

The Classical Myth and Symbolism in T.S. Eliot's Poetry and its Imitation by B.S. Al-Sayyab

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¹Received: 30/08/2025; Accepted: 09/10/2025; Published: 12/10/2025

Abstract

This article asserts that T. S. Eliot's poetry influenced B.S. Al-Sayyab because he used mythological and symbolic motifs in his writing. Instead, Al-Sayyab applied this classical and Anglo-American culture to his country's old mythology. Arabic poetry that addresses everyday concerns and comments on the region's historical context, particularly Iraq, where Al-sayyab was born. In this article, we put the poetry of Al-sayyab in a framework that echoes political and social disorders in Arabic countries instead of just imitating Eliot's methods and subject matter. He incorporated his mythological ideas into the mix of rich and global poetry without compromising his work's native focus. The two poets do not always have a causal relationship, but a relationship between subversion and alteration exists. Al-Sayyab refined and enhanced the tales that Eliot used to generate poetry that was personal and accessible to a wide audience. He infused his poems with myth to make them more interesting and give them a global perspective. Notably, he employed myth as a structural method to compare and contrast present issues with distant and fantastical ones in his poems.

Keywords: *T.S. Eliot; B.S. Al-Sayyab; Modernism; comparative poetry; Myth and Symbolism.*

1. Introduction

One of the many outstanding contemporary Arabic poets who introduced "modernism" to Arabic literature was Bader Shaker Al-Sayyab (1926-1964). Modernism's intellectual and creative consciousness transcended official propaganda and physical borders.

As a result of the economic, social, and political upheaval in the Arabic countries, particularly in their wake, poets in this region felt compelled to seize control of their literary works and revolutionize them to reflect the realities of their time better. One poet who saw the necessity of changing artistic forms and subject matter in the Arabic modern poetry was Al-Sayyab. "The Revolution in Modern Arabic Poetry," (Baidoun, 1991).

Arab poets had access to poetic methods in the middle of the 20th century and employed these devices to engage with contemporary cultural shifts. In particular, the events of the Palestinian calamity in 1948 prompted new literary subjects and methods by exposing writers to symbolism and surrealism. Without the requisite poetic talent, some poets turned to prosaic modes of expression. In contrast, others, like Al-Sayyab, were drawn to modernism and devoted to its principles, finding an outlet for their heightened self-awareness in the symbolic imagery and mythological subjects it encouraged. Haidar claims that "abstract symbols and imaginative images rather than direct expression" (Baidoun, 1991) define the new Arabic poetry. Arabic modernist poetry became allusive and provocative.

¹ How to cite the article: Naeem S.A..(2025); The Classical Myth and Symbolism in T.S. Eliot's poetry and its Imitation by B.S. Al-Sayyab; *Multidisciplinary International Journal*; Vol 11 No. 2 (Special Issue); 205-220

Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats were the English romantic poets who impacted Al-Sayyab. He wrote poetry on them and included passages from their works that he translated (Baidoun, 1991, p. 44, 45). However, in his later, more mature poetry, he was influenced more by modernists like Eliot. He was "an admirer of T.S. Eliot and Edith Sitwell" (Baidoun, 1991, p. 8), indicating that English poetry significantly impacted him. Given modernism's global scope, conceptualization, and effect, it is hardly surprising that he would internalise its themes and techniques. Gohar, in "Eliot's Modernism," argues that Al-Sayyab was the most original Arab modernist because he created "a hybridized poetics" that responded to "the new realities" arising in the Arab area after World War II. Modern Arabic poets such as Al-Sayyab, Al-Bayati, and Al-Mala'ikah, who divert from the classical poem tradition by embracing free verse, myth, and figurative language, can thank Eliot and his poem *The Waste Land* for inspiring them.

In particular, Al-Sayyab, who admired Eliot's techniques and symbolic style, transferred his admiration to go "beyond the general limitation of the romantic experience" (Badawi, 1975, p. 251). In his collection, "Unshudat al-Matar" means "Rain Song" in English. Al-Sayyab borrowed extensively from Eliot's use of imagery and legendary and symbolic patterns, and these aspects contributed to the collection's widespread acclaim. Al-Sayyab drew on Eliot and adapted his poetry, adapting elements that work for the Arabic and Islamic setting from Western themes and the Bible. Inspired by this legacy, he wrote passionate poetry that engaged with the everyday realities of existence and reflected on the Arab world, particularly Iraq's rich historical background. Instead of using Eliot's poetry to "dismantle the Western literary canon," as Gohar claims, Al-Sayyab did ("Eliot's Modernism"), he utilized it "as an intertext" to oppose local hegemony, which is a continuation of the colonial past. By doing so, he gave local contexts the same mythological significance as those of the world's most well-known tales and made them accessible to readers everywhere.

However, Emran maintains that he is "highly individual and independent" because he "resorted to the rich legacy of his homeland to revive memories of the splendour of ancient Mesopotamia" (Emran, 2000), even though she acknowledges influence links. If he did deal with Eliotic topics and employ comparable symbols, tactics, or pictures, it was for his purposes. He dug into the mythology of his native land, drawing inspiration from figures like Tammuz and Ishtar. That is why people started referring to him as "the Tammuzi poet." Al-Sayyab transforms Eliot's urban themes into powerful conflict poetry that challenges local hegemony and oppression.

