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Decolonizing Modernism in Poetry: A Comparative Study of Abū Nuwās (756 - 814) and T.E Hulme (1883 - 1917)

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Abstract

Through analyzing the works of T.E. Hulme and Abū Nawās, two poets from different cultural and historical backgrounds, this paper challenges the Eurocentric perspective that confines modernism to a literary movement exclusive to twentieth-century Europe. Abū Nuwās was a renowned Arab poet who lived during the Abbasid era in the eighth century, while Hulme is considered one of the founders of modern English poetry. The paper bases its argument on two primary scaffolds: the contemporary and recurrent scholarly call for a decolonization of the concept of Modernism like; El Messeri, Adonis, Feroza Jussawalla, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Aditya Nigam, and others, and the definitions of modernism as a universal phenomenon that include non-Western voices into the discussion of modern literature. The paper then analyzes the modern aspects in the poetry of Abū Nawās from the Dīwan Abī Nuwās: redacted by Aḥmd ‘Abd Almğyd Alğzāly الغزالي المجيد أحمد عبد المجيد الغزالي, compared to the aspects of modern poetry expressed by T.E. Hulme in his critical essay like “A Lecture on Modern Poetry” and “Romanticism and Classicism.” The paper focuses on three significant aspects of modernism: manifestation of modern thought through Metapoetry, linguistic awareness, and imagism.

Keywords: : Modernism, Abū Nawās, T.E. Hulme, Decolonization, Comparative literature.

Introduction:

While it is usually understood that Modernism refers to the timeframe of the first half of the twentieth century, the concept was already introduced to Arabic literature during the Abbasid Caliphate. This paper aims to explore the term “Modernism,” freeing it from the 20th-century timeframe by attempting a comparison between T.E Hulme (1883 - 1917), as the first known poet/critic to publish a modern poem, and the medieval Abbasid Abū Nawās (756 - 814) who is considered the forerunner of a modern movement in poetry during the eighth hijrī century (seven hundred and fifty-six A.D). Abū Nawās rebelled against the conservative tradition of “Jahilī” (pre-Islamic) poetry by introducing new poetic language, subject matter, imagery, and form.

Abū Nawās was a renowned Arab poet who lived during the Abbasid era in the eighth century. He was born in Ahvaz; Iran and his real name was Hasan ibn Hani al-Hakami. However, he is famously known for his sobriquet Abū Nawās (Šams al-Dīn, 2010, 8). He was a prolific writer who wrote about various topics such as love, wine, nature, and politics (Kennedy, 2012,10). He is widely recognized for his wine poetry “*khamriyāt*” (wine poetry) and his erotic poetry which is often homoerotic (Kennedy, 2012,58). Other critics such as Alex Rowell in his *Vintage Humour: The Islamic Wine Poetry of Abū Nawās*, (2019) read his *khamriyāt* as Sufi poems. Moreover, his witty and humorous poetry incorporates satire and irony. Abū Nawās took part in the long-standing Arabic tradition of satirical poetry, which included poet duels that featured savage verbal volleys of insults and lampoons (Kennedy, 2012,150). His poems have been renowned for their musicality and rhythm. Abū Nawās’s literary contributions have significantly impacted modern Arabic poetry. His satire and humor have influenced many Andalusī poets like Ibn Quzman (Monroe, 2013, 239-234). Abū Nawās also influenced contemporary Arabic poets, including Mahmoud Darwīsh and Nizar Qabbanī.

T.E. Hulme (1883 - 1917), on the other hand, was a British poet and critic born in Gratton Hall, Endon, Staffordshire and had lived a short but influential life (Kimball, 1997, 18). He was mainly influenced by French thought especially that of Henri Bergson whom he translated (Gibson, 2011, 275). He was also influenced by German thinkers such as Wilhelm Worringer (Jones, 1960,1). He is considered one of the founders of modern English poetry, along with Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Hulme’s poetry is characterized by its spare, precise language and its rejection of traditional poetic forms and romantic themes (Isaacs, 195, 34). Instead, he sought to capture the essence of

modern life through succinct images that authentically reflect the drastic changes in Europe in the twentieth century.

To comprehensively explore the complexities of modernism, it is essential to approach the concept beyond its commonly known definition, which predominantly associates it with the Western literary tradition of the early 20th century. By transcending these limited boundaries, a more inclusive and decolonized understanding of modernism emerges—recognizing its presence and manifestations in diverse cultural and historical contexts. Considering this expanded perspective, this paper aims to delve into the poetry of Abū Nuwās, a renowned Abbasid-era Arab poet, and examine certain modernist features within his work. By juxtaposing Abū Nuwās's poetry with the concept of Western modernism, with a particular reference to T.E. Hulme, the paper seeks to uncover shared themes, stylistic innovations, and philosophical underpinnings that transcend geographical and temporal limitations, thus contributing to a more nuanced and global understanding of modernism as a multifaceted literary and artistic movement.

This paper also examines the concept of 'decolonization', exploring the strategies employed in this process of decolonizing, while acknowledging both their limitations and efficacy. Following such analysis, the study scrutinizes the notion of modernism as it is presented in Western and Arabic scholarship. The paper posits the problematic nature of exclusively tying modernism to a specific temporal framework; the twentieth century in Europe. The subsequent sections of the paper engage in an analysis of the poetry of Abu Nuwās alongside that of Hulme, drawing explicit parallels between their respective creative expressions. The examination initiates with an exploration of Hulme's articulation of his ideas through critical essays, paralleling Abu Nuwās' manifestation through poetry. In addition, the study explores the linguistic awareness evident in both bodies of work functioning as a medium through which the cultural diversity in modern life is reflected. Moreover, a shared preoccupation with imagism becomes apparent, a concept that is attributed to Hulme and his contemporaries like T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, but apparent in the poetic endeavours of Abu Nuwās. These common features highlight a connection between Hulme's and Abu Nuwās's creative expressions, showing that they both have a shared awareness of how language and imagery work together in modernist literature, and how modernism is a concept that can expand to include more non-western literary voices.

