

RESEARCH TITLE

How Modern Arabic Poetry Intertwined with Ancient Myth: Searching for Channels of Influence

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Abstract

This study examines how ancient myth entered modern Arabic poetry and became an objective correlative for contemporary experience. Using a descriptive and analytical approach, it draws on literary criticism, selected passages from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Arab modernist debates. It examines Eliot's influence, the cultural project of the journal *Shi'r* and the Tammuzian poets, and the reception of James Frazer, Mircea Eliade, Roland Barthes, and Northrop Frye. The analysis identifies interconnected channels of poetic influence, translation, and critical interpretation through which inherited myths became symbols of alienation, oppression, sacrifice, and renewal. It concludes that myth provided a flexible resource for expressing modern human and social dilemmas, establishing a framework for subsequent study of Saadi Youssef's engagement with myth.

Key Words: Myth; Modern Arabic poetry; T. S. Eliot; *The Waste Land*; *The Golden Bough*.

كيف تداخل الشعر العربي الحديث مع الأسطورة القديمة: البحث عن قنوات التأثير

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المستخلص

تبحث الدراسة في انتقال الأسطورة القديمة إلى الشعر العربي الحديث وتحولها إلى معادل موضوعي للتجربة المعاصرة. وتعتمد منهجاً وصفيًا تحليليًا يستند إلى النقد الأدبي ومقاطع من «الأرض الخراب» لإليوت ومناقشات الحداثة العربية. وتتناول تأثير إليوت، ومشروع مجلة «شعر» والشعراء التمزيين، وتلقي كتابات فريزر وإلياده وبارت وفراي. ويحدد التحليل قنوات مترابطة من التأثير الشعري والترجمة والتفسير النقدي، تحولت عبرها الأساطير الموروثة إلى رموز للاغتراب والقمع والنضحية والتجدد. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الأسطورة أتاحت موردًا مرئيًا للتعبير عن المعضلات الإنسانية والاجتماعية الحديثة، وأسست إطارًا لدراسة لاحقة لتفاعل سعدي يوسف معها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسطورة؛ الشعر العربي الحديث؛ إليوت؛ الأرض الخراب؛ الغصن الذهبي.

introduction

The contemporary poet found his calling ⁽¹⁾ in mythological treasures, convinced that myth is linked to history ⁽²⁾, through the departure of the mythical hero from ancient times in myth, becoming a hero for all times and places, as mentioned in a previous chapter. Myth transcends history because its heroes are heroes of the present and the future. Gilgamesh, for example, becomes a story for all times after having been a story in ancient Iraqi myth ⁽³⁾.

The relationship between poetry and myth is what opened the way for contemporary poets to explore the text of myth. Myth relies on intuition and contemplation, and this is what brings it closer to poetry. Myth explains the phenomena of life, absence, death, and the search for the unknown. These phenomena approach the limits of those phenomena that the contemporary poet ⁽⁴⁾ has searched for.

At the level of content and idea, the contemporary Arab poet found an opportunity to express the tribulations of his time, the revolution he had long prepared for, the meanings of an upside-down world, and the repression practiced by Arab authorities and governments against writers and poets ⁽⁵⁾. In mythology, the poet found a similar idea that speaks of the role of gods who control the world and overturn society ⁽⁶⁾.

The myth of "death and rebirth," for example, captured the imagination of a number of Arab poets at a certain stage, among a group of them who called themselves the Tammuzian poets. This myth, in its various forms and representations, appeared in contemporary Arab poetry to express the formula "In order to live, we must die." Or, in other words, in order for others to live, you must sacrifice yourself and make concessions on earth ⁽⁷⁾.

Mythical time (time in myth) also plays a significant role in attracting Arab poets to myth. Mythical time strips things of their historical character, transforming them into natural entities with no history behind them (this time appears in modern poetry). This characteristic of mythical time has made it a source of inspiration for modern poets, who employ it to express their absolute ahistorical desires ⁽⁸⁾.

When the contemporary Arab poet turned to myth, became familiar with its material, and became fascinated by it, he had internalized the myth and engaged in an acculturation process with it through three tributaries, or three sources through which myth entered contemporary Arabic poetry and literature:

Research question How did myth become an objective correlative in contemporary Arabic poetry?

