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Iraq and the Question of Aesthetics

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Preamble

Throughout the past four years, Iraq has become an international obsession. Iraq headlines flood global media on a daily basis. The war on Iraq is, quite arguably, the most controversial military venture of our times; Iraq fever is likely to continue spreading well into the distant future. Thousands of books have been written about it, conferences are routinely held on the topic; movies, theatrical productions, and art exhibitions are solely dedicated to it. It is a subject of no small importance. More so now than at any other time in history, the fate of Iraq, as well as the greater region, represents a vortex of the most provocative academic discussions taking places around the globe. Nevertheless, the bulk of these discussions, academic or otherwise, are not germane to the present inquiry. However, the conventional, inexhaustive Iraq literature comprising justificatory or condemnatory deliberations, will not be addressed in this work. Rather, in the spirit of our present symposium, we will embark upon an investigation into that which is commonly slighted in the Iraq frenzy; it is that substantive use of aesthetic paradigms, integrated into triumphant modes of sociocultural concord by Iraq's iconographic visual culture producers. The reliance upon a coalescence of aesthetic paradigms for establishing and solidifying a common conception of the national self, in a vastly heterogenous, pluralistic nation-state of present day Iraq, extends well into its ancient past, recent, and turbulent present. Ultimately, it is hoped, that this atypical approach will uncover worthwhile directions by which to reassess our understanding of the debate.

A familiar context from which much Western sectarian Iraq discourse proceeds is through ubiquitous acceptance of the supposition that social, ethnic, political, and cultural strife is intrinsic to the core of its society. Little to no attention is paid to innumerable instances of so-called culture-bridging that has perpetually formulated the dominate fulcrum in coming to cognize a rampant adherence to the national self. In this work, I begin by surveying some of the more crucial stops on a brief journey into the heritage of cultural production in Iraq's past; the significance of this shared history continues to play a part in forming present notions of the national self. A preliminary annotation to the past is significant because it helps us to better connect the tendencies and influences of cultural production in the present. Next, I trace the frameworks to Iraq's modernist developments; finally, I consider the impact of the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq upon aesthetic production in the contemporary moment. The penultimate section examines common philosophical contentions that may arise to this overall argument. Throughout this paper, I strive to pay close attention to artistic, social, and aesthetic links, traditionally and contemporaneously, which in due course, imbued Iraqi aesthetics with opportunistic turns for moderating or stabilizing its sociocultural and political life.

Iraqi Aesthetics and Cultural Production: Early Historical Foundations

Entertaining the question of aesthetics to Iraq's cultural production in the present moment demands brief familiarization with antecedent developmental conditions that represent the armature of today's aesthetic essence encountered in much of Iraq's art. The *Golden Age* is often touted as the period marking a major renaissance of mass cultural and scientific achievements which took place in Baghdad during the Middle Ages; prior to this lengthy interval, the various populations which inhabited the region referred to as 'Mesopotamia' were known as some of the earliest known culture producers of the ancient world—as early as Mesolithic and Neolithic times. Pre-Islamic Iraq is the site of the world's most ancient civilizations, traced all the way to Middle Paleolithic period, circa 70,000 BCE.¹ In this region, Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilizations flourished in pre-Biblical times. It is the site of the world's first known cities, states, empires, irrigation systems, monuments, hospitals, and universities.² It was in Iraq that cuneiform (an early form of writing) was invented.³ It is here that the 12 clay tablets depicting the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest known work of literature, was discovered. It is in ancient Mesopotamia that hundreds of thousands of precious archeological sites are buried, sites which contain vast details about ancient human biocultural origin—the excavation of which has never been fully completed. In fact, the remains of ancient cities are still buried deep within Iraq's soil; repeatedly disturbed by looting, modern construction, and bombing attacks sustained in the course of several wars.⁴ It is here that the *Stele of Hammurabi* was found; enumerating the legal code that served as predecessor to today's *mens rea* principle. Treasures of the ancient world such as the Ziggurat of Ur, Ishtar Gates, Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and Biblical cities such as Nineveh, made their home in this land.⁵

The region was known as the '*Cradle of Civilization*' primarily because of the artistic, cultural, academic, and scientific achievements that took place in ancient Mesopotamia, and much later, in the *Golden Age*, roughly 7th to 13th centuries CE.⁶ Iraq's second major cultural renaissance took shape in its modern capital. Built during the 7th century by the Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja'far Al-Mansur, the city quickly became the epicenter of knowledge and remained so throughout much of the Middle Ages; its status did not dwindle until the Mongolian invasion of 1258, when the army of Genghis Khan's grandson, Hulagu, destroyed the capital and made a pyramid of skulls from its artists, philosophers, poets and theologians.⁷ In its heyday, the city was the center of learning, commerce, and science. Before the trade route from Europe to Asia was established, Baghdad not only functioned as a nexus of commerce, but also a cultural hub where poets, artists, philosophers, and other intellectuals debated hot topics of the day. Artists and intellectuals were often spotted in '*Kahwat*' ("coffee shops") and '*Souq Al-Warraq*' ("book-binder's market"). The city quickly became home to dozens of universities (some of which are still around today such as Al Mustansiriyya), trade schools, libraries, historic mosques and churches, zoos, palaces, hamams, and the world's first known hospital.⁸ It was in Baghdad that poets, artists, musicians, scientist, astronomers, jurists, theologians, and philosophers flocked from as far away places as Spain, China, and India, in hopes of partaking in and learning from its lucrative academic and cultural setting.⁹ The Arabic-speaking world's most prestigious poets established their reputations here; poets from Kufa and Basra flocked to Baghdad during the 8th and 9th century to make a name for themselves; the infamous Abu Nuwas, Bashshar Ibn Burd, and Al Jahiz are some of these well-known examples.¹⁰ These bare notes about the region's antecedent cultural productions outline some of the vital influences of aesthetic sensibilities in recent times.¹¹

Departing from succinct reflections of the past, we turn to Iraq's aesthetic and cultural productions of recent times. In our impending discussion of Iraq's modern art of the 20th century, we uncover an intriguing story that enables us to identify many points of reference which may be traced to its historical precedents, as well as the undercurrents to its modern influences. After Baghdad was freed from Ottoman rule in the early 20th century, modern art movements began to flourish in the decades immediately following Iraq's official independence from British rule. The styles, trends, and movements that came to dominate Iraq's art of mid to late 20th century exhibit not only keen awareness of their debt to European modernism, but a surpassing of this extrinsic apparatus in a subsequent fusion of characteristically ethnic, cultural and national responses to antecedent European influences.¹² Iraqi artists were well-aware of European methods in painting since their early inception by Ottomans; traits of the European Renaissance could be seen in murals which decorated palaces and public places, as well as portraiture that Ottoman sultan commissioned.¹³ During Ottoman rule and for sometime thereafter, many Iraqi visual artists drew inspiration from Renaissance realism, but things quickly changed after the formation of the national government in the early decades of the 20th century—to this segment we now turn.