Decolonizing the Eurocentric view of Modernism

Modernism is a term that usually refers to a cultural movement that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe. It was characterized by rejecting traditional norms and conventions in art, literature, and philosophy. Modernism was a response to the rapid changes brought about by industrialization, urbanization, and globalization. It sought to challenge the established order and break free from the shackles of tradition. However, the concept of Modernism has always been Eurocentric, as European thinkers and artists primarily shaped it. This Eurocentric perspective has led to the exclusion of modernist works and texts from non-European contexts, which has resulted in a distorted view of Modern Literature. Longxi et al, in their essay “Comparative Literature Beyond Eurocentrism,” discuss the issue of Eurocentrism of comparative literature and argue that due to the currently perceived structure of modern humanities, world literature remains a predominantly Eurocentric (2022,1). Hence, this article argues for the need to decolonize this Eurocentric view of Modernism by including modern works and texts from different historical and geographical contexts.

The Eurocentric view of Modernism is rooted in the history of colonialism and imperialism. Shohat indicates, in “What is Eurocentrism,” that even after colonialism has formally ended, eurocentrism continues to influence and shape modern behaviors and representations (2009, 138). European powers colonized much of the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries causing the dominance of European culture and discourse (Edward Said). European thinkers and artists were seen as the standard-bearers of modernity, and their ideas and works epitomized Modernism. This view was reinforced by the fact that European countries were the centers of economic, political, and cultural power at the time. Most Western scholarship has identified Modernism in connection to the European cultural upheaval of the Twentieth Century. However, the exclusion of modern works and texts from non-European contexts eventually resulted in a Modernism that is limited to a narrow range of European ideas and works, marginalizing similar modernizing movements that were happening in other parts of the world even if it were much earlier than European modernism as mainstream scholarship understands it. This has led to a situation where non-European cultures are marginalized, and their contributions to Modernism have been ignored. By studying Abū Nawās, a medieval Arabic poet who lived in the eighth century as a modern poet, this paper aims to decolonize the Eurocentric view of Modernism and broaden our understanding of this literary movement.

Abū Nuwās' verse challenged traditional Arab poetry conventions by introducing new themes, styles, and forms had not been present in earlier Arabic poetry. Despite his significant contribution to Arabic literature, he has not been widely recognized as a modernist poet. The Eurocentric perspective of modernism, which had dominated literary scholarship and frequently depicted it as a movement that started in Europe and America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ignores the reality that modernizing ideas had been present in other parts of the world for a considerable amount of time even before they emerged in Europe and America.

Arguing that there have been modernist attempts in Abbasid poetry, decolonizes traditional views on what constitutes modern literature or art. Recognizing that different cultures have their unique expressions of Modernism even since the Middle Ages/Abbasid era, places the Orient in a more modern light— and not a place of antiquity— as Edward Said argues in his *Orientalism* (1978,9). Said argues that the Orient was a “European invention” and that, for a Western visitor, “the main thing was a European representation of the Orient.” Said then asserts that the Orient is not only Europe’s neighbour, but also the home of some of its most ancient, prosperous, and powerful colonies, the cradle of its languages and civilizations, a rival to Europe's cultural dominance, and the source of one of its most persistent and profound stereotypes of the continent. Furthermore, because of its opposing notion, personality, experience, and image, the Orient has contributed to the definition of Europe (or the West). Still, none of this Orient is pure fantasy. European material civilization and culture are inextricably linked to the Orient. (9-10)

The concept of decolonizing modernism highlights the importance of including non-Western voices in the conversation on Modernism. Scholars have recently begun to redefine the concept of Modernism and try to understand it within a broader context, pushing against canonical mainstream definitions. Jean-Michel Rabaté and Angeliki Spiropoulou in *Historical Modernisms Time, History and Modernist Aesthetics* (2021) explore the relationship between time, history, and modernist aesthetics in literature, art, and culture. They examine how modernist artists and writers have sought to capture the complexities of their historical moment through innovative forms and techniques. The authors argue that Modernism was not simply a stylistic movement but a response to the challenges of living in a rapidly changing world. In the introduction of this volume, Rabaté and Spiropoulou posit that they accept that modernism cannot be limited to one country; however, they, along with the contributors to the book, are

skeptical of the notion of “transhistorical” modernism as they believe that modernism must maintain some degree of “historical grounding” (2021, 5). Terry Eagleton, in the preface of Rabaté and Spiropoulou’s book, posits that “The term ‘modern’ derives, ironically enough, from classical antiquity – from the word *modernus*, which became current in the medieval period, and which can be roughly translated as ‘the time of the now.’” Thus, Eagleton opines that “the idea of the new is not new at all” (2021, xxi). The book generally emphasizes the importance of historical context in understanding Modernism. It highlights the ways in which Modernism has been shaped by a range of social, political, and cultural factors and argues for a more inclusive approach to Modernism that recognizes the contributions of non-European cultures. However, the authors do not refer to modernist movements that might have occurred in a different historical and geographical context. Rabaté and Spiropoulou specifically do not refer to Arabic poetry which had modernizing traits. Therefore, the study of Abū Nuwās as a modern poet contributes to decolonizing the common understanding of Modernism by including texts from different geographical and historical contexts in studying and decolonizing Modernism.

Decolonization does not refer to a particular approach, precisely not one that employs Western theories to solve cultural challenges. Aditya Nigam in *Decolonizing Theory: Thinking Across Traditions* (2021) posits that decolonization should not be interpreted as a specific, preferred method of addressing knowledge problems or conducting theory in a postcolonial setting. Instead, it should be understood as a range of potential approaches that could enable us to think critically about the present independently, as an essential first step towards epistemic reconstitution. The concept of independence, according to Nigam, refers to the capacity of non- Western scholarship to address the issues of the contemporary world without seeking conceptual frameworks from Western philosophers and theorists. The concept of “independently” here refers to our ability to handle the day’s issues without seeking conceptual frameworks from Western philosophers and theorists. The idea of decolonization of theory then must be prepared to face head-on the problems of our always turbulent present, even as it is connected to and draws from intellectual history or the history of ideas. Theoretical decolonization, Adytia argues, focuses on self-reliance and intellectual bricoleurs, drawing resources from various sources. It’s not about reciting ancient civilizations’ glory (2021,30). The aim of this paper, thus, is to re-examine the traditional Arabic poetry of Abū Nawās, considering modernist theories advanced by Western and Arabic academics.

