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**Humanism and exile as subjects
in the poetry of Bilind al-Ḥaydarī¹**

Bilind al-Ḥaydarī² (*belend* means “proud,” “high” in Kurdish) is an Iraqi Kurdish poet considered as the first among the precursors of the new free verse forms in Arabic poetry that appeared in Iraq after the Second

¹ This paper was presented at the International Conference on Kurdish Studies, Cracow, May 17 – 19 2004.

² Bilind al-Ḥaydarī is an Iraqi Kurdish poet writing in the Arabic language. He was born in As-Sulaymāniyya in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1926 and died in exile in London in 1996. He came from an aristocratic family, devoted to science and literature, however his father served in the military. Bilind refused the style of the life of rich families and preferred to live as a simple man, taking up different jobs. His uncle was minister of interior in Iraq during the monarchy. At that time, some members of his family joined the left opposition. Bilind came to Baghdad. There he began painting probably because his wife Dalāl al-Muftī was a painter. He came to know such painters as Ġawād Salīm and Fā’iq Ḥasan. In his early years, he started to write in Kurdish. Later, he began to write in Arabic and cooperated with such writers as ‘Abd al-Malik Nūrī, Fu’ād at-Takarī, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī. He started writing criticism and published some books. He was the editor-in-chief of two Iraqi periodical magazines: “Al-‘Ulūm” (Sciences) and “Āfāq ‘Arabiyya” (The Arab Perspectives). He became a member of the Iraqi Communist Party, but after the Second World War changed his worldview to existentialism. Marxism and existentialism deeply influenced his poetry. In 1963, he was arrested. In 1982, he left Iraq for Beirut and then moved to London, where he died. He co-operated with Iraqis in exile and formed the Iraqi Democratic Union. After his death the Cultural Association of the United Arab Emirates created an annual prize *Aṣīla* in his name. (Cf. Ibrāhīm al-Yūsuf, *Bilind al-Ḥaydarī rā’id al-ḥadāṭa aš-ši’riyya al-mansī* “Az-Zamān”, no. 1364, Baghdad 2002. Or: www.azzaman.com). He was an abundant and creative poet. He published the following collections of poetry:

1. *Ḥafqat at-ṭīn* (A Pulsation of Clay), Baghdad 1946
2. *Aḡānī al-madīna al-mayyita wa-qaṣā’id uḥrā* (Songs of the Dead City and Other Poems), Baghdad 1951
3. *Ġi’tum ma’a al-faḡr* (You Came With Dawn), Baghdad 1961
4. *Ḥaṭawāt fī al-ḡurba* (Steps in Exile), Beirut 1965
5. *Riḥlat al-ḥurūf aš-ṣufr* (Travel of the Yellow Letters), Beirut 1968

World War. His first collection of poems *Hafqat at-ṭīn* (A Pulsation of Clay), which contained some poems written in free verse was published in 1946. It preceded the publication of free verse by other Iraqi poets such as Nāzik al-Malā'ika's (1923-1992)—*Al-Kūlarā* (Cholera) and Badr Šākīr as-Sayyāb's (1926-1964)—*Hal kāna ḥubban?* (Was It Love?). The years 1948-1950 were a time of experiments, and in the period between 1951 and 1954 Iraqi poetry was enriched by the work of the above mentioned poets as well as 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (1926-1999).

Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im Ḥafāǧī points out that the beginning of this new form dates back several years before 1947. It is therefore an old form³. There were some attempts in this field in the interwar period. These earlier free verses formed a foundation for the development of free verse after 1945⁴. Free verse was qualified by Muḥammad an-Nuwayhī as a new poetic pattern based on classical metres⁵. Aḥmad Sulaymān al-Aḥmad defined it as the new poetry⁶, while the Lebanese poet Yūsuf al-Ḥāl called it modern. After the Second World War, when social and cultural life developed, the wish to introduce changes in numerous spheres was strengthened. The struggle for independence and against colonialism appeared to lead to the consolidation of the politically engaged poetry and gave it a realistic trend. Poetry of this period was characterized by changes both in form and content. This new philosophy very different from traditional visions was the product of the new epoch⁷.

Unlike other Iraqi poets such as Badr Šākīr as-Sayyāb and Nāzik al-Malā'ika, Bilind al-Ḥaydarī often is unjustly not mentioned by some critics

6. *Aǧānī al-ḥāris al-mut'ab* (Songs of the Tired Guard), Beirut 1971.

7. *Ḥiwār 'abra al-ab'ād at-ṭalāṭa* (Dialogue Across Three Spaces), Beirut 1972.

8. *Ilā Bayrūt ma'a taḥīyyātī* (For Beirut with my Greetings), Cairo 1985.

9. *Abwāb ilā al-bayt ad-ḍayyiq* (Doors to a Crowded House), London 1990.

10. *Aḥīr ad-darb* (The End of the Road), Cairo 1993

11. *Al-A'māl al-kāmila li-aš-šā'ir Bilind al-Ḥaydarī* (Collected Poetical Works of Bilind al-Ḥaydarī), Kuwait 1992.

12. *Durūb fī al-manfā* (Ways In Exile), Beirut, Kuwait 1996 – published after his death.

He also published the following studies:

13. *Niqāt daw'* (Spots of Light), Beirut 1979.

14. *Zaman li-kull al-azmina* (Time for all Times), Beirut 1981.