Iraq and the Question of Aesthetics: Recent Developments

Conventional art historical narratives of the West have generally dedicated separate areas of concentration for works deemed 'non-Western.' Among these grand non-Western narratives, it is customary to find analyses of Oceanic, Polynesian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Mycenaean, and Islamic art. What is puzzling about the standardized treatment of so-called 'non-Western' art is the uniform treatment of 'Islamic art.' At least two points of contention are worth raising here: first, elaborate treatments of say India's Taj Mahal or Spain's Alhambra are provided alongside art historical analyses from Cairo, Samarra, Isfahan, or Istanbul. The conflation between the religious and the national is perspicuous enough, and not particularly unique to non-Western art historical discourses. One finds a similar treatment in philosophy, as well as other disciplines. Second, conventional non-Western art historical narratives pertaining to Islamic art, often end their discussion at approximately the 17th century CE, with little or no mention of what might have taken place during the past four centuries. Accordingly, one is often left with the general impression that art making or cultural production for the regions or nations in question, ceased fruition somewhere along the 17th century. The situation becomes more complex if we attempt to distinguish what in particular formulates that aesthetic canon of Arabic art (as opposed to say Persian, Turkish, et al.) vis-à-vis Islamic art; and more specific to our investigation, what might distinguish aesthetic canons of Iraqi art from either category?¹⁴ *Arabic* and *Islamic* are terms erroneously used interchangeably by much of today's mainstream lingo; whether the topic happens to be of a political, sociological, or even aesthetic nature. Undoubtedly, there are significantly dissimilar suppositions referenced in the use of these terms; such that they must not be uniformly conflated, as each may stand in the absence of properties alluded to by the other. Albeit with some exceptions, this overall tendency is also reflected in prevailing idiolects of philosophical aesthetics.¹⁵ Of particular significance here is the simplicity with which we may come to discern the visual iconography of the Iraqi national self, apart from any reference to the explanatory convenience of religiosity. In other words, the aesthetic patois which resulted from the fusion of European inspired modernist techniques alongside the re-appropriation of readily available past visual iconography yielded an unusually *secularized*, aesthetic

visual language.¹⁶ For instance, one immediately takes note of the vast use of abstracted human figures found in Iraqi modernist painting and sculpture, a usage, albeit with some exceptions, that is relatively uncommon or absent in much classic and contemporary Islamic art. Additionally, Akkadian or Sumerian physiognomies, cuneiform imagery, domestic vegetation or geology, Iraqi historical or contemporary sociopolitical diatribes, and Iraqi mythological or folkloric themes set apart this foundationally quintessential aesthetic visual iconography not generally found in Arabic, Islamic, or European art per se.

Attempting to resolve classificatory puzzles is a moot project not undertaken here. Rather, the aforementioned remarks are sufficiently noted to set the stage for an examination of modernist innovations during the 20th century. By and large, the identity of Iraqi modernism was not clearly distinguishable until its catalysts appeared on the scene, established their own art circles, and introduced manifestos detailing their movement's mission. To a great extent, such gestures greatly paralleled European trends in modernism of the early 20th century, as new European art clusters were often introduced by manifestos (or other written treatises) and pioneered by few leading figures, exhibiting their work under the movement's banner: Dadists, Fauves, Surrealists, and Italian Futurists are some common examples of this. Such connections are straightforwardly drawn by Iraq's modern artists of the 20th century, since many of the founding figures received governmentally-sponsored fellowships to subsidize their art education in European cities, and the governmental subsidy of the arts continued throughout the 20th century, despite regime changeover.¹⁷ Upon returning to their homeland, early Iraqi modernists further developed the techniques they acquired in the academies of Europe; ultimately inculcating younger generations of students across the nation's art academies. Of course, this does not simply reduce their efforts to imported European mimicry; rather, the modernists departed from this early exposure and ultimately formulated a modernist credo more suitable to the characterization of their own social, national, political, cultural, ethnic, and aesthetic visions, than European modernism enabled.¹⁸ In the early days of such endeavors, the quest to locate and master a visual iconography with which to represent the national self was a principal aesthetic dilemma facing Iraqi modernists. At its inception, Iraqi modernism ardently sought to portray the sociocultural and national unity of its highly diverse republic. By amalgamating and re-appropriating European derived modernist artistic influences, the search was on to construct a uniquely expressive visual identity of the Iraqi 'national self,' markedly synthesized through the internalization of its national and historical mass consciousness.¹⁹ Its success was dependant on that identifiably discernible portrayal of sociocultural pluralism, national progression, and the ontological aestheticization of the national self.

The most influential artistic tendencies of the 1940s and 50s were formulated to fit these ends. The appeal of aesthetic production as a tool for the representation of a multicultural national self was, and continues to be, the medium of choice for reinforcing commonly shared grounds of social concord.²⁰ Two leading Iraqis artists of this period, Faiq Hassan and Jawad Selim, both of which (in different ways) sought to amalgamate the paradigms of modernist painting alongside traditional, indigenous and nationalist concerns, merit attention.²¹ In general, Hassan was greatly influenced by Impressionism, Expressionism, and Cubism while studying at l'Academie Nationale des Beaux Arts; this exposure and background was inherited by his students and the art circle he founded in 1950, entitled

'Al-Ruwad' (or "The Pioneers"). This group sought to abandon the artificial confines of the studio, in exchange for nature and the surrounding environment; hence, the Iraqi countryside, southern marshes, villages, landscapes, cityscapes, and ancient structures or monuments, became common subject matter for Al-Ruwadi artists.²²

