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The Influence of Eliot in the Selected Poetry of Al-Bayati in English as an Example of a Post WWII Iraqi Poet in Exile.

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Attention must be paid to the fact that it is necessary to give a brief introduction to what is meant by Postcolonial Muslim poetry and under whose influences it has been shaped, as well as the issues of their interest. The use of colonial languages in literary composition is believed by many to be a threat to the Islamic culture, thus literature in a large part of the Islamic world is composed in indigenous languages, which, in turn makes it less read and appreciated in the mainstream. It is important to notice that the campaign against some works is rooted in radical constructs and religious hegemony integral to contemporary political Islamic doctrines held by some biased people. Yet it must be argued that the western or colonial literatures are approached by Muslim writers not as hostile texts, rather as part of the human cultural heritage liable for literary exploitation. Muslim poets from formerly colonized countries have actively functionalized western traditions and forms to articulate indigenous discourses. In the post WW II era, poets from different Muslim countries engaged western traditions transforming them into discursive dynamics that explore socio-political issues of great ramifications on national and regional levels. Appropriating western narratives to be used in a different language and within a different cultural context, Muslim poets aim to provide more depth and insight into their tradition to confront regional transformations and international challenges. Of such poets and writers, in addition to Al-Bayati, one can name Simin Daneshvar and Sadeq Hedayat from Iran, Mohsin Hamid from Pakistan, Khalid Hosseuiny from Afghanistan as well as Arab Muslim figures like Leeila Abu Leeila as some contemporary figures.

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Postcolonial Muslim poets adapt non-native forms to revolutionize local perspectives deploying narratives of confrontations and challenging the ruling regimes which they found repressive and brutal throughout their encounters with western culture. In the era of de-colonization, Muslim poets were engaged in a positive interaction with western literature to overcome alienation and disappointment integral to their cultural crisis. Entangled in the labyrinth of regional political events, the new generation of Muslim poets and authors seek salvation in the West and adapt its cultural paradigms both in their literary productions and their political views towards change and democracy.

The adaptation of the Western forms could be traced in the new generation of Muslim poets and authors. The global concerns of postcolonial Muslim poets who came under the impact of western modernism indicate the gradual disappearance of models of literary history that isolate poets by race, language, gender or geography. Nevertheless, the entanglement between the Muslim poets and the West in the post WWII era, raises the controversial issue of the relationship between post-colonialism and modernism as reflection of the complex interaction in the works of transnational figures particularly the Iraqi poet Abdul-Wahhab Al-Bayati. Aijaz Ahmad believes that " what used to be known as 'Third World Literature' gets re-christened as 'post colonial literature when the governing theoretical framework shifts from third world nationalism to postmodernism (Ahmad 1997: 276).

Moreover, drawing an analogy between third world literature and post-colonialism, Aijaz Ahmad argues that during colonization "the ruling class of a colony is located outside the colony and the colonial state is the instrument of that externally-based ruling class" (Ahmad 1992: 204). In a related context, Arif Dirlik points out that the term "postcolonial" refers to conditions in formally colonized countries after the period of colonialism. Nevertheless, postcoloniality has been released from "the fixity of third world location" and consequently, "the identity of the postcolonial is no longer structural but discursive" (Dirlik 1997: 297). Therefore, the term "postcolonial", according to Dirlik, represents an attempt to "regroup intellectuals of uncertain location under the banner of post-colonialism" (297). With the emergence of de-colonization "this structural feature of the dominated formation no longer applies and the formation therefore ceases to be colonial, regardless of any other kind of dependence" (Ahmad 1992: 204).

In the Muslim world, political and literary discourses were in a state of harmony during the colonial era when political leaders and poets speak the same language of resistance and struggle against western imperialism. The conflict between the Muslim poets and the privileged groups that dominate the ruling regimes reached a juncture in the aftermath of the Palestinian tragedy in 1948. The defeat of the Muslim armies in the 1948 war against the Israel regime and the rise of dictatorial nation-states in some Arabic countries forced the young generation of Muslim Arab poets to come into confrontations with the totalizing, monolithic

official policies of the regimes.

Nevertheless, the integration of western forms and literary techniques into postcolonial Muslim Arabic poetry is not a feature of the colonial legacy or manifestation of cultural dependency. Instead, Muslim poets, in the post WWII era utilized western forms and strategies in an innovative way transforming them into a dynamics of protest and revolution against local, hegemonic policies. Finding solace in western literature particularly the modernist project of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, postcolonial Muslim poets such as Abdul-Wahhab Al-Bayati, Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab and others appropriate modernist poetic traditions and western narratives, transforming them into a poetic dynamics to articulate domestic issues integral to the Muslim world in the era of de-colonization.

