



The Functions of Onomatopoeia in Modern English and Arabic Poetry: A Study in Selected Poems by Lawrence and al-Sayyab

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Abstract

Onomatopoeia has always been a functional poetic device which enjoys a high sound significance in the poetry of many languages. In modern English and Arabic poetry alike, it proves to be vital and useful at different levels: musical, thematic and at the level of meaning. Still, the cultural difference looms large over the ways it is employed by the poets of each. The present paper investigates the employment of onomatopoeia in the poetry of D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) and Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1926-1964) who are chosen due to the importance they enjoy in modern English and Arabic poetry and the richness of their poems in onomatopoeias. The conclusions reached at are in a sense related to cultural differences which govern the use of onomatopoeia for specific aims rather than for others.

Keywords: Onomatopoeia, Modern poetry, Arabic poetry, Comparative literature, rhyme and rhythm.

1. Definitions

Dictionaries and encyclopedias present a seemingly unanimous definition of onomatopoeia. Etymologically speaking, this word came from the Greek *onomatopoiia* which means "the making of a name or word" (in imitation of a sound associated with the thing being named); or from *onomatopoiios*, from *onoma* (gen. *onomatos*) "word, name" and a derivative of *poiein* "compose, make" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). Also, it could have come from the **Greek** ὀνοματοποιία; ὄνομα for "name" and ποτέω for "I make" (*Britannica*). In a sense, this Greek phrase means (name-making) (Cuddon, 1999,p.614) and the adjectival form of onomatopoeia is "onomatopoeic" or "onomatopoeitic."

Lexically speaking, onomatopoeia means the "the formation of words in imitation of the sounds associated with things concerned" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989). It also refers to the formation, and use, of a word by an imitation of sounds associated not only with the object, but with the action designated; a word whose pronunciation suggests its meaning (Cuddon, 1999,p.614; Drabble, 2000, p. 743; Holman, 2000,p.309). As a figure of speech, onomatopoeia occurs when the meaning of a word is echoed or suggested by its sound (Barnet, Berman & Burto, 1985,p.530) . It involves the use of words which "sound like what they mean" at least supposedly (Perrine, 1978,p.744). It is also defined as the "naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it", and it may also refer to the use of words whose sound suggests their sense (*Britannica*).

2. Types of Onomatopoeia

Since the present paper is concerned with the functions of onomatopoeia in poetry, it adopts the common sense definition of this term as being a word whose sense is imitated by its sound, and occasionally it will use it as far as it refers to words which create an onomatopoeic effect in the poem. Poets exploited this sound device for different purposes and functions, some of which are listed below. But it is crucially important here to state that this choice of the onomatopoeia proper will by no means claim that there is only one type of onomatopoeia which is true to all contexts. Rather, there are different types of onomatopoeias upon which there is little agreement. According to Paul Simpson, onomatopoeia, which forms a bridge between 'style' and 'content' can occur in either a "lexical" or "non-lexical" form, though both "share the common property of being able to match up a sound with nonlinguistic correlate in the 'real world'" (Simpson, 2004,p.67). However, Simpson's claimed matching up with the sounds of real world is not accurate due to the impossibility of the representation of natural non-human sounds by means of human sounds that are, in turn, written down in letters. Abrams explained this in a clearer way when he wrote that there is no "exact duplication" of non-verbal by verbal sounds, and the perceived similarity is due to the meaning and to the feel of articulating words more than of exact matching (Abrams, 1999,p. 199). Onomatopoeia, as used by poets, remains a matter of approximation of the intended natural sound by using the human sounds. As for Simpson's types of onomatopoeia, he states that they are two: lexical and non-lexical, and differentiates between them as follows:

Lexical onomatopoeia draws upon recognized words in the language system, words like *thud*, *crack*, *slurp* and *buzz*, whose pronunciation enacts symbolically their referents outside language. Nonlexical

onomatopoeia, by contrast, refers to clusters of sound which echo the world in a more unmediated way, without the intercession of linguistic structure. (Simpson, 2004,p.67)

As for the non-lexical types, Simpson presents the non-lexical approximations of a car revving up such as *vroom vroom*, or *brrrrm brrrrm* (Simpson, 2004,p.67). These expressions have no existence in the language. Likewise, English poetry provides us with many such examples in which poets try to capture or approximate some natural sounds, and the best examples of non-lexical onomatopoeias which could be called in here are Shakespeare's imitation of the chancicler's sound in *The Tempest* as "*Cock-a-diddle-dow*" (Act I, Scene 2, line 386) and of the owl's sound in *Love's Labour's Lost*, 'Winter's Song' as "*Tu—whit—tu—who*" (Act V, Scene 2).

Another division of onomatopoeias, into two forms again, is made by Stephen Ullmann who distinguishes between primary and secondary onomatopoeia, saying that its primary form is "the imitation of sound by sound" where the sound is truly an echo to the sense, and "the referent itself is an acoustic experience which is more or less closely imitated by the phonetic structure of the word," whereas the secondary onomatopoeia is the one in which the sounds evoke, not an acoustic experience, but a movement or some physical or moral quality (Ullmann, 1964,p.84). Ullmann exemplifies his first form with the (*dither, dodder, quiver, slither, slouch, squirm, wriggle*) as examples for movements, and (*gloom, grumpy, mawkish, sluggish, wry*) to exemplify the physical or moral qualities (Ullmann, 1964,p.84). It is obvious here that both forms are lexical, and not invented or improvised by poets according to the ends they want to serve.

3. Onomatopoeia in Poetic Contexts

However, poets have another perspective to view this poetic device which enjoys a high level of importance for them because of its functionality, as well as the aesthetic values it adds to poetry regardless of the language in which it is written. The importance of onomatopoeia in poetry reached an unprecedented peak at the beginning of the twentieth century when it was rediscovered and revived by the Italian Futurists, who exploited it as a means to convey all different types of noises upon which their theory is grounded.

