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Chaos in Worlds: A Critical Quest for Metapoetry

Abstract

Metapoetry is a self-reflexive poetic construction on poetry. It penetrates the process of writing poetry from a self-oriented view. This study purports to scrutinize the term from a critical-aesthetic and culture perspective. It aims at interpreting selected metapoems, classic and modern. The study hypothesizes that metapoesis is not progressive of modernity; it is practiced through the history of worldwide literature. Therefore, the study is not confined to the exploration of the Anglo-Saxon world of poetry. Rather, it will draw on the German, Persian and Arab Poetics as well. One finding of the study is that metapoetics is a culture- aesthetic universal, shared by worldwide poetics and poets. Metapoetics in this sense, is timeless poetics form.

Keywords: Self-reflexively, Metapoetry, Modernity, Culture, Aesthetics.

Introduction

Among the most common catch-phrases and adjectives related to modernism are self-conscious, self-referential, self-reflective, etc., which were literally interchangeable with use in a variety of respects, to be regarded or made aware by the writer or poet of the method of writing a literary work. As a consequence, we see post-modern ideas such as Patricia Waugh, Robert Spires, Michael Boyd, and a special fantasy that requires a share of self-confidence (Bertens, 1995).

After its appearance, further attention has been extended to this element that has progressively made its way into drama, poetry and to the degree that it is no longer unfamiliar or novel. Therefore, if the news about the creation of the novel is called a meta-film, we can call the poetry about the writing of a poem "meta-poem"; we can say that a drama which has its own method of writing a "meta-drama"; and even a video, which provides the purpose and the form of it as a "meta-film." This meta-literature phenomenon, which is used herein to refer to all kinds of literary that subject matter in the process of their production is not a matter of theorizing, such as those described above within the theoretical corpus of postmodernism. Rather, in some mystical

novels, dramas and poetry it has been developed as a popular theme. It is also consciously and consistently presented as a mainstream subject by postmodern letters. In the parts to come, we shall explore theoretical self-reflectivity along with its meanings and aspects, and then address self-reflectivity in nature, as found in Billy Collins' poetry. (ibid).

Literature Review

The analysis of metaliterary phenomena within the Western academic world became a relevant theme in 80s while the definition and sub-concepts for metaliterature were launched a bit earlier, in the 1960s and early 1970s. Metaliterary experiments may be considered to be primarily about meta-fiction but the first studies using the idea of metaliterature and its sub-concepts did not deal with fiction or prose. The analysis of metafiction was pioneered in the United States by Robert Scholes (1967; 1970) at the turn of the 1960's and 1970's, Linda Hutcheon (1985). In the early 1960s the first published a work on metadrama, and three years later the last (Schlafler 1966), published an essay on metapoetry. In 1966 the latter published an article, at least Lionel Aber and Heinz Schlafler had explored metal-literature before. Similarly, it appears to have become a

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scholarly curiosity in metaliterature through the study of the metafiction in the 70's and 80's. The United States and France, particularly, had an important interest in the topic of metafiction. In France, Jean Ricardou (1973), Robert Alter (1975) published their studies on French Nouveau Roman and its metafictional machinery and, in France, Jean Ricardou (1973) and Lucien Dällenbach (1977). The 1980's of the works transformed into a genuinely international phenomenon during this decade, which partially surpassed the limits of the Western World, the idea of metafiction and its sub-concepts finding their place in the literary studies departments of numerous countries (Hallila 2006). The metadrama and metapoetry studies were mainly used as side roads in metaliterature research compared to this development.

