

## Arabic and English Literary Modernisms: Points of Convergence and Divergence

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### Abstract

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This comparative study presents a new perspective on discussing the relationship between Arabic and English modernist poetry. Most of the previous Arabic studies in the field of comparative literature focused on the issue of the "influence" rather than Inter textuality and acculturation between the two literatures, Arabic and English. Similarly, the scholarships available in English on the topic either apply Western theories on Arabic literature or study the topic from Western perspective. The study argues that though the similarity between Arabic and English modernisms, Arabic modernism remains in its own right draws on Arabic cultural heritage. The similarity between Arabic and English modernisms is due the factors of acculturation and hybridity between Arabs and the Westerners. The study concludes that Arabic modernism is an Arabic offspring and enjoys its own cultural identity. In this sense, this study rejects the Eurocentric hegemony which always westernizes "modernism".

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**Keywords:** New Woman, Weimar Republic, Gina Kaus, Die Verliebten

### Aim of the study

This study aims at displaying the significant position of Arabic literature among world literatures, and its relationship with English literature. The study also explores the extent of hybridity and acculturation between the Arab world and the West. It attempts to trace the sources of Arabic modernism in order to affirm the Arab cultural identity.

### Research question

Does Arabic modernism enjoy its own cultural identity or merely a western offspring?

### Significance of the research

In the period of colonization, Arabic poetry has become unsung genre compared to the Western poetry due to the Western policy, which has been focusing on the Eurocentrism, and due to the "cultural antipathy" provoked by the Western media which present a negative stereotyping of Arabs. In this sense, this study rejects the Eurocentric hegemony that tries to associate modernism with the process of westernization. Moreover, this study selects the topic of modernism in an attempt to rectify the prevailing misconception about Arabic modernism [Al-Hadathah] because this term has been always presented to be a vague and ambiguous term; and many studies refer to modernism as an intellectual and philosophical trend that advocates atheism and the loss of cultural identity.

### Socio -historical background

Ibn Khaldun (1967:116) says "The vanquished always want to imitate the victor in his distinctive characteristics, his dress, his occupation, and his other conditions and customs."<sup>1</sup>

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In the medieval ages specifically in the period between 749 and 1258 Arabic literature was dominant and influenced Western literatures. Friedman (2007) states that borrowings from other cultures were the foremost reasons behind the rise of the West after 1500.<sup>ii</sup> Menocal (1987) argues that Arabic culture played a vital role in shaping medieval literature in Europe. Whereas Westerners, though greatly influenced by medieval Arabic literature, are too stubborn to acknowledge the role of Arabic literature. Briffault (1919) points out to the significance of Arabic literature and its relationship with European literatures:

Arabian knowledge began at an early date to percolate into Christian Europe. . . . "All the young Christians who distinguish themselves by their talent, know the language and literature of the Arabs, read and study passionately the Arab books, gather at great expense great libraries of these, and everywhere proclaim with a loud voice how admirable is that literature."<sup>iii</sup> (p. 198) After the invasion of Baghdad in 1258 by the Tartars, the domination of the Arabic culture dwindled. From 1515 up to 1914, the Ottomans ruled the Arab world. Imperialist countries, especially Britain, France, and Italy have occupied the Arab world after demolishing the Ottoman Empire, which represented the unity of the Arab world and Turkey. In the first two decades of the second half of the 20th century, most of the Arab states obtained independence. The Arab regimes that connived with colonization were overthrown. The conflict between the Western imperialism and USSR Communism made many of the Arab intellectuals and poets incline to socialism as it resisted imperialism and colonization.

