



Original article

Poiesis of the Nonhuman: Zoopoetic Aesthetics in Elizabeth Bishop's and Salim Barakat's Selected Poems

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ABSTRACT

The present study conducts a comparative analysis of selected poems by Elizabeth Bishop and Salim Barakat following the zoopoetic theorizing, which focuses on concepts of bodily poiesis and animal agency. It aims to identify distinct zoopoetic aesthetics. Bishop's poems show an aesthetic of material empathy, where an observational confrontation with a nonhuman prompts an ethical attitude and reaction in the human speaker. In contrast, Barakat's poems develop an aesthetic of mythic abstraction. His poems transcend the human observer who grants nonhumans a sovereign agency. Barakat's poems do not depict a history of struggle and survival but grant nonhumans a cosmic and sublime force that presents their consciousness as complete and sufficient. Essentially, the study concludes that while Bishop directly enacts the process of zoopoetics to demonstrate how the poet's material attentiveness to a nonhuman's being generates formal and moral breakthroughs, Barakat's poems embody a radical and philosophical approach of zoopoetics through imagining a non-human-centered world.

Keywords: zoopoetics, Elizabeth Bishop, Salim Barakat, comparative literature, bodily poiesis, animal agency, eco-poetics, anthropomorphism, attentiveness

شعرية الإنسان: الجماليات الشعرية الحيوانية في قصائد مُختارة لإليزابيث بيشوب وسليم بركات

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المستخلص

تُجري هذه الدراسة تحليلاً مُقارناً لقصائد مُختارة لكل من إليزابيث بيشوب وسليم بركات، استناداً إلى المرتكزات النظرية للشعرية الحيوانية التي تُعنى بمفاهيم شعرية الجسد، واليقظة الانتباهية، والفاعلية الحيوانية. وتهدف الدراسة إلى استجلاء مسارين متميزين للجماليات الشعرية الحيوانية لدى الشاعرين؛ إذ تكشفُ قصائد بيشوب عن جماليات التعاطف المادي، حيث تُفضي المواجهة المباشرة والرصدية مع الكائن الإنساني إلى استنارة موقف واستجابة أخلاقية لدى الذات الناطقة. ويتأسس أسلوبها الشعري على إدراك جسد الإنسان بوصفه نصاً لتاريخ معيش، مما يُعزز صلةً مُتبادلةً تقوض الثنائية التقليدية بين الإنسان والحيوان. وفي المقابل، تجترح قصائد بركات جماليات التجريد الأسطوري؛ فهي تتجاوز موقِع المراقب البشري لتمنح الإنسان فاعلية عنصرية ذات سيادة مطلقة. إذ لا تصور هذه القصائد تاريخاً من الصراع من أجل البقاء، بل تصفي على الكائنات قوة كونية جلييلة (Sublime) تقدم وعيها بوصفه وعياً ناجزاً ومكتفياً بذاته. بشكل جوهري تُحاجج الدراسة بأنه في حين تُفعل بيشوب سيرورة الشعرية الحيوانية بشكل مباشر لتبين كيف يمكن للانتباه المادي للشاعر تجاه كينونة الإنسان أن يولد فتوحات شكلية وأخلاقية؛ فإن قصائد بركات تُجسد مقارنةً فلسفيةً وجذريةً لهذه الشعرية، من خلال تخيل عالم غير متمركز حول الإنسان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعرية الحيوانية، إليزابيث بيشوب، سليم بركات، الأدب المقارن، شعرية الجسد، الفاعلية الحيوانية، الشعرية البيئية، الأنسنة، الانتباه.

Introduction

In recent years, Humanities and literary studies have witnessed a significant shift toward the relationship between the human and non-human environment. This progress questions anthropocentrism, the assumption that "the human ... is at the centre" (Bennett and Royle, 2005, p.293). Instead, studies perceive human nature as "extremely interconnected with the biological non-human world" (Love, 2003, p.163). While Gerrard (2004) attributes this "animal turn" to Singer (1975), Boggs (2013) notes it transcends the conventional human/animal binary which subverts the structured division between "subject and object" (Morton, 2007, p. 154).

Admitting the "more-than-human world" (Rigby, 2002, p.155), this field attempts to reform of the linguistic rhetoric to foster diversity, equality, connectivity, and move away from the traditional hegemonic discourse (Kostkowska, 2013, p.1). It offers space „to unthink our often-unthinking attachment to notions of the human and humanity" (Bennett and Royle, 2005, p.225), and responds to "to the commodification of animals, the degradation of animal habitats, the pervasiveness of species extinction, and the increasing urgency for human communities to coexist with nonhuman animals in urban and rural settings" (Ryan, 2017, p.19). In short, the animal turn questions the human supremacy and exceptionality and to re-evaluate the biological hierarchy in cultural contexts.

Zoopoetics: A Conceptual Framework

The field that questions human exceptionality and supremacy is known as zoopoetics. It is a theoretical framework that focuses on how animals contribute to the critical poetry studies. Aaron's Moe defines zoopoetics as "the process of discovering innovative breakthroughs in form through an attentiveness to another species' bodily *poiesis*" (2014, p.10). Moe assumes that they are makers (*poiesis*) who possess agency in their making (p. 11). Bodily *poiesis* signifies the creativity that animals tackle through their gesture, physical expression and vocalizations, which perceives animals as creators of the text through their physical bodies (Moe, 2014, 13). Bodily *poiesis* is applied to both anthropomorphism and zoomorphism to indicate the "continuity and fluidity shared across and amongst ANIMAL↔HUMAN spheres" (Moe, 2014, p. 12).