Theory of Self-reflexivity

While self-reflexivity and metapoetry are relatively new as literary concepts, there are few intense attempts to describing and theorizing them. However, the exception few of that are not detailed, whole books on them are meagre or almost non-existent. In this regard, Eva Muller-Zettelmann (2005) clearly claimed that there has been no complete and general English research has been conducted to explain "structural conditions of auto-reflexive poetry in any systematic form" (129). Even so, it can be claimed from the data gathered from various books and articles that metapoetry is "Poetry about poetry, especially self-conscious poems that pun on objects or items associated with writing or creating poetry" (Wheeler 2014). We can say that self-reflexive is a concept that refers to "literary works that openly reflect upon their own processes of artful composition. Such self-referentiality is frequently found in modern works of fiction that repeatedly refer to their own fictional status" (Oxford Reference). As far as self-reflexiveness is concerned, this style of writing refers to itself and this is popular in postmodern writing because it is "especially fond of this artistic technique" as L.K. This technique can be used in the form of metafiction and metapoetry (Wheeler 2014).

Alfred Weber (1997) provides a detailed survey of several topics relating to what he calls the 'genre' of self-reflexive poetry in a very significant essay entitled "Toward a Definition of Self- Reflexive Poetry"(ibid).

In his view, the poem relates to the central and open thematic interest of at least one aspect of the author's philosophy or poetry. The paper reflects on the place and role of poetry within its society and environment, on the writing of poetry and/or on poetry itself (the work of art, its structure and its quality). By nature, all

self-reflective poems are composed at the service of the poet's self-examination.

Consequently, any poetry dealing with one or more things is a self-reflective poem. This was the product of Horace's *Ars Poetica* in Western verse, a poem in which poets and writers offered guidance on poetry and theatre.

Later the sentence of a poetica was naturalized and explained to be the English term "a systematic theory or doctrine of poetry" as established by Alex Preminger. It is a coherent, systematic collection of poetry (qtd. in Weber 1997). So, it is self-reflecting to have a poem which has as its subject or topic some part of the writing process or which concerns the poet with any problems connected with the process itself. In short, a poem with a poetic theme is self-reflective. In this sense poetry's availability as its basic theme is the fundamental requirement or requirements for the identification of a self-reflection poem.

Yet, to conclude that all poems have to be involved in poetry itself cannot always be acceptable. To that extent, Dorothy Z. Baker (1997) argues that "every image, every metrical unit, every rhyme scheme, and every stanzaic form is 'loaded'". So, when a poet remembers an image or writes in a particular poetic way, he or she writes from a tradition, a literary heritage stretching to hundreds of years, and reflecting on the legacy of that past (Baker). However, Baker believes and reflects on a poem which confronts the poetic tradition, this is not a reflexive poem. There is also an extremely highly poetic group to the point that they have no other problem but the cosmetics of poetry. They are exemplified in the unique features and descriptions of poetry. In other words, poems discuss the literary issues in the whole poem, not as a minor by-product, as primary and sometimes a single one. The latter group is the right one.

Furthermore, Balakian states that 'reflexive' refers to the poems' 'selves' meaning they are self-reflective. In this way, she maintains a distinction between the self-reflexive and self-expressive poems:

My idea of a self-reflective poem is confined to the context of the poem rather than the author. If nothing else is meant, then his poetry is expressed and I call it self-expressive rather than self-reflective (Balakian).

Part One: On Metapoetry

1) *The Prefix Meta in Linguistics*

In the normal divisions of language studies – as in the metalinguistic conscience – metalinguistic (used as an adjective and a noun in French, metalinguistics has been said to have various meanings in different traditions. Metalinguistic knowledge is originally related to

the metal language definition, which the logicians Alfred Tarski and the linguist and literary academician Roman Jakobson used in different contexts. The latter is used in defining "something" which is characterized by most natural languages, while the former is used in language and logic – and certainly a great deal of linguistic discourse – according to Tarski. Metalanguage is the "object-language." This allowed Tarski (1956) and Kripke (1975) to deal with some problems which had been previously unsolved, such as the so-called "liar paradox," by eliminating from the object languages the true predicate in metal language.

