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Slavery and Colonisation in the Poetry of M. Al-Fayturi and Langston Hughes

Introduction

In "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality," Aijaz Ahmad celebrates the efforts to designate the contemporary literature of Africa as postcolonial, and thus to make it available for being read according to the protocols that metropolitan criticism has developed for reading what it calls minority literature.[1] Integral to Ahmad's thesis is an attempt to find common ground between postcolonial and minority literatures which could be pursued in the black poetry tradition in Africa and the United States. Taking Ahmad's argument into consideration, it becomes relevant to combine the poetry of the black minority in America with the postcolonial poetic tradition in Africa in order to explore common areas of interest that characterise the poetry of both sides. While the painful ordeal of slavery and colonisation turned the black people of Africa into a nation of exiles and outcasts living in diaspora, the same experience brings about enormous consequences which bind them together, triggering literary interaction between black writers from different parts of the world.

In addition to minority and postcolonial considerations, blacks in Africa and the United States are bound to each other by their common colour and their tragic legacy of slavery and oppression. They also share a history of suffering and an ancestral memory of agony and pain reflected in their literatures and folklore traditions. In "Black Nationalism Since Garvey," John Bracey establishes an analogy between the black experience in the United States and the history of the black people in Africa:

> The black experience in America can be viewed as similar to the colonial experience of blacks in Africa, the West Indies, and Latin America. The historical process in these areas—colonization, resistance, accommodation, nationalism, decolonization, nationhood—is operable in Black America. The corresponding historical continuum in America, then, is colonialism (slavery), 1619-1865, colonialism (imperialism), 1865-1963, and decolonization, since 1963. [2]

In *Rebellion or Revolution*, Harold Cruse affirms Bracey's argument by drawing a parallel between the circumstances of Africans under western colonisation and the black experience of racism and slavery in the United States. In his discussion of what he calls the state of "domestic colonization" of blacks in America, Cruse argues:

> It is not at all remarkable then that the semi-colonial status of the Negro has given rise to nationalist movements. It could be surprising if it had not. [3]

The similarity between the African and the African American experience of racism, slavery and colonisation leads to the emergence of black nationalist movements which have their roots in African and American history:

> Black nationalism has deep roots in American history. Black nationalism as a body of ideas and a pattern of behavior stemming logically from the colonial relationship of Black America to White America is both a response to colonial subordination and an affirmation of the existence of an alternative nationality and set of values. [4]

Carrying the scars of enslavement and hegemony, Langston Hughes and Mohamed Al-Fayturi[5] engage, through their poetry, the history of racism and colonisation, linking the African literary tradition with its counterpart in the United States. In his attempt to challenge colonial hegemony and promote a sense of identity among the colonised, the Sudanese African poet, Mohamed Al-Fayturi, born in the 1930s, is engaged in an intercultural dialogue with his "master," the African American poet Langston Hughes (1902-1967),[6] in order to reconstruct a history devastated by slavery and imperialism. Rooted in a revolutionary basis, the mutual dialogue between them aims to dismantle colonial narratives about Africa and the black people by revising history and rewriting the story of racism and slavery from the viewpoint of the colonised and the oppressed.

As an objective observer of human actions, particularly those which grew out of the racial situation in the Unites States during the 1920s and 1930s, Langston Hughes explores the complex relationship between the African American and his ethnic roots in Africa. The African American insists on achieving his dream of equality and dignity by turning to Africa after his confrontation with white American arrogance and superiority. Therefore, in Hughes's poetry, the African American longs for Africa not only because of an intense identity crisis but also as a result of the racial situation in America. Because white racism and oppression delayed the full realisation of black dreams, African Americans turn to Africa seeking solace, consolation and support. Hughes points out that in Africa the African American will be able to

> fling my arms wide
> in some place of the sun,
> to whirl and to dance
> till the white day is done
> then rest at cool evening
> beneath a tall tree
> while night comes on gently,

dark like me.[7]

Since Africa, in the words of Richard Barksdale "represented an artistic symbol and a political refuge for blacks," [8] Hughes's longing for Africa is an indication of his rejection of the racist values of the United States. In his early poetry, he protests his being taken from the African motherland to be "caged in the circus of civilization." [9] The poet feels like a stranger in America: "We cry among the skyscrapers / As our ancestors / cried among the palms in Africa."[10] Hughes also speaks about "the jungle joys," associating the "night-dark girl of the swaying hips" who dances in a Harlem cabaret in the 1920s, with the trees of Africa bathed in the splendour of a tropical "star-white moon." Such longing for Africa, particularly in Hughes's early poetry, is romantic simply because it does not depict a real image of Africa, but an Africa of the young poet's fantasy and imagination.

In Hughes's early poems, Africa is an unattainable ideal, a foil for his vision of a racist America where blacks are dehumanised. As a tropical paradise, a land of palms, forests and sun, Africa is contrasted with America, which is delineated as a wasteland and moral wilderness. Prior to colonisation and slavery, Africans, according to Hughes's poetry, were living in a natural environment, but in a post-slavery era they are suffocated in the circus of American civilisation. In the United States, argues Hughes, the black people suffer from alienation and dispossession; thus, they escape in the blues and other black folk songs which remind them of Africa. Further, the black folks in Harlem city are captured by Hughes in a sophisticated way revealing their longing for return to the innocence of their African past, to a pre-colonial Africa: "I would be simple again / simple and clean / like the earth / like the rain."[11] Such romanticisation of Africa is one of the basic characteristics of Hughes's early poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, in which an

image of an idealistic , pre-colonial Africa was integral to the emerging feelings of ethnic pride among African Americans at that time.

Incorporating African images and revealing a longing for a return to roots, Al-Fayturi, like Hughes, evokes Africa in idealised terms. Both deal with Africa as their Zion, a Moses-like homeland; nevertheless, Al-Fayturi's Africa is different from the Africa of his black American counterpart. As a result of centuries of colonialism and slavery which have disenfranchised him, Hughes is aware of the impossibility of returning physically to Africa. Therefore, his treatment of the African motif is coupled with a sense of homelessness born out of the feeling of being persecuted in the country where he lives, a victim of the legacy of racism and slavery. However, Hughes shares with Al-Fayturi a feeling of ambivalence toward Africa, because both of them are racial and cultural hybrids suffering from alienation and an identity crisis determined by psychological, socio-political and cultural factors. While both of them are psychologically split between their ethnic origins and their place of birth, Hughes's identity crisis is deeper because he suffers from what DuBois calls "double consciousness." DuBois refers to the crisis of being both black and American, of living in a limbo without a sense of belonging to either America or Africa:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.[12]

Whether the loss of identity is individual or ethnic, the person subjected to such an experience usually fights ferociously to avoid being lost in the labyrinth of cultures. Therefore, Al-Fayturi considers himself an African poet; thus he affirms in the

introduction to his anthology that his poetry is devoted to Africa and black people in general:

> I want to reveal the inhuman nature of the African experience. I will not distort or falsify the ugly reality of our life in Africa. No one other than a black person can understand the nature of my dilemma because s/he has lived the same experience.[13]

Contrary to those African and African American poets who tend to romanticise Africa, Al-Fayturi ignores a poetics which seeks a romantic confrontation with roots. For him, black poetry which involves an immersion in victimisation and lyric slavery is unacceptable because it leads to alienation and distortion of history.