It is set in a foreign country or locale (Gohar, 2008, p. 203). "Eliot's Western narratives and poetic techniques are recycled, disseminated, and developed into a poetic create probing social and political problems of great implications at the national and regional levels in the era following World War II" (Gohar, 2008, p.185). After establishing broad impact patterns, we want to use the same comparative method to examine how both poets use myths (fertility myths and vegetative rituals) in their work. The idea that Western poetry had an impact on Al-Sayyab may not be groundbreaking. Examining how myth is used in various Al-Sayyab's poetry is more crucial. The usage of myth by Al-Sayyab greatly enriched his poetry and gave it a global perspective. In addition, he employed myth as an organizing principle to set contemporary topics in opposition to more distantly evocative and fantastical ones in his poetry. According to Bloom's analysis of how poets draw from and create new traditions, "but poetic influence need not make poets less original; as often it makes them more original, though not necessarily better" (Bloom, 1973, p. 75). To claim that Eliot impacted Al-Sayyab is not the same as praising Eliot over Al-Sayyab. Relationships of influence improve writing and inspire writers to explore new avenues. In his article "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot explains this phenomenon of influence and demonstrates the connection between the past and the present in the creative process. According to Eliot, "not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (Eliot, 1993). In a poet's most developed works, the author's identity fades away under the weight of their family's literary legacy. In a memorable passage about the influence of relations, Eliot mentions, "A positive disapproval of "tradition" is warranted if it consists solely of blindly or hesitantly adhering to the practices that were successful for the generation immediately before our own. We have seen many such straightforward currents fade away into the sand before their time, and fresh ideas are always preferable. The importance of tradition extends well beyond its immediate context. It is not something you can pass

on to the next generation, and it takes much hard work to get it. First, it necessitates the historical sense, which is practically required of any poet who wants to keep writing after the age of twenty-five; and the historical sense necessitates a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of the world is present in What makes a writer conventional is an awareness of the past, which includes an appreciation for both the timeless and the temporal. This also makes a writer most aware of his contemporaneity and the moment in which he lives."

Al-Sayyab possessed a certain degree of introspection, wherein he assimilated a "historical sense" that enabled him to perceive his literary capabilities as an integral component of a lineage of precursors. However, he managed to preserve his artistic perspective and lyrical brilliance without compromising his individuality. Al-Sayyab's utilization of free verse enabled him to discover a form that encourages an effortless shift between prose and poetry. This is achieved by incorporating dramatic elements, as noted by Moreh. Additionally, Al-Sayyab borrows key devices from Eliot's poetry, such as "using parentheses to compare two situations and a relevant one". (Moreh, 1976, p. 236). Al-Sayyab exemplified the concept of "objective correlative," in "Unshudat al-Matar," as discussed by Eliot in his essay on "Hamlet." Eliot's theory posits that the effectiveness of original expression hinges upon establishing a connection between external realities and emotions, thereby enabling poets to circumvent direct emotional expression. In this manner, Al-Sayyab elevated his utilization of poetic symbolism and imagery to its zenith, endowing some symbols with a mythological stature while concurrently refraining from fully exploring the depths of his thematic subjects.

According to Moreh, Eliot characterizes this strategy as the process of eliciting emotion utilizing amalgamating a sequence of objects, objective facts, and events that ultimately culminate in a sensory encounter.

The utilization of the objective correlative is an integral aspect of crafting symbolic and evocative poetry within the framework of the modernist literary tradition. Al-Sayyab effectively conveyed his ideas and feelings by employing Eliot's concept of the objective correlative, which encompasses the utilization of many literary devices such as quotations from other poems, proverbs, folktales, as well as allusions to religious texts such as the Qur'an or the Bible. Additionally, the artist included Eliot's concept of depersonalization, which posits that the essence of art lies in the transference of subjective feelings from the individual realm to the collective human experience and ultimately to the realm of mythology.

Eliot's impact on Al-Sayyab encompassed both thematic and artistic dimensions. Al-Sayyab's utilization of visual components facilitated his departure from romantic subjectivity, leading to a notable transition in his poetry. This move allowed him to actively address the pressing concerns of his era and contemporize his poetic style. This research examines the utilization of imagery in its legendary and metaphorical manifestations in T.S. Eliot's renowned poem, *The Waste Land*. It explores how Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab employs these aspects. A comparison is established between Eliot's utilization of poetic methods and his criticism of the urban environment in *The Waste Land* and Al-Sayyab's preoccupation with comparable subjects and poetic devices. This analysis focuses on Al-Sayyab's endeavour to universalize his poetry within the backdrop of socio-political upheavals prevalent in the Arab area, specifically emphasizing his birthplace, Jaikur. "The importance of this study arises from the limited number of comparative English studies conducted on both Eliot and Al-Sayyab, as well as the study's specific emphasis on using myth as a thematic connection and a structural element" (Moreh, p. 240).

