

حيثي سلطانة

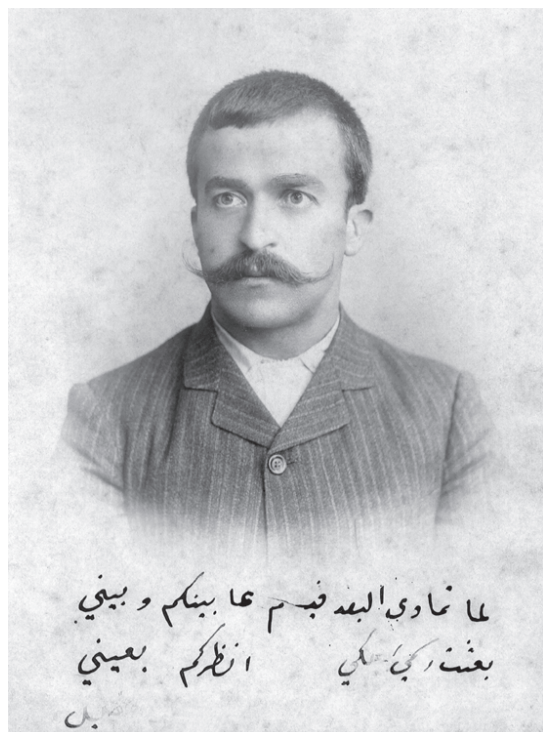
A Miserable Year in Brooklyn

Khalil Sakakini in America,
1907 - 1908

Salim Tamari

In my wakefulness, during the day, as I go about doing my daily chores, walk in the streets of New York, listening to the din of speeding trains, and of trams on the ground and above ground, and the sirens of ships, and the deafening clamour of people piercing my ears, and the bustle of streetcars and carriages, and the glitter...I only come around soaring in the skies of Jerusalem, over the school, over the house that I love, and often over Artas and Kalona, and Ein Karem, and Beit Jala. And when I go to sleep it is not because I am sleepy, but because I wait for slumber to overtake me. Not to sleep but to get rid of the pains of wakefulness, hoping to get rid of my heaviness, and hoping to get rid of my body - to leave it in America, and to fly in dreams to Jerusalem.

Letter to Sultana, New York, 13 December, 1907.



Khalil Sakakini in 1906 at the age of 28 on the eve of his departure to New York. The Khalil Sakakini Center Archives. Photo: Khalil Raad Studios, Jerusalem

The recent release of Khalil Sakakini's diaries by his family is a cause for celebration. Close to 3,400 pages of handwritten memoirs constitute the author's intimate record of his life from the moment he boarded the ship of his American exile in Jaffa (October 1907), and ending during his second exile in Cairo after he was displaced from his Katamon home in West Jerusalem in the War of 1948.¹ Sakakini's diaries, based on a daily record of his thoughts and ostensibly not intended for publication, are the only existing such memoirs of a major modern Palestinian intellectual (and possibly of any Arab writer). That alone makes these diaries of immense literary significance. The entries of his American sojourn constitute a small but significant section of the diaries - for they occurred during the formative period of his intellectual

development, when he was in his mid-twenties. They cover his encounter with Syrian (i.e. Shami) exiled intellectuals in New York, and his work with the important literary journal, *al-Jam'ia*, as well as his work - briefly - at a paper mill in central Maine. They also contain the period of his stormy courtship to his future wife Sultana, and the pangs of separation he experienced when she remained in Jerusalem.

Sakakini is best known as a Jerusalem essayist, a progressive pedagogue, and an anti-clerical free thinker. His dairies, according to a leading literary critic, constitute the entry of Palestinian literature into modernity.² His teaching method, introduced in his *Dusturiyyeh School* after World War I, was revolutionary for virtually all of his contemporaries. He had abolished physical punishment of students as being "barbaric and medieval," and replaced exams with the teachers' and students' self-evaluation. Teachers were instructed not to take a presence and absence roll call. Students were free to leave school if they got bored; this procedure, he felt, would force the teacher to be innovative and entertaining to maintain the student's attention.³ All this he undertook by the early 1920s. Yet despite his radical departure from the prevailing system of education at the time, he was eminently successful as an educational reformer and administrator, having been appointed by both the Ottomans and the British as education inspector in Palestine. Through his innovative method of teaching Arabic, published in the widely distributed series, *al-Jadid*, and his journalistic essays, he introduced a crisp, concise and novel writing language for a new generation of Palestinians, which in 1948 earned him a place in the Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo. This is what the scholar and novelist, Ishaq Musa al Husseini, author of *Diary of a Chicken*, wrote about Sakakini's language:



Khalil's father in his old city carpentry shop, Jerusalem 1882. Sakakini family archives

Sakakini called for a basic revamping of the teaching of Arabic grammar, by simplifying its basic general rules and the diffusion of teaching through usages, opening the door wide open for innovation. He saw language as an endowed skill (malika) not a craft, to be learned through commonsensical training (saliqa), not one that the student acquires through formal rules. He replaced rote learning with precedent (qiyas), practice not imitation, and he defended this system in two of his books: al-Jadid, in which he revolutionized grammar by transforming male-based sentences to plural ones, and encouraged the child to internalize the basic rules of the language

without realizing that he was studying; and in his book, 3alihi Qiss, he introduced cases and paradigms from which the students could deduce the principles of grammar without explanation.⁴

Until his memoirs were released we had limited knowledge of Sakakini's personal life, except that he was an eccentric scholar and bon vivant. His *Kadha Ana Ya Dunya* (1954), posthumously published, included only limited selections from his memoirs chosen by his daughter Hala Sakakini (died 2002). The book highlighted his career as an essayist with a flair for Nietzschean philosophy, but intentionally suppressed his distinct anti-clerical tendencies. His scepticism and universalist humanism dissuaded him from joining any political party in his lifetime, but he did share in the founding of *Hizb as Sa'aleek*, the "party of Vagabonds," which formed a circle around the café with the same name in the vicinity of the old city's Jaffa Gate.⁵ His anti-clerical, and later anti-religious, tendencies were quite provocative for his conservative, provincial society - even by today's standards. These tendencies were muted by his daughter who edited the earlier selections of his memoirs in *Kadha Ana*, but come out quite clearly in the released diaries. For example his long battle against the Orthodox Church is well known, but is usually attributed to the struggle for the Arabization of the Church from Greek control. Less known is his openly atheistic attitude calling for the replacement of the Lord's Prayer with a pre-Islamic pagan stanza from Umru' Al-Qays.⁶ He found prayers boring and a waste of time. He was probably the only Arab thinker who was openly anti-natalist. His *carte de visite* had only two lines: *Khalil Sakakini, Ta'alu li-Nanqarid* - "Let Us Extinct Ourselves."⁷ In 1932 he proposed that his countrymen abandon institutional religion and adopt ritual narcissism as a form of

worship, "...since this is a form of worship that all of us can undertake without threatening other religions...for Christ has said 'If you cannot love your brother whom you see, how can you love God that you cannot see.' But I [Khalil Sakakini] say to you: 'if you cannot love yourself, then you cannot love God or anybody else...'"⁸

Khalil became infatuated with Sultana Abdo less than a year before his departure to America. She was born in 1888 in the old city, and was a distant relative.⁹ Both grew up in the Christian Quarter and came from Arab Orthodox families. Khalil's father was a master carpenter (*'mu'alim*) as well as the *mukhtar* (community leader) of the Greek Orthodox community in Jerusalem. Sultana's father, Nicola Salem Abdo (Abu Adeeb), was also a prominent figure in the old city, having been appointed by the Patriarchate as overseer of Orthodox pilgrims during the Easter and Christmas seasons - overlooking their lodging, food, and welfare needs. Sultana's father, according to his granddaughter, Hala Sakakini, was progressive for his times since he sent both girls to board at the Friends' School in Ramallah - which was "three hours mule ride" to the north.¹⁰ We have insight into the relationship of this man to his daughter from a letter, dated 1906, that he wrote to Sultana's sister, Amalia, upon her marriage to a Nablus physician.