In this regard, the Futurist poets initiated a new phase in the use of onomatopoeia which enabled them to imitate any noise. Regarding the functions and types of onomatopoeias, F. T. Marinetti (1876-1944), the founder of Futurism, in a futurist manifesto entitled '*free words*', wrote that before Futurism, onomatopoeia, which serves to "enliven lyricism with the crude and brutal elements of reality" has been used in poetry "more or less timidly," and that "we futurists begin the constant and audacious use of the onomatopoeia" (Russolo, 1985,p.57). Marinetti asserts that onomatopoeia is a useful tool which enables them express their "growing love for material things, the will to penetrate them and recognize their vibrations, the physical sympathy that is attached to motors" (Russolo, 1985,p.57). This poetic device, which could reproduce any kind of noise, whether of friction, collision of solids, liquids, or gas in motion, is one of the most dynamic elements of poetry, according to Marinetti (Russolo,1985,p.58). As such, he names four different types of onomatopoeia:

- (a) The direct, imitative, elementary, realistic onomatopoeia, which serves to enrich lyricism with brutal reality and prevents it from becoming too abstract or too artistic (Example: *pic pac poom*, rifle fire) . . .
- (b) The indirect, complex, and analogic onomatopoeia. (Example: in my poem **DUNE**, the onomatopoeia *dum-dum-dum-dum*. . . .
- (c) The abstract onomatopoeia, the noisy and unconscious expression of the most complex and mysterious of our sensibility. (Example: in my poem **DUNE**, the abstract onomatopoeia *ran ran ran* correspond to no noise of nature or machine but expresses a state of mind.)
- (d) The psychic onomatopoeia chord, that is, the fusion of 2 or 3 abstract onomatopoeias. (qtd. Russolo,1985,p.58).

Apart from its functionality in poetic contexts, onomatopoeia enjoys high importance in several other contexts. In linguistics, for instance, it is considered a main source of language word-formation (Dobrovolsky, 1996,p.159) , and was also called in to prove an assumption that human speech came as the result of human imitations of animals' sounds (Poole, 1999,p.13). Also, it is singled out as the only exception of the theory of the arbitrariness of language, as it presents a non-arbitrary connection between the uttered sound and its meaning (Lyons, 1981,p.19; Poole,1999,p.12).

In the same context, Ferdinand de Saussure asserts that "the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary" (p.67), but onomatopoeia is the only phenomenon which undermines his assertion on arbitrariness, that is why he argued that "onomatopoeia might be used to prove that the choice of the signifier is not always arbitrary. But onomatopoeic formations are never organic elements of a linguistic system. Besides, their number is much smaller than is generally supposed." According to Saussure, the limited number, or rarity, of authentic— i.e. lexical— onomatopoeias and their inability to imitate the real natural sounds make onomatopoeia a relatively minor part of language use (Saussure, 1959,p.69).

It is worth mentioning that Saussure's objection is not the only one onomatopoeia had encountered. Earl R. Anderson, in a very important chapter of *A Grammar of Iconism* (1998) presents five more objections, four of which are linguistic

and one is aesthetic, each is given a considerable analysis and explanation (pp.129-166). For convenience, they could be briefly listed as follows:

1. Onomatopoeias are really conventional signs, not echoes of natural sounds.
2. Even if onomatopoeias imitate natural sounds, they are not really non-arbitrary signs, since the language could have selected non-imitative signs instead.
3. Onomatopoeias exist on the margin of language, not really as part of *langue*.
4. Onomatopoeias do not accurately imitate natural sounds.
5. If onomatopoeia does appear in poetry, it has no artistic value, but is rather, a dubious display of virtuosity (Anderson, 1998,p.129).

Nonetheless, these objections could not negate the importance onomatopoeia, as a poetic device, provides to poetry at the levels of music, sense and artistic value. These objections, which are completely the opposite of Marinetti's aforementioned views, are just a segment of the argument about the controversial nature of this device and its types and functions.

This being said, the present paper seeks to trace the functions of onomatopoeia, and its types, in the poetry of two modern poets; English and Arab, namely; D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) and Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1926-1964). Both poets enjoy a considerable significance in the map of modern English and Arabic poetry, respectively. Each of them had a major contribution for the poetry of his language, Lawrence as being a pioneer of free verse in English Language, and al-Sayyab a pioneer of the so-called *al-Shi'r al-Hurr* (Free Verse Movement) which recently comes to be known as "Tafi'eela poetry". Because it is rather difficult to cover the entire bulk of poems written by each, the present paper will focus on some selected poems from one volume of poetry for each poet, namely, Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923) and al-Sayyab's *Unshudat ul-Matar* (*The Canticle of the Rain*) (1960). The choice of these two books can be justified by the literary value of both of them as they are the poetic masterpieces of both poets. These volumes of poetry are considered the culmination of the poetic career of their authors. Also, these books are richer in onomatopoeias than the other poetic works of each of them.

4. Lawrence's Onomatopoeias

A careful reading of Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* shows how rich in onomatopoeias his poems are. However, this richness varies from poem to another, and more noticeably from one sub-group of poems to another. For example, in "Pomegranate", the sole example of onomatopoeia appears in: "the setting suns are open / The end cracks open with the beginning / Rosy, tender, glittering within the fissure (Lawrence, 1971,p.278). The description of the wide open crack in the body of a pomegranate fruit is enhanced by the very sounds of the word "crack" which adds a sense of dynamism to the natural process in which an over-ripe fruit cracks to unfold rosy-red seeds which are compared to setting suns. Here, the poet uses a lexical example of onomatopoeia in an attempt to add a dynamic effect to the visual image he is presenting.

Although the example given above is too minor and insignificant amid the totality of the poem, it indicates one phase of Lawrence's employment of onomatopoeia in this volume of poems. This little reliance on onomatopoeia is repeated in "Medlars and Sorb-Apples" where the poet employs the verb *smack* in roughly the same method. But the poet is here more concerned with the sounds of words as he says: "Though even the word Marsala will *smack* of preciousness" (p.280; emphasis added). Given the fact that *smack* lexically means the sound of a blow given when an open hand strikes something or a flat surface; sound of the lips parted suddenly; or sound of a whip (*Oxford English Dictionary*), it appears that Lawrence emphasizes the sore taste of the medlar which makes one's lips *smack* even when he/she mentions the name of the fruit. This example of onomatopoeia is used to create a sensual image of taste in the poem.

In "The Revolutionary", Lawrence uses the onomatopoeic words "clicketing" and "throbs" to convey the meaning and, again, to enhance the sound effect which tries to echo the motion suggested by the poem. According to the poet the foot-falls of the pale-faces mentioned in the poem are "a clicketing of bits of disjointed metal / Working in motion" (p.288). Here, the *clicking* of the machine-like pale-faced people of the industrial age condemned by Lawrence is compared to the sound of some metal bits hitting each other in movement. This conveys the state of lifelessness of the human beings as they are rendered to the level of pieces of disjointed metals moving aimlessly and monotonously.

