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A STUDY OF ABD AL-WAHHAB AL-BAYATI'S POETICS: THE MYTH OF PROMETHEUS

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ABSTRACT

The present paper argues the use of myth in Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Bayati's poetry (1926-1999), an outstanding modernist Iraqi poet. To incorporate tradition in contemporary Arabic literature, he could provide new perspective and open wide horizons throughout linking the present with the past and eastern with western literature. Influenced by modernist European writers, Al-Bayati revived the ancient mythology to create committed Arabic poetry that tackles the issues of the Arab region, especially that of his country Iraq. As a modernist writer, witnessing the devastating events of world war II, Al-Bayati's suffering, anger and desire are well reflected in his literary works. The present paper aims to study the myth of Prometheus as a strategic literary technique and the way it has been applied and employed in the poetry of the contemporary Iraqi poet Al-Bayati; in such a way that he has used different aspects of this rich source to express his political and social purposes, conflicts and crises in the life of Arab people.

Introduction

Myth and its Function

It is a natural impulsion of humankind to recount stories, and as a significant part of every human culture, we call these stories "myths". They justify and explain the world, and define our role within creation.⁽¹⁾ Societies, in the prehistoric eras, had by tradition used stories to illustrate things they could not explain. Leeming adds that the ancient myths took the form of stories by which our ancestors could understand the mysteries that occurred within and around them.⁽²⁾

Like its close relative the fairy tale, The myth has its origins in the collective "folk" mind. Possibly it was individual shamans or priests who gave some specific form to the "primitive" speculations concerning the origin of earth, the reason for spring, and the nature of death; but the principal similarities within those various forms, irrespective of geography and chronology, indicate a collective authorship, the human mind wrestling en masse with the mysteries, attempting to make earth conscious of itself.⁽³⁾

The origin of the word "myth" is a Greek, stemmed from the word "mythos", which according to the classical Greek; is any plot or story, whether false or true. A myth, however, in its central modern significance, "is one story in a mythology, a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives." Most myths are related to social ceremonials. myth is different from legend in the sense that if the hereditary story includes a human character and not a supernatural character it is usually called a legend, while if it includes gods and semi gods and it is part of a systematic mythology it is called a myth.⁽⁴⁾

Homer used the word mythos to mean conversation and narrative, but not a fiction. Later, Greek "mythos" is used to mean fiction. Plato refers to mythoi to signify something not completely lacking truth but for the most part fictitious. Nowadays a myth tends to signify a fiction, but a fiction which conveys a psychological truth.⁽⁵⁾ Barthes avers that "In myth, we find again the tri-dimensional pattern which I have just described: the signifier, the signified and the sign". ⁽⁶⁾ He sees myth as a sort of speech, a communication that is determined by historical circumstances, a

¹* The translation Of Arabic works that appear in this paper is done by the author of the paper.

Philip, Neil. *Myths and Legends Explained*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2007, p.6.

²Leeming, David Adams. *The World of Myth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.3.

³*Ibid*, 7.

⁴Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Earl Mcpeek, 1999, p.170.

⁵Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 1999, p.525.

⁶Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1991, p. 113.

misrepresentation that disguised as natural fact, Barthes writes, "myth is a type of speech, chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the nature of things".⁽⁷⁾

Not one genre but all genres of literature derived from myth. Myth is a structural principle in literary texts because literature is "displaced mythology". Frye saw literature as relatively simple groups of "myths" and "archetypes". He states that "myth is a term referring to specific aspects of narrative structure, such as plot or story, but in Frye's later work the term is also used to explore the cultural relevance of such stories or group of stories crucial for a given society".⁽⁸⁾

Thus, the lasting influence of the socio functionalist approach ensures the important social contexts of myth, its cohesive function in providing the social cement that binds societies together. In large measure, myths have importance because they embody corporate significances, meanings that transcend individual needs, desires, and values. They postulate a systematic method for empowering holistic interaction between individuals who otherwise might remain independent and disengaged. Hence myths mean culture, social structure and interaction.⁽⁹⁾