Australian poet Les Murray (1938 – 2019) comments on his collection of poems *Translations from the Natural World* (1992) that his poems examine a host of nonhuman animals, plants, and birds as he immersed himself in their world as though he may render their voices in poetic expressions. Murray writes: "living things do all talk, I say, but they don't talk human language, or always speak with their mouth"(Murray, as cited in Malay, 2018, p. 162). Malay asserts that Murray's poetry grants animal agency rather than reducing them into fable or allegory (2018, p.163).

Similarly Feddersen sees zoopoetics as positioning "the animal as a maker, subject and individual at the heart of its genesis" (2021, p.92), while Krauth defines it as the study of "animal agency, communication, and meaning-making practices both *as* and *through* poetic and creative forms" (2024, p.121). The zoopoetic approach explains "the mutual imbrication and entanglement of the material and semiotic, the body and the text, the animal and the word" (Driscoll and Hoffmann, 2018, p. 4). Poetry is seen as a privileged spot of reexamination that can facilitate the encounters between human and non-human animals.

The term blends *zoion*, which means "living being", and poetics from *poiesis*, which means "to make" (Moe, 2014, p. 11). Jacques Derrida, who coined the term in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), critiques the marginalization of nonhuman animals under a single category, "the Animal". He argues this homogenization is a "crime ... against animals" that erases their "abyssal differences" (Derrida & Wills, 2002, p. 416). Zoopoetics can be perceived as "the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (Garrard, 2004, p.5).

Zoopoetics recovers the animal thinking that the Western philosophical tradition in the way it examines the "material-semiotic knots" where animal bodies and human texts entwine (Driscoll & Hoffmann, 2018, p.4). It counters the separation described by John Berger, in his influential essay "Why Look at Animals?" (1980), where animals became objects of knowledge and "lost all significance" (p.2). By assuming animal self-consciousness and subjectivity (Moe, 2014, p.9), zoopoetics investigates how nonhuman presence dictates "perceptual constraints" and "linguistic constraints" in writing (Bouttier, 2019, p.158). Bouttier argues that these constraints involve, for example, avoiding nominal forms, establishing the active presence of nonhuman agencies, and recommending a possible claim of authorship on the nonhuman entities' part (2019, p.161).

The concept of self-consciousness is perceived as one of the fundamental features that resists conventional anthropocentric aspects of animals and re-establishes their function in literary aesthetics. Ahed (2025) states that anthropomorphism fosters a violent hierarchy that privileges humans over animals that poets and novelists critique "because it tears down the excuses humans use to justify abuses of power" (p. 1285). Sarikaya claims that animals are "self-conscious, self-autonomous" beings capable of exerting their free individuality (2023). This claim shows that nonhumans are not merely instinct-driven tools; rather, they possess awareness of themselves and their surroundings, and "their unique ways of acting and responding to events ignite the dynamism and self-evolution of nature" (Sarikaya, 2023, p.142). This contributes to the dynamism of nature influence, by extension, the development of poetic thinking.

Subjectivity is another concept in zoopoetics. It underpins the aims of reshaping human-animal relations and animals' linguistic representation. This sort of perception refuses to passively perceive animals as metaphoric and symbolic representations. Bouttier notes that "a human poet imitating a nonhuman animal, the nonhuman assumes a degree of authorial agency because the poet attentively scrutinizes and imitates it. Without this nonhuman animal, the poem would be shaped differently" (p. 160).

McHugh (2009) connects animals' subjectivity with material embodiment; she argues that paying close attention to animals' exteriority shows them "as actors operating in accordance with a logic different from that of intentionality or psychological interiority" (p. 491). Eva Hoffmann (2017) states that literary animals in poetic texts resist purely figurative readings through the insistence of the specific animal's physical body and its encounter with other bodies. Harrison (1993) writes that subjectivity must be understood "as not only multiplicitous to its core but also, from its origins, relational" (p. 10). This perspective stresses animals' individualized status, which arises from multiple interactions within human-animal spaces through the exchange of shared interests, meaning, and affection.

Experimental poetics shift human-animal relations through the deconstruction of language, striving to render the texture and the processes of nonhuman materiality (Campos, 2019). This approach can generate a more nonhierarchical and respectful perception of all animate components of the organic world (Keller, 2017). The experimental language within zopoetic aesthetics advocates for what Donna Haraway refers to as "new modes of thought and practice beyond the human/animal distinction", which encourages inhabiting "the world from perspectives other than those of the classically human subject and to explore the passions and potentials that are found in such spaces of encounter" (2003, p. 51).

The agency of animals is acknowledged through the study of animals, which reveals their intricate psychological patterns. Previously, animals were perceived as instinctual and automatic entities without personality or agency. However, scientific research increasingly enhances the notion of nonhuman cultures in animals, which documents complex social behaviors learned by species like orangutans and chimpanzees (Feder, 2021). Recognizing animal agency reshapes the poetic creation

into "a multispecies event" (Moe, 2014, p.24). Sarıkaya (2023) argues that the poetic creation is manifested through animals' "bodily entanglements and meaningful vocal utterances" (p. 129).

Moe (2014) offers examples which highlight animals' innovative breakthroughs in their makings, such as the mimic octopus's conspicuous facultative mimicry, the beluga whale Noc's imitation of human speech frequencies and cadences and the elephant Koshik's novel method of vocal production by manipulating his trunk inside his mouth. These instances redefine agency as an inherent property of matter itself, thereby subverting the anthropocentric perspective of perceiving matter as passive and dependent on human epistemological interpretations. However, matter "is inherently meaningful per se and does not actually require human intervention to become intelligible" (Martín González, 2021, p. 68).

