



## Research Article

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# The Image of the City in the Poetry of Two European Poets and Two Arab Poets

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## Abstract

*The city as a physical entity engages an outstanding position in world literature. Some writers show its admirable and gorgeous sides. The majority of writers, however, see the city as the place of hard times, difficult life and endless commitments. The four poets chosen in this study (T.S.Eliot, Frederico Lorca, Abdul Wahab Al Bayati and Ahmad Abdul Mu'ti Hijazi ) belong to the second category. These four modernist poets have highlighted its negative psychological and mental impacts on the its dwellers and the ecosystem as a whole. The purpose of the study centers on highlighting the negative moral, psychological and emotional impacts the city leaves on creative writers, particularly poets. Indeed they always find a sharp contrast between their hunches and imaginings on the one hand and the depressing reality of the city's mode of living on the other. As regards the methodology used throughout the study, it foregrounds the thematic aspects of the poems selected with a particular reference to the representations of the city and its dull world. A close reading of these poems and the biographical information will be the guiding line. Some of the parallels and differences between the poets in question are included. The main findings and conclusions of the study can be summarized in the following points. The city is the center of civilization and emblem of national pride of all countries. However, it has many disadvantages such as the dwellers' keen sense of spiritual loss, alienation and displacement, especially among hypersensitive people like poets. Many sociologists, psychologists and philosophers have investigated this issue of the city's frustrating life. The poets' contribution to this topic can be considered as a fresh version that readers look forward to and are enthusiastic about.*

**Keywords:** city, modernist, poetry, discontent, exile, alienation

*Hell is mild;  
And piteous matched with that accursed wild;  
A large black sign was on her breast that bowed  
A broad black band ran down her snow-white shroud'  
James Thomson, City of Dreadful Night*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The depiction of the city in literature is a very controversial and timeless topic. In fact critics and scholars find in the city (at least before the present technological revolution) as the only ideal place for practicing and publishing their craft. Historically speaking, ancient epics did not emphasize the

topographical aspects of their countries such as plains or highlands of the countryside in the same way they highlighted huge ancient cities like Rome, Ithaca, Athens or Babylon. It was in the greatness of such cities and their monuments, palaces and temples that manifestations of pride and glory were shown in literature. One example in this regard will do. In the Sumerian /Babylonian epic, *Gilgamesh* (2000 BC), King Gilgamesh is described "as two thirds divine and one-third human, extraordinary in strength and beauty. However, he oppresses the young men and women of Uruk in some way, and the gods respond by creating a counterpart to him: Enkidu" (Kovacs, 1989:XIX). The fight between the two men eventually leads to a very intense and deep friendship which only Enkidu's death could disrupt. From this moment on, Gilgamesh will devote his efforts to the search for the ever-lasting life. Failing in this task, he concentrates on erecting the great walls of his city, Uruk, as the only power that resists death and annihilation. So in this oldest epic in the world, the city can function as a compensation for or counterforce against the annihilating powers of death. If the grandeur of the city is considered to be the sole counterpoint of death and destruction, a poet like William Wordsworth can view the urban world of London and its fine architectural achievements as a symbol of national greatness. In his poem 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge' (1802), he has the following to say, "The City now doth like a garment, wear/ The beauty of the morning; silent, brave,/Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie,/ Open unto the fields, and to the sky'(Allison,1983:550)

What has been mentioned above is not always the norm in the literature written about the city and its depressing life. The majority of scholars, sociologists and psychologists always tend to highlight the dark sides of its life. It is seen as the center of class differences, exploitation, discrimination, injustice and forced labor. The German philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) identifies minutely the real demerit of the city in his deep observation that "Cut off from a source of nourishment beyond itself, the city became a closed system, entropic, which led to the decline of civilization: instinct was sacrificed to reason, myth to scientific theories, barter and exchange to abstract theories of money" (Lehan, 1998:6).

In the aftermath of the industrial revolution the city has become the hub of these activities and consequently proved to be the first to pay for the drastic consequences of that crucial factor. Sociologists have drawn our attention to the impacts of the city on public health and psychological life. Indeed the demarcation line between what is before and after the industrial revolution signals a terrifying and unbridgeable chasm. The attitude of the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) is memorable as his decadent reaction might be partially attributed to the spiritual dilemma of the urban world. Walter Benjamin believes that "for Baudelaire the delight of the city-dweller is not so much love at first sight as love at last sight. This is the city seen not from God's eye-view but from the streets, gutters. (Lewis,2007:6). Gradually people began to feel keenly the pressures imposed by the big cities such as the high rates of pollution, processed foods, keen competition for jobs or money and lack of privacy. The problem of alienation and isolation or even depression is a recurrent and actually inescapable question here. However, the city raises a host of challenges and pressures that have to be accepted if one chooses or is forced to live in the urban world. The leading Austrian psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) wrote his pioneering book, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930) which analyses the unenviable situation of the individual in the urban world and its multiple troubles. This is related to the lack of security, pollution, and rates of crime. A good example of this W.H.Auden's poem 'The Unknown Citizen'(1940) which is a representative work that for all its political implications, sums up the predicament of the individual in the sophisticated urban environment. Certainly there are endless duties and responsibilities to be fulfilled in order to live a meaningless and obscure existence. In fact the individual as shown in Auden's poem appears stripped of his essential human needs:

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be/  
One against whom there was no official complaint,  
/And all the reports on his conduct agree/  
That in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word,  
he was a saint/  
For in everything he did he served the Great Community.  
/except for the war till the day he retired/  
He worked in a factory and now got fired/  
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc. (Auden ,1976:201).