The turning point in Iraq's modernism was spearheaded by the work of Jawad Selim. The legacy of Selim may be compared to that of Picasso in Europe or Pollock in the states.²³ After completing his studies at the Slade School of Art in London (as well as in Rome and other European cities) where he studied with the British sculptor Henry Moore, Selim returned to work in Iraq's vast archeological Museums and ultimately pursue teaching at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad. The exposure to archeological artifacts of Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian origin, reconnected Selim to his nation's historical roots and propelled him to produce works that sought to create a characteristically Iraqi identity within the many possibilities that modernist techniques enabled. Such ideas were popularized by a group of painters he founded, known as 'Jama'et Baghdad lil Fen Al-Hadith' (or "Baghdad Group of Modern Art,"), which like many European modernist movements, featured an official manifesto.²⁴ In Selim's work, the modernist brush of Cubism, Expressionism, and Post-Impressionism is explored to varying degrees. Visual symbolism incorporating Iraqi-Arabic folklore, textiles, mythology, and other relics (e.g., winged bulls, Nebuchadnezzar, etc.) abound in the artist's oeuvre. The drive to preserve ancient symbolism alongside prevailing modernist influences of the early 20th century is evinced in one of his most well-known works, '*Nasb Al-Hurriya*' (or "*Monument of Freedom*," also "*Freedom Monument*") of 1960; a gigantic public mural consisting of 14 bronze bas-relief figures which narrate as well as commemorate the 1958 revolution. The work is a paradigmatic illustration of modernist re-appropriation of ancient Assyrian and Babylonian motifs, alongside modernist figurative abstraction and historicization of the national self.²⁵

Perhaps more than any other figure, Selim sought to *intellectualize* Iraqi art by infusing modernist formalist techniques with historic, cultural and national concerns. Accordingly, students of Selim sought to construct alternative interpretations of aesthetic formalism filtered through the modernist lens. This was done to various degrees; aside from the conventions of painting and sculpture, artists like Madiha Omar, Jamil Hamoudi, and Issam Al Sa'id sought to elevate the traditional art of calligraphy, text, and cuneiform, to a new modernist edge enabled by modernist painterly abstraction. Originally invented in Iraq, Arabic calligraphy was no longer limited to books and dusty manuscripts, but adorned monumental paintings, murals, prints, and eventually photography. This was a trend that characterized another major school adopted by the Iraqi '*rasam*' ("painter") of the 1950s. Aside from textual art, political and nationalistic consciousness served another major impetus for Iraqi artists, particularly during the 1960s. A new movement, 'Al Ru'ya Al-Jadida' (roughly, "The New Vision") was formed in the late 1960s (with some sources placing it as late as 1969) which was made up of a collection of artists with particular interest in addressing the political climate of the times (i.e., the 1967 war).²⁶ The body of work contributed by this group depicted a variety of nationalistic and domestic concerns, incorporating amalgamated aesthetic properties from European modernism. An example of this is seen in the work of one of Jawad Selim's most well-known students, and cofounder of Al Ru'ya Al-Jadida, the artist Ismail Fattah. Reminiscent of the proto-Surrealism of Jean Arp or Max Ernst (perhaps even later Minimalist work associated with the likes of Richard Serra or Donald Judd), '*Nasb Al-*

Shahid ("Martyr's Monument") is a colossal public sculpture consisting of a split, teardrop shaped turquoise domes, which rest atop an underground museum. Although the work was erected in 1982, it was intended to commemorate all Iraqis who died in the eight war with Iran (which was to last an additional 6 years); funded by the former regime, it is believed to have cost the treasury an excess of 250 million USD. '*Nasb Al-Shahid*' is recognized as a profoundly modernist embodiment of a cohesive national self.

Expectedly, cultural production was not avant-garde in every instance of painterly abstraction; certainly some artists never moved beyond mediocrity or reduplication.²⁷ Moreover, the influx of modernist work was not limited to the hegemony of painting. Artists like Rafa Al Nasiri (one of the 6 founding members of Al Ru'ya Al-Jadida), established his reputation as a printmaker, while others such as Sa'ad Shakir and Nuha Al Radi were known for their work in pottery and ceramics, itself an ancient Iraqi practice dating to Neolithic times—yet resurrected during the 1970s. Still, others opted to work in architecture, photography, or sculpture, producing works that bare the mark of unification and longing for that characteristic identity of the national self. In the decades that ensued, new galleries (i.e., Haifa Street's Baghdad Art Gallery) continued to sprout up; Iraqi artists continued to participate in regional as well as international exhibits, and Iraqi Culture Centers expanded throughout the greater Middle East and Europe, the most active of which was the London Center.²⁸ By the 1990s, after two debilitating wars and ensuing sanctions, excessive hardships lead many artists to seek refuge in neighboring countries or elsewhere, with many ultimately resettling in European countries.²⁹

In whatever medium and from wherever source contemporary Iraqi artists drew their inspiration, a common recognizable theme was resurfacing throughout. It is that quest to locate and identify a characteristically *Iraqi* identity to their art; one that strives at coalescence between inheritance of the sociocultural national self and the import of modernist progression and its consequent adaptation to alternative ways of knowing. Whether its source was historic, political, cultural, religious, mythological, or taken from the social or natural environment, a characteristically *Iraqi* imprint is visible through the large body of prominent works that surfaced during this period; it is that nexus of convergence, linking the historical past with the adaptive present, uniting cultural tradition with progression, modernist aesthetics with idiosyncratic sociocultural individualism—a canon of work, all too often unrecognized.

In looking at the very broad-reaching world of Iraq's visual cultural production, deeply-rooted themes of nationalist uniformity resurface anew in the works of contemporary artists, just as they have in the recent past. In using the outlets and means for communication and expression that arts and humanities enable individuals to develop, we find Iraqi artists (and intellectuals *du jour*) using their surrounding environment and past influences to create permutations that integrate the opposing worlds and divergent impulses in which they find themselves situated. We see this in the work of the painter, the poet, and broader intelligentsia. The present moment is no exception to this continuum. The transitional phase of Iraq at the turn of the 21st century has enabled innumerable voices unfettered opportunities in which to broadcast the *realpolitik* of the times. At this delicate stage, it is rather difficult to forecast every flourishing possibility. Undoubtedly, the present conditions have generated a long-standing transitional phase in which cultural contributions will continue to strive toward that conciliatory national self with its historical consciousness. The present conditions have set a ripe and volatile stage

in which to stimulate creativity in various dimensions; whether the message is of turmoil, grief, or adaptation to innumerable sociopolitical forces, the circumstances of the contemporary moment cannot be overlooked. While much of today's cultural production is generated under the most unfavorable conditions, it functions as a reaction to the circumstantial uncertainties, a mechanism for adaptation to extreme existential hardship. To the contemporary moment of Iraq and the question of aesthetics we shall turn.