Scholars' view, towards the function of myth, is varied. Some attribute it to a civilized role. Bronislaw Malinowski studied the myth in terms of its civilizational function. He said: "it supports social traditions and give them great value and a high position, and he believed that myth is an essential part in human civilization. It regulates and reinforce beliefs, safeguards and strengthen moral principles, guarantees the efficacy of rituals, and contains practical laws to protect mankind".⁽¹⁰⁾

This religious civilizational perspective is confirmed by Mircea Eliade in his book "Aspects of a Myth" saying that "They express beliefs and laws, highlight their importance, safeguard moral principles and enforce them, ensure the effectiveness of ritual ceremonies, and present practical rules related to daily life affairs".⁽¹¹⁾ In his book "Quest for myth ", Richard Chase looks at its function, and sees that it shares with poetry in a cleansing function. In addition, C. G. Jung adds another cognitive function "It's function giving knowledge: dreams give us knowledge of ourselves.". ⁽¹²⁾ Friedrich Nietzsche states that:

"without myth all culture loses its healthy and natural creative power: only a horizon surrounded by myths can unify an entire cultural movement. ... The images of myth must be the daemonic guardians, omnipresent and unnoticed, which protect the growth of the young mind, and guide man's interpretation of his life and struggles. The state itself has no unwritten laws more powerful than the

⁷*Ibid*: 108

⁸Dubois, Diane. *Northrop Frye in Context*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, p.2

⁹Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Illinois: The Free Press, 1948, p.79

¹⁰Awadh, Rita, *The Myth of Death and Resurrection in Modern Arabic Poetry*, 1st Ed, Beirut: The Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, 1978, p. 20

¹¹--Eliade, Mircea. *Aspects of the Myth*. Trans. HabibKasouha, Damascus: Ministry of Culture Publications in Syrian Arab Republic, 1995, p. 29

¹²Sobhi, Mohieddin, *Modern Literary Criticism between Myth and Science*, the Arab House for Books, the Jamahiriya The Great Arab Socialism, 1988, P.106

mythical foundation that guarantees its connection with religion and its growth out of mythical representations.”⁽¹³⁾

Mythical Influence in Contemporary Arabic Poetry

In the post WW II period, writers from various countries of Arab nation transformed European conventions into means of investigating significant social and political concerns on territorial and national levels. Appropriating European folklores to be utilized in a different language and inside a different social setting, Arab writers expect to give more profundity and understanding into fossilized conventions which neglect to defy provincial changes and worldwide difficulties.⁽¹⁴⁾

Perhaps one of the distinctive artistic phenomena of the contemporary Arabic poetry is its dependence on recalling myth and employing it in the texts. Indeed, myths have come to play a constructive role in the contemporary poetic text. It is well known that myths have appeared into contemporary Arab literature after the Arabs came into contact with European literature and culture. The Arab poets being influenced by the poem “The Waste Land” (1922) by T. S. Eliot - the English poet and critic - and the translation of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra in (1959) for James Fraser’s book “The Golden Bough” (1890), followed by the emergence of Shukri Ayyad’s book “The Hero in Literature and Mythology” (1999), all of them helped to develop the use of the mythical method in contemporary Arabic poetry. Moreover, what happened in the mid-fifties to the Arab world in terms of problems and calamities prompted Arab poets to be inspired by the myth. They sought to express the barrenness of Arab life after the catastrophe of 1948 and their deep longing for their lost dignity and the restoration of their lost glory.⁽¹⁵⁾

Because of T. S. Eliot’s influence (1888-1965), a new poetic dynamics was developed by postcolonial Arab poets to convey the aspirations and disturbances of a nation assaulted by recurrent defeats and troubled with repressive regimes. Being aware of the constraints of a limited poetic conventions that neglected to confront the difficulties of the after war time, poets of Arab countries supported Western poetic strategies and creative techniques to explore local issues and confront native hegemony. Influenced by Eliot's literary conventions, Arab poets like Al-Sayyab, Al-Bayati and others had the option to utilize Western structures like the prelude, the interior monologue, the objective correlative and the mythic method to give more cognizance and adaptability in the poetic tradition of Arabic literature.⁽¹⁶⁾

Overtly, Eliot’s poetry represented the major inspiration for Arab writers who responded vehemently to *The Waste Land*. Like Eliot, who wrote the poem with the

¹³Preminger, Alex and T. V. F. Brogan. Eds. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993. P.108

¹⁴Saddik, Gohar. *The Integration of Western Modernism in Postcolonial Arabic Literature: a study of Abdul-Wahhab Al-Bayati's Third World poetics*, *Third World Quarterly*, 2008, 29:2, P. 376.

