

Problematics Of Poetry: Arguments And Judgments With A Particular Reference To Metapoetry

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to shed some illuminating light on poetry and its position in the contemporary literary scene, following so many radical changes in the form and content of poetry. Metapoetry has become a recurrent topic that has its own supporters and adversaries. The article shows in the introduction the history of poetry and its long tradition of epics and narrative poetry. Also it shows how poetry in the twentieth century has some parallels with painting, and how the two arts constitute a reciprocal relationship. The main argument of the paper hinges on four writers from different parts of the world who share this interest in metapoetry, and what it can bring to the reader and author alike. The first writer chosen here is Ismail Kadar (Albanian) who is still alive and a French citizen. His poem. ' Poetry' is a typical one that belongs to metapoetry, as Kadare shows his surprise to enter willy-nilly this poetic maze. The second writer is the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. In 'Ars Poetica' (Art of Poetry). Neruda presents the squalor and bad things of reality as the background for the sublimating role of poetry. British poet and poet Laureate, Ted Hughes's' The Thought Fox' discusses the writer's block. Lebanese Shawqi Beze'a 'The Poet" highlights the daily struggles of the poet in his strenuous efforts of pursuing the most appropriate terms and images in his poem. The conclusion sums up the main arguments of the paper.

Keywords: Metapoetry, Kadare, Neruda, Hughes, Beze'a.

1. Introduction

1.1 Particularity of Poetry as a Literary Genre

In contrast to other literary genres, poetry is marked by exclusive and specific features so that no sooner is poetry mentioned, than these constituents come to the fore. The first point to consider in this respect is poetry's ancient history or even timeless tradition. All over the world, poetry has cherished all types of peoples and cultures, oral and written. It is through poetry that people have articulated and registered their exploits, triumphs and defeats, moments of joy and sorrow. Poetry has been engraved on the walls of caves, temples or even tree trunks. The first epics in the world

were written in poetry. The deterministic sides of poetry were best expressed in Robert Frost's judgment of the poetic discourse and the bitter-sweet role assigned to it. As he puts it, "A poem begins as a lump on the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovelessness [...]. It finds the thought or the thought finds the words"(Suarez & Andrade, 2010: 11).

Apart from its respectable and time-honored lineage, poetry is also known for its diversity and multiplicity of devices, categories or terminology. Of all literary genres, poetry has the most terms and striking nomenclature: elegy, ode, hymn, epic, lyric, haiku, epigram, epithalamion, prose poem, concrete poetry, didactic poetry, pastoral, tanka, satire, ballad, narrative and song. All this signifies that poetry is distinguished by its diversity, flexibility and readiness to adapt itself to any variables or changes. This adaptability which is typically poetic empowers poetry to accommodate what is new or exotic. It serves man in all circumstances---elation, defeat, euphoria, grief, intimacy or loneliness. An example of this is the Mesopotamian epic of *Gilgamesh* (2100-1200 BC) that was written in clay tablets. This anonymous epic has tackled many universal topics such as "loneliness, friendship, love, loss, revenge, regret, and the fear of the oblivion of death"(11). Poetry in this epic undertakes the task of describing young people and commenting on this panoramic text. Thanks to the evocative and representative power of poetry, readers throughout four millennia have never been tired of this majestic work. Indeed Gilgamesh himself, Enkidu, Shamhat and Utnapishtam in addition to a number of gods and goddesses. are memorable. The initial words of the epic are striking as they resonate with keen insight and physiognomy:" He who saw all, who was the foundation of the land"(1).

When we turn to the equally significant poem, *Iliad* by Homer (700 to 750 BC), we encounter a broader work in terms of characters, scenery, fights, challenges and battles. The poetic description of these wars is superb and very impressive. People like Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector, Andromache, Odysseus and Paris haunt the reader's mind for a long time. The epic, as a whole, has been rightly seen as 'song', given "the grand sweep of the work. Of course, there are many passages whose depth and drama came through any reading—to name only a few: the opening quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, the meeting of Hector and Andromache in book 6 (10).The music and setting of the different situations help in foregrounding the sentimental sides of the language that runs in parallel lines to the heroic actions and fights.