⁽¹⁾ This, of course, does not negate the presence of myth in ancient Arabic poetry, even before the advent of Islam. Myth was prevalent in ancient Arabic literature. It seems that it penetrated it through oral memory, which transmitted the myth across generations. On myth in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, see: Al-Naimi, 1995; Abdel-Ati, 2006; on the presence of myth in the oral memory of pre-Islamic Arabs, see: Hassan, 1988; on the emergence of mythological thought in Arabic literature, see: Gunther, Maher, 1999; Hallawi, 1998; and on the mythical hero who becomes the hero of every age, see: Itlimish, 1982, 122.

⁽²⁾ On Greek myth in contemporary Arabic poetry, see: Muhammad, 1977; Abdul-Hayy, 1977.

⁽³⁾ Al-Sakr, 1994, pp. 50-53.

⁽⁴⁾ Al-Yousfi, 2005, 145-146; compare: Mansour, 1986, 111; Al-Khudhur, 1995, 19.

⁽⁵⁾ Etlimish, 1982, 135

⁽⁶⁾ The discussion here is specifically about Iraqi poets who lived through this situation, so it is not surprising that they employed the myths of ancient Iraq to talk about the tribulations of the same place but with a different time. This discussion, of course, does not negate the employment of Arab poets from other Arab countries of the ancient Iraqi myth, but the Iraqi poet was more attached to it, such as al-Sayyab, al-Bayati, and Saadi Youssef. See how the myth fluctuated, for example, in al-Bayati: Musawi, 1995, pp. 105-142; and see, for example, on myth in contemporary Palestinian poetry: Shaath, 2002; and see on myth in contemporary Egyptian theater: Hijazi, 1984; and on myth in contemporary Arabic poetry, Halawi, 1994.

⁽⁷⁾ Saeed, 1994, 21-22; Al-Samarra'i, 1983, 199; Zayed, 1997, 30

⁽⁸⁾ Ben Ayyad, 2003, 77-80.

American Poetry as a Channel

Contemporary Arab poets have been influenced by ancient myth, most notably the poet Saadi Youssef, through an indirect exposure to the contents of this myth ⁽⁹⁾. The most important channel for this openness and connection was the poems of the American poet Thomas Eliot ⁽¹⁰⁾(1965-1988), as we will see in the upcoming applied chapters.

Critics consider Thomas Eliot the spiritual father of the modern Arabic poetry movement following World War II ⁽¹¹⁾. Thomas Eliot is the one who outlined the methodology for using myth, but Eliot himself admits that when he employed myth in his poetry, he was influenced by Frazer James's book **The Golden Bough** ⁽¹²⁾. Thomas Eliot formulated a new idea from the myth that suited the meanings of his time. Therefore, he had to deal with a new technique to express the myth with a new meaning. Thomas Eliot ⁽¹³⁾ used what are called the techniques of description (parataxis) and the objective equivalent, which are structures that exceed the limits of the meaning provided by language in its normal use, and the myth in its familiar heritage ⁽¹⁴⁾.

As for contemporary Arab poets, they have not adopted a limited, well-known technique for dealing with myth except for Saadi Youssef, who employed the technique of "complex paradigm intertextuality," which this study will assume as a modern technique for dealing with myth, a point that will be discussed in the coming chapters.

It is Eliot's theory of the "objective equivalent"—in this study's view—that directed the attention of contemporary Arab poets, particularly Saadi Youssef, toward ancient myths. Eliot asserts in his theory of objective equivalents that the artist's goal is not based on expressing thought as thought, or emotion as emotion, but rather on finding an objective equivalent.

Thomas Eliot coined the term objective equivalent in his study of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, published in 1919. Eliot said that the only way to express an emotion in art or through art is to find an "objective equivalent," that is, a set of regular objects, a situation, or a series of events, each of which becomes the artistic "formulation" of that particular emotion. This emotion is immediately aroused when external facts are presented, and its role ends once it is received or experienced sensually.