¹⁵--Euki, Ali Najafi; et al. "Forms of Prometheus Myth Presence in Contemporary Arabic Poetry." *Studies in Arabic Language and Literature*, Vol 22, 2016, P. 138

¹⁶Saddik, Gohar. *The Integration of Western Modernism in Postcolonial Arabic Literature: a study of Abdul-Wahhab Al-Bayati's Third World poetics*, P. 380.

memory of first world war in his mind, they experienced tragedies of great consequences particularly the developments of the Palestinian predicament in 1948. Further, Eliot's view of tradition fascinated modernist Arab poets, his conservative religious thinking, his resourceful poetic techniques and his use of myth. Utilizing Eliot's rich traditions of poetic symbolism, Arab poets employed western legends, Christian symbols and western archetypal figures like Prometheus and Sisyphus to articulate local issues vital to the Arab world in a period of great transformations.⁽¹⁷⁾

Using western traditions including mythic figures such as Prometheus, Oedipus, Ulysses, Aphrodite, Adonis, Odysseus in addition to motifs dealing with resurrection, fertility and ritualistic sacrifices is an indication of a propensity on the part of Arab writers to incorporate western civilization, to convey local narratives and indigenous purposes. Therefore, prominent Arab critics praised Arab poets, who extensively used symbols associated with western traditions, in their attempt to explore the socio-political conditions of the Arab world in the aftermath of WWII. ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Al-Bayati and Prometheus

Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Bayati is regarded as one of the most "committed" Arab poets and as a leading figure in the socialist realist movement in modern Arabic poetry. he was forced to leave Iraq due to his communist beliefs and wander throughout a number of Arab and Eastern European countries; Hence, much of his poetry has been translated into Russian and Chinese.⁽¹⁹⁾

Techniques of Western writers, such as the use of allusions, masks, and objective correlatives are included in his poetry to enrich his objectivity, making a distance between the text and the poet. He dealt with the theme of exile in a complicated way. He depicts the life in his country(Iraq)like a prison and hell. Al-Bayati, who was exiled from his country for political issues, did not find relief in the countries he was exiled to. Influenced by Eliot's theories of criticism, heavers that any effort to incorporate tradition opens wide horizons and provides new perspectives relating the present with the past. Thus he involves Eliot's notion of tradition as a modernist element essential in creating

¹⁷Saddik, Gohar. Modernist Arabic Literature and the Clash of Civilizations Discourse, *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, Summer Issue, Volume I, Number 1, 2009, P. 51

¹⁸Al-Hawi, Eliya. *Symbolism and Surrealism in Western and Arabic Poetry*. Beirut: Dar Al Thaqafa, 1980, p.81

¹⁹* Gohar M. Saddik mentions, in his article "The Integration of Western Modernism in Postcolonial Arabic Literature: a study of AbdulWahhab Al-Bayati's Poetics". Page, 389, that "The Iraqi poet, Abdul-Wahhab Al-Bayati, was born in Baghdad in 1926 . In 1950 he graduated from Baghdad's Teachers College with a BA in Arabic language and literature. He worked as a teacher from 1950 to 1953 until he was expelled from his job and his country because of his ideological attitudes toward the puppet government of Nuri Al-Said, the Iraqi prime minister who collaborated with the British occupation authorities. As a political refugee Al-Bayati lived in many countries in the Arab world and Europe and most of his works were published outside Iraq. As a result of his political commitments, Al-Bayati was twice deprived of his Iraqi nationality, once during the 1960s and once during Saddam Hussain's regime". (for more, you can see Paul Starkey's book "Modern Arabic Literature", page 83.