Great part of the reader's interest rests in the linguistic resources of poetry which are manifest throughout these two epics. Scholars and readers have exerted great efforts to highlight the role assigned to poetic sides in lifting these epics to high status. This can be summed up as follows:

In many instances the effectiveness of a poem derives from the tension between the use of linguistic and formal units [...]. As a result, the use of these formal elements, and of the whole space that helps create, becomes an important part of the poet's toolbox.(Sfetcu 2018,p. 30)

1.2 Metapoetry

One of the serious challenges that poetry had to confront in Britain in the Victorian Age (19th century) was the rise of industrialization and science as formidable forces, that eclipsed and diminished anything else outside this realm. Indeed, many Victorians have sought to grapple with the intellectual changes posed by the Victorian scientific age. The image of man presented by Victorian poets seems to be weak, confused and unable to form a holistic picture of what is going on. All this is the outcome of the unequal conflict between science and religion. Matthew Arnold in his ' Dover Beach' (1867)" expresses a very pessimistic spirit as a result of the clash between humanism and science, a clash of what is irresolvable:".... for the world, which seems/To lie before us like a land of dreams/ So various, so beautiful, so new/ Hath neither joy, nor love nor light" (Erdmann & Stover, 1991: 124).

As a result of the serious difficulty of resolving the conflict between the physical and spiritual, many poets in America and Britain sought something else to occupy themselves with: the formal and technical questions of writing poetry. Metapoetry has become a common term in the poetic jargon, especially in the twentieth century. In its rudimentary definition, metapoetry is viewed as:

...a term that refers to those poems that make poetry and literary criticism the subject of a poem [...], the alienation of the poet in an age of crass materialism and the role of the poet as visionary, and above all, the belief in the power of imagination in transforming reality and imposing order on what they perceive to be chaotic world (Azouqa, 2019: 273).

The other problem metapoetry often addresses is the attitude of the poet regarding his/her own medium (poetry), whether he has full control on it or not. This is not simply a twentieth century issue. Coleridge's position in the 19th century is a good example of how the writer's block causes

much pain to him as seen in his ' Dejection: An Ode'. It was fully devoted to expressing what the poet felt regarding his incapacity to write poetry:

*A grief without a pang, void and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, an impassioned grief
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear (Allison et al., 1983: 582).*

The poem is an unmistakable confession of his failure to express his feelings and inner conflicts. The significance of this poem lies in the fact that it is a watershed experience, where Coleridge's life will have a turning point. From that time onwards, he will shift to an adjacent field to poetry, i.e., criticism, that proves to be a successful choice. Such is his success here that even T.S.Eliot cannot but call him ' The Perfect Critic'.

Inspiration or the driving motive behind writing poetry and its absence can cause much suffering and discontent or even self-doubt. It is worthwhile to refer to the valuable note of the American poet, Emily Dickinson, who reminds poets that, " Your thoughts do not have words everyday", which reflects her meditation on the unpredictability of inspiration"(Jancso, 2019: 49).

1.3 Poetry And Painting

A prominent feature of poetry, which is not found in other literary genres, is the organic link between the verbal and visual, poetry and painting and how the two often interlock with each other. For other literary genres, like drama or the novel, the cinema or theatre is the convenient means of embodying them. In the case of poetry, painting functions as a catalyst for driving the poet to probe what lies hidden or inarticulate in the painting. This is quite evident in W.H. Auden's ' Musee de Beaux Arts' (1938), when the poet visited Brussels museum. It is Breughel's famous painting, which depicts Icarus' fall when he fled from his imprisonment in the labyrinth with his father Daedalus. As a young man, he flew higher than his father, thus the wax melted and he fell into the Aegean Sea. The painting does not show the fall, except the drowned legs and the emphasis of Auden's poem on those very close to the scene of the tragedy and their indifference. As one scholar suggests, " Due to the objective, distant perspective of the painter, the viewer's attention is drawn to the landscape, filled with the riotous spring"(Waldron, 2017: 132). Auden's poem reflects the details of the painting in a very suggestive language that the perceiver cannot miss the message:

In Breughel's painting Icarus, for instance, how everything turns away/ Quite Leisurely from the disaster, the ploughman may/ Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry/ But it was an important failure; the sun shone /As it had on the white legs disappearing into the green/Water, and the expensive delicate ship must have seen / Something amazing , a boy falling out of the sky; / Had somewhere to go and sailed calmly on.(Allison, 1983: 1101).

This insightful reading of the painting highlights certain points that the painter has left unclear as shown through the festive scenes and nature. In his painting. Auden's poem draws the reader's attention to the glaring contrast between people and objects in the painting and tragedy. The ploughman or the sailors of the ship could have salvaged the drowning boy, but selfishness and indifference prevent them from doing such a gracious act. Auden, the committed writer, has his own interpretation of that famous painting and its memorable details. This poem was seen " as one of Auden's masterpieces. And one of the greatest poems, even written on painting (that) shows Auden's intense interest in understanding Christian history in the context of ordinary existence" (Kirsch, 2005: 19).

