

## Scorched Lands and Scarred Souls Desertification and Eco-Trauma in Iraqi Poetry

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الأراضي المحروقة وأرواح جريحه : التصحر والصدمات البيئية في الشعر العراقي

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### Abstract

This research aims to explore the interweaving of environmental and cultural memory in Iraqi poetry, concerning with how desertification has an effect in ecological crisis and a form of eco-trauma. Drawing on ecocriticism and trauma theory, I examine selected poems written by Iraqi poets such as Badir Shakir Al - Sayyab , Saadi Yousef ,Fahidil Alazzawi ,Dunya Mikhail, and Ali Rashid by a curate reading to these poems and thematic analysis, the research focuses on recurring motifs of (rain, rivers ,palm groves, gardens and bleak fields) as metaphors for both ecological and cultural degradation .Results suppose that Iraqi poetry changes environmental decline in to symbolic landscape of grief, exile, and survival. In the poem(انشودة مطر) written by Al-Sayyab explores an early ecopoetic imagery of both renewal and despair, in Youssef 's diasporic verses depicts desertification represented a displacement. Al-Azzawik a surrealist visions and Mikhail's diasporic garden and Ali Rashid 's scorched imagery, underscore the psychological dimensions of eco-trauma .while environmental decline threaten the identity and memory.As a researcher I try to confirm in this research , how the desertification is not merely a material reality but also a cultural wound that can be appeared in literary expression, so this research participates to the fields of ecocriticism, trauma studies ,and the middle eastern literature .Finally, Iraqi poetry commemorates the land, changing eco- trauma in to a narrative of survival and resilience.**Key words :** ( Desertification, Eco-Trauma, Slow Violence, Climate Trauma, Ecocriticism )

### ملخص

يهدف البحث الى استعراض تداخل الذاكرة البيئية والثقافية في الشعر العراقي, فيما يتعلق بكيفية تاثير التصحر على الازمة البيئية باعتباره شكل من اشكال الصدمة البيئية. يتم ذلك بالاعتماد على النقد البيئي ونظرية الصدمة, من خلال اختيار اشعار كتبها شعراء عراقيين مثل بدر شاكر السياب ,سعدى يوسف,فاضل العزاوي دنيا ميخائيل وعلي راشد. من خلال قراءة دقيقة لهذه الاشعار والتحليل الموضوعي ,يركز البحث على الصورة المتكررة مثل (المطر بساتين النخيل ,الحداثق,والحقول الفاحلة) كاستعارات لكل من التدهور البيئي الثقافي. تشير النتائج ان الشعر العراقي يحول التدهور البيئي الى منظر رمزي من الحزن والمنفى والبقاء. في قصيدة (انشودة المطر) التي كتبها السياب ,تم اكتشاف صورة شعرية بيئية مبكرة تجمع بين التجدد والياس,في حين تصف أبيات يوسف التصحر كمثال على التهجير ,النظرة السيريالية للعزاوي والحديقة المهجورة لدنيا ميخائيل وصورة الارض المنكوبة لعلي راشد تعكس الابعاد النفسية للصدمة البيئية. وبينما عد التدهور البيئي تهديد للهوية والذاكرة ,كان علي كباحث ان اثبت ان التصحر ليس مجرد واقع مادي فحسب بل ايضا جرح ثقافي يمكن التعبير عنه ادبيا .لذا يمكن ان يسهم هذا البحث في مجالات النقد الادبي ,ودراسات الصدمة ,وادب الشرق الاوسط. واخيرا استطاعت الشعرية العراقية ان تحي الارض,وان تحول الصدمة البيئية المتغيرة الى سردية لما يخص النماء والبقاء .**الكلمات المفتاحية :** ( التصحر , الصدمة البيئية, العنف الصامت, الصدمة المناخية, النقد البيئي )