15. *Madāḥil ilā aš-ši'r al-'irāqī* (An Introduction to Iraqi Poetry, Cairo 1987)

³ Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im Ḥafāǧī, no date: 292.

⁴ For more information see: Adnan Abbas, 2000: 179-183.

⁵ See: 'Abd al-Wāḥid Lu'lu'a, 1973: 66.

⁶ Aḥmad Sulaymān al-Aḥmad, no date: 126.

⁷ 'Izz ad-Dīn Ismā'il, 1981: 13.

as the one of the early precursors of Arabic free verse. Unfortunately, they did not give Al-Ḥaydarī his just and specific place in the modern poetic process. Some of them, as for instance Iḥsān ‘Abbās, do not even mention Bilind al-Ḥaydarī. It is Ibrāhīm al-Yūsuf who stresses that Bilind al-Ḥaydarī was the first one to renew Arabic poetry⁸. In his opinion, the Kurdish origin of Al-Ḥaydarī was a reason of ignoring his role in modernizing poetry by the Arab critics. Because of that Al-Ḥaydarī in one of his press meeting in the 70’s, stressed: “I am being omitted for my Kurdishness”⁹. However, some well known Arab poets acknowledged the high position of his poetry in the new process and placed him among such poets as As-Sayyāb, Adonis (“‘Alī Aḥmad Sa‘īd”, b. 1930), ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, Sa‘dī Yūsuf, Nizār Qabbānī (d. 1999), Mārūn ‘Abbūd (1885-1962), Ğabrā Ibrāhīm Ğabrā (d. 1990’s).

Bilind al-Ḥaydarī was one of the most important poets of modern free verse, profiting from realistic, neo-realistic, symbolic and existentialist trends. Some of his earlier verses had romantic tendency. The poet founded an association called “Al-Waqt aḍ-Ḍā‘i” (The Lost Time) which stressed romantic tendencies in literature. Generally, his poetry reflects intellectual possibilities and universal human values. It presents the feeling of exile, psychological hopelessness of emigration, the crisis of humanity and the tragic burdens of those living in exile, deep human dreams for building a better future, worries, homesickness, loneliness, pain, troubles, anger, rejection and resistance, political and tragic events in Iraq and Iraqī Kurdistan, the relation of the poet to the world and existence and the human psyche, intellectual images concerning contrasts of life and individuality of people and their attitudes, conflicts, patience, hopes, death, and so on.

Exile as a subject occupies a prominent place in his poetry. The poet spent many years in exile, and died there. His attitude towards emigration is clear for this example in his first poetic collection *A Pulsation of Clay*:

Kullu mā fī arḍinā min ġannatin
*hiya min ġurbati ḍā l-qalbi l-kasīri*¹⁰
 (All things in our paradise on this Earth
 come from the sad heart of emigration)

This feeling reappears when he emigrated from Iraq, for instance in the collection *Durūb fī al-manfā* (Ways In Exile) while human crises and the

⁸ See Ibrāhīm al-Yūsuf, 2002.

⁹ Ibrāhīm al-Yūsuf, 2002.

¹⁰ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 113 (the whole poem: 111-114).

tragic burden of exile repeatedly are mentioned in his collection of poems *Haṭawāt fī al-ġurba* (Steps In Emigration). The feeling of exile can also be found in verses of many other Iraqi poets, living in exile, such as Ġarīb ‘alā al-Ḥalīġ (A Stranger in the Gulf)¹¹ and *Li-annī ġarībi* (Because I am a Stranger)¹² by Badr Šākīr as-Sayyāb, the collections *Qaṣā’id fī al-manfā* (Verses In Exile) by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Barīd al-ġurba* (Emigration Mail)¹³ by Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Ġawāhirī (1899-1997), as well as in the poetry of Sa’dī Yūsuf, Muzaḥḥar an-Nawwāb, Sherko Bekas, and others.

The pains of exile are described in Al-Ḥaydarī’s poem *Matà yā ayyuhā al-waṭan...?* (Homeland! When we ...?):

Matà yā ayyuhā l-waṭanu
sa-tarġi ‘u min manāfika
*sa-narġi ‘u min manāfihī?*¹⁴
 (Homeland!
 When will you return from your exile?
 When I will I return from its exile?)

He moves step by step to this painful new world full of dark nights and hope:

Wa-kunnā nasīru ma’an ḥaṭwatan ḥaṭwatan
li-l-manāfi
waṭanī wa anā
*wa ru’bu layālī ṣ-ṣaḥārā l-‘iġāfi*¹⁵
 (We were moving step by step
 Toward exile
 My homeland and me
 And the fear of the slim nights of deserts)

The homeland for him becomes the exile and his death is the sign of the unwanted emigration:

In muttu hunā ... fī l-ġurbati ... fī l-manfā
in muttu ġadan

¹¹ Badr Šākīr as-Sayyāb, 1986. v. 1: 317-323.

¹² Badr Šākīr as-Sayyāb, 1986. v. 1: 195-196.

¹³ See: Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Ġawāhirī, 1965.

¹⁴ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 50.

¹⁵ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 7.

