincerely, A damsel in distress

Mrs Shahnaz Meghdeed

August 1988

c/o: Rock No **R**

Shire No **S**

Village No **V**

Province No **P**

Translated from Arabic by M T Ali (MCIL) for the Iraqi Democratic Writers, Journalists and Artists League (IDWJAL) U.K.Branch.

Like the Kurdish woman and her daughter, we were pleasantly surprised by the downfall of Saddam Hussein even after fifteen years. We eagerly await the realisation of her aspiration for a lasting just peace.

III) Civil war 1993 -1994.

A) Kurdish theme, Arabic language.

1. The Kurds Are God's Bothered, Bewitched and Bewildered People.

* Dr Abdul-Rezaq 'Aboud, published in Al-Kalima solidarity bulletin No 43 on 9th July 1994. Excerpts out of 632 words.

I do not believe that there are a people whose rights have been usurped like that of the Kurdish people. So much so that only the **Indian** people of the two **Americas** could be as unfortunate as the Kurds... The Kurdish people have been blighted with internal fighting and fratricide. Thousands were sacrificed at the altar of their chiefs, who engaged in personal rivalries and fluctuating allegiances... When will a new **"Qadhi Muhamad"** arise to sacrifice himself in the interests of the Kurdish people and not the other way round? When will the world conscience wake up to recognise the right of more than 25 million human beings to an entity, which encompasses them, like the rest of the peoples of the earth?.

B) Kurdish theme, Kurdish language

1. 'Fratricide' by Abdulla Peshew at a literary talk in Erbil, Kurdistan on 17th June 1994, published in Hengaw journal No 8-9 September 1994. Excerpts out of 500 words

Two dead bodies lay there, brothers they were

They shared the same dream, but they differed in colour

The distance between them is bridged by

The burning sighs of a mother and father.

The English translation of the full text was published in Iraqi Poetry Today, p192-193, new series No.19, Modern Poetry in Translation 2003, by Kings College,

London. Also, it is included in the review on 1st March 2003 in

www.books.guardian.co.uk/departments/poetry/story/0,,905186,00.html

See IV) C) 1 and 2 for comparison with Nezar Qebbani.

There are many more poems in Kurdish on this and other wars. Ms Choman Hardi has several on Helebje and Anfal in her booklet of poems, Life for Us, published in 2004.

Similarly, for The Fleeing Garden: Kurdish Exiled Voices, which she edited. There

are some in the book of poems, The Bend in the Road: Refugees Writing, edited by Jennifer Langer, published in 1997, just to mention a few. www.exiledwriters.co.uk.

IV) First Gulf War (Kuwait).

A) Iraqi theme, English language

1. 'The Saddamic verses' book of poems and prose by Charmian Steele, 1991.

As part of my translation of the book into Arabic, I have numbered the Chapters (27), which are titled, as are the poems, by the author. Excerpts from illustrated book of poems and explanatory prose.

Chapter 2. The Unjust Peace. 'A Just War', p17.

A just war seems a loathsome thing

Yet unjust peace bears quite as foul a sting

Chapter 3. Holy War. 'Unholy War', p 21.

Allahu Akbar! God is Great!

Yet Man is small and frail,

With every test that Allah sends

Through arrogance he'll fail.

Chapter 18. The Mother of Battles! 'Mother of Battles, Father of Evil!' p 73.

Mother of Battles, Father of Evil,

Parents of a bloody cause

Whose many children fought and died

In pointless search for world applause.
Chapter 27. The Breadth of Hope. (Epilogue), p112.
How confined our lives would be
Without the Breadth of Hope.

2. 'A cold coming'. Tony Harrison published in the Guardian on 18th March 1991. Inspired by 'A Cold Coming we had of it' by T.S.Elliot, 'Journey of the Magi'. Excerpts from the long poem.

I saw the charred Iraqi lean
towards me from bomb- blasted screen,
His windscreen wiper like a pen
ready to write down thoughts for men,
His windscreen wiper like a quill
He's reaching for to make his will.

Incidentally, similar poems, 'A Shrunken Head' by John Levett and 'Phrase Book' by Jo Shapcott, were the Poetry Society's joint first prize winners of its National Poetry Competition in 1991. Similarly, Michael Hulse wrote Mother of Battles booklet, published in August 1991. Hard copies of the publications are available.

B) Iraqi theme, Arabic language

1. What a Fascination for This Devastation! Mrs Tajia Al-Baghdadi. 317 words.

Like a sleep walker, I climbed the stairs of time.
I turned the key of night, my voice poured out
Together with the vocabulary of place.
The window was quivering in the wind,
Dragging the stones of the horizon
And passers by, screaming:
I haven't got a moment to see you, Iraq
Nor the time to shout.
I found nothing except for Iraq's head,
Being the target of a salvo of spears from every side.
And this silence, which is cruel on me
And as usual, the polite pain suited our silence.
And was dragging its torn year along the logs
Of the fireplace from pillar to post.
Oh pain! What have you left for us?
Except for the stupidity of a military boot
And homes above which aircraft hover
And booby trapped dreams.
In order to mourn you, allow me to prepare the last words
And raise the screen off the last scene,
So I can say we are all implicated in an obscure game,
Where insomnia drives wedges between us.
How much of our garbage do we offer you before you leave?
Oh blighted cities, the lungs can't breathe the air
And my voice no longer reaches.
You stroke the fur of silence with the tips of your fingers
And so with the audacity of a wooden leg
Roll the dubious hypocrisy off its double standards.

