



# BASRAH HERITAGE

**A Quarterly Accredited Journal  
Specialized in Basrah Heritage**

Issued by

**Al-Abbas Holy Shrine**

**Department of Islamic Knowledge and**

**Humanitarian Affairs**

**Basrah Heritage Center**

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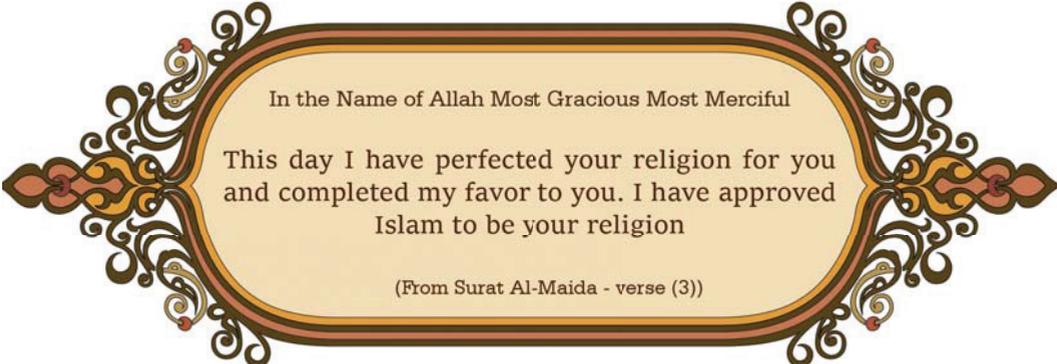
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In the Name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

This day I have perfected your religion for you  
and completed my favor to you. I have approved  
Islam to be your religion

(From Surat Al-Maida - verse (3))





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2- Research papers or studies to be published should strictly be according to the globally-agreed- on standards.

3- The paper should be printed on (A4). Three copies and a (CD) having ,approximately, 5000-10000 words using simplified Arabic or times new Roman font and in pagination should be delivered to the Journal Editor in Chief.

4- An abstract in Arabic or English, not exceeding one page,150 words, with the research title should be delivered with the paper.

5- The front page should have the title, the name of the researcher/researchers, occupation, address, telephone





number and email. Name(s) of the researcher / researchers in the context should be avoided.

6- All sources used in the research paper should be fully documented in the endnotes, taking cognizance of the common scientific procedures in documentation including the title of the book, editor, publisher, publication place, version number, publication year and page numbers. Such procedure is used in the first reference to the source. But if it is used again, documentation should include only the title of the book and the page number.

7- In the case of having foreign sources, there should be a bibliography apart from the Arabic one, and such books and researches should be alphabetically ordered .

8-Printing all tables, pictures, graphs and charts on attached papers, and making an allusion to their sources at the bottom of the caption. There should be a reference to them in the context.

9- Attaching the curriculum vitae. If the researcher contributes to the journal for the first time, it is necessary to manifest whether the research paper was submitted to





a conference or a symposium for publication or not. There should be an indication to the sponsor of the project, scientific or nonscientific, if any.

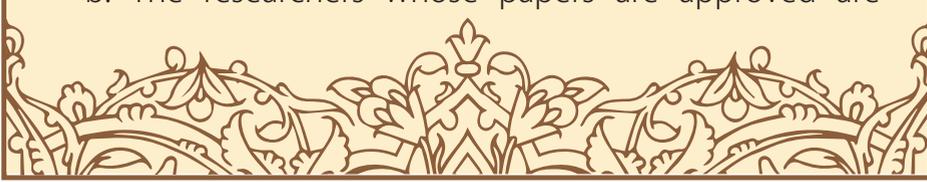
10- The research paper presented should never have been published before, or submitted to any means of publication.

11- The ideas contained in research paper manifest the viewpoints of the researchers themselves; it is not necessary that they come in line with the general policy of the Journal. The research papers arrangement is subject to technical priorities.

12- All research papers are exposed to confidential revision to secure their reliability for publication. No research paper would be returned to researchers, whether they are approved or not. The publication procedures are as follows:

a: The researcher should be notified to deliver the research paper for publication in a two-week period maximally from the time of submission.

b: The researchers whose papers are approved are





notified of the expected date of publication.

c: The papers to be rephrased or those that require any modification, before publication, would be sent back to the respective researchers together with the notes to be prepared for final publication.

d: Notifying the researchers whose research papers are not approved; it is not necessary to state the whys and wherefores of the disapproval.

e: Research papers to be published are only those given consent by experts in the field.

f. The researcher would be bestowed a copy of the bulletin in which the research paper is published, together with a financial reward.

13. Priority in publication is dictated by the following:

a. Research papers delivered in conferences or symposiums held by Basra Heritage Center.

b. The date of receiving the research papers concerned by the Editor-in-Chief of the bulletin.

c. The date of submitting the research papers after carrying out the required modifications.





d. Diversifying research papers topics as much as possible.