In the above-discussed poems, as in other poems, Lawrence depends on lexical examples of onomatopoeia consisting of words of different categories, basically nouns and verbs. However, some interjections like "ah, aha, oh" find their way in some of his poems in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* which is the focus of this study. Interjections are traditionally known as forms that express states of mind, such as surprise, disgust, indignation, boredom ...etc. Their function is purely emotive (Crystal, 2003,p.239). According to (Matthew, 2011,p.198), they "do not enter into specific syntactic relations with other words." His use of interjections, which are basically onomatopoeic, starts with the "Flowers" poems and this use comes side by side with other lexical onomatopoeias. These interjections are basically expressions of surprise, pain, wonder...etc. In Lawrence's poems, they are very functional because in most of them, he aims to establish a sense of liveliness, interaction and communication as they express as large and diverse feelings as possible in very few letters. Therefore, he depends not only on the familiar interjections of English, but also he invents interjections of his own. In "Purple Anemones" where he uses a conversational and succinct style, there is no use of onomatopoeia proper. But the poet uses some interjections to enhance the conversation which runs through the poem, and makes it real-like:

But ah, my dear
 Aha, the stripe-checked whelps, whippet-slim crocuses,
At'em, boys, at'em!
Ho, golden-spaniel, sweet alert narcissus
Smell 'em, smell 'em out!

 Somebody is coming!
Oho there! (309) [emphasis added]

The three interjections used above — aha, ho and oho — are expressions of surprise, exclamation and triumph (*Oxford English Dictionary*). However, they are onomatopoeic in the sense that they convey a state of feeling that is echoed by the sound of the very sigh uttered out under the pressure of the moment.

Although the "Creatures" group of poem in Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* is not so rich in onomatopoeias, the last poem in the group, entitled "Man and Bat" includes a few examples such as: *crash, rattle* (342), *splashing* (343), *clutching* and *palpitating* (345). The employment of onomatopoeias in these examples does not greatly differ from that of the previous ones, however, what makes this poem a good example to be called in here is that it serves as a prelude to Lawrence's use of non-lexical onomatopoeia which comes to occupy a large space in the later poems of his *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*.

The number and the length of onomatopoeias, lexical and non-lexical, used by Lawrence in the subsequent poems noticeably increases as the subject matter of the poem groups becomes more concerned with creatures of higher species. That is to say, as the poet presents in his poems some creatures which have the ability to produce sounds, he uses onomatopoeias more frequently and extensively. Therefore, in "Tortoise Shout" which is one of the "Reptile" poems, Lawrence finds in the device of onomatopoeia a very suitable means to describe the cry of a tortoise, which was too surprising for him to the extent that he wrote an entire poem in response to it. In this poem, Lawrence says that he thought the tortoise was dumb, but he has heard its cry (363). Then, he begins his consideration of what could this cry mean. He uses the word 'scream' to describe the cry of the tortoise-- or the shout according to the title. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, this word means a loud, shrill, piercing cry or noise, and the verb means giving a loud, sharp cry of, or as of, fear or pain, especially by human beings, birds and animals. It appears ten times throughout the poem, eight times as a noun, two as a verb. The frequent use of this onomatopoeic word not only supports the unity of subject throughout the poem, it rather indicates the poet's deep concern with the cry delivered by new-born tortoise which he compares to that of new-born human beings, and amplifies the auditory effect of the poem. The cry of the tortoise has left the poet with a number of speculations regarding large philosophical issues, like life, death, war, defeat and triumph...etc., which are all associated, in a way or another, with cries and shouts:

Or did it sound on the plasm direct?
 Worse than the cry of the new-born,
 A scream,
 A yell,
 A shout,
 A paean,
 A death-agony,
 A birth-cry,
 A submission,
 All tiny, tiny, far away, reptile under the first dawn.
 War-cry, triumph, acute-delight, death-scream reptilian
 Why was the veil torn? (364)

In addition to the above-quoted explanations of the cry of the tortoise, Lawrence uses other ones to show what it stands for. Therefore, it is associated with the *howl* of the weird, amorous cats (366); compared to the *whooping* of an owl (366), or to the *bleat* of a lamb (366), or the *wail* of an infant. It is worth mentioning that *whooping* is a non-lexical word, according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, whereas *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* states that it is the sound of owls, but makes it clear that it is imitative and not lexical. But, *howling*, *bleating* and *wailing* are lexical onomatopoeic words.

Because much has been said about the lexical onomatopoeias in Lawrence's poems discussed above, it would be convenient to highlight his non-lexical examples which tend to make a noticeable phenomenon in his poems related to "Birds" and "Animals". Non-lexical onomatopoeias appear in "The Blue Jay", "The Ass", "The She-Goat" and "Elephant." However, the other poems of both groups include several examples of lexical onomatopoeias which function in roughly the same way as the ones already tackled.

In "The Blue Jay," Lawrence uses three onomatopoeias, two have their roots in English language, (*hisses* and *bobbing*), whereas the third is improvised and non-lexical (*Ca - a - a!*). Recounting a personal experience with a blue jay, Lawrence says that this bird "runs in the snow like a bit of blue metal"(375), to hide in the pine tree that "towers and *hisses* like a pillar of shaggy cloud" (375) [emphasis added]. From there, the bird releases a loud cry which Lawrence understands as follows:

*Ca – a – a ! comes the scrape of ridicule out of the tree
What voice of the Lord is that, from the tree of smoke? (375).*

Lawrence thinks that this bird is laughing at him and his dog as they approach. The "scrape of ridicule" is made by the bird because it enjoys superiority, being higher in stand, let alone its naturalness and freedom, things which make its voice an echo of the voice of the Lord. Therefore, whenever there is snow, Lawrence watches that bird which "laughs" at them (375), "Turning his back on us all / And bobbing his thick dark crest about the snow, as if darkly saying: / I ignore those folks who look out" (375). Lawrence's three onomatopoeias in this poem are attempts to communicate with the world of nature: with the tree which hisses, and with the bird that screams. This " *Ca – a – a!*" is an attempt to imitate in human sounds the non-human scream, however impossible the complete matching is, according to Katie Wales (1989,p.328).

As the bird produces the cry, Lawrence gets curious and fascinated by the sound delivered by it and tries to interpret it his own way, and here, the ultimate goal of Lawrence for his use of onomatopoeia seems to be establishing a sense of communication with the world of the jay, in addition to that of enriching the musicality of the poem.

