Rethinking Watariyyat *Layliyya/Night Strings* by the Iraqi Poet Muthafar al-Nawwab

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Abstract

Within the parameters of the critical theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, this paper critically explores the text of the most controversial long poem in the history of modern Arabic literature (Mudhafar al-Nawwab's masterpiece "Watariyyat Layliyya/Night Strings") in addition to other selected texts in order to illuminate the poet's attitude toward major issues , integral to the contemporary socio-political scene in Iraq and the Arab world , like oppression, displacement, struggle and search for identity in addition to his attempt to revolutionize the consciousness of the Iraqi/Arab people at times of crisis, catastrophe and political turmoil. The paper also examines the hostile attitude of the poet toward the atrocities and brutalization committed by well-established dictatorial regimes in the Arab world in addition to the aggressive/hegemonic policies advocated by imperialistic and repressive agencies in the region. Intervening in narratives of revolution, ideology and resistance, the paper attempts to break new ground in modern Iraqi literature by providing a critical / analytical framework through which the political and radical poetry of Mudhafar al-Nawwab is filtered in terms of thematic structures and poetic techniques in order to open new horizons in trans-cultural studies and pave the way for new research landscape in contemporary Iraqi / Arabic poetry.

[**Keywords**: Mudhafar al-Nawwab; Bakhtin, Watariyyat Layliyya/Night Strings; Iraq, Arab, crisis, imperialism, trans-cultural]

The great Iraqi poet, Mudhafar al-Nawwab, descends from a well-known Shiite family that originally immigrated to Iraq from the Arabian Peninsula. As a result of engaging in revolutionary activities against the Turkish invaders during the Ottoman colonization of Iraq, al-Nawwab's family was dismissed out of the country. The family settled in India for a long time but they were banished back to Iraq by the British authorities after the British occupation of India. As a member of a revolutionary family, al-Nawwab opposed the dictatorship of the Iraqi governments in the 1950's and 1960's, consequently, he was brutalized by the regime's agents. In 1963, al-Nawwab, as a result of political persecution, decided to escape from Iraq to the Soviet Union via Iranian territories. In the beginning of his journey of escape, al-Nawwab infiltrated into his hometown, Alahwaz, located in the border region, which was annexed to Iran during the era of western colonization. Overwhelmed by feelings of sadness and nostalgia for his hometown, the poet stayed in Alahwaz for a short time before he was arrested by members of the Iranian Intelligence Agency. In Iranian prisons, al-Nawwab was subjected to different forms of torture and humiliation. After his deportation to Iraq, he was convicted of serious political

crimes and was consequently given a death penalty. Fortunately he was able to escape from prison, and then he found a sanctuary in the southern region of Iraq. Nevertheless, he was arrested in 1969 and was banished out of Iraq forever. As a refugee poet, al-Nawwab has stayed in different places – such as Cairo, Damascus, France, Greece, Thailand, Russia, India, Algiers, Libya, Sudan, London, Chicago, Brazil and other Latin American countries – moving from one exile to another carrying the pains of a wounded nation.

Like the revolutionary works of Third World literature associated with national liberation movements, the radical / political poetry of al-Nawwab is a reflection of the misery of the masses in the Arab world. The poetry of "**Watariyyat Layliyy/ Night Strings**", for instance, is basically addressed to the poor and the toiling classes spreading in the Arab world from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the coasts of the Arabian Gulf. The down-trodden classes occupy a central position in the poetic world of al-Nawwab. The Iraqi poet modelled his poetry on the aesthetic ideologies personified in the literature of resistance and advocated by politically committed writers. Apparently, the poetry of al-Nawwab aims to provide a stimulus for the proletariat classes in the Arab countries by getting them involved in resistance and struggle against evil and injustice. For political and ideological reasons, al-Nawwab himself participated in rebellion and protest confronting the oppressive forces that have dehumanized the Iraqi people. Sharing the suffering and pain with the poor classes in his community, al-Nawwab gained his reputation as the poet of the proletariat.

For a long time, al-Nawwab has written poetry dedicated to the common people not for critics and academicians using the everyday- language of the masses and manipulating ideology, polemics, obscenity as a means of expressing the anger and agony of his favourite readers:

> I walked throughout the Arab flesh market
> Overwhelmed by the tears of sorrow
> O my homeland, you have been regularly
> Fucked by the Persians, the Turks
> And the Roman boys
> Even the nasty smelling Ethiopian king
> Is exhibiting his dirty erected penis
> in the face of the Arab world (Watariyyat 1985: 43[1]).

Al-Nawwab regrets the squandering of Arab natural resources particularly the oil resources systematically plundered by imperialistic countries with the help of puppet Arab leaders. Personifying the Arab world as a beautiful lady, raped by foreign merchants, the poet aims to reveal the impotence of contemporary Arab leaders who have failed to protect the natural resources of the Arab nation from imperialistic monopoly. Instead, they squandered Arab oil in order to satisfy their western allies who provide them with weapons to tyrannize Arab people and remain in power.

According to al-Nawwab, contemporary Arab rulers have turned the Arab world into a big brothel used for the entertainment of imperialistic countries. The Arab leaders and their tyrannical regimes , in al-Nawwab's poetry , are delineated as forces of evil that seek to eliminate the advocates of revolution , change and struggle in the Arab world. Recognizing that puppet Arab regimes and their imperialistic allies are responsible, to a great extend, for the recurrent defeats and tragedies of the Arab world, al-Nawwab, in **Watariyyat**, depicts western imperialistic countries, particularly the United States and England as "wolves" threatening the security of (the Arab world) which is portrayed as "a brothel governed by the royal thighs". In this context the poet denounces the submissive attempts of cowardly Arab leaders who appeal to the "wolves"–western imperialistic countries-to find a peaceful solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Dismissing all peace negotiations as kinds of submission, al-Nawwab criticizes what he calls " the masturbation of Arab tragedies through nonsensical peace initiatives and the exchange of toasts with bastard western politicians" (Watariyyat 1985: 53).

In order to create a collective Arab consciousness able to confront internal transformations and external challenges, al-Nawwab uncovers the impotence of contemporary Arab rulers who betrayed their own peoples. He used poetry as a weapon to trigger the emotions of the frustrated and disillusioned multitudes of the Arab people urging them to resist local oppression and injustice. His poetry, as a whole, aims to reveal the moral bankruptcy of repressive and hegemonic agencies that seek to dehumanize and castrate the Arab masses. Due to the dramatic political consequences in the Arab world since the Palestinian tragedy in 1948, al-Nawwab was forced to come to terms with the new realities in his community transforming his poetry into a weapon in the war for survival and dignity. Therefore, he developed a radical poetics of anger and revolt in order to awaken the Arab consciousness and move the masses toward revolution against the forces of hegemony and the representatives of imperialism in the region.

For al-Nawwab, the post Second World War era, in the Arab world was an eventful period, characterized by political turmoil and dramatic developments. As a revolutionary poet, al-Nawwab, like other Arab poets, was agonized by the dramatic developments integral to the Palestinian tragedy in 1948. The poet was also agitated by the consequences of the tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956 and the depressing defeat of the 1967 war as well as other catastrophic events that have left damaging impact on the Arab psyches. For example , the defeat in the 1967 war with Israel which resulted in the occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories in Eastern Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in addition to the Golan Heights in Syria and the Sinai Desert in Egypt, intensified al-Nawwab's feelings of frustration, anger and alienation. Obviously, al-Nawwab was infuriated by the official Arab policy of indifference toward the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

Unlike other Arab poets who have responded to the painful experience of the Palestinian tragedy with poems of profound sadness, nostalgia and longing for return to a homeland they lost due to Arab impotence and imperialistic interference, al-Nawwab developed a radical poetics of anger in order to awaken the collective Arab consciousness drawing the attention of the Arab people to the tragic realities of the Arab world. As a voice of resistance and struggle against oppression and injustice, al-Nawwab identifies his own exilic experience inside and outside Iraq with the tragedy of the Palestinians living in refugee camps inside Palestine or in ghettoes of Diaspora in the Arab world or elsewhere. Seeing no difference between the policies of Arab rulers who brutalize their own peoples and the policies of the ex- imperialistic countries participating in the displacement of the   Palestinian refugees - turning them into a nation of exiles and refugees - al-Nawwab writes poetry which is a criticism of Arab governments as much as an attack against western policies ignoring   the rights of the Palestinians.

As a revolutionary poet, al-Nawwab has witnessed with agony how Arab countries were ravaged by oppressive regimes in the 1950's and 1960's. Attempting to express his view toward the national causes of his own country- Iraq- al-Nawwab was subjected to torture, persecution and displacement. Unfortunately, he was arrested, jailed and brutalized due to his political and ideological commitments. As an exile who suffers from dispossession after being cut off from his roots in the border region between Iraq and Iran as a result of the annexation of his village, Alahwaz by Iran, the Iraqi poet attempts to go back to his birthplace. Due to extreme feelings of nostalgia and longing for return, al-Nawwab infiltrated into his village, located near the Iranian borders and was arrested, put in jail and brutalized by the Iranian police. He states that in Tehran, the capital of Iran, "ten executioners hit me with their whips and heavy shoes". He describes the interrogation rituals in the Iranian prison: "the executioner asks me: Who are you? / I was ashamed to tell him / that I have been dismissed out of my country [Iraq]/ because I revolted against imperialism" (Watariyyat 1985 72). In the Tehran prison where he was tortured by the "Iranian ghoul", the poet recalled "the face of Palestine" which provided him with moral strength, consequently, he "spat on the executioner's face". The executioner accordingly, used more brutal ways of torture against the poet in an attempt to force him to make a confession:

> "On this chair
> we have castrated many
> of your comrades",
> said the executioner.
> It is bitter for you
> to make a confession
> as I said (Watariyyat 1985: 74).

In order to tolerate the torture of the Iranian executioner, al-Nawwab recalls the image of "Abu Thar, al-Ghafari[2]", a revolutionary Muslim comrade who is glorified in al-Nawwab's poetry as a symbol of defiance and courage and as a voice of

opposition against injustice. Evoking the face of "Abu Thar", the poet refused to reveal the names of his revolutionary friends in spite of being tortured for a long period of time in an Iranian prison. In the same prison, al-Nawwab was forced, under torture, to sign documents admitting that he will never come back to his village which has become a part of the Iranian territory, as a result of differences over the Iraqi/Iranian borders during the colonial era.

Imitating T.S. Eliot's poetic techniques in "The Waste Land", al-Nawwab, in his lamentation over the loss of Alahwaz village, in which he was born, says: "who is the one who is shrouded with all the palm trees of the night? Who is the one holding all the rivers of Alahwaz in his hand/ and confronting the wolfishness of this world" (Watariyyat 1985: 35). The preceding lines are an echo of Eliot's "who is the third who walks always beside you?" and "who are those hooded hordes swarming/ over endless plains". Like, Eliot's Wasteland, the Arab world is depicted in al-Nawwab's poetry as "a sinful land", a land of corruption and hypocrisy. In this "sinful land", the "adulterers of Arab history", contemporary Arab leaders, have brutalized Arab people dominating them by fire and sword. The Arab world is also described as "the slaughter land" where freedom, democracy, human rights and human beings are butchered every day and night.

