

Poetry of Dissent and Crisis II  
Can We Already Say the Word Naqba?

Khirbet Khize (excerpt)

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Khirbet Khize (excerpt) S. Yizhar

“We have no right, Moishe, to kick them out of here!” I didn’t want my voice to tremble. And Moishe said to me: “You’re starting with that again!” And I realized that nothing would come of it. It seemed such a shame, such a crying shame. The first transport had already moved off without my noticing and was climbing the big dirt track. (If only I could go from one to the next and whisper to them, come back, come back tonight, we’re leaving here tonight and the village will be empty. Come back! Don’t leave the village empty!) At once the second transport moved off too, the one with the women, who decorated the truck with the blue of their dresses and the white of their headscarves, and a single wail rose aloft, and was inserted into the sobbing of the heavy truck that grated and grabbed its way in the wet sand. (And the blind men would surely be forgotten here by the roadside.) It was the afternoon. Against the tranquility of the sky leapt the anger of the wind that darkened the day and foretold new rain, tomorrow or the day after. Here and there in the village there rose a trail of white smoke from damp materials that refused to burn, and refused to go out, and would go on smoking like this, half-burning, for a few days, until suddenly a wall or roof would collapse. A cow bellowed somewhere. When they reached their place of exile night would already have fallen. Their clothing would be their only bedding. Fine. What could be done? The third truck began to rumble. Had some astrologer already seen in the conjuncture of the stars in the sky over the village or in some horoscope how things would turn out here? And what indifference there was in us, as if we had never been anything but peddlers of exile, and our hearts had coarsened in the process. But this was not the point either. And how does it end? The valley was calm. Somebody started talking about supper. Far away on the dirt track, close to what appeared to be its end, a distant, darkening, swaying truck, in the manner of heavy trucks laden with fruit or produce or something, was gradually being swallowed up. Tomorrow, both painful humiliation and helpless rage would turn into a kind of casual irritation, shameful but fading fast. Everything was suddenly so open. So big, so very big. And we had all become so small and insignificant. Soon a time would arise in the world when it would be good to come home from work, to return exhausted, to meet someone, or walk alone, to walk saying nothing. All around silence was falling, and very soon it would close upon the last circle. And when silence had closed in on everything and no

man disturbed the stillness, which yearned noiselessly for what was beyond silence—then God would come forth and descend to roam the valley, and see whether all was according to the cry that had reached him.

Yizhar, S.. Khirbet Khizeh (p. 107). Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Kindle Edition.

# The Dead Village

Dan Pagis

When you come to the dead silence  
To the stones and the mud walls  
To the beheaded dead village  
To the trembling ashes  
To the abandoned rustle among the thorns,  
Clouds of memory over your head  
Heavy with anger mounting and rising – The falcon of hatred drops  
suddenly  
Wings spread like a cross above you  
Its claws like sun knives chasing your steps.

דן פגיס

## הכפר המת

מתוך "שלושה שירים", על המשמר, 6.4.1955

בבואך לשקט השרוף,  
לאבנים ולחומות הטיט,  
לכפר המת והערוף,  
לאפר המרטיט,  
לרחש הנטוש בין הקוצים  
ועל ראשך עבי הזכרון  
כבדי חרון עולים ומקיצים –  
צונח פתע בו המשטמה  
פורש כצלב כנפים מעליך  
וצפרניו כסכיני חמה  
רוחפות את שעליך.

There Was No Farewell *Translated by Peter Cole, Yahya Hijazi and Gabriel Levin*

There Was No Farewell

We did not weep  
when we were leaving—  
for we had neither  
time nor tears,  
and there was no farewell.  
We did not know  
at the moment of parting  
that it was a parting,  
so where would our weeping  
have come from?  
We did not stay  
awake all night  
(and did not doze)  
the night of our leaving.  
That night we had  
neither night nor light,  
and no moon rose.  
That night we lost our star,  
our lamp misled us;  
we didn't receive our share  
of sleeplessness—  
so where  
would wakefulness have come from?

I was the only Arab  
Muslim  
Palestinian in the class.  
This wasn't the first time I was the only one  
but this time it was different  
they all said this course was difficult  
they called it "shoah"<sup>12</sup>  
because of the material  
it was hard for me but not so much  
but what was really hard for me  
was to sit in the class and to listen to them.  
To the instructor,  
but mostly to the students  
who already in the first session would say  
their political opinions aloud  
and the instructor said by the way or maybe  
not  
that he served in a combat unit in the army  
I remember one lecture in particular  
where we were discussing the Arab minority  
and there everything was said loudly.  
All the coarse and washed-out clichés  
but it had never been so personal, so  
intimate.  
Until I felt every word encoded into my  
soul.  
The instructor would sometimes respond,  
correct something, and sometimes not,  
regardless he had material to teach and the  
time was not to our benefit:  
And I really just wanted the lecture to end  
in order to leave the class  
to start my moped and return to *Yaffa*<sup>13</sup>.

Translated by Reuven Greenvald. The poem appears  
in *I am in two* (Hebrew & Arabic, 2018).

הייתי הערביה  
המסלמית  
הפלסטינית היחידה בכיתה.  
זאת לא הפעם הראשונה שאני היחידה  
אך הפעם היה שונה  
כלם אמרו שהקורס הזה קשה  
כינו אותו *שואה*  
מבחינת החומר  
לי החומר היה קשה אך לא מאד  
מה שהיה לי באמת קשה  
זה לשבת בכיתה ולשמע אותם.  
את המנחה,  
אבל בעיקר את הסטודנטים  
שכבר במפגש הראשון אמרו בקול את דעותיהם  
הפוליטיות  
והמנחה אמר בדרך אגב או שלא  
שהוא שרת בצבא בקרבי  
וזכרת שיעור אחד במיוחד  
שבו דנו במיעוט הערבי  
ששם הבל נאמר בקול רם.  
כל הקלישאות המחספסות והמבכסות  
אבל מעולם זה לא היה כל כך פרטי, כל כך אינטימי.  
עד שהרגשתי כל מלה קדוה בנשמת.  
הפנחה לפעמים היה מגיב, מתקן דברים, ולפעמים  
לא, מתקן  
בכל זאת יש לו חמר להעביר והזמן לא לטובתנו.  
ואני כל מה שרציתי זה שסוף השעור יגיע  
כדי לצאת מהכיתה  
להתניע את הקטנוע ולחזור אל יאֵפָא.

<sup>12</sup> Hebrew: "catastrophe" and is the Hebrew word for "The Holocaust"

<sup>13</sup> She uses the Arabic name for the city of Jaffa whereas in Hebrew it is called "Yafo"