Adonis<sup>iv</sup> (1985) argues that we cannot understand poetics of Arabic modernism unless we view it through its historical context socially, culturally and politically. Context. Adonis believes that Arabic modernism is a timeless concept, and does not belong to a specific period. He attributes the pioneering of Arabic modernism to some Arab poets in the eighth century. He places some Arab poets of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods such as Bashar Ibn Burd (714-784), Abu Tammam (788 - 845), and Abu Nuwas (757-814) as well as the Sufi poets like Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Jabbar Al-Niffari (d. 965), and Abu Hayyan Al-Tawhidi (d. 1010) in the first category of modernist poets. For Adonis, Arabic modernism sprang up early due to the conflict between conservative and liberal poets during the Abbasid period. He argues that there were two trends of modernism in Arab world: the first is political/intellectual and the second is artistic. The revival [*Ihyaiyyah*] in the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth century's was marked as a period of Western colonization and acculturation with the West. Adonis considers some twentieth-century Arab poets such as the Iraqi poet, Ma'ruf al-Rasafi not among modernist Arab poets though al-Rasafi criticizes Arabic tradition and denies the Western colonization because Adonis argues that poetry should be artistically new. Adonis argues that *Diwan* poets (Abbas Mahmud Al-Aqqad, Abd al-Qadir Al-Mazini, and Abd Al-Rahman Shukri) had a pioneering role in modern Arabic poetry because they crossed the boundaries of Arabic traditional aesthetics. He regards the Syrian poet, Mutran Khalil Mutran as one of the most successful poets in the first half of the twentieth century because he harmonized the traditional with the contemporary on one hand and on the other hand reconciled originality and development. Adonis points out those Apollo poets (Ahmed Zaki Abu Shadi, Ibrahim Naji, Ali Mahmud Taha and Abu Al-Qasim Al-Shabbi) paved the way for structural and conceptual change in Arabic poetry. Adonis labels the Lebanese poet and writer Gibran Khalil Gibran, who initiated new Arabic poetry<sup>v</sup>, as an apocalyptic writer.

### 1. Arabic and English literary modernisms: Common grounds

While English literary modernism is considered a natural yield of philosophic and intellectual modernism in the West, Arabic modernism [*Al-Hadathah*], from the perspective of some Arab critics does not stand on Arabic philosophical and intellectual grounds. The majority of Arabic writings usually deal with literary modernism, and few writings deal with philosophic modernism. In other words, a comprehensive and profound meaning of Arabic modernism seems to be defective according to some Arab critics.

Adonis (1992) identifies many obstacles that affected the development of modernist Arabic poetry. The first obstacle is a belief that modernism is directly connected with the present. He argues that poetry cannot be modernist just by being contemporary. The second obstacle is 'the desire to be different from the ancient at all costs'<sup>vi</sup>; for him modernism is not just different from what has happened before. Adonis places the poets of the Abbasid period such as Al-Niffari and Abu Hayyan Al-Tawhidi in the heart of Arabic modernism, and he considers Abu Nuwas more modernist than many contemporary Arab poets. The third obstacle is the belief that the West is the source of modernism; and the belief that modernism outside Western poetry does not exist.

Kulaib (1997) maintains that the rise of Arabic modernism is due to acculturation between Arabs and Westerners, which has in turn resulted in technical and thematic renewal in modern Arabic poetry. He argues that Western literature was required to enrich Arabic aesthetics and not to be imitated. Therefore, acculturation with the West was relatively significant but not essential. He explicates four characteristics to differentiate modernist poetry from classical poetry: the use of music in the poem, the use of myths, artistic imagery, and vision. He emphasizes that vision is the essential element of the modernist poetry. He further states that aesthetic consciousness forms the basis on which poetic modernism launches. Western modernism is seen as multilateral, born out of several beliefs and thoughts, while Arabic modernism is unilateral. In his article, "The Problematics of European Modernism" Sheppard (1993) enumerates some features of Western literary modernism:

'uncompromising intellectuality', 'a preoccupation with nihilism', 'a discontinuity', 'an interaction to the Dionysiac', 'a formalism', 'an attitude of detachment', 'the use of myth as an arbitrary means of ordering art and reflexivism', 'an anti-democratic cast of mind', 'an emphasis on subjectivity', 'a feeling of alienation and loneliness', 'the sense on the ever-present threat of chaos, ... in conjunction with the sense of search' and 'the experience of panic terror', 'a particular form of irony which derives from the rift between self and world', 'consciousness, observation and detachment' and 'a commitment to metaphor as the very essence of the poetry itself'. (p. 2) From a literary perspective, there are some common characteristics between Arabic and English literary modernisms. Arab and English modernist poets see the world as fragmented multiculturalism with meaninglessness in life. New themes such as anxiety, alienation from society, loneliness, wasteland or unreal city, and the fear of death are among the dominant themes of Arabic and English modernist poetry. However, modernist poets assert that poetry should use the everyday language of people, Arabic and English modernist texts are usually obscure and abstruse due to allusions and excessive use of symbols as well as other factors such as the impacts of epistemology, philosophy, metaphysics, mysticism, and mythology. Moreover, inter textuality and the use of new images and metaphors are common features of Arabic and English modernist poetry.