Likewise, the American poet Anne Sexton's 'The Starry Night '(1962) was inspired by Van Gogh's painting 'The Starry Night'(1889) and was used by the poet to reflect her mounting depression that eventually led to her suicide in 1974. One of Sexton's early visionary poems, 'The Starry Night ' has stressed that ' the prime mover of the universe is " the old serpent", a mythological cosmic universe' (Colburn, 1988: 408):

The town does not exist/ except where one black-haired tree slips,

Up like a drowned woman into the hot sky.

The town is silent. The night boils with eleven stars.

Oh starry starry night! This is how,

I want to die.

It moves. They are all alive.

Even the moon bulges in its orange irons,

To push children, like a god, from its eye.

The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars.

Oh starry starry night! This is how,

I want to die (Sexton, 1988: 49).

The paradox in this poem is quite obvious, as the sad poet likens the moment of her death to that starry night Gogh has dreamed of. The poet belongs to a tradition of female writers who have sought death to be a kind of release or salvation from a meaningless existence. This includes names like Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath.

These two examples show the effects of painting on the composition of poems which capitalize on those paintings. However, the point of view is different in that it goes in line with the poet's psychological or ideological orientation in viewing the painting according to his or her specific perspective. Besides, the story does not end here. There are paintings which have been inspired by poems or lyrical songs. The most famous of these is the painting titled 'Ophelia'(1851-1852). She is the main female character in Shakespeare's masterpiece, *Hamlet*. The painter is Sir John Everett Millais who painted this miserable girl whose father in the play, Polonius, was killed at the hands of her lover. That was in 1851-52 and now it is in the Tate gallery, London. Ophelia's position is unenviable, as she feels orphan after the death of her father, following her mother's. It is not quite clear whether her death is deliberate, i.e., suicide or by accident when she stumbled and fell into the river in Denmark. The painting is again a tribute to Shakespeare who managed through her songs and flowers to make the audience visualize the tragedy of Ophelia, which is no less painful than Hamlet's.

2. Main Argument

The foregoing discussion leads to one important inference that poetry is no longer "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, recollected in tranquility" as William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge argued in their famous book *The lyrical Ballads* (1798). Of course, this book is a breakthrough in the development of English poetry. It is worthwhile to note that 'Wordsworth's moving into the Dove Cottage in December 1799 is the turning-point in his life and works. He celebrates this event in the following lines:

A termination and a last retreat,

A Centre core from wherever you will,

A whole, without dependence or defect,

Made of itself and happy in itself,

Perfect Contentment, Unity entire (Brett & Jones, 2005: 5).

Such a romantic view of poetry, and the festival tone of seclusion and solitude is no longer feasible for readers, who have totally different priorities and concerns. For this reason, romanticism had a brief life (officially it ended in Britain in 1830). From this date onwards, new trends have begun to flourish in English and American poetry, such as modernism (Eliot and Yeats), Movement in poetry (Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis), war poetry (Winfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon), and symbolist poetry (Stephen Crane and Edgar Allen Poe). The intellectual, epistemological, cultural and even existential questions in the West during the hectic times of wars and consequential economic crises necessitated a new type of poetry that has got nothing to with romantic sentiments and fancies. Poets had to reconsider their poetry and its tools, interests, reception and above all its role in life. Among the alternatives 20th century poets have chosen is what is called metapoetry: the poetry that investigates its own tools, objectives, its validity or invalidity.

3. Ismail Kadare (B. 1936). The Thrilling Intrusion of Poetry in Kadare's Life

An Albanian poet, novelist, dramatist and essayist whose contribution to fiction is immense. He wrote a number of famous novels that helped in cementing his reputation as a leading figure in Albanian literature. They include *The General of the Dead Army* (1963); *The Castle* (1970) *Chronicle in Stone* (1971); *Broken April* (1987); *The Three-Arched Bridge* (1978); *The Palace of Dreams* (1981); *The File on H* (1990) and *The Pyramid* (1992). Despite the constraints imposed on the writer in his native country (Albania), Kadare managed to read " some of the Western literature such as Sartre, Camus and Hemingway [...]; he was criticized for writing imbued with morbid cadence and bourgeois formalism" (Morgan, 2010: 38). His novels revolve around life, history, heritage and environment of Albania. The suffocating world of politics in his country made his work imbued with allegories or parables in order to criticize implicitly the dictatorial practices in his country before quitting for good. He won many awards and prizes. In 1990 he got political asylum in France and since then he has begun writing his literary works in French.