--Asfour, John Mikhail. *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry 1945-1984 with A Critical Introduction*.Montreal: McGill University, 1984, p.134

an objective poetics in Arabic literature at an important phase in the history of modern Arabic literature. ⁽²⁰⁾

Al-Bayati, due to contact with Western literature and culture, showed awareness of modernistic myths and traditions which became afterward exploited into his indigenous poetic tradition. In this respect, the intersecting between the postcolonial Arab poet's interests and Western modernism performed an essential part in underpinning an intercivilisational exchange of ideas between the West and the Arab world. The postcolonial Arab poet, troubled with the distressing occurrences of the after World War II time, looked for a different poetics to confront the predicament of his people. The product of exploiting modernist theories of Western literature, Al-Bayati revived the heritage of Arabic literature, using ancient near East mythology and integrating them in Arabic poetry. He engages western and eastern myths of resurrection and fertility, blending mediaeval culture with ancient Egyptian, pre-Islamic, Assyrian and Babylonian traditions; trying to revive the dissolving soul of Arab nation in a period of political predicaments and civilizing deterioration. ⁽²¹⁾ Al-Bayati explains his use of mask, myth and symbol by saying:

"This and others led me to find the new poetic style by which I express. I have tried to reconcile between what dies and what does not die, the finite and nonfinite, the present and transcending the present, and this required me to suffer long in searching for the masks in history, symbol and myth. The choice of some historical personalities, myths, cities, rivers, and some heritage books is one of the most difficult things to express through a "mask" the social and cosmic ordeal". ⁽²²⁾

Perhaps we will not deviate from the path of accurateness if we say that Al-Bayati was the first representative of promethean thought in Arabic literature. In many of his poems, he was inspired and enchanted by the myth of Prometheus to a great extent; and he tried to benefit from it at the intellectual and literary level. Al-Bayati extended his use of Prometheus to become a central myth in his poetry. ⁽²³⁾

What all mythological reports agree upon is that Prometheus, the giver of deep thought, wisdom, and one of the Titans in Greek mythology, was the revolutionary defender of man against gods. His name meant "far-sighted" and "advanced thought," and he taught mankind how to use fire. His story is one of the most important stories in Greek mythology, and this story symbolizes enormous implications and connotations in Western thought and history. Prometheus story is that he chose to be more loyal to man than to the gods and to be his savior, teacher and protector of his existence. Therefore, he carried out an act of rebellion against the great deity "Zeus" for the sake of mankind, and stole the fire which means "light", "knowledge" and "warmth" and presented it to humans as one of the effective means of civilization. He granted it to humans in order to raise them from darkness to light, and to use fire to

²⁰Saddik, Gohar. The Integration of Western Modernism in Postcolonial Arabic Literature: a study of AbdulWahhab Al-Bayati's Poetics 2008, P.382.

²¹*ibid*: 382

²²Boumali, Hanan. Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Bayati and Manifestations of Poetic Modernism. *The Academy of Social and Human Studies, Department of Literature and Philosophy*, Issue 15 - January 2016. P. 14

²³Rizk, Khalil. *Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Bayati's Poetry in a Stylistic Study*. (First Edition, Beirut: Al-Ashraf Foundation, 1995, p. 104

serve their interests. As a punishment, the Furious Zeus chained Prometheus to a rock, where his liver was eaten each day by an eagle, and grew back each night. ⁽²⁴⁾

Al-Bayati always strives to establish a global “utopian state”. He claims the affiliation to Marxist socialism, and he is considered as the most representative of the Arab poets for the new realism in Iraq and the Arab world. He is concerned with the issues of the masses, the people and the struggle for establishing justice and the kingdom of freedom on earth, so he always searches for depicting the objective reality of the Iraqi society and the Arab nation, and focuses on the social and political aspects of the objective reality as it is and as it should be. ⁽²⁵⁾

He called for the collective efforts of the peasants, workers and the poor to lead the struggle against the forces of injustice and oppression. He uses, as an embodiment of his views and aspirations, revolutionary figures to unite with them and take them as spiritual support to reach his ambitions. The myth of Prometheus, with its various modern connotations, helped him to get on this desired goal. For him, it is a rich intellectual supply which made him name one of his collections as “An Autobiography of a Fire Stealer,” and one of his poems in his collection “Broken Pitchers” as “The fire stealer” and employed this character in many of his poems.⁽²⁶⁾ In the third and seventh sections of the poem “Love Poems On the Seven Gates of the World” in 1970 he used Prometheus character to be the speaker of his ideas:

