

# **Elements of Modernism in al-Sayyab's Second Phase of Artistic Creation**

**Assistant Lecturer**

**Ameer Ali Hamza**

ameer.ali@iunajaf.edu.iq

**Assistant Lecturer**

**Khaled Saoud Chayed**

**The Islamic University - Najaf**

## **عناصر الحداثة في المرحلة الثانية من الإبداع الفني للسياب**

**المدرس المساعد**

**أمير علي حمزه**

**المدرس المساعد**

**خالد سعود جايد**

**الجامعة الإسلامية في النجف الأشرف**

**Abstract:-**

The present study attempts to investigate some of the poems that appeared in Badr Shakir al-Sayyab's second phase in a modernist mode. The research follows a number of poems that the Iraqi poet produced after the Second World War. The study focuses on three elements in modernism proposed by Childs (2000): myth, symbolism, and war. The current article shows that Al-Sayyab incorporates political issues with his personal experiences in a symbolic manner. The study shows that in this period of his writing, the Iraqi poet uses old Iraqi myths to depict his origins. In the case of symbolism, the article concludes that al-Sayyab's usage of symbols in these poems was because of the impasse of the political changes in Iraq and his fear from the authorities. The use of war pictures in al-Sayyab's poetry makes him one of the war poets at that time, who aimed to depict war in a negative sense.

**Keywords:** Modernism, al-Sayyab, myth, symbolism, war.

**الملخص:-**

تحاول الدراسة الحالية التحقق من عدد من القصائد التي ظهرت في المرحلة الثانية لبدر شاكر السياب بأسلوب عصري. يتبع البحث مجموعة من القصائد التي كتبها الشاعر العراقي بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. تركز الدراسة على ثلاثة عناصر في الحداثة اقترحها تشايلدز (٢٠٠٠): الأسطورة والرمزية والحرب. يوضح المقال الحالي أن السياب يدمج القضايا السياسية مع تجاربه الشخصية بطريقة رمزية. وتبين الدراسة أن الشاعر العراقي استخدم في هذه الفترة من كتاباته الأساطير العراقية القديمة لتصوير أصوله. وفي حالة الرمزية، خلص المقال إلى أن استخدام السياب للرموز في هذه القصائد كان بسبب مأزق التغيرات السياسية في العراق وخوفه من السلطات. استخدام صور الحرب في شعر السياب جعله أحد شعراء الحرب في ذلك الوقت، الذين كانوا يهدفون إلى تصوير الحرب بالمعنى السلبي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الحداثة، السياب، الأسطورة، الرمزية، الحرب.

## Introduction

The word 'modernism' was first used in the onset of the eighteenth century in order to refer to characteristics of modern times. In the nineteenth century, the meaning of the term used to encompass a sympathy with new opinions, expressions or styles. In the beginnings of the twentieth century, the word 'modernism' referred to the development industry and the rapid growth of some particular cities. Modernism as a literary term means avant-garde movements and styles, which proliferated under the terms of Imagism, Futurism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Vorticism, Dadaism, Formalist and Impressionism (Childs, 2000, p. 14). According to Childs (2000), modernist writings are mostly noted for their experimentations, complexity, formalism, and the challenge to generate a tradition of the new (p. 14). In the middle of the nineteenth century, Baudelaire used the word 'Modernity' for the first time in his essay "The painter of Modern Life", and described it as fleeting, fashionable, and contingent, in contrary to the eternal and immutable (Childs, 2000, p. 15).

## Modern Arab Poetry

Arab poetry has undergone a number of stages since its inception, which have contributed to its transformation and development into the current form. In his book *A Critical Introduction to Modern Poetry 1975*, Badawi (1975) determined Arabic modern literature by six periods, 1) Neoclassicism, 2) the pre-romantics, 3) the romantics, 4) the emigrant poets, 6) the recoil from romanticism (p. 5).

Neoclassicism signifies the return to the poetry of the past, and it determined the first movement in the modern Arabic poetry. It appeared in Egypt during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, and most of its members were Egyptians. The leader of the movement was Mahmud Sami Al-Barudi (1839-1904), whose poetry was the conscious return to the poetry of the Abbasid period. Barudi's works asserted Arab's cultural identity by rediscovering and editing the excellence of the Arab poetic heritage with the efforts of some scholars such as, Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-1871) (Badawi, 1975, p. 15). Al-Barudi and other poets of the movement managed to go back to the purity of diction, the powerful expressions of the Abbasids, in addition to expressing one's own individuality and experiences in

terms of the environment in which he lived (Musa, Ghazi, Samara'l, Obaidi, 1999, p. 45).