...I cried all day today as I saw you leaving the house, for now you belong to another person. In one moment you voluntarily dropped my name and chose another. You shared my love with another man. My mind, my beloved, knows that your husband should have priority over me...and that I will come second. Let it be, but please keep a corner in your heart for me. And give me some



Sultana, Jerusalem 1906, when Khalil began courting her. Source: Sakakini Family Archives

*time to adjust to your departure, after 20 years of being your companion."*¹¹

But Nicola Abdo must have been a very open-minded man by contemporary standards to allow his two daughters (the third died too young) to be courted publicly by their male acquaintances without escort.¹²

Immediately after graduation from secondary school, in 1903, Sultana took up teaching at the Arab Orthodox School in the old city, and then in 1905 at St. Mary's School for Girls, an Anglican school. It was at there that Khalil came to know her when he was commissioned to train her as a teacher of Arabic language and literature. Khalil himself was a schoolmaster, trained by the renowned teacher of Arabic literature, Nakhleh Zureik (1861-1921).

When Khalil began to court Sultana in 1907, he was 29 and she was 19. In that period both the Abdos and the Sakakinis had summerhouses outside the city walls, as did many middleclass families eager to escape the stifling atmosphere of the congested quarters. The Sakakini house was in Musrara, while the Abdo's summerhouse was near the railroad station and was known as *Haririyyeh*, the silk factory, after the workshop that occupied it before they moved in. (Almost a century later *al-Haririyyeh* Abdo became the Khan Theatre in West Jerusalem.)¹³

Since Khalil and Sultana were both involved in Orthodox community activities, they had ample opportunity to see each other. At that time Sultana had befriended Milia, Khalil's elder sister, and hence she became a frequent visitor to the house. In the evening Khalil would walk Sultana back home, at first with Milia, and then alone. Later on they would take longer walks or donkey rides to the countryside, mostly to Ein Karim or the Mount of Olives. It was in one of these outings that Khalil disclosed his love to Sultana. We are privileged to have this intimate moment recorded for posterity. Khalil's love is expressed here in modern romantic terminology that was virtually unknown in that period - certainly not in local Palestinian literature, and very rarely in Syrian-Lebanese or Egyptian contemporary narratives.

"On Thursday the 3rd of October [1907] I went with Sultana and my sister [Milia] to Qalona," he confided to his friend Dawood, in a letter written few days after the event.

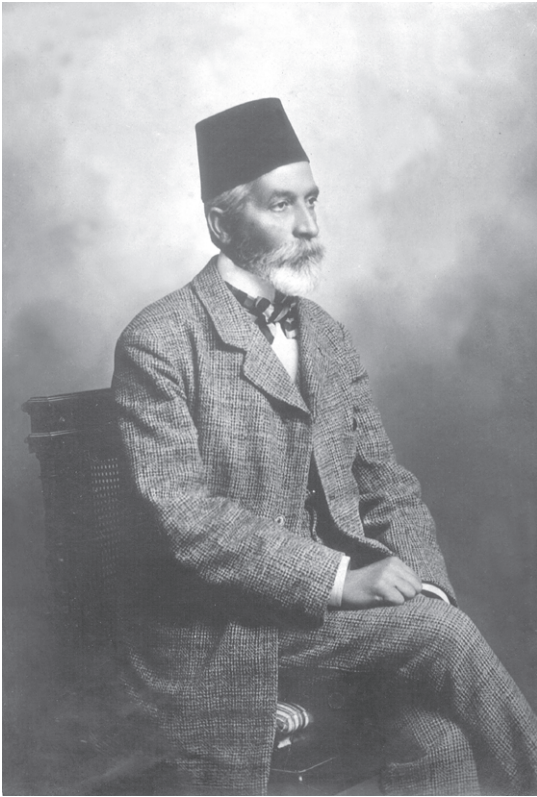
"There under the lemon trees we spent the day...near sunset we rode our donkeys and turned back. The atmosphere was loaded with our love. I walked next to her until her

donkey almost fell (yata3athath) so I held tightly to its harness and led it the rest of the way. In the evening she came and spent few hours at our house. When the night descended I walked her home, and told her that I will be writing her a letter. Early the next morning I poured all my sentiments in this letter. Then I went to [her] school and gave her the letter, with another letter written all over my face. Later that evening Milia and I passed by her house. When I saw her an electric shock went through my body. We all took a walk to a cliff on the Ramallah road. We sat by the rocks and I could see in her face the marks of contentment and acceptance. We kept this pace on the next and the following days. We went for an outing in the afternoon, and then spent the evening at our house and then at hers. Yesterday she sent me a letter expressing her love, and promising to write [more details] soon."

Immediately following this episode Khalil was overtaken by guilt, expressed so often in his later correspondence, that he did not deserve her, that he was being selfish in wanting her for himself, and that there must be others more deserving of her love than him:

*"...despite my happiness I feel I have placed my own desires above those friends of mine who have sought her affections. I beseech you Dawood, help me? What should I do in order not to betray their trust, and be branded among them as selfish and self-seeking."*¹⁴

Khalil's consuming self-doubt was not primarily the product, as it may initially seem, of self-denigration - although this element



Nicola Abdo, Sultana's father, 1906.

Source: Sakakini Family Archives

was present in his personality in considerable measure - but of tension embedded in some hesitation from Sultana. He had a tendency to read her affection in mere gestures, and to overreact to her silence as a mark of coldness towards him. Since we have very few direct indications of what *she* actually thought of his overtures, we can only surmise her actual mindset from his narrative, or references to utterances he attributed to her.

But Sultana was not altogether silent. She did leave a few, but significant, letters addressed to Khalil when he lived in Brooklyn, and we have Hala's reminiscences of her. In those she comes through as a reticent, intelligent and thoughtful figure - with a great sense of humour, one that is less philosophical than his, but certainly more playful and taunting.

Her hesitation in reciprocating Khalil's sentiment seems to be mainly a result of ambiguity that was inherent in the relationship. He was ten years her senior, with unstable financial future,¹⁵ and about to embark on a trip whose duration, and possibly purpose,¹⁶ was unknown to either of them. The more he pressed her for a commitment, the more ambiguous her response became. This I suggest was a major source of the continued tension that marked their relationship across the seas, and dominated their correspondence for the whole year.

In the Land of Fast Food

Sakakini himself was highly unconventional for his time. Although he dressed rather conservatively he was a *bon vivant*, singer, dancer, heavy smoker (pipe and *arghileh*), and regularly played the violin. He considered himself to be a sensualist (to use a word used in the diaries). He loved music, and poetry, which he wrote profusely - apparently with moderate success.¹⁷ Above all he enjoyed good company, long drinking sessions, and wrestled frequently with his male friends and acquaintances. His favourite sport was to induce several men to attack him and then wrestle them simultaneously to the ground.¹⁸ He was mesmerized by his body and spent long periods engaged in his ablutions. In his diaries, however, he comes through as a man of ambivalent and repressed sexuality. His entries are full of self-recrimination and bouts of gloom and despair. His obsession with cold water baths (summer and winter) and extended withdrawals from social gatherings amounted to self-flagellation. He was consumed for the rest of his life with three passionate relationships of love and devotion. All three ended in early deaths during his own lifetime: his friend and youthful companion Dawood al Saidawi; his fiancée and later wife, Sultana Abdo; and his only son, Sari, who died at the youthful age of 42.

Khalil Sakakini departed to New York on 22 October, 1907 from Jaffa, and returned to Jerusalem on 10 September, 1908. His American exile lasted less than one year, and although he travelled extensively after that he never returned to America. He had to borrow money from Dawood and Sultana, among others, to cover the cost of the journey. It also meant that he travelled third class, and - in part of the trip - on deck. Travel conditions in those days were long (ten days to two weeks from Marseille to New York), and very exhausting.