14. Research papers should be emailed to the Center's main office location:

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Baghdad Street,

Basra, IRAQ







## Bulletin's Foreword

In the Name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful  
Praise be to Allah; prayer and peace be upon the master of Messengers and the last of Prophets, Mohammad (Peace be upon him), and his immaculate and benevolent family members, the lamps of darkness and masters of nations.

Heritage constitutes a vital source that supplies nations with the ability, will, and vigour. Any nation that peruses its history and caters for its monuments is highly respected and honoured by other nations. As its linguistic implication indicates, 'heritage' is connected with 'legacy' (remaining part(s) of an original source), thus reflecting extension and procession.

Heritage may be looked at as a material legacy for a specific nation, or for a specific progeny at a certain time or place. The truth, however, is that heritage is the continuous activity of a nation with all its material and





moral potentialities in a certain period of time and in a specific place exposing its experience across time and place. It, in this sense, works out as a momentum and an energy for coming generations, stressing its existence and securing its continuation. The study of heritage also helps to highlight the identity of any nation and dig deep into the treasures latent in history with the aim of unveiling their characteristics and, therefore, giving it an immortal nature.

Basra is a city known for its rich history and heritage. It is also renowned for its noticeable creativity in various fields. In fact, a large number of sciences and humanities have been born in this city. Accordingly, it has been found necessary to explore the heritage of Basra and disclose its treasures with the aim of presenting a source of inspiration for more rigorous studies completing the intellectual movement that has started long time ago.

Al-Abbas Sacred Ataba (Foundation), representing the hand of generosity extending from Abu Al-FadhI Al-Abbas, son of Imam Ali bin abi Talib, (Peace be upon them), with





Sayyed Ahmad As-Safi as the top administrator, has been playing a vital role in supporting Basra heritage. This support culminated in establishing Basra Heritage Centre. The Centre's specialized and accredited Basra Heritage Bulletin now constitutes an important activity among many others. The Bulletin takes upon itself the responsibility, propped by an elite of academics and proficient writers, to serve the heritage of this city, contributing throughout to bring its treasures and rich reservoirs of knowledge into the hands of readerships. The aim is to spread heritage awareness which is the main channel for circulating heritage and supporting research about it.

Basra Heritage Bulletin, therefore, invites academically rigorous research papers to document the deep-rooted history of the city. The Bulletin adopts, in general, two main axes: the first covers Basra old history, while the second investigates its recent history, from various aspects, which will convey heritage for future generations.







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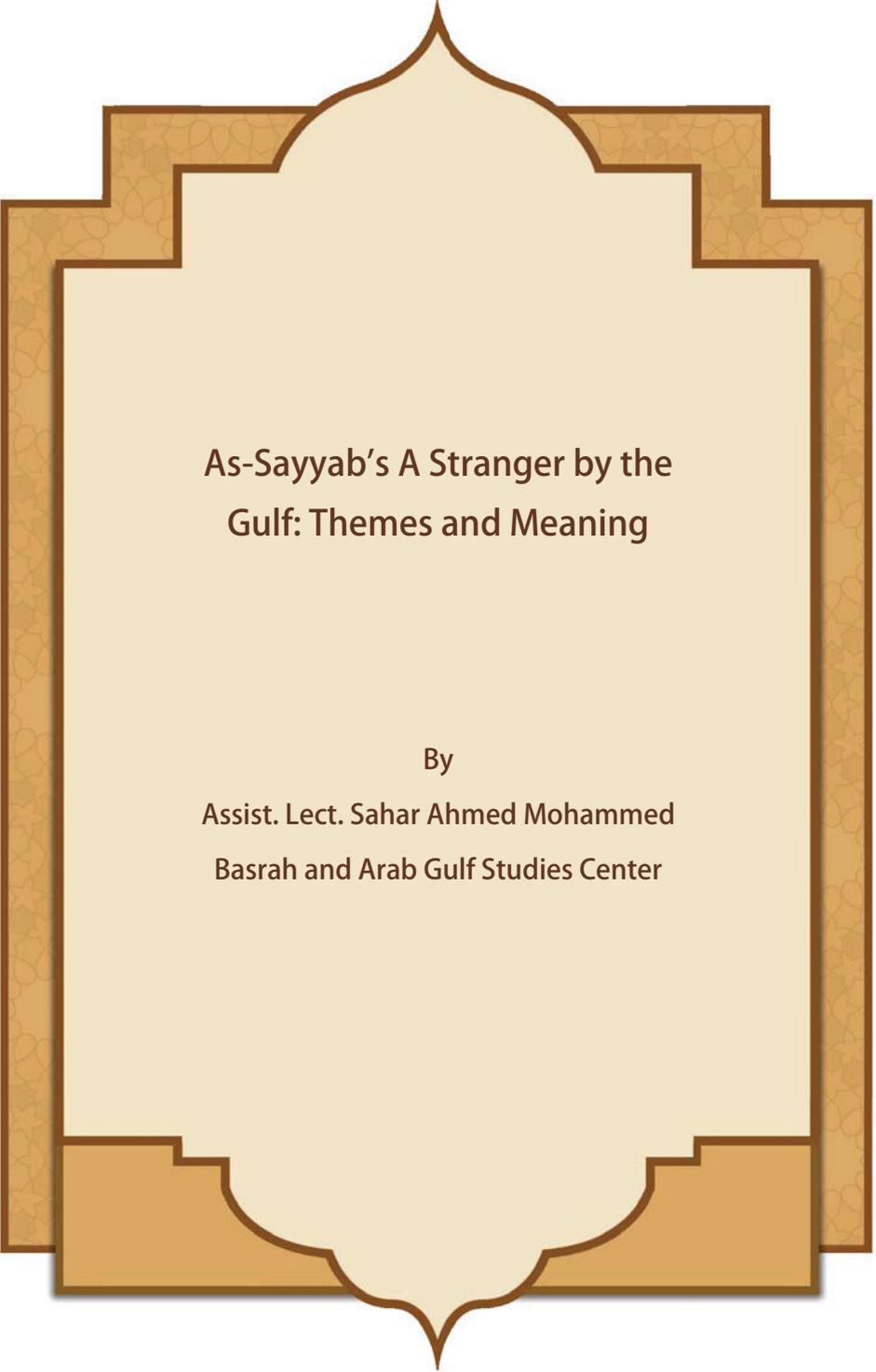
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**As-Sayyab's A Stranger by the  
Gulf: Themes and Meaning**