Al-Barudi's impressive personality and his expressions of the earnest mind compelled most of Arab historians and critics of literature to agree that the renaissance of modern Arab poetry began with al-Barudi (Badawi, 1975, p. 16). Nature, however, was a dominant theme in Barudi's poetry, because he would devote a whole poem to describing nature and its different aspects, generally taken from personal experience: starlit skies, tempestuous nights, raging seas, palm streets (Badawi, 1975, p. 23). His neoclassical traits of writings were soon followed by other Arab poets who became some of the best-known literary figures in Arab literature, including Ahmed Shauqi, Isma'il Sabri, Hafiz Ibrahim, Waliyy al-Din Yakan, Ali al-Ghayati, Ahmed Muhharam, Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi and then Badawi al-Jabal and Mohammed Mahdi al-Jawahiri. These poets were more successful in their social and political poetry because they were masters in the art of persuasion, and their poetry directly addressed their readers, designed to be connected with the social and political issues of their time (Badawi, 1975, p. 27).

A revolt against the neoclassical conventions began in the turn of the century; a group of poets intended to revolutionize diction, themes, and imagery. The major figure of the group was Mutran, who showed his dissatisfaction with Neoclassism conventions in his theory and practice (Badawi, 1975, p. 68). Badawi (1975) called Mutran as a pre-romantic poet, and a highly considered artist who gave Arabic poetry new concepts, which later became the standard assumptions of the next Arabic poets' literary works, making him the father of the modern Arab poetry (p. 70). Perhaps, the unity of the poem was the most important of the concepts. Since there was a need to recognize one rhyme in the poem, Arabic poems tended to be a collection of lines; for instance, the neoclassical poet would simply move from one theme to another, and even the Arab critics of literature did not pay attention to the unity of the poem. At most, they were concerned with the unity of one paragraph (Badawi, 1975, p. 21). Khalil Mutran, on the other hand, wanted to achieve the unity of the poem, because his poems seemed to have a beginning, middle, and an end.

The second concept, which had been developed by Mutran, and other pre-romantic poets, is the meaning, signifying the poet's liberty

not to confine himself to the necessities of meter or rhyme; however, he had to be aware of the language of his work, or the traditional meters, and rhymes. Before this, Arab poets would stick to their conventional themes, and even the neoclassical poets never dared to innovate new subjects; they confined themselves to the themes of traditional Arab poems (*qasida*). Thus, in Mutran poetry, there was tension between the old and the new, which can also be seen in the poems of Mutran's younger followers such as Shukri, al-Mazni, al-Aqqad, who called themselves Al- Diwan School.

Since its inception, Al-Diwan School opposed the traditional Arabic poetry in form, content, construction, and language because its pioneers were interested in Western models of poetry which liberated them from the Arabic poems' restrictions, and confined them to self and conscience (Ashkor, 2011, p. 4). The younger poets were widely read in English poetry; they were different from the previous poets, and benefitted from English literary criticism, which led them to understand the meaning of poetry, and use comparison and quotation in a proper manner (Ashkor, 2011, p. 5). Shelly, Wordsworth, Byron, Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning and Hardy were the source of inspiration for young Egyptian poets. The poets who are the subject of analysis in the current research believed that poetry should be the product of one's emotional experience, and it must express a valuable position of existence or philosophy of life (Badawi, 1975, p. 89); for them, unity, imitateness, absurdity, and ignoring substance were the main drawbacks of the neoclassic poetry. The best poems produced by this school, thus, expressed the poet's response to the nature or to his own metaphysical conditions, poems that recorded moods like confessional poems or poems of introspections.

The rivalry that began between the Diwan and the neoclassical groups did not resolve the moral position in favor of one of these rival factions. The neoclassical poets retained their literary status, and dignitaries continued to enjoy the poetry of the group; this happened despite the attempts of the Diwan group, which sought to undermine its literary glory. On the other hand, the Diwan group poets were successful in presenting a new critical perspective, and liberating the Arabic poetry from the restrictions of the traditional poem. In the middle of the tension between these two schools, there was another group of young poets who admired the revolt of Diwan poets.