Many Arab critics argue that Arabic poetic modernism is similar to English modernism. Others view it as a new poetic movement in form, content, and style, as a distinctive case of innovation in the modern era. Mikhail Nuaymah says that Arabic literary renaissance in the 20th century was a breeze of fragrance which came from the garden of the Western literatures. In the same line, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra says that the movement of Arabic new poetry is connected to the movement of modern Art in Europe, so the renewal came to us from the West. Al-Qa'ud (2002) says that it is obvious that modernist Arab poets were influenced by the West and its culture, especially by certain poets like Anglo-American poet T. S. Eliot, the Irish poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats, the British poet and critic, Edith Sitwell, the American poet and writer Edgar Allan Poe, as well as the French poets Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, and Paul Valery, and the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca. Haddad (1998) mentions that Al-Sayyab followed Edith Sitwell's style of employing myths. However, T. S. Eliot remains the most influential figure among the modernist Arab poets particularly Al-Sayyab, al-Bayyati, and Abd al-Sabur. Modernist Arab poets found the conventional themes as chains that hinder the poet from innovation. The obsession with renewal was an engrossing issue. Therefore, they revolted against the traditional poetics and established new techniques and themes. According to Adonis there is no conflict between Arabic and Western modernisms rather, he argues that late western modernism let him to discover early Arabic modernism.

### 1.1. Vision in Arabic and English literary modernisms

Modernist Arab poets and critics define the new poetry as a vision. Among them is Adonis, who says: "Perhaps the best way to define New Poetry is to say that it is a vision. By its nature, a vision is jump outside the present concepts. It is therefore a change in the order of things and in the way of looking at them."<sup>vii</sup> Arab critics also argue that modernism is a vision as well as an aesthetic form. Poetic vision does not reflect the reality of the life the poet lives in, but launches on the ground of reality and tends towards the future through the reality. For Adonis, vision is a device that reveals the unseen. Adonis (1992: 101) says: "Modernity should be a creative vision, or it will be no more than a fashion."<sup>viii</sup> According to Subhi (1987), vision in poetry is a deep glance and a comprehensive view of life. It is an interpretation of the past and future simultaneously. It is a comprehensive sight, but not a comprehensive philosophy. In English poetry, vision is an old poetic term. Jonathan Swift cited in Bittlestone (2005) defines vision as "the art of seeing the invisible." Vision in the modernist poem means neither the ordinary sight of something nor a waking dream of the poet.

Poetic vision is a kind of knowledge that oversteps the limited knowledge of the apparent phenomena. The poets feel that they possess the power of vision more than others. According to *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: Vision has been a favorite word in the vocabulary of poets, but it has become common in criticism only in the modern period. It is a word rich in ambiguities and overtones of meaning, which frequently generate ironies in the contexts in which it is used. . . . Contemporary criticism uses vision in a variety of senses. Occasionally, vision refers simply to a poet's visual images as these appear in descriptive passages or figures of speech. On the other hand, a critic like Frye uses vision in an extended sense as a synonym for literature itself, or at least for the thematic component of literature. According to Frye, literature is not an imitation of nature and makes no reference to reality; rather it is the dream of man, an imaginative projection of man's desires and fears. . . . But the sense in which vision is most frequently used in contemporary criticism is that given to it by expressionist critics, who use the term . . . to refer to an author's world view- his ideas, attitudes, feelings, and evaluations about God, nature, and man. (p. 990-91)

Preminger (1974) maintains that visions are appreciated if they are complex, deep, comprehensive, original, or authentic and are blamed if they are simple, shallow, narrow, standardized, or inauthentic.<sup>ix</sup> Vision in the modernist poem is the most creative device through which the poet interlinks the past and the present so that the poem does not seem to be a record of the events or a witness report.