Arabic poem by Mrs Tajia Al-Baghdadi. London, Christmas 1998? / New Year

Translated by M T Ali (MCIL) August 2007. Exiled ink, winter 2007-2008, p 22.

Note: The poem is a reflection on the events of that year, which was characterized by the continual aerial bombings and missile attacks on Baghdad and southern Iraq. The whole decade up to the last war was characterized by the UN imposed sanctions on Iraq as a consequence of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August 1990. And the rest is history, as they say. www.exiledwriters.co.uk/publ.shtml.

C) Arabic theme, Arabic language

1. 'An Arab Warrior's C.V.' Nezar Qebbani. Excerpts out of long poem.

You people, I've become your lord,
So, smash your idols of beliefs old
And worship me, as I don't always manifest
So, sit by the side of the road of patience
So that of me you catch a glimpse...

2. 'Catalogue of defeats'. Nezar Qebbani. 2nd April 1991, Excerpts out of long poem.

Neither our war is like war, nor is our peace like peace
All that passes in our lives is nothing more than movies
Our marriage is casual and our love is casual, like love at the start of movies
And our death is predetermined, like death at the end of movies. Both this Arab poet and the Kurdish one excelled in expressing the views of their respective peoples of their rulers, Saddam Hussein and Barzani and Talebani, respectively, even without naming names. The Arabic poem is much longer than the Kurdish one. Whereas the Arab poet was presumably far away from Iraq at the time, the Kurdish one was in the very centre of Kurdistan administration. I hasten to add that, fortunately, it is no longer risky to do so in either Iraq or Kurdistan, nor is it justifiable.

3. 'The Cock'. This is a similar critique of Arab rulers like Saddam. The reference here is to the Syrian president, Asad. It is a fable. There is a similar critique of Arab Islamists, titled: **Would you allow me to?**

4. 'I'm All Yours, Wait for me!' By an unknown poet. Excerpts out of short poem.

You Iraqis, elect me
I've cometh, so receive me
Kneel before me and worship me
As I'm the ruler and the master
I own the crown and the sceptre.

V) Second Gulf War, 2003

Ironically, although the world public opinion was much more mobilised against the Second Gulf War than the First Gulf War, their respective written literatures don't seem to be directly proportional. May be it is because the second war was more politicised. However, there is more coverage on the internet, TV, films and plays on it

A) Iraqi theme, Arabic language

1. Black Words in Red Ink, calligraphic installation by Mustafa Ja'far. 16-21/6/2008.

"In these words lie clues to the torment of Iraq since 2003. For Iraqis inside the country, these are daily reminders of the dangers they face, of the precarious nature of lives caught up in violence both random and ruthlessly targeted. For those outside, the country, these are the words that grab their attention from headlines and news bulletins, repeatedly linked to the name of Iraq and creating a terrifying landscape in the imagination of a broken country. Quite apart from the sadness and anxiety they evoke, bewilderment has been a natural response to the harshness of these words,

which contain in their red contours testimony to a cruelty that seems to put into question the capacity of Iraqis to live together as one people. Only perhaps by confronting them head-on, as Mustafa Ja'far does so powerfully in this exhibition, can Iraqis draw back from the precipice and construct a common future free of the horrors they convey." Professor Charles Tripp, SOAS, University of London.

The exhibit consists of a lexicon of words and phrases dominating the vocabulary of war, written in Arabic calligraphy in red ink on a patchwork of glossy white paper stuck on the gallery floor. There is a bilingual list of them typed on a black board stuck on a gallery wall. For a comparison with my own jumbled list, see VI) C below.

'Abu Graib, after torturing them, ambush, armed men, assassination, attackers/assaulters, beheaded/mutilated, blood/bloody, booby-trapped corpse, blowing up, bombs, combats/confrontations, corpse/corpses, displaced people, decomposed, expelled/evicted, explosion, fatalities, fugitives, floating corpses, gruesome, handcuffed, kidnapped persons, looted, maimed persons, masked men, mass graves, missing persons, morgue, occupation, roadside bomb, refugees, revengeful, setting it alight, sniper, suicide bombers, their death, their hands (tied to their backs), their heads (severed or shot at point-blank range), terrifying, threatening them, unidentified men, violent/violently, and wounded persons.'

The English text about the installation reads as follows: **BLACK WORDS IN RED INK: Iraq war in a calligraphic installation by Mustafa Ja'far.**

During the run up to the Iraq war in March 2003, my daily intake of news reports increased sharply. The American-led campaign to topple Saddam was about to start. Iraq was on the verge of a new phase about which I knew nothing.