This group was named the Apollo group, who were named after the periodical journal, formed in 1932 by Ahmed Zaki Abu Shadi as the leader of the group (1892-1955). Abu Shadi provided an administrative constitution for the group, setting out its general objectives of honoring Arab poetry, directing the efforts of poets in this direction, and raising the level of poets technically, socially and materially, and supporting the poetic development (Badawi, 1975, p. 116). The Apollo journal magazine, suspended in 1234, was considered as a literary, historical and intellectual document for this group, which replaced the Diwan movement. It produced a generation of poetry that belonged to the true romantic trend, including Ibrahim Naji, Ali Mahmoud Taha, Mahmoud Hassan Ismail and others.

The movement of the Apollo group was characterized by relying on the emotional direction of poetry and opening up to the western poetic heritage through the translation of European poetry. It called for deepening the poetic content and recreating the poetic heritage in an innovative manner. The use of the myth and the advanced methods of poetry drew attention to the experimentation of new forms of free poetry. It also turned to creativity in non-lyrical poetry, especially in Abu Shadi's works, and paved the way for the emergence of a mother magazine and another movement which is the magazine poetry in Beirut 1975 (Bohalasi & Zrara, 2016, p. 24).

In addition to the literary works produced by this school, in which the romantic sense was prevailed, Apollo magazine was a forum that could gather most of the Arab poets around it in order to spread their ideas. This movement regarded the poet as an artist, and focused on the importance of psychological and emotional experience in the process of poetic creativity, rather than the imitation of ancient models. Moreover, its themes shifted from community issues to self-issues, and some poets tried to explore a new poetic language that was more coherent and pure than the poetry of traditionalists and their inherited poetic purposes (Bohalasi & Zrara, 2016, p. 26).

At the same time, Arab poets who emigrated to the North America or South America formed a literary school on their own, and called it the emigrant school (*Madrast Al-Mahjar*). Both culturally and historically, Mahjar poets were considered as an extension to Syrian and Lebanon poetry. Although they knew that they were under the

influence of English Romantic poets, their early political, economic, and social background helped to determine their later output (Badawi, 1975, p. 179). The Syrian and Lebanese poets who turned to South and North America left their countries partly for economic and political issues or both. The autocratic role of the Ottoman Empire made life difficult for these poets. At the same time, the increasing role of Westerners affected the commercial life in Lebanon, which led to fewer possibilities for the citizens at home than abroad (Abbass, 1957, p. 19).

Most of these poets were Christians, and had their education in missionary schools, imbued with anti-traditional and modernist ideas. The Apollo school poets suffered from poverty and exile; so, they lived in countries where the language of their literary efforts was not spoken, feeling that their cultural presence was at stake. The romantic features which the readers can see in the Apollo school poets' works include feeling of individualism and sense of isolation; of course they do not completely originate from their psychological or intellectual attitudes, and to some extent they are based upon the concrete situation in an alien culture or community.

The best and maybe the most notable of the group is Jibran Khalil Jibran (1883-1931), who established a literary group in 1920 in America and called it PEN (*AL-Rabita Al-Qalamiya*). The aim of this literary association was clear, infusing new breath in modern Arab literature through avoiding mere verbal skills and focusing on writing literature which could suit the necessities of modern times, distinguished by subtle thoughts and keen sensibility (Badawi, 1975, p. 182). Mikael Na'ima, who was a member of the PEN association said "the aim of this group is to achieve the repudiation of conventionalism, and traditional excessive verbiage, and not forgetting the attempt avoid provincialism by making poetry express universal human thought, and feeling" (Badawi, 1975, p. 183).