## 1.2. Periodizing Arabic and English literary modernisms

The starting point of any crucial phase is always a moot point. From the perspective of some Arab writers, modernism is a term that stands for the intellectual mode and the social ideology of life and behaviour. It is not merely a general term denotes novelty and development in the modern age; rather it takes place in every era. Some writers attribute the evolution of Arabic literary modernism to the factor of time, while other writers attribute its emergence to the factor of epistemology. This argument with regard to the era of Arabic literary modernism can be categorized into three views.

The first view marks modernism as a continuous movement within the Arab literary history where in each era modernism was practiced one way or another. For instance, in the pre-Islamic period there was a poetic modernism in the poetry of Imru'l-Qays.<sup>x</sup> In the time of the advent of Islam, there was a modernism which revolutionized the way of life and ideology of Arabs. The poets changed their vision towards life and the universe. In the Umayyad period (661 - 750), modernism was discernible in the poetry of Bashar Ibn Burd. In the Abbasid period (750 - 1258), modernism was noticed in the poetry of Abu Nuwas, Abu Tammam Al-Mutanabbi, Abu'l-Ala' al-Ma'arri, Al-Niffari, and Al-Hallaj, Omar Ibn Al-Farid, and in the poetry of Ibn Arabi. In the 20th century, modernism began in the poetry of *Apollo* poets. As Al-Musawi (2006) states:

The structure gave way to many innovations between the eighth and eleventh centuries that betrayed dissatisfaction not only with the erotic prelude and its obsolete recollections of desert life, but mainly with ongoing tendencies to imitate the ancients and to apply worn out imagery to a different life and culture. Bashshar Ibn Burd (d. 783), Abn Nuwms (d. 815), Muslim Ibn al-Walld (d. 823), Abn Tammam (d. 845), Al-Mutanabbi (d. 965), and Abu al-Ala al-Marri (d. 1057) were, respectively, among the pioneers in this innovative enterprise, whereas pre-Islamic poets like Imru' al-Qays have become the strong precursors and forebears in terms of eloquence, spontaneity of experience, and daring involvement in life. Their names recur among the modernists as household words, and their poetry and life are drawn upon in assemblies and speeches. With such names in the back of their minds, modernists can hardly forfeit a sense of cultural or even genealogical succession. (p. 2)

According to Adonis (1985) poetic modernism in Arabic poetry began in the 8th century. He adds that Arabic modernism retreated because of the invasion of Baghdad by Tartars in 1258 and because of the Crusades, then because of the Turkish domination of the Arab world which spanned from 1515 until the World War I. The second view argues that Arabic modernism began with the French invasion of Egypt in 1798, and continued during the rule of Mohammed Ali Pasha, who ruled Egypt from 1805 to 1848. This view is supported by Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani and Mohammed Abduh, who advocated for openness to the West without losing Arabic identity. Other writers divided the period of Arabic literary modernism into three phases: the first phase began in 1932 when the *Apollo* group was founded. The second phase began in 1947 when the first poem in free verse was composed<sup>xi</sup>. The third phase is called Adonis' phase, which is continuing up to the present.<sup>xii</sup>

The third view argues that modernism in the contemporary period started with the rise of *Qasidat Al-Tafeelah*<sup>xiii</sup> [Foot Poem] which was published in 1947. Jayyusi (1992) in *Bdawi Modern Arabic Literature* divides Arabic modernist period into three phases: the first phase from 1948 to 1967, the second phase in the 1970s, and the third in the 1980s.

Deabis (1985) divides modern Arab poets into three groups. The first group is the neoclassic poets<sup>xiv</sup> such as the pioneers of Arabic renaissance *Nahda*, e.g. Mahmud Sami Al-Barudi, Ahmed Shauqi, and Hafiz Ibrahim in Egypt; Al-Rusafi and Mahdi Al-Jawahiri in Iraq; Bisharah Al-Khuri in Lebanon, and others. The second group is the romantic poets or the escapist poets such as Khalil Mutarn, Ilyas Abu Shabakah, Umar Abu Rishah, along with the *Diwan* poets, *Apollo* Group and *Mahjar* poets.<sup>xv</sup> The third group is the modernist poets who created a new poetic style that differs from the traditional one in form and content. Such new poetry is an attempt to absorb human culture in general. For modernist Arab poets, Arabic classical poetry and its inherited culture did not respond to the challenges of the modern world and to their aspiration to create a universal poetry. In his book *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, Adonis (1992). states: Modernity was both of time and outside time: of time because it is rooted in the movement of history, in the creativity of humanity, coexisting with man's striving to go beyond the limitations which surround him; and outside time because it is a vision which includes in it all times and cannot only be recorded as a chronological event. (p. 99)