**By**

**Assist. Lect. Sahar Ahmed Mohammed  
Basrah and Arab Gulf Studies Center**





## ملخص البحث

يعدُّ بدر شاكر السَّيَّاب (١٩٢٦-١٩٦٤م) أوَّل من كَسَّرَ الأشكال التقلديَّة، والكلاسيكيَّة، والكلاسيكيَّة الجديدة، عن طريق كتابة ما أصبح يعرف باسم «الشَّعر الحرِّ»، فقد كانت الثورة الحقيقيَّة في الشَّعر العربيِّ على يده في العام (١٩٤٠م).

استعمل السَّيَّاب الكثير من الأساطير المختلفة في قصيدته «غريب على الخليج»، التي تحتاج الى دراسة الطريقة التي يوظِّف بها الشَّاعر هذه الأساطير في عمله، وخصوصاً تلك التي أكَّد اختيارها. تركِّز هذه الدِّراسة على الموضوعات والرموز التي استعملها الشَّاعر، وتشرح معانيها.



## Abstract

Badr Shakir As-Sayyab (1926-1964) was the first to finally break the traditional, classical poetic, and neo-classical forms by writing what came to be known as «free verse». The real revolution in Arabic poetry took place in the 1940 at his hands. As-Sayyab used so many different myths in his poem «A Stranger by the Gulf», which needs a study of the way he employed in shaping these myths in his works, and particularly those he chose to emphasize. This study focuses on these themes and symbols which are used by the poet and highlights their meanings.



## 1) Introduction

In the late Nineteenth Century, a group of Iraqi writers and poets promoted purposeful experiment with new methods. Such experimentation was vital to a new style of poetry that brought it again into contact with contemporary life and culture after its long degeneration. They were called into being by the renaissance that provided just the conditions in which the poetry could flourish. This new development is complex in origin and nature, but broadly speaking it coincides with a new revolutionary fervor, and with a new respect given to ordinary people of the poorer or working class, and to the dignity and freedom of the individual.

As-Sayyab was influenced by Romanticism and remained an essentially Romantic poet throughout his life, although he greatly expanded the horizons of Romanticism in an Arab cultural context. Therefore, despite the usual critical inferences that As-Sayyab's growing concern with the political and social injustices of his time marks a movement



away from Romanticism, the fact is that such concerns are completely consistent with a romantic orientation (Taufiq, 1979: 127). Arab romantics do not share the same philosophical background as European Romantics (Jayyusi, 1987: 5). Arab Romanticism was born of a deep need for freedom in both art and life. It became a major trend in Arabic poetry. Several romantic poets began to formalize deep dramatic changes in their poetic method, style, mood, tone and imagery (Ibid: 8).

The period of Realism appears as a reaction against Romanticism. After the end of the Second World War in 1945, Romanticism "was criticized on the grounds of being escapist from reality" (Badawi, 1987: 148). While poetry is certainly not the only form of cultural expression, it is, in the Arabic context and in Iraq in particular, a highly valorized one and a primary locus of cultural symbolism and capital. Poets revolted against tradition and there were new schools embracing Romanticism and Symbolism. The real revolution in Arabic poetry took place in the 1940s at the hands of an Iraqi poet Badr Shakir As-Sayyab (1926-1964).