Iraq and the Question of Aesthetics: The Contemporary Moment

The contemporary moment takes us to the early days of the war. During which some of the most horrific consequences of the invasion took place. At that time, world audiences watched the looting of Iraq's National Museum of Antiquities. We looked on powerlessly as millenary archaeological sites were destroyed and looted, as Iraq's Museum of Modern Art³⁰ and Ministry of Culture were bombed, as Iraq's National Library set ablaze. In anguish and bewilderment, we witnessed the wanton destruction of ancient archeological sites, as Babylon's prehistoric brick pavements crushed by tanks to pave way for new military bases.³¹ Today, hundreds of major archaeological and cultural sites remain unguarded. Hundreds of thousands of irreplaceable artifacts, manuscripts, books, artworks, photographs, and archives have vanished. The longer they are gone, the greater the likelihood for their permanent disappearance. Yet still, with four years on, no more than approximately 1,600 artifacts have been recovered;³² due in large part, to the collective efforts of concerned professionals and individuals, rather than Interpol or UNESCO.³³ Heavily armed smuggling rings are still active today in a profitable multibillion dollar industry, wielding priceless artifacts to wealthy European and American collectors. Nowadays, small scale 'war trophies' from Iraq are easily available for sale on the world wide web. Some theorists contend that the looting of Baghdad was pre-planned, noting that commanders had given specific instructions against the protection of cultural sites. Notwithstanding the speculations, it is more plausible however, to surmise that protection of cultural property was and continues to be, of little concern to occupying forces and their sponsoring governments. We get a sense of this conviction, for instance, when in April of 2003, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, was queried about the looting of Baghdad; unperturbed, Rummy cunningly replied: "stuff happens".³⁴ Such complacency is tough to beat, for even the Nazis had advanced forethought to protect the Louvre during their occupation of Paris.³⁵ Ascribing blameworthiness is another matter entirely; one which is well-beyond the scope of the present task. At this moment, the pillaging continues unabated, as ancient shrines, religious and archeological sites, palaces, mausoleum, libraries, museums, universities, public monuments, and governmental or civic buildings continue to be destroyed, looted, or bombed, and sometimes more than once, as in the case of the famed Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, built during the 9th century CE. Despite the attempts that have been made to protect Iraq's cultural, historical, and archeological sites (such as the May 2003 passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1483, which emphasized the need to preserve and protect Iraq's cultural sites), the daily destruction of world heritage continues unnoticed. Against this backdrop, it is difficult to conceive of the contemporary moment in anything but resolutely abysmal terms. The contemporary moment is indeed a puzzling and dismal one, with multifarious beginnings, impenetrable complexities, and no clear end in sight. The question is thus put before us, is it logically possible for an examination concerned with the study of aesthetics to uncover those social, political, and cultural manifestations necessary for the construction of a conciliatory path that is

urgently needed, to make sense of the hapless present, and somehow inaugurate the end to its barbarism? In the previous section, I suggested that the conciliatory path has already been laid forth; thus, it must be rediscovered, redeveloped anew in virtue of the current plight.

In the past few years, there has been a renewed, marketable interest, particularly on the Europe and American continents, in the work of contemporary Iraqi artists. There have been many traveling and stationary exhibits that have solely focused on contemporary post-Saddamian Art. Showings such as "Out of Iraq: Artists' Meditations on Their Homelands," "Dafatir: Contemporary Iraqi Book Art" and NY Soho's own "Ashes to Art: The Iraqi Phoenix" are well-known examples.³⁶ What in particular, are the reasons for this sudden interest? When, in fact, Iraqi art, contemporary or otherwise, has previously merited little to no Western art historical attention, whatever? Of course, there are a multiplicity of factors, and while it may appear to be the case that the exposure is certainly timely and warranted, many dismiss these efforts as hegemonious political attempts to undermine or neutralize an already well-established visual culture; one that has been replaced with a ratified post-Saddamian aesthetic which seeks to legitimize the occupation by de-Arabizing and de-nationalizing (and some would add de-Islamicizing) its sociocultural fabric.³⁷ Whatever the reasons, it is clear that the turn toward the understanding of a peoples' ways of seeing and representing their world, is no small matter; the turn toward locating a comprehensive understanding of the other through an assessment of the other's cultural production, indeed holds considerable promise.

The uneasiness reflected about the aforementioned post-Saddamian aesthetic stems from its perceived masquerade as a bastion of liberation, newness, and previously nonexistent, mode of expressive freedom, which contrasts with the pre-Saddamian aesthetic we are accustomed to receiving from Iraq's culture creators. While it is certainly the case that a variety of expressive social networks are available today, one must also work alongside a previously unfamiliar totalitarian fundamentalism, relatively absent during the all-too-familiar secularism of pre-Saddamian aesthetic (and Saddamian-era aesthetic). Today, the repeated targeting of the country's most prolific and talented artists, actors, comedians, singers, journalists, archaeologists, scientists, and academics, amounts to a cultural genocide. The recent tragic killings of famed comedian Walid Hassan, Iraqi soap icon Muttashar Al-Soudani, as well as Iraq's most famous TV correspondent and female journalist Atwar Bahjat, viewed by many as a symbol of non-sectarian unity due to her Sunni father and Shia mother, are the latest victims in a campaign of ideological destruction.

