

The Portrait of Adam in Arif Al-Sa'idi's "The Last Adam"

Instructor: Jinan Hameed Jasim

General Directorate for Education in Diyala,

Ministry of Education.

Email: jinanhameed73@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Arif Al-Sa'idi (1975) is a prolific contemporary Iraqi poet. He is a pioneer of modern poem in Iraq. In this paper, the researcher deals with questions raised by the poet. They are not usual or normal questions. These interrogations show the poet's intermingling with the characters of his poetry. Through the questions, the poet moves from the subjectivity of the words and exceeds the self to reflect the others in their worries not about their present time but about their future. He puts his own philosophy concerning the other, things, time, place and even the events. Therefore, the poet deals with Adam on three levels: Adam is a symbol of the past. He is the first man on the earth. He is the father of humanity. Secondly, Adam represents the present reality of his society. Here Adam represents the sons of Adam. Lastly, Adam represents the unlimited time and place to be a symbol to save the future. Here Adam is the savior of humanity. This research aims at depicting the aspects of modern man and society. It sheds lights on how the poet uses the character of Adam to reflect the social, religious and political circumstances that almost all the humanity suffer from. So, who is Adam? Is he a thought or a myth?

Key Words: Arif Al-Sa'idi, Last Adam, existential worry.

صورة ادم في "أدم الأخير" لعارف الساعدي

المدرس: جنان حميد جاسم

المديرية العامة لتربية ديالى

المخلص : عارف الساعدي (1975)، شاعر عراقي بارز ويعد من ابرز رواد القصيدة الحديثة في العراق. يتناول البحث الاسئلة التي يطرحها الشاعر، وهي ليست اسئلة عادية او مألوفة. بل انها تكشف عن اندماج وتماهي الشاعر مع الشخصيات التي يتناولها في شعره. ومن خلال هذه التساؤلات ينتقل الشاعر من خصوصية الكلمة الى عكس هموم الآخرين ليس على صعيد زمنهم الحاضر بل الى مستقبلهم. للشاعر فلسفته الخاصة والتي تخص الآخر والزمان والمكان والاحداث. لهذا تعامل الشاعر مع شخصية آدم بمستويات ثلاث: اولاً، آدم رمز الماضي والانسان الاول على الارض واب للبشرية. ثانياً، يمثل آدم الواقع الحالي لمجتمعه وهنا ادم رمز لأبنائه. ثالثاً، يجسد آدم المطلق من الزمان والمكان ليكون رمزا لانقاذ المستقبل لانه مخلص البشرية. ويهدف البحث تصوير ملامح الانسان الحديث والمجتمع ويسلط الضوء على الكيفية التي وظف بها الشاعر شخصية آدم وهو بذلك يعكس الظروف الاجتماعية والدينية والسياسية والتي تعاني منها البشرية جمعاء. فالسؤال الان من هو آدم؟ هل هو فكرة ام اسطورة.

الكلمات المفتاح: عارف الساعدي، ادم الأخير، القلق الوجودي.

The Poet:

Arif AL-Sa'idi (1975) is an Iraqi prolific poet who believes in the power of poetry as well as the power of the poem to be a saviour in facing the miserable reality of life. He was born in Baghdad. He finished his study at the College of Education, University of Al-Mustansiriya. He published his first collection of poetry *A Travel Without Colour* in 1999 while he was a student at college. He got his PhD., in Arabic language and its literature from College of Arts, University of Al-Mustansiriya.

In 2009, his second collection of poetry *Its Age Water* was published. He published *A Jar of Questions* in 2013. This collection reflects the doubtful vision of the poet in order to create and generate existential questions to discover the world around him from the first moment at which Adam tested life.

The Records is published in 2015. The poet's *Records* can be said they are a continuation of the stage of an existential worry and doubt seen in *A Jar of Questions*. The main difference between the two collections is *The Records* are nearer to the daily reality of his society. It senses the pressure created by reality and it is more responsive to the changes during the time of writing.