He was the first to finally break free from the traditional, classical, and neo-classical forms by writing what came to be known as “free verse”. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (1987), who wrote the definitive book on modern Arabic poetry, had this to say about As-Sayyab

Among avant-garde poets, the poetry of Al-Sayyab shows a more harmonious resolution of the struggle between the classical and the modern. His language is clearer, more immediate, and invested in more emotion than others.... His imagination derived its inspiration from the primeval elements of the Iraqi countryside, from its scenery as well as its sounds.... When reading his poetry in Arabic] one is infected with the experience of this auditory sensibility (Jayyusi, 1987).

The period of his membership in the Communist Party corresponds to the middle period of his career as a poet, which is termed the “commitment period” . Although he abandoned the Communist Party and published a series of articles explaining his disenchantment and distance from the ideology he had espoused for a decade, his concern for the downtrodden and the victims of social and political oppression continued to inform his poems. His tone was



perhaps softer and less revolutionary, but his solidarity with the struggles of others remained formidable, but embedded in more individual themes.

DeYoung believes, that much of As-Sayyab's poetry "still speaks to his fellow Iraqis as somehow summative of their experiences in this century, especially the experience of the enormous changes wrought by the coming version of modernity to their land ... "(1998: viii).

The period of growing political activity had a measurable effect on the themes that As-Sayyab dealt with in his poetry. He wrote deeply sensitive patriotic poetry which clearly portrayed the strong resentment felt by the people of Iraq against oppression and tyranny. His "A Stranger by the Gulf" (غريب على الخليج) of 1953, describes those themes brilliantly. It achieved great success over years for many reasons: the lively description, its relevance to the contemporary events and issues, its language and style, and finally the employment of myth to embody the political content of the poem. As-Sayyab used so many different myths in



his poems, which needs for a study of the way he shaped these myths in his work, and particularly those he chose to emphasize. The use of myth is an essential characteristic in As-Sayyab's poetry, he «utilizes symbols absorbed from eastern and western mythology to indicate death, fertility and resurrection intensifying the implications of his poetry» (Gohar, 2008: 22); and in «A Stranger by the Gulf», he used some myths and symbols that sustained by a lot of images.

As-Sayyab's poetry varies a great deal, but it is fundamentally "romantic and roaring with rebellion and revolution deeply inside. He wrote love poetry early in his life, but this was always regarded as an apprentice phase. There is little in it which helps towards an understanding of the mature poet" (Shureteh, 2005: 2).

## 2) "A Stranger by the Gulf": The Poem

"A Stranger by the Gulf" was written while the poet was in exile in Kuwait in 1953, and was published as the first poem in his most acclaimed collection, (Hymn of the Rain) (أنشودة المطر), in 1960. The poem is so deep and intensely



emotional that it is usually hard to read even a single line or stanza without being carried by its sweeping rhythm, which uncannily echoes two realities at the same time: the roar of the sea and the rage of the speaker/poet's emotion. The poem hits the reader like successive relentless waves. Here is one of them in which the poet yearns to go back to Iraq but is so poor that he cannot afford a ticket to cross the sea. As-Sayyab introduced a very fruitful property of modernism by deftly grafting myth onto the traditional structure of the Arabic poem, steering the poem into new adventure. DeYoung believes, that much of As-Sayyab's poetry "still speaks to his fellow Iraqis as somehow summative of their experiences in this century, especially the experience of the enormous changes wrought by

the coming version of modernity to their land . . ." (1998: viii).

In brief, it is the first-person meditation of a speaker, who like As-Sayyab in 1953, lives in exile and is unable to return to Iraq because he has no money. In the first lines, the poet starts with a sense of misery by building a strange analogy.



The wind gasps like a nightmare over the afternoon, the masts fold or spread on the horizon, and the sailors, who are barefoot and half naked, are seekers for living under the scorching heat and winds of summer.

The poem consists of (101) lines, divided into three sections. Each one deals with a kind of description to the poet's feelings and emotions, remembrance of childhood, wishing to return home. The poet tries to present his images by functioning myths and symbols to support his poem, and by using a collection of symbolic system. The poem is considered as one of the long poems that As-Sayyab has written besides «The Blind Whore» (المومس العمياء) (472 lines) and «Hymn of the Rain» (أنشودة المطر) (120 lines). At that time, As-Sayyab became visibly more interested in experimenting with long narrative poems, as Ihsan Abbas has said of him during this period, «his greater desire [was] to be known among the people as «the poet of the long poem»» (1969: 181). However, by the time he returned home from Kuwait, he was, according to Abbas, «carrying in his suitcase» the first of his poems to be



interlarded with mythic allusions, the long poem «The Blind Whore» (المومس العمياء) (Ibid.). Although As-Sayyab by that time (March 1954) «actually presents the poem's length as a potential drawback, rather than evidence of its significance as a serious work» (DeYoung, 1998: 252).