Unlike other poets from colonised nations in Africa, the Caribbean and the ex-colonies who absorbed the language and culture of the colonisers, Al-Fayturi insists on his ethnic origin as an African, celebrating his black identity and glorifying the history of the African people. Identifying himself as a chronicler and a spectator of the tragic consequences of the experience of African people under slavery and colonisation, he aims to emphasize genuine African traditions. For him, tradition is integral to his myth-making and his attempt to reconstruct a national African identity. Since tradition, in the words of Henry Giroux, is responsible for shaping "the textual world through which people develop a sense of collective identity and relate to one another,"[14] Al-Fayturi's poetry becomes a vehicle for emphasizing the African tradition of resistance and revolt against the invaders. By an affirmation of African cultural values and their role in shaping a nationalist African literature, his narrative takes into consideration not only the legacy of slavery and colonisation but also the shifting forces that complete the process of regaining one's identity.

Interconnecting strands of myth and historical fact, Al-Fayturi aims to construct a revolutionary consciousness as a means of renovating and strengthening his African

identity. In *Aghani Efriqya (African Songs)*, he identifies himself as a black African who is ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of his homeland:

> I am a Negro
> I will not allow the white enemy
> to occupy my Africa
> I am a peasant
> and Africa is my land
> I have irrigated her soil
> with my blood.[15]

Indeed, Al-Fayturi's poetry is a reflection of the complex interplay of revolution and the constructs of racism and slavery. His poetry is seen as a project for collective freedom and empowerment, and an agent of revolution and regeneration. Devoting his poetry to Africa, he considers himself as an African poet who attempts to blur the boundaries between Africans, Caribbeans and other black people elsewhere in the world. Absorbing the literary heritage of African poets such as "Leopold Senghor and Christopher Okigbo in addition to the works of Langston Hughes and Richard Wright,"[16] Al-Fayturi is able to merge elements of poetics and historical fact and create a sense of immediacy in his treatment of a people in crisis. However, part of his poetry aims to reveal a glorious African past, devastated by the colonisers. For example, in *Aghani Efriqya (African Songs)*, he attempts to construct a myth of an African past, a myth which holds the African people from "a dislocation of traditions, a pillar into which they can anchor their sense of continuity and meaningful progress."[17]

The Cross-Cultural Dialogue Between Hughes and Al-Fayturi

The international reputation of Hughes and the universal nature of his poetry inspired not only African poets such as Al-Fayturi, who came under the influence of Hughes, but also other great poets from different cultures. For example, Eloise Spicer

compares Hughes's depiction of the African-American ghetto to the image of the Havana ghetto, the *barrio,* in the poetry of the great Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, affirming that Hughes's blues poetry and Guillen's folklore poems are rooted in rhythm patterns integral to ancestral Africa. In addition to similarities in narrative patterns, states Spicer, *son,* a Cuban dance, "was to Guillén what the blues was to Hughes."[18] Therefore, "the memories of Havana are exchanged with the memories of Harlem" in the poetry of these two great poets.[19] In the same vein Melvin Dixon in "Rivers Remembering their Source: Comparative Studies in Black Literary History—Langston Hughes, Jacques Roumain and Negritude" compares Hughes with the Caribbean poet, Jacques Roumain, arguing that both of them are influenced by the African American folklore tradition. Dixon points out that in the poetry of Hughes and Roumain, "black America is a metaphor for the reinvention of the African self through a language that is the danced speech of its people."[20]

Likewise, in the poetry of Hughes and Al-Fayturi, black America exists as a recurring motif and an extended metaphor reflecting the attitudes of the poets toward major issues such as racism and oppression. Further, Al-Fayturi and Hughes reconstruct the experience of Africans and African Americans through a poetics of anger, challenging all forms of oppression and exploitation inflicted upon black people in Africa, the United States and all over the world. In their attempts to confront the totalizing and hegemonic powers which aim to erase the identity of their people, Al-Fayturi and Hughes explore areas of overlap between the painful experience of African Americans and the catastrophic history of black Africans. In his poem "Ghabatu Maut (Forest of Death)" from his volume *Ashiq min Efriqya (Lover from Africa),* Al-Fayturi denounces the history of American slavery and its tragic

consequences for African Americans. Using New York as a symbolic location of the black/white conflict in the New World, he addresses the city in a tone of lamentation:

> Alas! New York
> my veins are full of sorrows
> and my eyes turn into a cloud
> as I move on your soil
> New York
> you are not my motherland
> you have a heart of stone
> which is not my heart
> Africa is my land
> the poor Negroes are my people.[21]

In this poem, Al-Fayturi underlines the sacrifices offered by African Americans who actively participated in the establishment and building of the great American civilisation. Portraying New York as a city with "a heart of stone," he laments the painful experience of the cities of the diaspora:

> The Negroes who built a bridge made
> of their bones in order to convey
> civilization into the American land
> the Negroes who are lost in
> your streets
> even their bitter laughter
> turns into horror and fear
> Alas! New York
> the Negroes
> who suffer
> in your fearful streets
> who weep
> in your ancient churches
> will surely forgive you and
> forget that you are a killer
> a seductive lady handicapped
> by fetters and chains.[22]

In spite of his dedication to Africa, Al-Fayturi, like many African and African American poets, expresses an ambivalent attitude toward the American civilisation epitomized by the city of New York. He argues that people of African descent have

been persecuted since they came to the New World; however, they are not able to be separated from America:

> O New York
> whatever you have done to them
> and whatever they have done to you
> their souls will run toward you
> they will bury their faces
> in your arms shedding their tears
> on your breast
> because you are a mother
> and a killer of prophets
> a forest of death.[23]

Being aware of the catastrophic history of people of African origin living in the American diaspora, Al-Fayturi, in "The Incident," denounces the lynching rituals integral to the slave era:

> While the clowns were bursting into laughter
> the corpse was dangling
> like a windless flag
> from the gallows
> the sun is white-haired in the sky.[24]

In *Aghani Efriqya (African Songs)*, Al-Fayturi condemns white racism, denouncing the experience of slavery in the American South:

> We desperately walked on thorns
> with our bare feet
> we spent our nights starving
> humiliated in the plantations of misery
> we stood in defiance challenging
> the wicked race
> we removed the stigma of slavery
> after ages of suffering
> after our executioner filled
> his cups with our blood
> after our executioner cut off our heads
> and used them as bricks for his palaces
> the earth is flowing with our moans,
> with our lamentations and wounds.[25]

This is an explicit manifestation of what he calls the suffering of the African American in "the plantations of misery." Regardless of the painful experience of enslavement, states the poet, Africans and African Americans are able to liberate themselves from the chains of racism. Like Hughes, Al-Fayturi supports the struggle of the poor, identifying himself with the victims of slavery and colonisation in Africa and the United States and calling for rebellion and revolution. Challenging the policy of fear which is the core of colonial hegemony, Al-Fayturi revolts against the oppressive and inhuman culture perpetuated by the advocates of hegemony and colonisation.