A scrutinized analysis of postcolonial Muslim Arab poetry reveals the limitations of narrow critical approaches which ignore the potential intersection of western modernism and postcolonialism. Associating modernism with post-modernism and colonialism with postcolonialism, critics neglected the complex relationship between modernism and postcolonialism ignoring how postcolonial poets like Al-Bayati and Al-Sayyab transform modernist texts to articulate new experiences. Unlike Muslim poets who express doubts toward western traditions, Al-Bayati and Al-Sayyab utilize western modernism to express the complexities of the Muslim experience in the era of decolonization. Appropriating western narratives to serve local purposes, they blend modernism with postcolonialism providing their people with a communal voice, a revolutionary anthem.

In spite of his attitude toward colonization, Eliot's literary heritage was received positively by postcolonial Muslim writers who were attracted to his modernist theories. Regardless of his criticism of various interest groups, like the missionary organizations which participated in the colonial project, Eliot argues that colonial domination was beneficial to the colonized countries. In "Christianity and Culture," he does not acknowledge the damages done to native culture during the colonial era. He believes that to show the damage" done to the native cultures in the process of imperial expansion is by no means an indictment of empire itself, as the advocates of imperial dissolution are only too apt to infer (Eliot 1948: 167). According to this stand point, Eliot seems to have had a great influence on such poets.

As pointed out, these poets developed a new poetic paradigm to articulate the ambitions and frustrations of a nation battered by recurrent defeats and plagued with repressive regimes. Recognizing the limitations of a local poetic tradition that failed to confront the challenges of the post WWII era, they advocate western poetic forms and innovative techniques to explore national issues and confront domestic hegemony. Under the impact of Eliot's literary traditions, poets such as Al-Bayati, Al-Sayyab and others were able to utilize western modernist forms like the prelude, the interior monologue, the objective correlative and the

mythic method providing more insight and flexibility into the Muslim Arabic poetic tradition.

Discussing the influence of western literature on modern Muslim writers, M.M. Badawi points out that "the most significant authors in modern Muslim Arabic literature have almost without exception, been directly or indirectly exposed to western cultural influence" (Badawi 1975: 2). Badawi argues that the great interest of Muslim poets and critics in Eliot's literary heritage after WWII made Eliot appear in Muslim Arab literary canons as a synonym for modern English poetry. Coming under the impact of Eliot's literary heritage, particularly his concept of tradition, Al-Bayati points out that tradition should not be approached merely as an assemblage of human knowledge and experience (Al-Bayati 1981: 19).

To him, tradition not only represents the past but also includes the continuous ritual of appropriation and assessment in which the poet re-evaluates and reconstructs the past while articulating the present and the future through sophisticated art. His concept of tradition is explicitly an echo of Eliot's theory on tradition. Eliot points out that no artist makes a complete meaning alone and the appreciation of a poet or the significance of his works results from placing him within tradition. In other words, a poet should be compared and contrasted with the dead masters in order to see his contribution to tradition. In "Tradition and Individual Talent", Eliot argues that modern poets should be aware of tradition and should contribute to it. He also points out that real artists belong to a community and are dedicated to tradition. Being convinced that no artist is able to make a contribution alone because "the most individual parts of work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors assert their immortality most vigorously" (Lodge 1972: 71), Eliot emphasizes the importance of assimilating tradition into contemporary works. To Eliot, a poet can be evaluated only in connection with his involvement in tradition and through his relationship with his forebears: "his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists" (Lodge 1972: 72).

Al-Bayati, impressed by both Abu Al-Alaa Al-Maari's life and his application of objective correlative to articulate the exile motif, attempts to implement Eliot's theories of impersonality and tradition. In "Tradition and Individual Talent", Eliot argues that poetry is not reflection of emotions because it is not conceived in the personal / subjective romantic context. To Eliot, "poetry is not a turning loose of emotions but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality" (Lodge 1972: 76). Eliot also emphasizes the significance of engaging tradition in contemporary poetic texts in order to link the present and the past. Therefore in "An Appointment in Al-Maara", Al-Bayati abandons poetic subjectivity and evokes domestic traditions identifying himself with the great Muslim poet, Al-Maari, because both of them are rebels who challenge the political establishment in their societies: "our poetry is not used for hypocrisy or prostitution/ we are not slaves of the Sultans any more" (Diwan Al-Bayati 1972: 366).

