Resurrecting the Arab Apocalypse STOP [THE WORLD]

From time to time, there occurs what suspends time, revelation—at least for certain people, martyrs. But then the apocalypse, revelation, is withdrawn, occulted by the “apocalypse,” the surpassing disaster, so that symptomatically apocalypse’s primary sense (from Greek apokalypsis, from apokalyptein to uncover, from apo- + kalyptein to cover) is occulted by its secondary meaning, and martyr’s primary sense, witness, is occulted by its secondary, vulgar meaning: “a person who suffers greatly or is killed because of their political or religious beliefs.” One of the symptoms of such a surpassing disaster is that one of the Twentieth Century’s major Arabic books of poetry, Etel Adnan’s L’Apocalypse Arabe, published in 1980, has been out of print for around two decades. L’Apocalypse Arabe, an Arab book of poetry?! Notwithstanding that it was written originally in French (1980) then rewritten in English (1989) by an author who lives for the most part in the USA and France, it is an Arab book of poetry in part because it was withdrawn, occulted by the surpassing disasters that have affected the Arab world. A small number of Arab writers, video makers, filmmakers and artists, some of whom live abroad, have been working to resurrect, make available again what has been withdrawn by the Arab “apocalypse,” including Adnan’s L’Apocalypse Arabe. Have they succeeded? Adnan’s book is here being reprinted in English—if the current date of reprint of this book that’s untimely except in its relation to the surpassing disaster is timely and therefore symptomatic, this reissue would indicate the

1On stopping the world, see Carlos Castaneda’s Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan.
book’s resurrection. The reader is soon alarmed by the repeated telegraphic STOP of this book that orbits the following doomed objects: the Sun and Tall al-Za‘tar and Quarantina, two refugee camps that were besieged and criminally destroyed during the Lebanese civil war (“the Quarantina is torching its inmates STOP”, “7 thousand Arabs under siege thirsty blinded STOP... 7 thousand Arabs in the belly of vultures STOP”). While the Arab “apocalypse” as surpassing disaster leads to a withdrawal of Arabic tradition, the apocalypse as revelation leads to Arabic tradition’s vertiginous extension, so that it comes to include many a bodhisattva as well as many a schizophrenic/psychotic who is not an Arab by descent and/or birthplace but who exclaims in his or her dying before dying: “Every name in history is I” (Nietzsche). Due to this apocalyptic extension of tradition, one has—away from the cumulative shade of the many “100% Lebanese” banners that were raised during the massive demonstration that took place in Beirut on 14 March 2005 in indignant commemoration of the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri a month earlier—an anamnesis, recollecting, as an anarchist, that “the sun is a Syrian king riding a horse from Homs to Palmyra open skies preceding” (cf. Antonin Artaud’s Heliogabalus; or, The Crowned Anarchist, 1933), and, as an ancient Egyptian, “a yellow sun crammed in a boat,” etc. A poet whose country and its refugee camps were being shattered by explosions during its protracted civil war managed nonetheless, perhaps because she poetically felt, like Judge Schreber with his solar anus and his singular cosmology, “a sun in the rectal extremity” and “a sun in the arms in the anus,” to heed this news, “The radio says History allocated 10 billion years to the sun / the SUN has already lived half its age,” and, while Frank Tipler and other Western physicists were trying to devise long-term emergency measures to deal with the future explosion of the scientific age’s Sun, a yellow dwarf
of spectral type G2, screamed: "An Apocalyptic sun explodes." Have Arabs, who, with very rare exceptions, continue to indulge in their petty concerns, taken notice? Was it enough to have *The Arab Apocalypse* translated into Arabic in 1991 for it to be read in the Arab world once it is resurrected? Even before having it translated to Arabic by someone else, it seems that the author, also an artist, had already partly translated it into graphic signs for the so many Arabs (38.7 per cent in 1999, or about 57.7 million adult Arabs [UN's *Arab Human Development Report 2002*]) who are illiterate, for whom Arabic is as illegible as English and French—may they be jolted by its graphic signs… into, at last but not least, learning to read—and then actually read (doesn't the great Seventh Century Arabic apocalyptic book, which has reached us through the prophet Muhammad, enjoin us to do so?).

— Jalal Toufic