*fa-sa-yahmilu šāhīdu qabrī: hādā waṭanī*¹⁶
 (If I died here ... in emigration ... in exile
 If I die tomorrow
 The witness of my grave will announce: this is my homeland)

However, he speaks of the feeling of freedom in his emigration and exile, for instance in the poem *Kawābīs wa-aḥlām* (Nightmares and Dreams):

Yūǧi'unī yā sayyidatī
an lā a'rifa nafsī ḥurran
*illā fī l-ǧurba*¹⁷
 (My Beloved! Ache for me,
 I do not have freedom
 Except in exile)

Bilind al-Ḥaydarī declares that the return from exile would make no sense because everything in his homeland was lost. This attitude appears in the poem *A'ūd ... li-man..?* (To Whom I Return...?):

*A-taqūlu: ta'ūdu ḡadan...?!
 A-a'ūdu li-man...?! .. a-li-baytī...?!
 a-li-ǧuttatī ṭiflin mayyit...?!
 a-li-kawmatī aḡǧārīn musīḥat aṭlālā
 taǧhašu fī ṣ-ṣamti...?*¹⁸
 (You say: you will return tomorrow...?!
 To whom I return... ?!... to my home...?!
 To a dead body of a child...?!
 To heaps of stones, which were transformed to ruins
 Sobbing in silence...?!)

However we see the other side of his dream: longing and homesickness in the poem *Hal lī an arà..?!* (Should I See..?!):

hal lī an aḥluma, yā madīnatī
bi-r-ruǧū'...?!

¹⁶ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 35.

¹⁷ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 44 (the whole poem: 44-46).

¹⁸ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 795 (the whole poem: 793-797).

*li-dārīnā l-muṭfa'ati š-šumū*¹⁹

(My city! Could I dream
To return...?!
To our dark home).

This longing is also compared with his love for a woman in the poem *Ilā samrā'* (To Brown-Skinned Woman):

Samrā'u

*yā ḥulmi l-muḍammaḥa bi-l-hawāḡisi wa-aḡ-ḡunūni*²⁰

(Brown-Skinned Woman!
You are my dream, anointed with fears and doubts)

This homesickness to an old love from his youth becomes irony in the following poem *Ḥubb qadīm* (Old Love):

Hal taḡkurīn

*wa-ḡaḡalti mimḡā taḡkurīn*²¹

(Do you remember?
when you were ashamed from what you remembered)

Bilind al-Ḥaydarī connects this kind of love with sadness and ruins in the poem *Ahwāki* (I Love You):

Qalbun tawakka'a 'alā 'ukkāzati d-ḡikrā

wa-rāḡa yabḡatu fī anḡāḡi

*mā marrā*²²

(A heart reclines on the stick of memory
And is searching between the ruins,
Passing things)

His deep homesickness and longing to childhood, mother, family and valley repeatedly appear in his poems. For example, in the poem *Mā bayna ḡirā'ay ummī* (Between my Mother's Arms) he writes:

Dāta masā'in hamasat fī uḡunī

wa-bi-ḡawtin muḡtallin bi-ḡ-ḡaḡani:

¹⁹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 439 (the whole poem: 439-442).

²⁰ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 159.

²¹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 261.

²² Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 31.

ibnī... iyyāka wa-iyyākum yā awlādī
*an ya'bura ayyun minikum dāka ʿāl-wādī*²³
 (A certain night she whispered in my ear
 With a sound wetted with sadness:
 My son... be careful, be careful, my sons
 Not to cross that valley)

This is also the homesickness to for his son in the poem *Ilā waladī* (To My Son):

Sa-a'ūdu tāniyatan ilayk
*li-uqabbila ʾn-nūra ʾlladī fi nāzirayk*²⁴
 (I shall return back to you once again
 To kiss the light in your eyes)

His dreaming refers mainly to freedom and hope for a better and more humanistic future:

Hal lī an ūlada lā ǧurḥan?
lā sikkīnan?
*lā siǧnan... lā saǧǧānan... lā masǧūnā*²⁵
 (Could I be born without wounds?
 Without a knife?
 Without a prison... without a jailer... without a prisoner?)

His dream for hope, freedom and humanitarian values, even with pain, is clear in his testament for his son in the poem *Al-Waṣiyya* (Testament):

Man yadrī...?
qad tūladu fi šamsin
ḥattā ašǧara min dīqi yadī
fi šamsin
qad tašruqu fi yawmin mā
*wa'dan bi-l-faǧri yaṭulla 'alā baladī*²⁶

²³ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 76.

²⁴ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 355 .

²⁵ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 447.

²⁶ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 826 (the whole poem: 825-826).

(Who knows...?
 Perhaps you will be born in the sun
 Even this sun is so small as a hand
 In the sun, which may shine someday
 As a promise, a dawn which appears
 In my homeland)

The poetry of Bilind al-Ḥaydarī contains various aspects of humanistic existence and an intellectual tendency. We can observe his existentialist vision of the monotony of the Earth and life in the poem entitled *Ṭāḥūna* (A Mill):

*Wa-l-arḍu mā zālat ‘alā ‘ahdihā
 tadūru ḥawla l-abadi l-aswadi
 ṭāḥūnatun*²⁷
 (The Earth is still the same
 Spinning around the eternity
 Just like a mill)

The existentialist vision of the Earth and nature joins with an illusion in the following example:

*Wa-talāṣaytu fī ṭarīqin wa-lākin ...
 kullu ḥādī ʾad-durūbi taqfū maṣīri*²⁸
 (I was crushed on the road, but ...
 All these roads follow my lot)

The existentialist aspect in his poetry stresses the irony of the present reality, in which we live, such as in the following poem *Mahzalat al-wuḡūd* (The Comedy of Existence):

*Sa-arǧi‘u li-l-fanā’i ka-annanī
 mā ǧi‘tu illā kay akūna fanā’*²⁹
 (I shall return to non-being
 Because I came to be a non-being man)
 Irony theme joins with his personal protest and anger:

²⁷ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 195.