Centered on the theory of communication (i.e., Shannon & Weaver 1949), Jakobson (1960) emphasized that metalinguistic expression is usually part of communication. Tarski's conceptualization was deepened. So, speakers may use artifacts – the "code" of the communicative interaction in Jakobson's words, but still communicate on the metalinguistic level. Indeed, as Jakobson (1958) points out in his popular article "Shifters, verbal categories, and Russian verb," speakers rely on duplex signs that simultaneously fulfill both functions (see Verschueren, 2000, for an overview of the major differences between the duplex sign categories of Jakobson). This is achieved without special attention (as with Mr Jourdain from Molière, who spoke prose without understanding it). The communicative model of Jakobson assumes a uniform code is used by sender and receiver. Linguistic contact carries metalinguistic code information; this information is a necessary communication element externalized by speech. This view of the metalinguistic discourse, although larger than that of Tarski, is still confined to the discussion of a presupposed topic, which happens to be just language (as the code). Indeed, as Verschueren (2000) remarks, it might not have been so worthy of distinctive care and attention had all this been in metalinguistic expression - that it is language about language. But just as practical justification is not metaphysical reasoning (vide Aristotle), so the use of metalinguistic vocabulary is not limited to speaking of language.

2) The Meta Literary Genres (Metafiction, Metadrama, Metapoesis)

'Metafiction' is fiction about fiction, as it is now known – fiction that contains a commentary about a personal narrative and/or linguistic identity in itself. (Hutcheon 1985).

In this context, the narrative self-awareness or self-reflecting is the hallmark of metafiction; in other words, on the one side metafiction provides a history and, on the other, comments regarding the story's presentation. Likewise, in

her own concept of metafiction Waugh places the idea of narrative self-awareness central:

Metafiction is a definition given to fictional writing that systematically and deliberately reflects on its role as an artifact in order to raise questions regarding links between fiction and reality. (Waugh: 1984).

The same claims related to metaliterature is metafiction. Via this presumption, if the opposite case holds true, one may conclude that metaliterary works, in the first place, talk for themselves (cf. Oja 2004). Using the word "reflection" is a smart notion because we can get several conclusions. Literature may lead itself to be scrutinized and referred to within other literary works.

Metaliterary devices, even in drama and poetry, have made literary works more theoretical and literary practices more aware of them. In German terminology, metapoetry, the theoretical component of metaliterature is clearly accentuated. Outi Oja (2004) states that the word 'poetological poetry,' which he uses as synonym for the term 'metapoetry,' is widely used by German scientists and signs that metapoetry and theory of poetry are seen as childish phenomena.

In the 1970s and 1980s, theorists and scholars of metafiction were inclined to accept metafictionally as a textual element in literature. It can therefore be analyzed Empirically using narrative and linguistic methods that are more or less capable of achieving it. This thinking was part of, among other things, the studies of Hutcheon, Waugh and Gerald Prince (1982). It may be that Hutcheon influenced the study of metaphoricism most widely among these three theorists. (ibid).

Part Two: Metapoetry in Other Literatures

1). Quintus Horace (Latin Poetry)

The importance of nature, and particularly trees, in ancient literature is another familiar topic. Horace may have consciously introduced aspects of the natural world into his poetry.

All the connections between trees and poetry are reflected in Horace's work. Horace tells the readers that, for example, the laurel has been and always will be a feat of his life, since his earliest days when he had been so prized by the Muses, that a blanket of laurel and myrtle has kept him from wild birds in Odes 3.4.9-20 until his possible escape from death by song. In the Horace of the *Ars Poetica* twice he uses material to reference a poetic subject, first of all, by his command to "take up a subject equivalent to your capabilities" (sumite matiam Vestris...aequam / viribus 38-9).

The ability of Horace to express significance by met poetic trees is not limited to poetry. The

dynamic patterns of trees occupy the whole Odes, which can be used for a number of programmatic purposes. For example, Commager claimed that Horace uses natural world, and tree symbolism in particular, to answer problems of time, transition and to educate his recipients and his readers about the inevitability of ageing, its limits to be embraced and the complicated vicissitudes of life. All throughout the Odes Horace commends those who learn these essential truths and criticizes those who don't use trees and their seasonal flora and decay cycles.