The last sub-group of poems in Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* is that of "Animals" in which his employment of onomatopoeia reaches a culmination whether in length, sound effect, or in significance. In the examples to come, his experimentation with improvised non-lexical onomatopoeias enables him tread in an unprecedented area in the world of poetry, that is the imitation of animal sounds in an elaborate manner, especially for animals whose sounds are neither pleasant to the ear, nor easy to articulate and express in English letters, such as the sounds of goats and donkeys.

In the "Ass" Lawrence makes an attempt to echo the sound of the donkey. Again, there are three examples of onomatopoeia, but now they are all non-lexical and more elaborate, as they occupy a very large proportion of the poem, not single words or phrases. One of them comes at the outset, the other at the middle, the third at the end of the poem, making some intervals within the text, sustaining its unity. Each of them stresses the poet's desire to interpret the ass braying, articulate what it would say in it, on the one hand, and his intention to support the thematic structure of the poem, on the other.

In the first onomatopoeia, Lawrence interprets the sound of the ass in a humorous and satirical way. "The long-drawn bray of the ass", the poem starts:

*All mares are dead!
All mares are dead!
Oh -h!
Oh- h- h!
Oh- h- h- h-h- h-!!
I can't bear it, I can't bear it.
I can't!
Oh, I can't.
Oh —
There's one left!
There's one left!
One!
There's... left... (377)*

Lawrence gives this queer and sarcastic (Pinion, 1978,p.108) interpretation of the ass braying and ascribes it, with no clear justification, to the Arabs, saying that "This is an authentic Arabic interpretation of the braying of the ass" (377), and this supposedly Arabic interpretation says that the ass is crying like this because of lust and desire. However, Lawrence disagrees with this interpretation of the bray of the donkey, saying that "The Arabs were only half right" (378) in their view. According to him, it is agony which makes the donkey cry:

*Hee! Hee! Ehee! Ehow! Ehaw!! Oh! Oh! Oh-h-h-h-h
The wave of agony bursts in the stone that he was ... (379)*

Again, onomatopoeia is a way to communicate with the animal, and to give the "correct" interpretation of its bray. The braying is only an indication of the ass's regret of memories of its own history of evolution which included glorious moments, as well as painful ones. Lawrence concludes the poem with what it starts with; the same bray of the ass, but casting a sense of doubt on the earlier fact of the death of all mares. Here, the donkey is to choose between its own death or that of all mares:

*Hee! Hee! Ehee! Ehow – Ehow—ow!-- aw! -- aw!—aw!
All mare are dead!
Or else I am dead!*

*One of us, or the pair of us,
I don't know—ow! —ow!
Which !
Not sure—ur —ur
Quite which!
Which! (380)*

In "She-Goat" there are four more examples of onomatopoeias; the first three are one-word lexical onomatopoeias, whereas the fourth is an extensive improvised one in which the poet imitates the sound of the goat. In the first three examples, the function is not for communication but for enhancing the meaning and making it vivid, by denoting an activity, and – to a lesser extent – to reinforce the musicality of the poem. The she-goats "*patter* back like a bough being dragged on the ground, / Raising dusk and acidity of goats, and *bleating*" (384) [emphasis added]. The verb *patter* – to make a quick tapping sound – according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, is used to indicate the sound of rumination of the goats at dusk, whereas *bleating*, which occurs twice in the poem, denotes the cry of a sheep, goat or calf. As for the fourth onomatopoeia, it is another example of Lawrence's frequent attempts to communicate with animals by making some personal explanation of their sounds:

*Merr —err! Merr—er—errr! Mer! Me!
--Wait, wait a bit, I 'll come when I 've lit the fire.
Merrr!
--Exactly.
Me! Mer! Merrrrrrr!!!
--Tace, tu, crapa, bestia!
--Merr-ererrr! Merrrr! (384)*

Thus spoke the she-goat when Lawrence passed by it, and "immediately she sees me, she blinks, stares, does n't know me" (384), and the sense of communication with the animal he desires is attained, according to the poet. The above-cited onomatopoeia helps Lawrence achieve this communication which is the ultimate end, and the aim of the poem, for he aimed at no more (Inmiss, 1971, p. 77).

In "Elephant" Lawrence's employment of onomatopoeia is rather different. Here, there is a bunch of onomatopoeias which combines the lexical and non-lexical, in addition to a very skillful example in which he employs the lexical non-onomatopoeic words for onomatopoeic purposes. In other words, in this poem, Lawrence presents a unique example of a lexical word which is used for purposes other than its immediate meaning. Rather, he employs it not for a lexical function, but for an onomatopoeic function. He uses the word "shuffle"—which means walking without raising the feet properly—to echo the slow motion of the elephant as it walks, through the repetition of this word, he imitates the pace of this animal: "Shuffle, shuffle, and his little wicked eye has seen you as he advances above you" (387). Though the verb "shuffle" might not be considered an onomatopoeic one, its occurrence in such a manner makes the reader hear the dragging of the heavy feet of the elephant. This way of using a non-onomatopoeic word for an onomatopoeic purpose is also used by al-Sayyab in his "Unshudat ul-Mattar" (*The Canticle of the Rain*) which will be discussed later.

There are four examples, all serving the musical effect of the poem so as to convey the meaning more effectively. Lawrence describes an elephant, walking slowly in a highly rhythmical way, using: "Shuffle, shuffle" (387), echoing the slow movement of the animal. Along with them, he uses some non-lexical examples such as the following ones which include a group of improvised imitations of sounds of drums and bells which are associated with the Indian celebration of Pera-hera festival when elephants are decorated and dressed in elegant costumes: "tom-tom's beat" (387); "tong-tong, tong-tong" (387); "the noise of the tom-toms and singers" (387); the "tong, tong-tong" (388) and again, and the "Tom-toms" (388) which occur within the poem to make it a highly musical portrait of a lively festival.

In addition, the poem exposes a large number of lexical onomatopoeias which exceed the number of those used in any other poem discussed so far. These lexical ones occur within the texture of the poem to enrich its musicality and vivify its images. Such examples include: buzzing (387); chanting (387); dripping (388); swinging, more dripping (388); shudder of drums (388); sobbing (389); shuffle (389); galloped and gallop (390); glare (391); glint (391); hiss (391); burst (391); shimmering (391); whispering (391)...etc. Here Lawrence achieves a musical effect that copes with the slow and heavy pace of the elephant which necessitates the choice of onomatopoeias that reinforce the music. It is not the meter of the poem that necessitates using such expressions, for Lawrence uses the free verse in all the poems discussed above, and this verse does not require following a certain pattern of feet.