Zoopoetic Modalities: A Theoretical Contribution

While Moe's concept of bodily poiesis effectively elucidates nonhuman agency, current scholarship remains largely tethered to Western epistemologies of empathy. This study interprets zoopoetic differently by operating it across cultural ontologies. By placing Elizabeth Bishop's materialist poetics in dialogue with Salim Barakat's mythic abstraction, the paper proves that bodily poiesis is culturally situational. It proposes two distinct modalities: relational subjectivity, where the animal's agency is claimed through ethical attentiveness as represented in Bishop's selected poems, and sovereign agency, where animal exists as an autonomous, mythic force indifferent to human interiority as embodied in Barakat's poems. This framework expands the animal turn to include sovereign animal of Middle East mythopoetics, in addition to the animal of Western ecocriticism.

Elizabeth Bishop

Elizabeth Bishop, a renowned American poet, was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1911 (Bloom, 2002). Her zoopoetics is deeply connected to her personal history and "her poetics of loss" (Ellis, 2022, p. 133). Her early life was marked by great trauma of losing her father and her mother's institutionalization, which instilled in her a sense of homelessness and uprootedness (McCabe, 1994). Harrison states that the mother's screams are diffused among her works' "animate and inanimate members" to provide a "relational subjectivity" where feelings of pain are distributed among memories and objects (1993, p. 141). This approach of displacing emotions through keen observation of non-human entities contributed to Bishop's ability to "question the boundaries of self and world, living and dying" (McCabe, 1994, p. 3). Huang (2010, p. 108) states that "Bishop's disciplined, objective treatment of the pain of loss never abates but paradoxically endows her agony with more dignity and profundity, to the extent that the pain is sublimated to art."

Her awareness to nature and animals helped her to tackle topics related to identity, relation, and the boundaries of human comprehension, often functioning as a process to "explore the individual subjects determined by and intertwined with those world events, but living them daily" (Harrison, 1993, p. 77). This awareness also impacted her poetic style that "unsettles any notion of integrated selfhood and places us in touch with a sense of loss at the core of our attempts to fix ourselves through language" (McCabe, 1994, pp. xi-xii).

In addition to the personal impacts, Bishop's study of biology influenced her imagination, teaching her "precision, economy of statement, logic employed to ends that are disinterested, drawing and identifying, all of which, she believed, influenced her imagination" (Moore, 1961, pp. 254-255). In correspondence with Robert Lowell, Bishop expresses her "passion for accuracy" and admiration of Charles Darwin's scientific method (Bishop & Lowell, 2010). Scientific precision informed her poetic approach to animals that held emphasis on direct observation over preconceived portrayals, which helped her to comprehend the significance of otherness in non-human beings. Furthermore, her interest in surrealism allowed her to interrogate nature's "moral ambiguity" (Rosenbaum, 2014, p. 70) and subvert traditional anthropocentric boundaries between human and non-human worlds.

Bishop's ecocentric attitude, marked by a selfless and impersonal tendency and restrained approach, essentially functions as an opposition to anthropocentric supremacy (Alkodimi, 2024, p. 50). MacRae (2018) states that Bishop's approach equalizes humans and animals, "thus rejecting the anthropocentric ideal in which humans dominate nature" (p. 123).

Bishop's lifelong zoopoetics manifests a continuous recalibration of perception—a developmental arc moving from the empathetic formations of early trauma, through intellectually honed ethological precision, to transnational insights into connectivity and biopolitical hierarchies. Her poetry operates as a discursive seismograph, capturing the subtle vibrations of alterity. This methodology parallels critical cartography in its revelation of submerged relational matrices, ultimately constructing a vision of radical entanglement: humans as constitutive strands within nature's irreducible tapestry.

Salim Barakat

A distinguished Syrian-Kurdish poet and novelist, Salim Barakat was born in Qamishli, northern Syria, in 1951. His literary works include over sixty books of poetry and novels, alongside three autobiographies, which established him as a prominent literary figure in modern Arabic literature (Fakhreddine, 2018).

Barakat's literature, rooted in his lived experiences of exile and displacement, cultivates a "transgressive relationship with the language" (Fakhreddine, 2024). His poetic style is characterized by a unique, dense complexity, convoluted language and a vast vocabulary that may require specialized lexicon for interpretation (Oussi, 2022). Barakat's purpose of crafting a distinctive linguistic style lies in the fact of pushing the boundaries of conventional meaning as he often favors symbolic and abstract expression to disregard meaning altogether (Khaled 2020). This unconventional approach to writing earned Barakat a reputation as a difficult poet and person, in the way he maintains a very secluded life and rarely engages with the media or literary circles (Fakhreddine, 2024).

In the regard of zoopoetics, Subhi Hadid, in his introduction to Barakat's *Al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya* [Collected Poems], argues that Barakat's poetry occupies a considerable place for animals, which represent the absolute freedom that is perfectly associated with instinct, and the perfect embodiment of the non-defiled and filled with vitality (Barakat, 2007). Barakat's bond with the animal kingdom is

evident through the very titles of his books, such as his novel, *Al Jundub al-Hadīdī* [The Iron Locust] (1980), and poetry collections: *Al-Karakī* [The Cranes] (1980), *Bi al-Shibāk Dhātihā... Bi al-Tha'ālib allatī Taqūd al-Rṭh* [With the Very Nets... With Foxes That Steer the Wind] (1986), *Al Bāziyār* [The Keeper of the Goshawk] (1987), *Hiyāj al-Awazz* (The Clamor of Geese), and *Tanbīh al-Ḥayawān ilā Ansābih* [Alerting Animals to Their Lineages] (2018).