Navigating the inner conflicts among Arab/Muslim countries in the Middle East, al-Nawwab refers to his birthplace village Alahwaz, which was annexed by the Iranian government during the Shah era. The poet sarcastically describes the rape of his own village during the British occupation of his country: "the farting king (the Shah) came at night toward Alahwaz village/that night Alahwaz was stolen from my country" (Watariyyat 1985: 44). Being dispossessed, al-Nawwab affirms what he calls "the wolfishness of our world" (Watariyyat 1985: 35) echoing Eliot's "the Waste Land": "on the tenth of April, I wept on the gates of Alahwaz/on the tenth of April, I left my eyes on the gates of Alahwaz" (Watariyyat 1985: 34). Al-Nawwab's line "on the tenth of April I wept on the gates of Alahwaz" echoes Eliot's "by the waters of Leman I sat down and wept". Lamenting his destiny as an exile after he lost his homeland, Alahwaz, the displaced poet, identifies himself and his dispossession with the Jewish experience in exile and Diaspora. Explicitly, al-Nawwab's line is a reflection of his alienation and displacement after being cut off from his ethnic and racial roots. He laments with agony the loss of his own village rebuking those

> Who smuggled Alahwaz out of my country?
> who forced its people to wear?
> the masks of alien cultures?
> who smuggled the rivers of Al-Ahwaz
> embroidered with Arab palm trees? (Watariyyat 1985: 40).

In his poetry about Alahwaz, al-Nawwab employs symbols and allusions to Arab history and culture affirming that Alahwaz palm trees are part of "the Arab land". In this context, al-Nawwab seeks to underline his own Arab identity. The

geographical and cultural references to Alahwaz, a distant homeland, aim to assert the identity of a refugee poet who lives in exile and Diaspora. Al-Nawwab's poetic discourse in this sense is structured around the notion that his poems are attempts to confront the evil forces that seek to widen the gap between the exiled poet and his homeland. This self-conscious attempt to challenge living in Diaspora by creating narratives of the homeland is part of the poetic process of legitimatizing al-Nawwab's Arab identity. Further, the role of cultural myths and symbols such as "the palm-trees", "Alahwaz rivers" and other elements, in shaping the notions of self, community and identity, is insightful in delineating the distinctive way in which these symbols represent the poet's homeland. Disappointed by his personal agony and feelings of displacement after being expelled out of Alahwaz, Al-Nawwab laments the fate of the entire Arab people who have been subjected to internal oppression and external blackmail for decades:

> How long will my homeland
> remain a petrol tanker
> carrying Arab sorrows
> and the flags of imperialistic countries?
> how long will the Arab people
> die of humiliation and shame? (Watariyyat 1985: 40)

There is no doubt that the Iraqi poet has suffered from being deprived of his homeland twice : once when his birthplace village Alahwaz, located on the Iranian / Iraqi border was annexed by Iran with the help of imperialistic forces, and once when he was dismissed out of Iraq due to his political and ideological views. As an Iraqi poet descending from a Shiite family, al-Nawwab has deeply suffered from alienation and exile in his own homeland and in Diaspora as well:

> an executioner asks me:
> who are you?
> I was ashamed to tell him
> that I have been dismissed out
> of my country because I revolted
> against imperialism (Watariyyat 1985: 72).

Moreover, the Palestinian tragedy and the deplorable circumstances of the Arab world since 1948 increased al-Nawwab's feelings of humiliation, exile and displacement. In his political poetry particularly his famous anthology, (Watariyyat Layliyy/Night Strings), he severally criticizes contemporary Arab rulers who have betrayed the cause of the Palestinian people turning the Arab world into a "prostitution house" at the disposal of imperialistic forces which have plundered Arab wealth and natural resource for decades.

Due to its inflammatory rhetoric and forbidden themes, al-Nawwab's poetry was banned in the Arab world. However, it has gained wide reputation among Arab youth/masses and was secretly circulated in all Arab countries. Ideologically, al-Nawwab's radical poetics is marked by a denunciation of internal

corruption and a rejection of the passive attitude of Arab governments toward the Palestinian tragedy. In this context, Avraham Sela considers "the Arab-Israeli conflict as the ultimate sphere of interaction between state interests and all- Arab commitments" (Sela 1999: 1). It is noteworthy to point out that al-Nawwab's poetry succeeds in depicting the conflict between the values and political ideologies of an Arab nation that favours concepts of Arabism and the actual policies that individual Arab governments and leaders desire to maintain. The most striking example of this political tension in reality is the Arab policy toward the Palestinian Israeli issue.

In theory, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent expansion of its boundaries demanded a unified Arab reaction that was supposed to put the Palestinian tragedy at the top of a broad supranational agenda, which also included Arab unity and complete freedom from foreign intervention. In practice, Arab leaders have rarely shown such a response. Instead, they have used anti-Israeli slogans, pan-Arab rhetoric instrumentally to reinforce their domestic legitimacy and to conceal inter-Arab disagreements. With the passage of time, these Arab regimes have gradually developed the capacity to pursue autonomous foreign and domestic policies with only token regard for symbolic Arab concerns such as the restoration of Palestine. For example, Arab summits, the major venue for collective decision-making on Arab core issues, played a critical role in this evolutionary process both reflecting and shaping the changing attitudes toward the Palestinian issue.

Instead of providing an official forum for redefining collective goals and serving as a mechanism of collective moral authority assigned the task of bridging the contractions between the pan-Arab nationalism and the state systems interests, the summits were a way to legitimize shifts in the policies of Arab regimes away from previously articulated common norms and toward approaches that were more consistent with their individual state preferences. This is a contradiction with the pan-Arab dreams expressed by the Egyptian ex-president Jamal Abdul-Naser and his advocates. Therefore, al-Nawwab in *Watariyyat* focuses on the passive attitude of Arab leaders toward the plight of the Palestinian refugees. He pokes fun at some Arab leaders who do not have time to talk about the Palestinian tragedy even during Arab summits, transformed into funny/formal rituals and celebratory ceremonies where leaders discuss public relations as well as personal pursuits. For example, in one of the poetic sequences – in *Watariyyat*- al-Nawwab sarcastically refers to one of those impotent leaders, an Arab Sultan, who suddenly decides to "wear slippers and sunglasses", therefore "the Arab League, may god bless her, acknowledges his fabulous achievements" (*Watariyyat* 1985: 54). In the same poetic piece, al-Nawwab also comments on a newspaper article which scandalizes a famous Arab ambassador "who behaves like a prostitute during a meeting with foreign military Generals" (Watariyyat 1985: 55). Being frustrated by the disgraceful and indifferent attitudes of the Arab regimes toward the national causes of their own peoples, al-Nawwab rages at the Arab leaders who betrayed the Palestinian

dream putting obstacles on the way of establishing an independent Palestinian state.

The Dialogical and Polyphonic Structure of al-Nawwab's Long Poem

Paul de Man argues that "Hermeneutics and Poetics, different and distinct as they are, have a way of becoming entangled, as indeed they have since Aristotle and before. One can look upon the history of literary theory as the continued attempt to disentangle this knot and to record the reasons for failing to do so" (Cited in Gohar 2001:39). Since the time of Aristotle, "Poetics" has been concerned with the construction of a theory. There are diverse attempts to shape a poetics of literature integrating language/linguistics, ideology and narrative structure. Due to several shortcomings , the search for an integrated alternative poetics which is socially relevant, historically valid and open-ended led scholars like Roger Fowler, T. Todorov and others to recommend Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic criticism as an adequate poetics of literature.

Bakhtin believes that the sociological method can be utilized to explore the casual interaction between literature and its extra-artistic social milieu. His insistence on the dialogic nature of "truth" and "word" allows and anticipates the participation of the "Other". This inclusion of the "Other" makes his theory open-ended. Obviously, Bakhtin proposes major alternatives for a sociological poetics through his whole body of criticism. Dealing with the function of language in society, Bakhtin explores language as an event and argues that linguistic and social elements in language pre-determine each other. By tackling the artistic form of everyday language, he considers poetic utterance as verbally complemented aesthetic communication. Bakhtin also prefers to analyze certain aspects of verbal utterances outside the realm of literature, in the speech of everyday utterances, because he believes that those utterances are already embedded with the potentialities of artistic form.

In Bakhtin's viewpoint, the verbal discourse takes into account the extra-verbal situation of the utterance. This verbal utterance directly engages in an event in life and merges with the event. According to him, the extra-verbal situation comprises three elements including the common spatial preview of the interlocutors, the interlocutor's common knowledge and understanding of the situation in addition to their common evaluation of that situation. Thus, the verbal discourse, according to Bakhtin, proves itself to be a social event (Bakhtin/Volosinov 1984: 401). Exploring the role of art in society, Bakhtin argues that art like any other political or ethical system is immanently social. The extra-artistic social milieu, affecting art from outside, finds direct, intrinsic response within it. This is not a "case of one foreign element affecting another but of one social formation affecting another social formation" (Bakhtin/Volosinov 1984: 393).

On this basis, Bakhtin believes that the theory of art can only be sociology of art. In a related context, Bakhtin's attitude toward the place of form in art is reflected through his view that form is an active expression of evaluation in two following directions: toward the listener and toward the object of utterance, i.e., "the hero", to quote Bakhtin. Thus, he suggests that form should be studied in two aspects: "with respect to content, as its ideological evaluation, and with respect to the material as the technical realization of that evaluation" (Bakhtin/Volosinov 1984: 403). In this way, the sociological poetics of Bakhtin aims at understanding the special type of communication realized in literary works taking into consideration the intersection between the following categories: "language/word/sign", "narrative/text/genre" and "ideology/world/reality". In addition to the connections between the individual elements of each category, the mutual dialogue between "language/narrative/ideology", "word/text/world" and "sign/genre/reality" characterizes Bakhtin's model of sociological poetics.

Moreover, Bakhtin's notions of dialogic or sociological poetics may help researchers to pursue that inquiry more systematically. His model of the utterance posits "three participants" to make any utterance intelligible including the speaker, the hero, and the listener (Bakhtin/Volosinov 1984: 105) expanding the poetic utterance as the speaker's "active expression of evaluation in these two different directions toward the listener and toward the object of utterance, the hero" (Bakhtin/Volosinov 1984: 107). The signs of these entities are the figures of thought that invoke or evoke or entail the relations of speaker, listener and hero - first person declarations , offerings of reasons , many other moves and gestures - that take their interactive colouring from the strong presence of these obvious figures.

In poetic utterances, these moves and gestures are emphasized by prosodic resources, choices of words and the order of the utterance's unfolding. One additional remark from the theory of Bakhtin and Volosinov may clear their position and also direct attention toward those elements of the poem to which it pertains. According to Bakhtin and Volosinov "the author, hero and listener, mentioned above, are to be understood not as entities outside the artistic event but only as entities of the very perception of an artistic work, entities that are essential constitutive factors of the literary work. They are the living forces that determine form and style and are distinctly detectable by any competent contemplator (Bakhtin / Volosinov 1984: 109).

Furthermore, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin argues that the novel "or the long poem" is a "linguistic unit" which is not a "single unified whole" but a "hybrid form" and a "composite collection" of many formulae:

> Every type of intentional stylistic hybrid is more or less dialogised. This means that the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue, there is an argument between styles of language. (Bakhtin 1981: 76).

For this reason, Bakhtin's theory underlines the concept of a supposed dialogue between the novelist and earlier writers, not just between the texts themselves. His dialogic method is central to his theory and critical perspective. By dialogical, Bakhtin means that every "utterance" oral or written, takes place as an act of communication between speakers in a given cultural environment. The meaning of the utterance is shared by writer and listener who in essence mutually interact for the duration of the interchange. In this context, Gary Morison points out that

> For Bakhtin, the listener does not understand an utterance simply by decoding it in terms of the system of the language. The decoder is also an encoder. To understand an utterance means to formulate a reply to it, to evaluate it. Understanding is thus itself dialogue. It follows, moreover, that meaning does not belong to the speaker, but to the interaction between speaker and listener. Because meaning is shared territory, the same set of words can differ in meaning if they belong to different verbal interactions (Morson 1978: 411).

