

Badr Chakir Assayab (Morocco)



Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb (1926–1964) is the unrivalled champion of the Arab Free Verse movement. One of the most well-known poets of the twentieth century, he revolutionized modern Arab poetry with his experiments in form, language, and content. Sayyāb introduced political commitment (*iltizām*) as concept into his poetry, interweaving it with myths of martyrdom and self-sacrifice in search for a better society. Coupling political commitment with a new form, radically breaking with the traditional classical forms and tropes, Sayyāb succeeded in liberating Arab poetry from the restraints and restrictions of its literary conventions. Even though later on it turned out that Sayyāb's *Weltanschauung* had been too naïve, he is the undisputed master of a new lyrical diction and sensitivity that paved the way for the following generations.

Song of the Rain

Your eyes are two palm tree forests in early light,
Or two balconies from which the moonlight recedes
When they smile, your eyes, the vines put forth their eaves,
And lights dance .. like moons in a river
Rippled by the blade of an oar at break of day;
As if stars were throbbing in the depths of them . . .

And they drown in a mist of sorrow translucent
Like the sea stroked by the hand of nightfall;
The warmth of winter is in it, and the shudder of autumn,
And death and birth, darkness and light;
A sobbing flares up to tremble in my soul
And a savage elation embracing the sky,
Frenzy of a child frightened by the moon.

It is as if archways of mist drank the clouds
And drop by drop dissolved in the rain ...
As if children snickered in the vineyard bowers,
The song of the rain rippled the silence of birds in the trees

Rain song
Drop,
Drop,
Drop,

Evening yawned, from low clouds
Heavy tears are streaming still.
It is as if a child before sleep were rambling on
About his mother (a year ago he went to wake her, did not
find her; Then when he kept on asking, he was told:
"After tomorrow, she'll come back again"
That she must come back again,
Yet his playmates whisper that she is there
In the hillside, sleeping her death for ever,
Eating the earth around her, drinking the rain;
As if a forlorn fisherman gathering nets
Cursed the waters and fate
And scattered a song at moonset,
Drip, drop, the rain
Drip, drop, the rain

Do you know what sorrow the rain can inspire?
And how gutters weep when it pours down?
Do you know how lost a solitary person feels in the rain?
Endless,- like spilt blood, like hungry people, like love, like
children, like the dead,-
Endless the rain.

Your two eyes take me wandering with the rain,
Lightning's from across the Gulf sweep
The shores of Iraq
With stars and shells,
As if a dawn were about to break from them
But night pulls over them a coverlet of blood.

Song of the Rain

I cry out to the Gulf: "O Gulf,
Giver of pearls, shells and death!"
And the echo replies, as if lamenting:
"O Gulf: Giver of shells and death".

I can almost hear Iraq husbanding the thunder,
Storing lightning in the mountains and plains,
So that if the seal were broken by men
The winds would leave in the valley not a trace of Thamud.

I can almost hear the palmtrees drinking the rain,
Hear the villages moaning and emigrants
With oar and sail fighting

The Gulf winds of storm and thunder, singing
Rain.. rain..rain (Drip, drop, the rain)
And there is hunger in Iraq,
The harvest time scatters the grain in-it,
That crows and locusts may gobble their fill,
Granaries and stones grind on and on,
Mills turn in the fields, with humans turning
Drip, drop, the rain
Drip, Drop, Drop

How many tears we shed when came the night for
leaving
We made the rain an excuse, not wishing to be blamed
Drip, drop, the rain
Drip, drop, the rain
Since we had been children, the sky
Would be clouded in wintertime,
And down would pour the rain,
And every year when earth turned green the hunger
struck us.
Not a year has passed without hunger in Iraq.
Rain
Drip, drop, the rain
Drip, drop

In every drop of rain
A red or yellow color buds from the seeds of flowers.
Every tear wept by the hungry and naked people
And every spilt drop of slaves' blood
Is a smile aimed at a new dawn,
A nipple turning rosy in an infant's lips
In the young world of tomorrow, bringer of life.
Drip.....
Drop.....
(the rain . . .In the rain)
Iraq will blossom one day

Song of the Rain

I cry out to the Gulf: "O Gulf:

Giver of pearls, shells and death!"

The echo replies as if lamenting:

'O Gulf: Giver of shells and death."

And across the sands from among its lavish gifts

The Gulf scatters fuming froth and shells

And the skeletons of miserable drowned emigrants

Who drank death forever

From the depths of the Gulf, from the ground of its silence,

And in Iraq a thousand serpents drink the nectar

From a flower the Euphrates has nourished with dew.

I hear the echo

Ringling in the Gulf:

Rain . . .

Drip, drop, the rain . . .

Drip, drop.

In every drop of rain

A red or yellow color buds from the seeds of flowers.

Every tear wept by the hungry and naked people

And every spilt drop of slaves' blood

Is a smile aimed at a new dawn,

A nipple turning rosy in an infant's lips

In the young world of tomorrow, bringer of life.

And still the rain pours down.