The objective equivalent is greatly influenced by the poet's level of culture and intelligence, as the poet must be more cultured and intelligent than emotional and poetic, so that he can

⁽⁹⁾ See: Abu Seif, 2005, 211; what is meant by indirect openness is the use of myths in a way that is not compatible with the content of the poetic idea, and the source of knowledge of myths in this stage was an indirect channel, such as the writings of Western poets, for example, headed by Thomas Eliot, and Al-Sayyab represented this stage in his first writings that used myths, as he benefited from Western poets and imitated them in using myths, in a way that sometimes did not suit the poetic meaning presented.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Lulu'ah, 1980, p. 66. As for the American Poet T. S. Eliot, he was born in the United States, in Missouri, in 1888. His father was very wealthy and well-educated. Eliot studied philosophy at Harvard University from 1906 to 1914, where he showed an early interest in French poets such as Charles Baudelaire. He moved between France, Germany, and England for his studies, and eventually settled in England in 1916. There, he married an English woman named Vivienne Haigh-Wood. He initially worked as a teacher, then moved on to editing newspapers and magazines. His marriage was unsuccessful, so he took a leave of absence, spending the first half in England and the second half in Switzerland, where he wrote his famous poem *The Waste Land*. Eliot wrote five plays, which gained wide popularity. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948 and died in 1965.

⁽¹¹⁾ Eliot, 1982, 7-8; Halawi, 1997, 7-9; Al-Gharfi, 1987, 92-93.

⁽¹²⁾ Lulu'ah, 1980, 56.

⁽¹³⁾ Thomas Eliot, along with Ezra Pound, are considered spiritual fathers of American poetic modernism (see Levinson, 1999, 5-7). The American poet Ezra Pound was also influenced by myths and employed them in his poetry. Regarding myth, Pound believes that myth arose as a result of a psychological experience lived by an ancient person, who found it necessary to hide for fear of falling victim to persecution. Pound does not view myth as an imitation of a legacy or past record, but rather as a legacy from the past that influences the future (see Shaheen, 1996, 43).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Shaheen, 1996, 52.

understand life's problems and express them in an appropriate poetic way, in which there is rational logic on one side, and poetic emotion ⁽¹⁵⁾ on the other. In other words, the objective equivalent might be that the poet adapts a legend from the past, for example, to express the problems of the present.

The idea of the "objective equivalent" drew Saadi Youssef to the ancient myth. A myth is a situation, a series of events, or a well-known formulation. When this myth is employed in poetry, it is bound to excite the reader, expressing the new meaning it expresses, such as commitment, alienation, or homeland. Thus, the role of the myth as a myth existing in the archives of history ends, becoming an objective equivalent expressing a new idea.

Thomas Eliot's idea, which influenced contemporary Arab poetry, was his refusal to reject heritage and his belief that the relationship between the past and the present is complementary. For him, the past represented rich material for expressing the problems and complexities of the modern world ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Thomas Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," in which he employs various myths, had the greatest impact among Eliot's poems in directing contemporary Western and Arab poets toward myth. This influence began to appear in the works of the Arab Tammuz poets ⁽¹⁷⁾. In his poem "The Waste Land," Thomas Eliot expressed profound human meanings. Modern poets, including Thomas Eliot, used rain to symbolize goodness, change, and revolution, while they used drought, dryness, and devastation to symbolize oppression, tyranny, and slavery. Later, Arab poets adapted the term "waste land" to describe the state of slavery ⁽¹⁸⁾, oppression, and tyranny in which they lived.

Thomas Eliot found in myth a rich source of material and an unusual content. Therefore, his primary goal was not to transfer myth from history to the present, but rather to formulate from this cultural and literary content a narrative appropriate to the meanings of his time ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Contemporary Arab poets, particularly Saadi Youssef, found their calling in the poem "The Waste Land," ⁽²⁰⁾ which is packed with myths and quotations. This stems from the premise that the poem can represent the crisis of any city in the world, at any moment in history ⁽²¹⁾. Among the Arab poets most influenced by Thomas Eliot were the Iraqi poets Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Saadi Youssef ⁽²²⁾, who saw in this poem the most violent satire directed at capitalist society, a form that even communists, despite their hatred of capitalism ⁽²³⁾, were

⁽¹⁵⁾ Eliot, 1982, 16; Lulu'ah, 1980, 27.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Eliot, 1982, 11.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Abu Seif, 2005, 214-216; Halawi, 1997, 7-9; and the Tammuz poets are five contemporary Arab poets who employed myths, particularly the myth of Adonis or Tammuz in particular. These poets are: Khalil al-Hawi, Yusuf al-Khal, Adonis, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Khalil, 2003, 332.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Shaheen, 1996, 56-57

⁽²⁰⁾ Thomas Eliot initially turned to poetry, but later turned to writing dramatic plays because he found a way to achieve his various goals and satisfy an audience of varying temperaments and tastes. This was after he faced the problem of the shrinking audience for his long, obscure poems. After this stage, he became convinced that poetry was written for the masses and insisted that his poetry was an experiential poetry. See Eliot, 1982, 15.