Since a poem or a novel, is an utterance, its meaning is shaped by the interaction of author, reader, and text within a specific cultural environment, and the meaning of the text, to quote Bakhtin, alters as that environment alters. Thus, Bakhtin supports the concept of the dynamic relationship between text and cultural environment. The utterance, then, contains within itself, as part of its shaping context, recognition of the Other and an anticipation of response (Morson1978: 410). And this sense of "the Other" affects the shaping of the poem through self-consciousness of the author regarding the poem's possible audience. In traditional epics, the authors assume an identity of national consciousness, cultural values, and religious beliefs between author and reader. The author of the modern poem can assume no identity between author and reader concerning any code of values or identity of national consciousness. But the author tends to be aware of the reader as "Other" and must anticipate his / her possible responses to the uttered poem. For Bakhtin, the constitutive mode of the novel is not epic narration but dialogue, that is, the relation that is established , thanks to the essentially "dialogic nature of the novelistic word, among several autonomous discourses in respect to which the author himself takes the position of an interlocutor and not of a sovereign master" (Aucouturier 1983 : 238).

But contrary to Bakhtin's emphasis, this concept of dialogue or double-voiced discourse increasingly applies to poetry and modern prose. For example many passages, phrases, and words in long poems – like al-Nawwab's *Watariyyat Layliyya/Night Strings* - characterized as literary allusions also act as double-voiced discourse in that they not only make explicit reference to extra textual utterances within the literary social horizons of author and reader but also serve as a comment on, or reply to, these other literary works. One of the multiple speakers in the poem says:

During such an hour of the lustful nights

> the sparrows on the golden thorns were invoking
> the glories of the ancient Arab kings
> during such an hour of infinite weeping
> during such an hour I was riding the she-camel
> overwhelmed with the eternal stars of the night
> during such an hour I embraced
>   the spirit of the Arabian desert (*Watariyyat* 1985: 44).

Unlike postcolonial poets who rewrite western canons in order to subvert them, al-Nawwab, in the preceding lines, Eliot's moral vision (in *The Waste Land*) to confront local political challenges. In other words, al-Nawwab employs T.S Eliot's techniques and poetic discourse to explore the political situation in the Arab world after the 1948 catastrophe. Using Eliot's technique of juxtaposition, al-Nawwab contemplates Arab life and history in the past and the present. The explicit references to " the desert "," the she-camel", and the "glories of ancient Arab kings" locate the poem in its Arabic geopolitical and historical context.

Further, the preceding poetic lines reveal al-Nawwab's awareness of Eliot's wasteland imagery and rhetoric as well as his poetic strategies that are adapted to emphasize the sordid reality of contemporary Arab history. Apparently al-Nawwab's phrase "during such an hour of the lustful nights" echoes a similar line from Eliot's poem *Waste Land*: "at the violet hour, the evening hour that strives homeward" (Eliot 1980: 45). The reference to the weeping of the Arabs at the loss of their glories recalls to mind Eliot's allusion to the weeping and lamentation of the Jews in Babylon and the weeping of Eliot's persona at the shores of Leman lake in *The Waste Land*:

> By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept
> Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song
> Sweet Thames run softly, for I speak not loud or long"
> (Eliot 1980: 42).

The Arab poet, like Tiresias, Eliot's central narrator can see the past and the present and anticipate/predict the future. The poet laments "the glories of the ancient Arab kings", such as Saladin, who conquered the crusaders and dismissed them out of Palestine.

Moreover , al-Nawwab's allusions to ancient Arab heritage - as cited above or to Islamic history in other parts of the text provide an example of this type of dialogue, mentioned by Bakhtin, in that they not only allude to classical Arabic literature or pre-Islamic narratives , Arabic mythology but also make a satiric comment on modern Arab politics of backwardness and defeatism. Due to mistaken Arab policies, the Arab people will be displaced from their homeland like the ancient Jews:

> We will surely become the Jews of history
> howling in the deserts of Diaspora

roaming in the wildness
without shelter (Watariyyat 1985: 53).

The reference to the Jews and their exilic history in Diaspora is a reminder of the potential future of the Arab nation if cowardly and hypocritical Arab rulers remain in power and if the Palestinians remain in exile without homeland. Al-Nawwab also alludes to the suffering of the Palestinian people living under Zionist occupation - in al-Nawwab's poetry, the terms "Zionists " is synonymously used to connote the invaders/colonizers of Palestine who attempt to deprive the Palestinian of establishing their independent state. Ironically, al-Nawwab, the radical Arab poet, does not criticize the Zionists in Israel, as severely as he attacks the Arab rulers who sold out the Palestinian cause, squandered Arab wealth and persecuted their citizens. Besides, in radical poetics of al-Nawwab, there is an explicit stream of human sympathy toward the historical plight and persecution of the Jewish people who are identified, in their suffering with the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees and Iraqi minorities living in internal exile and external Diaspora. The Arab poet's unquestionable sympathy with the Jews was taken by liberal Arab critics, as reference to the possibility on the part of the Arabs to transcend ethnic/racial barriers and ages of pain that have separated the two peoples (Jews and Arabs) for ages. Identifying the Palestinian tragedy with the historical plight of the Jews, al-Nawwab's poetry, in this context, may pave the way for a new era of peace and reconciliation, which seems unattainable under the current political situation in the region.

According to Bakhtin, double-voiced discourse arises in literature through the combination of the words of the utterance always entering the text already loaded with meanings, and the appearance of polyphony which means the presence of a variety of "languages" in a given text. In this context, it is significant to mention that the polyphonization of prose forms is a crucial part of Bakhtin's fascination with what he calls "the carnivalesque" in literature. Obviously, modern poetic pieces like Watariyyat *Layliyya* have witnessed the permeation of verse with just such a similar polyphonization, with the penetration of classical diction by the language of the street, by the dialects of the lower classes, and even by "anti-languages". In the famous "Sons of a Bitch/Awlad Alkahba" section of *Watariyyat*, the poet castigates the Arab leaders who betrayed the Palestinian cause accusing them of being responsible for the loss of Palestine incorporating Arabic slang and obscene language.

One of the multiple narrators in *Watariyyat* addresses the Arab leadership saying:

Oh sons of a bitch, (Awlad Alkahba), Jerusalem is the bride of your Arabism
why did you send all the night adulterers to her bedroom
while shrinking cowardly behind the doors
watching the rape scene
and listening to her screams and appeals for help

> while her virginity is being violated
> all of you start to withdraw your swords
> pretending to avenge her raped honour
> instead of slaying the rapists
> you start shouting at her
> demanding her to be silent and conceal the scandal
> you even force her to shut up her mouth to preserve Arab honour from disgrace
> you are really very honourable men
> shame on you, shame on all of you- sons of a bitch
> How can a raped lady remain silent? (Watariyyat 1985: 50).

Portraying Jerusalem as a virgin lady raped by alien invaders, al-Nawwab seeks to emphasize the Arab identity of Palestine and its holy city (Jerusalem) as well as the brutality of the assault. The explicit reference to Arab impotence is emphasized through phallic symbolism and Freudian allusions. The inability of Arab rulers to withdraw their swords during the rape scene is an evidence of their castration. In Freudian theories, the sword is recurrently used as an allusion to the penis.

The poetic techniques, utilized in *Watariyyat*, enable the characters, narrators or implied author to express viewpoints independent from the authorial presence. The narrator/hero is able to become subject rather than object in the poem, able to speak in a double-voiced discourse through the multiple perspectives afforded by the polyphonic discourse. Unlike the classical poem, the modern poem reflects multiple viewpoints, none of which gained un-assailed hegemony or absolute authority. For example, Mudhafar al-Nawwab's masterpiece **Watariyyat** represents a series of miniature narratives, events occurring in time, in a variety of voices, rendered both dramatically by characters speaking and descriptively by a first-person narrator. One of the angry voices in the poem says:

> My homeland has taught me
> that the alphabet of history
> becomes a falsification of reality
> if its letters are written without blood
> my homeland has taught me
> that human history without love
> and compassion is nothing but howling
> mourning and fucking in the wildness (*Watariyyat* 1985: 46).

Further, al-Nawwab utilizes the voices of major figures in Islamic history like Alhussain, Prophet Mohamed's grandson who was brutally assassinated in the battle of Karbala[3], southern of Iraq, after being laid under siege by the army of Yazid Ibn Moawiya.

As a group, the speakers in *Watariyyat* constitute dialogues with each other or are engaged in dialogue with the reader and the author. One of the speakers addresses the defeated Arab rulers:

> I am shouting at you
> I am spitting at your faces
> I challenge you to say the truth
> I know you won't
> because there is no Arab blood
> in your veins
> I am sure you are not Arabs
> or human beings or even animals
> do you know the meaning of honour
> where is your pride?
> where is your dignity? (Watariyyat 1985: 55).

The voices/speakers also construct, through their juxtaposition, the thematic dimension of the entire body of *Watariyyat*. This polyphony prevents any single narrative or discourse from asserting itself as authoritative and thereby prevents any clear-cut resolution enabling the al-Nawwab's poetics to be defined as tragic or satiric or elegiac. Without such formal closure, Watariyyat remains indeterminate, open-ended, and everywhere self-conscious of the incompleteness of the present:

> I was on the back of the she-camel
> astounded by the stars of the night
> you Bedouin who is interested in wandering
> in the Arabian desert
> take with you some drops of water
> as you continue your endless journey
> toward the Empty Quarter (Watariyyat 1985: 45).

Furthermore, Bakhtin conceives of the polyphonic novel as having a hero who becomes subject and enters into dialogue with the author and the reader, rather than an object of authorial analysis or simply a spokesperson for the author's completed monological worldview.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin points out that "the consciousness of a character is given as someone else's consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, it is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness" (Bakhtin 1984 : 7). The author can create such a subject-character by representing the character not as an observed personality but as an observing and commenting consciousness: "we see not who he is but how he is conscious of himself" (Bakhtin 1984: 49). The reader can experience such visualization only if the author lets the character speak (Bakhtin 1984: 53). And although the author will certainly inject his own voice, to some extent, in any literary work, he can prevent this incursion from overthrowing the dialogical character of the work's polyphony by giving up the last word on each character to the character itself.

In *Watariyyat*, Mudhafar al-Nawwab's presents a poetic narrative composed of a series of narrated events without a unified narrator centring on a major motif. The thematic centre–the current socio-political situation in the Arab world- is presented through a series of narrated and non-narrated episodes with various speakers, sometimes disembodied voices sometimes vividly described individuals (refugees, political prisoners, castrated soldiers) and develops gradually toward unfolding but indeterminate resolution. Apparently, the poetic narratives edge toward the direction of the internally persuasive, the dialogical and in the direction of the polyphonic, the double-voiced, not the homophonic voice crucial to traditional Arabic poetry.

Utilizing a plethora of voices, al-Nawwab in his poem "The Prince of the Sailors" makes allusions to the political history of Arab countries with an emphasis on Iraq particularly after the collapse of the Iraqi kingdom in 1958 and its replacement with dictatorial Republican regimes. In this context, he criticized the Republican regimes of Abdul-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif for their opposition against the opposition forces in Iraq and the atrocities they committed against Iraqi minorities. Al-Nawwab uses Eliot's poetic strategies juxtaposing the Iraqi rebels who revolted against Qasim's tyrannical regime to the Iraqi traitors, members of the ruling government, who betrayed the cause of their people. Using binary oppositions, al-Nawwab compares and contrasts the revolutionary and courageous rebels with the impotent and castrated traitors, members of Qasim's oppressive regime. Echoing Eliot's unreal cities narrative, he argues that Baghdad, like Tehran, is a hellish and sinful city which becomes the harbour and sanctuary of converted and castrated leaders who betrayed their people.

