The Prufrockian Dynamicity of Resistance, Change and Acceptance in the Poetry of Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī

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Abstract

While Modernism is recognised as originating in the United Kingdom and the United States, arising from conditions created by the Industrial Revolution and World Wars, the examination of Prufrockian Modernist elements in other cultural contexts can yield additional insights into the movement and readings of specific works. Though the Arab world is often considered through the lens of tradition and religion, issues of the modern world have also impacted the Arab culture, as in the work of contemporary Saudi poets, such as Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī (1940-2010). As evident in the poems, themes and techniques found in conventional Modernist texts are also present in Al-Quṣaybī's work, within the Arabic context. Specifically, anxiety and alienation arising from the mechanisation of society as a result of the Industrial Revolution will be examined here. This study will, through the technique of comparison and contrast with the works of T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) and Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), examine the claim that Al-Quṣaybī 's poetry accounts for a modernist shift observable through a change in the intensity with which objects are viewed within the Saudi cultural context. This intensity is in proportion to the industrial changes that have helped to reshape Arab society as well as the Saudi community. As in the Western context, the changes created through industrialisation have significantly impacted individuals' and indeed, entire cultures,' experiences and romantic relationship with their environment and others, altering dominant expectations of the human experience.

Keywords

Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī, T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Modernism, resistance, acceptance

Introduction

The poetry of Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī (commonly spelled Ghazi Al-Ghosaibi by English writers) has much to add to the reading of Arabic literature through a modernist lens, but his work has not yet been analysed in this way within literary scholarship. Although Modernism originated in the United Kingdom and the

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United States following the Industrial Revolution with an intrinsic connection to that time period, Prufrockian Modernist elements in works that exist within other cultural contexts can provide new insights and connections. Modernism in the context of poetry refers to a more expressive sort of poetry, one unbound by strictures and a connection to the personal, and instead focuses almost solely on the image the poem creates. Prufrockian here is a reference to the main character in T.S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," who is primarily noted for his regrets and unfulfilled longings. While it is unclear who exactly coined the term Prufrockian, its usage dates back almost to the time of the publication of Eliot's poem. Therefore, Prufrockian Modernism is the effect created when the image summoned by a poem is one primarily characterised by regret and weariness: feelings generated by a sense of loss for a world that perhaps never was.

Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī, a Saudi Arabian diplomat and government administrator, significantly influenced the growth of modernisation and industrialisation in Saudi Arabia. The similarities between that experience and the experience of the Industrial Revolution, as well as their unique differences, shape the modernist themes and techniques into a form that centres the Saudi experience and transforms it to suit the needs of the culture.

This study, in order to ground the themes of Prufrockian Modernism and its differing conceptions across cultures, begins with a brief background discussion of the poet Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī, which is necessary for understanding his modernist perspective within the historical context of the industrial revolution in Saudi Arabia. This is followed by a review of modernist literature by T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein, both of whom use themes and techniques that have come to define modernist literature and are used in ways unique to the Saudi experience in the poetry of Al-Quṣaybī. Three works by Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī from across different time periods and publications are then analysed in this study. "Dusting the Colour from Roses," is the title of a poem published in a bilngual volume, an English translation of collected works by Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī, which was originally published in 1995. "Oh, Desert" first appeared in *The Orient and the Desert: Poems by Ghazi A. Algosaibi*, another collection of translated works published by the author, in 1994. These two poems, "Dusting the Colour from Roses" and "Oh, Desert" appeared alongside "In the Old Streets" in an anthology of works by Arab poets published in 2011 entitled *Gathering the Tides: An Anthology of Contemporary Arabian Gulf Poetry*. These three works are representative of the tone, themes and techniques used by Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī and are the subjects of this analysis. In these three works, themes of resistance, change and acceptance are unpacked and placed in the context of modernist literature through a comparison and contrast to the works of American writers in the modernist genre such as T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein. Works of theirs examined here in the context of those same three themes include "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915)