The entire poem is a descriptive poem whose intention is to render a comprehensive picture of the Pera-hera festival in its visual and auditory aspects. The poet's aim in this poem is to describe this event which he witnessed in Ceylon in 1922, which was attended by the Prince of Wales who later became King Edward VIII. Therefore, the use of onomatopoeia proves to be very functional in the poem as it enables Lawrence to make this panoramic picture and transmit the richness and variety of sounds witnessed therein.

In the poems tackled above, and in some other poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, Lawrence's concern with the "otherness of nature" (Gilbert, 1972, p.124) and his interest in communicating with the elements of nature which have the ability to produce sounds, namely, the animals; his care for the meaning and how to convey it in his poems; and his

focus on the musical effects created by his poems which rarely rely on those attained by rhythm and meter which he departed in favor of free verse, make him employ onomatopoeia so extensively. This employment is due to its various functions and the flexibility of the purposes it may serve.

5 Al-Sayyab's Onomatopoeias

The poetry of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab in general, and his poems of *Unshudat ul-Maṭar* (*The Canticle of the Rain*) in particular, also reveal richness in the use of onomatopoeia, which varies in length, orientations and functions as with Lawrence. Al-Sayyab, being a pioneer of the New Verse Movement in Arabic poetry, depends largely on the musicality of his poems and gives it high priority, and this is what distinguishes him from his contemporaries (Abbas, 1969; Al-Ateeyah, 1986; Awadh, 1987; and Tawfeeq, 1997). Therefore, he finds in the Arabic onomatopoeic words, which are numerous, a useful channel to enhance the music and rhythm he is seeking to attain. The Arabic poetic sensibility obliges him to observe some rhythmical, lexical and thematic principles, like those of meter, decorum, etc., when he employs an onomatopoeic word or expression. That is why his choice of them is governed by the meter he follows in the poem. In other words, al-Sayyab's choice of onomatopoeic words has to fit, before all, into the metrical pattern of the poem, then to cope with its thematic context.

As with Lawrence, al-Sayyab's onomatopoeias vary from the very short ones like single interjections which appear here and there, to single words of different classes necessitated by the context, to combinations of words or phrases. But, unlike Lawrence, what characterizes al-Sayyab's onomatopoeias is that they are almost entirely lexical. As shown below, in the poems of *Unshudat ul-Maṭar*, non-lexical onomatopoeias seldom appear. This can be ascribed, among other things, to the richness of Arabic language in such expressions whose pronunciations suggest and imitate their meaning.

Unshudat ul-Maṭar, published in 1960, is considered the greatest achievement of al-Sayyab and his most accomplished work, in addition to several other superlatives, (See: Abbas, 1969; Al-Ateeyah, 1986; and Tawfeeq, 1997). In each of the thirty-two poems it includes, there are at least two onomatopoeias; that is to say, each and every poem in the collection includes an onomatopoeic expression. As shown in the poems selected here, these expressions are not imposed on the poem for specific intentions; rather, they come naturally as part of the texture as they are imposed by the semantic, syntactic and the phonological structure of the poem.

The first poem in the book, "Ghareeb un ala al-Khaleej" (غريبٌ على الخليج A Stranger at the Gulf), is written in 1953 when the poet had to travel to Kuwait for medication due to his chronic illness. It is an expression of intense feeling of exile and longing to his native country. The poet, standing at the shore of the Gulf in Kuwait, recalls different images from Iraq, visual and auditory ones, and all the human and non-human elements, coming before his eyes to remind him of various experiences. But the presence of sound images and memories is more overwhelming, that is why the use of onomatopoeia comes to assist the poet's description of the auditory scene. He hears something which is:

أعلى من العباب يهدر رغوّه ومن الضجيج

صوتٌ تفجّر في قرارة نفسيّ التكلّي: عراق (Al-Sayyab, 2005, vol. II: 4)

[Higher than the high torrents whose foam is roaring, than the clamor

A voice that burst in the bottom of my grief-stricken soul: Iraq](emphasis added).

Here, in the context of the sound images presented by the poet to convey his emotional state, he uses three onomatopoeic words in two successive lines: *yahdur* (يَهْدُرُ roars); *dajeej* (ضجيج clamor); and *tafajjar* (تفجّر burst out or exploded). Then, in the same context, he emphasizes the idea that all sounds he heard were echoing the name of his country due to the overwhelming sense of estrangement he suffered from:

الريح *ا-ا-ا* بي: عراق،

والموج *ا-ا-ا* بي: عراق، عراق ليس سوى عراق (vol. II: 4).

[The wind cries out at me: Iraq

The waves wail at me: Iraq, Iraq, nothing but Iraq]

The verbs *taṣrukh* (تصرخ cries out) and *y'awil* (يعول wails or howls) amplify the sound effects interspersed throughout the poem and maintain the vividness of its sound imagery, let alone its coherence and musicality. Then, with the circle of memories and allusions to his own past which revolves faster and faster in his mind, other onomatopoeic words occur to add more to the above-mentioned purposes. He also refers to the old lice-picker, a typical story-teller in his native society, as she "*tuwashwish*" (توشوش to whisper or speak under her breath)—i.e., tells in a barely audible tone—about Hizam and his love of 'Afraa (vol. II: 5). This latter example of onomatopoeia, as a matter of fact, adds a very significant touch to the whispering nature of what is being said. In other words, the recurrence of the voiceless consonant 'sh' creates and sustain the mood of secrecy which envelops the entire episode. The old grandmother who tells such fearful stories to children does not speak up because there is a superstition that it brings misfortunes to speak about graves, jinns, spirits, dead persons....etc. at night. It is worth mentioning that in this poem, five of the seven

onomatopoeias al-Sayyab employs are verbs, whereas the other two are a noun *dajeej* (ضجيج clamor or noise) and an adjective *mutakhafiq* (متخافق flapping or fluttering) (vol. II: 7). The context is mostly descriptive, and these onomatopoeias are used for descriptive purposes where adjectives are supposed to be used since they are more serviceable in description than verbs. However, reliance on verbs rather than adjectives creates a sense of dynamism, rather than static mood throughout the poem.