In the poem, cited above, the sailor (revolutionist, rebel) appears in different masks using a variety of voices such as "the lover sailor", "the hermit sailor", "the prophet", "Jesus Christ" and "the God of the night". On the other hand the Iraqi traitors, members of Qasim's Republican regime are associated, in the poem, with representatives of other tyrannical regimes in the Arab world and with "all the Sultans and Sheikhs" who have betrayed their countries. Further, the Iraqi traitors are also identified with a complex pattern of images and symbols that signify treason, betrayal, vice and evil. The members of Qasim's repressive regime who have sold out their souls and their people are described by the poet in abusive and offensive terms. He calls them: "the party of shits", "the rat ministers", "dirty and vicious dwarfs", the Republican Harem", "the Republican priests", "sons of a bitch", "sons of lairs" and "the castrated mob".

However , the members of the authority party are also identified with other tyrannical and corrupt figures and regimes whether at present or in the past such as "the shah party", "the Basra governor", "Judas", "Abu Al-Abbas Al-Saffah" (the assassin) and "Alhassan Albasry" in addition to the "white beau", "the blond bear", and "the snake", names which signify contemporary Arab rulers. As a whole, these symbols and allusions whether Islamic or Christian, modern or ancient carry negative connotations and seek to condemn Iraqi leaders who like, "Abu al-Abbas

al-Saffah (the assassin) the founder of the Abbasid Dynasty have slaughtered the Iraqi people who called for democracy and freedom. The allusions to "the police cars", "the elite classes", "the castrated ships" and Arab rulers who have connections with imperialistic countries, carry connotations of oppression, corruption, defeat and betrayal. Like all corrupt Arab rulers such as "the snake" "the blond bear", and "the white beau" who have betrayed their peoples all the Iraqi "sons of liars" should be eradicated and uprooted because they have undermined the revolutionary aspirations of the Iraqi nation dragging Iraq and the Arab world "backward to the stone age".

In describing the voices of utterances, it is noteworthy to refer to them either as homophonic or polyphonic. Homophonic voice means a single, uniform language throughout but polyphonic means multiple languages throughout. There is difference between the homophonic/polyphonic dichotomy from that of monological/dialogical because the latter is reserved for the distinction between authoritative and internally persuasive or absolute and relative utterances (La Capra 1983: 313-14.). According to La Capra, the imperative represents the simplest example of monological discourse and it elicits no reply except that of compliance. The monological literary work is one in which the author's word controls the interpretation of the work , as in simplistic one-level allegory or one in which all characters speak only to represent the moral or political position of the author as in several poems by Romantic poets.

Explicitly, the issue is not whether any work can succeed in being totally dialogical. It is whether or not modernist Arabic city poetry tends in the direction of the dialogical and the internally persuasive, in the direction of the "novel" or continues to remain monological and authoritative, speaking in poetic language which does not doubt itself and does not allow any polyphony to encroach upon its borders. Apparently, al-Nawwab's radical poetry - in *Watariyyat* - moves toward the direction of the dialogical and it becomes novelized. In this sense, *Watariyyat*, in Bakhtin's words, "becomes more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extra-literary heteroglossia and the novelistic layers of literary language, they become dialogised" (Bakhtin 1981:6). In moments of disappointment, frustration and pain, one of al-Nawwab's multiple voices complains to the "Arabian desert" appealing to it to listen to him:

> I am making a confession to you
> I am a bastard
> I am a nasty and miserable son of a bitch just like your defeats
> I am a motherfucker like your defeated rulers
> I am an ass hole just like your defeated peoples
> How dirty are we? How dirty are We? I do not exclude anyone.
> (Watariyyat 1985: 52).

This does not mean that *Watariyyat* stops being poetry by becoming novelized. In this context Bakhtin argues that poems "become more free and flexible, their

language renews itself by incorporating extra literary heteroglossia and the novelistic layers of literary language they become dialogised permeated with irony (and) elements of self parody" (Bakhtin 1981:6). There is no doubt that Bakhtin's argument affirms that poems remain poetic even if they are novelized because poetry gains revitalization through prose utterances which promote the writing of sophisticated poems. In other words, the novelization of al-Nawwab's Watariyyat not only liberates the poet from the pains of conscience as he makes a confession about the bitter realities of the contemporary political situation in the Arab world but also frees his poetry from the restraints of traditional, historical genre requirements no longer appropriate for the production of poetry in the current era.

Finally, the novelized features of modern poetics are identified by V.V. Ivanov as the new freedom attained by poetry in the twentieth century which enables the "advancing of dialogic relationships into the foreground". Ivanov states that dialogue, previously characteristic of artistic prose rather than poetry, is fore-grounded in modern poetry whereas in traditional poetry "a considerably larger role is played by the word which is direct and immediately oriented toward its object" (Ivanov 1975:200). Approaching modern poetry, the reader becomes a participant in dialogue rather than merely a recipient of information. Moreover Charles Hartman analyzes the novelization of poetry in terms of the breakdown of the dichotomy between works of literary art and other prose or poetry. He argues: "to those who sought room for new forms, the old opposition between prose and poetry, the later defined narrowly as material verse, began to seem too confining. Why not instead take poetry or verse as one end, and prose as the other, of a continuous spectrum" (Hartman 1980: 45).

The Discourse of Shame and Disgrace

In Watariyyat, al-Nawwab reveals the political and military impotence of the Arab governments underlying the failure of all corrupt Arab leaders to support the Palestinians in their struggle for freedom and dignity. In the concluding part of Watariyyat , which is devoted to the Palestinian/Israeli issue, al-Nawwab intensifies his satire, sarcasm and lampooning of puppet Arab rulers who betrayed the Palestinian cause bringing shame and chaos to the Arab world. He also attacked some PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) leaders who have exploited the suffering of their own people by wasting the money, initially dedicated to support the refugees, on personal pursuits. Instead of using the money raised in Arab countries and elsewhere to sponsor the liberation war against a ruthless enemy, top Palestinian leaders, according to al-Nawwab, have squandered big amounts of money on pleasures and extravagant adventures.

According to him , these Palestinian leaders who betrayed the cause of their people and the hypocritical Arab rulers (kings and presidents) contented of being slaves of imperialistic countries are the real enemies of the Arab people :

"These are your enemies, oh my homeland / your enemies are those who have sold Palestine and gained the price/your enemies are contended of being beggars /standing at the doorsteps of hypocritical rulers/and attending the banquets of imperialistic and rich countries" (Watariyyat 1985 : 49). Instead of committing themselves to struggle against the enemies of the nation, many Arab and Palestinian leaders according to al-Nawwab spent their time in nightclubs and five-star bars where they became drunk. While being drunk, these leaders, according to the poet, hallucinate about the Palestinian tragedy saying: "Jerusalem is the bride of the Arab Nation" (Watariyyat 1985: 49). Satirizing the Arab leaders who spend their time not in revolutionary activities but in the arms of prostitutes and criticizing all the puppet regimes in the Arab world , al-Nawwab swears that the Arab race will be inevitably eradicated by imperialism and its local allies as long as Arab countries are governed by these "bastard rulers".

Depicting the Arab rulers as a group of cowards remote-controlled by imperialistic forces, the poet affirms the impossibility of establishing a Palestinian state under the current political circumstances in the Middle East. In an angry manner, al-Nawwab addresses Arab leaders and policy makers using obscene language : "sons of a bitch/I have to reveal your dirty reality/the truth is that even the most pious and virtuous among you/ those who claim to be patriotic, chaste and righteous/are more disgusting than any nasty-smelling pig barn / now, it is time to expose your scandals to the public eye/now it is time to strip you of your hypocritical masks/sons of a bitch, you have assassinated the happiness of Arab people / In all the capital cities of the Arab world" (Watariyyat 1985 : 51). By failing to defend and restore occupied Arab land taken by force, the Arab rulers, according to the poet, should be removed from power and buried in the dunghill of history. In order to promote feelings of scorn and shame toward the Arab rulers, the poet effectively visualizes a rape scene where Jerusalem, a sacred symbol for Muslim, Christian and Jews, is being abducted and ravaged by foreign / barbaric invaders in the presence of all Arab rulers who are nothing but shameless eyewitnesses of the crime. The poet believes that Arab rulers, due to lack of effective political will and insight, have paved the way for the loss of Palestine and the rape of Jerusalem. In a sad tone, al-Nawwab addresses them: "Jerusalem is the bride of your Arabism,/why did you allow all the gonorrhoea-infected invaders to enter her bed chamber?" (Watariyyat 1985: 56).

In their confrontations with the enemies of the Arab nations, the Arab rulers "behave as cowards", says the poet, nevertheless, they are transformed into aggressive tyrants and brutal dictators when dealing with their own peoples particularly with those who call for freedom and democracy. On this basis, al-Nawwab, criticizes the domestic policies advocated by the dictatorial and military regimes in the Arab world, policies which advocate persecution and suppression. In

most of the Arab countries, people are dominated by repressive apparatuses whose main function is to tyrannize and brutalize the opposition voices and innocent citizens. In these countries where democracy and human rights are luxuries, ethnic/religious minorities, political opposition activists and dissidents of sate policy spend most of their lives either in external exile or in domestic prisons. In Arab countries where dictatorial regimes prevail, everything is subjected to police interrogation. The he was imprisoned in Iraq and Iran for political reasons. During his life in prison, his mother sent him a letter which reached him after being kept for more than two months in the police department for investigation and inspection. Consequently, al-Nawwab writes in *Watariyyat*: "I have to be very cautious when I speak on the telephone/when I speak to the walls/when I speak with children and babies" (Watariyyat 1985: 51).

In Iraq as well as in many other Arab countries, school children have been frequently used as agents for the regime's secret police, thus, the poet is afraid of talking with Arab children about politics or related topics. By using the police forces, the intelligence agencies, the prison system and other repressive instruments to subjugate their own peoples, Arab rulers have succeeded, to a great extend, in keeping the status quo and remaining in power for ages. Nevertheless, these repressive regimes have unfortunately mutilated and maimed the regenerative human power in the Arab world creating a nation of cripples and cowards unable to achieve the pan-Arabism dream of restoring occupied Arab territories and reluctant to cope up with the requirements of a post-industrial world. Maintaining systematic tyranny against their peoples, these oppressive regimes, in compliance with external imperialistic forces, have ironically paved the way for the birth and emergence of fundamentalist Islamic organizations which have recently brought more havoc to the Arab world and the West.

Being disappointed by the deplorable political conditions in the Arab world which brought about catastrophes such as the bloody confrontations between the Palestinians and the Jordanian army during the Black September (1970) events , the Lebanese civil war and the Iraqi-Iranian war, al-Nawwab laments, in *Watariyyat*, the fact that the Arab world has already become "the homeland of Arab-Arab wars". He regrets the notion that the Arab world is still dominated by the same tribal spirit of "Dahes and Alghabraa", a pre-Islamic war, which erupted in the Arabian peninsula due to tribal differences and conflicting interests among Arab tribes. He implores Iraq, his homeland, to save him from what he calls "the fearful smell of human starvation". He continues to address his homeland seeking its emotional support: "please save me from cities in which human beings have been transformed into chimneys of fear and cattle waste/cities which are submerged into stagnant water/Oh, my homeland please save me from our national buffaloes, those who are chewing the remains of our dead bodies" (Watariyyat 1985 : 47). The images of stagnation, horror, cattle waste, and people turned into chimneys of fear and buffaloes chewing dead bodies are signifiers of the difficulty of living in the Arab wasteland under the domination of repressive and tyrannical regimes.