In general, his works, whether those written in Albania or France " were extremely influential throughout the years 1970s and 1980s. for many readers he was the only ray of hope in the chilly dismal prison that was communist Albania "(Elsie, 2010: 220). It is apt to remember that Kadare began his career as a poet, then he shifted to writing novels and plays. His reputation was intensified by the huge number of novels he has written.

His work titled 'Poetry' (1957) exemplifies the characteristics of metapoetry in that it contains nothing outside the main idea, that the encounter between the poet and poetic genre is a moment of overwhelming surprise for the speaker. Indeed, the first section of the poem is full of unanswerable questions about the poet's puzzlement of how he came across this totally alien world to him:

Poetry: How did you find your way to me? / My mother does not know Albanian well/ She writes letters like Aragon without commas and periods/ My father roamed the seas in his youth/ But you have come/ Walking down the pavement of my quiet city of stone/ And knocked timidly at the door of three-story house/ At Number 16 (Kadare, 1993: 75).

The poet here shows his great surprise at this curious encounter, but at the same time there is a sense of pleasure mixed with helplessness at the intrusive arrival of verse in an alien environment, if not hostile, to this obtrusive thing. However, this unexpected meeting provides the poet with the opportunity to explore and recapitulate his own practices and routines before this insightful moment in his life:

There are many things I have loved and hated in my life/ For many a problem I have been an 'open city'/ But anyway... /like a young man returning home late at night/ Exhausted and broken by his nocturnal wanderings/ Here too I am, returning to you/ Worn out after another escapade/ And you/ Not holding my infidelity against me/ Stroke my hair tenderly, My last stop/Poetry (Kadare, 1993: 76).

This final section of the poem (My last stop) is a deterministic choice in his life. There are those whose voice is loud in praising the laudable privileges of poetry and what it does to the poet himself, let alone the reader. The Russian poet, Alexander Pushkin, finds that " the poet's messages can be sharpened up and made more effective by poetry; moreover, poetry will provide solace when the spirits are low" (Briggs, 1983: 69).

The poem aptly titled 'Poetry' was written before his famous novel, *The General of the Dead Army*, 1969. It is a poem that shows the craft of poetry is not merely a personal choice and has to be accepted, irrespective of its consequences or even distractions. The structure hinges on two basic moves. The first is when the poet is taken by surprise and even shock, given the narrow environment in which he has been living. The second is the realization that the advent of poetry is not completely harmful. The poet gradually sees in poetry some heartening elements which culminate in his enthusiastic claim as "My last stop." This last statement is virtually groundless, as the novel, not poetry, is Kadare's final or last stop. In fact, poetry has been a transient stage in his life just like Coleridge's or Matthew Arnold's, for that matter. In disposition and education, Kadare is preordained to practicing novel writing in a way that is more accessible than composing poetry. Even so, poetry here is presented as something that imposes itself on the writer without prior warning. It is a combination of intrusion and happy surprise.

3.1 Pablo Neruda (1904-1973). 'Ars Poetica' as a Metapoetic Work

Neruda is Chile's outstanding literary bard in his country and the world at large. He is the only poet in the list discussed here who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1971. His original name was Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basalto. He was a poet, novelist, essayist, and diplomat. He was born in Santiago, Chile. He was also a diplomat and this shows that he is different from his fellow writers who are content with poetry writing. His novels include *Residence on Earth* (1933) and *Canto General* (1950). His main interest is, of course, poetry whose meaning is paraphrased in the following "if you ask me what my poetry is, I might say I don't know; but if you ask poetry, it will tell you who I am" (Nagle & Shull, 2016: 10).

As already stated, Neruda's real reputation lies in his prolific and qualitative poetry. The poem chosen here is 'Ars Poetica'. As suggested by its very title, the poem is not about anything outside the realm of poetry itself. In other words, this is another example of metapoetry which has already been shown in Kadare's 'Poetry'. Here, Neruda tries to investigate his strategies and devices as he composes his poem, in particular the role assigned to inspiration in bringing the poem in its final fruition. In this regard, the American poet and short story writer, Edgar Allan Poe, has something to contribute to the arguments about inspiration and literary creativity. As he puts it, "Most writers—poets in special—prefer having it understood that composed by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic

intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes" (Lehay, 2005: 29).