Another poem which manifests al-Sayyab's rich employment of onomatopoeia is "Min Ru'ya Fokai" [من رؤيا فوكاي] From the Vision of Fokai]. This poem is an elegy to the City of Hiroshima, and Fokai, according to the epigraph of the poem, is a writer from the Jesuit Mission in Hiroshima, who went mad because of the terrifying scenes he saw after the atomic bomb in 1945. The poet also tells about a Chinese myth of the king who wanted a huge bell to be made of gold, silver, copper and steel, and ordered someone to do it, but these different metals resisted all attempts to melt them together in one pot. Kongai, the daughter of that king, consulted the sorcerers and oracles who told her that in order for these metals to unite, a virgin's pure blood must be added to the mixture. Then she threw herself in the huge melting pot. Then they made the Bell which, whenever stricken, produced a sound that echoed her name: "Hiyai... Kongai...Kongai" (vol.2:32). Therefore, the key onomatopoeia in this poem is that resembling the Bell's rings. It is repeated five times in addition to the subtitle of the first part of the poem. This makes the poem exceptionally rich in musicality created by this sound device, along with the successive rhymes and the meter used in it. Also, this is the first significant non-lexical example of onomatopoeia to appear in the entire volume of *Unshudat ul-Maṭar* (أنشودة المطر) *The Canticle of the Rain*). Other examples of onomatopoeia in the same poem are all lexical and used to fill in a metrical requirement in the poem, simply because, in the second part titled 'Tasdeed ul Hissab' (تسديد الحساب) Paying the Bills), and the third part 'Haqai'k u kal Khayal' (حقائق كالخيال) Fantasy-Like Facts) are both written in the classical Arabic form after *al-Baseet* Meter. The second part includes one single word: "qahqaha" (قهقهة) guffaw), whereas the third one includes several lexical ones, and one interjection: "Ha. Ha... Ha" which is intended to imitate the sound of the blowing wind. Among those lexical onomatopoeias included in the last section of the poem, there are: *yazqu* (chirp يزقو); *yakhtadh u* (is stirred or shaken يختض); *inbahat* (انبحت became husky); *tanbah u* (تنبح bark or yelp); *khashkhashat un* (خشخشة crinkle or crackle); *khababa* (خببا jogging sound) ...etc., which are used to convey meanings in terms of highly expressive and musical words.

With "Marthiyyat u Jaikur" (مرثية جيكور) Elegy of Jaikur), al-Sayyab's employment of onomatopoeia reaches a new phase in which he transcends the usual functions of this device as a catalyst for the sense and sound of the poem. Here, he uses it for creating a new channel of communication with his readers by appealing to their cultural collective mind, as he employs, for the first time in *Unshudat ul-Maṭar* poems, and in his entire poetic works, a folk song, very well known in his native community, and imitates its music by means of words. Although it is impossible to render the non-human sounds by means of human words and sounds, al-Sayyab manages to echo the music of drums, flutes and other musical instruments used in a wedding party that comes to his mind in context of his survey of Jaikur, his native village, and its everlasting suffering. The poem depicts one of the traditions of the Iraqi tribal society in the countryside that relate to the weddings; in the first night when the groom enters to his bride, he has to deflower her and get out to the awaiting groups with a handkerchief besmeared with her virginity blood as a proof that his bride is chaste and pure, and to prove that he is physically competent. This has to be done in the first night the groom spends with his bride, and he has to make haste to satisfy the folks of both sides: his own family and his bride's folk for the reasons mentioned above, and this may support their reputation as having raised pure and chaste girls.

In this context, the poet describes Mahmoud's wedding night and the need for the latter to provide people with drops of blood, and connects that blood with the blood of Christ on the Cross, and that of mythical sacrifices as well as the blood offered by the people in their struggle for freedom. In all examples, blood symbolizes resurrection, fertility and regeneration. The employment of onomatopoeia in this poem is different from that of previous poems not only in the numerous lexical ones which include more nouns than verbs this time (seven nouns vs. three verbs), but in the elaborate example of onomatopoeia he improvises in the wedding song:

شيخ انتم الله □ □
 قد شابهون - هون - هون - هون . . وما هلا
 □ □ □ □ العيد □ □ □ □
 ، . . عرس حمادي"
 ز غردون - هون - هون - هون
 الثوب من اليرين □ □
 والنقش صناعة بغداد (vol.2: 67)

[Shaikh Ismu-Allah . . . *Trililla*
 Grew old . . *Trill* . *Trill* . . *Trarr* . . and the Eid *Trill* . . . *Trililla* . . never appeared!
Trililla . . Hummadi got married,
 Ululate . . *Tril* . . . *Trililla*
 The dress of silk was made . . . *Trililla*
 And embroidered in Baghdad.] [emphasis added]

The Eid (i.e., Holy Feast) which never appeared, is contrasted with the joyful wedding of Hummadi, a nick name for Mahmoud, to show that feasts and festival days, i.e., glory, are not given, they are made. It is worth mentioning that this example, besides being rhythmical and musical, is formed in a metrical way to be a separate unit inside a larger metrical entity: it is written after *al-Mutadarak* Arabic Meter (consisting of eight repeated feet, each is /fa'ilun/ / فَعِلُنْ / فَعِلُنْ / فَعِلُنْ / فَعِلُنْ / فَعِلُنْ / فَعِلُنْ / فَعِلُنْ / فَعِلُنْ in each *bayt*¹ of classical verse, whereas in New Verse the number of feet is not limited), while the entire poem is written in *al-Khafeef* Meter (consisting of three feet as follows: [fa'ilatun mustaf'ilun fa'ilatun - فاعلاتن مستفعلن فاعلاتن] and this is to be repeated in the *sadr* and the *adjz* of each *bayt*, making it six feet in total. This is true to all examples of onomatopoeia used by al-Sayyab because he is very keen on meters, rhythms, rhymes and other musical aspects of poetry. In brief, he uses onomatopoeias, whether lexical or improvised, in accordance with the meter used in the poem.

Among the poems included in the volume of poems in question, the above-discussed example of the wedding song, and the one used in "Min Ru'ya Fokai" [From the Vision of Fokai] are very unique examples of onomatopoeia, not only because they are the only improvised non-lexical examples to be found *Unshudat ul-Maṭar*, but because they present a daring and unprecedented attempt to insert such items as foreign expressions, or popular songs, into poetry written in standard Arabic, as an integral part of it.