In spite of the gloomy tone of al-Nawwab's poetry, the poet's poetic diction is characterized by a sense of humour which aims to reduce the tension of the Arab readers, confronted with the absurd and tragic realities of their life. In Watariyyat, al-Nawwab transforms the Arab rulers into caricature images in order to satirize them, and expose their ignorance, impotence and lack of initiative and political will. Incorporating political jokes and literary obscenities in his criticism of local monolithic regimes, al-Nawwab uses obscene language and graffiti-like lines - in his poetry - in an attempt to strip some Arab rulers of the false veneer of solemnity which they acquire after staying in power for ages. In other words, al-Nawwab's political poetry seeks to demythicize the image of Arab rulers by creating a counter narrative which aims to subvert the false (master) narrative of a hypocritical, government-controlled media which has turned these dictators into idols and demi-gods.

Instead of demonizing them, al-Nawwab prefers to expose them to the public Arab opinion, by transforming them into a laughing stock: "a very patriotic Sultan/who has never had any relationship with Great Britain/He is completely different from his tyrannical daddy/He has always been dedicated to democracy since the day of his birth/Because of his democratic commitments/he is finally able [thanks to Allah] to wear slippers and put on sunglasses" (Watariyyat 1985:5). Apparently, the young Sultan in al-Nawwab's poem is as tyrannical as his father and he definitely takes his orders from Britain and other imperialistic countries. The only difference between the son and the father is the latter's reluctance to wear slippers and preference to walk bare-footed. The former's contribution to his own people and the Arab world, according to the poem, is his ability to wear slippers and put on sunglasses.

Moreover, al-Nawwab, in *Watariyyat*, attempts to poke fun at lazy Arab kings who seem to be ignorant of what is going on around them. In a sarcastic manner, al-Nawwab uses Arabic folklore jokes to satirize these kings. He says: "long live the Arab king, long live the king of gases" meaning "long live the farting king". In spite of its obscenity, al-Nawwab's poetic satire still has a purgative function on the psychological level and an illuminating function on the political level. Blending satire with humour, al-Nawwab's poetry, which criticizes Arab tyrants, dictators, conspirators, impotent rulers who have betrayed the Palestinian cause and the puppet leaders who are used by imperialistic countries, is characterized by what may be called "satiric relief". Because al-Nawwab's long poems - like *Watariyyat* - about the Arab world involve great amounts of tension, pessimism, pain and psychological pressure as a result of engaging the tragic and absurd realities of Arab countries, lampooning, satire and obscenities are manipulated as means of relief and purgation.

Ironically, al-Nawwab not only criticizes the enemies of the Arabs but the Arab nation itself. Being concerned with the plight of the Palestinian people, al-Nawwab openly attacks the spirit of defeat which characterized the Arab public opinion particularly after the 1967 war with Israel and the occupation of the rest of

Palestine, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. The poet recognizes that the military defeat is attributed to the existence of puppet Arab rulers who not only tyrannize and oppress their own people but fail to confront the Israeli army. Being disappointed by the impotence of Arab rulers who are only experts in building repressive police forces to brutalize political opposition in their own countries, al-Nawwab urges the Arab masses to overthrow their defeated regimes replacing them with revolutionary governments able to confront a vicious enemy. Like other Third World revolutionary poets, al-Nawwab puts his confidence in the masses and advocates armed revolution as the only means to remove Arab dictatorial regimes from power.

The Impact of T. S. Eliot on al-Nawwab's Protest Poetry

In the post Second World War era, many Arab poets came under the sweeping influence of Eliot's theories and modernist poetry particularly his poem *The Waste Land* which was translated into Arabic in 1947. Further, in the aftermath of the Palestinian tragedy in 1948 and the rise of dictatorial regimes in the Arab world in the 1950's, the image of the wasteland waiting for resurrection became a reflection of the state of collapse and desolation in which the Arab world was plunged. Attracted to Eliot's criticism of a dying civilization, Arab poets, particularly the Iraqi poet Mudharaf al-Nawwab, found a reflection of their own predicament in Eliot's modernist poetry. Due to Eliot's impact, Arab poets have employed myths and symbols obtained from Eastern and Western sources, modern and ancient history in order to express the pains and hopes of a nation shattered by recurrent defeats and dominated by political corruption. Salma Khadra Jayyusi argues that Arab poets were attracted to Eliot basically because they found in his "implicit use of the fertility myth [in "The Waste Land"] an expression of ultimate love and an emphasis on the potential of self-sacrifice". She points out:

> It was the idea of the cycle of sacrificial death that leads to rebirth which attracted those most. From the mid-fifties to the early sixties, Arab poets repeatedly drew an analogy between the aridity of Arab life after the 1948 disaster in Palestine and the aridity of the land in the fertility myth, saved from complete waste only by death and the spilling of blood, analogous to the falling of rain over a parched land (Jayyusi 1977: 724).

Historically, T.S. Eliot's impact on the Arabic literary scene, in the post WWII era, coincided with the emergence of political movements and military coups which aim to undermine the foundations of an old system and establish a new order. Thus , Arab poets, from different countries, were mostly interested in Eliot's narratives of death, rebirth and salvation because they found in them reflections of the socio-political situation in the Arab world in the aftermath of the Palestinian

tragedy in 1948 and the rise of tyrannical regimes in the region. Therefore, by the end of WW II, Eliot's literary heritage constituted the major source of influence of western literature on contemporary Arab poets. Being interested in Eliot's poetry, al-Nawwab responded passionately to Eliot's masterpiece, *The Waste Land*, establishing an analogy between the stagnant situation in the Arab world in the aftermath of WW II and the wasteland myth in Eliot's poem.

As representative of the post-war revolutionary spirit, al-Nawwab , like other post WWII Arab poets seeks salvation for the Arab people in western traditions incorporating Eliot's narratives and cultural myths:

> The wasteland that is his society is thirsty for rain. The barrenness that is his nation is longing for fertility. But Tammuz has to be killed by the wild boar and suffer the darkness of the underworld before he returns to the wasteland in spring, filling it with abundance and fertility. The Phoenix has to be burnt down completely before it can rise again from its own ashes. Prometheus has to suffer the sharp beak of the vulture as a price for the divine fire he has given mankind. Sinbad, like Ulysses, has to suffer loss in alien lands before he comes into his own. Only through the cross is Resurrection possible (Boullata 1976: Xii).

Like Eliot, who passed through an experience of universal implications which is the First World War, al-Nawwab witnessed the catastrophic ramifications of the Palestinian tragedy and the emergence of post-colonial regimes and puppet governments responsible for the curses and defeats which inflicted the Arab world. Explicitly, Eliot's wasteland narratives fit the situation in the Arab countries during the post WWII era where an entire order of things has crumbled. The theme of the barren land waiting for rain of fertility restored through blood, death and resurrection attracted the new generation of Muslim Arab poets who appeared in the literary scene in the era of decolonization.

The political upheavals in the Arab world in the aftermath of WWII which threaten to dismantle the roots of Arab culture find an echo in Eliot's wasteland narratives. Therefore, in the post WWII Arabic poetry, Eliot's discourses about a fallen civilization are appropriated and recycled to fit into local political contexts and serve indigenous interests. Arab poets incorporate Eliot's modernism and literary heritage utilizing symbols, myths and motifs integral to western thought and alien to the core of Islamic traditions. In other words, western modernism opened wide horizons for the WWII generation of Arab poets to appropriate Eliot's poetic strategies in order to fit the drastic transformations in the region. However, the poetic techniques used by the Arab poets who came under Eliot's influence differ from one poet to another and from one period to another. For example, Eliot's method of deploying speech-like language or allusions, used by Arab poets in the 1950's gave way to the use of personae and masks in the 1960's, which paved the way for engagements in textual structures that gave way in turn to further experimentation which resulted into poems of profound complexity and

subtle engagements in textual paradigms of affiliation or opposition that gave way in turn to further experimentation with form and stratagems from which emanated poems of great textual resonance.

In "Tradition and the Individual Talent", Eliot explores the relationship between writers and texts from different ages and cultures pointing out that "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past"(Eliot 1960:50). Illustrating his concept of tradition, Eliot affirms that "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his [the poet's] own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order", therefore, "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it" (Eliot 1960: 49). Denouncing the state of fragmentation and disintegration that characterizes current Arab-Arab relationships, al-Nawwab, who makes use of Eliot's theories on tradition, draws an analogy between contemporary Arab history and the pre-Islamic war between Alaws and Alkhazraj tribes in Medina prior to prophet Mohamed's migration where he established the first Islamic community. In the early Islamic era, the prophet succeeded in reconciling conflicting Arab tribes in the Medina region but at the present times, there is no Arab leader who is able to bridge the gaps among Arab conflicting countries simply because these rulers are puppets in the hands of imperialistic forces.

Furthermore, al-Nawwab laments the miserable conditions of the Arab world which paved the way for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the elimination of the Palestinian refugee camps in Sabra and Shatila. In "Tal Al-Zāatar" [the Thyme Hill], collected in his *Complete Poetic Works*, al-Nawwab describes the mass murder of Palestinian refugees in Beirut at the hands of the Lebanese militias supported by its imperialistic allies. He criticizes the Arab League and the defeated/castrated Arab summits which failed to provide military or economic or diplomatic or even moral support to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who were subjected to systematic massacres and annihilation. Moreover, al-Nawwab criticizes the United Nations describing it as a "Masonic lodge" where Henry Kissinger, the former US Secretary of State was seen "fucking the drunk Arab Kings" (Watariyyat 1985: 191). Explicitly, al-Nawwab uses pornographic diction and dirty language "artistic obscenity" in his poetry for aesthetic purposes. He made a confession in one of his poems declaring that his poetic diction is obscene and that "his own poetry itself is ashamed of the poet's obscenities and dirty words" (cited in Gohar 2001: 63).

Nevertheless, al-Nawwab swears that the dirtiest and most vulgar obscenities all over the world are not sufficient to describe the disgraceful behaviour of Arab rulers, who have betrayed their people thwarting the Palestinian dream of restoring their occupied territories. He portrays "the traitors", contemporary Arab leaders, in humiliating and abusive terms using language which blends sarcasm and obscenity. Attacking "the menstruating rulers" who "have lost their manhood", al-Nawwab says: "my middle finger becomes fearful at

night / I screw all the converted rulers who have betrayed their Arabism" (*Complete Poetic Works* 100). The sexual implications here are not used to allude to a homosexual fantasy on the part of the speaker but are meant to humiliate those who have sold out their peoples and countries to the enemies , those who "shake the hands and kiss the asses" of the invaders. Therefore, he urges all the popular and revolutionary forces in the Arab world to uproot existing regimes through the use of violence in order to save the Arab people from internal tyranny and external hegemony.

Al-Nawwab's allusion to the Arab kings who have raped Arab history or in his own words "who have committed adultery with Arab history", recalls to mind the Fisher King's myth", used by Eliot in *The Waste Land*. Contemporary Arab rulers, according to the poet, not only raped Arab history but also participated in the loss of Arab land in Palestine, in the Golan Heights, in the south of Lebanon and on the Iraqi-Iranian borders. Like Eliot's Fisher King, in the wasteland myth, all the corrupt Arab rulers, in Al-Nawwab's eyes, have committed not only the sin of adultery (with Arab history) but also the sins of betrayal, treason and conspiracy against their own peoples. In Eliot's "The Waste Land", a questing knight goes into a purgatorial journey of suffering and pain for the sake of redeeming the land which, according to the myth integral to the poem, becomes barrens as a result of the Fisher King's sin. While in al-Nawwab's wasteland there is no possibility of salvation as long as tyrannical Arab rulers and their oppressive regimes, protected by western imperialistic countries, dominate the destiny of the Arab people.