Eric Hayot in, *On Literary Worlds* (2012), asserts that over the past two decades, scholars have attempted to broaden the boundaries of modernism by including women authors and extending its reach beyond Anglophone countries. The strategies these scholars deployed include finding individuals who adopt modernist techniques, adding adjectives to modernism, and asserting the existence of multiple modernisms, thereby breaking the historical boundaries of modernism from early twentieth-century Europe. One influential reason why the concept of Modernism, as a category of aesthetic analysis and resemblance, is stable is its canonical curriculum in literature and professional requirements for modernist scholarship. The significance of the decolonization of the English Curriculum, according to Ato Quayson, is that it reconnects English studies and humanities with concerns of “social and racial justice” (2023, i). However, the strategies towards decolonization produce literary value by placing authors and artists into an existing theory of modernism, whose centre remains European (Hayot, 2012,12). Hayot argues that the weaknesses of such strategies can be ascribed to “Eurochronology.” The privileged historical time forms of modernity make it difficult to think beyond European patterns of development. This thinking does not necessarily result from Eurocentrism, but rather from the importance of notions like originality, novelty, and progress in literary history. The non-West’s inability to generate literary history in the modern period is due to the categories governing our understanding of literary history, which have made a history of modernism and modernity impossible to write (2012,13). The concept of Eurochronology is the reason why it is necessary to explore non-Western modern literature outside the timeframe of European Modernism period. It may be true that modern Arabic literature during the 19th and 20th century has been governed by the colonised schemes of thought but older periods of time, like the poetry of Abū Nawās, which scholars always study as classic, can remarkably define the true Arabic modernism.

In the realm of literary analysis, confronting the Eurocentric lens that has long dominated critical theories and interpretations of literary movements poses a formidable challenge. Engaging with literature from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds necessitates a departure from the conventional Eurocentric perspective, demanding a nuanced approach that considers the unique socio-cultural and linguistic contexts in which these literary works are embedded. Feroza Jussawalla, in her seminal work "Family Quarrels: Towards a Criticism of Indian Writing in English" (1983), critiques the limitations of prevailing criticism, contending that it often falls short due to its reliance on

imitation and subjective biases (1983, x). Jussawalla advocates for a "holistic" criticism that embraces both form and content, emphasizing the importance of understanding literature within its broader social and linguistic milieu (1983, 45). As we navigate the complexities of literary analysis, Jussawalla's call for a holistic approach becomes particularly relevant when examining the works of poets from diverse backgrounds, such as Abū Nawās and T.E. Hulme. This approach becomes a powerful tool in dismantling the Eurocentric view of modernism, allowing us to break away from the traditional narrative that confines modernist criticism to a one-dimensional framework rooted solely in Western interpretation and theorization. By adopting this perspective, we embark on a journey towards decolonizing the Eurocentric view of modernism, opening new avenues for understanding and appreciating the rich tapestry of literary expressions beyond the constraints of a Western-centric paradigm.

The concept of Modernism in the Arab world has been influenced by its understanding of Western scholars because of years of colonization; the definition of Modernism, especially when attached to the late 19th century, has been a question of identity and self-understanding. Hence, Western Modernism has been widely explored and, most importantly, critiqued. The renowned Egyptian critic and sociologist 'Abd al-Wahāb Elmessiri, in *Epistemological Bias in the Physical and Social Sciences* (2006), argued that Westerners have adopted the Western cultural paradigm without realizing its implications and impact on society, lifestyle, and values. This paradigm, which has achieved materialist victories through annexation and conquest, has given Western peoples a high standard of living and expanded self-confidence. Westerners believe their concept of the world is the highest point of development, and Western sciences are universal. This has led to a shift in the Islamic world's understanding of the world and its cultural heritage (2006, 17). Elmessiri also posits that the cultural and literary revival, also referred to as the Renaissance, in the Third World, including the Islamic world, has been centered around catching up with the West. This is evident in secular liberal thought in the Arab World, which primarily aimed to import Western thought and theories, adopting Western cultural paradigms. Elmessiri argued that some Arab intellectuals were Westernized, while others were moderate. However, generally the moderate team were uncritical propagators of Westernization and advocated for modernization according to Western standards. Elmessiri in, *ālhḍāth w mā b'd ālhḍāth* الحداثة وما بعد الحداثة (Modernism and Post Modernism) (2003), argues that Western Modernism has achieved many positive qualities for the Western man

when it comes to materialistic accomplishments and understanding. However, according to Elmessiri, Modernism has produced a new logic through which man has been manipulated by almost everything. Western philosophy, he elaborated, has focused on the end of history and the vanishing of humanity, literature has adopted topics like destruction, and sociology has pushed concepts like stereotyping and materialistic values, which eventually affected the essence of humanity and turned man into what is closer to a machine (2003,16). Elmessiri has not denied the positive sides of Western Modernism; instead, he presented an understanding of what it has produced. He argued that the speed of economic development has turned the center of the world to be the product instead of the human, or as he calls it in *āl'sthlākyah wāl'mbryālyah ālnfsyah* الاستهلاكية والامبريالية النفسية (consumerism and psychological imperialism), the consumption frenzy. This frenzy has affected the whole literary system and the society in which this literature is produced. Therefore, he called for a new type of Modernism in the Arabic world, one that adopts the positive side of Western Modernism while keeping humanity alive. The influence of Western colonization on many Arabic Nations has affected how Arab authors understand concepts like Modernism. It also directed scholars and poets to mainly study Modernism as a Western tradition later replicated in the Arab world, hence neglecting the authentic Modernist Arabic Movement that took place during the time of the Abbasid Caliphate. A progenitor of this modernizing movement was Abū Nawās. Elmessiri argues that Arabic literature needs a Modernism that fits the contexts where Arabic literature exists (200).