In his book *al ta'jjīl fī qurūd al nathr* [The hastening of prose borrowings] (2010), Barakat believes that the "animals constitute humanity's primal world of imagination" (p. 141). Barakat's perception is deeply aligned with the tenets of zoopoetic theory, which indicates the power of human imagination emerged from a close connection with the animal world. Paul Shepard (19789), a key figure in zoopoetics, states that "the mind and its organ, the brain, are in reality that part of us most dependent on the survival of animals," which suggests that "human intelligence is bound to the presence of animals" (p. 2). Barakat further observes that the animal echo is fainter in "world poetry" compared to "folk narratives" (2010, p. 141). His observation implies a critical concern that zoopoetics actively addresses in its studies.

Barakat's interest in "remote antiquity" and "primordial" symbols derived from ancient Kurdish oral genres and Zoroastrian culture influenced his connection to earlier narratives where animals held a central position (Butt, 2010). However, animals were not perceived by Barakat as symbols or allegories; he writes "I have not adopted it, in this capacity, as an avenue for anthropomorphic projection disguised within its mask; nor have I sought wisdom through its description, just as I have not desired an approach fortified by symbol" (2010, p. 142). Barakat's declaration and his perception of the animal show a deliberate artistic intention of transcending the convention anthropocentric portrayal of animals, which is a key objective in zoopoetic praxis. In other words, Barakat perceives the animal as a being, not simply as a thematic manifestation of human concerns.

Barakat's statement on the animal in his *al ta'jjīl fī qurūd al nathr* [The hastening of prose borrowings] can be seen as a manifesto of zoopoetics in contemporary Arabic literature that articulates a conscious endeavor to subvert anthropocentric projections and symbolic reduction. He seeks a more direct and respectful engagement with the animal as a free being and agency of the true source of poetic making.

Comparative Zoopoetic Aesthetics: Bishop and Barakat

Methodological Note

Undertaking a comparative analysis between Bishop and Barakat necessitates a critical awareness of the asymmetry often present in East-West comparisons. The paper resists the tendency to regard the Western Anglophone tradition as the universal norm against which Arabic poetics are perceived as peripheral or exotic. While the paper employs the Western theoretical framework of zoopoetics, it does not try to create a hierarchical structures that evaluate one poet's approach to animal as more successful or radical than the other's.

On the other hand, the comparative method of this paper functions as a reciprocal enlightenment where it posits that the divergence of between the two poets is a representation of cultural and linguistic epistemologies. While Bishop's reliance on observation influenced by the empirical Western tradition, Barakat's philological density is impacted by the heritage of the Arabic qasida and his Kurdish folklore. The paper views these distinct aesthetic modes horizontally rather than hierarchically in order to subvert the human subject across different literary geographies with granting privilege to one cultural ontology over the other.

Despite their disparate cultural and biographical roots, Bishop and Barakat embody zoopoetic features in their poetry to reveal their anti-anthropocentric worldviews through the process of blurring the boundaries of the human-animal binary. Both poets embrace a biocentric perspective that grants autonomy and agency to nonhuman beings, yet they employ distinct strategies.

The Snail between Material Empathy and Ontological Sufficiency

The exemplification of zoopoetics in Bishop and Barakat's selected animal poems through an intense focus on the particularity of non-humans' forms, actions, and perception that attribute centrality, agency and subjectivity. Bishop's prose poem "Giant Snail" and Barakat's "The Snail" both depict the world of a snail through different forms and voices. Bishop's poem is narrated from the first person ("I") by a snail, while Barakat's poem uses the third person ("he") to speak of the snail. While Bishop uses free-verse form to freely describe the snail's physical sensations and slow journey, Barakat relies on aphoristic form to articulate the snail's minimal needs and contemplative attitude.

Bishop's "Giant Snail" chronicles the nonhuman's slow, arduous adventure in rainy weather, where the snail's body "is wet and cold and covered with sharp gravel" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p. 134). The snail says that it has "set myself a goal, a certain rock" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.135). Bishop depicts the snail's adventure as a monumental effort as it laments his "wet and cold" body, "I am heavy, heavy, heavy. My white muscles are already tired" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.135). Despite the physical appearance of "mysterious ease," the snail shows that its movement requires "the greatest effort of my will that I can rise above the smallest stones and sticks" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.135)

On the other hand, Barakat's short contemplative poem is an observation of the snail from a reverent eye that perceives it as self-sufficient and gentle in its meditative solitude:

(Barakat, 2007, p.296) "حسبُهُ البسيطُ البسيطُ، الهَيِّنُ الهَيِّنُ؛ حسبُهُ المغلُقُ المشدُودُ بالبعيدِ المشدُودِ"

[His sufficiency is simple, utterly simple; gentle, utterly gentle; it suffices him to be self-contained, captivated by the distant, which itself is captivated.]¹

This and all the Subsequent translations of the Arabic texts which appear in the present study is done by the researcher ¹ for academic purposes, unless otherwise stated.

The poem does not depict a difficult journey but a philosophical contemplation of a state of being, which tackles the theme of the snail's completeness and lack of need for anything outside itself that is emphasized through the anaphora "حَسْبُهُ" [it suffices him].

