



WRITERS AND NOVELISTS

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra

📅 Birth	1919, BETHLEHEM, PALESTINE
📅 Death	1994, BAGHDAD, IRAQ

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra was born in Bethlehem to Ibrahim and Mariam. He had two brothers, Yusuf and Isa, and one sister, Sawsan. He was married to Lami'a al-Askari, daughter of the Iraqi notable Ja'far Pasha al-Askari. They had two sons, Sadir and Yasir.

He completed his elementary education at the Syriac Orthodox School in Bethlehem, and then in 1929 enrolled at the National Bethlehem School.

His family moved to Jerusalem in 1932 where he continued his studies at the Rashidiyya School; his Arabic teacher was the famous poet Ibrahim Tuqan. In 1935, he enrolled at the Arab College and studied there for four years; his Arabic teacher was the famous scholar Ishaq Musa al-Husseini.

Upon graduating from the Arab College, the Palestine Department of Education sent him on a scholarship to England in 1939, where he studied for a few months at Exeter University and then transferred to Cambridge University to study English literature. He was granted a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature in 1943.

Upon graduation, Jabra returned to Jerusalem where he was appointed teacher of English literature at Rashidiyya College; he founded the Arts Club at the Young Men's Christian Association in Jerusalem and became its president. He continued his studies and obtained a Master of Arts degree in English literature from Cambridge University in 1948.

In early 1948, his family was forced to flee when Zionist forces blew up a number of houses in the Baq'a quarter of Jerusalem where they lived. They took refuge in Bethlehem.

Following the Palestine disaster in 1948, Jabra emigrated to Baghdad where he worked as a lecturer at the Tawjihyya College and then at the College of Arts and Sciences founded during the academic year 1949–50. In autumn 1949, Jabra, along with a British colleague, founded the Department of English literature at that college. He also lectured at the Higher Teachers Training College and at the Queen Aliya College for Girls.

In 1951, he and the celebrated Iraqi sculptor and painter Jawad Salim founded the Baghdad Society for Modern Art.

In 1952, Jabra married Lami'a al-Askari, his colleague at the Higher Teachers Training College. At about the same time he was granted a research fellowship in literary criticism by Harvard University, where he remained until February 1954.

Returning to Baghdad that same year, Jabra was hired by the Department of Public Relations of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). Five years later, he was appointed head of communications of the administration and staff and then head of the publications division. He continued to lecture at the College of Arts and Sciences of Baghdad University until 1964.

In 1961, Jabra had founded a literary magazine for IPC entitled *Workers in Oil*, which he continued to edit until 1972.

When Iraqi oil was nationalized in 1972, Jabra moved to the National Iraqi Oil Company where he became head of information, publications, and translation, and where he founded a magazine called *Oil and the World*.

In 1975, the University of California at Berkeley invited him as a visiting professor. He spent the first six months of 1976 teaching contemporary Arabic literature and lecturing at other US universities.

In 1977 Jabra was appointed cultural counselor at the Ministry of Culture and Information, a position he retained until his retirement in 1984.

Between 1980 and 1983 he edited a magazine called *Arab Arts*, published by Wasit Publishing House in London. He was also president of the League of Iraqi Art Critics, which was founded in 1982.

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra was a Palestinian intellectual and artist of many talents and wide learning, a man of fine sensibility, great charm, sweet temperament, and humble bearing. He wrote short stories, novels, poetry, essays, plays, and literary criticism. He was an accomplished artist and a passionate fan of western classical music. He was also a highly accomplished translator of English novels, poetry, plays, and criticism; his translations of some of Shakespeare's works are regarded as among the very finest and most accurate translations into Arabic.

Several of his works have been translated into English, French, German, and Italian.

Jabra was awarded many prizes and medals, including the Targa Europa Award for Culture from Italy in 1983; the Literature and Art prize by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences in 1978; the Creativity in the Novel Prize in Baghdad in 1988; the Jerusalem Medal for Culture, the Arts and Literature by the PLO in 1990; the Medal of Merit (First Class) by the President of the Tunisian Republic in 1991, and the Thornton Wilder Prize for Translation by Columbia University, New York, in 1991.