Periodizing Western modernism is also one of the problematic issues of modernism. As modernism is a very general term, it is rather vague and hence it is difficult to accurately determine the starting point of modernism in the West. It has been characterized as a social dynamic that cannot be determined by a specific phase or era because it is rather a historical process. Sheppard in Giles (Ed). (1993) articulates that there is a general consensus among the critics that the period between 1885 and 1935 is the period of modernism. Other critics set its starting-date as early as 1870, and set its ending in the 1950. Still other critics have pinpointed a specific place and specific time for modernism: Europe as its place and age of Renaissance as its starting point.

However, the span of modernism from the last decades of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century remains the most significant period of modernism. Peter Childs says that the term modern was used for the Post-Renaissance age in England. He further states that the term 'modern' is the root of the word 'modernism', and it has been used to distinguish modern English from Middle English, while the term 'modernist' came into existence by the end of the 16th century. In the 18th century, the term 'modern' came to indicate the follower and the supporter of modern literature over old one. Childs (2000) indicates that Charles Baudelaire coined the term 'modernity' for the first time in the mid-nineteenth century, and Ruben Dario used the term 'modernism' in his writings for the first time in 1890s. For Samberger (2005) the Nicaraguan poet, Ruben Dario seems to be the first critic to speak of modernism (modernismo) in 1888. The Anglo-American poet and critic, John Crowe Ransom, in his essay "The Future of Poetry" published in 1924, was the first poet and critic who spoke of modernism in the context of imagism<sup>xvi</sup>. Cuddon (1977) in his *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* states:

It is valid to point out certain places and periods where and when modernist tendencies were at their most active and fruitful. For example, in France from the 1890s until 1940s; in Russia during the pre-revolutionary years and the 1920s; in Germany from the 1890s and on during the 1920s; in England from early in the 20th c. and during 1920s and 1930s; in America from shortly before the First World War and on during the inter-war period. (p. 515)

Critics and writers are not unanimous on the term 'modernism' when they attempt to define, classify, and explicate it. For Kermode as in Cuddon (1977), there are two phases of modernism: palaeo-modernism, and neo-modernism. Palaeo-modernism refers to the new movements roughly between 1914 and 1920 while neo-modernism tried to address the critique of modernism. What Kermode calls neo-modernism is called post-modernism by other critics?<sup>xvii</sup> Unlike the division of Kermode, some critics have divided modernism into pre-modernism, high modernism or proper modernism, proto-modernism, popular modernism, late modernism, or post-modernism. Pre-modernism was associated with the Western thinkers like Darwin, Freud, and Marx and high modernism or proper modernism expanded from 1910 to 1930. Ihab Hassan (1993) has differentiated between modernism and post-modernism. He attempted to explore the concept of post-modernism by contrasting it with modernism. Similarly, Giles (1993) has introduced incompatible differences between postmodernism and modernism. Firstly, he regards postmodernism as a clear rejection of modernism. Secondly, he views postmodernism as the dead end of modernism. Thirdly, he indicates that postmodernism remains within the ambit of modernism.<sup>xviii</sup>

The starting point of Western modernism cannot be determined by a specific date. Sheppard (1993) in his essay "The Problematics of European Modernism" indicates that the boundaries of the modernism period are among the problems in determining what modernism is.<sup>xix</sup> Nevertheless, some critics divide the period of Western literary modernism into two phases: the first phase from the last decade of the 19th century until the 1930s. The second phase began in 1930s and lasted until the end of the World War II; and it is referred to as the second generation of modernism. Others point out that the period between 1910 and 1930 is an explosion era of modernism. Of these are D. H. Lawrence who says that the old world ended in 1915<sup>xx</sup>; and Virginia Woolf who claims that modernism began in 1910<sup>xxi</sup>. Some writers link the birth of modernism with the birth of imagism which led by Ezra Pound in 1912<sup>xxii</sup>. According to Bradbury (1979) there are four stages of modernism: modernism of 1890s, modernism of 1900 -1912, modernism of 1913 -1930, and modernism of 1930s. Generally, literary modernism is viewed as a cultural movement of the first half of the 20th century and peaked between 1910 and 1925. Particular works have contributed in crystallizing the concept of literary modernism in the beginning of the 20th century. These works are Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922).