Between the two wars, romanticism reached its momentum in modern Arabic poetry. Immediately after the Second War, there were understandable marks that it was on the wane. This was not surprising at all because the war was a significant landmark in the poetry no less than in the social, political, and economic history of the Arabs, and the traumatic which was brought with it had an immense impact on Arab poetry of that time. In spite of its notable contribution,



romanticism had developed its conventional imagery, diction, phraseology, themes, and attitudes; therefore, it had become irrelevant to the Arab world which was growing painfully conscious of its harsh social and political realities. The movement was criticized for being escapist, too vague and immature, wanting in reality, and lacking precision. No one could deny the fact that the center of interest romantic poetry was individuality rather than society, and its perception of society was marked with idealized terms in diction and language, which was more appropriate to communication of subtle subjective and temporal moods and feelings; thus, it was incapable to convey the shock of reality (Badawi, 1975, p. 79).

The revolution against romanticism made itself heard in Egypt, and after a short period, it spread in other Arabic countries like Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. At the same time, there was a passionate interest in Marxism among Arab poets, transmitted from the European intellectuals to Arab intellectuals. From 1944 onward, documents of social protest started to pour out, most of which were chiefly concerned with degradation and horrors of the urban life, class struggle and social injustice as political themes (Badawi, 1975, p. 206). By 1950 a debate about commitment had started.

The word commitment (*iltizam*) has always been an important part of the vocabulary for all literary Arab critics for many years. The meaning of the word has become diffuse; sometimes it refers to an existentialist position, or it might refer to adopting Marxist tenets, but at all times, it has a standard meaning which is denoting nationalism. However, in literary sense, the most common usage is the need for a writer who has a message in his work, instead of mere delighting in a work of imagination (Badawi, 1975, p. 206). In 1953, Suhail Idris formed Beirut monthly periodical *al-Adab*, which determined the course of modern Arab literature. The policy of the periodical was to publish "committed literature" (*al-Adab al multzm*).

In 1954 one contributor to *al-Adab* wrote that "commitment prevails Arabic literature now" (*al-Adab*, 1954, p. 24). The battle between old and new had started, and it was significant in that the dispute was not over approach, novelty, or technique, but it was over the problem of commitment. Thus, after 1954, a work whether a play, short story, novel, or a poem had to be committed in one way or another to earn the stamp of acceptance. Young poets who started



writing their works in the romantic tradition were rapidly fascinated with social realism.

Poets with Marxists conventions like Kadim Jawad, al-Bayyati, and al-Sayyab as Iraqi poets had a lot of followers all around the Arab world, especially because they had their name linked with a new revolutionary verse form, which permitted the poet a greater liberty of self-expression (Badawi, 1975, p. 208). Poets who were against Marxism were not entirely free from commitment. They were committed to other ideals and causes; Adunis for instance was committed to Syrian nationalism or Yousif al-Khal owed to his Lebanese nationalism.

Beside the spread of Marxism, social realism, and Arab national thoughts, there was one more important factor that contributed to the downfall of Arabic romanticism by spreading modern ideals, which was the Arab poets' acquired knowledge about French symbolists, western post-romantic poetry and the powerful influence of T. S. Eliot. In the fifties of the previous century, Eliot asserted his presence in the Arabic cultural life, and most of his criticism or poetry was translated into Arabic, and published in Arabic magazines such as *al-Adab* in Beirut, and *Majala* in Cairo. Eliot's influence was not just shown in structure and style, the use of illusion and myths, and the use of interior monologue in Egyptian, Lebanese, and Iraqi poetry. However, his harsh attack on the romantic poetry in England and also his reaction against the limitations in subject matter and style impacted the attitude of young Arab poets towards Arab romantic poetry, enabling them to reject sugary poeticality, false simplicity, and the sentimentality of some romantic poetry (Badawi, 1975, p.224). Young Arab poets dared to use a pregnant style, which enabled them to express real-life experiences in all its harshness and complexity.

The so-called "new verse" did not confined itself with only the rejection of the romantic themes and styles; it was extreme in its conventions more than any other revolt in Arab poetry. This new verse, however, rejected most of the conventions of the Arabic poetry. In its shape on the printed page, "new" verse looked different from all Arabic verses which were written before, and it consisted of two hemistiches of equal length (*al bait*), replaced by lines of unequal length. This helped the Arabic poets to have a greater freedom of self-expression and realize the unity of his work, the new shape of

poetry by making it possible to write verse drama which was dramatic not lyrical as Aql's plays, or even rhetorical such as Shauqi's plays. The new form of Arabic poetry which found approval throughout the entire Arab world was discovered by al-Sayyab and al-Mala'ika , and it was called "free verse" (*al shur al hur*).