In addition to Eliot's theory of tradition, Al-Bayati incorporates western techniques such as the use of masks, allusions and objective correlatives to enhance his objectivity creating a distance between the poet and the text. Wearing the mask of Abu Al-Alaa Al-Maari, the poet-rebel, known in the Muslim Arab literary canon as "the hostage of the two cloisters" due to his blindness and self-imposed exile, Al-Bayati explores the theme of exile in a sophisticated way. Associating himself with his master, Al-Maari who longs for death as deliverance and release from life, Al-Bayati describes life in Iraq as a prison and inferno. However, the poet who was dismissed out of his country, due to political reasons, did not find solace in the "kingdom of exile" because "the heart of the world is made of stone" (Al-Bayati 1990: 207).

Through contact with western literature and culture, Al-Bayati, like other postcolonial Muslim poets, became aware of new traditions and myths which were subsequently transplanted into his local poetic heritage. In this context, the intersection between western modernism and the interests of the postcolonial Muslim poet played a vital role in reinforcing an intercivilizational dialogue between the Muslim world and the West opening new horizons for cultural interaction and literary hybridization. Entangled with the painful realities of a post WWII era, the postcolonial Muslim poet searched for a new poetics to express his predicament. As a result of western influence and modernist theories, Al-Bayati rediscovered his own cultural heritage turning to the myths of the ancient near East incorporating them for the first time in Muslim Arabic poetry. Attempting to revive the collapsing spirit of the Muslim nation in an era of cultural deterioration and political drawbacks, he engages eastern and western myths of fertility and resurrection blending medieval culture with ancient Egyptian, pre-Islamic, Assyrian and Babylonian traditions. The poet also incorporates Biblical and Islamic figures in addition to Arabic folklore heroes particularly Sinbad of The Muslimian Nights who is used as a symbol of the Palestinian refugees and the Iraqi exiles wandering in diaspora "beggars at the doors of Muslim countries".

As a result of western influence, the postcolonial Muslim poets are no longer the speaking voice of the tribe but part of the international challenges and the regional transformations which changed the geopolitical map of the Middle East. According to Boullata 1976: "The growing urbanization and industrialization of his under-developed society with their concomitant depersonalization of human relations reinforce his feeling of loss. The conflict between old values of stability and new values of mobility is rife within him". (xii).

Without doubt that part of the spirit of rebellion, integral to postcolonial Muslim Arabic poetry, is related to the Muslim poet's interest in the culture and literature of the colonial West. His movement toward the West is accelerated by the post WWII events particularly the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees and the rise of dictatorial regimes in the region. In other words, the post WWII era in the

Muslim world was an eventful period which witnessed significant changes such as the tragic consequences of the 1948 war and the emergence of military regimes in the region. The political and military developments were simultaneously paralleled by cultural and literary upheavals reaching culmination in a Muslim Arabic Poetic Renaissance whose advocates engage western literature and culture in order to overcome local crises. Identifying the Muslim world as a moral wasteland, postcolonial Muslim poets draw on western traditions and myths in order to revive a stagnant and debilitated culture giving priority to the dynamic process of reform which requires the dismantling of an old order.

After the Second World War and the Palestinian tragedy (1948), the image of the wasteland, assimilated from Eliot's poetry translated into Arabic in 1947, embodies the state of collapse and desolation integral to the Muslim world. Further, the dictatorial regimes emerging in the region plunged the Muslim world in useless conflicts and wars which led to more deterioration and defeats. In this context, Al-Bayati attempts to restore an identity, distorted by nationalistic chauvinism blending the modernist western legacy with the neglected myths of the Muslim past. Due to western influence , Al-Bayati seeks a new poetics incorporating revolutionary figures who challenge the establishment such as the warrior Muslim poet, Antara (525-615 AD), the Achilles of the Muslim history, Al-Mutanabbi (915-965 AD), the poet-philosopher and Al-Maari, the Muslim heretic who lived in the eleventh century, in addition to Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the First Muslim Imam and his son Imam Hussein (peace be upon them) who were assassinated in the early Islamic era due to tribal conflicts. Al-Bayati is also captivated by global figures such as Lorca, Guevara, Allende, Lenin, Naser and the Algerian warriors fighting the French occupation forces. Nevertheless, Christ is the most famous figure who is predominantly used in Al-Bayati's poetry to suggest a spectrum of symbols and allusions. In Al-Bayati's poetry, Christ is utilized to fulfill political and nationalistic objectives by being associated with the revolutionary forces in Iraq, the Palestinian refugees and the Algerian rebels. Identifying his own journey in diaspora, searching for salvation for the Iraqi people, with the crucifixion of Christ, Al-Bayati becomes the voice of all the Iraqi people who carry the burden of the cross as they are tortured in internal prisons or chased by the agents of the regime in external exiles: I suffered from the death of the soul/ in the barren land where sterile thunder/ is roaring in the mountains/ where the wind is starving/ and Christ is crucified (Diwan 1972:364).