### 1.3. Arabic and English literary modernisms versus tradition

Adonis believes that returning to the past means to reproduce the experiments of the past creators. However, he claims that Arabic cultural heritage is the starting point of Arabic modernism. In this context, Adonis says: "For an Arab poet to be truly modern his writing must glow like a flame which rises from the fire of the ancient, but at the same time is entirely new."<sup>xxiii</sup> In this sense, Adonis agrees with Eliot regarding traditional heritage and its relation with innovation. Some Arab critics argue that modernist poets should detach themselves from the past. Adonis contradicts himself when he claims that the modernist Arab poets should establish new Arabic era by cutting themselves off from the past completely. In addition, they should break away from the past by criticizing the cultural heritage especially the dominant and common culture. On the other hand, Adonis states that he did not discover modernity in Arabic poetry through Arabic culture but through reading Baudelaire, who enabled him to understand the poetic modernism of Abu Nuwas. Adonis (1992) says:

I must also admit that I did not discover this modernity in Arabic poetry from within the prevailing Arab cultural order and its systems of knowledge. It was reading Baudelaire which changed my understanding of Abu Nuwas and revealed his particular poetical quality and modernity, and Mallarme's work which explained to me the mysteries of Abu Tammam's poetic language and the modern dimension in it. My reading of Rimbaud, Nerval and Breton led me to discover the poetry of the mystic writers in all its uniqueness and splendour and the new French criticism gave me an indication of the newness of al-Jurjani's critical vision. I found no paradox in declaring that it was resent Western modernity which led me to discover our own, older modernity outside our 'modern' politico-cultural system established on a Western model. (p. 80-81)

On the other hand, Adonis states that Arab modernity should be studied within Arabic perspective on the level of principles and actual historical development, but to study it from Western perspective would be to distort it<sup>xxiv</sup>. Adonis' reflection on the issue of the relationship between modernism and tradition is often contradictory. He views that any literary theory should originate from an intellectual concept or ideological principles. In contradiction, he explores Arabic modernism through reading Western modernism.

Western modernist writers bear discordant views towards the notion of tradition in literary theory and register diverse attitudes towards it. One group strives to erase tradition and attempts to conceal affinity with the precursors. The representatives of this group are the Italian futurist poet Filippo Marinetti, French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, and the American writer Gertrude Stein. The American modernist poet William Carlos Williams criticized the return to antiquity and regarded it as reactionary, which threatens modernism. Virginia Woolf stresses the discontinuity of the traditional past with the shaken present, and describes it as a "frightening discontinuity."<sup>xxv</sup> For Eysteinnsson (1990) "modernism is a legitimate concept broadly signifying a paradigmatic shift, a major revolt, beginning in the mid-and late nineteenth century, against the prevalent literary and aesthetic traditions of the Western world."<sup>xxvi</sup> According to Josipovici (2003), T. E. Hulme argues that modernism is nothing other than a "wholesale rejection of romanticism and all it stood for, and a return to a new classicism."<sup>xxvii</sup> For this group, modernism is a rebellion against traditional concepts and practices.

The second group strives to recover tradition and save it from destruction. The representatives of this group are T. S. Eliot, the German critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin, and the Irish novelist James Joyce. Eliot emphasizes the necessity of a positive relation between modern and traditional heritage. In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", Eliot states "Tradition should positively be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance". Eliot also adds: "[n]o poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists." "The present is directed by the past" i.e. tradition. Eliot was criticized as the most traditional poet of the age.<sup>xxviii</sup> He drew inspiration from the French symbolists and was influenced by the English metaphysical poets. For this group, modernism is not only a creative achievement of the present but also a critical appreciation of the past. The third group bears ambivalent responses towards tradition and modernism such as the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen and the American novelist and short story writer, Nella Larsen<sup>xxix</sup>. Giddens (1991) cited in Al-Musawi (2006) tradition "is not wholly static, because it has to be reinvested by each new generation as it takes over its cultural inheritance from those preceding it."<sup>xxx</sup> For this group, modernism was anti-traditional stylistically and criticized the past and its cultural heritage.