In order to manifest aspects of Arab tyranny and oppression, al-Nawwab wears the mask of Eliot's blind seer, Tiresias, who reads the past and predicts the future. The poet goes into a mythical/imaginative journey in ancient Arab history recalling Arab-Arab wars and conflicts. The poet's journey which aims to illuminate parts of Arab life and culture is conducted within an Arab context: "I was on the back of the she-camel astounded by the stars of the night". Then, he addresses an imaginary listener: "you Bedouin who is interested in wandering in the Arabian Desert/take with you some drop of water as you continue your endless journey toward the Empty Quarter". While the journey in Eliot's *The Waste Land* ends in salvation as rain falls down, in the fifth section of the poem, the Arab poet's journey ends in the Empty Quarter, the most arid part in the Arabian desert. The reference to the desert and the she-camel at this point do not signify that the poet takes pride in his own traditions as readers may think, but it symbolizes the domination of sterility and political stagnation in the life of people who still live in the camel era.

Using angry rhetoric, obscene language and inflammatory poetic discourse, al-Nawwab reflects his own feelings of frustration as he contemplates the absurd reality of contemporary Arab life. However, al-Nawwab's poetry not only manipulates literary obscenity to achieve particular purposes but also incorporates a great deal of Eliot's wasteland imagery which provides more insight into *Watariyyat*. Nevertheless and in spite of the pessimistic and gloomy atmosphere of

al-Nawwab's poetry, there are some moments for love and longing for return to one's own homeland. In lines characterized by feelings of nostalgia, Al-Nawwab says: "I might admire thousands and thousands of women/but I only love one single woman/the woman who brings to me/the bread and tears that come from my homeland" (Complete Poetic Works 1996: 473). These ambivalent feelings toward one's homeland are one of the major aspects of the poetics of al-Nawwab, a refugee poet who has suffered from the pains and wounds of displacement and exile.

Moreover the frequent references to *The Waste Land* in al-Nawwab's poetry are associated with the collective feelings that dominated the poetic scene in the Arabic world in the post-Second World War era. After the loss of Palestine in 1948, the Arab poet felt the need for a poetics of revolution and regeneration, a mythical method that could superimpose totalizing vision on a dying land and civilization. Eliot's works on tradition and his use of myth particularly in *The Waste Land* were crucial to the new attitudes in Arabic poetry since the post WWII era. Eliot's poetry, critical theories, prose writings and the Arabic translations of his dramatic and poetics works were extensively used by Arabic poets as part of the new poetics of challenge and innovation. In this context, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra explains why Arab poets were attracted to Eliot's writings: "this was so because it happened that the people who read him most and translated him and commented on his work were themselves the reading young writers and poets of the new generation" (Jabra 1980: 12). To this generation of poets, Eliot, according to Jabra, was "an articulate and concise advocate of new incipient thoughts" (Jabra 1980: 13).

Like Eliot, al-Nawwab employs references and allusions to famous historical figures in order to juxtapose or compare/contrast the present with the past. But unlike Eliot al-Nawwab does not all the time juxtapose an idealistic past to a corrupt present in order to condemn the latter. For example, in *Watariyyat*, al-Nawwab refers to the heroism of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, prophet Mohamed's cousin who is portrayed as an emblem of courage and sacrifice. It is known that Ali, as a young man, accepted to sleep in the prophet's bed in Mecca at the night in which the prophet's tribal enemies planned to kill him. Taking the place of the prophet in bed, Ali succeeded in deceiving Mohamed's rivals who were waiting outside his house with their swords ready to slay the prophet. Due to Ali's scarifies and courage, the prophet and his close friend, Abu-Bakr were able to escape to Medina where an Islamic state was founded.

In "Reading in the Notebook of the Rain", the poet re-historicizes the famous conflict between Moawiya[4], the Umayyad caliph and Ali, the cousin of prophet Mohamed. While Moawiya is associated with the reactionary Arab kings, portrayed in al-Nawwab's poems, Ali is depicted as a warrior. One of al-Nawwab's narrators, celebrating the Arab revolutionaries who emerge from the Arab masses, associates them with revolutionary figures in Islamic and modern history: " all the peasants came in great multitudes toward me/among them I recognized Ali, Abu Thar, Patrice Lumumba, Chi Guevara, Karl Marx and Mao" (*Complete Poetic*

Works 1996: 498). Like Eliot, in *The Waste Land* and Dante in *Inferno*, al-Nawwab recognizes particular figures among the revolutionary Arab masses (the peasants) then establishes a one-sided dialogue with each one of them. Like Eliot in *The Waste Land*, who recognizes and stops "Stetson", the hat manufacturer who was "with me in the ships at Mylae" (Eliot 1980:39), al-Nawwab recognizes Ali Ibn Abi-Taleb[5] – prophet Mohamed's cousin - and Abu Thar al-Ghafari among the crowd identifying them with contemporary revolutionary symbols such as Guevara and Lumumba.

Al-Nawwab also refers to major Marxist figures like Mao and Marx who are identified among the multitudes of the revolutionary masses. While all the revolutionaries , in the poem , have one face and one image, all the depraved and tyrannical Arab rulers have similar faces and similar marks. The poet refers to all Arab rulers one by one using terms that connote, evil, dishonesty, conspiracy, betrayal, impotence, weakness and humiliation. For example, he refers to "the snake", and "the blonde bear", Arab rulers, who participated in "the peaceful settlement that leads to the slaughtering" of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in 1982. Besides, al-Nawwab criticizes Arab leaders who possess powerful war machines, used not against the enemies of the nation but against their own people particularly the opposition voices and the minorities calling for freedom. The poet attacks rulers of rich Arab countries who collected huge amounts of money from "oil contracts", however, they did not use the Arab wealth in an appropriate way. Instead of using the oil money to achieve national Arab ambitions, many Arab rulers smuggled Arab wealth to be invested in western imperialistic countries that support the enemies of the Arab nation.

Manipulating Eliot's technique of juxtaposition, al-Nawwab effectively alludes to famous symbols in Islamic history such as Ali, Abu Thar and Alhussain, (Prophet Mohamed's grandson who was brutally assassinated in the battle of Karbala, southern of Iraq), after being laid under siege by the army of Yazid, Moawiya's corrupted son who became the Muslim caliph after the death of his father. Al-Nawwab's use of Eliot's technique of juxtaposition is part of his attempt to manipulate Eliot's theories and poetic heritage in order to create a revolutionary poetics able to attack imperialism and criticize all forms of evil in contemporary Arab societies. Developing a national and ideological stand in the face of the imperialistic interests in the geopolitics of the Arab nation, al-Nawwab recollects his ancestors using different poetic strategies such as masks, dramatic monologues and other paratextual tools such as dedications as he discusses the multinational ambition toward the Arab world. Engaging in the consequences of the Second World War and the Cold War era on the Arab world, al-Nawwab develops a subtle poetics with political underpinnings to describe the Palestinian tragedy and the Arab-Arab conflicts.

Throughout his poetic career , al-Nawwab resists a poetics which has turned Arab poets into panegyrists and beggars kissing the hands of Arab rulers. Using Eliot's modernist techniques, al-Nawwab aims to revolutionize the tradition

of Arabic poetry in terms of form and content. Harold Bloom , in *A Map of Misleading*, observes that "literary tradition begins when a fresh author is simultaneously cognizant not only of his own struggle against the forms and presence of a precursor but is compelled also to a sense of the precursor's place in regard to what came before him" (Bloom1975 : 32). Therefore, al-Nawwab not only manipulates Eliot's poetic/critical heritage , but also reveals obvious examples of inter-textual engagements with other sources in ancient and modern Arab culture and history using masks and Eliot's objective correlatives in order to bring feeling and thought together in the manner of metaphysical poetry. In *Watariyyat*, al-Nawwab navigates within words, symbols and meaning to recreate a tradition and rebuild a world fragmented by domestic disputes and threatened by foreign hegemony. Like Eliot who used Tiresias as a mask, al-Nawwab used several masks, such as the Bedouin, the Arab revolutionary, Abu Thar, Abu Sufyan and Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, to articulate political issues and be engaged in an ideological narrative that is different from Eliot's moral order. And since the strength of any poet, to use Bloom's words, lies "in his skill and inventiveness at substitution" (Bloom1975: 105), al-Nawwab succeeds in utilizing Eliot's techniques moving from the Arabic mono-logic poem into the poetic plethora of *Watariyyat*.

Evoking the painful historical conflict between the royal families of Yazid Ibn Moawiyya and Alhussain Ibn Ali, al-Nawwab aims to portray, the contemporary situation in the Arab world where Arabs fight Arabs. In *Watariyyat*, the courage and sacrificial spirit of Ali and his son Alhussain in addition to the revolutionary and moral strength of Abu Thar are juxtaposed to the cowardly behaviour, false heroism, and moral bankruptcy of Yazid and Moawiya as well as their modern counterparts, the contemporary Arab rulers. Alluding to famous figures in Islamic history and tradition, al-Nawwab refers to the shameful career of Moawiya Ibn Abi Sofyan, the first Umayyad caliph who was initially appointed by Othman Ibn Affan, the third Muslim caliph, as the governor of Damascus, and who became the basic enemy of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb and his family. Moawiya (who consequently appointed his irresponsible and vicious son, Yazid, as the second Umayyad caliph in spite of popular opposition) is used in al-Nawwab's poetry as a symbol of political corruption and opportunism that has characterized recurrent Arab governments since the Umayyad era.

Through conspiracies and oppression Moawiya succeeded in forcing people to nominate his son as the coming caliph, thus he consolidated the continuity of the Umayyad Dynasty, a regime that had governed the Arab world for centuries . Yazid, Moawiya's corrupted son, was responsible for the brutal murder of Alhussain, a holy Islamic symbol, and his followers at the battle of Karbala'a which is used in Al-Nawwab's poetry as a symbol of Arab-Arab wars and historical hostilities. After being laid under siege and prevented from food and drink, Alhussain and his friends, about thirty persons coming from Mecca to Iraq riding camels and horses, were given two options, either to surrender and acknowledge Yazid as the caliph of the Muslim nation or face Yazid's army, more than thirty

thousand soldiers. Rejecting to surrender or acknowledge the immoral and vile son of Moawiya (Yazid), known for his debauchery and sexual corruption as a caliph, Alhussain, his family and friends decided to fight to the end which was a suicidal mission. After being killed, the dead bodies of Alhussain and his family were mutilated, cut into pieces and exhibited in Yazid's palace.

The brutalities and atrocities committed by Arabs against fellow Arabs represented by the conflict between Moawiya, a tribal leader and Ali Ibn Abi Taleb's family over authority are aesthetically articulated in Al-Nawwab's poetry to reflect contemporary Arab disputes and differences. As an influential tribal leader descending from a well-known tribe in Mecca, Moawiya rejected the nomination of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, the prophet's cousin as the fourth caliph of the Muslim people and he struggled to remove Ali and become the ruler of the Islamic world himself. After the death of Othman Ibn Affan, the conflict between Ali's family and Moawiya's tribe reached a zenith which paved the way for a series of dramatic events leading to the assassination of Ali followed by the brutal murder of his son, Alhussein, at the hands of Yazid, in Karbala'a. While Yazid is presented as a symbol of corruption, Moawiya is associated with the intruding and parasitic middle class or what al-Nawwab calls "the consultative (Shura) council" of Arab merchants. Moawiya is depicted in al-Nawwab's poetry as an emblem of rich Arab rulers who have participated in the disintegration of the Arab world due to personal differences and narrow political ambitions.