Many Arab scholars and authors have attempted to understand and define Modernism. Adonīs أدونيس, a Syrian Arab modern poet, in *Fāthī Lnhāyāt al-Qarn* فاتحة لنهايات القرن (*Ushering to the End of the Century*) in 1998, defines Modernism as a cognitive position that resulted in changing the lifestyle, this position is based on the belief that the human is the center of the world and the source of values, and that knowledge is an exploration to the unknown. This definition focuses on the mental status of Modernism as it places the human as the source of everything. In contrast to the Arabic belief that the source of knowledge and values is always mysterious, in other words, divine, Adonīs defines it from a humanistic approach. He also explains that Hadāthah (Modernism) is the emergence of movements, theories, new ideas, and systems that lead to the deconstruction of old ideologies and the beginning of new ones. This definition describes the process through which Modernism happens as a revolution, not necessarily a violent, tangible one,

but as one that eventually leads to a transformation to a better tradition (1998, 321). In *Zaman Al-še'r* زمن الشعر (*The Age of Poetry*) in 2005, Adonis goes on extending his exploration of the term, suggesting that a modernist poet should not only speak about the necessity of change but must adopt it. He continues that modernism is more than just writing a poem that looks modern; it is a stance, a mindset, and a way of understanding (2005, 45). This means that a modern poet should embrace all that Modernism offers, its mystery and messiness. That is why he also elaborates that a poet cannot write a modern poem unless he fully absorbs the old and its collapse, at least in his mind. The poet, he says, should suffer from chaos and survive (2005, 54). The whole concept concludes that Modernism, for him, is a chaotic ideology.

Besides Adonis's concept of modernism as chaotic, it was also viewed as a newer form of creation. Yūsef Al- Hāl , يوسف الخال, a modernist Syrian poet, in *Al-ḥdātah fy al-še'r* الحداثة في الشعر (*Modernism in Poetry*) in 1998 has defined Modernism in poetry as creativity that is different from the older one and that it is not tied to a timeframe. The motivation, according to him, is that our perspective on life has changed, hence reflected in a new way of expression. Modernism for Yūsef Al- Hāl, like Adonīs, is not about the form of the poem, it is then a new attitude towards life and towards poetry (1998, 84-85). The view of Modernism as a state of mind, a stance, a perspective to life, is an extremely critical concept when identifying works as modern. When looking at a poem, the form can be revolutionary, but the question should be whether it shows a deeper understanding and reflection of life. Sāmy Swydān, a professor of Arabic literature, has argued in *Jusūr Al-ḥdātah Al-mō'lqah* جسور الحداثة المعلقة (*The Hanging Bridges of Modernism*) in 1997 that the essence of Modernism is breaking the tradition, deviating to a path that has not been explored before. He claims that this deviation might reach to a point where the literary work should seem unoriginal (1997, 10). So, the whole concept revolves around the continuous state of rebellion and exploration to find a new original form.

The concept of modernism, however, is problematic and complex and difficult to define. 'Abd āllh al-Ġdāmy عبد الله الغدامي, an Arabic critic has argued in *muqārbah tašrīḥyyah l nuṣuṣ ṣe'ryah mu'aṣerah* مقاربة تشريحية لنصوص شعرية معاصرة (*An anatomical approach to contemporary poetic texts*), 2008, that one of characteristics of what we can call a (term) is that it is agreed upon, at least by most scholars which is not the case for Modernism. This makes the interpretation of Modernism more of an individual vision than

a shared cognitive perception. He illustrates that some scholars might define Modernism as a synonym for fierce experimentation and rebellion against traditional thought. Others might define it as a synonym for transformation in the form and performance of the artwork (2008,10). This approach to understanding Modernism is one of the most applicable ones, given the many different definitions and understandings that we would not find when exploring other terms like romanticism and classicism, for example. al-Ġdāmy then argues that Modernism is problematic because it cannot separate itself from the individual who created it nor the time it was made. For instance, scholars in the Arabic literary tradition use terms such as the Modernism of Adonīs¹ or the Modernism of the fifties (2008,11). He then posits that Modernism should be understood as a creative equation between the fixed and the variable, in other words, between the timeless and the temporary. Thus, Modernism always seeks to develop the existing art by removing all the temporary features, keeping all the timeless characteristics, and passing them on to the next generation (2008, 13). Al-Ġdāmy then differentiates between what is modern and what is contemporary or new. He argues that what is new today will be old in the future. Modernism, in contrast, does not get old, hence, what is modern now, will always be modern. So, the opposite of being modern is being static (2008,15).

Abū Nuwās's Poetry and Hulme's Essays as Manifestos for Modernism.

Unlike the manifestos of Modernism that were popular in Europe in the beginning of the twentieth century and came in the form of articles, papers, or lectures, Abū Nuwās and his contemporaries have expressed their views on modernizing poetry using poetry itself as a medium. T.E. Hulme introduced the features of modern poetry in his 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry,' which was delivered in 1908 to the Poet's Club. Hulme, in "A Lecture," advocates his views on introducing a new form of verse: a verse that is full of what he called "modern spirit" (1908, 52). Hulme argues that the new age must have its own forms of expression that harmonize with the changes that occurred in the early years of the twentieth century in general and in poetry specifically. Poetry, in his view, has been based on the idea that there is no "absolute truth," an idea that was greatly challenged in modern times, and that is how he sees poetry should be treated (1908, 53). Hulme, in "A Lecture," argued that

¹ The term connotes the poetry written with the style of modernism Adonis was adopting.

English poetry needs new forms of expression to move forward, advocating that “verse forms, like manners, and like individuals, develop and die” (1908, 50). Hulme then illustrates the way he thinks poetry should be dealt with by referring to the French *Vers Libre* (Free Verse):

I came to the subject of verse from the inside rather than from the outside. There were certain impressions which I wanted to fix. I read verse to find models, but I could not find any that seemed exactly suitable to express that kind of impression, except perhaps a few jerky rhythms of Henley, until I came to read the French *vers-libre*, which seemed to exactly fit the case (1908, 50).

Hulme admits that he found something of his views on poetry in the free verse. He describes it as the only thing he read that could express what he wanted to articulate through poetry. However, he then indicates that free verse differs from the poetry he aspires to. He states that:

The length of the line is long and short, oscillating with the images used by the poet; it follows the contours of his thoughts and is free rather than regular; to use a rough analogy, it is clothes made to order, rather than ready-made clothes ... The kind of verse I advocate is not the same as *vers-libre*, I merely use the French as an example of the extraordinary effect that an emancipation of verse can have on poetic activity (1908, 52).