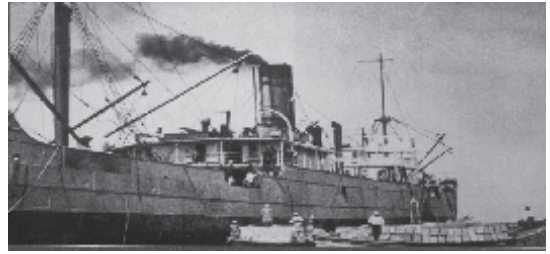
Sakakini offers a glimpse of these conditions in a letter he sent from London on his return from New York:

...third class travel is unbelievably tiring. For nine days I could hardly sleep. I ate very little, and did not change my clothes or wash my face once. When I arrived in England I was spent from hunger, exhaustion and lack of sleep. I was thoroughly disgusted with myself.¹⁹

On arrival he sent the following stanza to his sister Milia:²⁰

*After a trip which makes you old
I arrived to the land of Gold
On board the ship was shaking
Making me regret ever departing
Not a soul with whom to commensurate
And food that leaves you with a terrible
aftertaste.*

America was in the midst of a terrible recession in 1908. "Nobody has the courage to ask for work from anybody," he wrote to his friend Dawood, in one of his first letters.²¹ "Only yesterday my friend Farah Antoun said to me. 'Had you asked me before you came I would have advised you not to come to this country'...every day you hear about a



*Travelling Third Class and on Deck: Sakakini left Jaffa in October 1907 from Jaffa to New York via Marseille.
Photo Source: Frank Scholten, Jaffa the Beautiful, Leiden, 1931*

company declaring its bankruptcy. Messrs. Muluk, the nephews of Mr Rafleh [Khalil's roommate in Brooklyn], last week alone lost more than 13,000 riyal [dollars].

When he arrived in New York, he was counting on his brother Yusif, a travelling salesman in Philadelphia, to help him out. But because of the deteriorating conditions in the US that year, he found Yusif in dire straits, and in need of support himself. He took lodgings in Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn (the "Syrian neighbourhood") with the help of acquaintances from Jerusalem. Financial misery and loneliness hit him hard from the beginning. The atmosphere of these early months in New York are captured in a letter to Dawood, sent in the middle of the 1908 new year revelries:

Read this and laugh. Earlier I was crying for my current condition but now I am laughing. I mentioned to you in my last letter that I found, after great effort, three students to teach. My income from them was four riyals [dollars] per week, assuming they all remember to show up - which is rare, for every week at least one of them disappears, losing me a riyal. With these four orphan coins I eat and wash my clothes, and pay for my room, and then I share the rest with some of my Jerusalem companions here. I wish

at least it stopped here. Now all my students have disappeared during the Christmas vacation, and for two weeks I have had no income. I sent my laundry to the washerwoman and was unable to reclaim them [for lack of money] so I am left with the clothes that I am wearing. Two days ago I started washing my own clothes.

That was easy. But yesterday, the last day of the year, I only had ten cents in my pocket. I went with Nicola al Barghout to the market and bought bread (9 cents) and we came back and ate it with tea. While America was bidding farewell to the year and the coming of another one, we sat around the table in a daze, then we went to bed and fell on our faces.

[New Year's Day] What shall I do? I wrote to my brother Yusif in Philadelphia. He must be in a worse shape than me since he never replied. So now I am trying fasting, and said to myself: "best to stay in bed all day." Hanna Farraj and the lads came and said, "Get up let's roam the streets, today is a great day in America." I apologized. They left and Nicola stayed. I then got up and dressed and gave him [the remaining] penny and asked him to buy bread, "to break the fast." When he came back I divided the loaf between us, but he had barely put the morsel in his mouth when he choked with emotion. He left the room hurriedly. I called him and tried to encourage him. He said: "I am not crying for myself, but for you Khalil - as I see you unable to find food."...

I thought of joining the army, except that they take you for three years, and the recruit is unable to leave before that duration. I think all of this is a lesson to me. For I have grown up in a comfortable and protected atmosphere. Money was never of any value for me.¹

This last sentence about money, as well as his reference to his luxurious upbringing (the Arabic term is *mun3aman mutrafan*, a state between luxury and comfort) must have struck Dawood as odd, since the whole purpose of the trip was to make money in order to pay his debts, and set up a house for his intended marriage to Sultana.

He summed up his attitude towards New York and the US in a letter sent to Sultana in July of 1908:

*Sultana my love,
I left Rumfold Falls after spending one month working [in the paper mill]. It felt like a century. I came to Boston and was met by Mikhael Sayegh and your cousin Bandeli. Mikhael works for half a day and hardly makes 3/4 of a riyal [dollar]. Your cousin goes out everyday to sell [carpets] but hardly makes enough money to cover his travel expenses. I doubt he will make it even if he spent his whole life in this country. I nearly urged him to return home [to Palestine] except that I do not wish to interfere in what is not my business.*

In the evening I bade them farewell...Mikhael's wife was about to deliver her baby. I took the train for about an hour [to Providence?] then I took the boat to New York. Everyone I encounter presses me to

*go back home, for this country is not for the likes of me. Except that every time I am about to resolve the matter I remember my oath to you to make every effort to make something of myself here. I would then come back and bring you and Melia to visit America. The truth my love is that America is worth seeing, but is not fit to be a homeland [la taslah an takun watanan] for us, for it is a nation of toil, and there is no joy in it. I have one hope left, and that is to go back and try my luck back home. I trust conditions are better now that the Sultan has ratified the constitution.*²²

Sakakini's stay in Brooklyn was dominated by his relationship to Farah Anton, the editor of the Syrian exile journal, *al-Jam'ia*, and translation work he did for Columbia University Orientalist scholar, Professor Richard Gottheil.²³ He made extra money on the side by teaching Arabic to American students (mostly from Columbia) and the wives and daughters of Arab shopkeepers and merchants, who were illiterate in their mother tongue. For Anton he edited and wrote articles, and proofread the galleys. As he gained confidence, he also became engaged in polemics on behalf of Anton against his conservative opponents.

Sakakini belonged to the first wave of Arab immigration to America, which began in the 1870s and was halted by the radical anti-anarchist phobias of the 1920s. Like most of his compatriots from the Arab East, he carried Ottoman citizenship and identified himself as Syrian, and occasionally as Palestinian. Before the Great War, the Syrian community (i.e., the Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians) settled in what became known as Manhattan's "Little Syria" in the Lower



"I had a piece of bread laced with honey and tahini for 25 cents. That was my breakfast." Lebanese Restaurant in Little Syria, Manhattan's Lower West Side.

Source: Museum of the History of New York, Abbott Files.

West Side. (Paradoxically, this area in the 1970s became the plaza of the World Trade Centre.) Most of these families lived around Washington Street and worked in the garment industry. As they moved on and made money, they added to their ranks bankers, publishers and importers of linen, lace and lingerie. They moved their residence from Lower West Side to Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. There they established the South Ferry neighbourhood, which included sections of Brooklyn Heights and Cobble Hill.

Like Sakakini, many of these immigrants commuted daily from Manhattan by taking the ferry from Whitehall Street to Atlantic Avenue.²⁵ The geography of Khalil's movement in America gleaned from his diary entries and letters is cryptic and obscure, and often amusing in its naivety. He lodged in an unnamed neighbourhood of Brooklyn full of

"Syrian" and Greek cafes and restaurants. (Later this transpires to be Atlantic Avenue.) He daily took the elevated train or a boat to New York - meaning Manhattan - where he spent most of his day either in the Lower West Side, in the vicinity of Columbia, or in midtown in the editorial offices of *al Jam'ia*. Quite often he would cross the bridge [the Brooklyn Bridge?] on foot and walked to Washington Street or to Greenwich Village. Sometime in early 1908, Sakakini began to take subterranean transport after an underground tunnel was dug connecting Brooklyn to Manhattan. To describe that, he uses the Arabic transliteration of "subway."