Therefore, in al-Nawwab's poetry, Moawiya is juxtaposed to Abu Thar al-Ghafari, a symbol of honesty and revolution. During the reign of Othman Ibn Affan, the third caliph (who came to power after Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first caliph, and Omar Ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph), Abu Thar revolted against the lack of freedom, democracy, and justice in different parts of the Islamic/Arab world particularly in Damascus which was governed by Moawiya who was appointed by Othman. Abu Thar was astounded by the political corruption spreading in different parts of the Arab and Islamic world which threatened the entire existence of the Muslim nation. As a revolutionary person, Abu Thar launched a campaign against corruption urging people to protest against the injustice and oppression of the governors of several provinces in the Islamic Empire. Abu Thar also repudiated the luxury and extravagance of Moawiya's palace in Damascus where people suffer from poverty and being dominated by the sword. Being offended, Moawiya, through a conspiracy, succeeded in moving the caliph, Othman, and against Abu Thar who was accused of threatening the security of the Muslim nation by urging people to revolt against the governors appointed by the caliph himself.

Getting the impression that the authority of his government and his representatives in different Muslim provinces would be undermined due to Abu Thar's revolutionary activities, Othman summoned Abu Thar to his palace offering him a royal job in order to make sure that Abu Thar will stay in the palace all the time. Finding out that the well-paid and prestigious job aimed primarily to isolate

him from the masses, Abu Thar dismissed the job as a kind of bribe. Being informed that he will be assassinated if he insists on rejecting the job offer and disobeying the caliph, Abu Thar asked the caliph to let him choose his own place of exile. Othman accepts the plea on the condition that Abu Thar will go alone to his exile in the Arabian Desert without farewell or company. However, some people, including Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, rejected the caliph's orders and went to give Abu Thar a last farewell as he was leaving to stay alone in his exile in the desert where he died later. In his poem, "Abu Thar Summons a Meeting for the Hungry People", the poet portrays an image of Abu Thar as a leader who has no equal among contemporary egoistical Arab regimes. Al-Nawwab emphasizes the self-denial of Abu Thar glorifying his struggle for the human rights of the poor people in the Arab and Islamic world. In the preceding poem collected in , the voice of the poet is blended with the voice of Abu Thar and together turn into a revolutionary scream of anger in the face of oppression and injustice in the Arab world.

Criticizing the forces that seek to brutalize and blackmail the Arab masses, al-Nawwab provides a list of individuals who symbolize oppressive and repressive institutions in Arab and Islamic history. For example, al-Nawwab in "The Prince of the Sailors" refers to ancient and modern Arab and non-Arab figures who have participated in the dehumanization of the Arab and Muslim people such as Abu-Al-Abbas (Al-Saffah) the founder of the Abbasid Dynasty who was known for his brutality and cruelty particularly against those who opposed him, thus, he was given the nickname of "Al-Saffah" which means "the assassin". Al-Nawwab also refers to "Wasif and Bagha", two figures representing Turkish imperialism and domination of the Arab world, in addition to "Al-Hassan Al-Basri", "the Shah of Iran", "the Petrol Sheikhs" and the infected "Arab king who commits the sin of adultery in Arab history". All these figures and others are severely attacked in al-Nawwab's poetry because of their responsibility for the corruption, defeat, tyranny, betrayal, blackmail, oppression and impotence that have participated in the state of moral bankruptcy and disintegration which characterizes life in "the Arab-wasteland".

Nevertheless Ali was glorifies in al-Nawwab's poetry for his contributions to the Muslim people during the early Islamic era. In spite of his achievements to the Muslim nation, Ali, a sacred figure for all Muslims, particularly the shiites, was killed by a Muslim dagger. Evoking episodes of ancient Islamic history, al-Nawwab explores the religious and political differences between the followers of Ali, the fourth Muslim caliph and their rivals, the followers of Moawiya Ibn Abi-Sofyan in order to illuminate contemporary religious and political disputes that have led to Arab-Arab wars: "God's book, the Quran, is still hanging from Arab spears/under God's name/Abu Sofyan/with his grey beard/is still creating tribal factions" (*Complete Poetic Works* 1996 : 453). Juxtaposing the tribal past to the present, al-Nawwab condemns Arab-Arab conflicts which have led to clashes between the Palestinians and the Jordanian army and which reached their zenith in the Lebanese civil war. Identifying contemporary Arab-Arab conflicts as extensions of

a tribal Arab past and speaking about what he calls "the wandering Bedouins" and "the historical Arab sadness", al-Nawwab laments the catastrophic consequences of internal Arab conflicts on the Arab and Muslim nations. Al-Nawwab associates Abu Sofyan, Ali's rival, with the intruding middle class while categorizing Ali as a revolutionary hero. As a symbol of the perverted bourgeois mentality of that time, Abu Sofyan, a man with unlimited political ambitions, opposed the election of Ali as a caliph for the Muslim nation: "the consultation (shura) council of the merchants" led by Abu Sofyan "still considers Othman" (the third Muslim caliph who preceded Ali) as their ruler "while dismissing Ali as the revolutionary leader of the vagabonds". Then Al-Nawwab apostrophizes Ali saying: "if you come back today/you will be accused of being a Marxist" (CPW 1996:453). In the preceding lines, al-Nawwab alludes to the persecution of Marxists and other opposition groups all over the Arab world since the 1950's particularly in countries such as Libya, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia and Algeria.

Linking the past with the present, Al-Nawwab denounces the regime of Abu Sofyan and his son Yazid who came to power after the assassination of Ali and the subsequent murder of his son, Alhussain, paving the way for the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty. Identifying the Umayyad rulers as an embodiment of oppression, tyranny and corruption, al-Nawwab associates them with contemporary Arab regimes expressing his doubts and fears concerning the future of the Arab world. He addresses Arab rulers; "I swear by all the gods that all the Arab rulers/from Baghdad to Jiddah are not Arabs/Even Arab revolutionists are selfish opportunists like Abu Sofyan" (CPW 1996: 457). The equation between the opportunism of Abu Sofyan particularly his unjustifiable hostility toward Ali Ibn Abi Taleb and that of contemporary Arab rulers affirms the premise that Arab-Arab relationships are still governed by the same tribal doctrine that characterized the early Islamic era and which often led to wars among Arabs/Muslims due to religious and political differences. The poet addresses Ali, in a lamentable tone: "Oh, king of the rebels/I have deeply wept because revolution was raped and the hopes of my heart have been buried alive" (CPW 1996:458).

Al-Nawwab used Eliot's poetic symbols and myths for political purposes. In *Watariyyat* he alludes to the famous Arab king, the sinful king "who commits the sin of syphilis which infects Arab history" Watariyyat 1985:55. Associating the sins committed by corrupt Arab leaders with the adulterous behaviour of the Fisher King in Eliot's masterpiece, al-Nawwab depicts the Arab world as a wasteland and a moral wildness waiting for a revolutionary saviour. Employing an angry rhetoric , al-Nawwab addresses Arab rulers screaming at them: "I'm sure you are not Arabs or human beings or even animals/ do you know the meaning of honour?/ where is your pride?/where is your dignity?" (Watariyyat 1985:55). The striking attempt by al-Nawwab to negate the Arab identity of local rulers who behave on the favour of Israel and against Arab interests is emphasized by Matti Friedman who quotes one of the Palestinian citizens in Jerusalem saying:

The Crusaders did not want the Jews in Europe, so they sent there to the Middle East, where they are now indiscriminately killing Palestinians, and the Arab leaders are not coming to the aid of the Palestinians because they are all Jews as well (Friedman 2003:2).

Explicitly, in al-Nawwab's *Watariyyat*, the conspiratorial Arab leaders who sold their souls, their peoples and the Palestinian cause to western imperialistic countries which protect their thrones are identified with the conspiratorial regime of Abu Sofyan who was the basic adversary of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, a symbol of revolution and struggle. To al-Nawwab, all revolutionary heroes in the Arab world who have attempted to abolish the corruption of puppet Arab leaders and bring democracy to the Arab world are betrayed and victimized by the Arab regimes and their imperialistic allies the same way Ali was betrayed by Abu Sofyan and his evil allies.

Being interested in the intersectional dialectics between tradition and modernity, al-Nawwab, due to Eliot's influence, seeks to ground his political poetry in tradition. In order to legitimize his poetic discourse, he locates his poems in western and Eastern traditions engaging in inter-textual dialogues with Eliot and ancient Arab history. Facing the trauma and anguish of living in an Arab world disintegrated by tribal factions and experiencing the agony of watching most of Palestine being seized by Israel, al-Nawwab's poetic response was severe and violent. Thus, the Palestinian issue has become a leitmotif in many of al-Nawwab's poems which reflect his agony over the crucifixion of Palestine.

Provoked by the shameful response of most of the Arab rulers and governments toward the Palestinian issue, al-Nawwab moves from the rhetorical tradition to soliloquies and dramatic monologues experimenting with new techniques. In order to render the crippling impact of the Palestinian tragedy on the psyche of Arab people, al-Nawwab used radical language and poetic forms intertextualizing his political poetry with great masters such as T.S. Eliot. Unlike Eliot's poetics integrated in cyclical regeneration and rebirth, al-Nawwab's poetry seeks an urgent involvement with the present corruption including imperialism, exploitation, hegemony, oppression and authoritarianism. His political poetry is engaged with heritage, but it seeks emancipation from hegemonic discourse and conventional poetic traditions, the castrated poetry of clichés that fits into authoritarian and hegemonic culture.

Being disappointed by the tragic consequences resulting from the Palestinian tragedy al-Nawwab, in his avant-garde poetics, appropriates Eliot's concepts of tradition and myth using them as a dynamic for innovation and change. Attempting to integrate the literary legacy of Arabic poetry with Eliot's modernism in its western manifestations, al-Nawwab is engaged, on different levels with tradition, an engagement which affirms the poet's desire and commitment to provide deeper insight into the forces which have dominated Arab destiny. Al-Nawwab's inter-textual engagement with tradition and his allusions to

ancient Arab history aim to construct a discursive struggle that would participate in change. In his poetic discourse, al-Nawwab links the deplorable circumstances of the Arab world since the 1950's with their counterparts in ancient Islamic history in order to deconstruct Arab claims about the glories of the past and urge the masses to revolt against fossilized and repressive regimes responsible for Arab decadence and backwardness since the early Islamic era up till the present time.

Apparently, al-Nawwab, like other Arab poets, during the post Second World War era, could not resist the attachment to Eliot and his ideals and poems particularly *The Waste Land* and his criticism of a dying civilization. After the partition of Palestine and the declaration of Israel as a state established on Palestinian territories, the image of the wasteland waiting for resurrection became a reflection of the state of collapse and desolation in which the Arab World was plunged. As a result of Eliot's impact, Arab poets like al-Nawwab employed symbols of suffering, sin, redemption and salvation obtained from Eastern and Western mythology, modern and ancient history in addition to other sources, in order to express the pains and hopes of a nation shattered by recurrent defeats.

Conclusion

Mudhafar Al-Nawwab was occupied with the great political concerns of his own nation and was deeply involved in the political situation in the aftermath of the Palestinian tragedy in 1948. Experiencing an epistemological break from corrupt regimes in the Arab world who have participated in disgraceful defeats and the loss of Palestine and struggling against internal corruption and external dangers represented by the imperialist policies in the Arab region, al-Nawwab seeks an avant-garde poetic apparatus to be used in this era of great ramifications. Thus the lines of al-Nawwab's *Watariyyat* are pervaded by a poetic scream in the face of tyranny and oppression. The scream in the poem is emblematic of the suppression of all positive impulses (in the Arab world due to tyranny and dictatorship) turned into rage, violence and terrorism. Al-Nawwab's scream also functions as the scream of the oppressed, the dispossessed, the scream of political anger and poetic rebellion. The screams of al-Nawwab are directed against individuals and institutions that seek to dehumanize and brutalize the creative and intellectual impulses of the Arab people particularly the poor masses and the refugees.