One of the main distinctions between the two poems is that the distinction of the narrative voices influences the portrayal of the animal agency. In Bishop's "Giant Snail", the first-person pronoun entails an internal monologue that is rich with human-like anxiety: "I have come out to take a walk and feed Our proportions horrify our neighbors And what if I fall over it" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.135). The snail's anxiety solidifies the concept of non-human agency, though it is framed by the complexity of human emotions as emphasized in its direct plea for empathy: "But O! I am too big. I feel it. Pity me" (p.135). Though it sounds that Bishop uses the snail as a vessel for human emotional complexity, in a zoopoetic framework, she projects the consciousness of the non-human entities.

Conversely, Barakat maintains a respectful distance through the employment of the third-person pronoun, which preserves the snail its otherness according to the prerequisite of "attentiveness" as theorized by Moe. Rather than inhabiting the snail's mind, as Bishop does, Barakat's narrator contemplates the conditions of the snail:

حَسْبُهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيباً مِنْ وَحْشَتِهِ الْقَرِيبَةِ. حَسْبُهُ أَنْ يَهْرَأَ قَرْنِيهِ اللَّيْنِينَ مَتَلَمَساً غَمَامَةً ذَاتِهِ الَّتِي تَبْلَلُ غُرَّةَ الظَّلَامِ. حَسْبُهُ أَنْ يَمُوجَ فِي ضَفَافِ الصَّدْفَةِ، مُصْعِداً فِي القَشْرَةِ القَاسِيَةِ زَفِيرَ الحَالِمِ. (Barakat, 2007, p.296)

[It suffices him to remain near his own intimate solitude. It suffices him to sway his soft antennae, groping for the mist of his being that moistens the brow of darkness. It suffices him to ripple along the shell's edge, exhaling the dreamer's breath into its hardened spiral.]

The agency of the snail is defined through a simple and deep completeness as it possesses the agency of [intimate solitude] rather than of one of striving. However, Barakat idealizes his snail through philosophical contemplation, while Bishop's seems more realistic.

The divergence of the voices shapes the portrayal of the snails' "bodily poiesis" in both poems. In "Giant Snail", Bishop depicts the physical hardship of the snail's body, which is "covered with sharp gravel" and experiences a huge burden: "I am heavy, heavy." Its body is characterized by struggle and coldness: "I am cold, cold, cold as ice" and physical limitation "degenerate, my four horns that can't attack" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.135). Here, Bishop is attentive to the snail's material reality, though she interprets its poiesis through the lens of human suffering. On the other hand, Barakat depicts the snail's bodily poiesis as effortless and graceful. Its movement is not a struggle against the environment; it is a harmonious interaction with it. The snail does not drag itself over sharp terrain; rather, it is shown to "sway his soft antennae" and "ripple along the shell's edge." The portrayal perceives the animal's movements not as a hardship to be overcome, but as the physical expression of a complete and self-contained nature.

The treatment of the shell in each poem serves as a focal point of contrast that shows the snail's communication with the outside world. In Bishop's poem, the shell is portrayed as a beautiful object and a place of refuge. The snail finds pride in its home, perceiving it as "beautiful, and high, and glazed, and shining I, I fill it to perfection" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.135). Bishop's snail views its shell as an integral part of its identity and means of its psychic survival (McCabe, 2021). Through its internal monologue, the snail is self-aware of its internal world as it expresses self-admiration for its shell, which respectively reveals its awareness of its subjectivity. Bishop picture the shell as a destination of rest for the snail, "and when I reach the rock, I shall go into a certain crack there for the night. The waterfall below will vibrate through my shell and body all night long" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.135). These lines imply that there are two separate entities: the snail and its shell; the self, as a weary traveller, finds in the shell a beautiful sanctuary it carries.

Barakat, in his poem, does not depict the shell as a possession but an integrated and inseparable part of the snail. The narrator of the poem explicitly states in the poem:

بيئته معه.

يمضي فيمضي بيئته معه.

مُفَكِّرٌ يَجْرُ فِكْرَتَهُ الصَّدْفِيَّةَ، وَيَدْخُلُهَا لِنَلِّأَ يَرَهَا. (Barakat, 2007, p.296)

[His home is with him. He moves, and his home moves with him. A thinker dragging his shell-like thought, entering it so as not to behold it.]

Here, Barakat portrays the shell as home, body, and consciousness simultaneously; for him, there is no separation between the snail and its home, or between the contemplative existences of the snail and its physical appearance. Where Bishop's snail has a home, Barakat's snail is its home; the idea is compatible with zoopoetic emphasis on continuity over the arbitrary human/animal divide that affirms continuity and fluidity across species (Moe, 2014).

The subversion of the boundary between human and non-human consciousness of the traditional anthropocentrism is conducted differently by both poets. Bishop creates a shared space of empathy through portraying relatable suffering, while Barakat elevates the snail to a complex philosophical condition, perceiving its non-human self-sufficiency. At the same time, both poets attribute a complex inner life to the snail rather than presenting it as a one-dimensional, cartoonish entity.