## **Elements of Modernism in al-Sayyab's Second Phase of Artistic Creation**

### **1. Myth**

According to Peter Childs (2000), the modern writer benefits from the culmination of the past, and the indications of the future which identify a moment of probable breakdown in social relations and aesthetic exemplification (p. 16). As a Modernist poet, T. S. Eliot in his *The Waste Land* employed an ancient myth in a way that made it suitable to his time, society, and culture. While the displacement of mythical figures in Sitwell's works also contributed to the carnivalesque state of temporary anarchy. She did not employ myths to say how bad the current situation of the world was; in fact, she mingled myths with modern subjects.

On the other hand, al-Sayyab employed myth to depict the origins of his country, Iraq. al-Sayyab once said, "There is an urgent need for myth and symbols in today's world, because we live in a world that has no poetry, I mean it lacks the poetic values" (Abbass, 1972, p. 134). In his poem "Cerberus in Babylon" (1957), al-Sayyab mingles Greek mythology with the Iraqi mythology; from the very beginning, from the title, we have the name of Cerberus as a mythical character, a dog which guards the gates of Tartarus, the underworld in ancient Greek mythology. His job is to prevent the living to enter the world of the dead. In al-Sayyab's poem, we see Cerberus in Babylon, wanderings in its streets and killing everyone in front of him "Let Cerberus yelp in the paths of the dolorous, destroyed/ Babylon" (al-Sayyab, 2012, p.92, L. 33-34).

In the same poem, al-Sayyab refers to another myth but this time the myth comes from Iraq, "Let Cerberus yelp in the paths and exhume our buried/ God, our pierced Tammuz"(al-Sayyab, 2012, p. 93. L. 38-39). Tammuz or Dumuzid is the ancient Mesopotamian god and the god of shepherds. At the end of the poem, al-Sayyab mentions another Mesopotamian myth which is Ishtar. Ishtar or

Inanna is the goddess of love, beauty, desire, fertility, sex, justice, war and political power. This goddess was originally worshipped in summer, but later the Babylonians took her as their goddess. Here al-Sayyab imagines the renewal that comes with her "And here comes the goddess of harvest, Ishtar the goddess of North/ And South- walks in the plains and the fields" (al-Sayyab, 2012, p. 94, L. 44-45). It seems that the Iraqi poet wanted to show that he still believes in better life. Throughout the use of Greek and Mesopotamian myths in his poem, he wanted to express that he still hopes that all the blood shed on Iraqi land will lead to the rise of new lives.

In his poem "Sinbad City" (1957), al-Sayyab describes the journey of Sinbad, who leaves his city where is full of poverty and starvation in order to find what he desires; thus he risks his life by going through dangerous journeys. However, after having what he once wished, Sinbad wants to go back to his home; he cannot, because now he is old and his city still lives in the same situation of poverty. Al-Sayyab now addresses Sinbad to come back to his home "Oh Sinbad, will you come back? The lilies burn out in the cheeks, /Then when you will come back" (al-Sayyab-2012, p. 115. L. 23-24). Sinbad or Sindbad is a legendary sailor, and the myth around him reads that he hailed from Baghdad during the Abbasid Era; he also had to take seven journeys throughout different seas in Africa and Asia, witnessing supernatural phenomena and enouncing beasts.

In the second part of the poem, al-Sayyab introduces another mythical figure, but this time he borrows his myth from the ancient Greece religion "Is that Adonis? Where is the light"? Where is the fruitage?" Adonis is the god of fertility and vegetation in Greek mythology. After Sinbad returns home, he sees nothing but death and destruction; he sees no fertility in the soil, and thus he starts to ask about the reason behind this situation. However, al-Sayyab did not stop using the two previous myths. In the fourth part of the poem, he shifts to Mesopotamian mythology and specifically to the myth of Ishtar as the goddess of beauty "Ishtar brought the prisoner back to / Humans" (al-Sayyab, 2012, p. 116, L. 67-68).