The thieves attacked me in Paris
 They grabbed my notebooks and pigmented with blood
 The cubes of light and asphalt
 and left me dead
 But I got up my love before dawn
 carry the lily of the fields and the torment of the letter
 And the fire of this age
 for the homeland which is open like a grave

 Every night I carry this fire from Mount (the Caucasus)
 I shout with the horns
 claiming revolutions and
 In the homeland which steeped in misery from the ocean to the Gulf
 Sleep and prayer are happier these animals
 and this nature which is silent and mute
 from the sick cities poor
 and from the scum of the dead in the countryside
 But I will be crucified at the beginning of dawn on the walls.

²⁴Philip, Neil. p.24

²⁵Rizk, p.104

²⁶Al-Bayati, Abd Al-Wahab. Diwan of Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Bayati. 4th ed., Beirut: Dar Al-Awda, 1990, p.129-130.

)⁽²⁷⁾(Al-Bayati, 127

Al-Bayati united with the figure of the mythical hero Prometheus through poetical reincarnation, when the two bear the light that illuminates the path of humanity and freedom. Al-Bayati, like Prometheus, stole the fire (or poetry) to bring back the pulse of life to humanity and the value of the word in a time when principles, ideals and values are lost. The above mentioned lines demonstrate a trend that Al-Bayati is a Socialist and Communist. he mixes a revolutionary experience with a metaphysical experience and evoke the personality of Prometheus to reveal his position towards the issues of a vulnerable homeland, toilers and proletariat who suffer from class struggles, tyranny and occupation, and they wait for salvation and the savior. Uniting with the character of this legendary revolutionary hero to give fire to the contemporary man. ⁽²⁸⁾

It is worth noting here that Al-Bayati resorted to the myth of Prometheus to express his position because there is a close relationship between this myth and the reality of contemporary life. The man, in the myth, suffers from the cruelty of the system of the gods, modern humans suffer from injustice, persecution and poverty under the foreign intruders and corrupt governments. Just as in the myth, Prometheus makes rebellion against the gods and sacrifices himself for the sake of mankind, so someone should appear in the role of a savior and rescue modern man, returning back his dignified life and lost freedom. Al-Bayati, in his quest for the new Nishapur, through his employment of various personalities, is always looking for a new Prometheus, for a hero who revolts not only for himself but for the sake of others.⁽²⁹⁾ In his poem "Phoenix", Prometheus must take some action to act in order to establish justice among men, and so he steals fire from the sun:

I extended my hands to the sun, and the trees became green
I caught the day
As he ran away by the chariots of fire
Ashes glowed on my fingers and the phoenix flew away.³⁰

This image reflects a Promethean action. Prometheus steals the fire from the sun vehicle and gives it to man. Hence, nothing is impossible for the human race because Prometheus gave

man the secrets of the gods. But he who steals the fire of the gods and teaches man the art of revolution should be punished, tied in chains, tied to a rock, where Eagles snapped his chest: ⁽³¹⁾

²⁷*Ibid*, p.127

²⁸Al-Halabi, Ahmed Tohme. Intertextuality with folklore in Al-Bayati's Poetry. Knowledge, Issue 523. 2006, P.59-60

²⁹Rizk, p.173

³⁰Al-Bayati, p.179

³¹Rizk, p.173

Abu Al-Alaa cried
 When he saw me in the clothes of captivity
 the eagle snaps my chest
 waiting, with millions, the beginning of dawn.⁽³²⁾

In this poem, the elements of revolution, revival, and freedom are repeated and the spirit of vitality, Hope, optimism and looking to the future are dominating in the context of the poem.