According to Moreh, employing such a method would rescue the poet from employing direct statements and add a sense of novelty to their poetry. He adds that contemporary Arab poets have used Eliot's evocative approaches to articulate their challenges and the issues prevalent in the Arab world, such as poverty, illiteracy, disease, and exploitation. In the context of Lo'lo'ah, "Al-Sayyab drew inspiration from Eliot's use of allusive imagery to convey information indirectly rather than via straightforward reporting. Consequently, the author employs margin notes, explanations, and references to other poets reminiscent of Eliot's approach in his poem. The connection between Eliot's imagery and symbols is characterized by an emotional rather than a logical basis" (Lo'lo'ah, 1983, p. 182). As

demonstrated in the subsequent section, the aforementioned stylistic approach employed by Al-Sayyab relies on suggestive imagery rather than straightforward narration. This choice of technique rationalizes incorporating symbols and myths inside the text. Based on the above discourse, it can be inferred that the impact dynamics between the poets are not novel; our comparative methodology about mythology is anticipated to have significance.

2. The portrayal of classical myth in Al-Sayyab and Eliot's poetry.

Al-Sayyab's poetry is heavily influenced by mythology. "This is hardly unexpected when one considers that Al-Sayyab grew up hearing tales of Sinbad, Antara, and Abu Zaid Al-Hilali from his grandparents, tales that would later enhance his poetry". (Baidoun, 1991, p. 16).

"While doing so, he was a dedicated writer who cared about the problems of the Arab man in general" (Baidoun, p. 63). Because of his broad perspective, continued relevance, and willingness to incorporate new ideas, Myth has become a symbol for him.

Why, then, would a poet the calibre of Al-Sayyab turn to fiction? In his essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," T.S. Eliot argues that Joyce's Ulysses significantly reflects its period. A "way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history," the legendary analogies in the novel do just that. Baidoun said, "Al-Sayyab was drawn to myth because of its symbolic aspect, which allowed him to sidestep political tyranny" (Baidoun, 1991, p. 71). Social and political truths are dislodged in myth and projected via juxtaposition. It is a tool for elucidating a worldview by describing cultural norms and customs. "Al Sayyab, like Eliot, uses myth to explain paradoxes and fill a pressing social, political, and cultural void. Al-Sayyab once recognized Eliot's effect in making writers aware of such myths other poets were not concerned with." (Baidoun, 1991, p. 71). He discussed commitment and non-commitment in modern Arabic poetry at length in a lecture he gave in Rome. "Al-Sayyab offers a compelling argument for the usefulness of symbolic myth in literature: the decline of spiritual values and the rise of materialism are two unfortunate consequences of this trend." (Kilani, 2008, p. 130).

This makes sense when considering how each poet has a unique way of utilizing myth. Eliot's legendary vision is somewhat apocalyptic, and the barren country of his famous 1922 poem of the same title is the realm of the dead. Al-Sayyab is more upbeat and thinks it is possible to rise again after falling. His optimism sets him apart from Eliot. Another key distinction from Eliot is Al-Sayyab's use of myth manipulation to suit local settings of socio-political criticism (although one might argue that Al-Sayyab also was drawing on Eliot's cultural and social criticism of Europe post-war).

Here, we will look at how Eliot influenced Al-Sayyab in a few key areas, including his treatment of the city as a mythological topic, fertility myths and tales, and the occasional appearance of mythical symbols in Al-Sayyab's poetry. The research shows that Al-Sayyab's poetry is independent of myth. Poets utilise it to construct their works and give them weight in terms of politics and culture. Moreover, Al-Sayyab constructed a mythological system in his poetry, such that myth is organic and important to his poetry when seen as a whole rather than as individual symbols employed in individual poems. Al-Sayyab's prolonged and integrated mythological poetry would not exist if Eliot's impact on him had been frivolous and his inherited Western modernist heritage had been shallow.

3. City Mythology

Among Eliot's literary detractors, it is well known that the poet saw cities in the West "as paradigms of a dying civilisation" (Gohar, 2008, p. 43). Al-Sayyab treats some cities as mythological, keeping with his adopted modernist style.

Throughout "Jaikur and the City," the poet's hometown of Jaikur exists only in his imagination, and the poet has little hope of ever seeing it again. Even though he knows it is unrealistic, he cannot relinquish this desire. From now on, the resurgence of Jaikur symbolizes the emancipation and renewal of the country. When Jaikur is in the hands of

oppressors, it symbolizes death and destruction; when it is free, it signifies life. Mythically, Jaikur represents the cycles of birth, death, and reincarnation.

"And Jaikur is green,
the dusk has touched
the crests of her palm trees
with the sorrowful sun. My path
went to her, like a lightening flash
it showed and vanished, splendour returned, kindling the road
until it lit the city and under the bandages
could be seen in the wounds on my hand:
They were scorchmarks." (Jayyusi, 1987, p. 432)

The city of Jaikur represents pure pleasure, simplicity, and purity to the poet who lost him. For the speaker, it is also a way of being spiritual. Al-Sayyab opens "Jaikur and the City" by drawing a parallel between his hamlet, Jaikur, and the filthy metropolis, which he likens to robes that wrap about him. He cannot visit Jaikur, where the palm palms sway in the breeze, and the fish are delicious. The poet, unable to adapt to his or her new life of tyranny and exile, expresses his or her feelings of isolation and loneliness in this poem.

Therefore, Jaikur represents naiveté, virtue, and purity. The poet's intense sense of isolation and confinement as he indulges his desires in the dystopian metropolis is like a chokehold. "T.S. Eliot paints a picture of a culture bereft of its ideals and traditions in his urban and desolate waste region. He constructs his poetry disjointedly to convey a sense of the urban wasteland. This "metropolitan imagery, adapted from Eliot's poetry." (Jayyusi, 1987, p. 194).