Material Empathy and Mythic Sovereignty in Aquatic Encounters

As they engage with the same animal, the snail, in the earlier poems, Bishop and Barakat focus also on the same marine non-human, the seal, in their poems "At the Fishhouses" and "The Seal" respectively. However, they approach it from radically contrasting perspectives. In Bishop's "At the Fishhouses," the seal appears in the latter half of a longer and descriptive poem, which describes a personal encounter of the speaker with the seal. The speaker meticulously observes the seal and interprets its actions from a human-like, curious stance: "He was curious about me. He was

interested in music" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.51). The speaker seeks to bridge the species divide through singing hymns, and carefully describes the seal's physical reaction, observing how "He stood up in the water and regarded me / steadily, moving his head a little" (p.52). The poem is entirely narrated from the human perspective to document a moment of interspecies communication where the seal's agency is observed and marked.

In a stark contrast to Bishop's "At the Fishhouses," Barakat's "The Seal" dispenses with the human observer. Through the employment of apostrophe, the speaker directly addresses the seal and grants it a sovereign and mythic voice when the poem opens with addressing the seal to perform its epic voice:

أنشدُ نشيدك على صخرةٍ عاليةٍ، وأجمع الريحَ كلها قرب ثديك، فأنت تطفمُ البحرَ الآن، وتهيبُ بالمرضعات أنْ "هددنَ وليدي على سريره الرملي"، فما منْ عويلٍ سيعلو عويلك أنْ يأخذُ القطيعَ ذكرًا آخرُ، وما منْ أنينٍ سيواسي الأنينَ أنْ ترى إنائك يتوسلنَ فحولة الغريب. (Barakat, 2007, p.291)

[Sing your song upon a high rock, gather all the winds to your breast; for now you wean the sea, calling upon the nurses: "lull my child upon his sandy bed." No wail shall surpass yours to claim the herd another male, nor shall any moan console yours as you watch your females entreat the virility of the stranger.]

The poem creates an interior world for the non-human, a world filled with grief and cultural ritual away from anthropocentric dominance. Barakat does not seek to describe an encounter with the non-human; rather, it creates a self-contained, non-human voice that depicts the seal as a mythic hero of its own natural and elemental world.

A zoopoetic text is not necessarily about non-humans; rather, they are "predicated upon an engagement with animals and animality" where "poetic thinking" proceeds by the non-humans to reveal the "material-semiotic knot" of the non-human presence (Driscoll & Hoffmann, 2018, p. 4). Bishop renders an interaction and a sense of a shared presence to the seal through granting it agency and voice when she describes it as "curious," "interested in music," and comes out with "sort of shrug/ as if it were against his better judgment" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.52). Despite that, Bishop leans again towards projecting human attributes on the seal rather than explicitly rendering its nonhuman vocalizations as inherent to its species.

If Bishop's attribution of agency is implied, Barakat explicitly focuses on the agency and the forms of expression of the seal in his poem. The male seal is asked to sing "upon a high rock" and other vocalizations such as "wail" and "lament" are portrayed. The female seals are also depicted as:

ولينشدُ قطيعك الأنثوي، أيضاً، نشيده: قطيعك الذي يتبع الغالين (Barakat, 2007, p.291)

[Let your feminine herd, also raise their song— they who follow the victors.]

Here, Barakat's presentation of these utterances and vocalizations within the seals' world embodies the zoopoetic reasoning which explores non-human rhetoric and its contribution to the universal utterances that extend the human linguistic system.

The language of Barakat's poem and its imagery tangibly reveal the bodily poiesis of the seal through descriptions such as:

رذاذُ يبللُ الجلدَ البهيَّ قبل أن ينحدرَ الجسدُ إلى سلامِهِ. (Barakat, 2007, p.292)

[Drizzle moistens the graceful skin before the body descends into its peace.]

Here, Barakat attentively captures a specific, physical moment of the seal's being to demonstrate its reality through descriptive language, which means the poem manifests the feature of non-human's way of being in shaping the form of poetry.

Bishop describes the movements of the seal and its physical presence:

He stood up in the water and regarded me
steadily, moving his head a little.

Then he would disappear, then suddenly emerge
almost in the same spot, with a sort of shrug
as if it were against his better judgment.

Cold dark deep and absolutely clear. (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p.52)

Although Bishop attributes evident agency to the seal through the speaker's deliberate process of observation and communication with the seal, a striking anthropomorphic portrayal exposes a sense of personality, will and internal deliberation. Vendler (1987) argues that through the employment of specific sorts of words, Bishop anthropomorphizes the non-human to state that humans are merely another mammalian species different from the seal. It can be understood that Bishop undermines anthropocentric ideals by equalizing humans and animals when she frames the seal's voice through human-understandable terms rather than explicitly granting a non-human a mode of expression.

Both Bishop and Barakat blur the human/animal binary with their distinctive approaches to create a "porous borderland" where human consciousness is deeply involved with non-humans' world to foster a "multispecies event" where the animals are an "insubstitutable medium" for poetic making (Driscoll & Hoffmann, 2018, p. 4). While Bishop's "At the Fishhouses" is a significant model of anti-anthropocentric poem that depicts interspecies communication and resists conventional human/animal hierarchical structures, Barakat's "The Seal" explicitly and comprehensively embodies the concepts of zoopoetics in the way it presents the seal not merely subject of human attentiveness but a prominent medium through which poetic thinking is produced.

The essential distinction between non-human aquatic entities in Bishop's observational empathy and Barakat's mythic portrayal is reinforced in their "The Fish" and "The Eel" respectively. While Bishop's "The Fish" chronicle a narrative of capture and release, Barakat's "The Eel" presents

a philosophical contemplation on the essence of an aquatic non-human as an elemental entity rather than perceiving it as an individual creature.