and *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1928), among others. The poetry of Al-Quṣaybī uses similar themes and techniques but can be positioned firmly within the Saudi experience of industrialisation. This unique perspective is observable through a shift in the intensity with which objects are viewed within this cultural context and is in proportion to the industrial changes that have helped to reshape Arab society as well as the Saudi community. Through the comparison and contrast of the poetry of these three writers in the context of the themes of resistance, change and acceptance, a greater understanding of modernity across cultures will be discovered. What the works of these three writers have in common, as well as the distinctions between Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī's work and that of T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein, will illustrate how the process of moving into the modern industrialised world is reflected within their particular cultural contexts.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is one based on the concepts underlying Modernism. What this means is that while presenting some possibilities of comparison and contrast between the works of Al-Quṣaybī, Eliot and Stein, the goal here will be to actively consider how the societies in which they lived affected the works that they created (Alharbi 42). Their own lived realities work to present the realities that they construct on the page through the means of their poetic expression (Alharbi 42).

The common techniques of modernist poetry can be seen in examples from T.S. Eliot, whose work includes repeated descriptions of the landscape that reflect the view of it after the Industrial Age, and Gertrude Stein, who uses the technique of repetition to illustrate how the past influences our understanding of the present (Sanborn 40). In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot describes a scene when he writes "the yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes/ the yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes," and so paints an image of a factory town beset by pollution (Eliot 10). *In The Making of Americans* (1925), Stein repeats patterns of rebellion across generations of an American family, and the past is understood to shape the present experience in the story (Sanborn 40). The use of these techniques is connected to the focus of modernist literature as situating itself in its historical context, transferred from the original use by British and American writers to the poetry of Saudi Arabia.

Griffiths reads Eliot's work as illustrating concepts like authenticity and the "they" from which the individual is isolated (107). The protagonist of the love song never mentions love, but desires instead in the face of his advancing age to make his mark on the world, to "disturb the universe" and begin a personal revolution (Eliot 11). Prufrock is revealed throughout the text as a lonely man in a loveless life, and the unknown "they" who is separate from "me" exacerbates these feelings of isolation. These themes of isolation and anxiety and their

relationship to the landscape would become hallmarks of modernist literature and reflect the experiences of a newly industrialised society.

The work of Gertrude Stein is also considered in this context, as her often stream-of-consciousness poetry deals with some of the same feelings and themes of isolation and fear. In a stanza in *Four Saints in Three Acts*, she writes: "If they were not pigeons what were they…. If a magpie in the sky on the sky cannot cry if a pigeon in the grass alas can alas…" (Stein and Van Vechten 24). It is lines such as these, lines characterised by a sadness that seems to stretch beyond the capability of mere language to encompass it, to the point that what comes out might as well be utter nonsense, that help to demonstrate the degree of Prufrockian yearning, isolation and pervasive anxiety that permeates the work of modernist poets such as Stein. Perhaps most poignantly, Stein asks in her poem "Daughter": "Why is the world at peace" (Stein and Van Vechten 37). Still, is this even a question that is being asked in this context? The fact that the sentence is posed as a question but nonetheless ends with a full stop seems to be intended to create a sense of profound uneasiness, more so than the genuinely unsettling implications of the question itself. It is the response to this conception of isolation and fear that leads towards the three themes examined in this work, those of resistance, change and acceptance.

Themes and Techniques in Modernist Literature: From West to East

(i) *Resistance*

A number of academic scholars have asserted that modernist Saudi poetry is a site of resistance in which writers reject the dominant narrative of white, European experiences of industrialisation. Johansson argues that in order to decolonise literature, analysis of works from the Middle East must know how to apply "decolonial concepts and sensibilities" to our readings and through this application, we can decentralise the white, European dominance that has pervaded other analyses of the literary work of Arab writers (Johannson 19). Her reading of modern Arabic literature concludes that in its very decentring of Europe, focusing on the Arabic experience by engaging with Western culture in its use of modernism in unique ways, this poetry is a form of resistance (Johannson 19). It becomes a method by which Arab writers can resist the exclusionary practices through which the Arabs and their experiences have been erased from the canon (Johannson 19). These writings not only resist this exclusion, they reassert their existence within the contexts of history (Johannson 19).

Gohar makes a similar argument in his analysis of the work of Abdul-Wahhab Al-Bayati, where he concludes that Saudi writers are reshaping colonial modernism as a narrative of freedom and redemption, connecting themselves with Western writers who founded modernism and adapting it to their experiences and writing (375). Themes of resistance can be found throughout

Arabic literature since the era of colonisation, but modern poets have continued the tradition to resist Western dominance in representations of experience and culture (Alharbi 273). Similar themes of isolation and anxiety in Saudi Arabian literature tie the experiences of the Industrial Age and the modernist writing it inspired to the experience of industrialisation in the Middle East, resisting the exclusion of the East from modern representations in literature.

Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī was born in eastern Saudi Arabia in 1940 (Paine et al. 268), thirty-eight years after the recapture of Riyadh in 1902 when the House of Saud conquered the kingdoms of much of the Arabian Peninsula and gained control of the Ghawar oil field, leading the country to grow in power and wealth and bringing many changes to the landscape and traditions of the generations who came before them (Zuhur, *Saudi Arabia*). In the 1970s and 1980s, Al-Quṣaybī played a primary role as Minister for Industry and Electricity (1976-1983) and Minister of Health (1983-1985) in the rapid modernisation of Saudi Arabia. In his autobiography, Al-Quṣaybī expresses his views that shaped his writings, which convey the fear, anxiety and sense of loss around modernisation, themes that position him within the modernist tradition.

The shift toward modernisation and decolonisation as countries in the Middle East established their legitimacy as nation-states influenced the literature produced in these countries. As progress toward modernisation continues, the need to break away from traditional perceptions of life and culture in the Middle East can be seen in literature, as it has throughout the different and ever-evolving periods of history in the Arab world. These shifts have been traced throughout the canon of Arabic writings and are visible within the writings of Al-Quṣaybī as well. Themes of resistance in the works of Al-Quṣaybī are noted in the decentralisation of European narratives around industrialisation within modernist literature, but in the way he connects his experiences to a longing for the past.

In "Oh Desert," Al-Quṣaybī uses personification to express his connection to the desert landscape. The narrator's feelings toward the desert, the landscape of his heritage, are so intense in this poem that the landscape becomes a human entity, a being singularly connected to his Arab identity. Without the desert, which is rapidly disappearing in the face of industrialisation, there is no "mother" to which he can return; this unique identity that connects him to his history and heritage will be lost. Themes of isolation and anxiety over leaving the desert to experience the modern world and how that experience has changed him are connected to an identity shaped by the desert landscape.

> I came back to you, disenchanted.
> I've found there's
> no trust between human beings.
> I came back to you deprived
> the world's like a rib cage

without a heart. (Al-Quṣaybī 268)

Similar to other modernist texts, Al-Quṣaybī introduces the theme of "us" and "them" in this poem that underlie his feelings of isolation. The narrator and the desert are "us," the Saudi people of the past who had once been so connected to this landscape that shaped their daily lives and defined their unique identities.

Then you whispered:
'Have you come back to me, my
child?'
Yes… mother… I came back to you.
A child, forever grieving,
flew to God's countries;
unable to find his nest,
he came back to search for his life in
you. (Al-Quṣaybī 269)

The world outside this desert landscape, the "other" who lives without a heart, has led him to seek redemption through a return to his cultural landscape.

Obviously, the personification of the desert, a mother welcoming her child back into the fold to heal from the harsh and loveless world of outsiders, articulates the intensity of the narrator's view of the desert as embodying life and love. He is "a child, forever grieving" for the mother who is lost during his time engaging with the outside world. In this passage, the narrator resists outside influence and seeks solace in his motherland (Al-Quṣaybī 269). Just as Stein used themes of repetition to illustrate how the past influences the present, Al-Quṣaybī uses personification to connect himself with the desert landscape of Saudi Arabia and to illustrate how the past influences him. It is in the use of personification, however, that the shift in object relations is observable. Al-Quṣaybī's intense feelings toward this heritage, represented by the desert which has become the personification of life and comfort, is in proportion to the rapid changes that erode that landscape and disconnect the Saudi people from the lives and cultures it once shaped.