Al-Sayyab emphasizes the enduring devastation that leads to the "spiritual murder of both the poet and the village." Al-Sayyab uses folklore to convey the tale of villagers who leave for the city and are never seen again.

"These are streets of which drowsy hearthside legends say:

From them no more than from the shore of death
has any traveller through night returned,
as if there
echo and silence were wings of the Sphinx,
two wings that jut from buried rock through the subsoil." (Jayyusi, 1987, p. 432)

Eliot used these and other literary elements and mythology to paint a panoramic picture of his "unreal city" of death in *The Waste Land*. Similarly, Al-Sayyab weaves together myths and folktales to paint a picture of death and decay on the streets of Baghdad, the foul city. He does this by referencing the fable of the Sphinx, an Egyptian emblem. According to classical legend, the monster sphinx stands on a rock near Thebes and kills everyone who does not know the answer to its riddle. Al-Sayyab uses this story to attack the political oppression and corruption that plague Iraqi cities and, by extension, the Arab globe. "According to Al-Sayyab, this sphinx represents the tyrannical regimes that governed Iraq in the 1950s." (Gohar, 2008, p. 195).

In the same passage, a second reference refers to the Islamic and Qur'anic past. "By comparing the sterile and barren city to a rock in the desert, Al-Sayyab alludes to the story of Moses, in which God answers the prophet's call and provides him and his people with a spring of water in the rocky desert." (Gohar, 2008, p. 195).

"Come in under the shadow of this red rock" (The Waste Land, 2001, L. 39) is a line from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* that alludes to London's abandoned churches and religious rites. Neither the "rain" nor the water from Al-Sayyab increases fertility or revitalizes the land. "Since Al-Sayyab believes that no miracle would occur in his lifetime that may "restore fertility" to the barren towns of the Arab world." (Gohar, 2008, p. 195), he portrays this metropolis as a hell on earth due to its bankruptcy and malice.

It is clear throughout "Jaikur and the City" how much of an impact Eliot had on Al-Sayyab. Specifically, Al-Sayyab uses Eliot's objective correlative to characterize Baghdad, the embodiment of evil and corruption; he draws parallels between the "Arab regimes and the political scandals carried out by dictators who were not able to cover up their sins and stripped of their facade of sanctity with a few leaves of fig tree, alluding to the Qur'anic and Biblical stories of Adam and Eve and their temptation in paradise." (Gohar, 2008, p. 196). Eliot's *Waste Land* residents are corpses waiting to be buried. Instead of dying and being laid to rest honourably, they want to be buried in their sins. The inhabitants of Al-Sayyab, a city with sharp claws, are also devoid of love, innocence, and spirituality and have devolved into carnivorous creatures as a result. With this macabre metaphor, Al-Sayyab hopes the city's residents would shed their cynicism and reclaim their capacity for compassion. "The fertility of Jaikur is an objective counterpart of the sterility and moral emptiness of the city, which Al-Sayyab condemns." (Gohar, 2008, p. 196). Al-Sayyab bemoans the decline of Jaikur's palm palms and the ascendancy of the city's metropolis over the natural environment.

Images of development and fertility in Jaikur contrast with those of death and destruction in the metropolis. With "the crop of famines of the city's double Eden" (Jayyusi, 1987, p. 434), Al-Sayyab depicts the condemnation of the city over Jaikur by linking components of reality to those of symbol, the conditions of the present to tradition, and the truth to dream. A corrupt metropolis is like a paradise gone for all time. Paradise, for Jaikur, exists only in his imagination and at night, not in the bustling metropolis. Millstones of fire stand in stark contrast to the famished citizens of the city.

Al-Sayyab lends credence to this representation by referencing history, namely the Babylonian culture of ancient Iraq. To illustrate the citywide proliferation of sterile vein-stocks, the poet appropriates a traditional fable about Tammuz, the deity of birth and expansion. The once-blooming trees and bare branches now serve as darkened nightlights in his vision of decay and degeneration.

"My path

crossed millstones of flame,

here are vineyards, their dead springs

veins of Tammuz crossing the city, veins that branch

through every home and prison, every coffee bar,

every prison and bar and every nightclub,

through all the insane asylums,

every warehouse of Ishtar,

ignoble flowers

bursting into bloom like lamps whose oil does not burn,

where no flame touches,
and in every coffee bar and prison, whorehouse and home-

"This water is my blood; will you drink it?

This flesh is my bread; will you eat it?"

Moreover, the goddess Lat grieves for Tammuz." (Jayyusi, p. 434)

When evoking evil and sin, Al-Sayyab invokes Babylon. Therefore, the universe stays chaotic and discordant while the Babylonian dancers sleep, without dancing. The unfavorable portrayal of Al-Sayyab's metropolis as the antithesis of Jaikur is aided by the old city's connotations of lavish, decadent lives. "There is no middle ground between Jaikur and the city." (Azouqa, 2001, p. 52). Al-Sayyab alludes to the deterioration of the Arab people and their loss of spirituality via the death of "Tammuz in his retelling of the Tammuz/Ishtar tale. On the other hand, Tammuz's revival is likened to the rise of the Arab people." (Badawi, 1975, p. 225).