'Ars Poetica' (1933) is a significant and suggestive poem even though it was written at an early stage in the poet's career. He had just taken the post of a consul in an unfamiliar land. There is something biographical in the poem as the poet himself is struggling under the commitments of his new post and the irresistible seductions of poetry. He epitomizes this in the initial lines of the poem, "Somewhere between shadow and space, between harnesses and virgins/ with a strangeness of social and funeral dreams/ Suddenly pale, the brow enshrouded/ with a widower's hay at each new day of life (Eisner, 2004: 17).

'Ars Poetica' literally refers to the art of poetry, and as such, "it provides a fairly simple method by which one may fathom as individual poet's philosophy of poetry, his motivation, ambition, background and poetic vision" (Madhavarjan, 1). The poet derives his moment of inspiration from the rare and peculiar moments or situations where everything reeks of chaos and dirt:

An air being born, and indirect anguish,

As if the thieves were arriving, or ghosts,

And inside a long, deep, hollow shell,

Like a humiliated waiter, like a bell,

Gone a bit hoarse,

Like an old mirror, like the smell of an empty house.

The peculiar side of his diction here is attributed to his interest in being " a poet perpetually in revolution against himself, against his own tradition" (De Costa, 1979: 1).

The total mess in the place and the objects scattered here and there as well as the mood of the poet when he observes and meditates show that writing poetry and particularly inspiration can be the oldest and most confusing experiences. Gone are the days of the Muse. And the poet is left to "the wind lashing (his) chest". The price which the poet has to pay on the altar of creativity is costly:

The infinitely dense night dropped into my bedroom,

The noise of a day burning with sacrifice,

Demand what there is in me of prophetic with melancholy,

And there's a banging of objects that call without being answered,

And restless motion (Eisner, 2004: 18-19).

The conclusion of the poem brings the reader's mind to the moment of revelation and recognition which James Joyce has called 'epiphany' in *Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916): "A girl wading in the river has kindled Stephen Daedalus' consciousness and mind which he imbibes, " Her eyes had called him and his soul and had leaped to the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to create life out of life" (Joyce, 2013).

3.2 Ted Hughes (1930-1998). 'The Thought-Fox'

A poet, essayist and writer for children, poet laureate 1984-1998. He was the husband of the American poet, Sylvia Plath, which eventually ended in her suicide in 1963. He studied English at Cambridge University, then switched to study anthropology and archeology. In this field he had the opportunity to study animals and its wide implications. These two pillars will be the cornerstone of Hughes' poetry: the first is the miserable marriage to Sylvia Plath and its catastrophic impacts on Hughes. The second, is animal life, which will be the central topic in his poems which will give him his characteristic feature of his poetry. Hughes's keen interest in the animal life is not the only example one comes across in English literature. There are the examples given by William Blake, D.H.L Lawrence and Seamus Heaney. Hughes's poems are replete with animals like hawk, jaguar, tomcat, fox, pike and many others. This great interest in animal life enables Hughes's poetry to suggest further dimensions and broaden his perspective Elizabeth Costello reads the poems of Hughes from a primitivism philosophy for which Hughes is known. According to Costello, Hughes' works embody a distinctive poetic form of engagement. Animal life, for her, represents ' a different kind of being-in-the-world' to the abstract, rational mode typified by analytic philosophy' [...] Costello argues from a deeper source than the rational mind; it seems to belong to dream experience that which is held in the Jungian collective consciousness" (Roberts *et al.*, 2018: 78). 'The Thought Fox' is another example of metapoetry in that it raises a further dimension of the problem facing the poet in the strenuous act of composing the poem. It is the writer's block which Hughes does not hesitate from confessing and definitely it is a cause for much discontent and anxiety. Hughes wrote

the poem under painful circumstances. As scholar Craig Robinson (1989) argues, this poem evokes situations and aspirations to release. himself from art:

The poem, written after a period of writer's block, is the meeting point of several memories concerning foxes: a sudden face-to-face meeting with one set the top of a river bank in childhood; a warming dream at university in which a terribly burned fox-headed man induced Hughes to give the destructive critical study of literature (23).

The poem recounts a real experience with a fox which stirs his inspiration. The poet's block is overcome by this unexpected encounter with a fox at midnight. If Kadare's representation of the poetic experience has assumed an abstract form, the fox in Hughes's present poem is concrete. There is a real fox that inspires the bewildered poet in that night. The position of Ted Hughes in this poem is similar to Coleridge's in his 'Dejection: An Ode' which is a watershed experience in the latter's career. The similarity rests in the serene night, the multiple thoughts overcoming his mind; the loneliness of the poet. However, in Coleridge's case, his little son is asleep by his side. Both poets are craving for the moment of inspiration so that their thoughts can take concrete form and shape. Coleridge's waiting proves to be futile, in contrast to Hughes, who reached the moment of illumination in no time. Hughes' situation is different in that the poet or his persona eventually attains his objective. His relationship with animals takes a different turn which is shown in the following:

I think of the poem as a sort of animal. They have their own life, by which I mean that they are quite separate from my person, even from their author, and nothing can be added to them or taken away without maiming and perhaps killing them (Oswald, 2014: 4). The presence of the fox in the poem is not accidental: it is actually part and parcel of his upbringing. Hughes' scholars tell the reader that:

Animals were profoundly important source for Hughes [...] Hughes had not written for at least a year after his unsatisfactory university experiences: unsatisfactory because he felt that he was in a state of total confusion. as he was sitting up late in his 'dreary lodging', in London he got an idea, and in a few minutes 'The thought Fox' was written (Wyse, 2017: 127).

That is exactly what happened in the composition of this memorable poem, 'The Thought Fox'. Here the search for inspiration substantiates in the form of the real fox that looms at midnight, meanwhile Hughes is seen to be oscillating between two minds regarding the stimulating agent (the fox) to change the abstract thoughts into concrete images:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow

A fox's nose touches twig, left;

Two eyes serve a movement, that now

And again now, and now, and now (Hughes, 2009: 5).

The striking repetition of the word 'now' four times is indicative of the sudden thoughts that preoccupy the poet's minds at that critical moment. The same holds true to the decisive role of the animal's eyes in stirring the imagination of the poet:

Across a clearing, an eye,

A widening, deepening grossness,

Brilliantly, concentratedly,

Coming about its own business (Hughes, 2009: 5).

The factual and fictional elements of the poem commingle in one harmonious whole—the formation of the poem is in its final shape and all the hesitation and confusion comes to an end:

It enters the dark hole of the head;

The window is starless still; the clock ticks,

The page is printed (5).

This is a typical metapoetic work wherein the fox's presence and the poet's keen response collaborate in giving birth to a poem that engages a prominent position in Hughes' oeuvre.

4. Shawqi Beze'a: His Merging The Poetic With The Critical

Arabic free verse and literary modernism are prominent features of twentieth century poetry. The practitioners of these vigorous and impressive trends in poetry belong to different Arab countries.

The first generation of poets who dabbled in writing free verse includes Iraqi Badr Shakir Assayyab, Nazik al-Malaika and Abdel Wahhab al-Bayyati. Their writings flourished in the first half of the twentieth century. The second wave of modernists included names from different Arab countries like Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Iraq. The list includes distinguished names like Youssef Elkhal, Ounsi al-Haj, Shawqi abi Shaqra, Fu'ad Rifqa, Mohammad al-Maghout, Khalil Hawi, Adonis, Nizar Qabbani, Salah Abdel Sabour, Saadi Yousef and Shawqi Beze'a. Only three poets are still alive: Shawqi abi Shaqra, Adonis and Shawqi Beze'a (1951).

The major works of Shawqi Beze'a are as follows:

Departure to Yathrib Sun (1982),

Love Songs for Litani River (1985),

Regret Rose (1990),

Dust Dirge (1992),

Deferred Sky (2005),

The Complete Works (1 & 2, 2005),

Scream of Trees (2007),

As felt through the titles given above, it is quite evident that Beze'a is a poet who is meticulous and eclectic in choosing the diction and imagery of his poetry and prose. This prominent feature of his writing will be felt most in his metapoetic work aptly titled 'The Poet.'. Beze'a is a Lebanese poet born in southern Lebanon. He lived in the first two decades of his life in the southern Lebanese agricultural environment which will be reflected in his future poems. He got his B.A. from the Lebanese university in 1973 and M.A. from the Jesuit University, Beirut, 1974. After working as a teacher more than one decade, he started working in the Ministry of Information where the press will preoccupy him ever since.

What makes his poetry different from other poets of his generation is his distinguished capacity to innovate and put his diction in new contexts so that they begin to acquire different connotations and implications. In his essay on the modernist poet, Nizar Qabbani, he praises the poetic techniques which bestow upon his (Qabbani's) mode of writing a distinct touch. Indirectly, he tells the reader that he himself adopts such types of writing that dispense with the worn out or repetition:

Nizar has created his own private diction as is the case in the pioneers and controversial figures. Creation here does not mean that he brings words from outside the dictionary or invents new and unprecedented phrases. He simply means linking the words in an inventive context which is typically Nizarean and injecting them with serums of a new life that has not existed in its new lexical space (194).