Soon after the Americans entered Baghdad, everything went wrong for Iraq and its occupiers. (I am not going into detail, you know the rest.) As for myself, instead of refraining from following the painful news bulletins, I carried on as usual. Turning off the radio or television was not an option. Whenever I listened to a news item about the onslaught raging in Iraq, certain horrible words lingered in my mind. Arabic words such as 'looted' and 'set alight' came to summarise the news item itself. To someone who has experienced both occupation and war, this was troubling. As time went by and the conflict intensified, news reports from Iraq became increasingly bleaker and more depressing.

On several occasions I was personally affected by the turmoil. I lost dear friends, as well as old colleagues and good neighbours. Many of my relatives and family members had to flee their country seeking refuge in Syria, Jordan and Egypt. Those who remained in Baghdad and survived roadside bombs, indiscriminate killing and suicide bombers could not survive serious illnesses. Most of the doctors and medical staff had either fled the country or went into hiding. They too became targets of the terrorists.

One day, at the beginning of September 2007, I wanted to try out a new broad-edged calligraphy pen. I had never written with anything like it before. I cleared my desk, bought big sheets of white glossy paper measuring 64 by 45 cm and a large inkwell filled with red ink. I was ready to write, but what to write? I needed a word. Instantly, one crept out of my head to find its way to my pen: 'refugees'.

The next day I thought of putting down the rest of those torturous words that had been buzzing round in my head. I envisaged a show where multiple loose practise sheets could become a single installation - spread on the floor of a gallery or stuck to a vast white wall simply with masking tape. Between September 2007 and March 2008, whenever time permitted, I wrote more than forty words in a single calligraphic style, jeliul-thuluth, using the same broad-edged pen, the red ink and the white glossy paper.

Despite the long seven months that separate the writing of the first word from the last, they all look consistent, as if they were all written in one excruciating, long practise session.

Finally, I would like to make an important point. I did not embark upon such a project with the intention of entering the political arena or making a political statement. I am not a banner writer. Never was and never will be. Furthermore, my sorrow, my pain and my intense sense of loss transcend any political point scoring. The bitter words that I have written are born out of the conflict itself. I did not invent them, but I found them more than enough to express our deep collective grief. 875 words review and publicity. Mustafa Ja'far. Arabigraphy.com. www.arabigraphy.com/bkwords2.html

B) Iraqi theme, English language

1. Miscellaneous reflections of war- photos, Posters and Paintings.

'In and out of bounds. Ian Mayes. Saturday July 5, 2003. Excerpts from press review. The readers' editor on ... the difficulty of defining rules for images of war www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,991894,00.html. A portfolio, Reflections of War: Four photographers in the Iraq conflict, will be published with the Guardian later this month'. The portfolio of photographs of the war starts and ends with those of the banners, slogans and placards of the demonstration against the war. It depicts the lull before the storm in the desert! And as they say, a picture speaks a thousand words. "The Press Photographer's Year returns to the NT for a third year and is held in association with The British Press Photographers' Association" Assignments3 exhibition from 5th July to 30th August 2008. Slide show of 146 photos. <http://theppy.com/competition/results?year=2008> .

2. Rhythm in her eyes, poem and lyrics sung by Sara Eliot, accompanied with music on the guitar by her mother, Janna Eliot. www.myspace.com/saraeliot. Full text.

'Rhythm in her eyes' by Sara Eliot ©

Verse 1

Shadows that follow
Mirrors which lie
Memories unfolding
As time passes by

Teardrops are falling
As rivers run dry
Soldiers are waving
Their children good bye.

Chorus

See them
Hear them
Feel them
Believe in them
Woah!....
See them
Hear them
Grieve for them tonight

Verse 2

Words left unspoken
As planes pass on by
and drown out the hum of a
Sweet lullaby
Sun stains the morning
Stars leave the sky
Wind from the siege
Drown out
The mother's sigh

Chorus

See them
Hear them
Feel them
Believe in them
Woah!....
See them
Hear them
Feel for them tonight

Verse 3

Sun flips
Night to day
With clasped hands
She kneels to pray
Fallen soldier
Will you
Ever hold her?
Shadows that follow
Mirrors which lie
Memories unfolding
As time ...passes by.

Ashes to ashes
Dust to dawn
Flames of desire
Flicker and fall

Ashes to ashes
Dust to dawn
Flames of desire
Flicker and fall

See her.....
Hear her.....
Feel the rhythm in her eyes.

Written by Sara Eliot ©

2.'Body of War' songs that inspired an Iraq war veteran, Thomas Young. Mark Saleski, 6th May 2008. www.bodyofwar.com/. Play and film. Winner of National Board of Review, Best Documentary. Excerpts out of total 418 words review.

'Tomas Young knows this all too well. He enlisted shortly after 9/11, hoping to make a difference in Afghanistan. Instead, he was sent to Iraq and was paralyzed by a bullet to the spine less than a week into his tour of duty. This soundtrack represents the music that inspired Young as he dealt with his new physical reality. Founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War, Tomas hopes that his organization and the Body of War documentary will serve as a "tool for counter recruitment." Obviously, he has his reasons'.