Ishtar, the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess of love, battle, and fertility, is portrayed by Al-Sayyab in a subversive manner as a prostitute who owns whorehouses; this is a repulsive depiction of a goddess who, as the wife of Tammuz, ought to embody virtue and purity. Similarly, the women portrayed by Eliot in *The Waste Land* are sex objects who engage in meaningless extramarital romances that lead only to monotony and discontent.

Al-Sayyab combines the Tammuz story of the resurrection from the dead with its Christian equivalent, alluding to "insane asylums" and the "whorehouse of Ishtar." He makes a biblical allusion:

"This water is my blood; will you drink it?

This flesh is my bread; will you eat it?" (Jayyusi, p. 434)

The mythical story of Tammuz, son of Lat, who is tragically killed by an electric shock, is interwoven with this "Biblical narrative, of sacrifice and martyrdom" (Gohar, p. 197).

Using electricity is a metaphor for the new industrial lifestyle of the city and for how the metropolis is killing its residents.

"My son's glass blood has been smashed in his veins,

the spark of our house has struck stone,

the city wall

crushed him, scattered him, flung him down in no time." (Jayyusi, 1987, p. 434).

Comparing Eliot's condemnation of post-war Europe as mad and industrial to Al-Sayyab's critique of an urban, industrial society. But this martyr is not Tammuz, and Jaikur is not Lat weeping over her killed son; rather, the poet identifies with Tammuz, becoming the martyr, and Jaikur is the mother weeping over her son's murder at the hands of the city.

"He wanted the light, wanted to disperse

Darkness ... and he was defeated.

She sends out her lament –

The voice fades, and the music." (Jayyusi, 1987, p. 435)

Walls and gates separate Al-Sayyab, the poet, from Jaikur, his country. The poet sees that he cannot return to Jaikur; he is stuck in the city, and the clay in his hands becomes dry. Poet "becomes the object of the city's moral paralysis and spiritual death" (Gohar, 1987, p.197). The city is deadly for the poet, what with its false promises, greedy shopkeepers, and diseased inhabitants. It is bad enough when repressive tyrants are in charge of such a metropolis.

The exiled poet and Jaikur are brought together in Al-Sayyab's last lines of "Jaikur and The City" by their shared despair. It is clear right from the bat that the poet makes his home in the city he portrays as a jail, using a jumble of seemingly unconnected imagery to paint an objectively accurate picture of Baghdad.

"Bloody his

right hand: on every lock? And my

right hand: no claw

to fight with on the streets of the city, no grip

to raise up life from the clay, it is clay only.

Outside Jaikur a wall has been raised up,

and a gate,

and a stillness envelops her." (Jayyusi, 1987, p. 435)

Bad Baghdadites are like Londoners in *The Waste Land*—dead in life. They lack spirituality, abandoning prayers and religion, leading to a shallow, pointless life. Al-Sayyab adapts the Eliotic environment for the Arab country, using stories and references from ancient Arabic literature. "The author employs not just the Eliotic theme." (Emran, p. 41) but also its pictures, monologues, and poetic vocabulary, including life, death, hollowness, and waste.

Many critics have argued that major centers of modernist activity, such as London, Prague, and Paris, were all urban. Cities were utilized to symbolize the problems of a failing culture. Noorani argues that poets like Al-Sayyab and Al-Bayati use "visual autonomy" to "endow their images of femininity with communal and political meaning by linking them with the city" (p. 103), and thus establish "the place of the city as the figure of contemporary social dissolution in the genesis of modernism." Noorani argues that "the representation of moribund and fragmented social order, as well as hoped-for modernity, in terms of the city" (p. 104), is another factor in the emergence of modernism. In Al-Sayyab's poetry, there appears to be a rift between Jaikur and its citizens. When people in the hamlet were separated from Jaikur, they experienced spiritual death, and the community itself endured famines and the confinement of a jail. Therefore, Jaikur the hamlet stands as a metaphor for spiritual aridity, immorality, and secularism, whereas Jaikur the metropolis represents the loss of fertility and purity. The victim Jaikur represents the late god Tammuz, and Tammuz's death represents the decline of a city. Just as Tammuz is the son of Lat, so is the poet the son of Jaikur. The contrast of Jaikur and the metropolis emphasizes the metaphorical significance of Al-Sayyab's comparison and brings Jaikur back to life. In Al-Sayyab's "The Rain Song," the mythological closeness between the author and his town is mirrored by the connection between the writer and his country via shared hardships such as poverty, suffering, and hunger.

The Arthurian legend's Fisher King, like the vegetation gods Attis, Adonis, and Osiris, suffers a sexual wound to the thigh, which brings to mind the mythological topic of the interaction between individuals and sociopolitical structures.

The unproductive and unhealthy land he controls must be repaired. In *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer explores pagan fertility rites, and these ceremonies appear to have parallels in the Arthurian stories. It appears that Al-Sayyab is making an analogy between the poet and his desolate city. Instead, the poet and the people of Jaikur, where he was banished, are impacted by his absence and the deterioration of their environment.

4. Comparing Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Frazer's "The Golden Bough" with Selections from Al-Sayyab's Poetry on the Subject of Fertility Myths

While maintaining an aesthetic distance from his subject, Azouqa in "Metapoetry" believes that "the modern use of myth allows the poet to connect the present to a mythical counterpart." Modern poetry gains universality from the mythological frame since it relates the present to a fabled analog" (Azouqa, p. 44). In Awad's view, "Poetic myth is both a symbol and a structural concept" (Awad, 1983, p. 10). Awad claims that myth is an artistic equivalent to rituals about the changing of the seasons and the phases of human existence and that "it is an organic aspect in a poem that connects the private and the public, the abstract and the concrete" (p. 20).