In the above example, Al-Bayati replicates Eliot's poetic discourse to achieve local purposes. In "What the Thunder Said " , Eliot refers to a world where "there is not even silence in the mountains/But dry sterile thunder without rain" and where people can not "stop and drink" because "sweat is dry and feet are in the sand" (Eliot 1984: 243). The influence of Eliot's *The Waste Land* is unmistakable as indicated in Al-Bayati's allusions to "the barren land", "the sterile thunder" and "the starving wind". Further, an inter-textual reading of Al-Bayati's poetry reveals the

tremendous influence of Eliot on the revolutionary Iraqi poet: "The Mufti of Cordoba is smeared with blood/ O river Euphrates stops running/ Until I end my song/ The revolution is above all evils/ It passes through death/ It is a cry over the wall of sound/ It is a sin that should be baptized/ The justice of Christ will not be achieved/ Until the Day of Judgment. (Diwan, 1972: 36). In addition to his Divan in general, some of the specific poems under the influence of Eliot are:

Death in Exile

One of the significant adaptations from Eliot lies in imagery. The use of river imagery," O river Euphrates stops running ", is an echo of Eliot's line: "sweet Thames run softly till I end my song" (Eliot 1984: 239) and the references to Christ in addition to narratives of baptism and crucifixion "the Mufti of Cordoba is smeared with blood" reflect Eliot's impact. In "Death in Exile", Al-Bayati recalls Eliot's lines in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "I am not prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be" (Eliot 1984: 231). Wearing the mask of Hamlet, the poet attempts to capture the life of the Iraqi refugees in exile: "I am Hamlet/do not interrupt me/do not laugh at me/if I played an evil role/our world is a theater/do not switch the lights off/do not touch me, evil people/my blood smears the walls/my dagger dives into my heart/I am Hamlet without a mask/crossing the river on the wing of the tide" (Diwan 1972: 626).

Death in Love

In "Death in Love", Al-Bayati also wears the mask of Hamlet to articulate his poetics of exile: "I am prince Hamlet / the orphan / the prince of Denmark / I return from the kingdom of the dead / to enter the tavern / A sad clown fighting the dwarfs / in the cities of noise and trade" (Diwan 1972: 339). Associating the cities of Diaspora with Eliot's "kingdom of the dead" mentioned in "the Hollow Men", Al-Bayati describes the exile experience of the Iraqi refugees as a kind of hell. The Iraqi refugee, in Al-Bayati's poetry, is also configured through the image of Oedipus, the blind king in Sophocles's tragedy who personifies human misery and blindness: "the blind king was wandering in the deserts of western exile / looking for the fire of God" (Diwan 1972: 130).

Additional Examples of Exile Theme in his Divan

        Not only do the above poems reflect the themes of torture and exile, but also in several other poems from his Divan, he emphasizes the theme of exile, integral to postcolonial Muslim Arabic poetry, reflecting the agony of the Iraqi people too: "why are we in exile / In silence, we die / we walk on thorns and fire / unable to

weep/why are we left without a homeland / dying in exile" (Diwan 1972: 635). In the cities of exile, Al-Bayati's male refugee persona suffers from spiritual bankrupt-cy and sexual impotence unable to have normal relations with women. Deprived of his manhood and potency, Al-Bayati's speaker, like Eliot's male persona in *The Waste Land*, appeals to his girlfriend to leave him alone: "go back home and leave me on the cross" (Diwan 1972: 561), In fact the Iraqi refugee is transformed into: "a man made of ice/all my emotions are left behind/in Damascus/the sun city/where the curtains of the night/never fall on its walls" in Diaspora. In his European exile, Al-Bayati , like other refugees, is torn apart by feelings of nostalgia and homesick-ness identifying exile with crucifixion: " we from exile to exile and door to door/ wither like the lily in the dust/beggars we, O moon, we die/our train missed for all eternity" (Khouri 1975 : 111). In addition to Christian narratives, Al-Bayati uses other western traditions and myths to articulate the exile motif. For example, he uses the myth of Sisyphus, as a symbol representing the agony of the Iraqi people who were forced to live in exile due to their opposition to the Iraqi regime in the post WWII era: "In vain the dead attempt to escape / from the pawns of the relentless beast / in the darkness of the distant exile / the slaves roll the rock upward toward the valley / Sisyphus is reborn in the image of the displaced exile" (Diwan 1972: 193). Utilizing western narratives and Christian symbols, Al-Bayati describes the dilemma of the Iraqi people unable to come back home from exile became "the way to Iraq is dominated by herds of wolves" (Diwan 1972: 418) and those who survived the Iraqi massacre are dissipated "like the frogs of the river" (Diwan 1972: 418).