In "The Fish", Bishop meticulously describes the fish with seemingly detached observation which reveals her communication with animality beyond the easy anthropocentric categorization: "battered and venerable and homely" appearance, its "skin like wallpaper, speckled with barnacles and sea-lice," its "frightening gills," "pink swim-bladder," and "filmy eyes" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, p. 33). This level of "unusually close scrutiny of 'facts and minute details'" is crucial in Bishop's methodological description that allows her to observe a "peripheral vision of what lies beyond them" (Pickard, 2009, p.3). Despite the fish being caught, it is portrayed as "silent, heavy and ancient otherworldliness" that challenges the naivety of the anthropocentric perspective while respecting the fish's autonomy. The speaker pictures the fish's eyes, "far larger than mine but shallower, and yellowed," shifted "but not to return my stare" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, pp. 33-34). This significant detail indicates the fish's independent agency, that it is not an object of human projection. The five old pieces of fish-line "grown firmly in his mouth" are depicted as "medals with their ribbons," which refers to the fish's strength and endurance to survive. The speaker even shows his admiration to fish's "sullen face" (p. 34).

On the other hand, Barakat's "The Eel" reflects on the eel's active poiesis and implied actions through employing rhetorical questions that ascribes physical and emotional agency to the non-human:

أتذكر المياه: ذيلٌ يمسُّ الغدَ، وأعضاءٌ لينَةٌ تجوفُ الحدودَ القريبةَ؟

أتذكر المياه: أبدأُ رشيقٌ في حراشفه الكهرمانية، والأعماقُ الأكثرُ وقاراً تنتثرُ عقودُ سُبّحاتها؟

أتذكر المياه: حركةٌ وزبدٌ. ضرباتٌ خفيفةٌ للعضل الجسور، والزعانفُ تومضُ في انسيابها فينشغلُ الضوءُ بآرثه من الظلال على الصفحة الساحرة؟

...

ذيلٌ، وأعضاءٌ متصلةٌ لينَةٌ،

والحراشفُ تغمضُ على الماءِ جفونها فيبتئُ بالحنينِ. (Barakat, 2007, pp.292)

[Do the waters remember: a tail brushing the future, and soft flesh hollowing the near borders?/ Do the waters remember: a definite sleek shape in its amber scales, and the more majestic depths scattering their rosary beads?/ Do the waters remember: movement and foam. Gentle strokes against the sturdy muscle, and fins flickering in their flow, so the light becomes absorbed by its legacy of shadows on the enchanting page? .../ A tail, and soft connected organs,/ And the scales close their eyelids upon the water, and moistened with longing.]

Barakat grants the eel a rhetorical body and enables it to make its own mark and express its internal condition. Barakat emphasizes the interrelationship between the eel and its aquatic environment, with questions revolving around the water "remembering" the eel's movements. This

exemplification is affiliated with the mutual entanglement of the material and the semiotic, and with the animal and the word. The eel's actions become the medium through which poetic meaning is promoted. He demonstrates a zoopoetic sensibility through exhibiting intensive scrutiny and observation of the eel's "tail," "scales," muscles," and "fins", which renders the physical reality of the non-human. This grants the eel its independent agency when it actively impacts the aquatic environment and its movements.

Avian Poetics between Obsessive Gaze and Narrated Horizon

The comparative approaches of both Bishop and Barakat's perspectives directly shape their depiction of birds' bodily poesis in Bishop's "Sandpiper" and Barakat's "The Sandgrouse" and "The Partridge." Bishop portrays the sandpiper as intensely concentrated on its environment. It is completely immersed in its task: "His beak is focussed; he is preoccupied,/ looking for something, something, something./ Poor bird, he is obsessed!" (Giroux & Schwartz, 2008, pp. 125-126). This precise presentation of the bird's almost frantic movements, "finical, awkward, in a state of controlled panic" (p. 125), indicates a keen and attentive observation of non-human poesis. The repetition of the word "something" embodies the restless activity of the sandpiper and how its physical presence, as "finical," awkward," "panic," "preoccupied," and "obsessed," shapes the poetic form of the poem.

On the other hand, Barakat, in his "The Partridge," presents a more radical approach which places the bird in a position intertwined with the poetic act and language. Though the title of the poem implies it is about a partridge, it includes other birds such as: "sandgrouse," "flamingos," "cranes," "pelicans," "nimble sparrows," and "herons." Yet, Barakat elevates the partridge beyond its natural entity:

حجلٌ؛

تذهبُ الأرضُ ويبقى حجلٌ في المدى.

حجلٌ؛

يذهبُ المدى ويبقى حجلٌ في النشيد.

حجلٌ؛

حجلٌ أفقنا. حجلٌ ظلُّنا، حجلٌ بدايةُ الكلام. حجلٌ كلامنا.

حجلٌ، حجلٌ، إشهدي ما مدارج تهوي إذ تهوي الأرضُ،

واكتبُ أيها اليأسُ بالريشةِ الباقيةُ. (Barakat, 2007, pp.292-293)

[A partridge;/ the earth disappears, yet a partridge remains in the expanse./ A partridge; the expanse fades, yet a partridge endures in the song./ A partridge; our horizon is a partridge, our shadow is a partridge,/ a partridge is the genesis of speech, a partridge is our very words. O partridge, partridge, bear witness that slopes collapse as the earth collapses,/ And you, O despair, inscribe with the surviving quill.]