This poem comments in an ironic and sarcastic way on the predicament of the individual in the insoluble maze of the urban world. Out of these initial arguments, it becomes obvious that the present study is concerned with showing how poets deal with their cities and how they depict the different manifestations of its sinister world. Or at least that is what they come up with through their perception of this world. When the poems are read in the light of the biographical information of their authors, it transpires that the striking images of anguish and depression are the outcome of the poets' own predicaments in addition to the innate troubles of the urban environment. In brief, this is a work devoted to discussing the problematic relation between the poet and his urban world and its outcomes. The negative impression about the city that all four poets share is the crux of the matter here. The reason behind their dissatisfaction is two-sided: the first is objective in that all cities worldwide have many problems and difficulties. The second is subjective: all the writers discussed here were poets who found themselves in places other than their own homelands. Eliot is an American talking about his first London experiences. The Spanish Lorca could not bring himself to accept the sleepless New York life style, The Iraqi Al Bayati did his best to adapt to his Spanish experiences and overcome the mounting longing for his simple life in his homeland. Hijazi's case is slightly different in that he had his first experience of alienation when he left his village and visited Cairo for the first time. Given all this, it is no surprise to find him viewing even his Parisian experience from the same perspective of the other three poets, although it is certainly different.

## 1.2 Review of Literature

The following are some of the works that have dealt with how scientists and sociologists have presented their visions and assessment of the city life and the challenges it poses to the dwellers. Also the list includes critical views about the poets studied here which shed some illuminating light on the poets in question.

Baker (1972) recalls Hemingway's recollections of Paris which he calls 'A Movable Feast' as the place of beauty, pleasure, and culture. No doubt this view of a certain quarter in Paris is not the rule. Montparnasse quarter is exemplary in providing the sensual pleasures as well the cultural ones which Hemingway was looking for. It is the hub of coffee shops, pubs, restaurants and grand shopping centers. The presence of Sylvia Beach and her Shakespeare and Company opened Hemingway's eyes to "Dostoevsky, Tolstoi, Turgenev, Stendhal, and Flaubert as well as Henry James and James Joyce. Miss Beach had just published the Paris edition of *Ulysses* which Hemingway described as "a most goddamn wonderful book" (p.10).

Anderson (1984) finds that Lorca's trip to New York was not without advantages, for all what he said about the city and its intimidating environment. Surely it was "a disturbing experience". However, it had its own advantages which he will reap in the years to come as it was "extraordinarily productive. He was able to revise the drafts of his plays"(p.12) Obviously Lorca's dissatisfaction with the customs of people in New York and their mode of living provided him with much time to double-check his drafts and polish them in the best possible way.

Stainton (1986) refers to the invaluable role of the town Granada played in establishing Lorca's creative life and final stature as one of the distinguished writers of the twentieth century. By implication, the poet's own statement gives the lie to the recurrent claims that Lorca is wholeheartedly against any urban life and what it suggests. Lorca is quoted here to be addressing a crowd that, "If by the grace of God I became famous, half of that fame will belong to Granada, which formed me whom I am: a poet from birth and unable to help it"(n.p.). Granada, after all, is not a village: it is a town and as such it must stir the same reactions toward other cities. But his love for his boyhood place prevents him even from posing even a single reservation against it.

Whyt (1988) raises the question of crowded places in the city and the psychological and mental effects it leaves on the dwellers. As he argues, all this inevitably leads to the conclusion that it is "the main cause of neurotic and suicidal behavior." (p.4) Obviously this is an empirical study of the pressures which the city exerts on its dwellers to the extent that some collapse psychologically and

mentally because they lack the stamina to encounter such strains. Thus they might commit suicide as the only resort from these painful circumstances.

Baydhoon (1993) answers the question whether Al Bayati belongs to the urban life or the rustic one. It seems that his position is somewhere in between. Although he was not born in a village as in the case of Al Sayyab for example, he liked the countryside and might have many strolls in its calm place. The two poets agreed with the poet Mahmoud Darwish that the city is basically false and they share him his hatred of it. (p.14).

Singh, (2001) finds that Eliot in his poems "was desperately searching for some direction, some abiding place of peace and faith"(p.8) Actually Eliot's problem is not simply the dissatisfaction with the urban life, Eliot's problem is cultural, social, and spiritual.

Moussiopoulos (2003) raises a health problem the modern city causes and consequently people have to come to terms with: it is the air pollution and its far-reaching impacts on people's general health. It has been found out that " the aerosols, especially the particles of small diameter that are associated with epidemiological effects and respiratory diseases"(p.9). Unlike life in the simple villages and distant frontiers, the cities all over the world suffer from this perennial and exacerbating problem in various degrees.