The Book of Poverty and Revolution

Describing the deplorable condition of his people, Al-Bayati, in "the Book of Poverty and Revolution", points out: "Is this silent stone from my tomb? / Is this time, crucified in the public square, from my life? / is this you O my poverty / with no face, no homeland" (Khouri 1975: 113). Al-Bayati points out that in a world dominated by tyrannical regimes, he lives "without a homeland and a shroud" (113), however ,in his western exile, the poet, regardless of his suffering as an out-cast, feels that he is "a bird without a cage" (191). Addressing his homeland, the exiled poet expresses his feelings of disappointment and agony: "from the depths, I call out to you / with my tongue dried up and / my butterflies scorched over your mouth / is this snow from the coldness of your nights? (Khouri 1975: 111). From his exile, the Iraqi poet expresses his disappointed feelings toward his homeland utiliz-ing crucifixion motifs:"Is this time crucified in the public square from my life/ is this you, O my time/ Your face scratched in the mirror/ Your consciousness dead under the feet of whores?/ and your poor people have sold you/ to the dead among the living (Khouri 1975: 113).

The Miracles of The Saints

 In addition to the theme of exile reflected in the above selections, he believes the contemporary political situation in the Muslim world, in the era of de-colonization leads to complications and conflicts which could not be easily settled: "the miracles of the saints" are not able to solve the problems of the East /even the howling of the witches in the altar/ after the storm /even prayers / failed to settle the chronic problems of the East (Diwan 1972: 453). Living in "the hateful swamps of the East" where "the miracles and prayers of all saints are futile", Al-Bayati laments the death of great historical figures who oppose the religious and political establishments in their countries. Linking the past with present, in an Eliotic manner, he recalls the assassination of the Muslim Sufi, Al-Hallaj who was brutally crucified by the Abbasid rulers during the eleventh century, due to his revolutionary ideology: "Al-Hallaj is crucified /he is smeared with blood / a bag of meat /two eyes without eyelids/ a rotten apple devoured by worms" (Diwan 1972: 477).   Thus, in Al-Bayati's poetry, the Persian Muslim martyr, Al-Hallaj, is frequently identified with Christ because both of them are crucified for their views. In addition to the ideas discussed in the earlier poems, some other themes associated with postcolonial issues could be traced in his other poems too.

Do not listen to their songs

In his postcolonial poetry, Al-Bayati blends western and eastern narratives of sacrificial death in order to castigate the tyrannical rulers in the Muslim world. Utilizing narratives of treason and betrayal rooted in Christian and Islamic history, Al-Bayati provides his poetry with more insight and depth. Addressing the people of Iraq, Al-Bayati warns them of the policies of oppression advocated by their rulers: Do not listen to their songs/ The shores of the Muslimian Gulf/ Are inhabited by owls/ Do not listen to the false slogans/ originated in their palaces/ They betrayed Christ/ They drove Prophet Mohamed outside Iraq/ They embraced Al-Hussain, then killed him (Diwan 1972: 577).

        Unlike his Muslim Arab predecessors who use myths and legends in a conventional and superficial manner, Al-Bayati, due to western influence, transforms myths into a means of recollecting an actual experience. In other words, myths, acquired from modernist western literature are transformed into categories representing components that constitute the postcolonial Muslim poet's vision of the world. Ironically, an engagement with western literature and culture triggers the Muslim poet's awareness of his own mythology and provides sophisticated interpretive horizons for a local fossilized tradition. Coming under the influence of a major western influence, texts particularly James Frazer's *Golden Bough,* assimilated through Eliot's influence; Al-Bayati, like other postcolonial Muslim poets became

acquainted with western and eastern mythology.