C) Islamic theme, Arabic language

1. Slightly mischievous texts, poems by Adnan Alsayegh. Excerpts out of book of poems and web site.

These poems were read by Adnan Al-Sayegh at the third Al-Marbed Poetry Festival in Basra, Iraq, which took place on 15-17 April 2006.

Adnan Alsayegh

Slightly Mischievous Texts

Supplications

How to see God

You don't see your Lord
Except in the blade and in blood
And I see Him
In the word
In the tune
In the blueness of her eyes
And in the sea.

Verses and Times

Verses

Have superseded verses
And want your head to stay
Like a hard rock that
Doesn't change with the years.

Conversation

You, the mere mortal
See how you converse with your Lord and with Satan
Is it too much to learn
How you converse with a human?

Call for prayers

Neither a bell
Nor a minaret
Oh you worshipper
Why
Don't you hear
Your Lord
In the flute?

My God is one

My Lord
Is one
Neither a Catholic
Nor a Protestant
Neither a Sunni

Nor a Shi'i
Whoever divided Him
Whoever interpreted Him
Whoever spoke in His name
Whoever classified Him
According to his own sect
His demands
His interests
His constitutions
And his troops,
Is the infidel.
Four Caliphs
Four Caliphs
Left history
Behind them
Open mouthed
And we are still drying blood stains off them
I wonder!
How a scripture text could
Be preoccupied with a woman carrying wood
And yet overlook
To whom governance will go?

The poems - Slightly Mischievous Texts - upset the intolerant armed militia and after reading them Al-Sayegh was threatened with death and with having his tongue cut out. He was forced to leave Basra in haste and through Kuwait to return to his exile in London.

Al-Hallaj*
You the Almighty transmitted your scripture
A mirror
For the great and good
In multicolour verses,
Jurisprudence
Perfumes
But the Bedouin Arabs
Didn't see anything in it
Except for the sword and the veil.

* Al-Hallaj, old-time Sufi of Baghdad who was persecuted for his mystic beliefs.
www.adnansayegh.com. www.adnan.has.it.

VI) Aspirations for peace.

A) Iraqi theme, Arabic language (Iraqi dialect)

1. An Iraqi Asylum Seeker at the Animal Kingdom. Siduri Uruk. A fable.

www.kitabat.com 10th September 2006. Excerpts out of total 2010 words.

Would you believe it! An Iraqi man's asylum application to the animal kingdom was rejected. Come on in and see.

I got up in the morning, went to wash my face, like all human beings do, and discovered that the water was cut off and of course the electricity was also cut off. I went to the kitchen and asked the good woman: Where is the breakfast? She replied:

There is none. Go and have a takeaway breakfast from any restaurant on your way. I told her: My good woman, don't you see that the restaurants, too, have been targeted, specifically at breakfast time! She didn't say anything, but gave me a look of the type, if looks could kill! But, by virtue of my long acquaintance with her, I knew what she meant. Her look says: So! You aren't better than those who are dying. I left home, hit the road and kept on thinking about living conditions and the situation.

My God! How do I manage? Where shall I go? Where shall I buzz off to? Do I go abroad! But, what are my qualifications? Where is my money? Furthermore, what do I do with my kids? I can't imagine there is a country, which will accept me. Do you think I am better than all these people, who have been waiting for years! I kept on walking and thinking, when I had a brain wave, a fresh idea that no Iraqi has thought of. Why don't I go to apply for emigrating to the animal kingdom! I swear by God that animals are better than us the humans. They will definitely sympathise with me and agree to my request. To cut the long story short, I went and barged in straight at the king, I mean the **lion**, of course. I poured my heart out and told him: Your Royal Highness! I am an Iraqi seeking refuge with you and I want to be one of you. I'm fed up with humans, I hated them and I wish you take pity on me and agree my asylum application to your kingdom. The lion looked at me, very calmly and he said: Make an application and we shall consider it, wait and see. I promptly made the application, explaining my conditions and the situation of the country. I waited for a day or two, when I received the reply (**Your request is rejected**). What do you mean, rejected? Impossible! I shouted, kicked up a fuss and insisted on knowing the reason. The **lion** said: All the animals rejected your presence and decided on rejecting the request. I said: I don't believe it! I insist on hearing the opinions of the animals in person to "**give up hope finally**". The **lion** said: Fine! Come tomorrow and hear for your self straight from the horse's mouth. I went on the following day and quickly called on the king. I found him seated and had convened the meeting with all the animals seated, awaiting their turns to speak and convince. I was pleased by this introduction because the animals are giving me a lot of attention. The **lion** said: Now you will hear the opinions of the animals and prepare yourself for the answers. The first of the animals came and stood in front of me, it was the **donkey**. I don't know why they chose the donkey at the beginning. May be it is because he is the animal most oppressed by us, the Iraqis. The **donkey** looked at me and said: If only you knew how much we the donkeys bear a grudge against you Iraqis! What is it you lack that makes you still depend on us? Do you lack oil or money? I ask you! Aren't you embarrassed to be called an oil rich country and yet still depend on me? All the donkeys in the other countries have been freed from slavery, whereas you have added slavery's burden on to us. Isn't it bad enough we pull the oil barrels and gas canisters along your streets and vegetable carts along your markets and your filthy waste matter? This time, we are pulling cartloads of your dead and wounded. Tell me! How much longer do we have to endure this slavery? I was so embarrassed that I couldn't utter a word. But, I whispered, saying: You are right my dear, you are right. I kept quiet and said to myself: This donkey gave me such a telling off, God help me with the others. The donkey left and came the **bull**, which stood and said: I just ask you one question. I replied: Be my guest, your lordship. **He** asked: Don't you have a saying (**Seek advice from the bull's head**)? I told him: Ye, we do. **He** said: So, why don't you consult me, what's the matter with you? You see where your counsel has led you to since ignoring me! It serves you bloody right and you are more than welcome to your bulls and their consultancy. I replied: That is right, it serves us right. Then followed the **horse**, which stood to attention like a poet reciting a poem and said: It's me the one, who used to be