Al Bayati composed the last part of the poem in a form of internal monologue. Prometheus, who is a symbol of the captive, speaks of his suffering, refusing surrender and submission, while dreaming of victory and looking forward to the dawn of freedom. The curse, in the end, is transformed into salvation and success "waiting, with millions, the beginning of dawn...". The poet invokes the character of "Abu Al-Alaa Al Maari" to enrich his poetic text. In the last section of the poem he declares that he is waiting for the Savior, and waiting denotes hope, while the "flood" is a symbol of upheaval and revolution, he says "I Wait for the "herald man \I wait for the flood".⁽³³⁾

Al-Bayati employed the myth of Prometheus in his poem "The Fire Stealer", in his collection "Broken Pitchers", as an incentive to adopt the concepts of this "saint". According to Marx, Prometheus is the most noble saint in the philosophical calendar; a sign that ensures printing all of Al-Bayati's poems:⁽³⁴⁾

They turned around with the sun, and their resolve collapsed
 And they returned back the first mourned the second
 And the fire stealer did not leave as usual
 Racing the wind from barroom to barroom
 And the curse of the fathers still follow him
 And obscure the earth from his bright lamp

 The era of heroism is over, and here I am
 I came back from the world of the dead in a letdown
 I was burnt Alone! I'm alone! many suns
 Passed me, they could not get filled with my sorrows
 I forgave them, I lamented them!
 I left for them, O Lord, all my shrouds!
 Let the blind chance play its game
 I spat on my handcuff and jailer
 And what should I do if they come back disappointed?

³²Al-Bayati, p.179

³³Al-Bayati, p.183

³⁴Al-Gazaeri, Mohamed. Text enrichment. 1st ed, Jordan: Al Dustour Commercial Press. 2000, p.205

And they returned back the first mourned the second. ⁽³⁵⁾

Al-Bayati, in these lines, depicts Prometheus's distrust of human race and its exclusivity from it. If Prometheus, the myth, represents leadership and heroism to sacrifice for the sake of mankind, Prometheus, the poet, sees himself disappointed, not to face his destiny, but to face his failure to coexist with his fellow human beings. Al-Bayati merges the subjective (himself) with the mythical one (Prometheus) to activate unity of the symbol with the combative nature of a struggler. This poem was published in his collection "Broken Pitches", and it was the product of the clamor of uprising of the Iraqi people in 1952-1953 against the government of Nouredine Mahmoud and its coup. Next, it appeared on the horizon of the National Union Front that brought patriotic and national parties together in action to bring down the regime. ⁽³⁶⁾

What interests us here is that Al-Bayati made a complete change in his poem regarding the origin of the story. Prometheus, in this poem, did not sacrifice himself for the sake of humanity, but rather is controlled on by a spirit of despondency and pessimism. It seems that he regrets having brought himself the curse of the gods for this ungrateful man who does not appreciate the sacrifice of Prometheus and is not concerned with freedom, determination and heroism, and does not want to be guided by the fire of guidance. Prometheus, in these lines, is distinguished by a passive, non-committed, indifferent character, and moving between barrooms and relies on chance and fate instead of striving for the elevation and victory of mankind; and this is different from what we read in the original story of the myth. ⁽³⁷⁾

Al-Bayati, in his poem "An Autobiography of the Fire Stealer" is inspired by Prometheus's service to man in the belief that poets are the inheritors of Prometheus and can play a positive role for the human race in providing service to the human being. Hence, Al-Bayati completely hate the poetry that is far from Man and is not interested in his affairs:

... The fire Stealer was coming with the seasons
 Carrying the testament of times and collapse
 Come to see
 Preoccupying with the mortal humans through horse racing
 In the glow of the earth
 ...
 I searched from barroom to barroom and from exile to exile
 The face that the stealer of poetry fire carries
 from the temples of the gods - man
 from the princess of exile who we were behind her red hair

³⁵Al-Bayati, p.141

³⁶Al-Gazaeri, p.204

³⁷Fawzi, Nahida. Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Bayati, His Life and Poetry, 1st ed., Tehran: Thara Allah, 1963, P.152

...