While is it undeniable that the deposed regime encouraged and commissioned innumerable murals, public sculptors, monuments, and other productions to pay homage to its legacy as well as veneration of the national self, it is misleading to aver that the country's current producers of culture are savoring their first taste of an unrestricted post-Saddamian aesthetic, the fruit of an imperial civilizing mission: *democratized, secular, and free*. The obvious upside is the annihilation of past totalitarianism and ushering in of possibilities for the diversification of sociocultural expression. Along with the former regime, long gone are the days of 'presidential art' and partial censorship. The post-Saddamian aesthetic is rewriting the history of Iraqi visual culture, as artists convey their uneasiness about the precariousness of their newly instituted sociocultural world. Notwithstanding the volatility of the contemporary moment, cultural productions are continuing to convey profound messages of national self; through satire, humor, and

epistemic resistance. On the downside however, the post-Saddamian aesthetic has burrowed a perilous environment of targeted assassinations, not simply for perceived blasphemies or other social crimes (e.g., improper attire, alcohol consumption, or accessing pornography) but perceived violations of the fundamentalist aesthetic. It is an atmosphere whereby art circles and performing arts communities are targeted for presumed betrayal of the freshly-imposed rigidity of the fundamentalist aesthetic. In an atmosphere whereby previously nonexistent fundamentalism has rendered many modernist experiments impermissible, the post-Saddamian aesthetic, in essence, has introduced non-viable restrictions on cultural productions. In today's climate, the strive to incorporate those imported artistic techniques and styles, along with indigenous ways of knowing, while at once attempting to escape the censors of the post-Saddamian fundamentalist aesthetic, bares the more accurate depiction of the identity of the national self reflected in the contemporary moment.

So, to revisit the question we originally embarked upon: in what sense exactly may this post-Saddamian aesthetic function so as to build bridges to sociocultural polarities? Cultural divides bisect not only the heterogenous social, ethnic, racial, economic, and religious components of a society, but divides that exist between imperial cultures and intrinsic ones. In other words, there is at once a two-fold system framed by two different degrees of intersection. It may be utilized both as a means for building solidarity, as well as fermenting resistance or political insurrection. More clearly, there is the sense in which so-called culture bridging takes place within present localities, and another which extends afar in protest or adaptation, in reaching out to the imperial host culture. The latter may be illustrated in the flood of work we encounter lambasting the Abu Ghraib scandal. In 2004, an exhibit at Hewan Art Gallery (in Baghdad's Waziriah section) featured paintings, sculptures and installations by Iraqi artists that solely focused on events surrounding Abu Ghraib. Some of the contributions to this exhibit by the artist Karim Khalil, feature sculptures of naked, partially bound, and hooded human figures; a cloaked one in particular, carries its arms outstretched in uncanny simulacrum to the crucifixion of Christ, baring the weight of humanity's suffering.³⁸ Such works perspicuously attempt to collectivize the humiliation and melancholia of the national self. Apart from the wave of artistic responses to Abu Ghraib, exhibitions have dedicated gallery space to other provocative themes, such as the controversial bombing of Fallujah, parodies of the occupation itself, and pervasive reflections on exile and displacement. An example of the former is found in recent public murals that have been commissioned to beautify the capital, a city once known for its remarkable splendor, hence used as the setting of fables in 'alif laila wa-laila ("*Arabian Nights*" or "*Thousand and One Nights*"). The unsightliness of decaying buildings, car bombs, cadavers, electric power generators, barbed wire, and 12-foot blast walls denote the post-Saddamian aesthetic of the city. Today, Baghdad is a barricaded city of walls, with miles of concrete barriers surrounding everything from hotels, embassies, and civic buildings. In the spring of 2007, an international non-profit organization provided funding to employ out of work Iraqi artists as mural blast wall painters; in this collective effort, dozens of Iraqi painters from all walks of life, laboriously worked to beautify the drab, gray, blast barriers that stretch along downtown Baghdad's Sa'adoun street, with colorful murals of pastoral, historic, or ancient motifs. Although there have been other initiatives to paint blast walls around the country, this recent high-profile case functioned as an exemplar of the ways in which visual art may be used as a vehicle for establishing common cause, for treading along the conciliatory paths of pluralism. But not every blast wall will be painted. The

controversial Azamiyah wall, which has been met with fierce resistance, stands as a symbol of the occupation's institutionalized segregation. Under the pretext of protecting civilians from car bombs, the wall was built to barricade its residents into a gated community of concrete blast walls, restricting all movement, and cutting them off from surrounding neighborhoods. However, the Azamiyah wall will not be painted because many view it as a symbol of sectarianism, discrimination, violence, and social divisions inaugurated by the occupation. Fortunately, due to intense resistance, the U.S. military was ordered to halt its construction by the national government.³⁹

It is in the contemporary moment that we ultimately come to enrich that innovated secular vision, reinvigorated with a familiar social unity, with the undertones of the past alongside the turbulent present; by bridging immanent cultures of the localized national self, in conjunction to the imperial culture upon which it depends. Such a direction has already flourished; its effects are discernible in the renaissance of the Iraqi theater, fine arts, literature, music, media, and especially pop culture. When the Iraqi contender, Shatha Hasoun, won the highly competitive and prestigious Star Academy contest in March of 2007 (roughly, the Arab world's equivalent to "American Idol"); Shatha's victory sent a strong message of unity to the outside world. Iraqis of every stripe voted for Shatha in a symbolic gesture of support, no one cared if she was Sunnia, Kurdia, Yazidia, Chaldania, Baha'ia or whatever. What was important was her identification to and representation of the lamentable national self. Examples like Shatha's sow the seeds of inspiration in an atmosphere of pervasive despair. Another example is the duet that took place between the world's most famous Iraqi male vocalist Kathem Al-Sahir and the Canadian female artist, Sarah Brightman. The duet entitled "the War is Over," features Brightman in English and Al-Sahir in Arabic; the superimposed bilingual overlays of Arabic and English resonate previously unrelated auditory conjunctions of distant musical worlds. Brightman went on to include her duet with Al-Sahir on her new English-language album; and Al-Sahir features the work on his Arabic-language album. Of course, this unison could still have taken place prior to the contemporary moment, but its significance is further underscored and impregnated with symbolism only under present conditions.