According to Awad, Al-Sayyab employed metaphorical myth to depict a cultural issue: the resurrection of Arab culture after its decline. "The expressiveness of mythological symbols of his region and culture, such as the Babylonian ones known to Arabs from antiquity" (p. 23), is not surprising. This lends credence to our claim that Al-Sayyab intentionally drew on mythology rather than merely doing so to demonstrate his knowledge of Western traditions or English literature. Instead, he adapted them to meet the needs of certain social and political systems. The prevalence of myth in Al-Sayyab's poetry suggests that it serves as a useful organizational principle and thematic connection across his work.

"Inspired by T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' is that of aridity and its effect on the land" (Bishai, 1986, p. 9). "The River and Death" (p. 9) describes how rain "is conspicuous by its absence" or its links with blood and sorrow. The narrator of Al-Sayyab's "The River and Death" apostrophizes the mournful River Buwayb, imagining he is bringing it "pledges of wheat and flower" (p. 29) along with his feelings of desire. In the poem, Buwayb is transformed into a Tammuzi sign of greenery to represent the mythological subject of fertility. Al-Sayyab's river is a sign of life, in contrast to Eliot's Thames, which ironically "bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" (The Waste Land, 43–44, ls. 176–179).

The river in Al-Sayyab represents the cycle of life. Despite the river's gloomy appearance, the poet longs for it and the natural beauty it represents. To bear the weight with mankind, to bring out life: / In my death is victory," the poet writes as he contemplates drowning in his blood.

The 31st of Bishai Al-Sayyab. Symbolically, death provides new life. Feelings of sadness and joy blend into this poetry, filling a depressed world with blood and rain. Some people hope to die because it brings about change and existence in its purest forms:

"The bells of the dead sound a knell in my veins,

And my blood darkens with longing

For a bullet to rend my breast

With the coldness of death,

Like hell fires setting bones a blaze." (Bishai, 1986, p. 30)

The poet invokes the Tammuz story and references the role of death in salvation from the Bible. Rivers have long been used to represent prosperity, growth, and progress. But in ancient mythology, the rivers were considered worthy of worship and sacrifice. Rivers only produce life after human sacrifice. Despite the inevitability of sacrifice, a belief in the triumph of life over death is central to Al-Sayyab's vision of the political and social reform that could revitalize life. It appears that Al-Sayyab is arguing that mortality and the depletion of natural resources are inevitable results of political and social tyranny.

When Christ narrates "Christ After the Crucifixion" from beyond the grave, he transforms into a deity of the green world. The lines "I died so that bread may be eaten in my name/With the coming of the new season" appear in the poem. (Bishai, 1986, p. 46).

The orator's words become the germinating seed of life and his blood the lifeblood of others. This is contrasted with a picture of faraway Jaikur, where the grass is lush, the people are kind, and the speaker's blood flows through the ground:

"My heart is like the sun when its pulse beats with light,

Like the earth when it beats with grain,

Flowers and translucent water.

My heart is the water and the ear of corn

Whose death is resurrection,

Feeding on whomever it finds

In the dough, rounded and moulded

Like a small breast,

Like the breast of life." (Bishai, 1986, p. 45-46).

The city as a whole gives birth to life from the dead, like a woman in childbirth. "Praised be God! / Such is the city in labor" (p. 48) is how the poem concludes. The poet contrasts barrenness and death with fertility and life by linking Christ's fate to that of Jaikur. Christ, in harmony with Jaikur, saves the world by acting as its sun, water, and earth. In this way, Christ might be seen as a reimagining of the Tammuz narrative that AlSayyab frequently alludes to. Jaikur's unquestionable holiness as a spiritual alternative to secularism and corruption comes from the poet's connection with both Jaikur and Christ in a single stanza.

To fully grasp Al-Sayyab's legendary vision, Eliot's *The Waste Land* is required reading. Aridity and barrenness are recurring motifs in the poem. The poem incorporates fertility myths as a commentary on dwindling culture and evoking mortality. The following lines are what the poem's readers will encounter:

"What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone, no sound of water." (*The Waste Land*, 38-39, ls. 19-24)

London, the "Unreal City", is shrouded in fog, and the "frost" kills or threatens many forms of life throughout the winter. Compared to AlSayyab's hometown of Jaikur, this city seems rather bad. An April that is terrible in this poem, a spring that is chilly and arid compared to a winter that "kept us warm" and fed "A little life with dried tubers", calls to mind the work of Chaucer. As a result, the poem opens with a morbid and barren image:

"April is the cruellest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire stirring

Dull roots with spring rain." (The Waste Land 38, ls.1-4).

The speaker recognizes a familiar face in the somnambulist masses making their way over London Bridge, and he begins asking the man questions about the possibility of survival in such a grim setting.

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

Alternatively, has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?" (The Waste Land, ls. 71-73)

A second segment, "A Game of Chess," follows "The Burial of the Dead," it depicts the frivolous city life and conveys a feeling of boredom. The story of Philomela, the legendary daughter of an Attic king, is mentioned. Tereus, king of Thrace, had an affair with Philomela and raped her before severing her tongue and locking her up so she could not tell anybody about it. Philomela, however, told her sister Procne about the assault and mutilation by weaving a tapestry.