In the same part of the poem, al-Sayyab moves to Christian mythology, to Cain who committed the first crime in human history "Cain is born to take life away,/ From the womb of the earth and from

the sources of water”(al-Sayyab, 2012, p.118, L. 77-78). Throughout using all the previous myths in his poem, al-Sayyab depicts Sinbad's journey as a journey of failure. It seems that al-Sayyab wanted to talk about his own journey at the time of his illness. Finding shelter in myths, al-Sayyab might be referring to himself when he left Iraq and went to look for a cure, hoping to find his country in a better situation but his goals were unaccomplished since he did not heal, and the state of Iraq did not change.

In “Wafika's Window” (1962) (*Shibak Wafika*), al-Sayyab describes his mother's life and death. In this poem, Wafika's mother dies and leaves her daughter alone, thus Wafika's life is like the poet's life (Abbass, 1972, p. 114). In the fifth line of the poem, we are introduced to Icarus as another mythical figure. According to Greek mythology, Icarus attempted to escape from Crete through using wings which were made of wax by his father, but he was unsuccessful in his quest because the sun's heat melted his wings. Icarus in this poem has been hiding from eyes but then falls down “Icarus wipes the eagle feathers by sun and shoves off”. In line 35, another mythical figure is introduced by al-Sayyab “Ulysses walks with the waves”, and the poet here refers to his journey that he took in order to reach Wafika's window, using the name of Ulysses to show that he had risked his life so many times to reach his destination.

In his poem “Vision” (1956) (*Rui'a*), al-Sayyab takes the story of Ganymede and employs it in his poem; he says, “Thou eagle from Olympus in the silence of the sky- taking my soul to the middle of the evening- taking Ganymede injured”. Based on what we can see in the Greek mythology, Ganymede is the most beautiful boy among mortals, and the myth says that Zeus falls in love with him; thus, Zeus sends an eagle to abduct the boy. Al-Sayyab wanted to refer to his soul through the image of Ganymede, which is the image of love and suffering together and to mingle the actual with the psychological.

The central idea of al-Sayyab's poem “The Drowned Temple” (1962) (*Al ma'bd Al gariq*) is based on a legendary story that he had already heard about (Al- Batal, 1984, p. 46). According to this myth, there was a Buddhist temple in Malaysia that was drowned in the bottom of the lake Chini due to a volcanic earthquake which occurred

a thousand years ago, and inside the temple there was gold and jewelries guarded by crocodiles and a monster with one red eye such as the size of big bong ball. Al-Sayyab found the core idea of his poem through this story and placed an old man who is drunk and tells his story about the "lake womb" which exploded and brought out all the treasures stored in the temple, but a "crocodile" and a giant "octopus" with one eye came out with them in order to secure the gold.

Then, al-Sayyab refers to "Ulysses" (Ulysses is Odysseus), asking him to go with him to Lake Chini, because there is no use in going back to his home. The poet tells Ulysses that his "son" has become a young man, and his "wife" has become an old woman. The poet tries to convince Ulysses to come with him by reminding the latter in his role in the battle of Troy. In the conclusion of the poem, al-Sayyab uses another name from Greek mythology, and this time he mentions Zeus, the supreme Olympus god "Come in still Zeus its vinous colour paints the peak of mountain" (al-Sayyab, 2012, p. 135, L. 111).

## 2. Symbolism

Childs (2000) believed that symbolism and imagism were the most two powerful elements in modern poetry. As he pointed out, symbolism came from France, while imagism came from America (p. 94). Symbolism could be regarded as a reaction to the systematizing of Marx and Darwin, and as a reaction against realism, which could be traced in the works of Zola, Gissing, and Moore (Childs, 2000, p. 94).

The religious symbol is one of the most common symbols in al-Sayyab's poems, especially the character of Christ as in his poem "Christ after Crucifixion" (1957) (*Al Masi'a ba'd Al Salb*). Christ or the situation of Christ on the cross signifies the poet's state in his actual life. Ihasn Abbass (1972) stated that this poem is very chaotic and includes continuous images of the story of Christ going on irregularly, and the poet taking Christ as a symbol of his mental state; so he is the crucified who was able to rise from the dead and revive life in *Jaikur* (p. 148).

The cross in the poem is a symbol of the continuous suffering of the poet. He is able to bear the cross (his suffering) for a long time he

resisted but after they let him down, he passes away "After they let me down, I heard the wind-In long stretches palm trees". According to Swidan (2002), palm trees in this poem are the symbol of life, fertility and tender; palm is in fact the true blood of Iraq, and the poet is bound by the bonds of memory and beauty with the palm. For him a palm is the symbol of fertility and peace together (p. 123).