### 3) Myths and Symbols in the Poem

An example of using mythology is found in "A Stranger by the Gulf," which is recognized by readers and critics alike as one of his most powerful lyrics. The role of the sea in human culture has been important for centuries, as people experience the sea in contradictory ways: as powerful but serene, beautiful but dangerous. Symbolically, the sea has been perceived as a hostile environment populated by fantastic creatures. In the works of psychiatrist Carl Jung's, the sea symbolizes the personal and the collective unconscious in dream interpretation. It is related to depth psychology. According to Jung, sea is an archetype. It is his collective unconscious which is depicting the 'mother complex' back to our mother, the sea. Jung says, "Water is the



commonest symbol for the unconscious...Psychologically, water means spirit that has become unconscious." (Jung, 1959: 18-19). He further adds, "Whoever looks into the water sees his own

image," and, "Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance the Church, university, city or country, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea or any still waters, matters, even, the underworld and the moon, can be mother-symbols." (Ibid: 24).

The Greek myths also admit that life emerged from the feminine, the mother of all creation, as Robert Graves (1958: 27) says:

In the beginning, Eurynome, the goddess of All Things, rose naked from Chaos, but found nothing substantial for her to rest upon, and therefore divided the sea from the sky, dancing lonely upon its waves.

Water is used a lot as symbol in poetry. As-Sayyab used water as a symbol of life and death. His characters watch and wait for water to end their thirsts as it is found around



them, even if it won't rain. In this way water refills their bodies and gives them energy. This sea-image used by As-Sayyab has caught the attention of many critics. The sea-image is associated with primal life. V. N. Mishra says, "The image suggests life back to preconscious, animal origins at sea-bottom; the motion of pre-historic crabs in the sea." (1981: 82).

As-Sayyab starts with a big cinematic shot which presents the crowded gulf with the laborers, the masts, and the gasping wind in the opening lines (1-14). This shot demonstrates the way the stranger looks for returning to his country, like those sailors who move from place to another for living and then return to their countries. Here the sea image symbolizes the poet's eagerly wish to return to Iraq through this sea. The sea appears as a symbol of freedom in two senses and at two levels, which are no doubt ultimately connected. It appears as a symbol of (a) freedom of movement in the narrower, material sense. We find the sea representing simply freedom of movement, it appears as the place where that freedom must be defended.



(b) Spiritual freedom in a wider sense. For what is ultimately defended is

no mere freedom of movement but that eternal spirit of the chainless mind. The sea frequently symbolizes spiritual freedom in this wider sense. Why the sea has come to be a symbol of freedom? Perhaps two characteristics of the sea may be mentioned as reasons – its seeming boundlessness and its seeming irresistibility. As-Sayyab's sea, then, symbolizes freedom, mother complex, i.e. the early loss of his mother, and it also symbolizes an hostile obstacle between the poet and his beloved country he thought he would never reach unless he cross this sea by wading.

As-Sayyab uses the wind as another symbol in the beginning of his poem (Line 1) . The wind symbolizes many things, the important ones are: desire; regeneration; freedom; ecstasy and poetic inspiration; life-force (the spirit); time; and destruction (de Vries, 1984: 500-1). All wind- symbols are presenting the poet's state in his exile. He is yearning for returning home, re-habituating himself with his beloved woman, feeling free through living in a



free country, he is in an ecstatic condition to return home, wishes that his spirit could fly to see his beloveds, and because he is afraid of death, he wishes he could see Iraq before the death wind blows in.

The last symbol of wind is destruction. It is linked with the Quranic wind of God's punishment and anger. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an presenting this kind of winds. For example, verses (Hood: 65-68); (Al-Haqqa: 4-8); and (Al-Ahqaaf: 23-25). As-Sayyab begins his poem with 'The wind' (الرياح) which symbolizes all these symbols previously mentioned, and its effects are still obvious on most of the poem's lines, as in (1, 2, 11, and 72).

The reader sees Iraq in the way as As-Sayyab saw it in his exile: an overwhelming succession of sweet reminiscences floating in his solitude with music he heard through a street café. He saw and heard Iraq, as Boullata (1978: 69) points out in the lines (15-18), in "his mother's lullabies in the dark, in his fear of the ghosts, [as the child walked under the overlapping branches of date palm trees at sunset, and in the enchanting folkloric tales he and his mates used



to listen to from the old women while sitting around the burning furnace". There are ancient popular myths that talk about that creatures who kidnap children who return to their houses late after sunset. One is called <khadhra um-il-leaf> (the Green with fibers) and the other is <al-Si>lowa (female demon), and of course there are others more of these ancient tales.

The speaker at first recalls his childhood in an Iraqi village and remembers the folktales and legends his elders used to tell him. Zahra' is the poet's beloved, still waiting for him in Iraq. But the reference to heroic tales from the poet's childhood is particularly significant (in the lines 26-28), because it is a theme frequently repeated in As-Sayyab's later poetry, especially that of the early 1960s. There, as here, they are always associated with idealized images of childhood and the past.

After this the speaker again addresses his beloved, telling her how he longs to see her. Then he describes himself, the exile wandering in strange lands in the lines (51-55). This



is the first reference to Christ and his myth in As-Sayyab's poetry. Later, he became one of As-Sayyab's favorite hero-figures, representing the individual who sacrifices himself so that the society might be redeemed. In this, he has more in common with prototypical Romantic heroes like Prometheus than with the Christ of traditional Christian theology.

