

Contemporary Arabic Poetics: A Study in Terminology and Origins Through Abdallah Lachi's Book "Questions of Poetics"

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Abstract:

This study delves into the essential terms and concepts prevalent in contemporary Arabic poetics, as discussed in "Questions of Poetics: A Study in the Mechanism of Poetic Creativity" by Algerian scholar Abdallah Lachi. Al-Ashi seeks to clarify various terminologies and notions pertaining to the multifaceted aspects of poetic creativity. This paper engages with the text to explore significant issues, both critical and creative, posited by Al-Ashi. These include the definition of poetry, the creative process and its phases, the nuances involved in constructing a poetic text, and its inherent functions, elements that are fundamental to understanding the poetic experience and the governing laws of creativity within modern Arabic poetry.

Keywords: Poetry, poetics, creativity, function of poetry, text formation.

Introduction:

The discourse on poetics within modern and contemporary Arab criticism has been significantly shaped by Western theories of poetics. Arab critics have endeavored to theorize this domain, despite the absence of a concrete definition in the critical works of scholars who have extensively analyzed both theoretical and practical aspects of the critical process integral to poetic creation.

Abdallah Lachi, in his seminal work "Questions of Poetics: A Study in the Mechanisms of Poetic Creativity," addresses various critical facets related to the poetic creative process. He emphasizes the primary dimensions of this process, creativity, concept, and function, drawing from the perspectives of contemporary poets in their prose writings, thereby recognizing them as authentic bearers of poetic experience. This paper aims to elucidate the key terms and concepts from which Al-Ashi begins his exploration of contemporary Arabic poetics.

Arabic Poetics:

Historically, the concept of poetics was not recognized in its contemporary guise by the ancient Arabs, hence its absence in early Arabic literatureⁱ. However, it has subsequently permeated modern studies, being defined as a science of poetry, literature, or a theory of poetry. This field interrogates the essence of poetry, the nature of literature, and its relational aesthetics and humanistic functions.ⁱⁱ

The prominent critic Adonis frequently addressed these inquiries, posing critical questions like, "After about a thousand years of writing poetry in our society, what is poetry? What is creative writing?"ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, Algerian critic Youssef Waghli probes the definition of poetics: What exactly is poetics, and what does it encompass? Is it synonymous with literariness, a science of poetry, or prose, or does it represent a broader science of literature or aesthetics?^{iv}

In "Questions of Poetics," Abdallah Lachi tackles these fundamental questions in poetic theory and pinpoints the elements that render poetry distinct. He endeavors to cultivate specific understandings for his readers, asserting that many critical studies overly depend on the philosophical, critical, aesthetic, and psychological theories, often overlooking the personal declarations of poets concerning their creative endeavors and the intrinsic nature of their craft, likening the act of creating poetry to a laborious process.

The notion that a critic can fully understand the poet's inner turmoil during the writing process is challenged by the belief that poetry is profoundly comprehended only by those who endure its creative pains. This concept is illustrated by historical anecdotes, such as Bashar ibn Burd's statement, "Only he who is compelled to say like it knows poetry," and Al-Buhturi's discussion on poetic mastery between Muslim and Abu Nuwas.

When asked, "Who is more poetic?" Al-Buhturi noted that "Abu Nuwas manipulates every path and adopts every doctrine, while Muslim follows a path he does not exceed and adheres to a doctrine he does not bypass." When challenged by Abul Abbas Tha'alba's disagreement, Al-Buhturi retorted, "This is not from the knowledge of Tha'alba and his likes who memorize poetry but do not compose it, only those driven to its confines know poetry." Such assertions highlight the originality of the approach sought by poets and underscore the belief that poets possess a deeper understanding of their work than anyone else.

Thus, the writer aims to explore fundamental issues in the theory of poetry, starting from contemporary poets' prose writings that encapsulate their experiences, noting that ancient criticism often overlooked these personal insights. The writer advocates for greater emphasis on the poets' perspectives, without dismissing the intellectual contributions of critics and thinkers, who often concentrate on theoretical analysis without engaging with the poets' experiential views.

The Creative Process:

This section delves into the complexities of the poetic creative process, highlighting the challenges associated with its theorization and comprehension. The creative process is intricately linked to a spiritual state marked by deep emotional layers, making it one of the most intricate aspects of poetic studies. The subjectivity inherent in personal experiences and the variability among poets pose significant barriers to developing a unified theory of poetic creation. Additionally, the spiritual and emotional depth of this process often leads to a lack of clarity, which the author describes as the "challenge of language and its compulsion to convey meaning."

Poets frequently admit their difficulty in articulating the nuances of their creative experiences, relying on imagery to bridge the gap between their inner visions and the audience's understanding. Nizar Qabbani highlights this challenge, stating, "It is not easy to observe the poem as it forms." He describes the initial moment of creation as a "poetic assault," an abrupt and overwhelming experience that catapults the poet into a new emotional realm, often beyond clear comprehension^{vi}. This sudden onset leaves little space for reflective thought, plunging the poet into a profound emotional state that, while intensely experienced, remains partially elusive.