Then, his *Poetical Works* see life in 2018. It is a continuation of the poet's vision in using questions. His texts intertwine among themselves and have one purpose of reflecting reality and the reality of man in Iraq. In the same year, he published *The Last Adam*. Whereas in 2021, Al-Sa'idi published a new collection of poetry *A Cloud in a Shirt* and *Poems of the Family* in 2022. He has a novel under the title *Zainab* in 2021. He has also two critical books, *The Poetics of the Daily* in 2007 and *The Language of Modern Criticism in Iraq* in 2014.

He achieved fame for his poetical works and he was awarded many prizes. His poetry is a record of the poet's course of mind. It is the product of his age. He connects human to things as a means to produce a cultural knowledge of apprehending the reality and of representing the reality as well. His existential questions make us rethink of what does man mean? Man is the power that is able to influence life. Producing knowledge has a social root. It is the worry of man in establishing a society of the intellect to preserve life.

The Image of Adam

In this paper, the researcher deals with "The Last Adam," the epic of Al-Sa'idi. In which he tries to draw the readers' attention "from text to social context, from poetics to ideology" (Hale, 1998: 2). He focuses on the problems of the Iraqi society through using the image of Adam. He uses a number of existential questions that do not need any answer to deal with human life, his responsibility, his condition in society and his freedom. He tries to reveal and explore the "production and reproduction of everyday life" (Adorono, 1990: 20). He shifts the reader attention towards the problems of the day, his sufferings and pains, his experiences and freedom because man lacks the "power and control over his life" (Senejani, 2013: 16).

The image of Adam reflects the thinking of the Iraqi intellectual and the changes in the Iraqi society on the level of man's relations with the other man or with the government. The poet embodies the reality and presents it in the text. It is the reality of the Iraqi society after the collapse of human values. It is a call to anticipate the future of the Iraqi man and in return the future of humanity. It depicts the aspects of modern man and his society. It reflects the downfall of social, intellectual and religious values through using the theme that the world is careless and materialistic. In addition to that it is secular and spiritually dead.

The poet's usage of questions is to arouse astonishment and to awaken man from his worries. The questions refer to the vital connectors of human thinking. Thinking is embodied by images in the mind of the reader. Through these written questions, many mental images will be generated. This gives the reader space to interpret these questions either mentally or sensationally according to his own experiences, and as stated by Henri Bergson in *Creative Evolution* in 2022, that "the intellect is a part of life itself" (511). Arif Al-Sa'idi tries to give life to mysterious things in the subconscious. He tries to move the imagination of his reader to comprehend the mental and sensational images. His unanswered questions are just like the pendulum move between the poetic symbol and reality to draw life; the life of Iraqi people, to find their way towards a better future.

Arif al-Sa'idi builds his poems not on certain and specific time or place. For him it is the absolute time that goes side by side with an unlimited place. There is no centralization of time and place in this poem. It is a long unfinished journey to uncover the corrupted values through the use of words that are heard or spoken in the society. What important are the words that are going to be read in the poetic text.

Ancient people invented myths in an attempt to understand the wonders of the world around them. They imagined interpretations to the natural phenomena to get rid of his worries and to feel comfortable in the spiral of his existential worry (Al-Majidi, 2018: 25).

The poet uses the collective memory to express the identity of the Iraqi people. This collective memory is used to produce a new knowledge. The discourse of the poet is to enlighten the structure and the formation of the Arab mind. It is not the thoughts or the meaning but the tool that is capable of producing and forming such meanings. Here, the power of language appears clearly.

Who is Adam in the poem? Is he a thought or a myth? Is he earthly or heavenly? Is he the textual Adam or the creation of Al-Sa'idi? Does Adam in this collection refer to the end in general or in specific? The answer to such questions appears through the interpretation of the poem since the poet uses different techniques and images seeking hope for the desperate endings.