When Sakakini moved to Maine, moreover, he gave his family the impression that the factory was somewhere just outside New York City. His reference to acquaintances in distant Michigan and Chicago was always to "inland country" (*dakhil al Bilad*). Rumfold Falls was predominantly inhabited by "Frenchmen" and "Frenchwomen" - many of whom could not speak English. Sakakini does not indicate who these Frenchman were, and seems to think they were European immigrants, rather than Quebecois or Acadian natives of the region.

Throughout his travels in New York and New England, Khalil moved within the confines of Arab immigrant circles. At the turn of the nineteenth century most of these were shopkeepers, salesmen, and peddlers. He found their milieu uncouth and dull, and continued to remark how he missed his intellectual circle in Jerusalem:

The Syrians in this country are in general a disgusting crowd - both morally and in their mannerisms [even though] they tend to show a great deal of respect towards me. Recently I have been attending some of their social get-togethers. I took



"In Khalil's dream sequence New York becomes the crucible of a transitory existence." Sakakini's Manhattan - Little Syria in the Lower West Side, West Street between Rector and Morris Streets.

Source: Abbott File 159 © Museum of the History of NYC

my violin and played some Arabic tunes, and they went crazy [with delight]. What a miserable lot! What if Miss Mannana [Dawood's sister] shows up here? I will not be exaggerating if I tell you that even among the Americans you will not find a woman of her education and sophistication.²⁶

American culture remained an alien presence for Sakakini. Like many of his compatriots in the pre WWI period he had a "them and us" attitude towards American society. There was no pretence of a melting pot culture.²⁷ Many Arabs continued to dress and carry on with their native customs, including *arghilah* smoking in public cafés, as can be seen from numerous photographs from Brooklyn and Little Syria from that period.²⁸ Throughout his stay in New York, Khalil ate in Syrian

restaurants, shopped in Arab or Greek stores, and read the Arabic press. Brooklyn neighbourhoods were cold and inhospitable. Khalil records at least five instances in which his friends - and on one occasion his brother Yusif - were attacked by what he called "American street gangs." Only once did he complain to the police about the attack, only to find them uncooperative, and even threatening to arrest them all.²⁹

Just towards the end of his stay does Khalil show a faint interest in the American cultural and literary scene. He begins to read the *Evening Standard* and visit the Metropolitan Museum. On two occasions Farah Antoun prevails on Khalil to accompany him to the theatre on Broadway, but Khalil found musicals noisy and a waste of time.

In his taxonomy of early Arab intellectuals living in America, Michael Suleiman lists Sakakini - the most radical pedagogue of the period - among the conservatives, particularly when compared to socialist thinkers like Farah Antoun, and Tolstoyan naturalists like Michael Nu'aimi - both his contemporaries in New York.³⁰ This judgement is in part a reflection of Sakakini's inability to engage himself in any positive reflection on the American scene, but it also reflects his perverse, almost peasant-like reaction to the conquest of public space by women. In a 1908 trip to the Coney Island beachfront with his friend Elias Haider, Sakakini was literally shocked and disgusted by the playfulness of men and women frolicking on the shoreline in sea costume.³¹

Despite his antipathy to American mores, Khalil had sharp and satirical observations of daily life. "The American walks fast and eats fast," he wrote for *al Sufur* (Cairo), "...They are so fast that they have restaurants called 'Fast Food', where you do not see chairs, as

customers eat standing up. A person might even leave the restaurant with a bite still in his mouth!"³² Because Syrian and Armenian travelling salesmen surrounded him, he was fascinated by their mannerisms, especially their reflection of the work ethics of two different worlds.

*In the Arab world, observed M. Suleiman, the peddlers were happy and sang their wares. In America, however, peddlers hardly smiled and their voices were disturbing when they called for customers. They went to bed worried and anxious, and woke up the same way; such was not the case in the Levant. In comparing "our crazies and theirs." Sakakini reported that, of two madmen he knew back home, one walked day and night, the other locked himself up in a closet. In America, he found that everybody was that kind of crazy, whether in constant motion or behind a counter [closet]. In America, people worked all the time, there was no pleasure in work. Their only pleasure was in making money and more money.*³³

Sultana's Cruel Heart

While in New York Sakakini would spend sleepless nights remembering outings he took with Sultana mostly in Ein Karem, Artas, Beit Jala, and on two occasions to Ramallah. On several occasions she spent the night at their house, with her family's approval.³⁴ While one of the main impetuses behind his departure to America was to make enough money to set up home for Sultana and himself, it became obvious from his pleadings with her that she was not fully committed to the idea of marriage.



"The Syrians [ie Shamis] in this country are in general a disgusting crowd - both morally and in their mannerisms." Sakakini Diaries (1907). Photo: "The Foreign Elements in New York - The Syrian Colony," drawing by W. Bengough, 1895. Courtesy of Jonathan Friedlander; from A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City, A Historical Museum of New York Publication, 2002.

Altogether Khalil wrote 41 letters to Sultana, 21 of them from New York. Of those about 35 letters survived, allowing us to glimpse their relationship and courting traditions in Palestine before the great war. Sakakini had left Palestine without a formal betrothal to Sultana, so their relationship remained a secret from both their respective families. Only Dawood was privy to their love vows.

Despite his pleading and several threats to sever their relationship if she would not respond, Sultana wrote to Khalil only once or twice while he was in America. There are three themes that recur in virtually all of his many letters: the reconstruction of every moment he spent with her in Jerusalem and their walks in the environs of the city; his obsession that he would go back without

enough money to make him worthy in her eyes; and his overwhelming feeling of unworthiness and the sense that he is denying other more fit men from winning her favours.

Unlike his diary entries, which contain considerable description of his life in Brooklyn and work in Manhattan, Sakakini's love letters are located in nostalgic space - or in recrimination for having allowed himself to leave her. "Explain to me Sultana why did permit me to separate from you?" he wrote in 25 November, 1907, "All the wealth of America, and the wonders of America, do not equal in my eyes the loss and anguish I suffer from your absence. And what if I do not make it at the end. You say it's only two years. But two years is like being away from you for a thousand years."³⁵

After the New Year celebrations he goes with a Jerusalem acquaintance, Dr. Najeeb al Jamal, to view the city from the top of a Manhattan skyscraper. Jamal informs Khalil that he would like him to intercede on his behalf to ask for Sultana's hand: "He [Dr Jamal] began to sing the praises of your beauty and your qualities. Before him I heard similar praise coming from Issa al Issa [later the editor of the newspaper *Falasteen* in Jaffa] and Afteem Mushabbik...I do hope I deserve your trust and affections."

After months of incessant begging and pleading, Sultana finally does reply to him in a singular letter. Her style indicates a no-nonsense attitude in answer to his misery, but also a considerable command of erudition and literary Arabic. Her style, like Khalil's, is modernist and free from the flowery language typical among contemporary Arab writers. Her writing was the perfect antidote to his sentimentalism, self-pity and periodic eruptions of self-denigration.

*Jerusalem,
Monday, 20 January, 1908*

Dear Khalil,

I received all your letters by hand through your cousin Ya'coub [Farraj]. I thank you for your sentiments, and for your love and devotion. I was hoping your letters will be a source of guidance to me but unfortunately I must confess to you that I can hardly read them more than once. For every time I open them I am aggravated by the wailing and crying you go through by the sheer memory I invoke in you.