Critical Perspectives

In this section, I address some objection I surmise are likely to arise against the crux of the argument. What I take to be one of the weightiest objections, maintains that what is being ratified as a modernist visual Iraqi identity in the fine arts, is reducible to mimicry of European modernism at best, with no genuinely distinctive features marking the proposed wave of visual iconography of the national self. Moreover, in the globalization era of uniform visual iconography and dissemination of universal imperial knowledge, Iraqi modernism (and perhaps the contemporary post-Saddamian aesthetic) is rendered indistinguishable from or derivative of Western modernism and its contemporary tendencies.⁴⁰ It is undeniable that modernist European canons provided the stimulus for Iraqi modernism. It is well-recognized that the general scope of aesthetic universalism evoked by modernist techniques may potentially eliminate constructs of cultural and national boundaries, as is the case within the Western tradition itself; ultimately, rendering the modernist picture plane vapidly uniform—non-cultural, non-national, ahistorical. First, the strength of this intuition is better served as an attempt to emphasize the general defect of modernist formalism, and not necessarily Iraqi concoctions developed as a result of its perusal. Second, we need not accept the supposition that what

became associated with modernist European techniques, developed out of the exclusive distinctiveness of *Western* aesthetic modes of production. Europe's modern masters were known to have received much of their inspiration from the 'East,' or other sources, not exclusively Western. As expeditions outside of Europe become more common in the late 19th and early 20th century, European artists gained more exposure and access to imported motifs and techniques. Henri Matisse often spoke of his deep interest in Islamic art (though predominantly through its Spanish exposure). Paul Gauguin's fixation with Polynesian society and his subsequent, permanent move to Tahiti, in an effort to relinquish the seeming artificiality of European life, is well-known. And, Picasso's use of African mask motifs and subsequent influence of African mythology is also well documented.⁴¹ What is just as plausible is the conviction that the appeal of modernist European techniques to Iraqi modernists may have sprung from their prior cultural internalization of a familiar visual idiolect with which they have been reacquainted through the kaleidoscope of European modernism.⁴²

Another objection that merits consideration is the postulate that hybridity theories, while relatively sufficient for developing scientific, logistic, or computational analyses, are perhaps inadequate for the domain of human culture, or an investigation of its productions. The driving intuition behind this objection holds that the *sui generis* nature of human cultural production does not admit of the same calculative uniformity with which we may suitably apply hybridity theories in mathematics or science. To begin, it will be important to note that the history of Western aesthetics itself has frequently posited treatises that make predominant use of hybridity in its aesthetic formalism.⁴³ This had been done to various extents, including the development of classificatory and evaluative systems. For example, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and more recently, Arthur Danto, have developed intricate theories in philosophical aesthetics that largely draw upon a binary, duality or synthesis of formalist philosophical properties. Hegel's *The Philosophy of Fine Art* introduced the idea that art is a union between content (subject matter or the Idea) and its form (the sensuous embodiment of the content). For Hegel, aesthetic assessment was rooted in its propensity for establishing the "right" sort of coalescence between form and content. This way of understanding a work of art amounts to rendering works as a unification of thought and matter: for Hegel, excellence in art is excellence in the unification of an external form to its internal content.⁴⁴ Nietzsche too makes use of duality in aesthetic assessment as he fuses the classic mythical elements of Apollo and Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy*. For Nietzsche, this duality between the Apollonian elements (Apollo as the god of dreams, light, healing, prophecies, oracles) and the Dionysian elements (fertility, wine, drunkenness, drama, awe, blissful ecstasy) gave rise to excellence in art (hence the evaluative sense), and more specifically, the Greek tragedy. According to Nietzsche, these two aesthetic impulses came together to create the most unified art form in the Greek tragedy, best depicted in the works of tragedians like Sophocles and Aeschylus.⁴⁵ Here again, the idea of coalescence or duality is explored and central to the aesthetic thesis. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger lays forth his groundbreaking thoughts on art and aesthetics, and here too, the central idea is some brand of coalescence. Like Hegel's distinction of form and matter, Apollo and Dionysus for Nietzsche, Heidegger employs the idea of coalescence as a "rift" or "strive" between "materiality" and "worldhood." In Heideggerian lexicon, the coordinates of "Earth" and "World" come together to create a constant struggle in a work of art. These two forces are at once disclosing (World) and concealing (Earth). Such a "rift" forces the "World" to reveal itself in the "Earth." It is a constant battle of *disclosing*

and *concealing* for Heidegger.⁴⁶ Apart from the German aesthetic tradition, familiar essentialist accounts in contemporary aesthetics also draw upon similar techniques. Arthur Danto's famed conditions for something (in the classificatory sense) to be elevated to the ontological status of art, must have (i) content, and (ii) it must embody that content (similar to Hegel's thesis). Content or 'aboutness' as meaning is revealed in the way an artwork embodies its subject matter. The notion of artworks understood as embodied meanings is still influential.⁴⁷ Although I have crudely oversimplified these accounts, it helps us to think of this background in recalling the tendency toward a hybridized path commonly found in philosophical aesthetics; admittedly, a method both suitable and banal. Of course, hybridity theories are not limited to aesthetics. During the latter half of the 20th century, what ultimately came to be known as Post-Colonial Studies or Post-Colonial Literatures, predominately grew out of the interactive exchange between the dominance of imperial narratives, and the resistance to its suppression by indigenous colonized societies.⁴⁸

Finally, it may be pointed out that developments between the arts and humanities (and even politics) occur on different wavelengths, in distinct manifestations, sharing little or nothing by way of amalgamation in a common core of cultural production. This may still be the case; however, the argument simply maintains that a dichotomy between a uniquely traditional historical awareness and influentially modernist 'Western' ideas, concepts, and developments (whether so being in the arts, humanities, politics, or social sciences) are effectively and distinctively fused by Iraq's cultural producers, particularly during the 20th century, and this is likely to be notable in various domains, quite possibly beyond manifestations of cultural production; for instance, one is easily reminded of the strong influence of Marxist and Communist thought on various political factions in Iraq during the early and mid-20th century.⁴⁹ In the present moment, we are observing a continuation of these tendencies into the 21st century, as they take on new forms of meaning, in resistance and convergence.

Debates may easily spin in any direction in addressing wider consequences of the occupation itself, the toll it has taken in human life, purpose or effectiveness of the venture, and other peripheral directions. Settling these other matters is not an interest of this work; it is simply enough to note that an exhilarating resurgence in the cultural production of a synthesized national self has come to fruition, shrouded by the relics of the past. Nevertheless, given the present grim outlook, the resurgence has a long way to go; as genuine cultural production must be unfettered, entirely free from the confines of coercive dictatorial authority of imperial knowledge, as well as confines of the post-Saddamian fundamentalist aesthetic—a moment yet unactualized.