After this highly sophisticated phase of treatment of onomatopoeia, al-Sayyab presented another phase of development in his use of non-onomatopoeic words to imitate sounds of natural or human activities. This, in fact, is the most significant contribution al-Sayyab added to the employment of onomatopoeia in modern Arabic poetry. In this process, it must be said that the poet resorts to ordinary words, mostly nouns, to reflect or echo the sounds resulting from the movement of human feet as people march in a procession, or that resulting from the continuous and monotonous fall of raindrops. Like Lawrence in "Elephant", Al-Sayyab uses such non-onomatopoeic words to create a unique and functional onomatopoeia effect in his poem, to serve as a refrain, on the one hand, and to create an auditory image which helps the reader reach a mental state in which he could experience the feeling the poet is trying to convey. This could be best exemplified in two key poems in the volume under investigation: "Al-Maseeh u Ba'd al ṣalḥ" (Christ After Crucifixion) and the title poem "Unshudat ul-Maṭar" (The Canticle of the Rain).

In "Al-Maseeh u Ba'd al ṣalḥ" (المسيح بعد الصلب Christ After Crucifixion), the poet describes the scene of crucifixion of Jesus Christ from the latter's viewpoint. In other words, the poem narrates what Christ saw and heard after he was crucified. He heard the wind's wailing (نواح nuwāḥ). The moaning (عويل aweel) crossed the plains between Himself and the city. The crucifixion of Christ is only a pretext for His resurrection which renews life and brings fertility. In the first two parts of the poem, al-Sayyab uses several lexical onomatopoeias as shown above, then in the third part, he uses the word 'qadam' (قدم foot) and repeats it thrice each time so as to create an imitation of human feet marching around the grave:

قدمُ تعدو، قدمُ، قدمُ
القبرُ يكادُ يوقعُ خطاها ينهدمُ.
أترى جاءوا؟ من غيرهم؟
قدمُ . . . قدمُ . . . قدمُ. (vol.2: 108)

[A *foot* is running, *foot*, *foot*

The grave, due their footsteps is about to collapse

Did they come? Who else but them?

Foot, *foot*, *foot*.] [emphasis added]

This creates a sound effect akin to that of walking feet which follow a regular pace, and what is also remarkable about this example is that it is narrated from underground, and the narrator feels the pain of the earth and the heavy feet moving around. In a similar context, "Unshudat ul Maṭar" (The Canticle of the Rain) witnesses the repetition of the word 'maṭar' (مطر rain), also thrice each time, and since it is repeated eight times, this makes this word overtly functional in the poem at all levels. The importance of this word to the semantic and rhythmical levels is relevant to the purpose of this study. Here, it suffices to say that each time the word (rain) is repeated, it signifies a refrain which closes a section of the poem and opens another. Also, each time it is used, it shifts the movement of the poem towards a new direction. Therefore, the recurrence of "Rain . . . Rain . . . Rain" eight times in the texture of the poem not only enhance the music of the poem, it creates a sense of organic unity and holds together some otherwise fragmented images and ideas. The poem is also rich in lexical onomatopoeias which are very familiar in al-Sayyab poems: they serve sound effects which are particularly important for the poem whose musical qualities made it extraordinarily successful. Such examples include: "yaruju" (يرجُ to shake); "tanbuḍ u" (تنبضُ throbbing); karkara (كركر laughed loudly) tahāmas a (تَهَامَسْنَ whispered); tanshuj u (تنشجُ sobbing or whimpering); and yarunn u (يرنُ ringing). However, they come in line with the ordinary employment of this device in al-Sayyab's poetry. What is rather unique is his use of a very common word to create an onomatopoeic effect, as in the following citation where the frequency of the word rain transcends the normal poetic repetition:

"مطر..."

مطر...

مطر...

وفي العراق جوعٌ

وينثر الغلال فيه موسم الحصادُ

لتشبع الغربان والجراد

وتطحن الشّوان والحجر

رحىً تدور في الحقول ... حولها بشرٌ

مطر...

مطر...

مطر...

وكم ذرفنا ليلة الرحيل ، من دموعٌ

ثم اعتلنا - خوف أن نلام - بالمطر...

مطر...

مطر...

ومنذ أن كنا صغاراً ، كانت السماء

تغيّم في الشتاء

ويهطل المطر ،

وكلّ عام - حين يعشب الثرى - نجوعٌ

ما مرّ عامٌ والعراق ليس فيه جوعٌ.

مطر...

مطر...

مطر... (vol.2: 122-23)

[Rain . . .

Rain . . .

Rain. . .

And in Iraq, there is hunger

Harvest Season in it strews the corn

So that the crows and locust are satiated

Whereas what grinds hay and stone

Mills that revolve in the fields. . . surrounded by folks

Rain . . .

Rain . . .

Rain . . .

How much tears, in the night of departure, did we shed

Then we justified it—so to avoid blame—by the rain. . .

Rain . . .

Rain . . .

And since we were children, the sky used to

Be overclouded in winter

And rain falls,

And every year—as the pastures get green – we starve

No year passes without starvation in Iraq.

Rain . . .

Rain . . .

Rain . . .]

In this citation, it can be seen that after the first refrain, the poet points at the hunger that contrasts and contradicts with the abundant rain which falls on Iraq, and how the people starve in spite of the fertile seasons, due to the political status of that time. Then, after the second sequence of "rain", the poem moves toward a very passionate scene of two lovers bidding farewell to each other, bitterly crying, and when asked about their tears, they say it is the rain which falls on their cheeks. Then, the repetition of the word "rain" goes back to the deep rooted hunger and starvation in the land of Mesopotamia. Thus, the shift from one scene to the other is paralleled with, and indicated by the frequent fall of rain which increases whenever a new dark cloud comes, and gets gentler. This is echoed by the poet's skillful use of the word for onomatopoeic purposes, as he repeats the word three times when he opens a new section, hence new image and idea, and closes by repeating the same word but either twice or once, just like the rain which falls heavily at start, and then decreases and stops.