I am not dead yet, so there is no need to cry rivers of tears over me, and transform your words into eulogies! Why can't you smile Khalil,

instead, when you think of me? ...Is there nothing pleasant or wondrous in America that you can tell me about? I know you must have suffered a lot when you first came to New York, but please do not make crying your main pastime.

You keep worrying that you might fail and come back with naught. What kind of talk is this Khalil? Why should you fail? By God do not let me hear you repeat this nonsense...[also] please send me your letters directly to the bishop, or to [my] school so that I will be the first person to read them, rather than having them become the subject of everybody's admiration en route.

...Do you recall our picnic in Artas, Khalil? Peace be upon that day, for what happened has been carved in my heart indelibly...I write this to you with the moon looking at me between the olive trees, and I feel that I am not writing to you but addressing you mouth to mouth. ...At your request I went with my brother Yusif the day after Christmas to have a portrait made of me at Miltawi's [the photographer] to replace the one that you broke. I will send it immediately to you by post, and hope that you will get it intact.

– Sultana

The letter indicates that Sultana was committed to the relationship, but she did not want him to take her for granted. On at least two other occasions she indicated to him that nothing is guaranteed. On 10 October, 1907, for example she wrote to him - when he was about to embark on his American trip - "I will give you my oath of love, as long as I have



Sultana's Picture Carried by Khalil to New York,
*"...[Y]ou have replaced your delicate heart with one that
 is harder than steel and thicker than granite."*
Sakakini Diaries. Photo Source: Sakakini Family Archives

control over my destiny." Then she adds cryptically: "Blissful and happy is your condition, but there is no comfort for those you left behind."³⁶ Khalil panics. He responds immediately: "What do you mean? Are you suggesting that if another person comes your way, or if your folks propose a replacement, or compel you to take one, you will succumb? I hope you do not aim at torturing me with this talk." And then using an Arabic pun in reference to their names, he writes, "What prevents that I be your lover [*khalilek*] and you my mistress [*sultanati*]? My *sultanah* have mercy on your *khalil*."³⁷

After several months in America, Khalil's hopes for a stable income began to dissipate. His few steady students, mostly undergraduates from Columbia University

with limited finances, stopped showing up regularly. Scholars who commissioned him to correct their manuscripts were late in payment, and Farah Anton's journal *al-Jami'a* was losing money all the time. In desperation he packed his belongings and moved to Maine to work in a paper-mill for a promised wage of \$12 a week. Since his lodging and food expenses were about six or seven dollars, Sakakini figured he could save a net income of five dollars a week.

But it was not long before the drudgery of the paper mill and physical fatigue began to take their toll. In Jerusalem, he was a respected though underpaid teacher, an upright member of his community, with a loving circle of friends. And he had Dawood and Sultana to give him hope and solace. But Dawood was now dead and Sultana was not responding to his letters. By the spring he had reached desperate straits. "This is the last time I address you as my love [*habibati*]," he wrote to her from Rumsfold Falls on Friday, 17 July, 1907.

*For that entails that I am yours and
 you are mine...yes, that is the oath
 that we took, but a miserable lout
 like me, unable to reach his
 objectives, and then transform
 [your] happy life into misery?? Yes
 Sultana I am destined to live in
 misery. Turn your eyes from me to
 avoid this curse. Spit me out, cut
 these bonds and leave me forever.
 Tear up my letters, and burn all
 traces of my memory. Forget me. Do
 not mention my name for it is too
 unworthy of your pure lips. If my
 name is mentioned before you, say
 "I do not know him." But before that
 I beg you to forgive me for having
 preoccupied your heart, and
 blocked the path to your happiness.
 Do not deny me your pardon, for I*

have lost everything: my friend, my future...I have only my failure for company. And why should you put up with me. What is your crime? No Sultana, I do not deserve you. You must choose another person [to love]. Choose somebody who will make you happy. From now on my happiness will be to hear that you are happy [with someone else]. I will be returning soon to Jerusalem, an utter failure. My punishment will be to live away from you, and to avoid the roads that you take, and the places that you frequent. I will take to the grave of my beloved [Dawood] as my solace until death comes to me, and I am forgotten by all. ...This is my last letter to you. Farewell Sultana.

— Khalil³⁸

Khalil wrote three letters in this vein. One draft that he kept but did not send reads, "I wish I had not known you Sultana...everybody loves you. Choose someone who loves and who can make you happy." He then adds a note unseen in earlier correspondence: "I write to you in a language that I would never dare address to my mother and sister...its only because you have replaced your delicate heart with one that is harder than steel and thicker than granite that I can talk to you thus."³⁹

Within ten days, however, he was back on his feet. His tone was still reserved but his confidence was restored. She was his *habiba* again. "I am preparing for my journey back home," he wrote on 27 July. "I wish I can fly to you. I hope our reunion will be the beginning of a new and happy life. I will be returning my love burdened with grief and unhappiness, but my distress will evaporate once I see you smiling. You are my solace, my joy."⁴⁰



The only surviving picture of Khalil in America. He took this photo on the last day of his factory work at Rumsfold Falls, Maine, in July 1908.

Source: Sakakini Family Archives

An Elusive Love

If the imagery of Sultana was empowered with a projected hope that helped Khalil to escape from his daily tribulations of life in New York, then Dawood Saidawi was the icon that tied him to his roots in Jerusalem. His reflections on Dawood are dream-like, and Dawood often appears in Khalil's daily-recorded dreams. Before he left Jerusalem Dawood was his soul mate [*shaqiq ruhi*], and confidante. He was the one and only friend privy to his relationship with Sultana, and its progress as well as tribulations. Dawood's sudden death (communicated to him in a letter from the mysterious Miss Singer four months after his arrival to Brooklyn),⁴¹ was the single most devastating blow of Khalil's American sojourn.

"Dawood, Ya Yonathai [my Jonathan]", he wrote upon hearing of his death. My beloved, my soul mate, my hope, my joy and happiness. How dare you leave me alone...nothing will compensate me [for your loss]. Life without you has no meaning. If you are dead now, then I am among the living dead.⁴²

Two months later he was still subject to extended bouts of despair and depression:

This morning after I shaved I was about to have breakfast when I glanced at a picture of Dawood, and was overwhelmed by grief. I started crying again. Let my right hand forget me Dawood, if I forsake you. And let my tongue be stuck to my jaws if I stopped remembering you.

His letters are replete with biblical incantations ('My Jonathan', 'Let my right hand', etc..) mixed with flowery borrowings from Manfalooti, the early century Egyptian romanticist. (Both influences disappeared from his style upon his return to Palestine.)

In Khalil's American diary, Dawood remains a dominant figure both in life and death. He appears most vividly in the frequent dream episodes narrated with enchanting detail. One month after news of Dawood's death reached Khalil, Sakakini recalls an encounter in Jaffa:

Four months ago, in October 1907 we embraced on the Mediterranean shores. I laid my head on your chest and wept bitterly, as if I had a premonition that this moment will mark our permanent separation. I took [the ship] to the shore while you remained at the shores stoutly

sending me looks of love and affection. What were you thinking then? ...When I return to that beach tomorrow who will console me for your absence? I will kiss the earth on which walked. I will stand there facing you on the opposite shore - the terrain of eternal life...⁴³

Following this entry a striking phenomenon appears. In these dream narratives, the figures of Dawood and Sultana begin to merge. It is not clear what was going on in Khalil's mind, but it appears that this joining was the product of a dual loss: Dawood's physical loss in death, and Sultana's increasing aloofness and detachment. In February 1908, he makes the following cryptic entry:

I have spent the whole night with you. My sleep was full of anxiety. I woke up and stayed in bed all day. I remembered my mother and my [past] happiness. I could hardly withhold my tears.⁴⁴

Again on the 7th of March, 1908, he writes:

I dreamt I was returning with you in the evening to our house in the [old] city. When we approached the entrance I saw the neighbour's door ajar. When we entered I kissed you.⁴⁵