Kaplan (2006) highlights T. S. Eliot's justifiable claims about the inseparable ties between the natural reality and the support of culture and faith in the divine. If this very important link is not observed, as he rightly contends, the inescapable outcome is "only the place where Prufrock, Gerontion, Sweeney, and Bleistein make their lives"(p.2). This point is found in the attitudes and judgments of the figures and personae in his plays and poems and in his critical theories.

Vizcaya & Doubleday & (2008) give sweeping generalizations concerning Lorca's basic attitude toward the city and its dwellers which is summed up in the conclusion that Garcia Lorca "writes a manifesto against the city and industrial civilization" (p.257).

Adonis (2009) discusses the modern Arab poet's predicament that lies in the incompatibility between his need for innovation and updating his tools and at the same time there is an unbridgeable chasm between him and the other. Moreover, social development and overpopulation in the city weakened the close relationship between the poet and the other and with nature (p.18).

Kinanah(2013) argues that Al Bayati is a good example of the exiled poet whose life is full of bitterness and anguish. Such is the suffering and deprivation of writers like Al Bayati that even in their death they have to choose other countries like Syria to be the place of their burial. Al Bayati and Abdul Rahman Muneef are glaring examples of that (p.11).

Stainton(2013) sheds some illuminating light on Lorca, the man and his phobias and timidity which colored his perspective in dealing with this cosmopolitan city (New York) and its vibrant and challenging life. Lorca's morbidity is manifested in his reactions and attitudes in daily life, " Water, automobiles, traffic, and street crossings all loom large and ominous in his imagination"(p.547), as Stainton reminds us.

### 1.3 Methodology

As suggested by its title, the present study is not experimental as it is based on selected poems and critical excerpts provided by poets and scholars in this field. These two items constitute the main tools to be used in finding out certain parallels, similarities or differences among these poets in handling the question of the city in their poetic writings. The other subsidiary elements that help in implementing this task include diaries and memoirs of these poets, biographies, letters, recollections and interviews. The purpose behind making use of all these tools is to reach certain plausible and defensible conclusions which would be more or less objective. The difficulty one faces in this task rests in the poets' own changeable attitudes toward their cities which are commensurable with their own circumstances and experiences. Therefore it is not possible to give decisive and reliable judgments about the question of the city's treatment in the writings of these poets. It remains essentially approximate and tentative.

What distinguishes the present attempt from others in this field is the researcher's emphasis on the view that all the judgments and impressions in these poems are not absolute. No doubt they do diagnose certain serious problems and difficulties in the urban life. But such views cannot be taken for granted simply because they do not draw upon a clear-cut criterion or method in dealing with this thorny problem. A good example of this is Lorca's presentation of New York in his volume of verse. He mingles the factual and surrealist elements to the degree that he nearly fictionalizes his topic, so to speak.

#### 1.4 Results and Findings

1. All the poets discussed in the article (Eliot, Lorca, Al Bayati and Hijazi) see the city as the locus of suffering, isolation, frustration, and failure. This debatable impression that brings all these poets together is the outcome of harsh biographical and experiential situations that have driven the poets in question to assume such unsympathetic and sometimes pessimistic attitudes and judgments.
2. All views of the poets discussed in this article share one invariable and hostile attitude towards cities and their subversive role in the lives of the dwellers.
3. The cities all over the world have common features which often run counter to people's expectations such as overpopulation, lack of security on the roads, increasing rates of car accidents, pollution, the high cost of living and all types of crimes.
4. A close reading of these poems, in the light of their authors' scruples and phobias and critical analyses, shows that the city appears to be mostly a sort of peg, as it were, to hang on the poets' frustrations and setbacks. Many people who are exempt from this hypersensitivity manifested in these poets' reactions might find in the city an irresistible and attractive place for fun and enlightenment. A good example of this is the American novelist Ernest Hemingway who finds in Spanish places like Madrid or Pamplona much to enjoy. Such views stultify or at least detract the judgments and assumptions of the poets in the present study simply because people of Hemingway's type do not have impulsive or preconceived attitudes regarding the city and its dwellers.
5. Undoubtedly, all the works cited in the review of literature section highlight the disadvantages of the city life and the types of challenges it poses to its dwellers. Having said that one need to point out the other side of the coin. As the present article is concerned with the subtle relationship between poets and the city, it is necessary to refer to the position of the writer or artist in the city and see what inflictions or rewards he/she might face or receive. No doubt the cultural life in the city helps in encouraging writers to exercise and manifest all their potential powers in writing or art. The presence of literary salons in Britain, for example, in the first decades of the twentieth century (Bloomsbury) is just one of the services the city offers to writers. The same holds true to Gertrude Stein's salon which "hoisted Picasso, Matisse, Cocteau, Hemingway and T. S. Eliot" (Fields, 2012:189). Certainly there are other facilities suitable for writers which can only be found in the city, such as publishing houses, conference halls, book fairs, periodicals, theatres and cinemas, etc. In fact, the city can be an inexhaustible source of inspiration and encouragement for writers to innovate and renew their tools used in the literary work, a thing which we cannot do outside its borders.