While Al-Fayturi supports revolution against colonisation in Africa , Hughes utilizes his poetry to explore the impact of policies of racism and segregation on the black people in the United States. In other words, Hughes gives expression to what Nancy McGhee in "Langston Hughes: Poet in the Folk Manner" calls "the Afro-American condition,"[26] by being closely "associated with and writing for the Negro people."[27] In his poetry, across four decades, and in opposition to the white world, Hughes exploits the rich heritage of black people, reflecting their suffering and deferred dreams, interpreting their thoughts and traditions, in addition to

> their struggle for political freedom and economic well-being. He wanted to do this using their own forms for expression: their language, humor, music, and folk verse.[28]

For instance, in *Fine Clothes to the Jew,* Hughes explores the intensity of urban life of simple black people living in Harlem and Chicago's South Side in the 1920s: "My people, dish-washers / Elevator boys / ladies' maids / crap shooters / cooks / and band-men in circuses / dream singers all / my people."[29] This image of black life disappears in the 1930s to be replaced by another image categorized by tragic possibilities. Therefore, Hughes's poetry which celebrates the Harlem Renaissance

undergoes a radical change by the end of the 1920s. In his autobiography, *The Big Sea,* Hughes laments the end of the Harlem Renaissance and expresses his suffering during the Depression era: "The generous 1920s were over. And my twenties almost over. I had four-hundred dollars and a gold medal."[30]

Describing the racial situation in the United States during the Depression, Otey Scruggs points out:

> Hatred of blacks and economic fears became more acute when more blacks began arriving in Northern cities as part of the movement by the first post-slavery generation out of the Southern fields. The growing antagonism in the North toward blacks did not, to be sure, take the form of disfranchisement and all-inclusive legal segregation but it did express itself in race riots and more rigid neighborhood separation.[31]

Embodying the spirit of the Depression era, Hughes in "Out of Work" deals with the problem of black unemployment. The African American speaker in the poem has walked the streets looking for a job until his shoes fall off his feet. The federal agency of the Depression years failed to find work for him because he has to stay in town for a year and a day in order to apply for work. Hughes's speaker sarcastically replies:

> A year and a day, Lawd,
> in this big lonesome town!
> a year and a day in this
> great big lonesome town!
> I might starve for a year but
> that extra day would get me down.[32]

The misery of black people in the United States during the 1930s, resulting from economic problems and the continuation of racist policies in the North, is also depicted in a poetic sequence called "Montage of a Dream Deferred." The poem vividly portrays the frustrated dreams of the black people in Harlem and other urban ghettoes in the North. Utilizing the montage technique, Hughes effectively portrays the wasteland/ghetto where blacks live, telescoping black life into one day and one

night. He uses a motion-picture technique juxtaposing diverse locations and disparate scenes of suffering in order to provide readers with a panoramic view of black life in America. The poem projects a miserable image of Harlem, different from the Harlem of the 1920s, with its busy nightlife and sparkling lights. Harlem, the home of black refugees coming from the South, which is a symbol and a microcosm of the black experience in the North, is subjected to the poverty of the 1930s.

In "Parade," the opening section of the "Montage" sequence, Hughes describes thousands of African American children starving to death on the streets of Harlem. Unlike "white kids," they are deprived of life's necessities, and are not allowed even to dream. Viewing the frustrated dreams of his people, Hughes utters a cry of anger and threat:

> What happens to a dream deferred?
> does it dry up
> like a raisin in the sun?
> or fester like a sore—
> and then run?
> does it stink like rotten meat?
> or crust and sugar over—
> like a syrupy sweet?
> maybe it just sags
> like a heavy load
> or does it explode?[33]

The poem focuses on images of deterioration, drying, rotting, festering, souring and loss of natural features. The black American is cut off from his African roots to be abandoned in the American wilderness where he rots and fades like a grape turning to a raisin in the scorching sun. The allusion to rotten meat is a signifier of black lynching in the American South where black bodies are left on the trees to rot. The reference to the spoiled candy symbolizes the false promises of assimilation and equality given by the white society to blacks to keep them submissive.

In addition to the abandonment of the humanity of the black people, the United States has robbed them of their ancestral heritage, distorting the blues and transforming them into a white man's art:

> You've taken my blues and gone—
> you sing 'em on Broadway
> and you mixed 'em up with symphonies
> and you fixed 'em
> so they don't sound like me.
> Yep, you done taken my blues and gone. [34]

Like Hughes Al-Fayturi was interested in the African American musical heritage and folklore traditions. In a poem titled "To Paul Robeson, the Singer," Al-Fayturi reveals admiration for the African American singer who was brutalised by the American police apparatus for his revolutionary political beliefs. Depicting Robeson as a mythic hero and a victim of racist policies, Al-Fayturi explains the reasons for the campaign against him: "when you sing / they hide their daggers in their faces / and their hair grows grey / when you sing their grudge grows / and the city of New York feels humiliated and angry."[35] Using New York as a symbol of the growing racism against black people in the post World War Two era, Al-Fayturi addresses Robeson:

> Your songs strip the city of its masks
> of its perfumes and lipsticks
> when you sing, the night of New York
> hovers over the extending horizon
> your songs are a witness
> of the rebirth of the black people.[36]

Dealing with the songs of Paul Robeson as testimonies of pain at a time of crisis, Al-Fayturi hails the way the singer transforms his songs into an instrument of struggle for freedom and equality. As a weapon of revolution challenging the oppressor, Robeson's songs participated in the awakening of black consciousness and ethnic

pride. In an era of resistance and protest they play a significant role, infusing new spirit into an oppressed people:

> the dead bodies of the living
> and the cellars of the dead
> the angry and sad heads of the defeated generation
> are rolling down the road
> are climbing the trees of the forests
> in order to regain the dream of the land
> the wounded land, the land of the catastrophe. [37]

Integrating Robeson's songs into the black history of pain and catastrophe in the American diaspora, Al-Fayturi describes them as "rivers of sadness and sorrows of the poor black people in America / buried under its buildings / killed by its blades." Robeson's songs, according to Al-Fayturi, are not accepted by the advocates of apartheid and racism in the United States because they speak about

> Negroes dying in the ships which were drowned
> in the American seas, in the American harbors
> the Negroes, the coffee shop clowns
> with painted faces, the dark colors
> in the portraits of the artists, the Negroes
> who are the bricks of the mines in the United States
> where its seasonal smoke burns their flesh. [38]