This same theme is also explored in the works of Gertrude Stein. In one notable example, her poem "In Between," she writes:

> In between a place and candy is a narrow foot-path that shows more mounting than anything, so much really that a calling meaning a bolster measured a whole thing with that. A virgin a whole virgin is judged made and so between curves and outlines and real seasons and more out glasses and a perfectly unprecedented arrangement between old ladies and mild colds there is no satin wood shining. (Stein and Van Vechten 72)

In much the same way as Al-Quṣaybī used personification to see the desert as a mother of sorts, and thereby showing the extent to which he is willing to resist the concept of modernisation, here Stein is personifying the status of women as simply passing from being seen as one object to be understood as another. There is no room for individual personhood between these steps of the candy, representing early youth, the virgin, whose curves and outlines represent growth into early adulthood, to finally, after some seasons, an arrangement between old ladies. Stein chooses to rebel against this perception of women as objects, as mere trains forced to follow an unchanging and unbending track. The essential difference here between her resistance and that utilised by Al-Quṣaybī in "Oh, Desert," is that in her case, her resistance is not to the onset of modernity, but rather to the lingering ways of the past. She clearly wishes that modernity, and the freedom she associates with it for women, would come here as quickly as possible.

The theme of resistance is also present in Eliot's work. One example of this can be found in the final stanza of his poem "Journey of the Magi."

> All this was a long time ago, I
> remember,
> And I would do it again, but set down
> This set down
> This: were we led all that way for
> Birth or Death? There was a Birth,
> certainly,
> We had evidence and no doubt. I had
> seen birth and death,
> But had thought they were different;
> this Birth was
> Hard and bitter agony for us, like
> Death, our death.
> We returned to our places, these
> Kingdoms,
> But no longer at ease here, in the old
> dispensation,
> With an alien people clutching their
> gods.
> I should be glad of another death. (T.S. Eliot 172)

Eliot shows resistance to that most sacred of things to many, religion. By portraying the Magi, who famously brought gifts to the new-born Christ, as grumpy old men not entirely certain if they had done anything useful at all, and indeed, almost regretful of their actions in the end, Eliot indicates the level of ambivalence he is willing to show to one of the most powerful forces in society. To speak of the family of Jesus as a group of aliens clutching to unknowable gods

is perhaps the most severe form of blasphemy to many, and yet, his spirit of resistance does not allow him to shy away from it.

(ii) *Change*

Since the rise of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to power and wealth, which precipitated the shifts toward industrialisation, cultural shifts have reflected the changes that the country has experienced. Almeflh traces the evolution of Saudi poetry from Neo-classicism from 1902 to the 1940s, to Romanticism of the 1940s to the 1970s, to the Modernist poetry that began in the 1970s and continues after. Different understandings of Modernism can be found across different cultures and regions, and Almelfh notes that everyone attaches their own experiences to it. Badawi, however, argues that an understanding of modern Arabic poetry as falling under the two narrow categories of "modernist" and "classicist" ignores the many different Arab poets and their writings, and that reducing these poets to a mere label is not representative of the diversity and complexity of Middle Eastern thought and culture. Across these many categorisations, the underlying themes in modern Saudi poetry reflect the feelings of fear and anxiety around the rapid changes occurring there.

The canon of Arabic literature is shaped in similar ways as in other countries in an age of industrialisation, impacted by the growth of towns and cities into massive metropolises, a growing divide and complexity of labour and the changing relationships between social classes (Berman 35). Berman argues that a shared perspective of what needs to be known about these communities guides the unique way that it is written in an Arabic context and is influenced by the fragmentation of the social experience in these countries as a result of industrialisation in the twentieth century.

A trend towards moving away from the literature and styles of a traditional Arabic past can be read in the post-industrial Arabic literary works. Gohar argues that in an effort to redefine tradition and break away from the traditional Western perceptions of Saudi culture, Arab writers have sought solace and redemption by reshaping Western forms of writing into "a poetics of resistance and protest" (Gohar 375). This redefinition requires "incorporating Western techniques while emphasising variants and displacements between their nationalist perspective and that of their Western forebears" (Gohar 375). An engagement with the Western world is reflected in this poetry by the similarities in style that result from similarities in experience following an industrial period, but the unique experiences of a shared Arabic history and culture shape expression of modernist thought in ways specific to Arabic writing.

In "Dusting the Colour from Roses," Al-Quṣaybī expresses this fear of change by desperately asking what will happen when "everything" is lost as autumn, a threatening and inevitable time, approaches. Autumn, which can be read here as the time when all reap what they sow and an inevitable death and

rebirth are on the horizon, symbolises the approaching changes that will signal the end of one way of life and the birth of another, although it is a new life that the narrator fears.