## 2. The Main Argument

### 2.1 T.S.Eliot 'The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock'

The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock' (1917) and 'The Waste Land' (1922) by the Anglo-American T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) are inseparable from the urban life that has degenerated in his view. The futility of

the human enterprise is actually part and parcel of the city and its ravages. Before discussing the Love Song of 'J. Alfred Prufrock', it is necessary to refer to the cultural influences that eventually endowed his poetry with its characteristic touch. One of these is the profound influence of the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, especially his major fiction and its foregrounding of the urban world. 'They are Crime and Punishment, The Idiot and Brothers Karamazov' (Barzinji, 2012:4).

The other equally formidable influence on Eliot's intellectual orientation is James Thomson's poem, 'City of Dreadful Night'(1874) which forms the epigraph of the present study. Eliot admitted " the strong influence Thomson's poem had had on him when he began to write' as the poet Edwin Morgan asserts in his introduction (2001:7).In fact, one of Eliot's early poems, 'Preludes' has some affinities with Thomson's poem.The speaker in the poem sees the city as a dull and dismal place,' And when all the world came back/And the light crept up between the shutters/ And you heard the sparrows in the gutters/And you had such a vision of the street/As the street hardly understands.(3:7-11).In his illuminating comment on this poem, Oliver Tearle has his own interpretation of this when he states that" The street is corrupted, 'blackened' by pollution and industrialization. Also black in a more abstract, metaphysical way"(Tearle, 2016:n.p)). .

'The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock' is one of Eliot's early but important works. It is true the city according to Eliot is one of the pillars of human achievements and pride. It offered him prestige and the Nobel Prize. Nevertheless, it has its own gloomy sides. Eliot's images of the city whether in this poem or in all his works highlight the dark and ignoble sides of human experience. It is a mode of life he neither likes, nor does he approve of. He begins the poem by quoting an extract from his favorite Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) which refers to Guido as he lives eternally in inferno. This intertextuality helps Eliot to present the city as the corollary of hell. In contrast to 'The Waste Land', this poem does not draw on London solely. Here the poem as suggested by Eliot's scholars " is made up of Eliot's experiences in big cities—St.Louis, Boston, Paris and even London (which he visited in April, 1911)" (Miller, 2003:156). The attitude informing the entire poem is the conformity of the speaker, Prufrock. He succumbs to the allurements of his urban world on his way to the proposal of marriage that never happens. The impediments in Prufrock's way are beyond his power and will. Thus his plans of declaring his love and dream of marriage are continuously disrupted.. The poem has a very striking start thanks to the way the thoughts of the speaker are interiorized. The urban places chosen here are indicative of solipsism and agony:

*Let us go you and I  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
Let us go, through half-deserted streets;  
(Abrams, 1986: 2174).*

The first line refers to Prufrock's abortive dream of love and marriage while the second one detracts all this by showing the dark shadows of the city where there is no room for such groundless and impermissible hunches. The line "like a patient etherized upon a table" is a reminder of the painful and inescapable facts of life, and actually subverts his fancies. Also the deserted streets refer to emptiness and depression, which is the common and prevailing trait in the poem. Out of this urban backdrop, the reader is made aware of the state of unease marking Prufrock's standpoint. He exemplifies all the negative impacts the city unconsciously exercises on the individual and how he gradually loses his self-confidence in this suffocating world. The details of the city indicate that. For example, the smoky fog that spreads against the window panes represents the state of fogginess that actually envelops his life and daily activities. Also the soot coming out of the chimneys refers to the polluted atmosphere of the city and its stagnant pools appear as an inevitable presence:

*The yellow fog that rubs its back  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,*

*Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,(p.2174).*

The rising fog of the city stirs images of inertia and boredom in the speaker's psyche while the surrounding environs can only offer soot and drain. This represents a glaring paradox to a situation of romance as suggested by the title. The poem shows Prufrock's self-encounter, especially when he talks about the affinity between him and that secondary and clownish figure in Shakespeare's famous tragedy, *Hamlet*. It is Polonius with whom Prufrock identifies himself, "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"(p.2177).The details from Shakespeare's play comment on Prufrock himself and his self-recognition as an individual smarting under the pressures of a severe urban world. As the poem proceeds, Prufrock dissects his desires and even his physical status (gradually getting bald and thin and his appearance is no longer attractive "I grow old... I grow old.../I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled". Such worries remind the reader that part of the inferiority Prufrock feels toward others might be attributed to his harsh environment. He imagines the reactions of people at the party when seeing him" they will say 'how his hair is growing thin." Also they will say "But how his arms and legs are thin! " It is not only the detracting attitudes and jeering of others that irritate him. He even uses animalistic images to describe his own status " And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin/When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall' (p.2175) Given all the frustrations stirred by this hostile milieu, it is no surprise to find him choose a suitable ending for his position in this hostile and unfriendly place," we drown" (p.2117). In the painful reality presented by the poem, fantasy and make-believe become the only feasible tools before the frustrated speaker in the poem.