In spite of glorifying Paul Robeson as a national hero, Al-Fayturi blames him for appealing to the white mainstream: "Why did you sing for your executioner? / why did you ask him for forgiveness" after he had planted "a dragger in your heart, in the depths of your soul."[39] Al-Fayturi addresses Robeson, appealing to him to continue his peaceful struggle against the forces of hegemony in the United States. In this address Al- Fayturi denounces the assimilation policy which aims to marginalise black culture. He points out that in order to be integrated into a racist society, African Americans have to deny their black culture and sever relationships with their own people. In Hughes's words , they have to "glorify their assassins / cut off the breasts

of their mothers / and play with the bones of their fathers." Further, Al-Fayturi reminds Paul Robeson of the crimes committed against the black people of the United States: "The black child was killed / his blind grandmother was also killed / but the words she whispered into his ears every evening are still living." Al-Fayturi concludes his poem to Robeson with the words of the African American grandmother: "My children, you should sing in time of misery / you should keep singing when you confront sorrows, sadness / and beware of giving up your black skins."[40]

As well as admiring Robeson, Al-Fayturi glorifies other major African figures who are engaged in reforming society and reconstructing African history. He vehemently insists on the natural right of revolution against those who showed contempt for the African people, disparaging their intelligence and potential. Capturing the history of revolution in Africa, Al-Fayturi has written many poems about important political figures such as Patrice Lumumba, Nelson Mandela and Senghor. Celebrating African and Latin American revolutionaries who challenged the devastating impact of imperialism, Al-Fayturi urges Third World leaders to repel the forces which attempt to exploit their nations. He also calls for the establishment of systematic strategies of resistance against imperialism. Al-Fayturi, in a poem titled "Nkrumah," hails the former leader of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, as a national hero who participated in the liberation not only of his country but also of other African nations:

> Your face shines
> in the light of all revolutions
> the image of Ghana
> and free Congo
> O Nkrumah
> your face awakens in me
> ancient feelings of pride and glory
> your face carries the smell
> of my homeland across the forests of Africa. [41]

In the same poem, Al-Fayturi evokes the painful memories of a continent devastated by slavery and colonialism:

> I see the African land, mountains,
> fountains, clouds and waterfalls
> overwhelmed with tears
> I see my naked people
> abandoned on the roads
> O Nkrumah
> you are a banner of freedom
> hovering over great Africa. [42]

Similarly in "Lumumba, the Sun and the Assassins," Al-Fayturi endows the African revolutionary, Patrice Lumumba, with heroic proportions, considering him a symbol of struggle against European colonisation:

> O Lumumba
> you are the golden sword of our land,
> directed toward the heads of our executioners
> O Lumumba
> be a flame in our wounds
> paint the flags of revolution with our blood
> fix the flags of freedom in our soil. [43]

Unlike the alien colonisers who are viewed as strangers and intruders, Lumumba is depicted as an epic hero who has his roots deeply planted in African soil.

While Al-Fayturi uses revolutionary rhetoric to articulate his attitudes toward the African liberation movements, Hughes incorporates black forms to reflect the African American experience in the United States. In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes states that "most of my poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know."[44] Hughes's argument is underlined by George Kent who affirms Hughes's utilisation of black folk tradition and cultural sources as a basis for his poetry. Kent points out:

> The folk forms and cultural responses were themselves definitions of black life created by blacks on the bloody and pine-scented Southern soil and upon the blackboard jungle of urban streets, tenement buildings, store-front churches, and dim-lit bars. [45]

Regardless of integrating revolutionary discourses in his poetry, Al-Fayturi, like Hughes, was interested in the cultural/folklore traditions of black people. Such cultural heritage, on both sides, enhances the ethnic pride of the two poets providing them with a revolutionary spirit which is seen in their poetry. For example, Al-Fayturi was influenced by the popular biography of Antara Ibn Shaddad, Al-Absi, the black pre-Islamic folklore hero[46] who lived in tribal Arabia and suffered from slavery. Antara's epic biography which has become part of the Arabic folklore heritage, provides a source of inspiration for Al-Fayturi.[47] Revealing sympathy toward Antara as a black revolutionary figure, victimised by slavery, Al-Fayturi emerges as a defender of the black race in Africa and the Arab world. In addition to his interest in Antara, Al-Fayturi incorporates in his poetry the epic and folkloric history of Abu Zaid Al-Helali Salama, the black warrior of Southern Arabia who conquered North Africa. As a mythic folklore hero, Abu Zaid, like Antara, haunts the imagination of Al-Fayturi particularly because of his blackness, his military contributions and his nobility with his enemies. But the most significant thing in the epic history of Antara and Abu Zaid that attracted Al-Fayturi is their commitment and moral responsibility toward their black communities.

In "The Limitations of Universal Critical Criteria," Ibe Nwoga argues that in African literary traditions,

> a greater emphasis [is placed] on community than on persons. Where the individual—character in a novel, persona/poet in poetry—is emphasized the dimensions of his individuality are undercut by the fact that he is a representative, a paradigm of status of being which extends through the community.[48]

As an African poet, dedicated to the struggle of the African people against hegemonic forces which seek to undermine their revolutionary potential, Al-Fayturi, like Hughes, gives priority to communal issues denouncing apartheid policies which aim to degrade his people. Being the first poet who speaks about Africa in Arabic, Al-Fayturi explores the pains and sorrows of the poor African masses, and therefore gains his reputation as the poet of the people. In "Sorrows of the Black City" Al-Fayturi reconstructs the history of his people, evoking painful memories of a colonial African past:

> When the night sets up its trellis of wigs
> on the city streets
> and sprinkles its deep sorrow on them
> when its spiral stairs
> take creatures downwards
> to a deep remote past
> and when its amber shores
> are drowned in memories
> almost never to awake. [49]

In these ancient times, and as a result of colonial interference, "the blood of tranquility becomes as dry as tombs" and "the heart of the city becomes / like a despicable thing / like Africa in the dark ages." According to Al-Fayturi, colonisation and slavery turned Africa into a "medieval" continent. However, in the pre-colonial era, Africa is viewed as:

> An old woman shrouded in incense
> a pit for bonfire
> an amulet with an ancient prayer
> a dance of naked blacks
> singing in black joy
> in absence of sins.[50]

This state of simplicity does not last forever and the era of African innocence comes to an end due to colonial threats and the greed of the colonisers. During the colonial

era, Africans are turned into targets for "the master's lust" and become objects for the economics of slavery:

> Ships laden with comely slave girls
> musk, ivory and saffron
> gifts without festivities
> driven by the wind at every moment
> to the white man of this age
> master of every age.[51]

Further, Al-Fayturi describes the experience of the dispossessed Africans in the American plantations after being transported in slave ships to an alien land:

> A plantation extends in the world of imagination
> clothing the naked, undressing the nude
> its gloom running in the veins of life
> coloring the waters dyeing the face of God
> its sorrows being a laugh on the lips
> growing even tyrants
> even slaves
> even iron
> even fetters
> growing something new every day.[52]

In his poetry Al-Fayturi excoriated the slave trade, featuring horrible stories of enslaved people being driven toward the slave ships, which carried them from the shores of Africa to no man's land. In "Song of Exile," the poet depicts the African slaves at the moment of being transported on board a slave ship going to an unknown destination. Using the tearful chants of the slave chorus as an objective correlative to convey the painful experience of slavery, he says:

> Our hands and feet are bleeding
> but we will keep walking
> like water in the rivers
> like the sun in the horizon
> like the African sands
> farewell Africa
> farewell Africa:
> my broken spear
> my deserted cottage

my battered face. [53]

Explicitly, Al-Fayturi expresses his disgust with slavery as an evil, irrational and immoral institution that degraded the white masters and violated the national ideals of Africa. In "The Story" Al-Fayturi describes the vicious conflict between European pirates and slave traders over the possession of African slaves:

The thieves have stormed
across the harbor mole
they have broken the ship's mast
and plundered its precious cargo. [54]

He denounces slavery and white supremacist policies toward the African people and their religions. He also dismisses the racist attitudes toward Africans which categorize them as inferior and contemptible beings who must be colonised and tortured with impunity:

They came closer toward me
they hanged their crosses
on my neck
I became embarrassed
I did not know the difference
between crime and revolution
it was painful
to conceive what has happened
they were throwing the face of God
with their shoes and knives.[55]

Moreover, in "To a White Face" Al-Fayturi discusses the issues of slavery, condemning all forms of discrimination and echoing Hughes's anti-racial poetics:

Because my face is black
and your face is white
you called me a slave
and crushed my humanity
and humiliated me
because my face is black
you put me in chains
and robbed me of everything
even my graves. [56]

In an interview with Kimberly Benston, Amiri Baraka denounces slavery arguing that slavery is an evil everywhere but that in the United States there is slavery and racism:

> Slavery is dehumanizing whether it is slavery practiced by blacks against blacks, by whites against whites, or whatever. The one added fact in the United States was racism, which did not exist with black versus black or white versus white slavery, a fact created by capitalism. The people who try to make African slavery some kind of paradise are out of their minds—slavery is slavery.[57]

Echoing Baraka, Al-Fayturi refers to the heinous consequences of slavery and racism which pave the way for the exploitation of black people socially and economically:

> Because my face is black
> you stole my harvest
> and left nothing except
> my hate and grudge
> because my face is black
> you stripped me of my clothes and left me naked
> in the cottage of darkness.[58]

Regardless of his suffering from the consequences of slavery, Al-Fayturi looks forward to a better future based on mutual respect between the ex-slaves and the ex-masters:

> Today I am not a slave anymore
> so it is time you take off your
> masks of arrogance
> let us work together hand in hand
> to build love and compassion between us
> we are brothers
> do not cultivate my land
> with thorns and hatred
> since I have put the seeds
> of roses in my land.[59]

To express the crux of his ideological perspective, Al-Fayturi attempts to sketch out an aesthetic whereby it is easy to see his own poetry in its proper context as an

expression both African and black. Being aware that his African culture has been violently shattered by slavery and colonisation, he revives significant episodes from African history, bringing into the foreground not only the glories of the African ancestors but also the sacrifices of contemporary African leaders. The process of bringing forward the African history of pain and suffering involves a revival of scenes not only of oppression and genocide but also of resistance and victory:

> Africa is my land
> profaned by the white man
> Africa is my land
> contaminated by the colonizer
> I will die a martyr
> for the sake of Africa
> my children will sacrifice
> their blood for the sake of Africa. [60]

Denouncing the crippling impact of European occupation of African countries, the poet is willing to sacrifice his blood for the sake of Africa in order to liberate his homeland from colonisation.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon discusses the tragic consequences of colonisation on the psyche of the colonised:

> Colonial domination is made possible by the negation of national reality, by new legal relations introduced by the occupying power, by the banishment of the native and their customs to outlying districts by colonial society, by expropriation, and by the systematic enslaving of men and women.[61]

Recalling the history of oppression and tyranny in Africa, Al-Fayturi underlines the damaging impact of colonisation and slavery on the African people. He argues that colonisation and slavery aimed to erase the African identity and keep the African people silent and subjugated:

> When I was young
> I saw the white man

> turning my brothers into slaves,
> walking in chains
> the white man behind them
> slashing their naked bodies with whips
> white whips sticking to black skins and wounds
> I am still hearing their cries
> I am still seeing the bloody sweat
> covering their foreheads
> and the hostile white sun
> burning their skins and the
> grass under their feet.[62]

In these lines Al-Fayturi captures the crippling impact of colonisation and slavery on the psyche of the African people. As a witness of British and French colonisation of African countries, Al-Fayturi devotes his poetry to defend the colonised people in Africa. His obsession with the consequences of colonisation leads to critical misinterpretation of his poetry. In his study of contemporary Sudanese poetry, Mustafa Haddara points out that Al-Fayturi's poetry is dominated by a kind of neurosis and "self hatred that can be traced to an inferiority complex originated in his sense of alienation as a black subaltern living in Diaspora."[63] Haddara's notion, which integrates Al-Fayturi's self-hatred into a colour inferiority complex, is refuted by Frantz Fanon who attributes such dilemmas to psychological factors rooted in the encounter with colonisation and racism. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon refers to the self-division and self-combative nature of the colonial encounter:

> With the exception of a few misfits within the closed environment,
> we can say that every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation is
> the product of his [the colonised's] cultural situation.[64]

Neurosis and self-division, according to Fanon, are part of the psychological effects of colonisation on colonised subjects. Al-Fayturi's poetry which is considered by Haddara as a manifestation of self-hatred and division is partly the result of the psychological impact of colonisation on the colonised self. Haddara's argument is also subverted by Albert Memmi who affirms that self-hatred on the part of the

colonised writer in Africa is not related to any inferiority or colour complex, but constitutes a step in the writer's development toward the revolutionary stage of his/her development. In *The Colonized and the Colonizer*, Memmi refers to the way in which the colonial subaltern, prior to his shift "on to the stage of revolt" passes through a phase of self-division and self-hate.[65] Therefore, in his revolutionary poetry, Al-Fayturi does not adopt the attitude of the ego-driven category of many postcolonial poets, but turns his attention away from the personal toward the social and collective. Struggling to express an authentic personality that confronts a hegemonic postcolonial world, Al-Fayturi prefers to advocate a revolutionary voice standing for the entire African community. He denounces colonisation, considering it as the major reason for African catastrophes and civilisational backwardness.