the symbol of strength and equestrian sport, yet you Iraqis made me the symbol of oil products. I'm the one, who used to be steered by jockeys and now by rag and bone men. He shouted: You lot rot there! I replied: Yes, we will rot. Then came a flock of **nightingales** and **sparrows**, which asked: Cross your heart! When was the last time you heard our trill? I replied: God is my witness, I can't remember as for a long while now I go to sleep and wake up to the sounds of explosions and gunfire. The nightingales answered me back, saying: You come to dump this trouble onto us. We couldn't believe our voices had returned and we've seen freedom. For God's sake! Keep away from us, let us have our singsong. We don't like wailing and self flagellation. In a sad voice, I said: Believe you me! Neither do I, but it's imposed on me. Then came a **fish**, evidently upset with us, and angrily said: Nothing gets up my nose more than your proverb (**The big fish eats the small fish**). So, how are you lot, dear, you never have the appetite. It then swam away. I said to myself: Charming! Fine chance of getting my asylum! Even the fish without a heart is fed up with us. Then came some **gazelles** and a **deer**. I said to myself: What lovely eyes and shapely figures! These are softies, who will definitely sympathise with me. A gazelle looked at me intently and said: Quite frankly, our capital is our beauty. I replied: Bless you. **She** pleaded: Please, we don't want your culture. I replied: Why, my dear, why you? What's wrong with our culture? Didn't we sing to you (**It's a deer, yet they aren't hunting it**)? Aren't we the ones, who wrote the lyrics of the poems for your eyes only! Have you forgotten the poem, the deer's eyes? What else do you want? **She** retorted: We mean your new culture, not the old one. We don't want anyone to wrap us and cover us with a piece of cloth, like you do to your females. I said to myself: Our females, where are they? Our females are ever clad in black mourning, wailing and in self flagellation. God help them! They were followed by the **dog**, which stood in front of me with a very solemn face and said: Quite frankly, I'm worried about our coming generations. I said: Generations! I see he speaks in standard Arabic. God help us! I said to him: Elucidate, my dear. **He** said: Yes! We the dogs are known for loyalty and the absence of treachery and injustice. Don't get me wrong, but you Iraqis are disloyal to your mothers and fathers. This causes me to worry about the behaviour of our puppies sinking down to your standards. How embarrassed I became, saying that even the dogs look down on us. Oh dear, how shameful! Then followed the **monkey**, stood in front of me, placed his hand on his mouth, laughed and said: Convey my greetings to those in the Green Zone. He roared into laughter and before I could ask him a question, jumped and went away. I didn't know what he was on about. Could it be he has relatives in the Green Zone!! Or, does his lover reside there!! I didn't have the chance to find out. He was followed by the **camel**, which stood and said: For all my patience and perseverance, quite frankly, I don't believe I can put up with your likes, your deeds, you Iraqis. He left me and went away. I didn't know how to answer him. How can I answer him!! Who the hell was I able to answer so far, let alone answer the camel! Then came the **sheep, lambs** and **ewes**, which were sympathetic to me. **They** gave me a sad look and said: Only we feel for you Iraqis. You are in the same boat as us. At celebrations you are slaughtered, at funerals you are slaughtered. You are clobbered by the stick. Any Tom, Dick or Harry, who comes, milks you dry and eventually have your guts for garters. Before I could show my delight and hope for the best, they said: But we are disheartened and don't have the energy to express our condolences to you. They were followed by the **wolf**, which was laughing and said maliciously: How are you my master? This time, I answered back and told him: I'm not your master. Your master is there at the Interior Ministry. I'm a peacenik, a man who has nothing to do with wolves and jackals. Then came the

elephants, giraffes, bears and other animal **species**. I was shouting: Stop! One at a time! We Iraqis don't even know you, nor have we seen you. They replied: And for this reason we are upset. All the wide world is our hosts at their zoos and has introduced us to their peoples, except, that is, for you Iraqis. Your Zawra' park is a ruin and your zoo is empty and you have the bloody cheek to call it the **(Lung of Baghdad)**. What a bloody lung!! It's like the lung of someone, who has been smoking rolled cigarettes.