²⁸ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 178.

²⁹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 144.

*Sayyidatī tas'alunī:
mā ra'yuka an naḥluma ... an nakbura ... an naṣḡura
an nashhara mimma kāna lanā ... mimma kunnā*³⁰
(My lady asks me:
What do you think if we dream, grow, to be small
To jeer from what happened, and from our being)

This is also the intellectual image of life and existence, and the expected or unexpected person in *Madfan az-ẓill* (The Cemetery of a Shadow):

*Wa-hunā tab'ātu ẓ-ẓilālu ḥarīfan
wa-baqāyā min umniyātin 'aqīma*³¹
(Shadows send autumn here
And the rest of the barren wishes)

Bilind al-Ḥaydarī considers the position of the poet as a spring for changing and creation, even in the existence of pain, darkness and complicated conditions. This poem has a neo-classical form, and it appears at the end of his main collection:

*Yā zayta qindilin wa-šam'ata mudliḡin
fī ḡayhabin laysat lahu šuṭ'āni*³²
(You are the oil of the lamp, the candle for whom at nightfall
In darkness, which has no shores)

The poet examines the specific position of humanity, its pain, troubles, solitude, weariness, boredom and loss, as in the poem *Al-Ḥaṭwa aḍ-dā'i'a* (The Lost Step):

*Lā šay'a ya'rifunī hunā
lā šay'a a'rifuhu hunā
lā šay'a aḍkuruhu wa-lā ašyā'a taḍkurunī hunā*³³
(Nothing knows me here
Nothing do I know here
Nothing do I remember or and nothing remembers me here)

³⁰ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 9.

³¹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 181 (the whole poem: 179-183).

³² Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 837 (the whole poem: 837-840).

³³ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 278 (the whole poem: 275-278).

Loneliness, isolation and solitude are often presented in his poetry, reflecting his sadness, sterility and barrenness, such as in the composition *Waḥdatī* (My Loneliness):

Hākaḍā anti namawti
*'uṣbatan ṣafrū'a fi dīffati mawtī*³⁴
 (You grew in this way
 Like a yellow plant at on the bank of death)

This is the deep sadness and suffocation of the humanity, living life in solitude with very few truthful friends:

Ka'ābatun ḥarsā'
*tazfiru fi qalbī*³⁵
 (A dumb sadness
 Exhaustion in my heart)

Life is full of troubles, weariness and misery in the poem *Sa'm* (Weary):

Yā tuyūfa l-fanā' i hādī ḥayātī
dammirihā
*fa-qad sa'imtu l-wuḡūdā*³⁶
 (Spirits of non-being! This is my life
 Destroy it
 I was wearied from by existence)

His sadness and anger concern those unfaithful “friends” and their false relationship, who did not support him in times of troubles and in difficulties. To that he devotes the poem *Hal kunta ṣadiqī?* (Were you my friend?):

Yā anta
yā man kunta ṣadiqī
hal kunta ṣadiqī...?!
*lā adri*³⁷

³⁴ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 219 (the whole poem: 219-221).

³⁵ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 91.

³⁶ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 61.

³⁷ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 298 (the whole poem: 717-719).

(You
Who were my friend
Were you my friend...?!
I do not know)

Life appears as full of contrasts, a labyrinth of boredom and carelessness, in the composition *Qaraf* (Loathing):

Inna bi-qalbiya qayyun
*wa-inna hawānā mumillun*³⁸
(There is vomiting in my heart
And our love is boredom)

This is just like a mirror of irritation and weariness in the poem *Hiwār mā bayna al-wağh wa-āl-mir'āt* (A Dialogue Between the Face and Mirror):

At'abanī āḍ-ḍağaru
fa-a'taqanī li-anāma
wa-in daqqa 'alā bābī fağrun
*fa-aṭruduhu ... aṭruduhu*³⁹
(The irritation tired me
And allowed me to sleep
When the dawn knocked at my door
I drove it away)

Bilind al-Ḥaydarī treats the moving days as the absurdity of life. It has to be rejected as in *'Abaṭ* (Absurdity):

Hunāka fī l-'abaṭi llaḍī lā tudrikīn
sa-taẓullu sā'atuki l-anīqa
*talhū bi-uğniyatin 'atīqa*⁴⁰
(There in an uncomprehending absurdity
Your elegant watch will work
And play with your old song)

³⁸ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 280.

³⁹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 709 (the whole poem: 705-709).

⁴⁰ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 197.