According to the dictionaries the name Adam means the human being or adamma that means the earth or the ground. Adam the individual plays a vital and a representative role to reflect the two sides of humanity. In this respect the last Adam equals the newly earth because Adam was created from the adamma

of the earth. Khaz'al Al-Majidi in his book *Sumerian Prophets* refers to an important issue that gods were females and the earth is the fertile ground that refers to growth, birth and fertility. But "the masculine reversal started and the father and his son became the centre of the family" (68) depending on this idea, the poet transforms Adam the human to a heavenly symbol that equals to the masculine god in dealing with Adam as "The last Adam". This last Adam is the only one who can resolve the crises and the labyrinth of man. It is the labyrinth of the rigid and severe life :

Adam owns this universe

Was Adam forgotten on the side of time

O! God, answer me

Or Adam in the labyrinth is a god

It is only him who was kicking this earth (*The Last Adam* 12).

In this extract the act of kicking refers to the misery of Adam's reality. The poet wants to say it was Adam himself who brought hard labour to this earth. Instead of working on its prosperity he kicks it because he is forgotten in time and in place. He has lost in the labyrinth of life. This image of Adam being lonely is the image of man who is alone in his worries. He owns everything and at the same time he has nothing. This is a central image in the text. It is the feeling of loneliness of the poet himself. It is the loneliness of the man whom the poet is writing about. This loneliness reflects the boredom of time and place of man on earth. Adam envies the dead because they finally find rest and peace. They get rid of the wretchedness and monotony of the world. Adam is looking for salvation from his own crisis, loneliness and self-exile;

Adam envies the dead

They had left the details behind

That gives the heart sickness

The moment they face death, they find rest (24).

Because of his crisis Adam/ the poet do not satisfy with the envy of the dead but he discusses their situation after death. He depicts their despair and agony of their death:

What is Adam waiting for?

The dead are calling,

Adam, hurry up

Despite the endless time

We get bored

.....

Adam, hurry up

Is there anything in life that deserves!

Adam does not hear their calls

Yet the passage to death is short (28).

The dead are calling 'Adam'. Adam here can refer to the first Adam, the father of humanity who was created in Heaven without any sin. The first sin of man took

place on earth. The dead ask Adam to hurry up to join them because they get bored in the endless time. They find relief and rest in his presence. Because his appearance means the end of man's sin on earth. The dead are looking for the Day of Judgments, but for Adam, life and death are equal so that he does not hear their calls.

Postponed answers for a group of questions. Adam is left alone in the "bitter vast space". His life becomes vacant. Since his place is the space. No one hears him at the moment. It is not the real time but the absolute that exceeds days and years as well. The world is "silent and calm". It is an irony because peace, quite, tranquility, and comfort are found in the everlasting death. The poet repeats the bitter space as a refrain to emphasize the timelessness.

Arif Al-Sa'idi uses the sacred heritage in his poetry. He uses intertextuality with Qur'an narrations. Once he refers to Moses as in:

Adam survived from death

Lonely, he asks the sea

He throws his stick to the buildings

He walks alone (12).

The survival Adam here resembles the prophet Moses. There are two indications in the lines above: in the first place Adam is left alone as a wonderer in the labyrinth. The indication here is that Adam is punished not because of his sin in heaven that brought him to earth, rather the sin of humanity that left him suffer. Adam is Moses and life is his maze.

The second indication is the cane. Here the poet compares between the cane of Adam and that of Moses. The cane is a symbol of travelling from one place to another. It is also used to support the body by leaning on. The stick is used for bringing down leaves for the sheep as recited in the Holy Qur'an. In this respect the image of Adam is an image of an identity. It is the identity of the whole nations as stated by Al-Jabiri in *The Structure of the Poetic Mind* (1987), "the self is an organized entity made of intellect, sensation and behaviour. It occupies time-place spatiality in the existence" (557). Adam is a cosmos symbol refers to each human being. This is the identity that the Arab Islamic culture presented. He is no more a man working on earth but chosen by Allah over the world. Consequently "each nation has its Adam as its father and in return he is one of its sons" (Al-Kawaz, 2024:19). Therefore, the story of Adam it is the story of the man's self and its reflection on the mirror. As soon as this story is used in narratives and poetry, it becomes "the thought, emotions and the behaviour" (Idid 27). Through Adam's story, one knows his/her ancestors and forebodes his future and destiny. Adam is a prophet and a father. A prophet is a general inclusive term. It embodies the relation between Allah and man. Prophets carry the message of Allah since He chose them and not incarnate of the Holy words.