Another religious symbol that was employed by al-Sayyab refers to Job in his poem "Job's Travel" (1957) (*Safr Ayoup*). Throughout this character, al-Sayyab was able to deliver his sufferings to the reader in his journey to find a cure to his disease; thus, Ayoup is a symbol of miseries, patience and the power of belief in God. Throughout Job, al-Sayyab intended to say that he had never stopped believing in God and he would await God to cure him "If Job shouted: Praise be to you, O Lord, by virtue" (al-Sayyab, 2012, p 122, L. 17-18)

When Iraq was living under political tyranny and economic difficulties, al-Sayyab hurried to depict these changes in his poem "A City Without Rain" (1956) (*Madina Bla Matar*). "Years have passed without rain, without even a drop- Without a flowers, without even a flower- Without fruit, as if our bare palms pillars we made to die beneath it (al-Sayyab, 2012, p.133, L. 45-46). Palms here represent Iraq, and he described them as "bare" because of the drought and persecution in Iraq. The title of the poem "The City without Rain" is a symbol of Iraq, which means that there is no life in it.

The palms have been used reactionary by al-Sayyab in many poems in addition to the two previous poems like "Stranger by the Gulf" (1958) (*Gharib Ala Alkalij*) "it is my mother's face, and her voice glides with vision until I sleep/And it is the palm trees that I fear if they grow dim" (al-Sayyab, 2012, p.7, L. 35-36). Many symbols of Iraq are used here; first the poet's mother's face which is a symbol of Iraq, or the palm trees symbolizing fertility or the poet's childhood and memories. Iraq, in this poem, is not a geographical entity, but it is a series of personal memories cherished by the cycle of a musical cylinder heard by the poet in his exile. memories ranging from the voice of his mother in the dark for him to sleep, fear of ghosts with the vision of palm trees at sunset, and folklores which are narrated by old women to children who are around the fire (Swidan, 2002, p. 124).

In his poem "Garcia Lorca" (1956), al-Sayyab used two opposite symbols: fire and water "A lantern in his heart, the fire feeds the hungry and the water in boils". In this poem, fire generates water despite their contradiction and obliterating one another in existence. Fire here is a symbol of revolution and water symbolizes prosperity. The revolution will burn the country; on the other hand, it will lead to water, to prosperity and fertility.

### 3. War

According to Peter Childs (2000), modernity has been concerned with those changes of life that are mainly caused by technology, industrialization, secularization, and urbanization; it also describes the way and experiences of life; its features include rapid changes, fragmentation, reformation and disintegration (p. 15). Thus, war is one of the experiences that was witnessed by al-Sayyab, and thus, becoming a dominant theme in most of his later poems.

DeYoung (2013) noted that, 1944 was an important year in Sayyab's life for many reasons. It was a year when he would make several important choices about his future, and the ground would be prepared for several others. World War II was also winding down (p. 67). The D-day invasion would begin in June, and after that it was excessively clear that it was a matter of when, and not if, Germany would be defeated. The implication of this Allied victory for colonial and informally colonized territories in the Middle East like Iraq was that the British would expect their hegemony in these areas to continue with little change. Thus, the end of World War II in this region would mean the solidifying of old boundaries, drawn by the colonial powers among the victorious Allies, not the redrawing of new ones. In other words, the boundary separating Iraqis from realizing their version of Eden would stay in place.

The British colonial presence was an important issue for al-Sayyab, because one of his earliest surviving poems is a 1941 elegy for several of the leaders of the Rashid 'Alli coup, an attempt by the Iraqi army at the beginning of World War II to reduce the British influence in Iraq through the ouster of Nuri al-Sa'Id and his supporters (one of these Nuri supporters, Taha al-Hashimi, was actually Prime Minister at the time) (DeYoung, 2013, p. 201). In this poem as a very youthful effort, Sayyab describes the Nuri al-Sa'Id



group as “slaves of the English” who have poured out the blood of martyrs”. He warns them at the end of the poem that “in Berlin a lion is waiting” who would soon take vengeance upon them for the execution of the coup leaders (al-Sayyab, 2012, p.189, L. 35). Thus, we may imagine that the realization in 1944 that his earlier wishes for the defeat of the British and an end to their presence in Iraq, so fervently expressed in this early poem, were not to come true in any way must have been a bitter pill to swallow (al-Sayyab, 2012, p17, L. 17-18).