I said to myself: That's it. There's no other solution except for our own Iraqi tried and tested one, which will save me. I placed one hand on my head and raised the other hand and started shouting the slogan, my dear brothers! And recited some verses, praising the lion and at the top of my voice said: In my name and on behalf of all the Iraqis **(Excuse me! I spoke in your name because I'm sure you lot are in the same boat as me)**. I asked the lion to come and be a king over us the Iraqis. The **lion** looked at me, paused and then said: Listen, son! I'm no use to you. Don't forget I have no elections, no democracy, nor political parties and militias, nor federalism. My slogan is dictatorship. Yes, I, the king am the founding father of dictatorship. I shouted in joy, saying: Hello dictatorship! Long time no see! For sure, it will deliver us from this plight. We aren't elections type, nor democracy material, our cure is dictatorship. The lion told me: Now take your request and you lot repeat the elections and this time round vote for dictatorship. I returned, but so far no one has bothered me except the monkey. If only I knew why he laughed! And whom did he want me to convey his greetings to??

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2. 'An Iraqi girl's dream of a bridegroom'. Siduri Uruk.28 July 2007

www.kitabat.com

I am an Iraqi girl,
A beautiful Baghdad lass
Nice? Of course, nice
Because, there is no Iraqi girl, who doesn't appeal to the heart and to the eye
I dream like all the girls
No, not quite like all the girls, because I am an Iraqi girl
And the Iraqi girl doesn't resemble just any girls
I dream of a good bridegroom, who has many attributes,
That are simple attributes
But, they are very important to me as an Iraqi girl
In brief, I am a bride, who has requirements and conditions
And I believe I am not asking for too much
Because, I am an Iraqi girl
I dream of a bridegroom, who loves me more than all the girls
And even more than the nymphs high up in the skies
I dream of a handsome, cultured bridegroom,
Not wearing pyjamas and flip flops and a volunteer in the militias
I dream of a bridegroom not affiliated to any party, committee or grouping
I want him to belong only to Iraq's soil
I dream of a bridegroom as a teacher, an engineer or a labourer
But, I don't any more want him with a doctorate
I dream of a man of letters, a poet, a writer
But not one, who writes on democracy and elections,
Nor one, who pens poems to parties and federalism

I want a home down by the riverside in Al-A'dhemiye
 And the gold from up the market in Al-Kadhimiye
 I want to manicure my hands with *henna* from Al-Basra
 I want to decorate my legs with anklets from Al- Mosul
 I want a bridegroom, whose parents come from both sects
 Whose friends are Kurds, and whose neighbours are Christians
 Together with Sabeans and Turcoman
 At my wedding, I want the *Al-'Alam* band to play the music
 And the good old Hatem Al-Asmer sing
 Better still, if accompanied by Linda George, the nightingale of Chaldo-Assyrians
 I want a bridegroom dressed at the wedding in a suit and the nicest tie
 And doesn't tell me that wearing the tie isn't our custom
 Because, I am an Iraqi bride, not a Persian one
 If he wears a *dishdashe* gown, it still doesn't matter
 Provided he doesn't shorten it as if he is competing with Lebanon's young girls
 Because, I am an Iraqi bride, not a Saudi one
 I want to wear a beautiful white dress and loosen my long hair
 And doesn't tell me that it is taboo, or that I should wear the veil
 Because, I am an Iraqi bride, not an Afghan one
 I want my wedding to be an Iraqi wedding with merriment, singsongs and ululations
 And doesn't segregate the two sexes and says it is an Islamic wedding and celebration
 Because, I am an Iraqi bride, not a Jordanian Bedouin one
 I want a honeymoon in the mountains of Dihouk and Al-Suleymaniye
 Provided they don't lay a red carpet with the reception
 By a guard of honour and marching with a band
 Because, like them, I am an Iraqi
 I mean, like us, they are Iraqis
 I wish for God to bless me with nice boys and girls
 When they ask me: Mum! Are we Sunni or Shi'a?
 I will smack their gobs and tell them:
 Shut up! You are Iraqis, full stop.
 I beg your pardon! I forgot we are in a democratic country
 Violence and beatings are against the law
 I will embrace them lovingly and affectionately and tell them:
Excuse me, my children
 You are Iraqis and nothing else and this is what is important
 And believe you me! This is the dream of every Iraqi girl.

Translated from colloquial Iraqi Arabic by M T Ali (MCIL)

Notes by the translator: The full title of the poem is:

The Personnel Specifications of a Bridegroom as the Wishes of Every Iraqi Bride

Reference to women of neighbouring countries is for social comparison as historically the Iraqi woman had a relatively higher status than her counterparts and hence her expectations may be higher, too.

References to countries, ethnicities, religions and sects are familiar to the readers; others are place names within Iraq.

Dishdashe is the traditional loose, flowing gown worn by Arab males.

Excuse me, my children is the actual transliteration from English used by the author and not my translation.

Al-'Alam, meaning the flag, is the name of the music band from Salah-Al-Deen county.

Henna is a traditional yellow varnish popular with women
The poem was published on kitab.com Arabic website.