Therefore, in his poetry Al-Fayturi resists colonial hegemony denouncing the destructive impact of slavery and colonisation on the psyche of the African people. He makes Africa the locus of his poetry:

> His destiny and existence are related to Africa. He thinks as an African and he breathes as an African making the African continent the center of his poetry. Therefore, the African spirit is manifested in all the titles of his poetic collections.[66]

Thus Al-Fayturi calls for a poetics which explores spaces such as the trauma of slavery and colonisation that exists in African memory and still survives in African culture in the postcolonial era. This revival of memory would apparently free the African people from the complexes of the past and the cycles of race and remorse. On this basis, Al-Fayturi addresses his ancestors, the victims of colonisation and slavery:

> O my ancestors
> history will bow in respect
> to Africa
> the rivers of light will flow
> into the new African dawn

removing the wall of darkness
O, my ancestors
can you hear the melodies
of victory?
the dark ages are falling down
the oppressor is fleeing
in fear and awe.[67]

As a record of the turbulent African experience of slavery and colonization, Al-Fayturi's poetry provides a wide perspective on African history, illuminating areas of controversy about the relationship between Africa and the western world:

The white man has enslaved me
and occupied my land
he wants to keep me as a slave
at present and in the future
as he did in the past
he wants me to spend all my life
in a prison built
by my own hands.[68]

Using his poetry as a mechanism to explore the ordeal of African people, Al-Fayturi denounces the brutalization of his people at the hands of the European colonisers and slave traders. He describes the persecution and slaughter of the black people in Africa during the era of slavery and colonisation. The poet laments the systematic genocide of the colonised Africans while the entire world is watching the massacre:

He died, not a drop of rain grieved for him
not even a face or two frowned for him
he died tomorrow
a filthy corpse
neglected shroud
he died
his soul darkened and burnt,
full of a history smeared with the blood
from the dangling nooses,
the screams of rebels in the barred prisons.[69]

Denouncing what Hayden White refers to as "a fictive or mythic deformation of reality,"[70] Al-Fayturi's assessment of the African experience during the colonial era incorporates narratives of persecution and resistance, of oppression and revolution. As a historical narrative of the African experience, his poetry encounters the tragic consequences of slavery and colonisation revealing their impact on the African memory of pain and agony. Condemning the indifference of the world toward the plight of African people and denouncing a mercantile European civilisation which failed to confront the problems created by slavery and colonisation in Africa, Al-Fayturi says:

> Because sadness is a cold fire
> creeping into hearts made up of frost
> Africa remained in slavery
> when Africa gets rid of one fetter
> she is forced to wear another
> Africa moves in chains
> because weakness is a prison
> and fear is a prison
> and the dark past is a prison
> Africa remained in slavery
> moving from prison into prison.[71]

In "He Died Tomorrow," through a dialogue between father and son, Al-Fayturi recalls episodes from African history, reminding the readers of the atrocities committed by the European invaders against the colonised people of Africa:

> And you, my father
> won't you be back before winter?
> all of us are crying still
> and clamoring
> my mother, my brothers and I
> morning and evening
> come back.[72]

Nevertheless, the father does not come back alive but returns as a dead body after being killed by the colonisers:

They knocked on the door one night and entered
they threw his corpse by the wall.

Al-Fayturi thus denounces the brutality of colonisation, depicting western invaders as they infiltrate into Africa creating chaos and catastrophe. Instead of an involvement in sentimentality and remorse, he captures an image of Africa fighting against oppression and colonisation:

The African dawn is removing
the wall of darkness
it is time to listen to the songs
of victory
the era of darkness
is fading away
my people in Africa
are regaining their consciousness. [73]

In this context, the victimization of the African subjects is overcome by transforming his poetry into a revolutionary dynamics enhancing the values of struggle and resistance. Therefore, Al-Fayturi's poetry is an attempt to resist the crippling impact of European imperialism on the psyche of the African people. In "To a White Face" he is engaged in a dialogue with his oppressor reflecting a spirit of reconciliation and tolerance:

Let us shake hands
But let us lay the foundation of love
I am your brother
do not betray my love.[74]

Revealing the failure of European civilisation to be culturally engaged with a colonial and postcolonial Africa, Al-Fayturi in "The Black Flood" embodies the hostile western attitude toward Africa, particularly in the era of colonisation. The white persona in the poem is determined to go to Africa, not for human or missionary purposes but to purchase a cargo of "black gold:"

When I get money
I will buy a boat and some dogs
I will sail to Africa to hunt
I will have a caravan of slaves.[75]

The white slave trader is not only motivated by an interest in achieving material profit but there are other motives:

I am fond of black bodies
I am dying for the warm body
of a female African slave
my folks said that the bodies
of black slaves have a different taste
a different smell
Africa is the land of treasures
the land of naked slaves
Africa
I will come to you one day
as an invader, a colonizer
looking for wealth and life.[76]

In his African poetry, Al-Fayturi establishes a link between western capitalism, on one hand, and slavery and colonisation on the other, emphasizing Frantz Fanon's argument in *The Wretched of the Earth* that "colonialism was an inevitable stage in the development of capitalism."[77] Therefore, the process of decolonisation, according to Fanon, involves a confrontation between the colonisers and the colonised, the wretched of the earth. This conflict, in turn, involves an attempt by the colonised to achieve psychological deliverance from the complexes fostered by colonisation. Al-Fayturi emphasises the inevitability of such deliverance:

Even if the forests of Africa
are dominated by silence
a new morning will break
and the hills of Africa
will burst into fire and flames.[78]

Al-Fayturi also denounces Europe and its exploitative technology, undermining the cultural paradigms of the mercantile western civilisation. Questioning the colonial

representation of Africa in European culture as a prehistoric continent, he affirms the civilised roots of the African people, mythologising local history and glorifying Africa. Al-Fayturi also brings to the fore the greatness of African culture, calling for the unity of black people all over the world and urging them to resist hegemonic policies that aim to keep them inferior and subjugated:

> My brothers in the East
> my brothers all over the world
> my brothers in every country
> I am calling you
> do you know who am I?
> I am the one who tore away
> the shrouds of darkness
> I have destroyed the walls of weakness
> I got rid of my chains forever.[79]

Thus, Al-Fayturi writes poetry which projects narratives that prioritise the consequences of the trauma of colonial hegemony on the African psyche. Regardless of avoiding confrontations with the western literary canon, he challenges western epistemology, exploring the relationship between Africa and the west within the context of the civilisational conflict between colonised and coloniser:

> Here, behind this wall
> which is painted with our miseries
> the white man sleeps in comfort
> in a cottage whose ceiling
> is made up of the bones
> of our forefathers.[80]

In spite of its commitments to the African motif, however, Al-Fayturi's poetry is not an example of ethnic chauvinism but a reflection of what Partha Chatterjee identifies as "good nationalism:" [81]

> My African people are waking up
> from their trance
> the black flood is sweeping
> our land

crossing over the stone barriers
and great Africa is being born
Africa is twinkling in the rays
of the new dawn.[82]