In this paper we follow the meanings of the word "prophets". It may refer to the 'fathers' before the flood (Adam and Noah). Furthermore, it refers to the fathers after the flood (Ibrahim, Jacob, Haroon and Moses). In addition to that, it refers

to the judges. Finally, it refers to the adherents of a religion (Al-Majidi, 2018: 62). Al-Majidi shows that the fathers take the role of the prophets. This means that the prophetic act is a matter that is connected to race and not connected with revelation. Each man has his own god inside him because sacredness (holiness) is inherited. Therefore. It is necessary to notice how Al-Sa'idi uses this word in the poem. Does he use the word prophet or father? What is his intention to do so? Such questions equalize Al-Sa'idi's questions in his poem because the myth of Adam establishes his 'existence between birth and death'. It displays in front of him "his victories and defeats, happiness and misery". Al-Sa'idi experiments the power of words in a series of unsolved questions to represent the existential anxiety of man. His words reverse among themselves and exchange roles and participate in formulating a new theme and a new event that have shelter behind these words.

The poet insists on using the stories of Qur'an to make the readers' imagination work to cultivate the idea behind the lines. He wants to emphasize his belief in the poetic vision. This poetic vision is not limited by structure or rhythm. It depicts his own vision in writing poetry and at the same time works as a critic for his own writings. He said:

Adam goes out from one house to another

The earth comes near him

The buildings

Houses

High summits

Fountains

Lakes

The meadows

Alone he owns them

Forget them all

Now, he is the heir of the earth

Nothing participates

The interpretations do not understand his exile

He was lost by the dump cities

that assassinate his songs (13).

Who is Adam in the above extract? Adam is the first Adam who descends to earth. He owns everything 'the earth, buildings, meadows, mountains, lakes, rivers'. He is the omniscient on the earth. No one shares him the ground. The idea here is that Adam is a symbol of the impossible. He is a symbol of survival for any man on earth. He is a symbol for immortality. However, the buildings, houses, high peaks" refer to the height and elevation. While the fountain, lakes meadows' refer to the identification with things and dilation. It is the elevation and dilation from the horizon. Between the two there is a vast space and a vast time by which one can think of the reality of the place. But the poet here speaks

about Adam, the poet, Adam Al-Sa'idi. He is the owner of the poem. It is his song that reflects his vision on the misery of man.

Adam is a thought now. The poet mixes the passage of history. He shifts from the past to the future in an attempt to read the present. He talks about the future of man.

Adam travels in history

He is wet with the rains of tales

.....

With the shirts of little prophets

No one is similar to him in the labyrinth of exile

In the meaning of the bitter loss

Except the first Adam

.....

Do you think, God will bring back

The same first moment

Gives Adam the names in order

that he can succeed in the lesson

on all the angels (18-19).

The poet shed lights on the connection between First Adam and the last Adam. This relationship is overlapped in the text. Concluded texts emerge to the surface. This depends on the reader himself and what he sees beyond the lines. When God created Adam, He asked the angels to kneel to him as a kind of glorification, respect and obeying the order of God. But when Adam ate from the Fruit of Knowledge, he disobeyed God and his sin made him descend to the earth. The first Adam brought death to the world. In the Bible the last Adam is Jesus who obeys God. First Adam is earthy because he was created from dust, whereas the last Adam (Jesus) is heavenly because he is not a sinner. So, man brings destruction, death to the earth.