Similarly in Odes 1.25, Horace implicitly warned Lydia that as a woman grows older, one inevitably suffers heartbreak after heartbreak (17-20)

*laeta quod pubes hedera virenti
gaudeat pulla magis atque myrto,
aridas frondes hiemis sodali
dedicet Hebro.*

This is because satisfied citizens deeply enjoy greens ivy and dark myrtle and they prefer making offers to Hebrus, winter's friend.

Time cannot be halted when seasons themselves change continuously. Teenagers are well conscious of these things; accordingly, they express no pity or remorse for their victims. A awful act is done to Horace—with no excuse other than for the realization of her own self—who Lydia disparages.

Horace also admonished the Lalage would-be lover in Odes 2.5 that it was time for her to be pursued, and his suggestion incorporates a term filled with trees (9-12):

*tolle cupidinem
immitis uvae: iam tibi lividos
distinguet Autumnus racemos
purpureo varius colore.*

Remove the unripe grape your wish. The blue clusters will soon be painted with a purple hue with all their color in fall.

Again here trees serve as the prime representation for time and transition. Lalago is similar to an unearthed grape that only matures over time like the multicolored autumn leaves and dark clusters. Lalago is not mature. Horace's receiver must spare his time so that he does not fail in his overzealous quest of his disregard of the manners of nature.

2). *Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Bayyati (Arab Poetry)*

While metapoetry began to flourish in the West, in the 1950's, it became a reality in the Arab World under pressure from al-Bayātī, the present socio-political problems of the age and the Palestinian catastrophe in particular. In

addition, this analysis indicates that Al-poetry Bayātī's was impacted by the same influences that inspired the Western metapoetry composers. The analogies between the metapoetical texts of al-Bayātī and his western counterparts put the subject-matter and literary practices of metapoetry within their compass, which makes for a deeper interpretation of his craft as a poet.

In his use of the dance imagery, the first comparison in the poem "The Gypsy symphony" by Al-Bayātī with Yeats's "Sailing for Byzantium" is obvious. The poet is the dancer himself and the dance reflects the role of poetry to establish unity and balance in a turbulent world. The locus in al-poetry Bayātī's dances as an illustration of metapoetical worries. In two gypsies Al-Bayātī, a singer and a dancer, even his poetic mask, uses to create two metapoetic themes. The first theme is similar to that of the dancer in the poem of Yeats, where he uses dance to stand for how the poet can give his old self up and get a new one to excel as an artist. The second theme is a similar one. The second theme concerns the poet's social role in the recovery of the soul of the country as a visionary vessel.

As with the byzantine spirit, revered by its great artworkers and thinkers, al-Bayātī uses the Alhambra Palace nostalgically as an emblem of large-scale culture and an influence that immortalizes literature. He uses the Palace often to demonstrate that the Arab nation sleeps and does not remember the glories of its history.

In addition to the device of dance pictures a different parallel is apparent in the use of the ancient and classical philosophy of the descendant to the sub world of al-poem, Saint's "A'isha's Mad Lover" and the apostrophic work of Tsvetaeva's "Poems of Blok." Metapoetry leads you into the underworld and into the philosophical sphere. 'A'isha takes on the role of Ishtar and Eurydike and the speaker, the lover of A'isha has Tammuz and Orpheus qualities. Like Tsvetaeva's metapoems, al-Bayātī poems embody a "near-death narrative" in Homeric Neky, since the insane lover embarks on a difficult quest to redempt 'A'isha, the emblem of poetry.