In "The African Flood" Al-Fayturi glorifies the sacrifice of the black people in Africa emphasizing their heroism during the era of oppression. Regardless of torture and pain, the African subaltern is able to challenge the European colonisers:

Even when Africa was still in chains
even when Africa was still a big prison
the land of the gallows and death
the African was dedicated to revolution
like his rebellious forefathers
he refused to be a slave
even when every inch of his skin
was enflamed by the whips
of the colonizer
he died only after tearing
the colonizer's skull
into pieces.[83]

Al-Fayturi also celebrates the liberation of black people from colonisation and slavery: "Millions of blacks woke up from their forgotten history / after ages of life in Diaspora." He addresses black people all over the world, expressing his pride in the achievements of the black race in an era of liberation:

My brothers
the black man is transformed into a god
he is not a slave anymore
he is no longer the oppressed slave
licking the shoes of the white master
the stigma of slavery is removed. [84]

Glorifying Africa, Al-Fayturi attempts to criticise a literature which seeks to abuse and denigrate the sacrifices of the African people during the era of slavery and colonisation. He also condemns the policy of systematic interpretative betrayal advocated by those who attempt to ignore the reality of the Africa experience of pain.

Further, he affirms the African spirit of protest and revolt against colonisers and invaders:

> The land of Africa survives
> through our blood
> the land of Africa
> echoes the cries
> of my ancestors
> I vow that the African wind
> will disperse the ashes
> of the executioner's body.[85]

Conclusion

Carrying the scars of slavery and reflecting the pains and aspirations of their people, Al-Fayturi and Hughes develop an oppositional poetics to disrupt colonial narratives and exhibit the ugly face of oppression and racism. While Hughes's treatment of the issue of oppression is articulated without rage or lamentation, Al-Fayturi reveals anger toward colonial violence using a revolutionary dynamics to uproot colonial paradigms and affirm the poet's aesthetic of resistance and revolt:

> My people have walked on thorns for ages
> my people have irrigated the land of Africa
> with their blood
> but they gained nothing
> except fire and thorns.[86]

As victims of the double curse of slavery and colonisation, Al-Fayturi and Hughes express their indictment of all forms of oppression and hegemony. Thus, in their poetry, they are engaged in the complex process of reworking the relationship between coloniser and colonised, oppressor and oppressed. Dedicating their poetry to their people, both of them are involved in the process of deconstructing the history of slavery and racism, in Africa and the United States, giving priority to the painful

experience of black people and engaging significant issues integral to the African diaspora.

Further, as voices of African descent , Al-Fayturi and Hughes struggle to capture the history of slavery and colonisation from the perspective of the oppressed and the humiliated, constructing a poetic mechanism capable of subverting hostile colonial narratives. Devoting their poetic talents to reshaping black history, Al-Fayturi and Hughes are engaged in a mutual dialogue dismantling racist discourses about Africa and black people. Considered as a reflection of the agonies born out of the painful black experience of slavery and colonisation, the poetry of Al-Fayturi and Hughes is a cry of anger against racism and colonisation. In their attempt to restore Africa as a remedy for the wounds of identity, and a refuge for those who are lost in exile and diaspora, the two poets confront narratives of distortion which aim to banish Africa outside human history. Approached as manifestation of the subtle interaction between revolution and the constructs of racism and slavery, the poetry of Al-Fayturi and Hughes attempts to draw attention to the catastrophic history of black people in Africa and the United States. Challenging racism and oppression by bringing to the foreground narratives of humiliation and violence against their people, the two poets aim to reconstruct history and rewrite the story of slavery and colonisation from the standpoint of the colonised. Regardless of calling for revolution and counter-violence against oppression, the poetry of Al-Fayturi and Hughes is distinguished by a quest for a better world where people are able to learn from the painful experiences of the past.

Notes

All translations from Arabic prose and poetry are by the writer unless names of other translators are mentioned.

[1] Aijaz Ahmad, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality" in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 282.
[2] John H. Bracey, "Black Nationalism Since Garvey" in Nathan Huggins *et al*., eds., *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 259.
[3] Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution?* (New York: William Morrow, 1968), 77.
[4] Bracey, 259.
[5] Al-Fayturi was born in the 1930s, in a village called Al-Jiniya, located in western Sudan near the borders with Chad and Libya. His father descended from a Libyan family who escaped to Sudan after the Fascist occupation of Libya prior to the First World War. His mother was the daughter of a rich slave-trader from a famous Arabian tribe. His grandmother, Zahra, was a black slave who gained her freedom after marrying his grandfather, the Arabian slave trader (for a discussion of slavery and human rights in the Arab world, see below, n47). During the Second World War, Al-Fayturi's family moved from Sudan to Egypt where they stayed in the city of Alexandria. Living in Alexandria in the 1940s, Al-Fayturi witnessed with pain the humiliation of the black people recruited from Sudan and other African countries and forced to tackle insulting jobs and work as servants for European soldiers during the war. This experience intensifies Al-Fayturi's identity crisis and enhances his ethnic consciousness as black and African. In spite of living in different Arab countries, Al-Fayturi does not consider himself as an Arab, but as a black African poet committed to defending the rights of black people all over the world. As a young poet, Al-Fayturi came under the influence of African American writers, particularly Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, in addition to other African and Caribbean scholars and poets. Due to his pioneering works about black people's experience of slavery and colonisation, Al-Fayturi is considered to be the first poet who sings for Africa and the black people in Arabic. He has published five poetic collections dealing with the painful ordeal of black people in Africa and the diaspora: *Aghani Efriqya (African Songs), Ashiq min Efriqya (Lover from Africa), Ahzan Efriqya (African Sorrows)* and *Uthkurini ya Efriqya (Remember Me Africa).* All these volumes are collected in *Diwan Al-Fayturi (The Complete Poetic Works).*
[6] Al-Fayturi came under the influence of Langston Hughes and Richard Wright in addition to other black scholars and writers from Africa and the Caribbean. In his comprehensive study, *Al-Adab Al-Efriqi (African Literature)* (Kuwait, 1993), Ali Shalash traces the literary dialogues between black African writers and their counterparts in the diaspora. Further, Abdul Fattah Al-Shatti in his study of Mohamed Al-Fayturi explores the impact of Hughes on the Arab African poet.
[7] Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (New York: Knopf, 1940), 14.
[8] Richard K. Barksdale, *Langston Hughes: The Poet and His Critics* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1977), 21.
[9] Langston Hughes, *The Weary Blues* (New York: Knopf, 1926), 100.
[10] Ibid.,102.
[11] Ibid.,104.
[12] W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Fawcett, 1968), 3.
[13] M. Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi (The Complete Poetic Works)*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar Alawda, 1979), 25.
[14] Henry A. Giroux, ed., *Postmodernism, Feminism and Cultural Politics: Redrawing Educational Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 231.
[15] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 78.
[16] Abdul-Fattah Al-Shatti**,** *Shir Al-Fayturi: Almuhtawa wa Alfan (The Content and the Art of Al-Fayturi's Poetry)* (Cairo: Dar Qebā, 2001), 9.
[17] Ibe Nwoga, "The Limitations of Universal Critical Criteria" in Rowland Smith, ed., *Exile and Tradition: Studies in African and Caribbean Literature* (London: Longman,1976), 15.
[18] Eloise Y. Spicer**,** "The Blues and the 'Son': Reflections of Black Self Assertion in the Poetry of Langston Hughes and Nicolas Guillen" (*The Langston Hughes Review* 3, 1984), 9.
[19] Monika Kaup, "'Our America' that is Not One: Transnational Black Atlantic Disclosures in Nicholas Guillen and Langston Hughes" (*Discourse* 22.3, 2000), 108.
[20] Cited in Saddik Gohar, *The Folklore and Protest Poetry of Langston Hughes* (Cairo: Eyes Press, 2001), 8.