### 1.1 Introduction

Iraq is our country, represents the Cardel of Mesopotamian civilization, nowadays it faces interweaving of cultural heritage and environmental degradation, desertification becomes the most evident of ecological crisis in our country. many factors interference with the natural and cultural landscape effecting it's shape, such as

diminishing rivers, the dust storms, and salinization of soil. The decades of war have significant effect, shortage of water, an economic sanction, upstream dam projects on the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, all these leads to desertification in Iraq, so cause a destabilizes livelihoods, disturb the cultural identity, and fracture memory. All that can be seen through a lens of eco- trauma, eco trauma is a psychological and cultural wound caused by environmental devastation (Kaplan, 2015). Unlike war trauma which expose in visible deeds of violence, echo trauma twists silently and slowly , echoing Rob Nixon(2011) idea of “slow violence”It’s dimension is so harmful. Sandstorms change the stability of our life in addition to healthy damage, soil erosion leads to decline the agriculture, and the drying of rivers effects on the diminishing the cultural identity. This ecological degradation can be mirrored in the literature domain. Poetry in Iraq has a great position in most cultural expression, from the Sumerian hymn to the modern free verses. By poetry Iraqi can interprets history, express their grief, and dreaming with renewal. Arabic literature has often depended on natural imagery as a vehicle of cultural memory. (Allen, 1998) Many symbols in Iraq can be acted as signs of abundance and fragility such as river, rain, palm groves, under the effect of desertification, poetry in Iraq becomes a mirror which through it , ecological devastation can be mourned , remembered, and resisted. The research involves that the poetry in Iraq doesn’t only depict a nature with its beautiful picture but changes the degradation of environment to a language of cultural Trauma In Iraqi poem written by Al-Sayaab ( انشودة مطر ) the “Rain’s song”, AlSyyab portraits both salvation and haunting absence, this reflects instable balance between fertility and drought. From the exile Saadi Yousef write his poems, joins the desertification to the exile, while Dunya Mikhail writing about vanishing gardens and wounded skies, in her poem she depicts diasporic status. Another contemporary poet such as Ali Rashid extends this discourse, showing that the trauma of ecological devastation is still till the 21th century. The research gathers many disciplinary approaches such as eco criticism with trauma theory. The research highlights how the ecological crisis such as desertification has a great eco in the Iraqi literary work, so this approach try to bridge gaps, while Iraqi literature tackles the subjects of war and exile, but what related with ecological subjects unexplored. Although the ecocriticism theory is getting its famous in west but still been rarely applied in Arabic poetry. This study also contributes to clear that Iraq with its important position can be a crucial site for the intersection ecological grief and cultural memory and trauma. Briefly desertification can be considered not only an environmental concern but as a reality with is deep cultural results.

### 1.2. Historical Context of Desertification in Iraq

Our country in famous with a fertility, abundance, and agricultural prosperity as known historically “the land between the rivers”. Many civilizations such as Summer , Babylon, and Akkad flourished region, formed by the existence of both rivers Tigris and Euphrates. For more than 6,00 years early irrigation system appeared, which change the region in to one of The most productive agricultural zones (Al-Ansari, 2013) The ecological richness has great effects not only in their population economic life but also to their cultural imagination. the Iraqi epic Gilgamesh included many natural elements such as rivers forests and floods, focusing on human life and environment. However, ecosystems disability regards as significant feature in to its history. Salinity of Iraqi soil caused by bad irrigation without suitable drainage, causes agricultural degradation from ancient decades. Historical documents from Sumerian and Babylonian tablets unfolds interests with soil infertility and water scarcity., these can be a sufficient reason the neglect of irrigation infrastructure, invasions and wars to escalate ecological challenges. Iraqi history evokes contradictions between abundance and degradation, while the human culture depends on environment at the same time it causes disrupts it. Nowadays because the climate changes, industrialization and political instability all these reason causes to continuity of these vulnerabilities in environmental status , so another reasons inter such as the drainage of marches in the 1990s ,causing to destroying one of the most important ecological systems for wetland in the world, and damaging an environmental unique heritage, even the dam that’s put by Turkey and Iran cause to decrease the level of water in Tigris and Euphrates. Today, nearly 39% of the region affected with desertification, with projections suggesting to more deterioration if sustainable management strategies are not implemented (Al-Ansari, 2013) . This historical show so important to understand Iraqi poetry, which full with symbols like rain, palm groves, rivers, and when they lament burning palm groves, receding of rivers they are not only affecting with environmental crisis but also evoking a great historical consciousness of environmental vulnerability. By putting the desertification under this frame, realizing the eco-trauma in Iraqi poetry ,it’s a response for this devastation and echo of old fears about land ability to recover its health.