What Hume argues then is that modern poetry is not necessarily a free verse; it has something of it, and that is the poet has control over the length of the line. Therefore, he is just using the example of the French *vers libre* to show how much emancipation can affect poetic activity. Hulme additionally argues that regular rhythms in poetry stem from the days when poetry was “a religious incantation,” and “rhyme and meter were used as aids to the memory” and that is why modern poetry should not keep a mechanism that suited the old times. The unrestraint technique will make each poem not expectable in the length of the line or the rhyme, making the reader more involved and liberating the poet from a fixed metrical system. Hulme then moves to what is probably the most crucial idea in “A Lecture” on modern poetry; he claims that “Poetry is an abstract thing is a very different matter, and has its own life, quite apart from meter as a convention” (Hulme 55). Poetry, for Hulme, is the direct way of communication, while prose is the conventional one. The main difference between poetry and prose is that

poetry communicates through images that always arrest the reader's mind. In contrast, prose jumps to the desired conclusion with the least effort possible. Therefore, for Hulme, images are first created in poetry, where they can "arrest you, and make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process." Images are then used in prose when they become automatic to the mind, so prose is indirect because "it uses images that have died and become figures of speech" (1908, 55).

in contrast to Hulme, who opted for a more direct approach in manifesting his views on poetry through critical essays, Abū Nawās uniquely conveyed his perspectives on poetry and its composition through the medium of poetry itself. The way Abū Nawās introduced his views on how Abbasid poetry should be written is similar to what Samuel Coleridge and William Wordsworth did when they wrote their Lyrical Ballads in 1798; they both used poetry to announce the new poetic style. Abū Nuwās attempted to shift from the common traditions of poetic forms into personalizing each poem to eventually express the unique status of the poet and the subject matter. However, he kept the general outline to avoid escaping from poetry as a genre. His modification to the poem's structure expresses the issues he and other poets wanted to overcome (Darwīsh, 1987, 107).

نشوتان

لا تَبْكِي لَيْلَى وَلَا تَطْرَبِي إِلَى هِنْدٍ وَأَشْرَبِي عَلَى الْوَرْدِ مِنْ خَمْرَاءِ كَالْوَرْدِ
كَأْساً إِذَا انْحَدَرَتْ فِي حَلْقِ شَارِبِهِ أَجْدَتُهُ حُمْرَتَهَا فِي الْعَيْنِ وَالْحَدِيدِ
مِنْ كَفِّ جَارِيَةٍ مَمْسُوقَةِ الْقَدِّ فَالْخَمْرُ ياقوتَةٌ وَالْكَأْسُ لؤلؤةٌ
خَمْرًا فَمَا لَكَ مِنْ سُكْرَيْنِ مِنْ بُدِّ تَسْقِيكَ مِنْ عَيْنِهَا خَمْرًا وَمِنْ يَدِهَا

Two Ecstasies

Don't weep over Laila and rejoice by Hend.
Drink what is red like roses instead
A glass when slides down the throat,
Reddens the eyes and the cheeks.
Wine is a ruby, and the cup is a pearl.
In the hands of a servant with a svelte body
Serves you wine from her hands and eyes.
So, you get drunk twice. (my trans.)

¹ *Dīwan Abī Nuwās*, 27

In the first line, Abū Nuwās asks to stop writing poetry that weeps over Laila or being enchanted by Hend, which were common themes in *Jahilī* poetry and a classic opening for a poem. In the second line, he invites poets to drink wine which is also an invitation to focus their poetry on wine poetry which was a popular theme in his poetry and that, for him, an expression of the modern lifestyle and mindset. The first and the second lines (the first and the second hemistiches in Arabic) show a contradiction between two eras that Abū Nuwās wish to exchange for one another. One era that is stuck in old images, subjects, and metaphors, and another one that expresses the advancement that Arabs witnessed in the Abbasid period.

In the following lines, Abū Nuwās asks other poets to quit borrowing the old meanings and topics like crying over the beloved and live life to the fullest. He goes on to describe the features of this hedonic life where he does better things like drinking wine served by a servant who is so beautiful, which makes him get drunk twice, one by the look she gives him and the other by the wine itself. Abū Nuwās's poetry contains many invitations for other poets to look around and enjoy all the aspects of the new civilization and express the surrounding environment full of temptations. (Gharīb, 1983, 88) These lines can also be a good representation of Abū Nuwās's attitude towards poetry as he always looked at what is new in life and, therefore, should be represented in poetry.

Abū Nuwās, in the openings of his poems, usually critiqued older poetry and argued for what poets should write about. One feature that distinguished older poetry was the beginnings. Abū Nuwās meant writing his critique about poetry in the first line to clarify his point. Critics like Abū hlāl āl'skrī (died 1005) in *Al-Ṣīnā'ātīn* الصناعتين, edited and published in 1999 have widely admired the openings of Abū Nuwās's poetry saying that he wrote the best opening lines of poems ever written by a modern/ classical poet (1999, 437). A great example is:

صديقة الروح
صفه الطلول بلاغة القدم فاجعل صفاتك لابنة الكرم
لا تُخدعن عن التي جعلت سقم الصحيح وصحة السقم¹

¹ Diwan Abū Nuwās 57

The Soulmate

Describing the ruins is a tradition of the past.

Give your words to the daughter of the vineyards (the wine).

Don't ignore it as it is a

Cure for the ill and illness for the healthy (my trans.)

The openings of pre-Islamic poetry were primarily about 'l būkā' 'lā 'l 'tlāl البكاء على الأطلال (crying over the ruins). Abū Nuwās starts "The Soulmate" by declaring that a poem that weeps over the ruins is outdated; in their opening lines, poets should write about wine instead. Abū Nuwās, according to 'Abd al-qādr al-quṭ in ḥarkāt al-tǧdīd fī al-š'r al-'bāsī حركات التجديد في الشعر العباسي (Renewal Movements in Abbasid Poetry), was inviting his contemporaries to adopt contemporary content and to quit Bedouin traditions. In his meta-poems, it is evident that he was deploying wine as a symbol and a parallel for the more civil life and the new poetic attitudes. He called for a break away from ancient/ outdated poetic traditions (n.d, 50). He urges poets to convey what is happening around them rather than focusing just on the past and recycling metaphors from bygone eras. Hence, Abū Nuwās criticized those who did not see that life had changed and did not express that in their poetry. He wrote:

أيا باكي الأطلال غَيْرَها البلى بَكَيتَ بِعَيْنٍ لا يَجِفُّ أها غَرْبُ
أَتَنَعْتُ داراً قَدْ عَفَّتْ وَتَغَيَّرَتْ¹ فَأَني لَما سألَمْتُ مِن نَعْتِها حَرْبُ

Oh, crier over the ruins!