### Conclusion

This research deals with the significant but controversial subject of poetic modernism. It is a comparative study between Arabic and English modernisms, highlighting the convergences and departures between them as epitomized by their representative pioneers in both modernisms. There are two views of defining the term 'modernism': one is that 'modernism' is a violation of norm and attempts to break with the tradition. It rejects the traditional values and encourages creativity and subjectivity. The other sees modernism as a reaction to the cruel urban societies, industrialization, and absence of the human values. Generally, it is an aesthetic criticism to modernity.

From the Western perspective, modernism is a development in the Western society which places man as the centre of the world who judges all things on it instead of adhering to the past as a standard of judgments. It includes the movements in art, architecture, and literature, which attempted to break with classical and traditional norms. Generally, modernism is a period, style, and genre. However, Susan Stanford defines modernism as a global tendency in art and literature and not confined to the West. From an Arabic perspective, modernism is an awareness of life and existence. It is a revolt against tradition; it is a violation of the political, ethical, and cultural sovereignty. It rejects the ideal standards of the past. Modernism is linked with innovation and does not belong to a specific time because it is a continuation of modernisms that appeared earlier. Arabic modernism is a new intellectual and philosophic vision of the self and the universe. Some Arab and Western thinkers use the terms 'modernism' and 'modernity' interchangeably. Others use the term 'modernity' for technology and social life, and the term 'modernism' as an aesthetic term for the social and ideological contexts.

The study demonstrates that Arabic poetic modernism is a violation of the poetics of Arab traditional poetry to create a novel poetics along with a novel vision of the world and human life. Historically, the seeds of Arabic poetic modernism emerged early in the Abbasid period by some Arab poets who contravened the traditional poetics and the religious values and norms of the community they lived in, like Abu Nuwas, Abu Tammam and Al-Ma'arri. Due to consequent calamities that have been occurring since the 13th century till the present in the Arab world, Arabic modernism retreated to reappear in the 20th century. Arabic traditional poetry still exists and Arabic modernist poetry did not replace it. In other words, the 20th century was not an exclusive period for Arabic modernism, but other Arabic literary trends such as neoclassicism and romanticism also emerged and opposed modernism. Unlike the Western literary movements, the Arab neoclassic, romantic, and modernist poets relatively lived in the same period.

This study attempted to attribute the renewal of Arabic modernist poetry to the necessity of change as a natural process in human life, and to the increase in knowledge and epistemology that modernist Arab poets acquired, as well as to the acculturation with the West. In this sense, Arabic poetic modernism is not an offspring of the Western poetic modernism as some Arab writers and scholars argue. The liberation of Arabic poetry from the traditional poetics was inspired by the revolutions against the oligarchic regimes in the Arab world which persecuted people in the name of tradition and the renewal of themes and techniques were inspired by the rise of progressive thoughts and parties against the reactionary and conservative parties. Therefore, Arabic modernist text is a product of its socio-political contexts. Both Arab and Western modernist writers hold discordant views on tradition. Some Arab and Western modernist writers attempt to erase tradition and strive for a radical departure from the tradition.

Others aspire to recover tradition and save bits of the past from destruction. The third group of modernist writers holds ambivalent responses towards it.

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<sup>i</sup>Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans, Franz Rosenthal, ed, N. J. Dawood (Princeton: Princeton University, 1967) 116.

<sup>ii</sup>Susan Stanford Friedman, "Unthinking Manifest Destiny: Muslim Modernities on Three Continents" *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, ed, Wai-Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell (Princeton: Princeton University, 2007) 70.

<sup>iii</sup>Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity* (London: George Allen, 1919) 198.

<sup>iv</sup> Adonis (b. 1930) is a Syrian poet and critic, his real name is a Ali Ahmad Said, but he writes under the pen name of Adonis

<sup>v</sup>Adonis, *Al-Thabit wa Al-Mutahawwil: Sadmat Al-Hadathah* [The Static and The Changing: The Shock of Modernity] vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Odah, 1978).