> Just think about it, lady,
> What if autumn took over
> Everything
> Leaving nothing but memo-
> rise in the forest
> of green plants on their
> knees?
> Just contemplate autumn
> Draining
> Summer from windows;
> Dusting the colour from roses
> It is autumn, the lord of all seasons,
> Bearing secrets of survival and loss'
> Of death and of resurrect-tion. (Al-Quṣaybī 265)

Al-Quṣaybī's narrative expresses the fear of a loss of "everything" as the new era approaches, and the intensity of that fear for the lost landscapes where "green plants from the forest" will be nothing but memory is illustrated by the use of the words "survival and loss," and "death and resurrection" (Al-Quṣaybī 265).

Themes of alienation and anxiety related to the rapid change during industrialisation resound throughout modernist literature and are apparent throughout the works of Stein and Eliot. North refers to the analysis of the public unconscious as one of the drivers behind these themes and points to criticisms of the Freudian theories that precipitated modernist literature as the catalyst for rising suicide rates (65). In both the United Kingdom and the United States, explorations of the unconscious led to "anxiety about anxiety," driving further analysis of the unconscious and the emotional experience of shifting cultures. As North explains, one of the most influential beliefs of the twentieth century was that "understanding is bounded by specific social practices, that knowledge is not external and fundamental but situated in context. In the 1920s' Western world, shifts related to the feminist movements, a restructuring of culture based on industrialisation, and an understanding of how individual and collective experiences of these rapid changes are impacted drove literature to explore the anxiety that resulted from them.

In "Dusting the Colour from Roses," this anxiety reaches a fever pitch as Al-Quṣaybī expresses his fear of losing "everything." Al-Quṣaybī continues the theme of fear and anxiety prevalent within the text of modernist literature like that written by T.S. Eliot, but places the experience within the context of Saudi history, illustrating the unique experience of industrialisation from his own

experience, which exists outside the art forms of American Industrial Revolution, and into a narrative that centralises the experience of industrialisation in Saudi Arabia.

Stein's work similarly grapples with the concept of change. One notable example of this can be found in her poem "A Long Dress." In this poem, she considers how the forces that shape women according to the desires of men are similar in many ways to the forces that drive the machines that facilitate this process.

> That is the current that makes machinery, that makes it crackle, what is the current that presents a long line and a necessary waist. What is this current. What is the wind, what is it.
>
> Where is the serene length, it is there and a dark place is not a dark place, only a white and red are black, only a yellow and green are blue, a pink is scarlet, a bow is every colour. A line distinguishes it. A line just distinguishes it. (Stein and Van Vechten 43)

While Al-Quṣaybī fears the oncoming autumn, where the consequences of the actions done in the summer become manifested, Stein, instead, fears the cage of expectations. In both cases, the concern is related to the idea of change, and in both cases that change has to do with the process of industrialisation, but yet there is a key distinction here. Al-Quṣaybī sees the onset of death and resurrection, while Stein sees no future at all, other than as a mere ornament. Where Al-Quṣaybī fears a massive aberration from what has always been, Stein fears the acceleration of an already existing evil.

The concept of change is considered in many of T.S. Eliot's works, but one that is worth mentioning here is an excerpt from his poem "Cousin Nancy." In this poem he describes a woman whose ability to cause change seems almost inescapable, and how the world seems to have no other choice but to simply watch it happen, no matter what their feelings on those changes might be.

> Miss Nancy Ellicott
> Strode across the hills and broke them,
> Rode across the hills and broke them—
> The barren New England hills—
> Riding to hounds
> Over the cow-pasture.
>
> Miss Nancy Ellicott smoked
> And danced all the modern dances;
> And her aunts were not quite sure how they felt about it,
> But they knew that it was modern. (T.S. Eliot 87)

Here, the crushing force of modernity seems a juggernaut bearing down upon the ideas of the old. Nancy's ride is so powerful that the very land itself breaks beneath her feet. She acts as she wishes to, with no regard for the rules of society as the older ones might have previously conceived of them. Her concern is for her happiness and pleasure in the moment, and this disconnection from the concerns of others has made her very powerful indeed. Rather than fearing change, as Al-Quṣaybī fears the changing of the seasons, she not only embraces this change, she embodies it.