### 1.3 Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is critical framework, examines the relationship between literature and the environment, showing the role of narratives in form the ecological awareness, this literary framework appear in the 1990s .It examines how the nature and ecological issues ,and the interweaving between human and non-human world are represented and critiqued during the texts, challenging the anthropocentric and explore how cultural shape is formed by ecological context. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) define ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment’ Buell (2005) describes ecocriticism as a heterogeneous movement that explore how literature participates in cultural constructions of nature, while also maintaining awareness that nature exists independently of cultural representation Lawrence Buell (2005) later expand his vision, confirming that ecocriticism must not only call pastoral and natural imagery but also the global crises of pollution, climate change and land degradation. Ecocriticism highlights how cultural narratives portrait ecological conditions .Gifford (2020) in his reassessment of pastoral traditions, explore how natural writing demonstrates how nature writing often mediates between idealize landscape and the realities of ecological exploration. Symbols such as rivers rain, palm groves in Iraqi poetry, not only express an esthetic symbols but material realities tied to survival .By ecocritical analysis to these motifs ,researcher can unfold how desertification can be environmental and cultural trauma.

#### 1.4. Trauma theory

Aftermath of wars and catastrophe many theories has been emerged, one of the key approach was Trauma theory ,which appeared in the 20<sup>th</sup> century .Many scholars has taken the chance to apply it to the environmental crisis. Cathy Caruth’s (1996) in “unclaimed Experience” defined trauma as “ an event so overwhelming that it resists direct representation and is experienced belatedly through haunting ,repetition ,and fragmented narrative”. Dominick Lacapra (2001) expanded this idea through differentiated between “acting -out” means to re-living the past compulsively and “working- through” means the effort to integrate and narrate trauma .These two scholars influenced literary studies by exploring how art and language portrait the suffering as asymbolic references .Trauma theory has change during the last two decades to inter in the human psych to include environmental, collective ,and historical dimensions. Robin Nixon (2011) introduced the concept “slow violence” means harm that can be unfold gradually and invisibly such as desertification, climate change and pollution. this slow disaster can caused cumulative physiological trauma that represent post-traumatic conditions at social scale. Ann Kaplan (2015) coined the term of “climate trauma” which expressed the instability of psychological and cultural conditions that’s caused to ecological collapse. Ann confirms that there is a difference between climate trauma and traditional trauma in planetary scale and its onset. In Iraq because decades of wars and displacement that led to intersect all these circumstances with desertification and provoke to see it with crucial sight, and the psychological disorientation parallels to cultural trauma of displacement, and facing conflicts resulting to hear voices by Iraqi poets.

#### 1.5. Arabic literary scholarship and Ecological Imagery

Ecological imagery has been depended by modern Arabic poetry, by considering it as a vehicle to show themes of renewal, loss. and identity. Salma Khadra Jayyusi’s exposed in her book” Modern Arabic Poetry” (1987) the effect of natural world in poetic expression, to expose symbolizing homeland and identity, also another modernist poet Muhsin Al-Musawi (2006) showed how the Arabic poets trat with modernity by landscapes, rivers, gardens and deserts and their effect in cultural permanent and devastation. On the vein of Iraq poetry, the Iraqi poet Badr Shakir al -Sayyab’s discovered free verse using rain’s song” انشودة المطر” ,rivers in his poetry in order to symbolize the hope the redemption or disappointment ,Saadi Yousef ,by contrast depicts the displacement through using images isolated orchards and disappearing rivers ,mirroring of ecological and political exile (Allen, 1998) As a woman poet such as Dunya Mikhail put another perspective, using ecological imagery with themes of diaspora, war and survival (cooke, 2017). Most of scholarship treated the ecological motifs symbolically more than using them as Eco- critically. Iraqi poets give a less attention to environmental realities such as desertification form the imagery itself.

#### 1.6. Comparative perspective

In this research I concern on Iraqi poetry ,putting it in a contrastive framework enhances our learn of exploring desertification in different cultures within a geographical contexts. Many countries in the global south specially the north Africa suffers from eco-devastation such as desertification ,also share the Iraqi poetry with the same significant thematic in addition these causes cultural wounds.