Incorporating Christian narratives, according to modernist literary standards, the postcolonial Muslim poet provides more depth and insight into the Muslim Arabic poetic tradition. In the poetry of Al-Bayati, Christ and the condition of his crucifixion are evoked in different contexts to suggest multiplicity of meanings. Associating the crucifixion narrative with the miserable life of the Iraqi nationalists inside Iraq and in Diaspora, Al-Bayati associates Christ with the forces of opposition confronting the dictatorial government of Abdul-Karim Qasim in Iraq during the post WWII era. The poet identifies himself with the Iraqi revolutionaries who were forced to live as strangers in their homeland and in exile because of their views: "stranger in my homeland and in exile/I am isolated from my country/my wounds, about to heal / I will be opened again / I will be crucified on the window of a hospital / O my homeland / I see you as a passing dream / your palm trees wake me up in the foggy dawn / O my homeland ,O my destiny / you left me alone / and went dragging behind you / the wagons of the dead" (Diwan 1972: 190). As an outcast, Al-Bayati identifies himself with Christ enhancing the motifs of crucifixion and sacrifice. In exile, the Iraqi refugee moves from one European city to another, carrying the wounds and scars of a homeland, which turns into a memory. Due to feelings of nostalgia and homesickness, the Iraqi refugee sees nothing in Paris except a history "written with fire and blood" and "a pigeon crucified on the wall" (Diwan 1972: 634). Further, in his poetry, Al-Bayati uses Christian narratives to castigate the policies of oppression advocated by some so called Muslim politicians, like those of Egypt and Iraq, in order to subjugate their people.

The predominance of western/Christian allusions in Al-Bayati's poetry is a manifestation of the sweeping impact of the modernist project initiated by Eliot and Pound on postcolonial Muslim Arabic poetry. In his appropriation of western modernist tradition, Al-Bayati links the degrading state of the Muslim nation, in the post WWII era, with the history of fallen empires mentioned in *The Waste Land* and *The Inferno*. Like Pound, who incorporates the sinful cities of Dante's Inferno, as an epitome of fallen civilizations, Al-Bayati denounces Baghdad because it turns into a harbor for tyrants who "shed the blood of children" and "crucify the sun in the square" (Diwan 1972: 362).

The romantic image of Baghdad which recurs in Al-Bayati's early poetry is replaced by negative images in his later poetry particularly when the poet was forced to leave Iraq after his nationality was withdrawn in 1963. Articulating this painful experience, Al-Bayati uses Christian narratives, transforming himself into a Christ figure who is continuously crucified at dawn on the walls of Baghdad.

In Al-Bayati's later poetry, Baghdad is viewed as a slaughterhouse where people die in great numbers. To Al-Bayati, the poor and starving people of Baghdad, oppressed by dictatorial regimes, are more miserable than "the hard-working donkeys". Lamenting the fate of a people surrounded by sterility and stagnation for

decades, the agonized poet states that in Baghdad, the animals are luckier than the dwellers of the cities of persecution and the villages of sickness and ignorance: "The animals are happier than the inhabitants of Baghdad / than the sick and the dead in the villages at dawn / I am crucified every day on the walls of the cities "(Diwan 1972: 315). Denouncing the Iraqi regime in the post WWII decades, Al-Bayati laments Baghdad because the city becomes a sanctuary for the Iraqi dictators and their oppressive apparatuses. In a city where holy books are burnt and the poet's friends are assassinated due to their ideological views, the Iraqi regime establishes a reign of terror splitting the blood of the Iraqi people: "blood on the walls of the churches/blood on the church bells/blood on the artist's paints/ blood on the children's school books" (Diwan 1972: 113).

Consequently, in a poem entitled "Beloved", Al-Bayati expresses his hopes that Christ will liberate his people from oppression and bring salvation and peace to the wasteland of Iraq. However, Christ will not come from Nazareth but from the West, "the land of ice" carrying a sword in one hand and an olive branch in the other. He will put his cross on the wreck of Iraq, in an attempt to bring salvation to a country ravished by political conspiracies. This vision of a new Iraq will be fulfilled only through the miracles of a Christ who comes from the West: "Christ, the savior will be reborn/in the land of ice and clouds/I can see him appearing in the horizon/ at the dusk hour/carrying a sword in one hand/and an olive branch in the other/placing his cross on the ruins of the ancient world" (Diwan 1972: 114). When Christ appears in Iraq, says Al-Bayati, "the dead people are resurrected/praying for the Christ of the new world" (Diwan 1972: 118). The references to Christ and "Saint Augustine" (Diwan 1972: 116) in addition to narratives of crucifixion and allusions to Christian martyrs and saints indicate the impact of western culture and literature on the poetry of Al-Bayati.

Explicitly, Christian traditions integral to Eliot's wasteland narratives are adopted in Al-Bayati's poetry to serve local political purposes. In the "Gypsy Symphony", references to the quest of the Muslim Sufi, Al-Hallaj, who was crucified by the Abbasid rulers in Baghdad, due to his revolutionary beliefs, in addition to allusions to ritualistic violence, torture and "bodies hanging from the gallows" signify an atmosphere of death reminiscent of Eliot's The Waste Land: "Why did they crucify Al-Hallaj? / the verses of the Bible were written with blood" (Diwan 1972: 362). There is no doubt that the parallelism between Al-Hallaj and Eliot's slain gods of fertility is a manifestation of the impact of Eliot and western literature on Al-Bayati's poetry. The Muslim poet seeks salvation in the poetic traditions of the West because he lives in a country where the Bible is written by "the servants of the kings / who are doomed to be buried in the dunghill of history" (Diwan 1972: 362).