Eliot is a writer of the urban life whose details he elaborates skillfully. Though he deliberately keeps himself away from the scene of Prufrock's dilemma, the persona in this poem has something of Eliot himself especially his erudition and self-introspection. The poem is not thoroughly objective as Eliot wants it to be. Even in his masterpiece, 'The Waste Land' (1922) he cannot keep himself completely from the scene as felt in line 182 of the poem when he confesses, "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept"(Alexander,1983:1005). All this leads to the conclusion that the depressing image of the city in Eliot's first poem is a reminder that it is actually tinged with the poet's own frustrations and religious instability, a point which enhances the negative image of this city and its dwellers.

## 2.2 Federico Garcia Lorca and the City

In contrast to Eliot's central figure (Prufrock), all the details of *A Poet in New York* (1940) by the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936) are overtly subjective, if not out rightly confessional. One of his scholars finds that the poems of the book "reveal a sudden, radical estrangement of the poet from his universe" (Craig,1977:2). Lorca's attachment to his birthplace environment (Granada) is genuine and deep-rooted. It will become more evident when compared to his future visit to New York. What he will see there is to be judged in the light of his childhood experiences in Granada. The difference between the intimidating New York in Lorca's perspective and refreshing Granada represents the wide gap between vibrant society and the static one which Lorca is unable to take into account. In a letter addressed to his friend Adriano Del Valle, he expounds the admiration and love he holds for that environment. It is similar to William Wordsworth's love of his Lake District, "I've contemplated the blue sky too much ...along the roads of the Granada Plain, I thought of no one, not even of myself" (Gershator 1983:10).This nostalgic experience of his childhood and boyhood will be the touchstone by which he will judge any future experience. That experience of New York life and its tumultuous world is indeed a landmark in the poet's entire oeuvre . One of the unfortunate situations that coincided with his visit and intensified Lorca's fear and disillusionment is , of course, the Great Wall Crash in 1929. Lorca was the eye-witness of its devastating effects on people and life in general.

Such a thing would not happen in the countryside where the easy-going mode of life prevails. In 'Dance of Death' he refers to intolerable impacts of this horrifying event on people:

*The Stock Exchange shall become  
pyramid of moss. a  
Jungle vines shall come in  
behind the rifles  
all quickly (p.47)*

At a certain moment, Lorca appears to be adopting the voice of the pathetic victims of this merciless material world:

*The mask will dance among columns of blood and myself,  
Among hurricanes of gold and the groans of the unemployed  
who will howl in the dead of night, for your dark time.(p.49)*

The love-hate duality that marks his experience in New York will inform the poet's emotional and poetic reactions toward the New Yorker mode of life. It has been expressly summed up in the following:

In New York, you will see the city both as a marvel and a horror. American culture, and jazz will enchant you, New York's economic and social inequality will terrify you. You will be on the streets when the October stock collapse of 1929 goes down. (Peters,2016:16)

This ambivalent picture which contains the thing and its antithesis epitomizes Lorca's mixture of contradictory feelings and misgivings as regards this intimidating city (New York). The poet feels that his poetic description might not be enough for reflecting his own shock, if not his trauma. He quotes accurate statistics about the numbers of animals slaughtered in New York, "Every day in New York, they slaughter four million ducks/five million pigs/a million cows/a million lambs/and two million roosters/that have the sky in splinters"(Lorca, 1986:XV).Undoubtedly, these official figures reflect the poet's intention of authenticating such normal acts. All cities in the world have such practices. But for a man of Lorca's mood and sensitivity, this act is harrowing and outrageous. However, the validity or invalidity of this argument remains tentative, depending on how the reader perceives this dividing fact.

In contrast to many, the only place which he enjoys in New York is Harlem Quarter for its spontaneous, natural mode of living, work and daily routines. Indeed, his admiration of this corner contrasts vividly with the material world of the metropolis ;

*The King of Harlem  
You Harlem! You Harlem! You Harlem!  
No anguish to equal your thwarted vermilion,  
Your-blood-shaken-,darkened eclipsed garnet ferocity,  
dead and dumb in the shadows (p.31)*

Generally, this is a book whereby Lorca depicts his apprehensions of New York's ghastly world that does not even observe what is human and instinctive (sleep). Of course, he means by that its dwellers have turned the normal course of life upside down. It is the night life that is celebrated in this city and many other cities in the world. Such a move disturbs the cosmic system of plants and other creatures as the poem forcibly argues. Even the dead are not exempt from this rash and irresponsible conduct and practices of the New Yorkers if we take Lorca's words for granted:

*In the sky there is nobody asleep  
Nobody, nobody.  
Nobody is asleep.(lines 1-3)*



The repetition of the man-made sleeplessness and its blatant violation of universal norms are suggestive of the grossness of the human folly and conceit:

*The creatures of the moon sniff and prowl  
about their cabins.  
the living iguanas will come and bite  
The men who do not dream  
and the man who rushes out with his spirit  
broken will meet on the street corner  
the unbelievable alligator quiet  
beneath the tender protest of the stars.(lines 2-9)*

New York's urban world, according to Lorca's judgment, succeeds in intensifying the meaninglessness of life and its absurdity. The isolation of individuals is a natural outcome of a mechanical and utilitarian web of relations:

*Kisses tie our mouths  
in a thicket of new veins  
And whoever his pain pains  
feel that pain forever  
and whoever is afraid of death will  
carry it on his shoulders.(Lines 18-23)*

There is a preaching tone here to substantiate the poet's argument against violating the cosmic and natural courses of life, The enforced sleeplessness in a city that imposes on its dwellers a mode of living incompatible with nature and man's innate disposition is not acceptable for a man of Lorca's type. It is summed up in the following words cited from the foreword of the book:

He felt murdered by the sky. He was stunned by the vastness and scale of the city , which was for him a place when during the day people were mired in mindless games, fruitless labors, and at dusk poured into the streets. He was disoriented and carried off by the terrible rootlessness of the crowd.(Lorca, 1986:XI-XII)

Lorca succeeded in paying homage to this great city in its grandeur and dark and mechanical life. His volume of verse shows an ambivalent attitude toward this city and its people, even though his castigation overshadows affection in dealing with this great city.

### 2.3 Abdul Wahab Al Bayati : The City as an Exile

Abdul Wahab Al Bayati (1926-1999) is a leading modernist in Iraqi poetry. From 1954 onwards, he worked in journalism, in particular the leftist Al Thaqafa Al Jadida (New Culture) .Soon it was closed by the authorities and Al Bayati was arrested. Since then he started the stage of wandering in different countries like Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Soviet Union and Spain..In Madrid he lived for more than ten years and wrote a volume of verse as homage to Spanish culture and literature. In his life of instability and homelessness, it is expected that he would tackle the city life from his own embittered viewpoint. Indeed this topic occupies a big space in his oeuvre. His anger is directed against the city in his native country and abroad. Curiously, Al Bayati was born in the suburbs of the capital of Iraq, but in mood and perception he has adverse reactions toward the city and its clamorous life. If W.H.Auden wrote his half-serious poem, 'A Letter to Lord Byron' (1937), Al Bayati did the same when he wrote in 1963 a poem addressing the great classical poet Al Mutanabbi(915-965). Al Bayati used this iconic figure in poetry as a mask for finding vent for his own long-repressed feelings of pain and resentment. Here he condemned both place and people in very shocking terms:

لتحترق نوافذ المدينة / ولتبدل الحروف والاوراق  
ولتناكل الضباع هذي الجيف اللعينة / وليحتضر نسرك فوق الرماد

فانت بحار بلا سفينة (Albayati,1972, Vol.1,:25) (Lines 1-5)

May the windows of cities burn  
May the letters and leaves wither  
May the hyenas devour these damned cadavers  
May your falcon die on the ashes of the mountain  
For you are a sailor without a ship.

This is a long monologue in which the poet discloses his inner pain and homelessness. He wishes that all cities perish as they are associated in his confused mind with archetypal wretchedness and alienation. No doubt Al Mutanabbi becomes the direct incentive for lacerating the present poet's national wounds and defeats. The contemporary poems are "orphaned" as the ancestors like Al Mutanabbi remain only in name: in actuality everything is stripped of its real meaning. This is a poem that brings together the personal and impersonal, the individual and collective in one synthesis revolving around the dismissive and alienating urban world.. Iraqi/ Dutch critic Yaseen Al Naseer finds that cities in Al Bayati's poetry "constitute a daily practice and stations where trains and times never arrive. Indeed they are like lighthouses in ever-widening seas"(1995:97) .

It has already been pointed out that the negative images of the cities in the poetry of Eliot and Lorca stem from certain religious and philosophical or cultural grounds. In Al Bayati's case, the driving force behind the outright castigation of the city is essentially political. Ideologically different from the political authorities in his country (Iraq), Al Bayati embarked on a life of exile. Indeed the title of one of his poems ' A Traveller without Suitcases' is highly suggestive as it refers to the poet's misfortune of continuous exile and estrangement:

مسافر بلا قناب / سابقى دائما في لا مكان /  
الضوء يصدمني وضوء المدينة من بعيد  
نفس الحياة يعيد رصف طريقها /  
سام نيد (Al Bayati 1972, Vol.2:157) (lines 23-26)

A Traveller without Suitcases  
I will always remain out of place  
The light dazzles me and the light of the city is from afar  
The same life whose course is realigned by  
new boredom.