##### 1.6.1. North African Context

Droughts and expansion of Sahara expansion also has great role to form literary imaginaries in the north Africa (Tanarhte, 2024) (Tian, 2023).the change in the climate which monitored by satellite can be interpreted to poetry such as(dust-laden skies ,receding oases ,dunes) in contrast with Iraqi poetry which focuses on water shortage in Tigris and Euphrate and vanishing groves , the latest reviews collect the region's hydro-climatic drivers and socio-economic impacts(Tanarhte 2024),and through transcultural and postcolonial lenses literary scholars draw how Maghreb poetries documented ecological stress (Hiddleston).

#### 1.6.2. North Africa (Maghreb)

In the north African each Arabicphone and Frenchphone poetries portrait desert not as threat only but as geophilosophical figure ,place where memory ,scarcity and migration interweave, that means the desert change from only an environment to the symbol of identity and human existence. Current studies examines how diction ,form, and image -worlds influence extractivism, water scarcity ,and dune encroachment(Hiddlestone,2024).from an environmental -humanities perspective ,even as the current aridity increases ,the Sahara's long -term variability the so called" green Sahar" episodes and the ensuing aridification-offer a deep -time backdrop for cultural mythopoesis (Pausata, 2020). In contrast to Iraq, where the river is the center of memory .Maghreb poetry frequency emphasis dunes and horizons over rivers and forests.

#### 1.6.3. Sudanese and Sahelian Contexts

Sudan considers desertification is not mere an environment crisis, poetic responses to aridity joined this to exile and civil conflicts. Al-Saddiq Al-Raddi one of Sudanese poets who wrote about dust storms and scorched land as a metaphors for displacement and fractured identity. He translated the in AMonkey at the window rounded about themodernist urban and draught, employing dust and wind as apolitical and psychological climate Al-Raddi's imagery represented an ecology of loss ,it is at the same time civic and environmental which corresponded with Iraqi poetic imagery where the vanishing river becomes a cultural trauma .At the regional level ,policy syntheses have warned that drought and desertification in Africa have a serial effects on food security ,health, and infrastructure(UnitesNations,2007).the recent climatology improves there are many changes in the northward of Sahar's boundary and increasing of drought systems ,with deep inclusions for live hoods through the Sahel region (Tian, 2023) (Tanarhte, 2024) Sahelian and Sudanese poems has paralleled with Iraqi one, these poems portrait vanished landscapes ,roaming, and corroding kin geographies with intense emphasis on famine.From all that one can conclude that many insights can be emerged ,one can realize that the shared feature of Eco-trauma between Iraq ,north African , and Sudan countries it isn't only mere a physical loss but a cultural trauma , resulting themes of displacement ,grief ,and memory. But if we come to the symbolic divergence pointIraq poetry confirms on rivers, palm groves, but in North Africa poetry characterizes with dunes and horizons, while Sudanese poetry emphasizes on famine and exile. what concerns with colonial and postcolonial dimensions in Iraq desertification joins with war and authoritarian policies, north Africa is related with colonial exploitation of land. across all these regions desertification is both local trauma and global crisis (Nixon, 2011) in his notion *slow violence* .

#### 1.7. Eco -Memory

Eco memory concerns with the significant role of landscapes as storge of historical and cultural identity. just as how literature saves human memory, the environment has an great cultural importance .In the case of river dry or palm grove disappear it's not only mean an ecological devastation but that shows a cultural wounds (Cunsolo.A., 2018).Iraqi's poems reflect that, both Tigris and Euphrates aren't just rivers but both of them symbolize history of Iraq from Mesopotamia to modernity, their devastation represent a decline in the eco-memory which poetry tries to preserve.

#### 1.8. Environmental Melancholia

Environmental Melancholia points to a state of un solves sadness caused by ecological losses that can't be completely solved (Lertzman, 2015), in contrast with temporary sadness which can be vanished, but melancholia which remains and changes the identity. Through recurrent motifs such as rain, barren soil, and disappearance garden ,which can be declared by Iraqi poets . All these repeated images through generation suppose the cultural inability to resolve the trauma caused by the devastation of the environment. That's can make one to understand the repetition of the same symbols in the literary work of Al-Sayaab,Al-Azzawi ,and the modern voices .