Al-Nawwab's revolutionary narrative involves a discourse of opposition that takes different shapes. For example, the poet denounces contemporary Arab regimes, tyrannical rulers, lack of democracy and freedom and exceeds these discursive areas to reject the fossilized structure and the classical forms of the Arabic poem itself. Confronting the catastrophic conditions of the Arab world after the emerging of dictatorial regimes that turned Arab countries into prisons and exiles, al-Nawwab developed a counter poetics, a new discourse that manipulates culture, history and tradition in order to challenge the hegemonic discourse which inherits the colonial legacy. In his poetry, al-Nawwab also used

popular narratives bringing into the foreground religious, historical figures and Islamic symbols who stood against oppression and struggled for social justice. It is through this epistemological perspective that a modernist poet like al-Nawwab succeeds in adapting Eliot's objective correlatives from history, mythology and tradition affirming Ezra pound's view that tradition is "the beauty which we preserve and not a set of fetters to bind us" (Pound 1968 : 91).

In al-Nawwab's poetry, the Arab rulers who "have opened the doors of Palestine " to the invaders to rape the entire country are "cuckolds" therefore the poet reminds them of their defeats, conspiracies and "the rotten weapons" sent to the Arab soldiers, during the 1948 war while fighting a well-trained Israeli army. To him all the Arab rulers are puppets who "speak too much" and "dance like bears" revealing no objection to submissive peace treaties that would lead to "the marriage of Jerusalem, the bride of the Arab world" to the invaders. Using the "waste land" narratives, al-Nawwab appeals to the land of Palestine to denounce this illegitimate marriage: "be sterile, oh, Palestinian land/such pregnancy is horrifying/be sterile, Oh mother of martyrs/this pregnancy would result into the birth of ugly and deformed offspring/this Palestinian land can only be fertilized by Arabic language/ otherwise, there will be chaos and anarchy" (CPW 1996 : 485). To al-Nawwab, both Republican and Royal regimes that dominate the Arab world are symbols of corruption, defeat, tyranny and oppression that must be eradicated as a basis for the liberation of the Arab nation. Juxtaposing the submissive policy of Arab governments toward the Palestinian cause at present to the historical failure of Arab leaders to defend and protect Arab land (Alahwaz) during the colonial era, the poet underlines the impotence of Arab regimes and the necessity of change.

Attempting to capture the tragic realities of a disintegrated nation, a nation cursed by successive defeats, tragedies and tyrannical regimes, al-Nawwab responded with a radical poetic discourse, characterized by obscenity, anger and inflammatory rhetoric aiming to awaken the Arab collective consciousness and urge the masses to revolt against fossilized Arab rulers and dictatorial governments responsible for the backwardness of the Arab world. He questions Arab traditions and beliefs throwing doubt on the popular notion that the Arabs/Muslims are the best nation on earth as they are supposed to spread justice and fight evil according to prophet Mohamed's narrative and Arab religious mythology. Through his depiction of Arab rulers and tyrannical regimes who have participated in Arab defeats and national catastrophes, al-Nawwab emerged as a radical Arab poet whose poetics not only revolutionized contemporary Arab thought but also participated in changing the tenor of cultural awareness of the Arab world transforming the nature of its receptivity to the concepts of struggle and revolution.

As a famous poet with wide audience, al-Nawwab is known in the Arab world for his provocative poetry which is characterized by anger against Arab politics and condemnation of Arab rulers and regimes. Lampooning contemporary Arab rulers and policy makers for their failure to fulfil the dreams and ambitions of

the Arab people, al-Nawwab employs sarcasm and artistic obscenity as an integral part of a poetics addressed to the masses all over the Arab world. Due to its inflammatory rhetoric, political agenda and obscenities, al-Nawwab's poetry is still banned in some Arab countries, however, it has been smuggled into every Arab country and many of its famous lines and poems are memorized by Arab intellectuals and poetry fans. Describing a region governed by dictatorial regimes and oppressive governments, al-Nawwab portrays the entire Arab world as a complex web of adjacent prisons: "this homeland which extends from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean is made up of prisons leading to prisons". Through oppression, tyranny and hegemony, every single Arab ruler has turned his country into a private prison where all of the citizens are "prisoners" and the regime's agents are "jailers". Seeking to resist tyranny, oppression and injustice al-Nawwab's poetry, in this sense, has become a cry of anger against what he calls "the wolfishness of the world", the wickedness of policies of repression practiced against the Arab people by dictatorial regimes and puppet governments.

Witnessing the recurrent Arab defeats in wars with Israel and experiencing persecution as well as dispossession, the dissident Iraqi poet , al-Nawwab , calls for protest against all forms of oppression in the Arab world. He initiates a radical poetic dynamics advocating political change, even through violence, as a potential means of terminating the corruption and evil of tyrannical Arab regimes. Revealing his impatience with the rise of puppet governments, in the Arab world, who take orders from ex-imperialistic countries and support the interests of foreign hegemonic forces in the Arab region, al-Nawwab articulates his criticism of Arab regimes using angry and obscene rhetoric. Struggling to create a distinctive revolutionary voice in his poetry, reflective of the aspirations of the Arab masses, al-Nawwab attempts to give expression to a poetics of protest capable of reflecting the pains and hopes of Arab people. This distinguished voice reflects the growing national consciousness in the Arab world which is hostile to the Euro-American double-policy in the Middle East.

In spite of the textual richness characterizing most of al-Nawwab's poetry, there are some artistic/ideological drawbacks in addition to few examples where poems edge toward superficiality, unnecessary political jargon and emotional rhetoric. Nevertheless, it is relevant to argue that al-Nawwab, poetry , particularly *Watariyyat*, succeeded in penetrating the core of history and culture in the Arab world disrupting the central myths and traditions which dominate his society. In problematizing the concepts of ideology, identity, revolution and struggle, al-Nawwab attempts to draw the attention of his people toward issues not merely of political or radical concerns but of complex and profound human significance. The poetry of al-Nawwab not only explores themes with radical and propagandist implications - because of its being predicated on the revolutionary/political, dynamic-but also underlines symbolic, mythic, exilic and human issues with universal implications, traceable to complex motifs drawn from Arab/Islamic culture and history. Due to the mass popularity of the political poetry of al-

Nawwab, this kind of poetry reveals the tremendous impact of the poet on Arab literature and culture al-Nawwab entered the Arab consciousness not only as poet but also as a significant and national event and a symbol suggesting a blending of radicalism and rebellious/political energy.

Notes

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[1] All translations from Arabic poetry and prose are done by the writer of the article unless names of other translators are mentioned in the text of the paper.

[2] During the reign of Othman b. Affan, the third Muslim Caliph, Abu Thar Al-Ghafari, the voice of opposition against the regime, launched a campaign against all forms of corruption practiced by the governors of several provinces within the Islamic Empire. Astounded by the policies of domination and injustice, advocated by Moawiya, the governor of Damascus, during the reign of Othman, Abu Thar urged the Muslim people to protest against the Caliphand his governor. Repudiating the luxury and extravagance of Moawiya's palace in Damascus where most of the people suffered from poverty and were dominated by the sword, Abu Thar's revolutionary activities against Moawiya turned him into an object of Moawiya's retaliation. Through a conspiracy, Moawiya succeeded in moving Othman, the Muslim Caliph, against Abu Thar who was accused of threatening the stability of the Muslim nation. Urging the masses to revolt against a governor appointed by the Caliphwas considered as an unforgivable crime in the tribal society of the early Islamic era. But since Abu Thar was one of the Prophet's companions, the Caliph did not immediately punish him but he attempted to contain his revolutionary activities. Consequently Abu Thar was given a well-paid job in the Caliph's palace. Being aware that the royal job basically seeks to undermine his revolutionary activities by isolating him from the masses, Abu Thar dismissed the Caliph's offer as a kind of bribe. Threatened to be assassinated if he did not obey the Caliph's order, Abu Thar appealed to Othman to allow him to go into a voluntary exile. The Caliph accepted the plea stipulating that Abu Thar should go to his exile alone without farewell or company. Nevertheless, some people including Ali, broke the Caliph's orders and gave Abu Thar a farewell as he was leaving to stay alone in his desert exile where he died later.

[3] The massacre of Karbala which took place forty-eight years after the death of Prophet Muhammad could be traced back to the antagonism between Ali, Prophet Muhammad's cousin and Moawiya, his political rival and the founder of the Umayyad Dynasty. When Othman, the third Muslim Caliphwas mysteriously assassinated, Ali became the Caliph of the Muslim people but the murder of Othman and the inability to identify his killers

triggered a conflict between Ali and Moawiya, the governor of Damascus, because Ali believed that Moawiya was aware of the identities of the Caliph's assassins . After the murder of Ali, Moawiya became the Caliphand Ali's family accepted him as the leader of the Muslim nation on the condition that Moawiya's successor should be selected by the Muslim people through election. Nevertheless, Moawiya violated the agreement and appointed his corrupt son Yazid as a future Caliph. After the death of Moawiya, Yazid became the Caliph of the Muslim people. Some prominent figures from Mecca expressed rebellion against Yazid in addition to the people of Iraq who sent to Al-Hussein, inviting him to come from the Arabian Peninsula to establish a separatist Islamic State in their country. In response to their invitation Al-Hussein and about thirty of his followers including his family came from Meccato Iraq riding horses and camels. When Al-Hussein and his company arrived at Karbala, southern of Iraq, the Iraqis betrayed him because they were intimidated by the powerful army of Abullah Ibn Zeyyad, who was appointed as the governor of Iraq by Yazid. After being besieged and prevented from food and water in Karbala, Al-Hussein was given two options, either to acknowledge Yazid as the Caliph of the Muslim people or face his army, more than thirty thousand soldiers. Al-Hussein appealed to the leaders of the enemy army to allow him to return to Mecca in peace, but his appeal was turned down. Determined not to surrender or acknowledge Yazid as the Caliph, Al-Hussein's decision to fight to the end was a suicidal mission. After being killed, the dead bodies of Al-Hussein, his families and followers were mutilated and his head was cut off and fixed on a spear and carried to be exhibited in Yazid's palace in Damascus.

[4] Moawiya was an influential tribal leader descending from a well-known tribe in Mecca. During the reign of Othman, the third Muslim Caliph, Moawiya was appointed as the governor of Damascus. When Othman was assassinated Moawiya expressed his desire to become his successor but Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law was selected as the fourth Caliph. During Ali's reign which lasted for five years, Moawiya attempted to usurp the Caliphate and remove Ali from power. After the assassination of Ali, Moawiya became the Caliphand succeeded in founding the Umayyad Dynasty in Damascus. The leaders of the major Muslim tribes accepted Moawiya as a Caliph after reaching an agreement that prevented him from appointing his son as his successor. Moawiya's violation of the accord resulted into political hostilities and the disintegration of the Muslim nation. After the death of Moawiya, his corrupt son Yazid became the Caliphand a conflict between Yazid and Al-Hussein, the son of Ali reached a zenith in the battle of Karbala where the latter was brutally slaughtered together with his family and followers.

[5] As a young man, Ali, Prophet Muhammad's cousin, volunteered to take the place of the Prophet in bed at the night in which Muhammad's tribal enemies planned to assassinate him in order to prevent him from spreading Islam outside the borders of Mecca. Sleeping in the Prophet's bed, Ali succeeded in deceiving Muhammad's rivals who laid a siege around his house in an attempt to prevent him from escaping to Medina and establish an Islamic State. Due to Ali's courage, self-denial and fearlessness, the prophet and his close friend, Abu Bakr escaped from Mecca to Medina where the first Islamic community was established.

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