This situation lead Bilind al-Ḥaydarī to stress the falseness of the new epoch, in which he lived. This is clear in the following poem entitled *Ḍiḥka qaṣīra* (A Short Laugh):

Yā ‘aṣra āz-zayfi
Sa-nuṣallī li-l-baḥri āl-ġāriqi fī āl-aṣdāf
*li-ḥaṣà āl-‘arrāf*⁴¹
 (The epoch of falseness!
 We will pray to the sea full of shells
 And to the pebbles of the fortuneteller)

According to him, the civilized contrast of cities has aspects, of which we can recognize the true city from the false city one such as in the poem *Madīna fī āl-bāl* (A City in Mind):

Li-kulli madīnatin waḡhāni...
*illā āl-madīnata āllatī tarfiḍu an takbura fī āz-zayf*⁴²
 (Each city has two faces ...
 Except a city, which refuses to grow in falsehood)

The political theme in the poetry of Bilind al-Ḥaydarī joins with anger, resistance and rejection. He was a well-known poet for his refusal of the ruling political system, the prevalent social traditions and against tyranny. The image of the victim and tyrant appears in the poem *‘Awdat aḍ-ḍaḥiyya* (Return of the Victim)

Wa sa-yakburu tārīhun min ġurḥin fī kaffi
min zamanin maḡhūl
*zamanin yatamannà l-qātilu law kāna huwa l-maqtūl*⁴³
 (History will grow from the wound in the palm
 From unknown time
 Time, in which the murderer wishes to be the killed one)

This image of the tyrant and victim is clear in the composition *‘Awdat aḍ-ḍaḥiyya* (Return of the Victim), in which he presents two opposite persons: the tyrant—Al-Ḥaġġāġ and the victim—Sa‘īd Ibn Ġubayr:

⁴¹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 433 (the whole poem: 431-433).

⁴² Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 747 (the whole poem: 747-750).

⁴³ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 14.

Lākinnī yā Ḥaḡḡāḡ
wa-ka-mā ta'rifunī... sa-aḡallu hunā... wa-hunāk
*wa-fī alfī makān*⁴⁴
 (Ḥaḡḡāḡ⁴⁵! As you know me⁴⁶...
 I will stay here... and there
 Everywhere)

The homeland became a place of cruel repression, and pain and refractoriness:

Fa-ālaytu 'alā naḡsiya
an lā a'rifa lī waṭanan
kafanan, mišnaqatan wa-ṣaḡārā
*lā tunbitu ḡayra ḡamāḡimi mašnūqīn*⁴⁷
 (I decide
 Not to know a homeland
 Or shroud or gallows or deserts
 Do not plant except hanged skulls)

This is the land of fear and death in the following example:

Yā arḡa l-amwāti
yā ru'ba falātin lam ta'rif ḡayra
*ḡamāḡimi qatlānā*⁴⁸
 (The land of dead people!
 The fear of the desert, which did not know
 Except the skulls of our killed people)

Iraq was a the homeland of fear and political injustice events in the following poem *Al-Hudūd al-masrūqa* (Stolen Borders):

Waṭanī yā waṭana l-ḡallādī ...
yā anta l-qātilu wa-āl-maqtūlu
*wa-anta l-ḡurḡu wa-anta s-sikkīn*⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 764 (the whole poem: 761-764).

⁴⁵ Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ Ibn Yūsuf aṭ-Ṭaqafī – the tyrant (d. 714).

⁴⁶ Referring to Sa'īd Ibn Ġubayr – the victim.

⁴⁷ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 74.

⁴⁸ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 765 (the whole poem: 765-768).

⁴⁹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 693 (the whole poem: 693-697).

(My homeland! You are the homeland of hangmen ...
 You are the killer and the killed
 You are the wound and the knife)

The suffering of Iraqi Kurdistan and of the Kurds is examined in the poem entitled *Li-kay lā nansà* (Not To Forget) concerning the massacre of Ḥalabğa in Iraqi Kurdistan on March 17, 1988, bombed by the Ba‘īst Ṣaddām regime with chemical weapons. In all, more than five thousand people died and thousands more suffer from health and psychological problems to the present day:

Mā ziltu wa-in ḡabašat dākiratī
mā zālat wa-in atfa’ahā l-haramu
mā ziltu wa-in ḡaffa ‘alā ṭarafay ‘aynī qaḍan wa-damu
mā ziltu urāwidu baytan kāna lanā
kāna yamuḍdu ḍirā’yayhi ‘alā wahaḡin fī faḡrin
sa-yaḡī’u fī-hi wa’dun... aw ḥulmun
kāna li-baytī šubbākāni ṣaḡīrān
aḍkuru annahumā kānā ašḡara min ‘aynay insān...⁵⁰
 (I still remember, even if my memory is twilight
 My memory still remembers even if the old age puts it out
 I still remember even if rage and blood dry in my eyes
 I still have in mind a home, which belongs to us
 Which was covered with lighting of the dawn
 A promise or dream will carry it
 My home had two small windows
 I remember, they were smaller than human eyes...)

Then he writes:

Wa-la-kam kāna l-baytu ṣaḡīran
kāna ṣaḡīran ka-l-qalbi
ḡaniyyan bi-d-dif i wa-bi-l-ḥubbi
aḍkuru annā... kunnā
wa-ka-šubbākay baytī... wa-ka-bābi l-bayti
nanāmu bi-‘aynin mal’ā fī l-aḡlāmi l-ḥuḍri
‘alā saḡḥin min ḡabalin fī Kurdistān

⁵⁰ See the whole poem in: Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 769-773.