#### 1.9 Anthropocene Trauma

Within global context of human-driven environmental alert, Anthropocene trauma put ecological collapse. The climate trauma distorts not only local identity but this can be extended to all planetary context (Kaplan, 2015).

So in Iraq, local mismanagement and global climate change escalate desertification, putting in situation each Anthropence trauma and political violence intersect with each other. Iraqi poetry works in two levels, reflects the local scars of rivers and fields , also relating with a wide worry about human's role in devastation of planet.

#### 1.10. Analysis of Iraqi poems.

Here I take some Iraqi poems as samples to the study ,after close reading of these selected poems by applying the frameworks of both Rob Nixon's slow violence (2011) and E, Ann Kaplan's climate trauma (2015) .Nixson's concept shows hidden, accumulative nature of environmental devastation which appears through decades of war without putting any attention to eroding Iraqi rivers , soil, and agricultural life .the concept of Kaplan completing this ,In his concept of climate trauma ,he touches the psychological and cultural worry resulting from the prediction of future ecological degradation, what she calls pre-trauma .these two frameworks focus on how could those Iraqi poets change these environmental devastation to historical record for all these suffering. through interweaving of Nixon's environment temporary and Kaplan 's affective futurity , this analysis reveals the scorched Iraqi landscape represents a living archive of eco-trauma foe all grief ,anticipated catastrophe, and memory meet within a poetic form.

##### 1.10.1 Badr Shakir Al-Sayayyab

Al – Iraqi poet Badr Shakir Sayyab's ,wrote in his poem “Rain Song” “اغنية مطر” one of the most influential poem in the Arabic literature.

Arabic poem:

عيناك غابتا نخيل ساعة السحر  
أو شرفتان راح ينأى عنهما القمر

Translation

Your eyes are two palm's forests at dawn

Or two balconies from which the moon withdraws” (al-Sayyab, 1987, p. 277)

Here in this poem the palm groves can carried two meanings like fertility and fragility, so it can be referred to Iraqi identity, but traditionally it symbolizes fertility and continuity. Because the recent ecological crisis such as war pollution, palms expose to draught, and salinization. the alert from life to dying symbol can be leaved an eco -trauma. this represented what Rob Nixon (2011) calls *slow violence* and un visible degradation for environment and memory.

##### 1.10.2. Saadi Youssef(1934-2021)

Saadi Youssef born in Basra(Abu-Al-Khasib) 1934 and died in 2021 ,earned BA in Arabic literature from teacher's college of Bagdad in (1954). In this line from his poem “Lady of the River”.

“I no longer the water -I no longer the water”

Translation

انني لم اعد اسمع الماء  
لم اعد اسمع الماء

Analysis:

In this line ,the poet tried to express the environmental silence, which referred to aridity ,desertification , and ecological death. Psychological impact of the environmental devastation can be appeared in the inability of the poet to hear the sound of the water appeared in this line ,this is a picture of eco-trauma studies. especially the water is a symbol of life and never been heard its sound referred to death of it.The repetition of this line ”I no longer the water” can be showed memory and the mourning aligning with Kaplan's (2015) concept of climate trauma and Nixon's (2011) slow violence

##### 1.10.3 Fadhil Al-Azzawi:

A major Iraqi poet ,translator and novelist from Kirkuk in 1940, he joined between modernist experimentation with existential and political reflection. At Bagdad university ,he complete English literature study. , talk two language (Germany ,English) in addition to Arabic Language .then ,from Leipzing University ,he getting doctorate in cultural journalism . he write a poem under the title “In my spare time “ ٢٠٠١ translated by Kaled Mattawa ٢٠٠٨

في ساعاتي الطويلة المملة من الفراغ  
اجلس العب بكرة الارض

انشئ دولا بلا شرطة ولا احزاب  
والغي اخرى لم تعد تجذب المستهلكين  
اطلق انهارا هادرة عبر صحارى قاحلة  
ادير بغداد نحو جزر تاهيتي  
وادع الجزيرة العربية تجثو في صحرائها الابدية