Afterthoughts

Iraq's modern art reached its zenith during the late 1970s and dwindled shortly thereafter; this was due to wars and instability, as well as ensuing sanctions which included educational material and art supplies (i.e., pencils, paper, paint, and books).⁵⁰ The past four years have led to the country's *brain drain*, as Iraq's most talented individuals have been scattered in the Iraqi diaspora. While the 2003 invasion escalated this phenomenon, its reversal is nonetheless possible. With the reduction of state-controlled cognitive oppression, there is indeed room for pluralism and diversification of social thought; as such, these are not necessarily new emergences, but previous visions reinvigorated. Iraq's future cultural property will continue to be as inclusive and politically-motivated as ever

(perpetuating the tradition inaugurated by Al Ru'ya Al-Jadida). Just as Iraq's social change has recently been shaped by much imported thought and imported capital, its ancient cultural heritage and affairs of contemporary life will continue to captivate and contribute to the changing fate of cultural production. Existential hardship, collective resistance, and the ontology of displacement embody the new aesthetic; restructuring the national self to align itself with alien ways of knowing. Iconographical responses to sociocultural restructuring of the national self is likely to further develop in times ahead.

In looking to address the key questions of the contemporary moment, we looked to the distant past and recent times, in order to draw probable conclusions about the sociocultural plight of the present. We dipped our feet into Iraq's historical waters to get a grip on the tidal wave we presently face. In affirming the Iraqi past alongside its present, we diagnosed its elemental features in virtue of a predicament deeply caught between the prior and present, inner and outer. It is in this contemporary moment that we shall seek further indication of sociocultural reparation through aesthetic appropriation.

This work has sought to shed alternative light on a subject frequently marred by discursive predictability and topical uniformity. In an effort to present a legitimately convincing response to the inquiry with which we began, an investigation into the conciliatory power of aesthetic production took place. If there is a place where we may stumble upon an archetype of aesthetics harnessed as an instrument for merging divergent cultural exchanges, it is Iraq in the contemporary moment. It is the scene of recurrence to the national self, endeavoring to reverse the learned internalization of sectarianism, integrating imperial knowledge with its own sociocultural cognition—and patiently awaiting its self-determination.

Endnotes

¹ Roux, Georges. *Ancient Iraq*. 3rd ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1992. 500-515.

² Gibson, McGuire. "Ancient Mesopotamia: World Heritage under Threat." *Iraq: Its History, People, and Politics*. Ed. Shams C. Inati. Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003. 23-34. 23.

³ Gibson 27.

⁴ Gibson 30.

⁵ Romaya, Bassam. "Iraq and the Question of Philosophy." *Re-ethnicizing the Minds? Cultural Revival in Contemporary Thought*. Eds. Thorsten Botz-Bornstein and Jurgen Hengelbrock. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. 339-356. 343-344.

⁶ Inati, Shams C. "Baghdad in the Golden Age." *Iraq: Its History, People, and Politics*. Ed. Shams C. Inati. Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003. 35-48. 38.

⁷ Inati 36.

⁸ Inati 39.

⁹ Inati 37-39.

¹⁰ Kadhim, Hussein N. "Iraq's Literary Contributions." *Iraq: Its History, People, and Politics*. Ed. Shams C. Inati. Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003. 104.

¹¹ Romaya 344-345.

¹² Though this is most evident in the plastic arts, it can also be extended to architecture and music; this is because Western or European artistic/aesthetic developments highly influenced Iraq's cultural productions of the 20th century, far beyond the stimulus evidenced in the plastic arts.

¹³ Muzaffar, May. "Iraqi Contemporary Art: Roots and Development." *Iraq: Its History, People, and Politics*. Ed. Shams C. Inati. Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003. 63-89.

¹⁴ Shabout, Nada. "Historiographic Invisibilities: The Case of Contemporary Iraqi Art." *International Journal of the Humanities*. 3.9 (2006): 53-64. 54.

¹⁵ A valuable analysis of the ways in which Islamic aesthetics (not necessarily 'Arabic' aesthetics) operate is explored in a recent essay by Jale Erzen (among the exceptions alluded to in my paper). Erzen identifies

three general tendencies found in Islamic aesthetics: the theme of flux to the world of permanence, uncertainty of human knowledge, and the principle of love. The three principles are interconnected through a religiously foundational perspective or understanding of the world. Although some of those same elements utilized by Islamic cultural producers, viz., the use of spirals, orthogonal motifs, and obscuration of the real from illusory through repetition or reflection (often by water, mirrors, or lattices/screens), are familiar visual devices likewise incorporated in various Arabic compositions, what is significant here is recognizing that some of these techniques may have been derived from a variety of sources, such as folkloric or mythological foundations which pre-date the frequent appeal and reliance upon religious interpretations. See Erzen, Jale. "Islamic Aesthetics: An Alternative Way to Knowledge." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 65.1 (2007): 69-75.

¹⁶ A noteworthy exception to this secularized fusion is the continued interest in calligraphy, which may or may not necessarily deal with religious subject matter.

¹⁷ Al-Khamis, Ulrike. "An Historical Overview: 1900s-1990s." *Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art*. Ed. Maysaloun Faraj. London: Saqi Books, 2001. 21-32. 22.

¹⁸ This key objection will be addressed in more detail in the Critical Perspectives section.

¹⁹ Shabout 56-57.

²⁰ Developing this theme is likely to carry appealing success for any Iraqi artist. Identifying with a vastly pluralistic society is central to alignment with the national self. Especially so in a country whereby 23 languages are still spoken today; whereby even the Iraqi dialect itself is non-standard, including many terms and expressions from Turkish and Farsi, baring tribute to its historic multicultural diversity.

²¹ Muzaffar 69-71.

²² Al-Khamis 23-34.

²³ Although Selim's work resembles more of the Cubist constructions found in Pablo Picasso, the circumstances surrounding his life bare striking resemblance to Jackson Pollock; not the least of which is being wed to an aspiring female artist (Lee Krasner in the case of Pollock and Lorna Selim in the case of Selim) whose work was often overshadowed by her husband prominence.

²⁴ Muzaffar 72.

²⁵ Muzaffar 72-73.