⁽²¹⁾ See Eliot, 1982, 13-14. The contemporary Arab poet turned to this poem specifically as a form of compensation for the defeated Arab self after World War II. See: Halawi, 1997, 7-9.

⁽²²⁾ Arab poets were divided over their influence on the mythological aspect of Thomas Eliot's writings. Some followed Eliot's mythology, without realizing the depth of the mythological symbol, its connotations, and its implications. They also did not realize that this symbol needed to be reproduced and transformed according to a specific pattern, thereby opening the poem to new horizons. The second group comprised a group of Arab poets who employed ancient mythology to express their personal mythology. At this stage, mythology became a space for the intersection of the imaginary and the real. The text no longer took refuge in its mythological symbols, as it did with the poets of the first group, but rather began to invent its own historical symbols.

⁽²³⁾ Mahmoud, 2003, 69-71

unable to match. At the end of this review, it is necessary to follow some passages from Thomas Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" and examine its mythological level:

The first verse:

Huge sea-wood fed with copper
 Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
 In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
 Above the antique mantel was displayed
 As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
 The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
 So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
 Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
 And still she cried, and still the world pursues,

In this passage, Thomas Eliot refers to the universal legend of Philomela, the beautiful princess, who was invited to his palace by her brother-in-law, who then raped her, locked her in a hut, and cut out her tongue so that she would not tell anyone. However, his wife finds out and slaughters his son in revenge, feeding him for dinner and freeing her sister Philomela, who eventually turns into a nightingale ⁽²⁴⁾.

The second stanza

Damyata: The boat responded
 Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
 The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
 Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
 To controlling hands

In this stanza, the word "Damiata" appears, meaning "give." It is taken from the thunder myth in the sacred Hindu meditation books, written around 500 BC. In it, the god said "Damiata," and all gods and humans heeded his instructions ⁽²⁵⁾. Thomas Eliot says that the god said "Damiata," meaning "give," and the boat joyfully responded to this request. The sailors involved in the voyage prepared to set sail and depart. The sea was calm, and it seems that there is a person, envisioned by the poet, who will joyfully participate in this voyage and respond to the call of "Damiata," obeying this commanding command".

Section Three

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
 Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
 At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
 Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
 The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
 Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

⁽²⁴⁾ Abdul-Hayy, 2008, 4.

⁽²⁵⁾ Abdul-Hayy, 2008, 7.

Out of the window perilously spread
 Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
 On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
 I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
 I too awaited the expected guest.
 He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
 A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
 One of the low on whom assurance sits
 As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses
 Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
 Exploring hands encounter no defence;
 His vanity requires no response,
 And makes a welcome of indifference.
 (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)

In this passage, the Greek mythological character Tiresias appears, who spent half her life as a man and the other half as a woman. After being punished by Hera and deprived of her sight, Zeus compensated her with penetrating insight and the ability to predict ⁽²⁶⁾. This passage confirms the poem "The Waste Land's use of various myths, which influenced the contemporary Arab poet. In this passage, Thomas Eliot says, through Tiresias, that he lived his life blind, oscillating between two lives: the first when he was an old man, and the second when he was a human with the features of a woman with large breasts. However, Tiresias boasts that he can see through his vision at evening, distinguish the times, and can diagnose things, like the typist cleaning up the remains of breakfast in her house. He can also describe the world of the house without seeing it, like the clotheslines outside the window that are scorched by the sun, and the socks and underwear piled on the sofa that served as her bed. Tiresias continues talking about his life and his ability to predict. He predicts the next visitor, a young clerk for a broker. Tiresias describes him accurately. He has a bald spot on his head, but his spirit is mean. He takes advantage of the opportunity to come after the woman he just described is tired. He tries to flirt with her, but she does not respond to him, so he flirts with her against her will.

⁽²⁶⁾ Abdul-Hayy, 2008, 9.

Section Four

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep-sea swell
And the profit and loss.

A current under sea

Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.

Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome ⁽²⁷⁾

In this section, the legend of the Phoenician Philippos appears, and this inevitably takes us back to the legends of ancient Canaan and its ancient Phoenician kingdom that ruled the land of Lebanon.

It can be said, in summary of this section of this chapter, that Thomas Eliot played a major role in introducing myth into contemporary Arabic poetry, especially with Saadi Youssef. However, it must be noted that Thomas Eliot's influence was on the subject of global myths, Greek and Phoenician, but he did not address the myths of Mesopotamia.