(I remember, we were
 Just like two windows of my home... and just like the door of my home
 We were sleeping deeply and dreaming green dreams
 At the foot of a mountain in Kurdistan)

He continues:

Amsi

*wa-id kâdat kullu 'uyûni şigârîka yâ baytî
 yâ baladî
 tasbaḥu fî alaḡi š-šamsi
 wa-taḡullu nadan min kulli zuhayrâti n-narġisi
 wa-l-wardi
 habbat riḥun masmûma
 nafaḡathâ 'aynâ bûma
 li-tusammîma kulla şigârîka yâ baytî ... yâ baladî
 qatalat fî-man qatalat... waladî
 saraqat fî-mâ saraqat... zillî
 ad-darbu li-baytî amsâ maqbaratan tamtaddu li-alfay maqbaratin
 fî Kurdistân
 lâ šay'a siwâ l-mawti wa-zilli l-mawti
 mâ min narġisatin taḡlumu an takbura fî bustân
 mâ taraka l-awġâdu
 illâ l-qatlâ wa-ramâda l-qatlâ wa-sawâda duḡân
 lâkinna ġadî l-âtî
 wa-ḡisâba l-amwâti
 wa-dimâ'a l-qatlâ sa-tuḡâridu waġha š-šayḡân
 min ḡadî l-mir'âti li-tilka l-mir'ât
 min alfi zamânin wa-li-alfi zamân
 wa-sa-yalḡaffu l-ḡablu 'alâ 'unġi l-ġallâd
 wa-sa-tal'anu ismaka Kurdistân
 wa-sa-tabra'u min riġsika Baġdâd
 wa-sa-tarġi'u li-l-arġi l-ḡulwati kullu basâtîni
 n-narġisi wa l-awrâd
 wa-sa-yûladu ḡâniyatan waladî fî kulli l-awlâd
 (Yesterday
 My home! My homeland!
 When all the eyes of your children,
 Were swimming in the light of sun
 And dropped dew from all each narcissuses
 And flowers*

A poison wind attacked
 An owl's eyes threw it
 To poison all your children, my home!... my homeland!
 It killed my son
 It stole my shadow
 The road to my home became a cemetery, extending to two thousand
 cemeteries
 In Kurdistan
 Nothing except death and the shadow of death
 There was no narcissus dreaming to grow in a garden
 Wretched killers did not remain
 Except for murders and the ash of the killed murdered and the black
 colour of smoke
 But my coming tomorrow
 And the counting of the dead
 And the blood of the dead will follow the face of the Satan
 From this mirror to that mirror
 From one thousand times to one thousand times
 And the rope will twist around the neck of the murderer
 And Kurdistan will damn your name
 And Baghdad will be free from your dirt
 And all gardens of narcissuses and flowers
 Will return back to the sweet land
 And you, my son, will be born again among all boys)

In the poem entitled *Ĝi'tum ma'a al-fağr* (You Came With Dawn), the murderers come with dawn to massacre and steal the smile and dreams of the children:

Ĝi'tum ma'a l-fağri
wa-kunnā hunā
nuqtalu fī şamtin wa-lā nadri
a-yuşlabu l-insān?
a-taħriqu n-nīranu
buyūtanā?
şığāranā
*li-annanā naħlumū bi-l-fağri...?*⁵¹

⁵¹ Bilind al-Ĥaydarī, 1992: 314 (the whole poem: 313-315).

(You came with the dawn
 Here we were killed
 In silence and we do not know
 Are the people hanged?
 Do the fires burn
 Our homes?
 Our children
 Because we are dreaming with dawn...?)

The tragic events and the deadly silence covered Kurdistan and Iraq. He comments on the silence and sadness of homes and faces:

Yuqālu: inna baytanā ka'ib
wa-kulla mā fī baytinā
wa-kulla man fī baytinā ... ġarīb
ḥattā ṣadā aṣwātinā ... ġarīb
ḥattā n-nuḡūmu lamlamat bariqahā wa-hāḡarat
ba'īdatan 'an arḍinā⁵²

(They say: our home is sad
 All things in our home
 All persons in our home... are strange
 Even the echo of our sounds... is strange
 Even the stars gathered their glimmering lightoss and emigrated
 Faraway from our land)

Murder and destruction were everywhere in the homeland. He writes in the poem *'Isrūn alf qatīl* (Twenty Thousand Killed):

Wa-akādu asma'u min hunāk
wa-min hunā
sawta l-muḍī'
mutaḥaššiban
šā'ū lahu allā yuḥissu bi-mā yuḍī' ⁵³

(Almost I hear from there
 And from here
 A rigid voice of the speaker
 They want him to be as they want
 Not to feel what is announced)

⁵² Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 775 (the whole poem: 775-778).

⁵³ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 298 (the whole poem: 293-298).

The tyranny and repression concern all Iraq under the Ba‘īst Ṣaddām regime, including Al-Ahwār marshes, as in the poem *Sa-tušriqu aš-šams tāniyatan* (The Sun Will Shine Again):

Lā ‘ağabun
an nu‘dama ... an nurğama
an yumsī damunā l-mahdūra
*ḥikāyata qatlānā fī “l-ahwār”*⁵⁴
 (It is not strange
 That we were killed... we were stoned
 Our blood stays,
 A history of our victims on the marshes)

Baghdad is also found in his poetry. He writes in the poem *Man yadrī yā Bağdād* (Baghdad! Who knows?):

Bağdād
yā baytan mahğūr
yā zamanan ma’ğūr
yā wağ’a’an ma’sūr
yā waḥšata mra’atin taklā tanḥabu
*fī arḍin būr*⁵⁵
 (Baghdad!
 You are a deserted home
 You are a venal time
 You are a captivated pain
 You are the loneliness of a woman bereaved of a child
 In the wasteland)

Baghdad is described as controlled by an inhuman and cruel regime and a tyrant in the poem *Bayna ‘alāmatayn* (Between Two Signs)⁵⁶. Baghdad however is the statue of freedom and hope of tomorrow in the following composition *Nuṣb al-ḥurriyya*⁵⁷ (The Statue of Freedom):

⁵⁴ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 55.