[21] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 441.
[22] Ibid., 422.
[23] Ibid., 443.
[24] Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed. and trans., *Modern Arabic poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1987, 221.
[25] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 74.
[26] Cited in Gohar, 24.
[27] Ernest Kaiser, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (London: Allen, 1969), 41.
[28] Onwuchekwa Jemie, *Langston Hughes: An Introduction to the Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1.
[29] Langston Hughes, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (New York: Knopf, 1927), 77.
[30] Hughes, *The Big Sea*, 335.
[31] Otey M. Scruggs**,** "The Economic and Racial Components of Jim Crow" in Huggins, *Key Issues*, 85-6.
[32] Langston Hughes, *Shakespeare in Harlem* (New York: Knopf, 1942), 40.
[33] Langston Hughes, *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* (New York: Vintage, 1974), 268.
[34] Ibid.,190.
[35] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 324.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 325.
[38] Ibid., 326.
[39] Ibid., 327.
[40] Ibid., 328.
[41] Ibid., 355.
[42] Ibid., 357.
[43] Ibid., 345.
[44] Cited in Gohar, 89.
[45] George E. Kent, ed., *Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1972), 53.
[46] Antara, the black son of a noble tribesman from Arabia and a slave woman, was subjugated to different forms of humiliation including the betrayal of his father who denies his paternity and considers him as a slave living in his household. As a young man, Antara was famous for his poetic talent and war adventures. He was a talented poet who composed famous epics dealing with tribal life. He was also a great warrior who defended his tribe against the invasions of the enemies. Due to his kindness and heroism, Abla, the most beautiful girl of the noble tribe of Abs, fell in love with him in spite of being a black slave. The love story between Antara and Abla created tribal tensions because marriages between slaves and free women were forbidden in pre-Islamic Arabia. Antara's suffering and internal conflict were settled only when he was liberated from slavery. Antara became a free man when his father acknowledged him as his legitimate son expressing his deep regrets for abandoning him as a child and a young man. The reconciliation between son and father paved the way for the marriage of Antara and Abla, his beloved, for whom he wrote his love epics.
[47] The story of Antara raises the issue of the nature of slavery in the Arab world and the Middle East. In this context it is relevant to argue that slavery in the Arab world during the pre-Islamic era was different from slavery in the West or the Americas or elsewhere because slaves, in general, were dealt with as servants or housemaids; however, they were denied most of their human rights including freedom and citizenship. Though the tribal system in Arabia offered them some rights given to free people, slaves were considered as inferior. Islam attempted to put an end to slavery and many of Prophet Mohamed's close friends were slaves, brought from Africa to Arabia, prior to Islam. However, the argument that Islam eliminates colour racism is a simplification of history because slavery continues to exist in the Arab region, even after the domination of the Islamic religion. In Muslim communities in the Middle East and Africa, there are two kinds of slavery (white slaves and black slaves) and a spectrum of colour prejudice without caste. Under the Ottoman regime of Mohamed Ali, for example, Mamlukes (white slaves) were used as soldiers to defend the state. In other parts of the Arab world, black slaves were used as domestics and manual labourers. From the eighth century until the fourteenth century, raiders from southern Arabia attacked sub-Saharan Africa, kidnapping Africans who were forced to become slaves. Further, when the Sultans of Oman invaded Tanzania, they turned it into a slave market which continued to exist until the British occupation forces put an end to the slave trade. Slave markets were famous in different parts of Arabia, and in Morocco blacks of West African origin were imported and sold into slavery until the nineteenth century. The distinctive feature of slavery in the Islamic world is not its racial aspect but its military and administrative nature. Slavery in

Arabo-Islamic countries has no Jim Crow laws but undoubtedly it has its own traditions of prejudice and racism. From a historical perspective it is well-known that racial and colour prejudices are integral to Arabo-Islamic traditions. For example, prisoners of war who were captured in battles between the Muslim people and the invading armies during the early Islamic era were considered as slaves / concubines regardless of their colour or origin. In spite of considering slavery as a religious taboo, and a sacrilegious crime sufficient to expel its advocate from the Islamic community, slavery continued to take different forms in the Arab world, particularly in Arabia, until the middle of the twentieth century. Nowadays, there are human rights violations all over the Arab world .The victims are ethnic / religious minorities, political opposition parties, women, and workers of South Asian origin.

[48] Nwoga, 14.
[49] Issa Boullata, ed. and trans., *Modern Arab Poets* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976), 88.
[50] Ibid., 89.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 184.
[54] Jayyusi, 220.
[55] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 66.
[56] Ibid., 84.
[57] Kimberly W. Benston, "Amiri Baraka: An Interview" (*Boundary* 26, 1978), 313.
[58] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 85.
[59] Ibid., 88.
[60] Ibid., 81.
[61] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1967, 123.
[62] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 69.
[63] Mustafa Haddara, *Tayyarat Alshir Al-Arabi Almuāsir fi Al-Sudan (Movements of Contemporary Arabic Poetry in Sudan)* (Beirut: Dar Al-Thaqafa, 1972), 387.
[64] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto, 1986), 152.
[65] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Souvenir, 1979), 14.
[66] Haddara, 382.
[68] Ibid., 75.
[69] Michail Asfour, ed. and trans., *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, 1945-1987 (Ontario: Cormorant Books, 1988), 104.
[70] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 76.
[71] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 50.
[72] Asfour, 105.
[73] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 48.
[74] Ibid., 88.
[75] Ibid., 90.
[76] Ibid., 91.
[77] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 313.
[78] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 71.
[79] Ibid., 73.
[80] Ibid., 70.
[81] See Michael Sprinkler, ed. *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 215.
[82] Al-Fayturi, *Diwan Al-Fayturi*, 83.
[83] Ibid., 94.
[84] Ibid., 75.
[85] Ibid., 81.
[86] Ibid., 159.