Modern Arab Creative Projects

The Lebanese magazine *Shi'r* and its cultural and literary project ⁽²⁸⁾ have made a significant contribution to shifting the gaze of Arab poets toward myth. Its theorists and critics have long called for openness to ancient myth. The Tamuzite movement, which founded the Lebanese magazine *Shi'r*, also played a significant role in opening the door for contemporary Arab poets to explore the material of mythology, especially after the return to myth represented a qualitative and ideological shift in the history of Arab poetic discourse, and an attempt to reclaim the region's ancient heritage through a return to these myths ⁽²⁹⁾. The ideas of the Tamuzite movement reinforced some of the ideas in Antoun Saadeh's book **"The Intellectual Conflict in Syrian Literature,"** ⁽³⁰⁾ published in the 1940s. The Tamuzites discovered that some symbols of Greek heritage intertwined with the heritage of the Fertile Crescent. Aphrodite was Ishtar, and Adonis was Tammuz ⁽³¹⁾.

The Lebanese magazine *Shi'r* (Poetry) has called on Arab poets, both directly and indirectly, through poetry, literature, and articles, to unite with the accumulated human experience throughout history ⁽³²⁾. In its direct call, the magazine, through its publishing house, published a study by Asaad Razzouk, demonstrating the frequency of myth in contemporary Arabic poetry. The study, titled **"Myth in Contemporary Arabic Poetry,"** ⁽³³⁾ examined the early

⁽²⁷⁾ Abdul-Hayy, 2008, 11.

⁽²⁸⁾ See this magazine's pioneering role in Arabic literary modernity and its contributions to opening the door to the culture of ancient mythology in a comprehensive and unique study: Bawardi, 2003; Bawardi, 1998.

⁽²⁹⁾ Al-Sham'a, 2002, 74.

⁽³⁰⁾ See the book: Sa'ada, 1940.

⁽³¹⁾ Al-Sham'a, 2000, 74.

⁽³²⁾ The Tammuzians drew on the myths of the ancient Phoenicians, considering them a source of the Arab region's past and ancient heritage. Their interest in the poem "The Waste Land," for example, was significant, especially since Eliot had drawn on the Phoenician myth. See: Lu'lu'a, 1980, 49-50.

⁽³³⁾ See the study: Razouk, 1959.

contributions of contemporary Arab poets who employed myths in their poems, including Khalil Hawi, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Adonis (Ali Ahmad Sa'id), Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, and Yusuf al-Khal⁽³⁴⁾.

Critic and poet Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, one of the poets and critics who employed the myth, believes that Arab poets first employed the myth in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s at the invitation of the Lebanese magazine *Shi'r*⁽³⁵⁾. Their purpose during this period was to express the painful experience of the Arab person⁽³⁶⁾, through which the poets sought to attract Arab and international public opinion to identify with the Arab person. The Lebanese magazine *Shi'r* succeeded in transforming the myth from a historical record in museums to a personal myth specific to contemporary Arab poets⁽³⁷⁾.

Contemporary Arab poets have realized that the mythical symbol can transform into a human symbol of struggle and challenge, and possesses the ability to present the same challenging stances throughout the ages. These stances are not merely psychological compensation for the frustration and defeat experienced by the Arab person, or for his inability to achieve desires in a realistic and practical manner. Rather, these stances offer solutions to crises and participate in the search for a new vision through which the Arab person can free himself from his individual, social, and national dilemmas⁽³⁸⁾. Thus, the magazine *Shi'r* paved the way for Saadi Youssef and other Arab poets to open up to the myths of Mesopotamia and employ them in their poems.

Anthropology Books

The modern interpretation of myth began in the nineteenth century with the Orientalist and linguist Max Muller (1832-1900), who classified myths according to their intended purpose. He was followed by the Scottish sociologist James Frazer (1854-1941), who linked the idea of myth to the idea of fertility in nature⁽³⁹⁾. This appeared in his book ***The Golden Bough***, published in twelve volumes between 1890 and 1915⁽⁴⁰⁾.