You cried with an eye that never dries.

Are you crying over a home that has been replaced?

I avoided a war by avoiding crying over it (my trans.)

Sometimes, not only does AN refute the *Jahilī* poetic traditions or call for new ways of expression, but he also transcends that by attacking the old lifestyle of the Arabs. In the following lines, he is praying for all the old to vanish and mocking the trends of the ancient Arabic life, arguing that it should not be a part of life in the Abbasid period (Darwīsh1989, 90):

¹ Diwan Abū Nuwās 10

ساقٍ وخمر

دَعِ الْأَطْلَالَ تَسْفِيهَا الْجَنُوبُ وَتُبْلِي عَهْدَ جِدَّتِهَا الْخُطُوبُ
دَعِ الْأَلْبَانَ يَشْرَبُهَا رِجَالٌ رَقِيقُ الْعَيْشِ بَيْنَهُمْ غَرِيبٌ
فَأَطِيبُ مِنْهُ صَافِيَةٌ شَمُولٌ يَطُوفُ بِكَأْسِهَا سَاقٍ أَدِيبٌ¹

Wine and a servant

Let the ruins be ruined.

And decay over time.

Leave the milk for men.

Who does not know any better?

For what is better is a clear wine

Served by a good-looking servant (my trans.)

Abū Nuwās's hatred for Bedouin Arabic culture was another way of expressing how poetry should move from traditional themes like horse riding and drinking milk to more contemporary and reflective themes like wine. Unlike Hume, Abū Nuwās may not have written a manifesto for his approach to poetry, but he has used poetry to offer new alternatives. Through forging verse, he created and rationalized his *khāmryyāt* and other aspects of Modernism, including language, imagery, and form.

Cultural inclusions in the Modern poetry of Abū Nuwās and Hulme.

The Language of Abū Nuwās's poetry shows a modernist linguistic awareness that reappeared in twentieth-century European poetry. The poetry of Abū Nuwās was written with a linguistic approach through which he intended to adapt language to serve the purpose of each poem and make his poetry accessible to the audience of the new age. Language for Abū Nuwās was not taken for granted. He was aware of the purpose of his poetry and the tools to deliver this purpose. Jeff Wallace, in his *Beginning Modernism*, 2011, discusses the idea of the linguistic turn that happened in the early twentieth century (2011,128). The wave of what he called "modernist awareness" has made people aware of language. As Wallace puts it, this means language is "no longer regarded as an empty vessel into which we pour our previously conceived thoughts and ideas; rather, it is the material in and through which these thoughts and ideas are conceived" (2011,129). This awareness can be found in the poetry of Abū Nawās; he used simple everyday language in most of his wine and love poetry and then

¹ Diwan Abū Nuwās 11

used philosophical terms in poems presenting a sophisticated image or idea. One of the most important examples of linguistic awareness in the poetry of Abū Nuwās is the implementation of words of other languages in his poems.

Abū Nuwās and his contemporaries, as Darwīsh mentioned, did not make a distinction between the poetic and the non-poetic language to the extent that they even felt free to borrow non-Arabic words, slang, or any word they needed to serve a purpose they aimed for (1987, 33). *Ibn Rāshīk in Al-omda fy mḥāsn ālš'r wa ādābh* (The Mayor; the Merits and Etiquette of Poetry), 1953, stated that this contrasted with what was known at the time that poetry has a language system that poets should not deviate from (1953, 128). Before the generation of poets of Abū Nuwās and his contemporaries, it was known that poetry has a set of words and structures and that poets should not break out of the poetic language as they know it.

أو أجد الفيوج كتاب الأمير وختم القراطيس بالجرس¹

The word 'بالجرس' is borrowed from Al-Nabtēyyah.² It means black mud (Darwīsh, 1987, 33).

فمن رأى النيل رأى العين من كذب فما رأى النيل إلا في البواقيل³

The word البواقيل in this line is an example of borrowing from the 'Qebteyyah' language⁴.

والمهرجان المُدار لوقته الكرار
والنوكرور الكبار وجشن جاهنبار
وآبسال الوهار وخرة إيران شار⁵

Most words in these lines are borrowed from Persian like 'جشن، المهرجان، نوكرور' which are known to be Persian feasts. Also, 'إيران شار' is Persian for "dear Persia."

¹ Quoted in Al-Arabī Darwīsh, in *Abū Nuwās wa Qadeyyat al-Hadātha' fī 'al-Shi'r* (Abū Nuwās and the issue of Modernism in poetry). P.33

² (Nabati language) is a variation of slang spoken by the inhabitants of an old kingdom that existed in the desert of Sinai, Jordan, and some parts of the Arabic peninsula (169 B.C. - 106 A.D.).

³ Same source P.34,

⁴ Qebteyyah' is the most recent development of language spoken by the ancient Egyptians and البواقيل means jars.

⁵ Quoted in *Al-bayān w Al-tbyīn* البيان و التبيين, *Al Gaḥēz*, p.141

It was logical for the poetic language to alter due to the massive social and cultural changes that took place in the Abbasid era, not only in the borrowing of unusual words but in the ways, they are used to convey meaning. Muhammad Kōrd ‘alī in *Rsā’el Al-bulagā’* رسائل البلغاء (Rhetoricians Messages) in 1908, wrote that the old critic Ibn Šaraf Al Qairawānī states that Abū Nuwās was the first to break the standard as he left what the inheritance of the old and made funny of the serious and the easy of the difficult. He was biased to what people are familiar with, so they loved his poetry and kept it in their memories (1908, 248).

In the poetry of Abū Nuwās, the change in language cannot be seen as a spontaneous action but it was intended and connected to meaning he wants to deliver and the topic it aims to present. If, for example, the story told in a poem was not told by or about Arabs, it is logical to use words that eventually serves the purpose. Ibn Al-Romī has made a notice that meaning for Abū Tammām, for example, was the ultimate goal and that he did not care much about the words to use in order to deliver the meaning (Ibn Rašīk 1:86). Therefore, the need for expression is connected to Modernism in word choice. (Darwīsh 36)

Darwīsh, in *al-Šo‘arā’ Al-Mudaṭūn fī Al-‘asr Al-Abbasī* الشعراء المحدثون في العصر العباسي (Modernist Poets in the Abbasid Age), posits that critics have divided the poetry of Abū Nuwās to two main parts when it comes to its language, the first is the “serious poetry” in which he uses a heavy, traditional language that is close to the classical. It is essential to mention the use of language in this case is aligned with the topics. The other part is the poetry in which he is trying to create a new language system that is easy and inspired by the language people speak (78). Abū Nuwās then always used language as a tool that can alter depending on the meaning intended to be communicated and the poem’s subject matter.