As a result of his interest in western literature, Al-Bayati makes allusions to different western figures and symbols. In "To Ernest Hemingway", Al-Bayati alludes to Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* recalling episodes from the Spanish

civil war where death and blood characterize life in Madrid: "Spanish festivals pass without processions/the sorrows of Spain have no limits/For Whom the Bell Tolls, Lorca is silent /and the urn of roses is full of blood" (Diwan 1972: 605). Evoking Lorca, who was executed because of his ideological orientation, Al-Bayati identifies himself with the great Spanish poet. In "Death in Grenada", Al-Bayati laments the death of Lorca identifying the Spanish poet with the Iraqi revolutionaries persecuted by Abdul-Kari Qasim's regime in the post WWII era.: "Lorca is dying/he is executed by the Fascists at night on the banks of the Euphrates / They mutilated his dead body / Lorca is without eyes, without hands". He also evokes Virgin Mary reminding her of the plight of the Iraqi exiles who live as strangers outside their country: "O Virgin Mary / I have prayed for the stranger / to come back from his exile" (Diwan 1972: 334).   Like other postcolonial Muslim poets who came under the influence of western modernism in the aftermath of WWII , Al-Bayati reflects in his poetry the disappearance of models of literary history that isolate poets by race, language, gender, or geography.

Moreover, sense of inferiority can be traced in his poems as a direct result of exile and diaspora. Due to a sense of oppression, derived from imperialist colonization, post- colonial writers often compose a literature which is a subversion of master colonial narratives, challenging a cultural hegemony which dominated and suppressed their own cultural heritage. Unlike poets who attempt to disrupt constructs authored by colonialism and western domination, Al-Bayatti struggles to integrate western modernism in Muslim Arabic poetry but he questions the colonial tradition interrogating narratives of hegemony advocated by the heirs of the colonial legacy.

However, he succeeds in assimilating western / Christian culture into the Islamic literary canon by appropriating its tradition to serve popular/political purposes in the Muslim world at a crucial historical movement. Making use of the cross-cultural intersection between western modernism and Muslim post-colonialism, Al-Bayati reorients complex relationships between colonizer and colonized enhancing the growing globalization of twentieth century literatures. In this context, it is significant to argue that the integration of modernist / western culture, in Al-Bayati's postcolonial literary canon, is not an act of submission to the culture of an imperial center because the process of appropriation itself implies a refusal of cultural dependency.

Al-Bayati appropriates western culture into a local construct of indigenous modernity. While post-colonial writers in the West Indies and the Caribbean, for example, consider colonial culture as a swamp that must be wiped out, Al-Bayati transforms the same culture into a liberating force to confront local challenges. In his response to domestic predicaments and national transformations, the postcolonial Muslim poet approaches the West as a source of potentiality to be utilized in his confrontation with local power centers particularly the ruling regimes. Attempting

to reconcile eastern and western cultures, Al-Bayati works toward a nexus of post-coloniality and modernism competing with the great masters of western literature.

Being convinced that the liberation of the Muslim mind lies not only in westernization but also in the resurrection of positive values rooted in Muslim heritage, Al-Bayati engages western culture and modernist myths to revive local traditions and indigenous narratives. Through literary and cultural entanglements with western modernism, Al-Bayati develops "the tribe's mythology" (Nama 1986: 143), including Muslim-Islamic traditions into an innovative poetic mechanism blending western and Eastern narratives within a complicated historical framework. Due to modernist influence, Al-Bayati evokes domestic traditions, and Muslim Arab folklore and mythology ignored by an out-dated poetic tradition and worn-out cultural heritage. Due to the impact of western modernism, Al-Bayati revises many local concepts such as the relationship between individual and society locating them in a historical context in ways that foster the renovation of identity and tradition redefining their roles in the development of a revolutionary consciousness.