In "A Strange by the Gulf", however, Christ is not the redeemer – he is in an exile, like the speaker, and the legend has therefore been mythopoetically shaped in quite a different direction. Here, he emerges as an instance of archetypal mythic figure that dominates As-Sayyab's later poetry: the wanderer, or exile. In the later period this figure is usually incarnated as either Sinbad or Odysseus. From this early use of Christ to personify an archetype that is diametrically opposed to what he will later become in As-Sayyab's poetry, we can see the flexibility mythopoesis grants the poet in bending the traditional material to fit the particular needs of his poem.

It is worth considering some reasons that may have led



As-Sayyab to make the decision to use myth this way in his poetry. He himself said that he used allegorical myth in order to evade government censorship of his work (Taufiq, 1979: 333). However, beyond this expediency, myths used allegorically – when such an application does not violate generic conventions – have the very important effect of defamiliarizing the situation which the poet is describing.

The setting is very reminiscent of the poet's village, this is a place of mixed light and darkness, symbolic both of the spiritual and moral depression presently affecting the inhabitants, and the potential for rebirth, for moving into the light, that may or may not be realized. As-Sayyab uses darkness in more than one line in this poem in showing the dark images, symbolizing the regime in Iraq that spread fear and death, while the poet

is eager to light, the symbol of safety and freedom.

#### **4) Conclusion**

As-Sayyab often sets up a hierarchical relationship in his poetry between pagan myths, which are devalued,



and Semitic monotheistic myth from the Bible and the Qur'an, which is valorized. We have seen that, much as As-Sayyab used myths in his poems, they were not the primary determinant of the themes he dealt with there – in other words, he did not choose the myths first and then shape his poems to accommodate them. Instead, the same themes tend to recur, whether joined to specific myths or not, and the myths he used were then adapted to those themes – not the other way around. He also uses symbols to sustain the theme of the poem: his longing to his beloveds, and the freedom for his country which was controlled under the oppressive regime at that time.



غريب على الخليج \*

الريح تلهث بالهجرة، كالجثام، على الأصيل  
وعلى القلوع تظل تُطوى أو تُنشر للرحيل  
زحم الخليج بهنّ مكتدحون جوابو بحارٍ  
من كلّ حافٍ نصف عاري.

(٥)

وعلى الرمال، على الخليج

جلس الغريب، يسرّح البصر المحير في الخليج  
ويهدّ أعمدة الضياء بما يصعد من نشيج  
أعلى من العباب يهدر رغوّه ومن الضجيج  
صوتٌ تفجّر في قرارة نفسيّ الثكلي : عراق

(١٠)

كالمدّ يصعد، كالسحابة، كالدموع الى العيون

الريح تصرخ بي : عراق،

والموج يُعول بي : عراق، عراق، ليس لي سوى عراق!

البحر أوسع ما يكون وأنت أبعد ما تكون

والبحر دونك يا عراق.

(١٥)

بالأمس حين مررتُ بالمقهى، سمعتك يا عراق ...

وكنت دورة أسطوانه

هي دورة الأفلاك من عمري، تكور لي زمانه

في لحظتين من الزمان، وان تكن فقدت مكانه.

هي وجه أمي في الظلام



- (٢٠) وصوتُها، يتزلَّقان مع الرؤى حتى أنام؛  
وهي النخيل أخاف منه إذا ادلهمَّ مع الغروب  
فاكتظَّ بالأشباح تخطفُ كلَّ طفلٍ لن يؤوب  
من الدروب؛  
هي المفليَّة العجوز وما توشوش عن «حزام»  
وكيف شقَّ القبر عنه أمام «عفراء» الجميلة
- (٢٥) فاحتازها .. إلا جديلة.  
زهراء، أنت .. أتذكرين  
تنورنا الوهاج تزحمه أكف المصطلين؟  
وحديث عمِّي الخفيض عن الملوك الغابرين؟
- (٣٠) ووراء بابٍ كالقضاء  
قد أوصدته على النساء  
أيدٍ تُطاع بما تشاء، لأنها أيدي رجال -  
كان الرجال يعربدون ويسمرون بلا كلال.  
أفتذكرين؟ أتذكرين؟
- (٣٥) سعداء كنا قانعينَ  
بذلك القَصصِ الحزين لأنه قصص النساء.  
حَسَدٌ من الحيوات والأزمان، كنا عنقوانه،  
كنا مداريئه اللذين بينهما كيانه.  
أفليس ذاك سوى هباء؟