Who did Khalil kiss in this dream? And who was the person he was returning with in the dark? The allusion here is oblique. Initially he seems to be referring to Sultana, but the opening stanza (*faqatdu habiban*), about the losing the beloved, suggests that it was Dawood. Furthermore Khalil never alludes to kissing Sultana in his diaries before their marriage (or after their marriage), even in his frequent dream sequences. Either he was

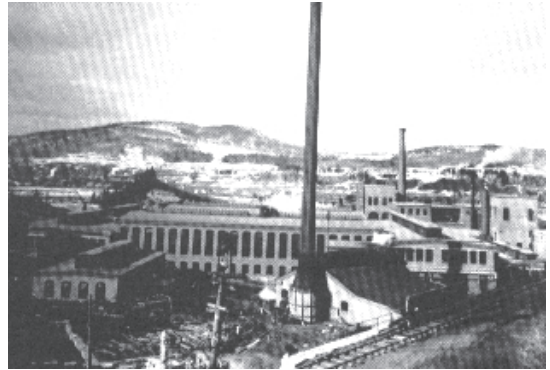
protective of Sultana (in case the diaries fell into the wrong hands) or - more likely - he was expressing a love that was abstract and asexual.

At this stage the reader should be warned that many of the quoted entries cited here come from an era when men were free to express their devotion to each other in a manner little used today, and one that is not suggestive of an erotic relationship. Furthermore, because his was a socially restrictive community, Khalil's expression of affections towards Sultana was considerably more reserved than his feelings actually were. It was more permissible to express love for the same sex than for the opposite sex. But Sultana was also not reciprocating his affections. The dominant figure of Dawood, no longer of flesh and blood, was merging with his longing for an elusive love for Sultana. The two objects of his adoration were united in his fantasies.

New York as an Ephemeral City

Virtually every diary entry recorded in Brooklyn or Rumfeld Falls begins and sometimes ends with a dream sequence. The majority of these dreams are set in a Jerusalem landscape - walks with Sultana, talks with Dawood, family outings, and bizarre happenings with various acquaintances. Frequently those involved death, burial and resurrection scenes. Many of those visitations to the Holy City involve escapades from New York, or have Khalil being carried in outer space from New York to Jerusalem. As such, *New York in these dreams becomes the arena of a transitory existence*.

In every detailed dream, there exists a theme of jarring tension between Khalil's American persona and his being "a son of Jerusalem." Most of those juxtapose New York's industrial monstrosity and Palestine's "natural



Paper Mill in Rumford Falls where Sakakini was employed for a few weeks in 1908: "*What kind of city is this? What is the difference between workers in [this factory] and slaves in a barbaric system?*" - Katha Ana Ya Dunia. Downtown Rumford, 1906; Rumford Historical Society

tranquillity." The return to Jerusalem is, to him, an escape from the cruel machine of the American metropole.

This was eventually exemplified in the oppressive conditions and Sakakini's suffering at the paper mill in Rumford Falls, which he contrasts with the rustic open fields of Ein Karem and Artas. In these dreams, Jerusalem is reduced to its countryside. (In *Kadha Ana Ya Dunia* he wrote: "There is no difference here between men and machinery. The labourer moves without thought and will, and no trace of reasoning in his work. You should not be surprised that worker's souls and sentiments are dead. They work ten hours a day with little or no rest and receive no more than a dollar and a half for that. The injustice of capital has no limit. What an ugly and brutal civilization.")⁴⁶ But one should not exaggerate his anti-capitalist sentiments. His criticism was directed at the soulless character of capital rather than its exploitative nature. In his dreams Khalil does not fight, he escapes.

Another related theme in these dreams is the contrast between the frigid modernity of New York and the traditional intimacy of Jerusalem social life. Those contrasts are expressed in

the constant crossing and re-crossing of the boundaries of European/Arab dress codes.⁴⁷ Here is a typical example from his diary:

I dreamt [last night] that I had gone back to Jerusalem wearing a European hat [burnaita] over my Qumbaz [traditional Arab robe]. I became embarrassed, so I removed it and walked dishevelled. It was a hot day, and I was passing the Russian Compound next to the Italian Consulate. I walked by the new road between the houses of the Halabi family and that of Feidi Afendi al-Alami. When I reached the end of the road I saw myself barefooted and without the Qumbaz, but I was covered by a white Abay (shawl). A black servant woman (jariya) confronted me and said: "What do you want?" I replied: "I want to go home." She pointed to a fence and said: "Jump over here." I jumped and my white abay got stuck in a thorny bush at the entrance. I was so exhausted trying to free it from the thorns.⁴⁸

The process of getting to Jerusalem always involved physical hurdles and escape routes [from New York?]. It invariably focused on jumping walls, and dressing and undressing in a manner that Khalil would have hesitated to record had he been familiar with Freudian paradigms. Just before Dawood's death, Khalil made the following entry about his friend. (In this particular episode, as in several others, one is struck by the vivid allusions to Jesus at the last supper):

Dawood and I were walking in the old city. He was full of vigour and had a glowing angelic smile on his face. We passed the American Colony⁴⁹ but did not enter. Then we

passed by the Tarazi store, where they [?] looked at him as if his time had come [dana ajaluhu]. I saw myself jumping on top of house roofs, and climbing walls until I arrived to our house. I climbed down to enter the house, but I was naked.⁵⁰

When Khalil finally returns to Jerusalem the dream sequences either come to a halt, or he stops recording them.⁵¹

Sakakini's failed "mission" in New York turns out to be a passing episode. He very rarely mentioned it in his later writings. He was quickly engulfed in a different battle: the quest for reforming the teaching of Arabic, the movement for Ottoman constitutional reform, and the struggle for Arabizing the Orthodox Church.

Sultana received him warmly if not with open arms. He became officially engaged to her before the end of the year. They were married in Jerusalem on 12 January, 1912, when Sultana was 24 and Khalil was 32. They had three children: Sari, who died in his youth and broke his father's heart; Hala, who published several books about her father, including selections from his memoirs (*Kadha Ana Ya Dunia*, 1955), and Dumia, who lives in Ramallah today. In all the Sakakini biographies and biographic notes, his American sojourn is considered a failure and a year of misery.⁵²

That is, all except for the writings of his daughter Hala, who makes this brief remark in her own memoirs: "He went to [America] in the hope of finding appropriate work and eventually settling there, but he was not successful; 1907/1908 happened to be one of those depression years in America. After an absence of nine months, during which he suffered many hardships, father returned to