As noted above, both Yeats and Tsvetaeva rely extensively on classical myths and practices to discuss their metapoetical issues, but Stevens did not. Stevens' poetry was heavily inspired by Avant-Garde trends in literature, in particular Pablo Picasso's Cubicism, along with his ontological perspective on life. The poem "The Nightmare" of al-Bayātī is therefore similar to Stevens' poem "The Mank with the Blue Guitar" when it reveals how Picasso's sculptures, "The Old Blind Guitarist," are summoned by the poets.

The "Nightmare" is a divergence from the facets of topic and form and reflects a new step in the composition of metapoetical texts by

Al-Bayātī. It is also a metaphor that underlines poetry exploration. As a musician, He uses Picasso to throw his soul into music to make his fans smile. In the background of the poem the guitarist stands for the artist who turns the reality, like Picasso, through the force of his own imagination into something magnificent. It's similar to the old guitarist Stevens, who switches his blue guitar in fact. Therefore, al-Bayātī reveals that art can be a means of escaping reality.

3). *Nezami Ganjavi (Persian Poetry)*

Despite numerous meanings and interpretations, such as meta language, met criticism and metafiction, meta poetry is applied fundamentally to a poem which deals with poetry and which focuses consciously on the poetry question. Nezami Ganjavi then describes the essence, features and functions of poetry based on his beliefs. Among Persian poets Nezami Ganjavi is one who most frequently goes back to meta poetry. He often deals with the subject matter of literature, particularly the verse, apart from the emphasis on the principal subjects of his poem (union of Heaven, prophet's eulogy, moral instruction, etc.). Indeed, his poem roots, the virtues of writing and the importance of eloquence are all the topics he dedicates. We can see a number of questions in one of his stanzas (stanza 14 with 66 distiches), from the correct subject and role of poetry to the religious position of poets to their connection with prophecy to the critique of the Elogotists to the relationship between poetry and sorcery. (http://farsij.iausdj.ac.ir/?_action=xml&issue=114878).

Nezami, a well-known Poet of the 6th century, is one of Persian's rare masters of imaging. His love of pictures and confrontation brought him to many proverbs and metonymies. This unusual variation of its pictures induced by his comprehension of theoretical and practical knowledge and the strong command of numerous knowledge branches. As an important element in the works of Nezami, figurative language has a central role to play to communicate his concepts and thoughts. His frequently used colloquial metonymies made him the incomparable master of colloquial proverbs. His repeated use of Leili ya Majnoon proverbs is a product of his way of life and mastery of his time's public culture. He used these terms to influence the reader and to deal with all his social, moral, educational and cultural concerns in the colloquial language. (ibid).

Nezami, the renowned poet of the sixth century, is a uniquely imagery master of Persian literature. His passion for imagery and the talk contributed to numerous proverbs and metonymies. This unusual range of images was

induced by his mastery of the theoretical and practical knowledge and the control of numerous branches of knowledge. As an important element in the works of Nezami, figurative language has a central role to play to communicate his concepts and thoughts. His frequently used colloquial metonymies made him the incomparable master of colloquial proverbs. In Leili ya Majnoon, his constant use of proverbs is the result of his style of life and mastery of public culture. He used these terms to influence the reader and to deal with all his social, moral, educational and cultural concerns in the colloquial language. (ibid).

Concluding Remarks

Metapoetry is not limited to a specific time or range in history. In modern poetry it occupies a large region. The poets are faced with a mirror to articulate their poetry, function, and imagination through their poetry, so in spite of the artistic subconscious through their works they added the critical role. The poets have evidently introduced several definitions in poetry, all connected to four areas speculated in the paper, which are: nature, man, a mixture of nature with man, or the strangeness of the term, which poets consider enigmatic in their poetry. It was confirmed this theory.

This study traces the progression of Metapoetry from great writers throughout their literary careers by describing how they began as romantic poets; and how they used allusions to mythology and division as a metaphor of the turmoil in the Arab world, Latin world and Persian World and how they became a myth makers, and how they abandoned myth-making and they wrote metapoetry. Thus, Al-Bayātī, Nezami, and Horace are not imitator, but rather original thinker.

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