The poet is actually writing his own dirge on his unfortunate destiny in the urban world. The poem reeks of rottenness and boredom. Unlike the typically romantic poet, Al-Sayyab, Al Bayati's name is often associated with the city. However, his images of the city in his country or abroad revolve around its painful and distracting sides. In the following poem, 'Cities Sleep without Dawn' Al Bayati addresses his city as a lifeless entity affecting human lives and destinies. The city, as the poem tries to show, "deals with the civilization of modern industry, scientific revolution and awesome technology that have probed the secrets of the universe and man"(Mubarak2011:46). This is one reason for its being the cause of man's continuous scruples and worries:

مدن بلا فجر يغطيها الجليد / هجرت كنائسها عصفير الربيع  
فلمن تغني؟ المقاهي اوصدت ابوابها  
ولمن تصلي؟ ايها القلب الصديق  
فلمن تغني؟ المقاهي اوصدت ابوابها  
والمركبات عادت بلا خيل يغطيها الصقيع (Al Bayati,1972, Vol.1,:25-26) (lines1-7)

Cities without dawn are snow-capped  
Spring swallows have forsaken their churches  
To whom do you sing? Coffee shops have closed their doors.  
To whom do you pray? O Broken heart,  
when the night died away  
and the carriages  
returned without horses, covered with frost,

The tragic sense permeates every line of this poem. The poet feels that part of his suffering is linked to the dull and indifferent mode of living prevalent in modern cities where the individual's isolation and helplessness is perfect. Actually the poem hinges on a number of images such as birds that have deserted the churches, the whining silence whose powerful impact can only be felt when the place is deserted and lonely. In short it is a world falling apart. However, it is worthwhile to note the fact that his sense of revulsion and antipathy which surmounts whenever the subject of the city is raised, essentially springs from his own psychological and emotional experiences. The city has become in his perspective mind concomitant with exile and homelessness which in his invariable lot. Indeed his poem on Damascus, which has become the place where his remains is kept, is replete with love and gratitude as this city has offered him the opportunity to be lying eternally beside the Adalusian Muslim mystic poet, scholar and philosopher, Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240). The title of the poem is interesting: 'Love under the Rain' (1985) which is highly lyrical and devoid of the customary tone of bitterness and resentment:

عددت الى دمشق بعد الموت  
امل قاسيون  
اعيد ه اليها  
مقبلا يديها  
فهذه الارض التي تحدها السماء والصحراء  
والبحر والسماء  
طاردتني امواتها واغلقوا علي با المقبره  
( Al Bayati, 1985, Vol.2, p.18)

*I have back to Damascus after death  
Holding Mount Qasioun  
And bringing it back to her.  
Kissing her hands  
As this land is bordered by the sky and desert,  
the sea and sky.  
Her dead people chased me and closed the cemetery gate on me.*

This is a poem of love , the genuine love of one who sees the city of Damascus as the last haven to which he is heading once and for all. It provides him with the rare opportunity of lying next to the great mystic Arab philosopher Ibn al-Arabi. Here he will have his eternal rest after a long series of homelessness and wanderings in foreign cities.

#### 2.4 Ahmed Abdul Muti Hijazi 's View of the City

The Egyptian poet Ahmed Abdul Muti Hijazi (b.1935) was born in Tela, Manoufiyah in the south of Egypt. He is one of the pioneers of Arabic modernist poetry. He worked in many cultural institutions, including the reputed Al Ahram newspaper. He was the editor-in-chief of Ibdā ? (Creativity) Journal for many years. Compared to Al Bayati, Hijazi is a typical provincial poet whose encounter with the city (Cairo) for the first time represented a kind of cultural shock from which he could not recover. Indeed in his cautionary poem titled ' Subjective Vision and Objective Vision', he warns the rustic people against the risks lurking in their way:

انظروا ! / ايها القادمون بانصاف □ سادكم لمن قرى  
ستظل تقاسم ابناءها لحمهم  
كيف يكون بها □ الغريباء لاقدامهم وانرعمهم!  
اه !  
لكنكم  
ستعبرون □ مال المدينة مثل طيور سماويه  
(Hijazi 1987,17)(lines1-8)

*Look!  
You that come with half bodies*

from villages  
that will keep on sharing their sons their flesh.  
How the strangers need their arms and feet,  
Oh!  
But you pass the city's allurements  
Like celestial birds.

The poem is a reminder that rustic people are not fit to be exposed to the urban world in one's country, let alone foreign ones. They have a difficulty in coping with the city's challenging milieu. In fact their predicament is actually the poet's own. He has this permanent sense that he is out of place when it comes to the city's environment. The romantic disposition which is inseparable from the countryside is marked by certain elements which one can easily identify in the works of Lorca or Hijazi. Critic Frank Kermode reminds us that "Romantic sensitivity drags the poet into that mood of agony and encourages in him the tendency to be fully alienated and isolated from his society" (1966:6). That is what the reader finds in the poetry of Hijazi. In his interviews Hijazi sees the city as the locus of hell, "The city is our beautiful hell. Even this epithet sometimes may not sound true and therefore it turns into hell. No doubt we see our disfigured and needlessly enlarged cities of cancerous growth." (Hijazi, 1985:17)

Hijazi tends to generalize his concept of the city and its disadvantages without drawing a demarcation line between "the Arab city and the foreign one" as critic Mohammad Obeid rightly suggests (2007:78). From the outset Hijazi's poetry gives priority to this leitmotif of village-city polarity and his continuous shifts from that stable but static world of the countryside to the urban world and its gnawing sense of isolation. His poem 'Good Bye' (1959) illuminates this topic:

الى اللقاء  
شوارع المدينة  
قيعان نار  
تجنر في الظهيرة  
ما شربته في الضحى من اللهب  
ياويله من لم يصادف غير سمها  
(Hijazi, 1956:19-20) (lines 9-14)

Good by  
The streets of the city  
Are fathoms of fire  
That ruminate in the afternoon  
what they have imbibed of fire in the morning  
Woe to him who has not seen anything except their poison.