The Arab intellectual, who sought to free himself from the shackles of religion in the Arab and Islamic world, found in Fraser James's research a legitimacy for rebelling against its authority. **The Golden Bough** directed the contemporary poet toward myth, convincing him that myth is an effective means of imposing order on banal everyday events by creating poetic and symbolic atmospheres in poetry. Considering that myth enables the mind to be neutralized and the imagination to be liberated from the scientific tendency⁽⁴¹⁾ brought about by modern science, myth is based on subjective, non-scientific foundations. Therefore, it seeks to offer a new vision that penetrates the reality of social phenomena. From this perspective, the Western poet first turned to myth, and later, the Arab poet⁽⁴²⁾.

⁽³⁴⁾ Abu Seif, 2005, 217-226.

⁽³⁵⁾ The Lebanese magazine *Shi'r* directed the Arab poet to adopt the functions of myth, which were as follows:

1. Myth expresses the totality of experience, which transcends time and space and continues the cycles of human destiny.
2. Myth unifies subjectivity and objectivity.
3. Through myth, the poet touches the unseen and spiritual world.
4. Myth transforms abstract ideas into concreteness, giving suffering sensual forms and features. On these functions, see: Farhan, 2005, 256-257.

⁽³⁶⁾ Jabra, 1995, 49.

⁽³⁷⁾ Thamer, 1995, 78-79.

⁽³⁸⁾ Thamer, 1995, 88-98; compare: Al-Yousfi, 2005, 152-159.

⁽³⁹⁾ Farhan, 2005, 20.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Al-Ruwaili and Al-Bazie, 2000, 230.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Despite this consideration, it was found through the first chapters of this study that there are some scientific and logical foundations for the myth, especially according to the historical theory of myth. See the first chapters of this study.

⁽⁴²⁾ Kattani, 2003, 398, 406.

The gesture made by James Frazer in his book **The Golden Bough** in the years (1890-1915 AD) opened eyes to the myth ⁽⁴³⁾. James Frazer influenced the entry of the myth into contemporary Arabic poetry through two channels. The first is direct, as the Arabic translation of **The Golden Bough** influenced contemporary Arab poets, who began to employ ancient myths in their poems, as Badr Shakir al-Sayyab did ⁽⁴⁴⁾. The second is indirect, through Western poets who were influenced by **The Golden Bough** and employed myths in their leader.

The Golden Bough influenced modernist Arab poets through various myths. This is what researcher Jaroslav Stetkevych's study, "**Arabs and the Golden Bough**," specifically the myths of death and rebirth ⁽⁴⁵⁾, which James B. calls "Death and Resurrection," adopts, in addition to other myths found in Saadi Youssef.

Researcher Rita Awad also adopted this hypothesis in her study, "**The Myth of Death and Resurrection in Contemporary Arabic Poetry**," in which she demonstrated the influence of **The Golden Bough** on modernist Arab poets, particularly Abdul Wahhab al-Bayati and Badr Shakir al-Sayyab⁽⁴⁶⁾. These two poets indirectly influenced Saadi Youssef, as they were pioneering poets in Iraq.

Mythological Criticism Studies

This thesis believes that Mircea Eliade's book, **Aspects of Myth** ⁽⁴⁷⁾, and consequently the Arabic translations of this book, also contributed to opening the way for Arab intellectuals—including the Iraqi poet Saadi Youssef—to explore the culture of ancient myths, despite the time gap between the Arabic translation and **The Golden Bough** ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

In his famous study, **Aspects of Myth**, Eliade views myth as a sacred history that narrates the earliest origins and beginnings, the times in which the gods created the universe in its entirety and all its details. However, as Eliade argues, myth does not take a descriptive mental stance toward these origins and beginnings. Rather, it always seeks to restore sacred times and implant them in the present, for the sake of life in a pure, renewed world. In this study, Eliade also addresses the history of the influence of myth on human culture, extending to the present. In this study, Eliade also sees myth as a realistic vision that expresses the culture of ancient man and how he dealt with the surrounding reality. From here, we assume that Eliade's study of **the manifestations of myth** influenced the mythological culture of Arab poets, and Saadi Youssef can be included among these poets.