- (٤٠) حُلْمٌ ودورة اسطوانة؟  
إن كان هذا كل ما يبقى فأين هو العزاء؟  
أحببتُ فيك عراقَ رُوحِي أو حبيبتكِ أنتِ فيه؛  
يا أنتما، مصباح رُوحِي أنتما - وأتى المساء  
والليل أطبق، فلتشعاً في دجاء فلا أتيه.
- (٤٥) لو جئتِ في البلد الغريب إليّ ما كمل اللقاء!  
الملتقى بك والعراق على يديّ .. هو اللقاء!  
شوق يخضُّ دمي إليه، كأنَّ كلَّ دمي اشتها،  
جوع إليه .. كجوع كلِّ دم الغريق الى العواء.  
شوق الجنين إذا اشربَّ من الظلام الى الولادة!
- (٥٠) إني لأعجب كيف يمكن أن يخون الخائنون!  
أخون إنسانُ بلاده؟  
إن خان معنى أن يكون، فكيف يمكن أن يكون؟  
الشمس أجمل في بلادِي من سواها، والظلام  
- حتى الظلام - هناك أجمل، فهو يحتضن العراق.  
واحسرتاه، متى أنامُ  
فأحسُّ أن على الوسادة  
من ليلك الصيفي طلاً فيه عطركُ يا عراق؟  
بين القرى المتهيباتِ خطاي والمدن الغربية  
غنيّتُ تُربتك الحبيبة،



- (٦٠) وحملتُها فأنا المسيحُ يجرُّ في المنفى صليبه،  
فسمعتُ وقع خطى الجياع تسيرُ، تدمى من عُثار  
فتذرُّ في عينيَّ، منك ومن مناسمها، عُبار.  
مازلتُ أضرب، مُتربِّب القدمين أشعث، في الدروب  
تحت الشمس الأجنبيَّة،
- (٦٥) متخافق الأطمار، أبسط بالسؤال يداً نديَّة  
صفراءَ من ذلِّ وحمى : ذلِّ شحاذٍ غريبٍ  
بين العيون الأجنبيَّة،  
بين احتقارٍ، وانتهازٍ، وازورارٍ .. أو «خطية»،  
والموت أهون من «خطية»،
- (٧٠) من ذلك الإشفاق تعصره العيونُ الأجنبيَّة  
قطراتِ ماءٍ .. معدنيَّة!  
فلتنظفي، يا أنتِ، يا قطراتُ، يا دم، يا .. نقودُ،  
يا ريح، يا إبراً تخطي لي الشراعَ - متى أعودُ  
الى العراق؟ متى أعودُ؟
- (٧٥) يا لمعةَ الأمواج رنَّهِنَّ مجدافٌ يروُدُ  
بيَ الخليجِ، ويا كواكبه الكبيرة .. يا نقودُ!  
ليت السفائنَ لا تُقاضي راكبيها عن سفارٍ  
أو ليت أنَّ الأرضَ كالأفق العريض، بلا بحارٍ!  
مازلتُ أحسب يا نقود، أعدكِنَّ وأستزيد،



- (٨٠) ما زلتُ أَنْقِصُ، يا نقود، بكنَّ من مُدَدِ اغترابي،  
ما زلتُ أوقد بالتماعتكنَّ نافذتي وبابي  
في الضَّفة الأخرى هناك، فحدِّثيني يا نقودُ  
متى أعود؟ متى أعودُ  
أتراه يأزف، قبل موتي، ذلك اليوم السعيدُ؟
- (٨٥) سأفِيقُ في ذاك الصباح، وفي السماء من السحابِ  
كِسْرٌ، وفي النسَماتِ بَرْدٌ مشبع بعطور آبٍ؛  
وأزِيح بالثُّوباء بُقيا من نعاسي كالْحِجابِ  
من الحرير، يشفُّ عما لا يبينُ وما يبينُ :  
عما نسيْتُ وكدتُ لا أنسى، وشكُّ في يقين.
- (٩٠) ويضيءُ لي - وأنا أمُدُّ يدي لألبسَ من ثيابي -  
ما كنتُ أبحثُ عنه في عَمَّاتِ نفسي من جواب  
لَمْ يَمَلأ الفرحُ شعابَ نفسي كالضباب؟  
اليوم - واندفقَ السرورُ عليَّ يفجائي - أعودُ!  
واحسرتاه .. فلن أعودَ الى العراق!
- (٩٥) وهل يعودُ  
من كان تُعوزُهُ النقود؟ وكيف تُدخِرُ النقودُ  
وأنت تأكل إذ تجوع؟ وأنت تُنفقُ ما يجودُ  
به الكرام، على الطعام؟  
لتبكينَّ على العراق



(١٠٠)

فما لديك سوى الدموع  
وسوى انتظارك، دون جدوى، للرياح وللقلوع!

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\*Al-Sayyab, Badr Shakir (1971). Diwan Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab. Beirut  
Dar Al-'Awda.