As with Lawrence, al-Sayyab also exploits some interjections in his poems for almost the same functions. However, the use of interjections in Arabic metrical verse is not random, it is governed by the meter used. Therefore, each interjection used by al-Sayyab whose poetry is strongly metrical and musical, comes in harmony with the kind of meter he uses in each poem. Typical examples of these interjections, which are basically onomatopoeic, can be found in three poems in *Unshudat ul-Matar (The Canticle of the Rain)*. These are: "Al-'Odat u li Jaikur" (العودة لجاكور The Return to Jaikur); "Ru'ya fi 1956" (رؤيا في عام 1956 A Vision in 1956); and "Tha'lab ul Maout" (ثعلب الموت Death Fox). Being onomatopoeic expressions of certain states of feelings, interjections are very useful in articulating and conveying to the reader the intense emotional states the poet feels. Such Arabic interjections as: "Awwahu; Ah; Hawa...ah" are used along with few lexical onomatopoeias in each of the poems mentioned above. In "Al-'Odat u li Jaikur" (The Return to Jaikur), the poet uses "Awwahu" (Oh! Ah!) three times. The first is intended to express his unaccomplished wish that the water may awake in the river: [أواه لو يستيقظ الماء فيه [Ah! If the water may wake up in [the river]] (vol.2: 78). Then he uses the same interjection to express a similar wish that his village may hear the cries of the starving people: [أواه يا جياكور! لو توجدين! / أواه يا جياكور! / لو تسمعين! / أواه يا جياكور! / لو توجدين!] (vol.2: 80). In this poem, the poet uses this particular interjection because it forms a complete foot in the meter he uses in the poem. Since he uses al-Saree' meter which consists of [مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ مُفْعُولَاتُ / مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ مُفْعُولَاتُ]. He is keen on making this interjection fit in the meter. Likewise, in "Ru'ya fi 1956" (A Vision in 1956), the poet uses the same interjection of "Awwahu" (Oh! Ah!), also three times, in addition to another one, namely 'Ah!' as an expression of pain. The use of this interjection serves for almost the same purposes as in the previous poem. In "Tha'lab al-Maout" (Death Fox), the common expression of pain and distress (ah!) is used twice to articulate the poet's helplessness and depression before the grand power of the angel of Death: [ثعلب الموت، فارس الموت، عزرائيل يدنو ويشحذ النصل. / أه منه أوه] [Death's fox, Death's knight; Azrael is coming nigh, grinding its blade / Ah! From him ah!] (vol. 2: 98).

6. Conclusions

The above-discussed poems of Lawrence and al-Sayyab reveal some important matters concerning the differences between the poets, and by extension, between the English and Arabic poetry as far as the employment of onomatopoeia is concerned. First, with regard to frequency, al-Sayyab employs onomatopoeias in his poems more frequently than Lawrence. But the former's onomatopoeias almost always consist of one single word, or two at maximum (except for the non-lexical examples), whereas Lawrence's onomatopoeias are lengthy and elaborated. In "The Ass", for example, the onomatopoeia occupies twenty-one lines of the poem, and it takes seven lines in "She-Goat." In this sense, Lawrence's less frequent usage is compensated by length.

Also, al-Sayyab's onomatopoeias are mainly lexical ones; they exist in the Arabic language, so he does not have to coin or form them. On the other hand, Lawrence's ones are mostly non-lexical; he invents them in imitation of the sound he wants to convey. This issue might be ascribed to some intrinsic features in the languages they used. Arabic language is richer in onomatopoeic words than English. That is why an Arab poet like al-Sayyab would not need to invent such words and expressions.

As for the purposes for which each of the poets used onomatopoeia, Lawrence used it for communication and voicing the non-human rather than for musicality or enhancing the meaning. Most of his onomatopoeias are used to attain that mystical or ritual communication with the non-human world, and to enable his reader share the same experience, whereas musicality is subordinate in his poetry. In contrast, al-Sayyab's onomatopoeias are functioning at the level of music and meaning, being inseparable, due to the requirements of the Arabic *Tafeela* verse (The New Poetry Movement as they call it), whereas the category of communication takes only a marginal part of his onomatopoeias.

This can be ascribed to the musical quality of each discourse. Lawrence is less concerned with musicality simply because his poetry is neither rhymed nor metrical; it is written in free verse. Therefore, his employment of onomatopoeia is far from creating a musical effect, particularly in a form of poetry which pays little heed to meter and rhyme. The only poem where onomatopoeia is used for music is that of "Elephant", where the four onomatopoeias create a sound imitation of the slow pace of this animal. Also, onomatopoeia here does not *create* a musical effect, rather, it echoes the monotonous and heavy movement of the elephant.

In al-Sayyab, the case is very different. He pays the utmost care to musicality in his use of onomatopoeia, because music is the essence of the Arabic *Tafeela* verse of which he has been one of the main innovators and pioneers in the late 1940s. This type of verse observes strict and well-defined metrical patterns called *tafa'eel* (feet). Therefore, a Sayyabian onomatopoeia should be well placed within the metrical pattern of the poem, and at the same time, it must be pleasant to the ear—creating a nice and easy flowing effect to the reader. Music and meaning are inseparable in al-Sayyab because they combine to create startling images, auditory and visual, and this is an essential principle of

Taf'eela verse, which replaces the unified single rhyme of classical Arabic verse with a variety of rhymes. The rigidity of the pattern that must be observed might be the reason why al-Sayyab seldom improvises onomatopoeic expressions of his own, as is the case with Lawrence.

Finally, the most important difference that determines the use of onomatopoeia is cultural one. The Arabic culture and the concept of poetry and its aesthetic aspects have a large impact on the Arab poets and their choice of subjects, themes, symbols, sounds and onomatopoeias. Whereas Lawrence imitates the bray of the donkey, or the sound of the goat, in very long onomatopoeias, being subjects of poetic merits, such sounds are not accepted in the Arabic poetic discourse, except for very rare occasions, as in satirical poems. Neither al-Sayyab, who established with his contemporaries new aesthetic values in poetry (Adonis, 1985; Fadhil, 2002), nor any modern Arab poet would take the risk of imitating the sound of the donkey or that of the goat in a poem, because of the bad associations of the latter² and the explicit condemnation of the former in the Noble Quran as such: "the harshest of voices is the braying of the ass" (31:19).

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Notes

- 1) Arabic classical poetry is written in the form of *qasida* (Arabic poem) which consists of a number of *bayts* (i.e., verses) which have to follow one specific meter and one single rhyme throughout. Each classical *bayt* consists of two parts; *sadr* and *adjz*, each of them cannot stand by itself as a complete unit, as they complete each other.
- 2) For the ugly associations of the goat in Arabic culture see: Al-Jahidh, *Kitabu al-Haywan (The Book of Animals)*, vol. 1, p. 32 and vol.5, pp. 470 -80.