⁵⁵ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 535-536 (the whole poem: 535-539).

⁵⁶ See the whole poem in: Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 807-809.

⁵⁷ Referring to the Iraqi creator of this statue – Ğawād Salīm.

Fī baladīn faqa'ū 'aynayhi fa-lan
yubšira illā l-ğudrāna l-ħağariyya ⁵⁸
 (Country, in which they gouge out his eyes
 They do not let him see anything but stony walls)

The mirror of Baghdad was black, there was no solution but to leave it and emigrate. He wrote this poem when he was in Baghdad. The poem is entitled *Fī ıarıq al-ħıgra min Bağdād* (In the Way of Emigration from Baghdad):

Tuṭāridunī Bağdād
tuhāşirunī
fī kullī zawāyā l-mir'āti ⁵⁹
 (Baghdad runs after me
 Seiges me
 In all corners of the mirror)

The poet also contrasts death with the image of a place, a tyrant and a hero. This is the death of the poet joining with dreams and wounds:

Ahlāmuhu
qad hawt ta'bā wa-mā ħādat darāh ⁶⁰
 (His dreams
 Were tired fallen and did not approach his shelter)

Death also joins with life, existence and fight resistance in the poem *Şirā'* (Fight):

Wa-taşabbatāt fī-l-mawti
'aynān
wa-taşabbatāt fī-l-arđi
riğlān ⁶¹
 (Eyes
 Adhered to death)

⁵⁸ Bilind al-Ĥaydarī, 1992: 679 (the whole poem: 679-681).

⁵⁹ Bilind al-Ĥaydarī, 1992: 671 (the whole poem: 671-674).

⁶⁰ Bilind al-Ĥaydarī, 1992: 104.

⁶¹ Bilind al-Ĥaydarī, 1992: 229 (the whole poem: 229-230).

Legs
Adhered to the Earth)

Death and life join with the image of time, which has different symbolic tendencies, such as lost time in the poem *Ba'īdan fī az-zaman aḍ-ḍā'i* (Faraway in the Lost Time):

*Zamanun lā arḍa lahu illā 'utmata ḍākiratin 'amyā'
illā arṣifatan sawdā'*⁶²

(A time, which does not have an Earth, except a blind dark memory
Except Accept black pavements)

Time exists in the way to find another image of it such as in the composition *Al-Baḥṭ 'an zaman āḥar* (Searching Another Time):

*Akbarṭuka fī 'aynī ḡayra qatīlin wa-ṣahīdi
fa-hādā s-siḡni wa-ḍāka s-siḡn'*⁶³

(I pride you in my eyes, no just as killed or martyred
In this prison and that prison)

The poet uses myth and legendary figures, and various symbols using shadows and colours. He writes, for example, about Semiramis (*Sāmūrāmāt*) the ancient queen of Ashur and in the same time reveals his hidden feelings:

*Ayyu sirrin
fī nāzirayhā yudawwī
ayyu sirrin
fī hādīhi l-aṣḍā'i'*⁶⁴

(What thunderous secret
In her eyes?
What secret
In these echoes?)

Oedipus with his feeling of solitude appears in his poem *Ūdīb* (Oedipus), which is fragmented into image, Oedipus and chorus:

⁶² Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 751 (the whole poem: 751-752).

⁶³ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 68.

⁶⁴ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 22.

Mahğūrun ka-l-layli anā
*ka-ṣ-ṣamti anā mahğūr*⁶⁵
 (I am lonesome like the night
 Like silence I am lonesome)

The symbol of shadow occupies a prominent place in his poetry, presenting the relation between shadow and the soul:

Wa-ḍaḥiktu li-annī
adraktu bi-annī
*amliku zillī*⁶⁶
 (I laughed because
 I knew that
 I have my shadow)

The shadow appears both in titles and poems. It reflects the image of life and existence, expected or unwanted consequences. Bilind al-Ḥaydarī writes for example in his poem *Madfan az-zill* (The Cemetery of a Shadow):

Wa-hunā tab'aṭu z-zilālu ḥarīfan
*wa baqāyā min umniyātin 'aqīma*⁶⁷
 (Here, shadows send autumn
 And the rest of the barren wishes)

The expectation of a shadow as an aim of ending solitude, the shadow becomes a desired company. This is clear in the poem *Innahā tantazīrunī* (She Waits for Me):

Wa htazza zillun min ba'id
lā... laysa zilli
wa-yalūḥu zillun min ḡadīd
lā...
*laysa zilli*⁶⁸
 (A shadow trembled from afar
 No... This is not my shadow)

⁶⁵ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 451 (the whole poem: 451-455).

⁶⁶ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 622.

⁶⁷ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 181 (the whole poem: 179-183).

⁶⁸ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 367 (the whole poem: 365-367).