T.E. Hulme left little poetry behind, and his significant contribution to modern poetry was the critical essays. However, we can see that other European modernists in the twentieth century employed this element of deploying vocabulary from other languages. A famous example is Hulme’s contemporary, T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land.” Roxana Brisanu, in *T.S. Eliot’s The Waste Land as a Place of Intercultural Exchange: A Translation Perspective*, posits that Eliot employed the technique of “collage” by gathering “various languages, cultures, temporal and geographic spaces to annul the mimetic representation of reality” (75). Abdul Fattah Abu Ssaydeh

mentioned in his Article *Translating Intertextuality in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land* that he used twenty-three quotations in their original language, and others translated into English (340). According to T.S. Eliot, modern civilization is complex and diverse, and that is why “modern writers must be comprehensive, and this requires them to be “more allusive, more indirect” (1960:248). “The Waste Land” is a poem that explores the fragmentation of modern society, using multiple languages to convey its message. Eliot employs various languages, such as French, German, and Italian, in his poem to highlight the cultural diversity of modern society. For instance, in the first section of the poem titled “The Burial of the Dead,” Eliot suddenly switches to German in one line that says: “Bin gar keine Russin, Stamm aus Litauen, echt Deutsch” (he translates as) I’m not Russian at all, I’m from Lithuania, really German). Few lines later he writes adds few lines in German as well:

Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilest du?
(The wind blows fresh
To the homeland
My Irish, child,
where are you staying)

In the same section he uses French in this line “You! hypocrite lecteur! — mon semblable, —mon frère!” which means) You! Hypocrite reader! -my similar, -my brother!) In another section titled “What the Thunder Said,” Eliot uses Italian words like “Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina” to create a sense of mystery and intrigue. This phrase translates to (Then he hid himself in the fire that refines him). Using foreign languages and borrowing from other texts in different languages adds an exotic element to the poem and reflects the diversity and multi-culturalism in modern society. It also adds weight and gives the work an epic, timeless quality. In the post-war era, Eliot aimed to reflect the fragmentation of the modern mind by communicating his thoughts in a different language that was sometimes borrowed from other texts like Dante’s *Inferno*.

Both Eliot and Abū Nuwās ' poetry use multilingualism to convey a feeling they both were aware of. They have made conscious choices and are aware of the effect they are aiming for. However, while Eliot uses multiple languages to highlight the fragmentation of modern society, Abū Nawās uses other languages to emphasize cultural diversity. In the poetry of Abū Nuwās,

the change in language cannot be seen as a spontaneous action but was intended and connected to the meaning he wants to deliver and the topic it aims to present. If, for example, the story told in a poem was not said by or about Arabs, it is logical to use words that eventually serve the purpose. Ibn Al-Romī a notice that meaning for Abū Tammām, for example, was the ultimate goal and that he did not care much about the words to use to deliver the meaning (Ibn Rašīk, 981,1:86). Therefore, the need for expression is connected to Modernism in word choice (Darwīsh,1987, 36)

Imagism in the poetry of Abū Nawās and T.E. Hulme

Imagism was a movement in the early 20th century that focused on the quality of images, a move that T.S. Eliot, in a lecture at Washington University in St. Louis in 1953, claims to be the first organized literary movement in the English language. Rene Taupin, in *L’Influence du symbolisme français sur la poesie Americaine (de 1910 1920)*, posits that imagism is more accurately to be considered as the association of a few poets who agreed on a small number of principles. In ‘A Lecture on Modern Poetry,’ T.E. Hulme argues the distinction between two kinds of communication, direct language and conventional language claiming that poetry is direct language as it “deals in images” while the indirect language is prose because it “uses images that have died and become figures of speech” (1908, 55) He argues that images are the direct way of communication because they capture the mind, in contrast, figures of speech, while help with the flow of the reading, they require the least amount of mental effort. Hulme also asserts that poets must constantly create new images because their “sincerity may be measured by the number of his images” (1908, 55).

Abū Nuwās’s use of images poems is his use of imagery. Ābī mnzūr mḥmd bn makrm, in “mḥtār āl- aḡāny fy āl-aḥbār w ālthāny مختار الأغاني في الأخبار و التهاني (A Selection from the Book of Songs), 1966, describes the images of Abū Nuwās as “when reading Abū Nuwās, it is as if you see what he says” (3:279). He is known to be one of the best, if not the best, modern poets to create images that can make readers visualize what they read, as stated by Al-Mobarred in *Al kāmél الكامل*(The Complete) (2:761). The use of images, its rationale, and its purpose can be compared in the following two poems by T.E Hulme and Abū Nuwās.

‘Autumn.’

A touch of cold in the Autumn night –
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge.
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak but nodded,
And roundabout was the wistful stars.
With white faces like town children.

‘Autumn’ is arguably the first modern poem written in English. While poets such as Thomas Hardy at the beginning of the twentieth century were still using the already-tried poetic forms like the sonnet form or the quatrain, T.E. Hulme presents a seven lines stanza that constitutes the whole poem, not following a regular rhyme scheme and paint a singular image of a person describing his walk at night during autumn.

The first line gives an image and a sensation and is followed by a movement/ action. The speaker then mentions that the walk is abroad, which could mean that he might have left the city to go to a place where he can see such scenery, probably the countryside. The poem starts with a sentence that is not even complete; it is more like a thought that transfers the sharp image and the sensation and defines the mood. The third line shows how images are treated in Hulme's poetry. It starts with the image of the moon, which might open the gate for the readers’ minds to think about the beauty of it, but he quickly brings it back to the ground by saying that it looks like a red farmer’s face, which is an unusual and fresh image. He then nods and does not even speak about it, leaving us with it, or maybe he has thought that there is nothing fundamentally transcendental about what he has seen, so he just takes a glance and keeps walking. In the last two lines, the word ‘wistful’ gives character to the stars he sees, which he describes as the faces of town children. Again, Hulme is dealing with images the opposite way previous poets would; he looks up to the sky and does not see dreamy, imaginary creatures but the “wistful stars” with faces resembling two “town children.”