A Stranger by the Gulf \*\*

The wind gasps with the midday heat,  
like a nightmare in the late afternoon And on the masts, it  
continues to fold, to spread for departure

The gulf is crowded with them-laborers roaming the sea  
Barefoot, half-naked

And on the sand, by the gulf (5)

A stranger sat – a baffled vision wanders the gulf

Destroying the pillars of light with the rising wail

Higher than the torrents roaring foam, than the clamor

A voice thunders in the abyss of my bereaved soul: Iraq

Like the crest rising, like a cloud, like tears to the eyes (10)

The wind cries to me: Iraq.

The wave howls at me: Iraq. Iraq. Nothing but Iraq.

The sea is as wide as can be, and you are as distant

The sea is between you and me: Oh Iraq.

Yesterday, as I passed by the café, I heard you Iraq ... (15)

You were a spin of a record

This, the spin of the cosmos in my life – it rolls time on for  
me



In two moments of tranquility if it has lost its place  
It is the face of my mother in darkness  
And her voice, they glide with the vision until I sleep; (20)  
And it is the palm trees that I fear if they grow dim at sunset  
Crammed with ghosts snatching every child  
who doesn't return from the paths.  
And it is the old woman and what she whispers about  
Hazam  
And how the grave split open over him before the beautiful,  
young Afra  
And he took hold of her ... except for a braid (25)  
Zahra'... do you remember?  
The glowing fireplace crowded with palms seeking warmth?  
And my aunt's whispered tales of bygone kings?  
And behind a door like a decree  
That was closed on the women (30)  
By hands forever obeyed – as they were the hands of men  
The men would carouse and pass the night in revelry  
without tiring  
So, do you remember? Do you remember?



Content, we were resigned  
With those sad stories – as they were the stories of  
women(35)  
A collection of lives and times, we were in its prime  
We were its two spheres – between which it rested  
So, isn't that nothing but dust?  
A dream and a spin of the record?  
If that were all that remains, where is the consolation? (40)  
In you Iraq, I loved my spirit or I loved you in it  
Both of you, the lantern of my spirit, you –  
and evening came  
And the night pressed down – so let both glow in the  
darkness,  
so I will not lose my way  
If you came to me in a foreign land – the encounter would  
be  
incomplete  
Meeting you – Iraq at my hand ... this, the encounter (45)  
Longing for it penetrates my blood, as if all of my blood is  
desire



A hunger for it ... like the hunger of the blood of the  
drowned for air

The desire of the unborn stretching his neck from the  
darkness to birth

I wonder how it is possible for traitors to betray

Does one betray his country? (50)

If he betrays the meaning of being, how can he be?

The sun is more beautiful in my country than any other, and  
darkness

Even darkness – there, is more beautiful

for it embraces Iraq

What a pity ... when will I sleep

And sense on the pillow (55)

Your summer night – glided by your perfume, Iraq?

Between timid villages and strange cities, my footsteps

I sang your beloved soil

And I carried it – for I am the Messiah in exile dragging his  
cross

And I heard the footfall of the famished moving, bleeding (60)  
from faltering



And dust, from you and from padded feet – my eyes filled  
with tears [sic.]

I still walk, disheveled – with soiled feet on the roads  
Under foreign suns

In tattered rags, hands outstretched, calling  
Pale from fever and disgrace, the disgrace of a strange  
beggar (65)

Amidst foreign eyes  
Amidst scorn, and rejection, and aversion ... or pity  
Death is easier than pity

Than the pity foreign eyes squeeze out as  
Drops of mineral water (70)

So be doused, you, Oh drops, Oh blood, ... oh ... currency  
Oh Wind, Oh needles tailoring the sail for me,  
when will I return

To Iraq, when will I return?

Oh flash of the waves staggered by oars –  
carrying me to the Gulf

Oh great constellation ... oh currency. (75)

If only the ships didn't change their passengers for traveling?



If only the earth like the vast horizon was without seas  
I am still calculating, oh currency, I count you – I ask for more  
I am still repelled by you from the intervals of my alienation,  
I still ignite my window and my door with your glow, (80)  
On the other shore over there,  
so tell me, oh currency ...

When will I return, when will I return.

Do you see that joyous day approaching before my death?  
And in the sky, in the fragments of clouds  
And in the breezes, hailstones saturated with August  
perfumes (85)

I reveal with a cloak, the remainder of my lethargy, like a silk  
veil

Disclosing what is and is not visible,  
What I have and barely have forgotten,  
when doubt is within certainty

It is clear to me – as I extend my hand to slip on my clothes  
–

What answer was I searching for in the darkness of my soul  
(90)



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Asst. Lect. Sahar Ahmed Mohammed

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That the hidden joy did fill the abyss of my spirit like fog?  
Today – as delight floods through me – surprising me – I  
return.  
What a pity – I will not return to Iraq  
And will he who lacks currency return?  
And how is it saved? (95)  
And will you eat when you are hungry? And will you spend  
what  
Dignity deems generous, on food?  
So cry for Iraq  
For what do you have but tears  
But your futile anticipation, for the winds and the masts.  
(100)

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\*\* Al-Sayyab, Badr Shakir, Diwan 1: 317-23. Trans. Shareah Taleghani,  
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