Translated by Khaled Mattawa

During my long boring hours of spare time  
I sit to play with the earth 's sphere.  
I establish countries without police or parties  
And I scrap others that no longer attract consumers  
I run roaring rivers through barren deserts  
Analysis

This poem summarized the psychological and ecological instability round about eco-trauma. In the line "***I runs roaring rivers through baren deserts***),her the the poet portrait an imaginative resistance against desertification. Al-Azzawi in hist surrealist literary work tried to conveyed his longing to keep ecological harmony ,as poetic response to Rob Nixon(2011) terms slow violence, which explores invisible cumulation of environmental pain.by other words he tried to mandate what exposes to environmental ,taking the imagination as a good mean to escape from the bitter status.

In other line ادير بغداد نحو جزر تاهيتي

وادع الجزيرة العربية تجثو في صحرائها الابدية  
لتحتفظ نقاء جمالها الاصيل

“Transport Bagdad to island of Tahiti

I let Saudi Arabia crouch in it's eternal desert  
To preserve the purity of her thoroughbred camels”

Here in these lines, the poets tried to transport Bagdad to another geographical ground (Tahiti), he either tried to escape from reality or to delivered a picture of displacement or exile as a result of the wars and its remains from devastations ,illusion and feel of instability, mirroring an eco -trauma as scaring from loss and longing for change by making this geographical movement.

In the ادير الجزيرة العربية تجثو في صحرائها الابدية he turned the Sudia Arabia to symbol of eternal in order to save it from any miserable environmental circumstances, echoing Kaplan 's (2015) climate trauma .in his poem the poet tries to heal the eco trauma by run away by making geographical movement by imagination ,turning loss to language by using a surreal attempt to treat all these scorched land.

1.10.4Dunya Mikhail

She was born and raised in Iraq to a Chaldean-Catholic family .She graduated with a BA from the University of Baghdad. Mikhail worked as a journalist, as editor of the literary section, and as a translator for The Baghdad ObserverAs a liberal writer during the time of dictatorship and censorship, Mikhail fled Iraq in 1995, going first to Jordan and then eventually to the United States, where she became a U.S. citizen, got married, and raised a daughter. She studied Near Eastern Studies and received her MA from Wayne State University.

In 2001, she was awarded the United Nations Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing. Mikhail speaks and writes in Arabic and English. Her works include the poetry collection The War Works Hard,

:Arabic poem

ما اروع الحرب!

ماشد حماساتها وكفائتها!

تستيقظ في الصباح الباكر لتوقظ صفارات الانذار

وترسل سيارات الاسعاف الى اماكن شتى

.....

تستدعي المطر من عيون الامهات ,

وتتقب في الارض ,وتزيح الاشياء كثيرة من تحت الانقاض

(Translated by Elizabeth Winslow,2005, New Direction publishing)

English

How magnificent the war is!

How eager and efficient!

Early in the morning ,it wakes up the sirens

And dispatches ambulances to various places.

It summons rain from the eyes of mothers,

Digs in to the earth , dislodging many things from under the ruins,

it sows mines in the fields and reaps punctures and blisters

the war works with unparalleled diligence!

Analysis

”it summons rain from the eyes of mothers”

In the poem of “الحرب ترهق” for Dunia Mikhail , the line ”it summons rain from the eyes of mothers” يستدعي

المطر من عيون الامهات ,here in this line the poet joins the rain drops with the weep of mother , rain here symbolizes

the grief for loss , she referees that the war don't disrupted only human life but also all nature's joints. Here

tears come as a metaphor for Eco-Trauma, it reflects the psychological wound and environmental devastation.

In the line ”it digs in to the earth ,dislodging many things from under the ruins” of memory, here the writer

means the soil becomes a cemetery of memory , reiterating Caruth's (1996) theory burying experiences causes

them to reappear as haunting remnants. Human and environment wounded by the violence committed on Earth,

which is comparable to infringement of bodies and identities.