Critic Abda Wazin in his article titled ‘Shawqi Beze’a Presents the Modern Poetic Scene and Grounds it in the Memory’ Independence, Thursday,23/09/2021 informs the reader about Shawqi Beze’a’s book, *Trajectories of Modernism: A Reading in the Experiences of Pioneers* (Dar Al Rafidain,2021). Bez’a raises the central question regarding the poetic-critical duality. The book is a careful reading and “panoramic approach to the modern Arabic scene in all its directions, characteristics, differences and relations” (Independentarabia.com/node/2615561, September, 15,2022).

The poetics of place as delineated by Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) is a phenomenological exploration of how the place plays a very decisive role in the consciousness of the artist, whether in painting or writing. This holds true to Beze’s’ position in his two different reactions, to places in his country, Lebanon. As critic Jaber Kamil points out, Beze’a’s interest in the place and its impact on his writing is crucial in his poetic enterprise:

I loved Beirut very much, got familiar with it; I felt that it was the resort after having been the deaf cement castle. But to me, the consciousness of writing and its fountainhead is the countryside. The village, the place and nature in all its forms and manifestations occupies most of the poetry I have written (Jaber, 2009).

The poem in question here is Beze’a’s controversial work, ‘The Poet’. It is aptly titled since it describes the hazy position of the poet in the present age as he handles his nebulous material. Let us see the poem that is self-evident in evoking the different burdens and tasks the poet has to put up with:

5. The Poet

1. He always jots down what he fails to know,
2. He always traces an invisible arrow,

3. And a river whose origin is unknown to him,
4. Wandering aimlessly in every vale,
5. He expels ghosts, like goats, from the vaults of the soul.
6. Like a wizard that lays down his wand, raising suspicion,
7. Wherever he dwells.
8. So that they demolish each other.
9. Permanently dwelling in what looks like a house,
10. Though he is homeless.
11. Every time he tries to be plain, he gets more equivocal.
12. And every time he attempts to be clear, he gets more ambiguous.
13. He withholds what he writes.
14. He knows that some guessing is sinful.
15. Therefore,
16. He hints to the meaning but does not clarify it.
17. The poet claims that that poetry is a sin,
18. So he tells people,
19. That he is just a poet after all,
20. And poetry is no more than deceptive fancies.
21. Its most appealing type is the most feigning,
22. Nobody trusts what the poet states,
23. People never thought of death,
24. Which assumes the shape of a wolf; it snaps his exhausted body.

25. In order to extract meaning in his heart.
26. People are asleep,
27. That awaken when the poet is dead (Beze'a, 2005: 26).

Obviously, the aforementioned poem which belongs to metapoetry is a good representative of this type of poetic writing in that it basically revolves around two lines constituting its very structure and main issue. The first line is about poet-community or reader's relationship. Here in this point, there is an explicit self-criticism in the poet's deliberate mystification as seen through the lines (1-5) and mistrusting his readers or audience (lines 17-22). Only in the last two lines of the poem does the scale shift to the poet's side when his actual death becomes the signal for a fresh realization and estimation of the poet's work.

The other line in the poem is its most impressive side as it shows how the poet can be a good critic of his work, let alone of other works. Academic theses have been written about Beze'a's poetry. In one of these, the reader finds the following evaluation", The poet (Beze'a) is familiar with the religious, historical and poetic tradition as seen through his Quranic, and poetic intertextualities which inform most of his poems. They are evidence of his profound thinking and potent interaction" (Al Mazaida, 2014: 121). The poet-language relationship is also a problematic issue that has preoccupied many poets and critics like T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, Robert Frost, William Wordsworth and so on.

It is quite evident that in Beze'a's poem, the writer inculcates the ever-present gap between the word and meaning, between the signifier and signified. Look at the lines (11-12). Is there a conscious will on the part of the poet suggesting that the intention does not necessarily lead to the real or intended meaning? Two Spanish scholars comment on this peculiar point saying that" words have no meaning. That noise we make means nothing on its own. We bestow our perceptions with meaning" (Massip-Bonet & Bastardas-Boada, 2013: 22).

The obscure and hazy position of the poet in Beze'a's poem is the outcome of his failure to create means of actual contacts with his conversant. His homelessness, isolation and pathetic failure to interact with people are some aspects of the idiosyncratic mood of the poet. Indeed, it runs counter to Mayakovsky's metapoetic poem where the poet's voice is clamorous and noisy. In his metapoetic

piece ‘Billy-Bragg—Talking with the Taxman About Poetry’, he sees the achievements of the poet as invaluable and challenging, given the strenuous efforts he exerts in this field:

Poetry-/all poetry-/is an exploration/Poetry-/is just like mining radium/To gain just a gram/ You must labour a year./ Tens of lexicon are/ excavating/ All for the sake of one precious word./But/ how searing the heat of the word is /Alongside/The smouldering/ heap of waste./ These are the words / that go rousing, stirring/Millions of hearts /from age to age (Mayakovsky, 2013: 30).