(iii) *Acceptance*

Finally, the themes of isolation, fear and anxiety in the poetry of Al-Quṣaybī shift to a theme of acceptance in "In the Old Street." The Saudi Prufrockian poet laments the loss of a happier time, a time of love that has passed and will not return. In this poem, the street of the narrator's childhood home represents a past era, and the deep connection to this object is once again expressed through the use of personification. The streets and all the memories they represent will always remain, but the men growing old and gray, are forever changed over the past quarter century. Al-Quṣaybī moves throughout the poem from resisting the coming changes by returning to the place of his childhood, lamenting the loss of the young and hopeful child he once was, to finally accepting that the past is gone and is but a memory to be revisited and forever connected to the person he has become.

> We return
> To the street which long ago
> our home overlooked
> We ask it
> about the years of our love
> and longing glistens on its lips
> we ask it
> about those years when we were young
> and its eye burn with tears. (Al-Quṣaybī 265)

Al-Quṣaybī once again uses personification to connect his current position to his past, creating the street of his childhood to a person who is able to mourn the past and the changes that the years have brought along with him. The intensity of the narrator's feelings toward the street are once again evident through the use of this technique, just as it was in "Oh, Desert." However, the street does not pull him back to a time before the one in which the narrator finds himself, aiding his resistance to change. Instead of symbolising a return to the past, the street mourns the loss of the narrator's past self because there is recognition that the past is now lost to him.

The narrator points to a time period of a quarter of century that changed the narrator in significant ways.

> A quarter of a century or more has
> Passed.
> And that young man has changed
> And changed and changed…
> Then his mind was pure and brilliant.
> And he was a better poet,
> He plunged his dagger into the heart
> of conflicts.
> Until the dagger broke.
> And he sailed his ship fearlessly
> Into the eye of the storm until he drifted
> And was wrecked.
> He roamed the deserts with his pas-
> sionate heart,
> Until that too ossified and
> he returned, dragging the ruins of his
> years behind him. (Al-Quṣaybī 266)

The narrator bemoans the unfairness of memories that remain, for men too changed to ever experience the happiness attached to them again, but sees that loss as permanent as the young man, who is permanently lost in the current time, as periods of great change have been experienced. The fear and anxiety that were expressed in other poems have turned to grief, as the streets and all the memories they represent will always remain, but men like the narrator grow old and gray; they are forever changed over the past quarter century.

In the final lines, Al-Quṣaybī's narrator accepts with sad resignation that happiness of that lost time is nothing but a memory attached to a street and a house.

> Tell me this – why do men grow old,
> Old and gray, while the streets
> remain
> The same as they always were, are
> now, and will be?
> Now at the door I am tempted to ring
> the bell. (Al-Quṣaybī 267)

The description of a shared grief between the narrator and the street symbolises the acceptance of a shared but lost past, although hope remains that the memories will survive even if the young man who experienced them has not.

Acceptance is a theme that runs through the poetry of Stein as well. In a section of her poem "Cézanne" reproduced below, her expression of the idea of acceptance is discussed and expanded upon.

> The Irish lady can say, that to-day is every day. Caesar can say that every day is to-day and they say that every day is as they say. In this way we have a place to stay and he was not met because he was settled to stay. When I said settled I meant settled to stay. When I said settled to stay I meant settled to stay Saturday. In this way a mouth is a mouth. In this way if in as a mouth if in as a mouth where, if in as a mouth where and there. Believe they have water too. Believe they have that water too and blue when you see blue, is all blue precious too, is all that that is precious too is all that and they meant to absolve you. (Stein and Van Vechten 112)

She uses her stream-of-consciousness style, to conjure images of time and incomprehensibility, building on the idea that reality ultimately is what we all collectively agree it to be. If a mouth is a mouth, then we must believe that mouth has water, and that it is therefore precious. These lines represent a departure from much of her work, in that she is not rebelling against the strictures of society, but rather gaining a certain level of acceptance that allows her to see beauty in the nonsense that is modern life.

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the poem ends with a sad acceptance of the protagonist's utter banality. At this point, the protagonist seems to fully understand that his imaginings of himself as some sort of special person to whom others would be attracted are nothing more than the daydreams of a child, and his mind and body has grown far too aged for such frivolities.