Al-Sayyab's decision to join the Communist Party may seem even less oriented specifically toward opposing British colonialism than his change of college major. During the war, the Soviet Union, as the only major Communist state at the time, had allied itself with Britain, and the official Communist ideology propagated by the Comintern had a distinctly ambivalent position towards anticolonial independence movements, seeing them as essentially of marginal importance in the context of class struggle. The first Arab-Israeli war, which broke out in the summer of that year, would only have increased the sense of an intensifying noisy set of incommensurate discourses. By internationalizing the conflicts already present in Iraqi society, especially as the founding of the state of Israel, was widely perceived in the Arab world as being congruent with the desires and interests of the European colonial powers and an extension of their ambitions to control the resources of the Middle East.

Thus, it is not surprising to find al-Sayyab, at the end of 1948, returning quite overtly to an almost exact repetition of the initial situation he had described in “I Will Go” and this time “letting the scenario play itself out” once again, perhaps in order to see if there would be any change in its dynamics (De Young, 2013, p. 213). In his poem, in his poem “In the Ancient Market” (*Fel al-Suq al-Qadim*) (1948), al-Sayyab chose to use a bipartite structure to organize his meditation upon the problem of voice. To an expanded and much altered version of the psychic monologue from “I Will Go”, he added seven introductory strophes that described the speaker's nighttime perambulations in a deserted village marketplace. In this poem there is a speaker who wakes up in an ancient market, and finds himself expelled from his own city; he has been removed from his house where has been taken by a stranger, and in this ancient market there

is nothing but the smoke of fire. The speaker hopes that one day he will have his city and his house back from the strangers.

## Conclusion

The poetry of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab had witnessed some changes throughout his literary career. However, in the second phase of his poetry, the Iraqi poet focused on inserting modern elements in his poems. The use of myth, the employment of symbolism and the depiction of war as a main theme were the most prevalent modern aspects in his poems. These three elements were used differently, and they purposed different aims. The Iraqi poet saw that there was an urgent need to incorporate myth with poetry. He brought myths from different origins such as the Greek ones, but his focus was to shed the light on the old Iraqi myths. The article states that symbolism was a vehicle by which the Iraqi poet could express his political opinions. War, was one of the most dominant themes in the last phase of al-Sayyab. The impact of the Second World War was prevalent on his poetry.

## References:-

- Abbass, I & Muhammad, N. (1982). Arabic poetry in exile [Alsha'r alarabi fi almahjar]. Beirut: Dar alsadr.
- Abbass, I (1972). Badr Shakir al-Sayyab: Dirasa fi hiath wa sha'rh [Badr Shakir al-Sayyab A study in his life , and poetry]. Beirut: Baghdad Library.
- Al-Batal, A. (1984). Shabah Qai'n [ The Shadow of Cain]. Beirut: Dar Al-andlus.
- Al-Sayyab, B. S. (2000). Full poetic collection (3rd ed). Baghdad: Dar al-Hurria Publications.
- Ashkor, S. S. (2011). Aldiwn group, literary, and critical progress in the twentieth century. Critical enlightens 1(2). 63-78.
- Badawi, M. M. (1975). A critical introduction to modern Arabic literature. London: Cambridge university press.
- Bohalasi, F & Zrara, Z. (2016). The fundamental critical basis between Apollo, and Mahjar schools (Unpublished master's thesis). Algeria College, Binankon, Algeria.
- Childs, P. (2000). Modernism (2nd Ed). New York: Routledge.

- DeYoung, T. (2013). Placing the poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, and postcolonial Iraq. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Musa, A, Ghazi, M, Samara'I, M & Obaidi, M. (1999). Mn shra'a al-Ihia': Ahmed Shwqi, Maroof al-Rusafi, and Muhamad Al-Shathli Kznadar [Among revival poets: Ahmed Shwqi, Maroof al-Rusafi, and Muhamad Al-Shathli Kznadar]. Beirut: Arabic union for education.