The image” it sows mines in the fields and reaps punctures and blisters” ,here directly joins the damage resulting

from war to Nixon's (2011) concept of *slow violence*, long -term invisible wounds hit the life and earth.in

Mikhail poem the destruction ,replacing agricultural fertility ,symboling desertification of hope . by taking

political tension in the region ,Mikhail portraits how these tension cause traumatized witness. Her the nature

mourns alongside humanity ,characterizes what Kaplan(2015) calls *climate trauma*, where the environment

characterizes the mass wound and reflects them.

1.10.5.Ali Rashid ”Together” (translated by Saleh Razzouk &Scott Minar )

*Ali Rashid is an Iraqi-born painter and poet based in the Netherlands. Rashid trained at the Institute of Fine*

*Art in Baghdad and later at the Royal Academy of Arts in the Hague. Rashid lived through the Iran-Iraq War*

*and the first Gulf War and his work is a direct response to the ongoing violence and conflict in Iraq. In his*

*earlier work, the artist drew detailed and chaotic scenes incorporating human and mythological figures, today*

*he produces large scale abstract paintings and ink drawings which incorporate the written word, collage and*

*media clippings. Rashid argues that his work depicts the “language of war.”*

his poem in the title ”Together” (translated by Saleh Razzouk &Scott Minar ) ,can be applied eco trauma theory

:Poem in Arabic

في الصباح نتشارك السجائر والقهوة

اشربها ممزوجة بالمرارة ,وانت تمتدين يدك الضعيفة اليها

انت معي ترتدين قميصا مبللا

وقلائد حزينة معلقة

دمنا يصبح ماءك الذي تشربينه

English

In the morning we share cigarettes, and coffee.

I drink it mixed with bitterness ,you reach for it with a frugal hand

You are with me wearing your wet shirt,

And your saddened draped amulets.

Our blood becomes your drinking water

Analysis

Here Rashid in this line “our blood becomes your drinking water” the writer portrait metaphorically link between blood with drinking water. The boundaries between human suffering and environment are strongly broken. Water symbolizes to the life ,while blood symbolizes to the pain ,the poet joins between human being and the environmental resources in order to diminish the boundaries between them .he converts the human to be apart of nature .water is not only a natural element but also symbol of emotion ,memory ,and identity. This is a core concept of eco-trauma.

This like what Nixon ‘s (2011)slow violence, when the metaphor of blood turning to drink water ,where consumption sinks in grief and injustice ,so Rashid aligned with Kaplan(2015) ,the collapse of the familiar (water,drink,life) in to loss.

### **Conclusion**

This research explores how the Iraqi poets enable to change the earth devastation perpetrated by desertification to profound symbols of Eco-Trauma, where both physical devastation of the environment interact with psychological trauma resulting from war ,displacement ,and loss. Through a close reading to Iraqi poem and analysis to these collection of prominent poets ,such as Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, Saadi Youssef, Fadhil Al-Azzawi, Dunya Mikhail, and Ali Rashid.

Through a deep reading , it show that the degradation of environment is not mere a natural phenomenon but change to an existential crisis which effecting in memory, identity and belonging. These poets could expressed their own vision by exploring how the nature can be witness and victim at the same time.

In Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab’s “انشودة مطر” “song of rain” , rain is reflected the language of sadness, exploring the relation between nature with human sorrow, on the other hand, Saadi Youssef in his poem” سيدة النهر the silence of the river as a metaphor for the loss of collective memory and environment degradation .

Fadhil Al-Azzawi, in “my vac Time” , he create the world with imagine resisted to environmental devastation, depicting poetry as an act of symbolic resistance.

Dunya Mikhail portraits war as power that devastates both human and nature

rain becomes tears and field in to rubble, making the earth as partner in the human pain.

Lastly, Ali Rashid breaks the boundaries between the body and landscape in a wonderful picture “دما يصبح ماءك” ,here the poet joins between human and nature.

Through this poetic vision ,it’s clear that desertification is not merely acclimate phenomenon but existential crisis ,effects in human being ,memory and identity.

Iraqi poets can able to employ all environmental elements to express the devastation of environment by making trees ,rivers ,deserts and dust articulate the sorrow of the earth.

by applying the theory of eco trauma ,it becomes clear that Iraqi poetry predicts global awareness of environmental worry; environmental devastation which causes the slow violence come with the slow erosion of human hope .Iraqi poets make poetry as amoral response to the silence and wounds of the environment

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