3. 'An Iraqi girl's supplication to God'. Humorous satire.

Please, Allah, bless me with a man from the highest class families, who has achieved the highest academic qualifications, owns the most expensive cars, fully loaded with Dollars, is multilingual, gives diamonds as presents, with the honeymoon intercontinental and, oh, whose mother and sisters are all dead.

4. Ramadan joke. Humorous satire

A Muslim nutcase was fed up with abstinence from all food and drink during daylight in the fasting month of Ramadan. So much so that, every time he prays, he makes a personal supplication to God: Please, Allah, let Ramadan be like the World Cup in sport, once only every four years and each time in a different country.

5. Electricity Jokes

If one of your house doors is draughty, bring a chair and sit on it in front of the door. Remember that a nice breeze blows along it and that mains Electricity is switched off. An Iraqi swears that he saw the National Electricity Board in his dreams, promising him power resumption in the year 2050.

You are strongly advised to publicise this news item as a person, who did so, was rewarded with power for three days. Whereas, another, who ignored it, incurred the loss of his house generator by burning.

Translated from Iraqi colloquial Arabic by: M T Ali (MCIL)

6. A popular song in colloquial Iraqi Arabic was 'Saddam in court' by Joe Guitar on www.iraqiwave.com. Another, DJ Saddam is in English, others are bilingual. Most are satirical.

B) Iraqi theme, English language

1. 'Dreams'. When you live in a world of war. Colette Shakib

When you live in a world of war...

Colette's Shakib (12 year old) class at school was given a task in their English class to write a poem about 'Dreams'. Most of her class wrote about romantic dreams but Colette wrote her poem about the dreams of an Iraqi girl in Baghdad and her dreams of peace. www.iraqiassociation.org/pdf/Muntada92e.pdf.

Dreams

I used to dream, now no more,
I wouldn't if I were you,
For a dream is a dream and only a dream,
And dreams just don't come true.
I dreamt there was peace and happiness,
I dreamt I could just fly away,
I dreamt that bombs did seldom drop,
And the war belonged to yesterday.
My dreams used to see me through,
But now they see me cry,
Images of home haunt my night,
And I never quite understand why.
The dreams sometimes turn to nightmares,
They are nothing I can avoid,
Images of hundreds of army planes,

And my city being destroyed.
 Deep down I can still dream,
 If you want to hear the truth,
 For I lie to myself, pretend that I don't,
 But tell me do you see the use?
 Dreams of flowers and rainbows,
 And a piercing sky of blue,
 Just how do you stop this enemy,
 When these dreams are part of you?
 Why do all dreams of escaping,
 Seem like millions of dreams I've had?
 Why has my old house gone now,
 Back in the streets of Baghdad?
 I want to escape from this world,
 For there to be an open door,
 I guess it's hard to dream,
 When you live in a world of war.
 I say that all hope is gone now,
 But is that really true?
 Moments feel like hours,
 Will my dreams see me through?
By Colette Shakib, October 2007
 Al-Muntada, issue No.92
 Translated into Arabic by: M T Ali (MCIL)

C) Vocabulary of war, English language

The immediate consequences of war in death and destruction are visible and quantifiable as are its subsequent ones of war refugees and prisoners of war. The other human sufferings are less visible and not as quantifiable. Culture is also damaged. *The first casualty of war is the truth*, as they say. Although language is neutral, it doesn't emerge unscathed. As a rule, the victor's language and culture prevail over that of the vanquished. At least, it generates new vocabulary of words and phrases or recycles others as shown by the following examples.

1. Iraq-Iran War 1980-1988

War of Attrition. War of the cities. Tanker War. Dogfights. Human Waves. Killing fields.

2. Anfal military campaign 1987-1988

Anfal.Genocide. Mass graves. Chemical Ali. Chemical weapons. Helebje. Mustard gas. Ethnic cleansing. Military zone. Scorched earth policy. Shoot on site. Land mines

3. First Gulf War (Kuwait).

Desert storm. Desert fox. Desert rats. Enemy fire. Friendly fire. Cross fire. Collateral damage. Operation provide comfort. Safe haven. No fly zone. 36th Parallel. Surgical strike. Pinpoint accuracy. Theatre of war. Digital war. Turkey shoot. Cluster bombs. Missing in action (MIA). Meals Ready to Eat (MRE).

4. Second Gulf War, 2003

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).Shock and awe. Comical Ali. (DU)Depleted uranium. Infrastructure. Occupation. Liberation. Surge. Preventive war. War on terror. Terrorists. Al-Qaida. . Militias. Al-Sadir. Firebrand cleric. Grand Ayatollah. Al-Sistani. Neocons. George W Bush. Tony Blair. Dossier. Stuff happens. Michael Moore. Fahrenheit 9/11. Improvised explosive device (IED). Rocket propelled grenade (RPG). Snipers. Suicide bombers. Booby trapped cars.

D) Multimedia coverage, Television, Films and Plays.

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/Stuff%20Happens+8705.twl

"Stuff happens... and it's untidy, and freedom's untidy and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.