<sup>vi</sup>Adonis, *An Introduction to Arabic Poetics*, trans. Catherine Cobham, (Cairo: American UP, 1992).

<sup>vii</sup>M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) 232.

<sup>viii</sup>Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, Catherine Cobham, trans (Cairo: American UP, 1992) 101.

<sup>ix</sup>Alex Preminger, ed, *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (London: Macmillan, 1974) 991.

<sup>x</sup>Imru'l-Qays *Ibn Hujr* an Arab poet, is acknowledged as the most distinguished poet of pre-Islamic era. He is the author of one of the seven odes in the famed collection of the pre-Islamic poetry *Al-Mu'allaqat*.

<sup>xi</sup>According to Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Nazik al-Mala'ika asserts that it was she who wrote the first free verse in modern Arabic poetry with her poem *Al-Kulira* which was published in 1947. Al-Sayyab, on the other hand asserts that his poem in free verse entitled *Hal Kana Hubban*, was written before Al-Mala'ika's.

<sup>xii</sup>For Muhsin Al-Musawi, [M]odernity properly began with the emergence of coteries, groups, and schools that came into contact with Russia and Europe, and developed a new consciousness of individualism and democracy, like the Diwan School in Egypt (1912), with a publication under this name in 1921, and the following one Apollo (with a journal under this name,

too, 1932–1934). Soon after the Second World War, another radical change under the rubric of the Free Verse Movement took over the poetic scene. (Al-Musawi 9)

<sup>xiii</sup>The meters of rhythmical poetry are known in Arabic as *Seas*. The measuring unit of the “seas” is known as (*Tafeelah*) with every sea containing a certain number of *Tafeelah* that the poet has to observe in every line [bait] of the poem.

<sup>xiv</sup>For some Arab critics, these poets should be named as the poets of heritage or the conservative poets instead of neoclassic poets, because the rules of Aristotle are not applicable on their poems in which the element of emotion is as important as the reason.

<sup>xv</sup>The Mahjar poets were the Arab emigrant poets who emigrated to North and South Americas such as Jibran Khalil Jibran (1883-1931), Mikhail Nuaymah (1889-1988), Illya Abu Madhi (1889-1957), and Nasib Arida (1887-1946). Most of the *Mahjar* poets were Christians from Syria and Lebanon.

<sup>xvi</sup>Sonja Samberger, *Artistic Outlaws: The Modernist Poetics of Edith Sitwell, Amy Lowell, Gertrude Stein and H.D* (London, 2005) 17.

<sup>xvii</sup>Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, ed, *Modernism 1890-1930* (London: Penguin, 1976).

<sup>xviii</sup>Steve Giles, ed, *Theorizing Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1993) 176.

<sup>xix</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>xx</sup>Kevin J. H. Dettmar, ed, *Rereading the New: A Backward Glance at Modernism*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1992) 172.

<sup>xxi</sup>Marlowe A. Miller, *Masterpieces of British Modernism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006)1.

<sup>xxii</sup>Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, ed, *The Ezra Pound Encyclopedia* ( Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005)226.

<sup>xxiii</sup>Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, Catherine Cobham, trans (Cairo: American UP, 1992) 101.

<sup>xxiv</sup>Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, Catherine Cobham, trans (Cairo: American UP, 1992) 83.

<sup>xxv</sup>Irving Howe, “The Characteristics of Modernism”, ed, Tim Middleton, *Modernism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>xxvi</sup>Astradur Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (New York: Cornell UP, 1990) 2

<sup>xxvii</sup>Gabriel Josipovici, “The Birth of the Modern 1885-1914”, Tim Middleton, ed, *Modernism: Critical Concepts in Literary and cultural Studies*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2003) 241.

<sup>xxviii</sup>Michael Grant, ed, *T. S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 1 (Routledge 1997).

<sup>xxix</sup>Anne E. Fernald, “Modernism and Tradition”, Astradur Eysteinnsson and Vivian Liska, ed, *Modernism: A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007) 157-171.

<sup>xxx</sup>Muhsin J. Al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry Trajectories of modernity and tradition* (London: Routledge, 2006). P. 4