Here, the partridge is not depicted as a creature to be observed and empathized with; as in Bishop's "Sandpiper, rather, it is a being that participates in the poetic act as its presence is revealed through the insistent repetition of "A partridge" that emphasizes its foundational role. Barakat grants the partridge an ontological place that remains even when "the earth disappears," and "the expanse fades" and the partridge becomes the "horizon," the "shadow," "the genesis of speech" and the "very word" of the speaker. This indicates that the partridge in the poem is a linguistic and cultural agent and active contributor to human language. Driscoll and Hoffmann (2018) posit that the animals "influence us in our production of language, and specifically in the making of poetry" (p. 7).

Barakat blurs the conventional boundaries between non-human creatures and inanimate landscape to imply that the earth itself can manifest the bodily poesis of the non-human:

فقلنا تطايري، تطايري أكثر يثها الأرض؛ تطايري بجعاً، ونمناً، وغرانتق ... فلنا في النشيد أرضاً أخرى، رخيمة كغبغبة حجلٍ
يستدرج الأنثى. (Barakat, 2007, pp.292)

[O earth; fly apart pelicans, nimble sparrows, herons For in song, we possess another land, as tender as the cooing of a partridge luring its mate.]

Here, the speaker directly addresses the earth to emulate the movements of the aforementioned birds, which refers to the conceptual notion of zoopoetics that non-humans are not merely objects of poetic representation but powerful active agents whose bodily action can shape the world, human experience and the very fabric of language. Barakat does not focus on the bodily actions of the birds but also on their vocalizations, which is a primary feature of zoopoetics, as seen in linking non-human vocalization (song) to the possession of alternative tend "land," compared to the tender "cooing of a partridge luring its mate." It can be realized that the "cooing" of the partridge is not perceived as mere sound; instead, it is a significant and purposeful behavior of "luring," which demonstrates the relational and communicative tenet of non-human sound. Moe (2014) affirms that non-human vocalizations and gestures contribute to the development of human consciousness and language.

In "The Sandgrouse," Barakat elevates the bird beyond its physical description to a mythic and surreal position and grants it a narrative voice that transcends its natural entity. The poem does not depict the sandgrouse explicitly, but implied in the depiction of the wilderness, which is an active force in the poem:

البراري تركض شعناء، حاضنة، ملء رئاتها، أسرة الجذور، والخيام التي نسيتهما الصواعق في الحجر، غير أنها تتعثر بجناح
صغير؛ جناح مرسل كظل يغطي الظلال بشباك النشيد، فتلوي على ذاتها. وتوطد المكان.

(Barakat, 2007, pp.292)

[The wilderness runs disheveled, cradling in its lungs the beds of roots, and the tents forgotten by lightning in the stone. Yet it stumbles upon a small wing— a wing sent forth like a shadow covering shadows with the nets of song; it curls upon itself and fortifies the place.]

The poiesis, here, is elemental and grand in the sense that it enhances the environment with a conscious and theatrical agency – an "intentional exertion of power" (Moe, 2014, p.2). The sandgrouse appears only in the last line of the poem:

البراري تتكى على عمودها الأزرق، وقطة تسرد المدى. (Barakat, 2007, pp.292)

[The wilderness leans upon its blue pillar, and a sandgrouse narrates the horizon.]

The appearance of the sandgrouse is not seen as an actor but as a narrative principle whose agency is not natural but creative and vocal. Barakat makes the poiesis of the sandgrouse responsible for establishing meaning and order in the vast and chaotic energy of the wilderness. Converse to Bishop's "Sandpiper", where the agency of the sandpiper is frantic and limited, marked by its immediate, instinctual needs, the agency of the sandgrouse, in Barakat's poem, is more abstract and grander. Its agency is one of the ultimate narrative controls that does not act in the world only, but it defines the world through narrating it. Barakat subverts the anthropomorphic hierarchy but attributing its essential narrative agency to a non-human creature. On the other hand, Bishop perceives the agency of the sandpiper as pitiable and struggling, though more realistic and materialistic than Barakat's sandgrouse.

Conclusion

The research study concludes that both Elizabeth Bishop and Salim Barakat redefine the role of the nonhuman in poetry as they transcend the symbolic representation of anthropomorphism and establish a biocentric conscious communication with the natural world. Despite their distinct linguistic and cultural origins, the study shows that Bishop and Barakat converge in their commitment to foregrounding nonhuman poiesis.

However, the comparative analysis of the selected poems by both poets illustrates two coherent and distinct zoopoetic aesthetics. Across their portrayal of the nonhumans ranging from the terrestrial snail to aquatic life and birds, a clear pattern emerges. Bishop's poems reveal an aesthetic of material empathy through the employment of a direct and observational depiction of the animals' physical shapes, which become texts lived history. Her method prompts an ethical and conscious awareness of nonhuman lives. In contrast, Barakat's poems develop an aesthetic of mystic abstraction that bypasses the human observational stance to grant the nonhumans a sovereign and elemental agency. Barakat does not present nonhumans' bodily poiesis as a history of struggle, but as a cosmic and sublime, self-sufficient force.

Consequently, the research study offers a complementary, rather than competing, approach of what zoopoetics can perform. The comparative approach reshapes zoopoetic theory by demonstrating that animal agency is culturally situational rather than being perceived as a monolithic concept. By granting animals an active role in the making of poetry, Bishop and Barakat subvert anthropocentric hierarchies and present a significant recognition of nonhumans' intrinsic values and influence. These findings recommend that future work in Arabic and comparative ecocriticism should further investigate how non-Western poetics offer unique ontological theorizing for posthuman

poetics. Finally, these distinguished aesthetics forge new orientations of perceiving our place within the universe.

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