Nevertheless, Al-Bayati's poetic project is interrupted by the demands and exigencies of a monolithic political and cultural entity. Therefore, he revolts against a category of values which is erected on a national myth of cultural monolithism. In response to local hegemony, Al-Bayati creates poetic texts which aim to establish trans-historical and transnational connections between East and West. Saturated with western / Christian narratives and allusions to major European writers from Dante to Eliot, Al-Bayati's poetic discourse provides one of the most striking points of cultural and thematic commonalities between Muslim Arabic literature and the West. He consciously engages himself with western culture advocating the position of Frantz Fanon in *White Skin, Black Masks*: "I have to capture the whole past of the world. I am not responsible solely for the revolt in Santo Domingo" (Fanon 1967: 226). Entering into dialogues with a variety of modernist western texts, Al-Bayati claims the cultural heritage of the world to be his own. He incorporates western modernism engaging a diversity of historical and literary texts in order to create a hybrid poetics able to confront domestic challenges. In the context of Homi Bhabha's words, Al-Bayati does not "oppose the pedagogy of the imperialist noun to the inflectional appropriation of the native [Muslim] voice" but moves "beyond such binaries of power in order to reorganize our sense of the process of identifications in the negotiations of cultural politics" (Bhabha 1994: 223). Al-Bayati's engagement with western culture or what Bhabha identifies as the "discursive enunciatory, cultural, subjected process" related to "the struggle around authority, authorization, reauthorization and the revision of authority" is called hybridity (Olson 1999: 39).

The poetry formed in this process of integration of discourses on domination occupies space that is neither Eastern nor Western. In other words, Al-Bayati's poetry is located in what Homi Bhabha calls an "in-between hybrid position

of practice and negotiation" (cited in Gohar 2000: 63). Unlike radical Muslim poets who reverse orientalist discourse attributing agency and history to the nation-state, Al-Bayati denounces the tyrannical regimes instituted by the nation-state seeking alternatives in western thought. This does not mean that the West and its legacies remained unquestioned in Al-Bayati's canon. While recognizing the trauma of colonization, Al-Bayati blends together the multiple legacies of the colonizer and the colonized, in the Muslim world, in order to claim the rich diversity of the region's cultural and religious sources.

While he did not aim to abandon Islamic culture regardless of his revolutionary and liberal orientations, Al-Bayati was accused of Eurocentrism as he persistently attempted to assimilate western culture and thought. He works toward a hybrid poetics which is able to confront the challenges of a changing world. While postcolonial poetry, in general, is predicated on a hostile relationship to western culture and is motivated by a desire to undermine western narratives, Al-Bayati expresses his admiration of western tradition in general and Christianity in particular. Al-Bayati blends the legacies of modernism and postcolonialism to create a new poetics able to stand the challenges emerging in the Muslim region in the aftermath of the Second World War and the consequences of the Palestinian tragedy in 1948. Therefore, Al-Bayati's poetry resonates with thematic concerns and orientations that have their roots in a new situation that becomes part of regional consciousness in the Muslim world after WWII. The new situation is created by local transformations on the social and political levels which disorganize earlier conceptualizations of Muslim nationalism in which the nation-state, in the era of decolonization, is supposed to achieve the Muslim dream of unity and advancement. In Al-Bayati's poetry, the fragmented conditions of a post-colonial Muslim world, brutalized by tyrannical regimes, is projected through a disintegrated discourse informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations which are the products of these conditions.

Al-Bayati's poetry incorporates slogans, public proclamations and shocking poetic images to reflect the radical changes coming over modern Muslim Arab consciousness during the post WWII era, The poet aims to reveal the filthiness of the Muslim political system and expose the corruption of the rulers who betrayed their people, especially that of his homeland, Sadam Hussein. The poet attempts to shock the readers by viewing an obscene reality. Like other postcolonial Muslim poets who remain faithful to their political views, Al-Bayati finds himself increasingly marginalized and alienated in his homeland, therefore, he moves toward the West. His attempts to westernize Arabic poetry which involves the assimilation of the culture of the ex-colonizer is seen by some critics as threatening to Muslim nationalism. Nevertheless, Al-Bayati aims to modernize and hybridize a fossilized poetic tradition in order to be able to confront the challenges of a postcolonial world.

As discussed, he reconstructs colonial modernism as a narrative of liberation engaging into dialogues with western pioneering writers and masterpieces transforming western modernist strategies into a revolutionary construct, Al-Bayati aims to challenge internal oppression and external hegemony. Through trans-cultural entanglement and textual appropriation of western narratives, he provides diversity and insight into postcolonial Islamic poetry intensifying the awareness of other traditions and reconstructing his own heritage. Undermining the narrow critical approaches which neglect the potential intersection between modernism and post-colonialism were discovered to be the underlying issues in the poetry of this poet to engage western modernist heritage in order to articulate domestic narratives integral to the geopolitics of the Islamic region in the postcolonial era.

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