Procne took her revenge on Tereus by having him eat his kid for supper after she had murdered him. Tereus, upon learning of the dreadful scheme, attempted murder on the two sisters. All three were transformed into birds before the story's climax, with Philomela becoming a nightingale. This forbidden love fable is set with contemporary examples of the same. Abortion medicines and sterile intercourse are commonplace in Eliot. A visitor "assaults at once" (The Waste Land, 45, ls. 236, 239) after a typist has eaten and is "bored and tired" (ls. These phrases convey the sexual boredom that has set in:

"I cannot help it, she said, pulling a long face,

It is the pills I took to bring it off, she said." (The Waste Land, 43, ls. 157-8)

Eliot's sexually repressed writings echo the dryness and finality of Al-Sayyab's poetry. Interestingly, Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, a classic work comparing religions, folklore, and mythologies, appears to have been consulted by both poets. For Al-Sayyab, myth is the teleological, etiologial goal of commentary. Therefore, he incorporates its symbols and themes—such as Christ and Tammuz, sacrifice and fertility—into his poetry.

"The King of the Wood was regarded as an incarnation of the tree-spirit or of the spirit of vegetation, and that as such he would be endowed, in the belief of his worshippers, with a supernatural power of making the trees to bear fruit, the crops to grow, and so on" (Frazer, 1993, p. 240)

Frazer argues that if the King of the Wood were killed before he became too sick or injured to rule effectively, his divine soul might be transferred to a more capable successor, ensuring that the vital and natural power he symbolizes would continue to thrive. The potential for this method to "promote as well as stimulate plant development" (p. 248). Adonis or Thammuz, the god of vegetation in Semitic and Phoenician mythology, receives an entire chapter devoted to him by Frazer. The cult of Adonis was popular in Festivals honouring his life, death, and resurrection, which were held throughout Egypt and Syria in the spring. The tale of Adonis is closely linked to "the decay and revival of vegetation" (p. 281); his "myrrh tree" (281), according to Frazer's description, is what mothers are like. If you believe Frazer, Aphrodite/Adonis's lover, Istar, travels to Hades in Babylonian mythology. After being slain by a boar, you should give him water (p. 287). In Western culture, Adonis represents the equivalent in the East. "Legend states that the anemone was born from Adonis's blood, the god of plants and flora" (The Golden Bough, p. 297). In his discussion of other vegetative deities, Frazer mentions the case of Attis, whose burial and subsequent resurrection were similarly observed each spring. "Worshipped as a tree spirit at religious celebrations and ceremonies in Western Asia." (The Golden Bough, p. 298); along with a corn ghost, Dionysus, a Greek deity, is also associated with nature. The central

motif in such tales is survival and rebirth after death, which has potential parallels to the afterlife. The Arab world, after years of cultural and political collapse and internal strife. In Eliot's "Death by Water", water represents death rather than life. In Chapter Five, "What the Thunder Said," there is thunder but no rain in this desert. In the words of *The Waste Land*, we are experiencing "dry sterile thunder without rain" Death is rife in Eliot's grim legendary universe. No one is preparing for the life-giving rain that would provide water:

"He who was living is now dead

We who were living are now dying

With a little patience

There is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road. (*The Waste Land* 48, ls. 329-333)"

In the fifth part, the contrast between "water" and "drop" and "dry" is most pronounced. In Eliot's poem, the rain never comes, religion is ineffective, and redemption appears to be personal:

"Chapels are empty, dark clouds gather, but no rain falls.

I sat on the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

Shall I at least set my lands in order? (*The Waste Land* 51, ls. 424-426)"

Frazer's fertility myths are mocked by decay and death in this Eliotic allegory. There is no hope for any promise of atonement. Eliot is experiencing a breakdown of his previously held beliefs and principles.

In contrast, Al-Sayyab offers a unique mythological perspective. Al-Sayyab's "The Rain Song" (Awad, 1983, p. 33) is the pinnacle of his modernist poetry efforts, in which he draws without mentioning Adonis on a basic fertility myth and the inevitability of rebirth. Therefore, myth is not an afterthought but an essential structural pattern in the poetry. In this context, the female figure represents the earth as a "mother earth" (Awad, 1983, p. 34). The ceremonial chanting of "Rain...Rain...Rain" in Al-Sayyab's "The Rain Song" appeals to rain to satisfy both the parched earth and the famished populace.

"Iraq will burst forth into leaf

With the rain." (Bishai, 1986, p. 27).

The inevitable rain has everyone waiting. In Al-Sayyab, however, "The Rain Song" describes rain tinged with tears and blood. There is a chance for regeneration, but it may only occur after a violent uprising and hardship. While it may seem insurmountable, tyranny may be overthrown.

"In every drop of rain that falls

Yellow or red from the heart of a flower,

And every tear shed by the hungry and the naked,

And every drop spilt of the blood of serfs

Is a smile awaiting a fresh one

To follow in its wake, or a nipple

Which flowers at the mouth of a babe

In the young world of tomorrow,

World, giver of life.