Mythological Studies

The critic Roland Barthes can be considered a proponent of mythological criticism, as is evident in his famous book, **Mythologies** ⁽⁴⁹⁾. Barthes argued that since society is composed of languages, and since everything is written, this necessitates a Marxist mission: to create a mythological critique of society, one that critiques its myths that connect it to the past and constitute its movement and its first civilization in the world ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Mythologies was an important milestone in the history of mythological cultures, influencing the introduction of myth into Arabic and world poetry. In this book, Barthes' semiotic analysis

⁽⁴³⁾ Al-Ruwaili, 2000, 230-231; Awad: 1978, 18.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Mahmoud, 2003, 73.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ See these myths in: James, 1994, 521-540; and see this view in: Stetkevych, 2005, 187-273.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ See this in: Awad, 18-24; 44.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Eliade, 1971.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ See the study in Arabic in: Eliade, 1999.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ See the book in: Barthes, 1957.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ See: Jihad, 1980, 211-213

of social customs is evident. He examines some of the customs in our societies and attempts to prove that they are remnants of mythical thought, such as drinking alcohol, drinking milk in the morning, or smoking. Barthes demonstrated in his book that human society adopts many modern myths, for example: belief in alcohol in France is a forced act, and whoever does not believe in it is either sick or disabled. Society unconsciously follows myth and illusions. People do not smoke cigarettes, but rather images of them. Women do not adorn themselves to renew their youth, but rather acquire images of youth. There are many other social customs and behaviors that he subjected to semiotic analysis, proving that they are the remnants of myth⁽⁵¹⁾. All of this discussion makes the book a fertile study of myths. When we see the extent of the influence that Roland Barthes had on modern Arabic literature, we also conclude the extent of Roland Barthes' influence in this book, in spreading myths and their culture in modern Arabic poetry.

Literary Critical Studies

Critic Northrop Frye is considered one of the most prominent and legendary critics, especially for his book, **Anatomy of Criticism**⁽⁵²⁾. Canadian critic Northrop Frye has received attention in the Arab literary arena, unlike any other Western critic. This is due to his famous book, *Anatomy of Criticism*, which has been translated into Arabic several times. This book was fully translated by researchers Mohieddin Sobhi and Muhammad Asfour, and both translations were published in 1991, but by different publishing houses. Mohieddin Sobhi's translation was published by Dar Al-Arabiya for Books in its branches in Tripoli and Tunis, while Muhammad Asfour's translation was published in Amman by the University of Jordan. Partial translations include one by Syrian critic Hanna Abboud, published in 1987 in Homs by Dar Al-Maaref under the title "**The Theory of Myths in Literary Criticism.**" There have also been attempts at other partial translations in the Arab world⁽⁵³⁾.

The interest of Arab critics and intellectuals in Frye was not limited to the translation aspect, but rather extended to being influenced by him and adopting his approach to criticism and thought, by many Arab critics, including: Hanna Abboud, Muhyi al-Din Subhi, Muhammad Shahin, Rita Awad, and Sulayman Hussein, which allows us to say that there is a contemporary Arab critical movement or trend that adopts Frye's doctrine and sets out from it in his critical writings. Arab interest in Frye's critical works began late, as the first English edition of the book, **Anatomy of Criticism**, was published in 1947, the two Arab translators, Muhyi al-Din Subhi and Muhammad Asfour, relied on the translations they completed with the Princeton edition of the book in 1954. The two Arabic translations were published in 1991, four decades after the book was published in its original language. The two Arab translators, Muhyi al-Din Subhi and Muhammad Asfour, relied on the translations they completed with the Princeton edition of the book in 1954. The two Arabic translations were published in 1991, four decades after the book was published in its original language⁽⁵⁴⁾.

In this study, Northrop Frye employed a critical approach known as the mythological or archetypal approach, derived from the theories of psychologist Carl Jung, which examines literature as a repository of numerous archetypes preserved in the collective memory of humanity, including myth. Frye's book is important in that it is an encyclopaedic and classificatory treatment of Anglo-American literature in particular, and Western literature in general, within the context of the aforementioned mythological approach⁽⁵⁵⁾. From here, we

⁽⁵¹⁾ See the full idea: Barthes, 1957.

⁽⁵²⁾ See the book in: Frye, 1957; and for the book see: Hamr al-Ayn, 1996, 33.

⁽⁵³⁾ See the book in: Frye, 1957; and for the book see: Hamr al-Ayn, 1996, 33.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Abbud, 2008, 1-3.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ See Frye, 1957.

can assume that Northrop Frye's book is considered an important cultural channel through which Arab intellectuals—including the Iraqi poet Saadi Youssef—attempted to understand myth as a literary material, an idea, a collective memory, and a philosophy that addressed the world of ancient man. Although Saadi Youssef had engaged in dialogue with myths before the publication of Frye's book, Frye's book enriched his knowledge of the contents of myths, a point we will examine in the subsequent applied chapters.

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