

Job in Modern Arabic Poetry: A Semantic and Comparative Approach to Two Poems Referring to the Poet Al-Sayyab

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Abstract : The use of legendary, folkloric and religious symbols is one of the most important phenomena in modern Arabic poetry. Interestingly enough, most of the modern Arabic poetry's pioneers were so fascinated by the biblical symbols and they managed to use many modern techniques to make these symbols adequate for their personal life from one side and fit to their Islamic beliefs from the other. One of the most famous poets to do so was al-Sayyab. The way he employed one of these symbols 'job', the new features he adds to this character and the link between this character and his personal life will be discussed in this study. Besides, the study will examine the influence of al-Sayyab on another modern poet Saadi Yusuf, who, following al-Sayyab, used the character of Job in a special way, by mixing its features with al-Sayyab's personal features and in this way creating a new mixed character. A semantic, cultural and comparative analysis of the poems written by al-Sayyab himself and the other poets who evoked the mixed image of al-Sayyab-Job, can reveal the changes Arab poets made to the original biblical figure of Job to bring it closer to Islamic culture. The paper will make an intensive use of intertextuality idioms in order to shed light on the network of relations between three kinds of texts (indeed three 'palimpsests': 1- biblical- the primary text; 2- poetic- al-Sayyab's secondary version; 3- re-poetic- Saadi Yusuf's tertiary version). The bottom line in this paper is that al-Sayyab was directly influenced by the dramatic biblical story of Job more than the brief Quranic version of the story. In fact, the 'new' character of Job designed by al-Sayyab himself differs from the original one in many aspects that we can safely say it is the Sayyabian-Job that cannot be found in the poems of any other poets, unless they are evoking the own tragedy of al-Sayyab himself, like what Saadi Yusuf did.

Keywords : Arabic poetry, intertextuality, job, meter, modernism, symbolism

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