In the image of Adam all prophets and messengers are unified under the tent of Allah. Adam appears as if he is the essence of all the prophets. Like the first Adam who is the father of prophets. The poet created a unique identity for Adam. He takes us to the worlds of his Adam. He elevates the meaning of Adam and takes it out from its textual meaning to an issue of man because Adam is a mythical cultural knowledge. The identity of first Adam is a humane one. It is a universal identity that collects all religions, all languages and all nationalities. Yet the identity of the last Adam is a spiritual need to reconcile with the other. The killing and murdering mean exclusion for the identity, the conscious and the life. It divides nations to believers and nonbelievers. Killing creates two opposite groups, two enemies and what is needed is identity and belonging. Because people are dead in life :

Perhaps it was a joke

That people die before death comes

As soon as they were buried,

They wake up ironically (15).

Adam, the cosmos symbol, is turned to a social man. The linking boarder between memory and action is prediction. The prediction is unconscious act through which one can recreate and regenerate a mental model. The usage of the story of Adam or the name Adam reflects and studies the existing social reality of the age. In return one can recreate social events to find solution for modern man.

As mentioned earlier that time and place are absolute in the poet's poetry.

Time is not limited. He specifies time once and generalizes it another time.

(Lonely as the beginning/ the dust of age/ the butterflies of absence/ now, Adam is the heir/ nights of stations/ Adam looks at his watch / time is endless for Adam/ Adam owns the time, ... etc.) .

The same thing is true when Al-Sa'idi uses place.

a house the earth

high peaks meadows

station deserts

if one follows place in his poem" The Last Adam', one notices that he moves from a specific closed place as (house , building/ peaks, old café ...) to wide open places (the earth, meadows, the sea, deserts, road ...) this shows how man is swaying and dangling like pendulum in place. This depicts the diaspora in which man lives. Man feels strange in his own place. He is the owner but he owns nothing. This is the feeling of reality of the Iraqi people. People feels themselves imprisoned and stick to one place nevertheless they are free. In this respect the earth represent Adam in his exile. The earth turned to be the labyrinth. The place is turned to be a labyrinth. As a consequence Adam is the total and the absolute place in return.

Then the poet employs the story of the prophet Noah to reflect the idea of the sin. With this sin man loses innocence and becomes totally naked. Man is transformed from the heavenly angelic innocence state to the human state that knows only misery, death and the sin:

Adam goes out of Paris or Rome

From all the capitals

marching towards the sea

towards the oceans

there is no savior from the cruelty of the drowning (21).

In this poem, the poet wants his reader to compare between the prophet Noah (the sacred) and the Noah of the text. When Noah boards on the deck of the ship with those who board with him, he does not know where to go or what his direction is. He sailed on the sea following Allah's Will without prior knowledge where to go, as in Surat Hud, Aya 44

"And it was said: "Oh earth! Swallow your water, and O

sky! Withhold (your rain)." And the water subsided, and the matter

was accomplished, and the ship came to rest on the [mountain of] Judi. And it was said: "Away with the wrongdoing people." (44)

"Away " here means to stay away from the start point. When Noah embarks the ship, it is a kind of maze till it rested on its place. Noah did not know when it would be rested or where his direction was. But it was the wisdom of Almighty Allah that made the ship rested on the mountain of Judi. The Noah of the text also enters the maze with the first Noah. There is an indication of the difference and the intimacy between the two Noah (Noah, the prophet and Noah of the text). The Noah of the text or we can call him the Noah of Al-Sa'idi also does not know his direction. In both cases sailing is the only alternative despite of the maze and drowning. As if here Noah the text is a new generation that goes back to its ancestors.