Beze’a’s poet as shown in the poem appears to be a lonely figure who has to face two difficult situations concurrently: misunderstanding of readers or audience on the one hand, and nebulous nature of the language on the other. Indeed, the language and its ability or failure to give the exact meaning are the forces that give the poet hard times. The task of the poet as shown in Mayakovsky’s poem is next to impossible. Beze’a’s representation of the poet’s hardships transcends the local and embraces the universal as poets mostly struggle with all types of difficulties---financial, psychological, social and cultural.

A final and illuminating point about Beze’a’s poetic achievement and metapoetic writing is provided by one of his perceptive critics. Isam Shartah who illuminates the impressive achievement of the Lebanese poet, Ishraq Beze’a:

No doubt the art of poetry is vision-oriented with fertile perspective and has its own distinct tools and evasive plastic relationships. It has ambiguous linguistic texture or oblique suggestions or readings. Also it has different epistemological and lexical knowledge in addition to enthusiastic dialectics (Shartah, 2018: 17).

It is such recommendations and analyses that prompt Beze’a to carry on his poetic approach which proved to be successful and capable of attracting the attention of the specialists and ordinary readers alike.

6. Conclusion

Out of the arguments and views mentioned in the foregoing page, certain ideas and inferences have crystalized. The first thing is the nature of poetry, its long history, earlier uses and practices worldwide. The best classical works in drama and epics were written in poetry. In the last two



centuries or so, a new terminology has been coined: metapoetry which is a common term in the studies of poetic discourse, just like other adjacent terms; 'metadrama', 'metafiction' and 'metacriticism'. The prefix 'meta' means that the reference concentrates on the mechanism and self-reference of the term and implications. Whether deliberately or not, world literature is replete with examples that instantiate this poetry and the different roles assigned to it. Another section of the introduction in this article explores the interrelation between poetry and painting. Examples abound here to show how painting functions as a catalyst to expand the fields of poetry and adds a special flavor to it. This poetry-plastic arts relationship bestows another dimension to what poetry can do. The poet here is invited to speak out what is basically static in painting and color. One can refer in passing to the attempts of John Keats, W.H. Auden and Anne Sexton who dabbled in this field. Conversely, there are few cases where painting serves as the offshoot of poems. Shakespeare's tragic heroine Ophelia in *Hamlet* provides a good opportunity for painters to draw her pathetic situation as she realizes that her lover Hamlet is her father's murderer. Semi-mad, she falls or possibly jumps into the river in Denmark and carries on her sorrowful songs till she gets drowned. Painters did not miss this opportunity of representing the agonies of Ophelia as she covers her body with flowers and gradually water takes her inside the river.

The examples of metapoetry are chosen from different continents and cultures. Ismail Kadare is the only living poet among those chosen here. He wrote poems about, love, parting, death and many other topics. His poem 'Poetry' represents the experiment with metapoetry as it talks about the irresistible drive of poetry and its temptations. At the beginning, the persona or the poet himself is surprised to find poetry entering his abode without permission. After some reasoning, he welcomes it and celebrates its advent.

Pablo Neruda's 'Ars Poetica' pursues this line of argument which deftly shows how the graceful and refined world of poetry can flourish even upon the most inconvenient and cheerless situations, A midst all types of mess, disorder and squalor, poetry invites him and he can only welcome it as a release from all types of entanglements. The poem suggests that poetry can be an act of release and liberation.

Ted Hughes' 'The Thought Fox' is a poem about the bewilderment of the poet when he could not find the inspiration which is the stimulant for writing. At the end, he sees a fox moving toward him at midnight. It transpires that this fox serves as the impetus for Hughes' inspiration.

The last poem in this paper is Shawqi Beze'a's 'The Poet' which sheds illuminating light on the act of composing poetry and choosing it as a means of living and its costly hazards. Beze'a presents a controversial image of the poet as he gropes his way in the labyrinth of writing poetry and the huge difficulties besetting his life. The finale of the poem shows that the poet, after all, is an indispensable figure whose role can be fully appreciated after his death. In short, the present study in all its examples and theoretical background, shows that poetry is not a mere luxury or a superfluous thing. Poetry is concomitant with life and the crucial agent of refining, sublimating and cultivating it.

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