٢٧ تموز ١٩٠٨

حبيبتی سلطانہ

زکرت رمفولڈ و فوڈز حیث اقامت شدہا حسیبہ و ہذا و حبیب الہ بوستن فاستقبلی منیل الہا نر
 و ابن عمہ بندی الخواجا منانی یشتغل بفعلات و فندی من اندر ما تدریج ارباب الہا و ابن عمہ
 بخریج للبیع و لکنت لوبکا دی من ابرہ طریقہ و لست اظن انہ یخج و لو اقام فی ہذا البلاد العرکہ و لکنت اعش
 عمر ارجوع الہ البلاد لولا الخوی من التفرغ لمارو یعنی من انہ قال فی انہ صابر و فعاشر فاذا تمنت احوال
 بقی و لا رجع فی الیوم ان فی زرت الخواجات سنو نو ذہبا معی فتفقد معاہد بوستن و آثارا الحیہ
 افقی بنا الطراف الہ الحریقہ العمویہ فحسنا عمر مقعدہا انام بحرفہ حنیۃ۔ لانت القدراب
 شروج و نجی و فیہ فخر ذی الفکر الہا رئاس و تذکرہ ثم ذہبا للقدار و مان مدویہ مع رزق اللہ عبادا
 فی الکریم و حلت بجانب النافذہ اوقن فاشوی عی الہا و نحدث من صبی ہمت فی عالم الخیال
 و حلت فی جہا الفلوات فذکرک و تذکرک و اود نام لست و بقی فی الماء و دعتہم و دعت نخائل
 و بندی و کانت اراۃ نخائل عمر و ذلت الولادہ و رکبت الوہار نحو ساعہ ثم رکبت الہا فخر و حبیب الہ
 نیو یورک۔ لا اسال احدا الا نفع فی الہا ارجع الہ بلادی فہذا البلاد لست لکنتی و لکنت کلما لکنت الہا
 تذکرک و تذکرک و بقی لست انہ اجاہد فی البلیغ الی اعلی درجات المجد ثم ارجع الیہ فاذن مع میڈیا
 زور و مآ ایدکا۔ بالحقیقہ یا حبیبتی ان ایدکا شتجہ العزبہ و لکنت لا نفع لوان لکون طرنا لوانا بلاد و محل
 و بلاد و سرور نکت ارجع الیہ اتوا قاضیا و لکنت بقی فی اس و اعد و ہوان ارجع و البلیغ حلی فی بلادی و ارجع
 نہ لکون احوال ساعدہ و لکنت بعد ان من الہا الہا و الذکر و بلاد لکما لکنت سمعت۔ لست لستہا
 و سہا افری و سہا بعدہا و حکمی باثباتین۔ انا ہب اتوا مسفر و با حیدر لوانا سہا ان ایلر طیارہ فعد
 برہمت فی السؤلہ و لکنتی الفراعہ و ارجع ان لکون لغا و نا بعدہا الغیاب و العذاب بداءہ حیاء

جدیدہ سعیدہ ان شاء اللہ

قالہ اللہ و غدا بمنعرج الہی و اطول شوق المسکین الی خیر

سارہم الیہ با حبیبتی شفا بالاعوم و لوان و لکنت کل لکنتی و لکنتی امام انبار
 لکنت انت دوائی انت سعادتی۔ حمت سنہ یو دین ان لکنت فی محسن مع عفت کتبی و لکنت
 امین زہر و کانت لکنت لکنت ما یستامہ اللالہ فخرشت فی و کانت الفون امی و لکنت فکنت
 لا بلہنہ اذن امی و لکنت فانتہت الہا مرادی و کانت بلکنت اللہ اسلست ثم و کنتی اتوا
 انہ فی یوم آخر و و کنتی ان لکنت لکنت فی ازادہ العذات۔ ماہد الشفاء حتی فی نومی اطم
 بالعتات۔ ساحت اللہ یا سعادہ لم یکن یخطر فی ببال انت فو حین عینی و تدعینی عرفہ لوان
 و الہا و جی غدا سارح لک کل شیء غدا انک لکنت غدا الفی ہوی خند قریب و لکنت
 انقادی بیدہ غدا ترین بعینک حالی و کنتی۔ و انہ اشو حین اتوا الہا و لکنت نا نیم فعد
 انہ از لکنت و لم اعد ابرہا لکنت و لکنتی لکنت المسکین الیہ
 خیل

"My beloved Sultana, I have just left Rumfold Falls [Maine] where I spent a month that felt like a century." The last letter Khalil sent to Sultana, written in Boston 27 July, 1908, "Western" [ie, Gregorian calendar], just days before his departure to Marseille and Jerusalem. Sakakini used the notation "Western" since he often recorded his entries in the Julian as well as in the Gregorian calendar. Source: Sakakini Family Archives

Jerusalem. Even this experience, though unhappy, had enriched him in many ways."⁵³

Neither Hala Sakakini, nor his other biographers, mention in what way this trip was enriching. In my reading of these hitherto unpublished letters and diary entries I would suggest three sources for this enrichment. First was the obvious manner in which the cultural life in New York, miserable as it was, helped to broaden and stimulate his intellectual horizons. His collaboration with Farah Anton, in particular, introduced him to the writings of Nietzsche - which became, in a rudimentary way - a basic influence on his thinking.⁵⁴ Significantly, his editorial work for *al-Jam'ia* made his language more crisp and less flowery, as became evident in Sakakini's editing of the literary journal *al-Asma'i* in Jerusalem after his return from New York. Several years later, while he was spending his dreary months in an Ottoman prison in Damascus, Khalil could look back to his years in Brooklyn with some nostalgia. "If I were to be exiled from my homeland," he wrote in the beginning of 1918,

*"...I would choose America. Nothing would make me happier to see my son in play gear, bare headed and in shorts, jumping down the stairs of Columbia University in New York, with the wind blowing at his golden locks...how happy I would be if I could be sitting with my little family having tea in a elegant home in Brooklyn or its neighbouring suburbs..."*⁵⁵

More importantly, Khalil's American exile and the tragedies that accompanied it - Dawood's death and Sultana's vacillations - helped him to reflect on the meaning of love and loss. The first he could no longer take for granted (now he had to fight for Sultana's affection), and the second fortified his character. Nor

could he go back and find solace in conventional domesticity, which men of his age were traditionally prepared for. Instead these tribulations tested his character and faith. The seeds of rebellion and scepticism were planted - only to become more focused on his return to Jerusalem to face the intellectual battles of the eve of World War I: the struggle against the tyrannies of the state, the Church (which sought to excommunicate him and bar him from marrying Sultana), and his own conservative society.

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Endnotes

¹ The *Diaries of Khalil Sakakini* [henceforth KSD] are scheduled for publication as a seven volume series (in Arabic) beginning with Volume 1 in March 2003, jointly by the Khalil Sakakini Centre (Ramallah), and the Institute of Palestine Studies (Beirut and Jerusalem), editor, Akram Musallam.

² Communication with Zakariyya Muhammad, January 15, 2003.

³ Abdul Hamid Yasin et al, *Zhikra al Sakakini*, Modern Library, Jerusalem 1957, pp. 88-891. For a more detailed exposition of his educational methods see Yusuf Ayyub Haddad, *Khalil Sakakini: His Life, Ideas, and Patrimony* (in Arabic), As Sawt, Nazareth, 1985, pp. 223-227.

⁴ Ishaq Musa al Hussein, Khalil al Sakakini, in *Zhikra al Sakakini*, ibid, p. 93.

⁵ Haddad, p. 69-71.

⁶ Hussein, Sakakini, pp 60-63.

⁷ K. Sakakini, in *Kadha Ana Ya Dunya*.

⁸ Hussein, *Sakakini*, p. 61.

⁹ Until the diaries became available the only available source on Sultana was her daughter's memoirs, Hala Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I: a Personal Record*, Economic Press, Amman, 1987, pp 1-10.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 3.

¹¹ A father's advice to his daughter, in Hala Sakakini, *Personal Archives*, Jerusalem 2000, pp 23-24.

¹² I was in an advanced way of writing this when I came across a piece of information that appeared to me as an astounding revelation. My cousin Elias informed me that Nicola Abdo's sister, Hilaneh was married to Elias Tamari, my grandfather. This makes Sultaneh Abdo the

direct niece of my paternal grandmother Hilaneh.

¹³ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁴ *Katha Ana Ya Dunya*, Letter to Dawood [Saidawi], Jerusalem 10 October, 1907.

¹⁵ We find out for example, that he borrowed money from her for his trip. On a few occasions she also gave few pounds to his mother when she heard that both he and his brother Yusif, who was a traveling salesman in Philadelphia, were unable to send her any support.

¹⁶ The biographic notes on Khalil Sakakini published by the Sakakini Center in Ramallah suggest that he went to pursue a university education in America. (see www.sakakini.org). This claim is not supported by his diaries or correspondence where it is clear that he intended to make a substantial amount of money in the same manner as other immigrants from greater Syria: through peddling and trade. Once in America, he did consider a teaching post at Columbia university, but aside from the private lessons he gave to students of Arabic at the university, and manuscripts he edited, he never came close to university employment.