The distinguishing characteristic of the poem is the clear and sharp image that it draws. The suggestive power in such a short poem is the natural break in Hulme’s poetry, a break from the overblown sentimentality in romantic poetry as the poem presents a clear and sharp image that allows you, as a reader, to decide what you feel about them. It also shows how the images

created by the poet should always capture the reader's attention and avoid drifting into the abstract world. The same techniques can be found in the following poem of Abū Nuwās:

الشَّمْسُ فِي بَاطِيهِه
اتْرُكِ الْأَطْلَالَ لَا تَعْبَأْ بِهَا
إِنَّهَا مِنْ كُلِّ بُؤْسٍ دَانِيهِه
وَإِشْرَابِ الْخَمْرِ عَلَى تَحْرِيمِهَا
إِنَّمَا دُنْيَاكَ دَارٌ فَانِيهِه
مِنْ عُقَارٍ، مَنْ رَأَاهَا قَالَ لِي
صِيدَتِ الشَّمْسُ لَنَا فِي بَاطِيهِه¹

The Sun in a Wine Cup

Leave the ruins unconcerned.

It is close to all the misery.

And drink alcohol on it is prohibition

Your life is a mortal abode.

Of wine, those who saw it told me:

The sun was caught for us in a wine cup.

Abū Nuwās starts the poem with one of his famous openings, rejecting the old tradition of 'l būkā' 'lā 'l 'tlāl (crying over the ruins)². He is addressing a friend, probably another poet since he is telling him to leave the old tradition because it brings misery. Here, he is also referring to hanging on to the past in life and poetry. Then Abū Nuwās advises his friend to drink wine even if it is religiously prohibited because life is a mortal inhabitation made of wine. The wine in the poetry of Abū Nuwās is more than a drink. However, it is a representation of modern life. Then he mentions that whoever saw this life, or the wine cup, has seen that it is true that this cup has captured all that life is about. The moon in Hulme's "Autumn" is employed in the same way the sun is employed in Abū Nuwās' poem The Sun in a Wine Cup. The purpose of both was to use elements like the Sun and the Moon, which are always used in poetry as a door for the poem reader to the imagination but to

¹ *Dīwan Abī Nuwās*, 119

² AL-Bōkā' 'ālā Al- Atlāl (crying over the ruins; my trans.) is a Jahīlī poetic tradition where poets open their poems by describing the house of the beloved. It was a popular the poets mention the place of the house, its surroundings and the fact that is now deserted and rain has fallen over its remains, so grass have grown, and animals have taken it as a place to live.

tie them down to a very common image from life like the wine cup for Abū Nuwās and the farmer's face for Hulme. So, imagination will be interrupted, and the focus will be on the image presented and its effect.

The understanding of Modernism as a timeless practice that took place during several historical periods rationalized comparing two poets with more than one thousand years in between. Abū Nawās and T.E. Hulme, however, belong to extremely separate points historically, they share similar conceptions about poetry, expression and, most importantly, they share the same modern spirit that led Abū Nawās and his contemporaries to revolutionize Arabic poetry. Comparing Abū Nawās and T.E. Hulme has shown many aspects and ideas both poets share and employ in their work. Many modernist aspects like meta-poetry, linguistic awareness, multi-culturalism, and imagism were found as significant components of the poetry of Abū Nawās and Hulme and other modern poets. This comparison decolonizes the concept of Modernism as a European concept and expands it to include more literature from different cultural and geographical contexts. Decolonization, as Aditya Nigam argued in *Decolonizing Theory: Thinking Across Traditions* (2021), is not about producing concepts in different languages; it's an "inwardly directed search for some pure, uncontaminated indigenous self" (2021,30). The issue then is not just attempting to break away from Western thought and creating an "indigenous" literary theory; it is about finding, in the history of literature, what defines literature as being what it is (2021,30). In Arabic literature, Abū Nawās is an example of a mode of modernism that is marginalized due to the bias, argued by El Messiri, 2006 and the failure of criticism argued by Feroza, 1983. This calls for a more inclusive perspective towards literature from around the world that is not fairly treated because of barriers of place and time.

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إنهاء استعمار مفهوم الحداثة في الشعر: دراسة مقارنة لأبي نواس (756 - 814) وتي إي
هيوم (1883 - 1917)

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باحث دكتوراه - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها

كلية البنات للآداب والعلوم والتربية - جامعة عين شمس - مصر

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المستخلص:

في هذه الورقة، يتم تحليل أعمال الشعر لكل من تي إي هيوم وأبو نواس، وهما شاعران يتأثريان من خلفيات ثقافية وتاريخية متنوعة. يهدف البحث إلى تحدي المفهوم الأوروبي التقليدي الذي يعتبر الحداثة ظاهرة حصرية لحركة أدبية أوروبية في القرن العشرين. يعتمد البحث على دعامين رئيسيين؛ الأولى هي الدعوة المتكررة من خلال البحوث العلمية لتحرير تصوّرنا الحالي للحداثة، والثانية هي تعريف الحداثة كظاهرة عالمية تشمل أصواتاً أدبية غير غربية. يتناول البحث الجوانب الحديثة في شعر أبو نواس من خلال تحليل قصائد مختارة من "ديوان أبو نواس: تحقيق أحمد عبد المجيد الغزالي". يتم مقارنة هذه الجوانب مع سمات الشعر الحديث التي عبّر عنها تي إي هيوم في مقالاته النقدية، مثل "محاضرة في الشعر الحديث" و"الرومانسية والكلاسيكية". يتركز البحث على ثلاثة جوانب رئيسية للحداثة في الشعر؛ وهي عملية التأسيس لفكرة الشعر الحديث من خلال الشعر نفسه (الميتا شعر)، والوعي اللغوي، والحركة التصويرية. باستخدام هذه الطريقة التحليلية، يتم تقديم حجة تسلط الضوء على تنوع الحداثة الأدبية وتفعيلها في أصوات غير غربية، مما يسهم في تصوير الحداثة كظاهرة عالمية تتجاوز الحدود الثقافية والجغرافية.