> No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
> Am an attendant lord, one that will do
> To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
> Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool
> Deferential, glad to be of use,
> Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
> Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
> At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
> Almost, at times, the Fool.
> I grow old… I grow old…
> I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
> Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
> I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
> I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
> I do not think that they will sing to me. (T.S. Eliot 124)

Much like Al-Quṣaybī's narrator, the protagonist of Eliot's work here mourns and grieves for lost youth, but ultimately accepts the inevitability of the aging process and all that comes with it. While there once was fear in the story, now the theme is sad acceptance. The protagonist understands that there is no possible manner that they might fight against this process, just as Al-Quṣaybī's narrator did. A key distinction between the two characters, however, comes in the framing of this grieving acceptance. Prufrock feels that, as a result of his imaginings of himself as a sort of hero, he only deepened the sense that he was truly nothing more than an object of ridicule, a fool. Al-Quṣaybī's narrator, by contrast, sees himself as a person whose best years are behind him, a person whose age has robbed him of the degree of talent that he once held, and yet, he does not belittle the greatness of who and what he once was. Al-Quṣaybī's narrator celebrates his life in the context of his acceptance of the decline of age, whereas Prufrock merely mourns what might have been.

Conclusion

When placed in the historical context in which they were written, the works of Ghāzī Al-Quṣaybī reflect a society's anxiety and feelings of isolation related to their experiences during the period of industrialisation. While Western authors expressed this through modernist writings by such seminal authors as T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein, Arabic poetry has become a site of resistance to the erasure of their own experiences within a white, dominant narrative of change through modernisation. Al-Quṣaybī uses similar techniques and themes found in the work of Eliot and Stein, as he positions the landscape around him as an integral piece of his narrative in the modern age and connects modern thought to historical patterns of loss and pain. However, Al-Quṣaybī employs these techniques in a way that adapts the modernist style to his cultural needs. Eliot uses descriptive prose to position himself within the landscape of modernisation, while Al-Quṣaybī uses personification to express the intensity of the connection he has with the desert and his memories of the past, both fading in the face of modernisation and change.

The themes and techniques in the work of Al-Quṣaybī can be compared to Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," but the closest comparison can be made in how both express the fears and anxieties of their communities as a result of industrialisation, a time of great change that threatens cultures for whom the landscape has shaped their lives. The connection between Al-Quṣaybī's cultural heritage and the Arabian deserts is expressed all the more deeply for its characterisation as the mother, the land where the Saudi experience is rooted and informs its present understanding of the world. Repeated expressions of fear and loss connected to the loss of the landscape tie the Saudi experience to the literary canon of industrialisation but at the same time use the Western style of

modernism in a way that can fully describe Saudi life and the impact of the cultural time period.

Modernist poetry is primarily the search for the presentation of the perfect image of an idea, one that need not be connected too much to anything else. Eliot, Stein and Al-Quṣaybī each approach this goal in very different ways on the surface, but the themes underneath remain quite similar. In each case, the experience of the authors shaped the ultimate form of their poetic expression as it appeared on the page. Stein's work is very much informed by her status as a woman at a time when the society around her was extremely reluctant to allow her to be much more than an ornament meant to brighten up a room, while Eliot's work shows his difficulty in finding truth while living among the upper class and participating in their learned discussions of the world around them. Each of them is ultimately defined by the parameters of their cultural and personal context. However, while the differences between the contexts of Stein and Eliot are indeed notable, these pale in comparison to the important distinctions between them and Al-Quṣaybī.

As in the Western context, the changes created through industrialisation have significantly impacted individuals' experiences and romantic relationship to their environment and others, altering dominant expectations of the human experience. Al-Quṣaybī can firmly be placed in the category of Arab poets who engage with Western culture through the use of a modernist style but redefines it in order to assert the existence of the experience of industrialisation in literature. By decentring the European experience through the use of personification and connecting the narrative to periods in Arabic history, Al-Quṣaybī asserts his work as positioned within a similar time period but unique to Saudi life and culture. His poetry accounts for a shift in object relations, illustrated through his personification of the landscape of his ancestors, expressing fear and anxiety at its loss. This intensity reflects the widespread industrial change that has reshaped Arabic society as well as the Saudi community and asserts the Saudi experience into the literary narrative around industrialisation.

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