¹⁷ This is the opinion of Ishaq Musa al Hussein, in his *Khalil Sakakini*, op cit.

¹⁸ Mansour Fahmi, "Muhammad Krd Ali and Khalil Sakakini" in Yasin, *Zhikra*, p 108.

¹⁹ KSD, Letter to Sultana, London, 22 August, 1908.

²⁰ KSD Letter to Milia, New York 14 November, 1907.

²¹ KSD, Letter to Dawood Saidawi, New York, 1 January, 1908. This particular letter is also printed in *Kadha Ana Ya Dunia*, p. 17.

²² KSD, Letter to Sultana, New York and Ramfold Falls, 27 July, 1908.

²³ Richard J.H. Gottheil (1862-1936) was the first Chair of Rabbinic Literature and Semitic Languages at Columbia Universty during Sakakini's visit. During his tenure a wide range of semitic languages and courses were introduced, and the library vastly expanded. His relationship to Sakakini was amiable, but as is obvious from the Sakakini diaries, Gottheil was oblivious to Khalil's financial plight. He assumed, wrongly, that Sakakini's work for him on Arabic manuscripts was a labour of love. At one point he tried to help him sell postcards of the holy land to other faculty members at Columbia. (KS Diaries and www.columbia.edu, "Jewish Studies at Columbia Before Salo Baron"). Eventually he paid Sakakini \$25 for his work, but only after the latter pleaded with him.

²⁴ *Gotham Gazette*, "History of Arab New York," an online review, 22 August , 2002.

²⁵ Ibid. See also Philip Kurata, "Arab Americans of New York," *Washington File*, June 25, 2002 " In

addition to economic factors," writes Kurata, "a major impetus for Arab immigration in the early 20th century was the passage of an Ottoman law in 1908, making military service compulsory for Christians and Jews, who previously had been exempt...The Lower West Side became the 'mother colony' of all the Arab immigrant communities that eventually were established in the United States."

²⁶ Ibid. What did Brooklyn think of these immigrants? One New York newspaper said, 'There is not a more industrious or capable representative of the East than the Syrian.'

²⁷ See Jonathan Friedlander, "Rare Sights: Images of Early Arab Immigration in New York City" in K. Benson and Philip Kayal, *A Community of Many Worlds, Arab Americans in New York City*, Syracuse University Press, New York 2002.

²⁸ Ibid. See the photographs accompanying the Friendlander essay.

²⁹ KSD, Easter Sunday, 26 April, 1908. Although from the context of this particular incident it seems that Yusif himself was drunk and abusive to the police in his request for protection.

³⁰ Michael Suleiman, "Impressions of New York City by Early Arab Immigrants," in a *Community of Many Worlds*, op. cit., p. 44.

³¹ KSD, 2 August, 1908.

³² Khalil Sakakini, "The Way Americans Live," *As-Sufur*, Cairo, 1918; re-printed in Khalil Sakakini, and cited in *Ma Tayassar*, Volume 1, The Modern Press, Jerusalem, 1943, pp. 95-98; also quoted in Suleiman, op.cit.

³³ M. Suleiman, op. cit, and *Ma Tayassar*, p. 96.

³⁴ See Letter to Sultana, KSD, 20 November , 1907.

³⁵ KSD, Letter to Sultana, 20 November, 1907.

³⁶ KSD, Letter to Sultana, 11 October, 1907.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ KSD, Letter to Sultana, Friday 17 July, 1908 (excerpted).

³⁹ KSD, Undated letter to Sultana. [July?] 1908.

⁴⁰ KSD, Letter to Sultana, 27 July, 1908.

⁴¹ KSD, 25 January, 1908.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ KSD, 22 February, 1908.

⁴⁴ KSD, 10 February, 1908 (excerpt).

⁴⁵ KSD, 7 March, 1908 (excerpt).

⁴⁶ *Kadha Ana Ya Dunia*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ This what I. Hussein wrote about Sakakini's dress

code before WWI: "He used to wear traditional Arab clothing: Qunbaz and white Abay in the summer, and a yellow wollen Abay in the winter, with a Tarbush for headgear." Cf Hussein, *Khalil Sakakini*, pl 17 (citation below). But how do we explain his western dress in the 1905-1906 photographs? Either he used them for official travel documents, or he varied his dress depending on the occasion.

⁴⁸ KSD, 29 February, 1908 (excerpt).

⁴⁹ The Swedish American hospice and school that was eventually converted into a hotel in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

⁵⁰ KSD, 30 January, 1908 (excerpt).

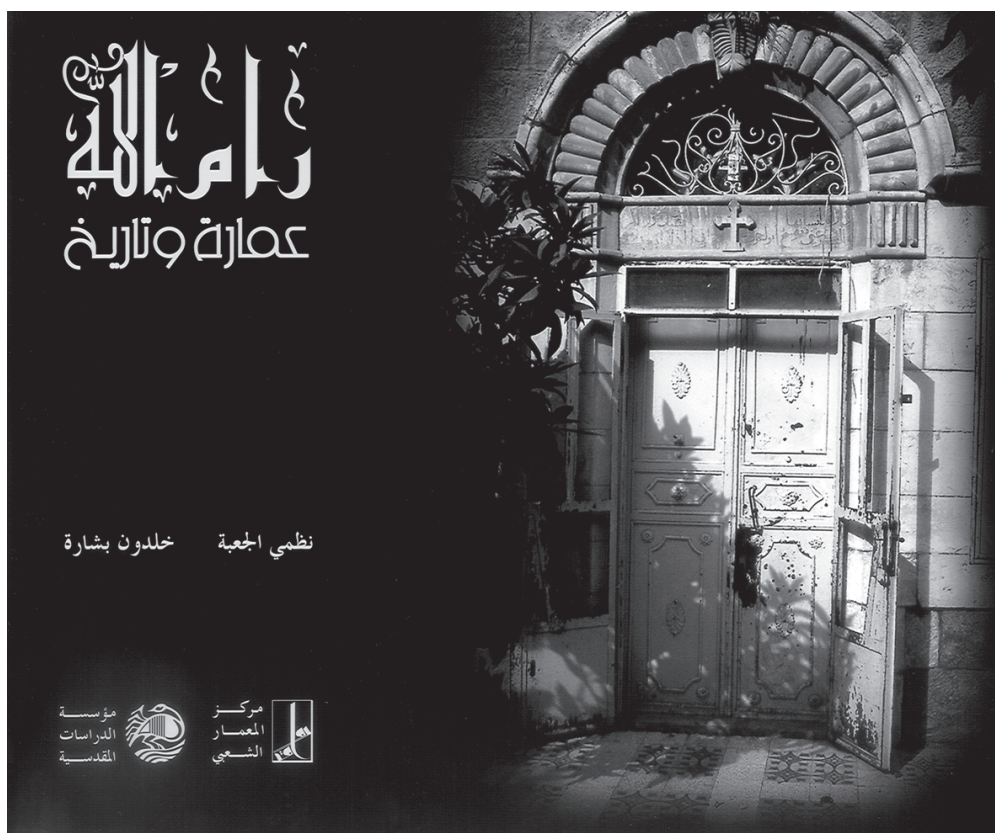
⁵¹ Sakakini resumes recording his dreams several years later, in the 1920s.

⁵² The best biography of Sakakini is Yusif Ayyub Haddad, *Khalil Sakakini*, op cit, 45-47; see also Ishaq Musa al Hussein, *Khalil al-Sakakini, Al-Adib al-Mujaddid*, Centre for Islamic Studies, Jerusalem, 1989, pp. 20-24.

⁵³ Hala Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I: a Personal Record*, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Hussein, *Sakakini*, op cit., p. 23.

⁵⁵ Sakakini, *Kadha Ana Ya Dunia*, Diary entry, Friday, 4 January, 1918, pp. 124-125.



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