This recurrent negative image of reality (Cairo) in many of Hijazi's poems will be felt after more than twenty years of the first publication of 'Good Bye'. His depiction of Paris in the 1980s is marked by similar images of disapproval, entrapment and discontent.. In his poem titled 'Cement Trees' he has the following to say:

يقبل الليل ويمضي  
دون ان تشبع من نوم  
وهذا شجر الاسمنت  
يلتف علينا  
(Hijazi, 1989:79) (lines 67-74)

The night falls and dies away  
And we do not get enough sleep  
These cement trees  
Wrap around us.

The account of Paris given here makes it similar to many European cities. The title of the poem is expressive enough as it comments vividly on the industrial life in the civilization of the cement and

its harmful impacts on human existence. Here the natural course of life is diverted and sidetracked while the heavy rain is similar to that of Eliot's 'The Waste Land' in its infeasibility. Indeed it does not serve as the harbinger of fertility or hopeful life. .

### 3. Conclusion

This study has selected some examples from England, Spain, Iraq and Egypt where the city is the center of interest. All the poems chosen here have shown the crushing and alienating effects of the city life on its people and their aspirations. Eliot's poem is an interior monologue devoted to explicating Prufrock's predicament in the urban maze and what is expected of him to accomplish. It is noticeable that Eliot's spring-board is not the countryside and its priorities as felt through the practices of the other poets in this study. Instead of that, the views , assessments and self-scrutiny actually stem from epistemological and cultural references which Eliot sees as the only criterion by which good poetry ought to be judged.

However, part of the gloomy picture gleaned from his poetry cannot be solely attributed to the city itself: rather it is the cumulative outcome of his unstable domestic life along with his religious background (Eliot is a descendant of the Puritans). All this left its indelible impacts on his perceptions of things around, the city included. In fact Prufrock's different positions and his continuous ruminations highlight the individual's ordeal as he is in a situation where he is too weak to act properly and convincingly.

The nine months stay of the Spanish Lorca in New York is enough to furnish a volume of verse where that city and its people are brought to the fore. This metropolis, people , objects and relations are ultimately dissected and viewed from the perspective of Lorca's Granada.. It is very obvious that he longs to see the images of his childhood in the place he happens to visit or at least some of it. New York here is the hub of these arguments about the mechanical life lived by the Americans in that sleepless city as the poet imagines. When the two poets are compared, it turns out that Eliot's poem, though written at a very early stage in his life, is objective in that Prufrock cannot be considered as the alter-ego of Eliot, though some of his own visions and judgments are definitely there. In Lorca's case, however, it is the lyrical side that outweighs any other point in the poem. As his biographers have shown, Lorca is not psychologically and emotionally fit to sustain the shock of confronting such a great city.

When we turn to the poetry of Al Bayati and Hijazi, we notice that its common feature is the horrifying challenges the city poses in the way of people. Here the subjective sides of the two Arab poets are self-evident in that they do not seek to present details of the cities described as in the images of their European counterparts. Al Bayati and Hijazi explore their sentiments and reactions towards such cities either directly or by means of different masks or personae. As such, it is expected that the reader feels that the poet is talking directly about his own conflicts and misgivings, unlike the dramatic suggestions informing the corpus of Eliot's poem. Al Bayati is a man whose destiny is inextricably intertwined with the city as his exile. His poems are marked by a mounting sense of bitterness and frustration. Of all the poets discussed here , Hijazi is the only poet alive and outspoken in his hostility towards the city of Cairo or any other city. His handling of the city springs from his conspicuously rustic background to which he always yearns and never gets tired of eulogizing lavishly. As a whole, the four poets have given the reader their own perception of the city life where man is slighted and at times commoditized.

### 4. Limitation and Study Forward

Although the current study chooses its samples from poets that belong to different cultural and social backgrounds, the final judgments cannot be generalized simply because men of letters are highly idiosyncratic in their judgments and views. Mostly they are capricious and consequently their views are not always reliable and authentic. Their judgments are circumstantial in that their reactions

consist in the nature of the experience, its time and place. Consequently, the study remains basically tentative as there are no strict and conclusive criteria by which one can measure the validity or invalidity of a certain situation or phenomenon.

Any work in the field of humanities is expected to cover only some aspects of the topic in question. Therefore the present attempt might be considered as one of a number of works that would add or rectify the missing or incomplete elements here. Definitely there are other poets (both male and female) that can be chosen as samples for future studies and come up with new outcomes and judgments.

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