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra died in Baghdad and was buried there.

Selected Works

Short Stories

"عرق وقصص أخرى". بيروت: المؤسسة الأهلية للطباعة والنشر، 1956.

[Sweat and Other Stories]

Novels

"السفينة". بيروت: دار النهار، 1970.

[The Ship]

The Ship. Translated and introduced by Adnan Haydar and Roger Allen.
Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1985.

"صيادون في شارع ضيق"، ترجمة محمد عصفور (صدر أصلاً بالإنكليزية). بيروت: دار الآداب، 1974.

Hunters in a Narrow Street. (original English) London: Heinemann, 1960.

"البحث عن وليد مسعود". بيروت: دار الآداب، 1978.

[Searching for Walid Mas'ud]

A la recherche de Walid Masud. Traduit par France M. Douvier. Paris: J.C. Lattès, 1988.

"يوميات سراب عفان". بيروت: دار الآداب، 1992.

[The Diary of Sarab 'Affan]

"عالم بلا خرائط"، بالاشتراك مع عبد الرحمن منيف. بيروت: المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر، 1982.

[A World without Maps (with 'Abd al-Rahman Munif)]

"الغرف الأخرى". بيروت: المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر، 1986.

[The Other Rooms].

Autobiography

"البئر الأولى: فصول من سيرة ذاتية". لندن: رياض الريس للكتب والنشر، 1987.

[The First Well: Chapters from an Autobiography]

The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood. Translated by Issa J. Boullata.
Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995.

Le Premier Puits. Traduit par Leila El-Masri et Jocelyne Laabi. Paris: Albin Michel, 1993.

"شارع الأميرات: فصول من سيرة ذاتية"، بيروت: المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر، 1994.

[Princesses' Street: Chapters from an Autobiography].

Critical Studies

"الحرية والطوفان". بيروت: دار مجلة شعر، 1960.

[Freedom and the Flood]

"الرحلة الثامنة". بيروت: المكتبة العصرية، 1967.

[The Eighth Journey]

"جواد سليم ونصب الحرية". بغداد: مطبعة مؤسسة رمزي للطباعة والنشر، 1974.

[Jawad Salim and the Freedom Monument]

"النار والجوهر". بيروت: دار القدس، 1975.

[Fire and Substance]

"ينابيع الرؤيا". بيروت: المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر، 1979.

[The Wells of Vision]

"تأملات في بنيان مرمري". لندن: رياض الريس للكتب والنشر، 1989.

[Reflections in a Marbled Structure]

"أقنعة الحقيقة وأقنعة الخيال". بيروت: المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر، 1992.

[Masks of Truth and Masks of the Imagination]

"معايشة النمرة وأوراق أخرى". بيروت: المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر، 1992.

[Living with a Tigress and other Essays]

Poetry

"تموز في المدينة". بيروت: دار مجلة شعر، 1959.

[Tammuz in the City]

"المدار المغلق". بيروت: المؤسسة الوطنية، 1964.

[Closed Circuit]

"المجموعات الشعرية الكاملة". لندن: رياض الريس للكتب والنشر، 1990.

[Collected Poems]

Screenplay

"الملك الشمس". بغداد: الشؤون الثقافية العامة، 1986. سيناريو فيلم عن نبوخذ نصر.

[The Sun King (A screenplay for a film about Nebuchadnezzar)]



Translations into Arabic

Hamlet, by William Shakespeare. Beirut: Dar majallat shi'r, 1960.

Before Philosophy, by Henri Frankfort, Thorkild Jacobsen and John Wilson. Beirut: Dar maktabat al-hayat, 1960.

The Man of Letters and his Craft, by ten American critics. Beirut: Maktabat munaiminah, 1962.

The Sound and the Fury, by William Faulkner. Beirut: Dar al-'ilm li-l-malayin, 1963.

Three Centuries of Literature. 4 vols. Beirut: Dar maktabat al-hayat, 1965.

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Shakespeare's Great Tragedies (Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth). Beirut: Al-mu'assasa al-'arabiyya li-l-dirasat wa-l-nashr, 2000.

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