A shadow appears again
 No...
 This is not my shadow)

Different colours in his poetry reflect the different contrasts in life. Yellow is associated with silence. He writes, for example:

Ṣafrā' u ka-ṣamti
awaddu law kunti ka-mā naltaqī
*fa-naltaqī*⁶⁹
 (Pale like silence
 I wish if you are the same in our meeting
 Then we will meet)

Yellow is also found in the title of his poetic collection *Riḥlat al-ḥurūf aṣ-ṣufr* (The Travel of Yellow Letters). This colour in his creation is a symbol of emptiness, sterility and death. In his poem he writes *Hal liya an...?! (Should I..?!):*

Abḥaṭu 'an 'aynayya bayna daffatay kitāb...
*fa ṣfarra fī awrāqihī 'itāb*⁷⁰
 (I search my eyes in a book...
 Its pages are covered with a yellow sorrow)

The same thing is right with the bronze colour, reflecting the image of death and silence:

Yata'assanu fī 'atmati alwānin samrā'
*taṣīru bi-hā l-ḡurbatu arḍī*⁷¹
 (He is brackish in a bronze darkness
 In which the emigration becomes my land)

Black reflects departure and leaving for exile, as in the poem *Sa-aḏillu hunā* (I Shall Stay here):

⁶⁹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 256.

⁷⁰ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 441.

⁷¹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 23.

Fa-l-narḥallana ma‘an
li-bilādīn uḥrā
li-bilādīn qad taḥmilu lawnaki, dāka l-aswada
ka-š-šamsi l-maḡrūzati fī lawni⁷²
 (We have to leave together
 For another country
 To a country, that perhaps has your black colour
 Just like the sun, which is pricked in my colour)

However, Bilind al-Ḥaydarī uses green as a symbol of optimism and hope in the poem *Ġuṣn wa-šahrā’ wa-Muẓaffar* (A Branch, Desert and Muẓaffar⁷³):

A-šahīhun yā Muẓaffar
anna ḡuṣnan ṭamarathu r-rīḥu fī š-šahrā’i
raḡma r-rīḥi wa-š-šahrā’i
iḥḍarr...?!
Uskuṭī yā rīḥu, fa-l-insānu annā kāna
nab‘un yatafaḡḡar
wa-sa-yabqā l-ḡuṣnu aḥḍar⁷⁴
 (Muẓaffar! Is it true
 That a branch was covered with earth by a wind in the desert
 Despite Yet the wind and the desert
 Became green...?!...
 Wind! Be silent, the man anywhere
 Is a flowing source
 And he will stay like a green branch)

Red also reflects the image of flowers, hope, and so on in his composition *Az-Zahra al-ḥamrā’* (The Red Flower):

Aṭlaqtu ayyāmī ta‘ubbu l-munā
min šafatay zahratiki l-ḥālīma⁷⁵
 (My days toss down hopes
 From the lips of your red flowers)

⁷² Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1996: 28.

⁷³ Referring to the Iraqi poet Muẓaffar an-Nawwāb.

⁷⁴ See the whole poem in: Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 397-401.

⁷⁵ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 44.

Bilind al-Ḥaydarī also writes about cities and well known personalities. In the poem *Ilā Bayrūt al-ḥaḡar an-nā'ī* (To Beirut, the Faraway Stone) he mentions Beirut:

*Ayyatuhā l-ḥabībatu l-mustayqizātu fī l-alami ka-l-ḡurḥ
ayyatuhā r-raḡbatu l-qadīma
yā arḍa l-milḥi*⁷⁶

(You are the sweetheart, awaking from the pain just like a wound
You are the old desire
You are the land of salt)

The Palestinian problem emerges in the reference to a fighter from refugee camp 'Ayn al-Ḥulwa:

*Wa-yartamī l-waṭan
ḥāriṭatan uhrà bi-lā arḍin wa-lā zaman*⁷⁷

(The homeland is thrown
Like another map without land and time)

He feels solidarity with the Lebanese poet Ḥalīl Ḥāwī, who killed himself in protest against the Israeli invasion on Lebanon in 1982. He writes in the poem *Ilā Ḥalīl Ḥāwī* (To Ḥalīl Ḥāwī):

*Qif ka-n-naḥlati fāri'a
aw qif ka-t-tawdi š-šāmiḥ
wa-ḡma' fī fawḥatin sawdā'a li-burkānin šāriḥ
ṣawtak...*
*wa-a'lin mawtak*⁷⁸

(Stand like a lofty palm
Or stand like a high mountain
And gather in the black mouth of a noisy volcano
Your sound ..
And announce your death)

The international aspect is clear in his poem *Ḥiwār al-alwān* (The Dialogue of Colours) dedicated to Leopold Senghor:

⁷⁶ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 633 (the whole poem: 633-637).

⁷⁷ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 704.

⁷⁸ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 643 (the whole poem: 643-646).

Lākinnī
lan a'rifā yā bunay
fi 'aynika aw 'aynī
illā 'aynay Mandīlā... illā 'aynay Saṅgūr
illā
*laylan yastabṭīnu kulla ma'ānī n-nūr*⁷⁹
 (But
 I do not know, my son
 In your eye or my eye
 Except the eyes of Mandela... except the eyes of Senghor
 Except
 A night, which absorbed all meanings of light).

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⁷⁹ Bilind al-Ḥaydarī, 1992: 817 (the whole poem: 811-817).