The American Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld's famous response to the looting of Baghdad, at a press conference of 11 April 2003, provides the title for a new play, specially written for the Olivier Theatre, about the extraordinary process leading up to the invasion of Iraq". It was his way of justification as "*All is fair in love and war*". Stuff happens was made the title of a satirical play on the war by the playwright David Hare. It was performed at the National (Olivier) Theatre at the South Bank in London from 10th September 2004, on the eve of 9/11 third anniversary. Below is the Author's Note in the theatre's programme on the play: "Stuff Happens is a history play, which happens to centre on very recent history. The events within it have been authenticated from multiple sources, both private and public. What happened happened. Nothing in the narrative is knowingly untrue. Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim. When the doors close on the world's leaders and on their entourages, then I have used my imagination. This is surely a play, not a documentary, and driven, I hope, by its themes as much as by its characters and story. I must thank all those people-.."

The introduction to the bibliography of the programme is: "*The literature on the Iraq war grows by the day. Here is a list of books which either help explain the war's narrative, or which discuss and illuminate some of its wider implications.*"

Another play in English was Baghdad Wedding by Hassan Abdulrazzaq at the Soho Theatre last July. www.sohotheatre.com/pl1279audio.html. It was covered in www.blogsguardian.co.uk/theatre/2008/04/the_middle_east_has_culture_no.html. It was also covered in Free The Word celebration of world literature by Pen International last April at the South Bank, London.

www.internationalpen.org.uk/go/event/meet_the_playwright.

Currently, there is a docudrama play, Black Watch, on show until 26th July at the Barbican theatre. Its debut by the National Theatre of Scotland was at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2006 and has since been to the USA, Australia and New Zealand. 'The company has won a clutch of awards including a South Bank Show award for *Black Watch* and a Critics' Circle Award for director John Tiffany. Gregory Burke also recently won the Best Play Writers' Guild Award for *Black Watch*'.

www.barbican.org.uk/generic/play-media.asp?id=5418&me=793&af=theatre.

'To Tell These War Stories, Words Aren't Enough' By BEN BRANTLEY

Published: October 24, 2007 The New York Times. 'Piercing the Emotional Armor of Scottish Soldiers' PATRICK HEALY Published: Become Hit Shows in Edinburgh'

Sarah Lyall, Published: August 26, 2006.October 15, 2007. 'Angry Plays

There were also plays in Arabic by Ms Ronak Shawki and Ms Ahlam 'Arab. The latter directed Democracy & 1/2, which was produced by Al-Nahrain Theatre Group in London on 3rd July 2007. They are currently working on The Eight Day Week.

Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11 film, which he directed in 2004 is a documentary.

A poem by Rex Tyler on Cooke's Delight web site is a review of it in verse.

9/11 Fahrenheit.

You should hear what they are saying in America
About the War and how it has panned out
They feel it's been a truly costly error
And terrorists have been spawned with out doubt
They know now their intelligence was rotten
The torturing caused countries near and far

to think unkindly of the US people
and then of course the personnel who are
undergoing grave threats from insurgents
hundreds of young soldiers now lie dead
Bush appears to have been a bit hasty
along with Blair in England he was led
into Baghdad, cluster-bombs and rockets
Du Shells they are littered everywhere
thousands slaughtered just to free the people
Saddam Husain's sons dead but was it fair?
to raze the country to the ground completely
the infrastructure in need of repair
No weapons of Mass destruction in the offing
with weapons instructors searching everywhere
the dossiers and 45 minute warning
everything now leading to attack
that was the data coming out of Britain
A reason for the war in poor Iraq
Newspapers also buzzed with a legitimacy
and got the US people well on side
complicity of this sort is now painful
and really it now cannot be denied
we went to war and killed so many people
for no good reason that's the truth to-day
Thank Goodness Michael Moore and our George Monbiot have got the guts to
speak out and to say
And if you read my web-site from the outset
I always thought that we had got it wrong
and now it has been proven and we're saying
that politicians really don't belong
here on this sad planet we must
banish them,
where they can drop their evil bombs and fight
Bush and Blair lets send them there for goodness sake
9/11 Go see Fahrenheit!

Three Iraqi short documentary films, Baghdad Days, Hiwar (Dialogue) and Omer Is My Friend, were shown here at SOAS and at the Trafalgar Studios in November 2006. They were in Arabic with English sub-titles. www.iftvc.org. Also shown here at SOAS and at the ICA were the Kurdish film Turtles Can Fly and A Time for Drunken Horses. Another feature film was Crossing the Dust as part of the 5th Kurdish Film Festival in London, 30th November-6th December 2007. They were in Kurdish with English sub-titles. www.lkff.co.uk. Also on www.kssso.org.uk.
As for television, there have been scores of programmes, documentaries and even satires, such as regular sketches on Bremner, Bird and Fortune on www.channel4TV.com.

What the papers say. Washington Post 12th July 2008. Sudarsan Raghavan. A Baghdad Bookseller, Bound to His Country. Keeping Literature Alive in Baghdad. Arab saying: "Cairo writes. Beirut publishes. Baghdad reads."

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