They were praising the servants - Kings in cages

Lice and moss grow in their poetry

.We were behind her hair taming the horses in the steppes of this east ⁽³⁸⁾

These lines tell us that the function of Prometheus has been changed in the contemporary era. Prometheus has to steal the authentic poetry from the false poets and present it to the genuine poet. He must save the language from the poets who decorate the word in the era of revolutions and uprisings, and who carry, steal, praise and falsify facts. Prometheus should once again be the donor; his message is to bring love, humanity, freedom and poetry to contemporary man in an era that humanity has lost its meaning and value. Poetry has become a decoration that no longer praises freedom, love and humanity in the era of uprisings, "And the poets, of the paid for dream, in the towers were with powders / And paint hide the pallor of the poetry goddess who is getting old". Prometheus, the myth, carried the "fire" to mankind, but Prometheus, according to Al-Bayati, is a symbol for all, and it has suggestive connotations that do not mean only warmth and light. His message is guidance of mankind. ⁽³⁹⁾

And the poem "The False Pregnancy" is one of the poems in which the poet exploited the myth of Prometheus. The theme of "The Savior", in this poem, depicts an endless waiting while Al-Bayati sheds light on the ruling conditions in the Arab world after the Setback; and perhaps his main purpose of "The False Pregnancy" was the appearance and disappearance of "Gamal Abdel Nasser" as a leader for the Arab world. He opens the poem with the name "Babylon" and depicts the curse of this city, a curse that will never end, and even Prometheus, the savior of mankind, is unable to rise from his grave and eliminates sterility. ⁽⁴⁰⁾

The motive for which this myth is summoned is to challenge the prevailing political and social issues in the Arab world while he makes us hear his painful cry from his struggle for the sake of the homeland:

Babylon was neither resurrected, nor did the herald the man appear on its walls

The flood neither destroyed it nor washed away the sins of its people

And the fire stealer did not rise from his grave across the Euphrates,

Sterility, endless summer, silence and dirt

Sadness and plague

The food of these bloated stomachs cities

Mortal humans, in them, are like hunting dogs and the

Burning under the summer sun

Either defeated or shackled. ⁽⁴¹⁾

³⁸Al-Bayati, p. 353-354

³⁹Euki, P. 150

⁴⁰Rizk, p.149

⁴¹Al-Bayati, p. 154

It can be said that "Babylon" here is a symbol of the passing glory of the Arab nation. The poet blends between the contemporary experience, that he wants to communicate, with the traditional experience while he feels nothing but despondency and pessimism and does not see a salvation from these agonies. What attracts the reader's attention is the lexicon of this poem such as the terms "grave", "sterility", "sadness", "plague", "defeated", "mortal humans" and other words that carry negative charges that fit the poet's purpose and form a semantic field that reflects these agonizing circumstances. "This barren city has been crippled by sterility, silence, grief and plague, and it surrenders freely to the thief, traitor and coward".⁽⁴²⁾

Al-Bayati raises the tragic events, that took place in the Arab world during the Arab-Israeli war in June 1967, to the mythical level. "The central theme is the sterility of contemporary Arab cities and the failure of the Arab leaderships to achieve the salvation of the Arab nation. Prometheus here does not survive humanity, abandons sacrifice, does not carry the fire of life for them. He does not restore the role of the Arab man in history. He doesn't bring back to the Arab civilization its vitality and effectiveness; the thing which increases and magnifies the tragedy of humanity"⁽⁴³⁾

Conclusion

The myth of Prometheus has been transformed from a mere story to one of the main poetic concerns in the movement of contemporary Arabic poetry. It became one of the central myths employed, in one way or another, in Arabic poetry. Taking advantage of the capabilities of this mythical heritage became an integral part of the poet's mission. The poet does not use it merely to convey the story but was a transformation and a new creation that bestowed it what the poet wanted of new connotations and usually gave it a symbolic nature. Thus, he takes the poem out of its lyricism to be able to integrate the subjective with the objective to express his various purposes. Moreover, he did not employ it to escape from the living reality, but rather he often reconciled the myth with his contemporary experience. Al-Bayati's Prometheus is a committed individuality to a great extent; he exploits this myth to challenge the political, social and economic issues prevailing in the Arab world and to express his revolutionary ideas and the political and social struggles in the nation. He finds support in "Promethean redemption" that expresses his socialist tendencies and positions towards the issues of the masses to bring dignity for the people. He tried to merge the social and political revolution, that he advocates, bay.

⁴²Rizk, p.149

⁴³*Ibid*: 150

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