Moreover, the rain falls heavily." (Bishai, 1986, p. 28)

In contrast to Eliot's pessimism, this optimistic vision demonstrates faith in a brighter future for the Arab world despite temporary persecution. In Al-Sayyab's poetry, the rain "falls heavily," wiping away past wrongdoing and bringing a new beginning. This bright picture makes us think of Jaikur. This virtuous city stands in contrast to the corrupt metropolis (even if it is dark because of the exile and isolation of its residents from the city dwellers). According to "Jaikur and the Trees of the City," the city of Jaikur is filled with evergreen trees and has no time to rest during the night. In contrast to Eliot's London, this fictitious metropolis becomes a fertile raingarden:

"And tonight there is rain in Jaikur

Showering shadows—

Night stealing over Jaikur." (p. 38-39)

The cycle of life and death is perpetual. The "similes, metaphors, allegories, literary allusions, and symbols" (Boullata, 1980, p. 235) that make Al-Sayyab's system of imagery are particularly noteworthy. According to Boullata, "the village of Al-Sayyab and the river with its palms, waters, and shells become part of this system of symbolism of fertility; and Babel, the wicked city, and its labyrinthine paths of mud become their counterpart of barrenness, complexity, and death" (p. 237). As Boullata explains, Al-Sayyab looked to myths for "archetypes that would embody man's hopes and fears, and suited them with acuteness to man's modern predicament, especially that of the modern Arab" (p. 242). He employed myth as a tool for social and political cohesion. According to El-Azma, Al-Sayyab was able to understand better "the loss of his civilization, and the decay of the Arab culture and the Islamic people" (p. 219) because to Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In place of London, we have Baghdad. However, Al-Sayyab's poetry offers more promise for resurrection, and water remains a universal metaphor for fertility.

To communicate the expanded scope of his vision, which he believed would ensure not only its worldwide applicability but also drive deeper roots into the ground of the fatherland, Al-Sayyab turned to myth "as an 'objective correlative'" (El-Azma, 1980, p. 225). Kadhim claims that al-Sayyab's use of the Tammuz story in "Fi al-Maghrib al-Arabi" allows him to "transcend the WL's vision and ultimately to repudiate that vision" (p. 137). Subversion and alteration characterize Eliot and Al-Sayyab's relationship rather than a straightforward power dynamic. In local sociopolitical circumstances, Al-Sayyab employs myth as a kind of mini-narrative. He then invests in such regional settings with far-reaching, global insight.

Asfour explains, "Since the middle of the century, there has been a growing use of myth, symbol, and legend, reshaped to incorporate themes of contemporary significance" (Asfour, 1993, p. 48). According to Asfour, a "notable discrepancy between Eliot's wasteland and Sayyab's is that in Sayyab, the land generally continues to replenish its wealth year after year" (p. 58). In other words, the land's sterility in Al-Sayyab's poetry does not reflect Eliot's depiction of civilization's demise. Since Eliot's tales serve as a foundation, Al-Sayyab expands and alters them. In contrast to the romantic stage, the realistic stage, or the individual stage (as his detractors like to call it), Al-Sayyab's mature poetry is rife with mythical motifs. Myth can also be used in a pessimistic way. In the poetry "In the Dark Village" ("Fi al-Karyati el Dalmaa"), for instance, the dead come to as if from slumber, expecting a resurrection only to find that there is no such thing in their quiet, forsaken community. They observe the changing of the seasons, the sounds of the wind and the foliage, and the crescent moon before returning to their graves and wondering when the Day of Judgment would come (Awad, 1983, pp. 31-32). This resurrection, however delayed, will occur.

This poem is bleaker than the others we have looked at, yet it never denies the possibility of resurrection as a rebirth after experiencing darkness and death. The precise timing is just left unstated. Al-Sayyab's conviction in the necessity of change in the form of life after death is hinted at by the apocalyptic tone of the poem, which borrows from the poetry of W. B. Yeats.

5. Conclusion

Similar to Eliot, Al-Sayyab utilizes historical and traditional myths in his work. Specifically, he incorporates the tale of Tammuz and Ishtar as a symbolic representation of the cyclical nature of death and resurrection. Additionally, the author employs the Babylonian tale and the Sphinx myth as symbolic representations of authoritarianism and subjugation. The poetry authored by the individual in question conveys a profound and intricate relationship between humanity, the natural world, and the human experience.

Al-Sayyab's poetry provides evidence supporting the notion that the concepts of resurrection and regeneration hold fundamental and enduring significance for humanity. A combination of social, political, and cultural elements necessitates the change process.

Hence, the poet's verses elucidate the inherent interconnectedness between life and death and the interdependence of optimism and despair. Hence, it is unsurprising that the poet connects blood, water, and tears in his poetic works.

Al-Sayyab employs literary elements such as legendary motifs and archetypes. The poet assumes the role of the spokesperson for national issues by embodying Arab regimes within a legendary context. This allows him to elevate his poetry to a global sphere while reinterpreting popular myths to align with his creative objectives as an Iraqi Arab poet. Examining Eliot and Al-Sayyab's poetry via a comparative lens has yielded valuable insights into the interplay of influences within the modernist framework. However, it is important to acknowledge that the individual works of each poet possess inherent significance and need independent research. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the local settings in both cases may serve as a valuable tool for interpreting the poems. For instance, the Western tradition is a significant factor in understanding Eliot's work, while the Eastern-Arab environment plays a crucial role in comprehending Al-Sayyab's poetry. The utilization of international comparative settings proves to be highly advantageous in fostering a global perspective within the field of cultural studies.

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