Through the text we glimpse the shadow of Noah, the maze and the search for a safe place and a safe shelter. The difference between Noah and Adam is Noah searched for a safe place whereas Adam in the text wherever he goes or sails in the seas or oceans, he carries an indication of vacuum, desolation and drowning. This represents the present Adam. The connection between Adam and Noah in the text is that Adam is transformed from being a father to become a son. Adam is the father of Noah by origin. But here Adam becomes one of Noah ancestors who carries desolation within himself. He suffers inner desolation, " there is no savior from the cruelty of the drowning". Noah and his son were separated by a mountain. The son thought this mountain is the savior. He took this mountain as a shelter being a safe place despite the divine decision, "There is no protector today from the decree of Allah". Nevertheless, Adam the son who is an ancestor of Noah, is a symbol of the wanderer (stray) man. Neither the seas, the oceans nor the capitals of the world will save or protect him. This is because of what modern Adam suffers. He suffers from spiritual alienation. His alienation is not of place because place alienation ends by reaching a safe shelter. However, spiritual alienation has no savior. Thus existential worry explodes in the following lines in a question form " O! My God. Who are You?" Only God and the Divine Will fill this vacuum and the absurd feeling in this life.

"Drowning" also reminds the reader of the drowning of Pharaoh. This is another story from the Sacred Qur'an about the relationship of Moses with Pharaoh. That ends up by the death of Pharaoh. It shows the indifference of nature towards humanity.

Adam al-Sa'idi becomes part of the death record in Iraq. He uses Adam not to fix things but to reveal things. All prophets are gathered in this character of Adam because Adam is the start and the end. He is the start point of life in Iraq and in return Iraq will be the start point and the universal and earthy end. Here Al-Sa'idi refers to the belief of Iraqi people in the re-appearance of Imam Al-Mahi (peace be upon him) to hasten the Doomsday to have rest and peace on earth:

Adam has not realized

Accept a stone thrown in front of him

They are all called him

Hurry up now

Adam! You postpone the date of Doomsday (30).

This is a clear transformation in the use of such existential questions that are related to life, death and the man.

O! God. Who are You?

Where can I meet You?

There is no one in these worlds except You
and this wanderer

that was thrown in the fear as drowned

O! God. Be for even a day

A friend for this desolate man (21-22).

The poet continues using intertextuality with the sacred stories of Qur'an. The use of "O! God. Who are You" brings to the mind the question of the prophet Abraham while he was looking for the only God. Man needs guidance and power to face the oppressed authorities of the world.

The poet also uses the folk mythology and the collective culture of people in revealing the questions. He uses the train and the railway that stands as an equivalent to Adam maze and loneliness. The rail (the train) is very important in poetry. It comes near the myth of the departure and death. The train plays on paradoxical levels. On the first level, the train means the departure, travel, distance, and fear from the unknown and it forms part of the myth and the collective imagination. It also reflects the maze of the way , of place as well as the maze of time. train passes different places and it moves through nights. The nights are the unknown. The train takes people from his place and cuts him/her from his/her roots as in the ancient folk tales and in the imagination of people. The coming back of the traveller is hard and perhaps impossible. In addition to this, the relation with the train itself is not an easy one. Life as a whole is connected with the train since the train is used to transport people, goods, oil, coal, and different materials. It is a relation that has two faces; life and death. The train recollects memories and brings them to the mind. The relationship between the text and Adam is interchangeable. The text gives life to Adam. Adam gives the text thoughts, ideas, questions, life, fear and death.

Conclusion

The poet uses different techniques to show the existential worry of man. Poetry for Al-Sa'idi is a mirror that reflects the reality of man. The poet speaks indirectly using the mask to criticize his own society and the world man lives in. He uses folk mythology to show the cultural knowledge of man. He uses the collective memory of Iraqi people in relating the train to travel, separation and death.

He depicts life through employing sacred religious heritage. Through which he connects the character of Adam to the prophets. Once Adam represent the first

Adam on earth. He also represents Moses in his bewilderment in the maze. He reflects the worry of man in the maze of life since life is not fair. Adam also becomes equal to Ibrahim in questioning God in an attempt to get knowledge and get rid of the oppression of the primeval mind. The image of Adam equalizes Noah in his sailing to the nowhere to find peace and rest.

Adam is connected to Al-Mahdi; the guided, whose appearance at the end of times to throw away the evils and injustice of the world.

Time is endless and absolute. The place is also has no borders. It is a universal space.

Adam also represents the poet and his vision concerning poetry as a guide to create a change.

Finally, Adam represents everybody, everywhere, and every time.

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