²⁶ Muzaffar 77-79.

²⁷ That is, it's not the case that every artist effectively incorporated modern influences along with localized trends; some artists such as Mohammed Muhridin, commonly produced works that are often dismissed as overly 'Westernized', baring no authentic trace of the national self; ultimately collapsing into mimicry of compositions by such comparative artists as Robert Rauschenburg. Another example is Hashim Samarchi who had some success incorporating traditional orthogonal geometric patterns into his work, but for the most part, the works become indistinguishable from American-European Op art of the 1970s and early 1980s. Of course, this is bound to happen in any art market and it is worth noting that both of these personalities came on the scene during more recent decades (the 1980s and 1990s), after the advent of postmodernism had reached every corner of the globe and rendered the preponderance of 'newness' and 'originality' more or less fruitless. Muzaffar 82-83.

²⁸ Al-Khamis 29.

²⁹ Al-Khamis 29-32.

³⁰ What was once known as 'Markaz Saddam Lil-Fenoon' ("Saddam Center for the Arts") was christened "Iraq Museum of Modern Art" after the invasion. Essentially, it is the same institution which was known as the "National Museum of Modern Art" prior to Saddam.

³¹ In addition, British and Iraqi archaeologists have noted substantial damage to the city's famed Ishtar Gates, including the gouging of decorated bricks that compose the gate; other reported negligence include the use of archaeological fragments from the site to fill sandbags (other examples are discussed in Simon Jenkins' article from *The Guardian*, cited in endnote 35).

³² These are mainly works belonging to Iraq's Museum of Modern Art, which not only include works by Iraqi modernists, but also works by Miro, Picasso, and others.

³³ Interpol does not consider missing works in cases where there is no documentation to prove a work has been stolen from a given collection; what complicates matters is the fact that archival records and inventory catalogues for the collections in question were stolen or destroyed. This was especially the case for Iraq's Museum of Modern Art. Durrani, Anayat. "Iraq's Forgotten Modern Art." *Fine Art Registry*. Updated 31 January 2007. <http://www.fineartregistry.com/articles/durrani_anayat/iraqs_modern_art.php>. Cited 1 June 2007.

³⁴ Durrani, Anayat. "Introducing Iraq's Contemporary Artists." *Fine Art Registry*. Updated 31 January 2007. <http://www.fineartregistry.com/articles/durrani_anayat/iraq_contemporary_artists.php>. Cited 1 June 2007.

³⁵ Jenkins, Simon. "In Iraq's Four-Year Looting Frenzy, the Allies Have Become the Vandals." *The Guardian*. Updated 8 June 2007. <<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/art/heritage/story/0,,2098275,00.html>>. Cited 20 June 2007.

³⁶ One cannot include the inaugurating exhibit, "Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art" in this category because this touring exhibit predates the Iraq war.

³⁷ This thesis is defended by the Iraqi art historian, Dr. Hashim Al-Tawil. See "From Pomegranate to Dearborn: The Loss of Iraqi Art." *The Arab American News*. Updated 16 December 2006. <<http://www.arabamericannews.com/newsarticle.php?articleid=7106>>. Cited 1 June 2007.

³⁸ Blanford, Nicholas. "Iraqi Artists Depict Anger Over Abu Ghraib." *Christian Science Monitor*. Updated 15 June 2004. <<http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0615/p07s01-woiq.html>>. Cited 1 June 2007.

³⁹ Salaheddin, Sinan. "Iraqi Artists Look to Spruce Up Baghdad." *The Washington Post*. Updated 29 April 2007. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/29/AR2007042900628.html>>. Cited 1 June 2007.

⁴⁰ A different version of this objection may argue along similar lines. The quibble may be that the analysis is not particular to its subject, arguing that it can easily be applied to hybridized artistic developments in other times and places. This is probable, but one has to recognize that the wave produced by other times and places constitute alternative cultural productions; that is, work unique to a different notion of the national self. For instance, contemporary Mexican art is likewise predicated upon a similar successful synthesis of modernist formalism and a vastly antecedent cultural tradition; but what we have here is a strikingly dissimilar iconographical aesthetic, it would be one of the Mexican national self (e.g., the work of Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and Rufino Tamayo are some close parallels). Indeed the methodology is a familiar one, but the shadow cast by its subject is of its own making.

⁴¹ Gedo, Mary Mathews. "Art as Exorcism: Picasso's *Demoiselles D'Avignon*." *Arts Magazine*. October 1980. 70-83.

⁴² The crux of my reply to this objection is indebted to Nada Shabout's article cited earlier. Shabout 58-59.

⁴³ This is not to assume that hybridity theories solely surfaced in the Western aesthetic canon. We find traces of them elsewhere such as India. Two key features of Indian aesthetics ('*rasasastra*'), namely *dhvani* and *rasa*, are meant to function so as to give rise to a uniquely corresponding relationship which generates an analysis of aesthetic experience, commonly found in classic Indian thought. Framing aesthetic interpretation and assessment in terms of binary aesthetics emphasizes the comparable transcultural and transhistorical *modus operandi* that human beings have commonly utilized in their philosophical reflections on the arts. A valuable discussion of the aforementioned principles is found in Mohanty, J.H. *Classical Indian Philosophy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. 133-151.

⁴⁴ Hegel, G.W.F. 1835. "The Philosophy of Fine Art." *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*. Eds. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964. 395-345.

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1871. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Clifton P. Fadiman. New York: Dover Publications, 1954. 1-55.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, Martin. 1935-1936. "The Origin of The Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. & Intro. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. 17-87.

⁴⁷ Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld." *The Philosophy of the Visual Arts*. Ed. Philip Alperson. New York: Oxford U P, 1992. 426-433; *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1981; *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton: Princeton U P, 1997. 193-196.

⁴⁸ Ashcroft, Bill, and Gareth Griffiths, et al., Eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. New York, Routledge, 1995. 1-4.

⁴⁹ A good accessible introduction to some of these movements is found in Salucci's *A People's History of Iraq*; the work draws much from the monolithic treatment found in Hanna Batatu's classic, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*. See Salucci, Ilario. *A People's History of Iraq: The Iraqi Communist Party, Worker's Movements, and the Left 1924-2004*. Chicago: Haymarket, 2005.

⁵⁰ Muzaffar 85-88.