In discussing the motivations for writing, the text refers to traditional perspectives that linked poetic expression to specific emotional states, as noted by Al-Hutay'ah^{vii}, who categorizes poets by their emotional triggers: "Al-Nabighah writes best when fearful, Zuhair when desirous, and Jarir when angry." These emotional catalysts, fear, desire, and anger, serve as potent motivators for poetry. Contemporary poets echo these sentiments but often describe them in terms that reflect a broader existential and psychological engagement^{viii}. For instance, Ezzedine Mihoubi speaks of the "self's dialectic with the external," referring to the complex interplay of internal emotions and external circumstances that precipitate poetic creation. Mahmoud Darwish describes his pre-writing anxiety as a profound existential unease, a state echoed by many poets who view their initial emotional or psychological tension as a crucial driving force behind their creative output.

In the realm of poetry, the term "start of the poem" holds critical importance, as the poem's fate often hinges on its beginning. An artistically successful start frequently predicates the success of the entire poem. This initial phase can be a point of great hesitation for poets, who may experiment with multiple openings before deciding on the definitive one. Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati exemplifies this, often pausing at the first verse, which he views as both a gateway into the poem's world and a lens to uncover the secrets of writing.^{ix} For Mohammad Al-Hijazi, the creative process initiates with an exploration for an entry point; he tests various beginnings until one resonates, paving the way for the remainder of the poem.^x

Poets describe the psychological state preceding the act of writing as dominated by a musical response, a vague rhythmic state in search of form. Prior to putting pen to paper, the poet is immersed in a sea of rhythms, sounds, melodies, and chimes, embodying a psychological and sensory landscape. This initial spontaneity, resulting from a prolonged accumulation of sensations and keen observation of life's subtleties, is described as both magical and surprising. Ezzedine Mihoubi remarks on the enigmatic nature of this phase, often elusive even to the poet despite prolonged contemplation.^{xi}

Ambiguity is a hallmark of the poem's beginning, arising naturally as the poet delves into their depths, bringing forth a confluence of emotions, concerns, ideas, and visions, all striving to manifest in language. This makes the start inherently ambiguous. If Al-Hijazi writes in a trance, liberated from consciousness, then Adonis experiences a form of madness from the outset; the poem writes him, presenting surprises unbidden and arising from an unconscious creation^{xii}, devoid of pre-formed ideas, defined boundaries, or clear emotions.

This section also introduces the concept of the "season of the poem," which besets the poet unexpectedly. Often, poets repeat the notion that "the poem writes me," implying that the poem emerges independently, without a fixed schedule or appointment. For Nizar Qabbani, poetry "makes itself by itself," autonomously weaving its essence behind the soul's veil until it achieves its existential justification and dons a melody-rich robe, trembling letters onto paper.^{xiii}

Al-Bayati suggests that elements of the poem accumulate in a pre-writing phase, and when their assembly reaches a coherent form, the poem is born spontaneously. Thus, the act of writing is not premeditated but is intrinsically linked to dreams, visions, and an intuitive melding of thoughts and forms. The poem becomes a circumstantial adventure for the poet, capturing a moment charged with cultural consciousness, emotional intensity, and the force of its expression beyond the poet's immediate control.^{xiv}

Stages of Creativity:

After examining the stages of poetic writing discussed by Western critics, the author highlights the variability in their classifications among numerous critics and thinkers. He then turns to the stages of poetic creation in ancient Arab criticism, finding notable reference only in IbnTabataba's *Criterion of Poetry*. In this text, IbnTabataba explains, "When a poet intends to construct a poem, he churns the meaning upon which he wants to build the poetry in his mind in prose, and prepares for it the words that match it, the rhymes that correspond with it, and the meter that facilitates its articulation."^{xvii} Here, the creative process is presented as a purely volitional act, reflecting a structured, instructional approach to poetic composition under the poet's full control.

The author challenges this view, arguing that creativity is a fusion of voluntariness and spontaneity, involving both conscious and unconscious elements. He underscores the overlooked heritage of poets' reflections, a rich body of insights that affirms the influence of external factors beyond the poet's control, such as environmental conditions and solitude. This idea is echoed in Abu Nuwas's description of poetry as existing "between wakefulness and intoxication," a metaphor for the interplay between consciousness and unconsciousness.

The author concludes that while terminologies differ, contemporary poets broadly agree on three fundamental stages of creativity. The first stage is often described with terms such as *labor, inspiration, incubation, accumulation, devastating anxiety, or storm*. The second stage, involving the active process of creation, is referred to as *writing, action, beginning, formation, or eye of the storm*. The third and final stage involves refining the work and is labeled as *revision, return, writing, refinement, or settling*.

Salah Abdel Sabour adds depth to this understanding by observing that, in youth, poetry often "writes its poet" as they imitate their predecessors. In maturity, the poet experiences profound emotional states, such as deep terror or despair, connecting their earlier and later stages through a growing internal thread until their poetry ultimately defines them.^{xvi}

Formation of the Text:

The author delves into key issues surrounding the formation of poetic texts, discussing the interplay of rules, the boundaries of consciousness and unconsciousness, and the metaphorical nature of the poem as a lake where rivers converge. He addresses the fluidity of the poetic process, noting that verses may emerge effortlessly at times while remaining elusive at others, with some poems lingering unfinished for varied durations.

The act of creating poetry is not simply a matter of inspiration, as this overlooks the numerous challenges that poets face. The concept of inspiration fails to encapsulate the entirety of the creative process, which is rich with diverse and unpredictable moments.^{xvii}

Contemporary Arab poets reject the notion of fixed rules governing poetic creation, asserting that no specific laws can constrain the inherently dynamic nature of poetry. Nazik al-Malaika aptly observes, "In poetry as in life, Bernard Shaw's phrase applies: 'The only golden rule is that there are no golden rules,' because poetry is born from life events, and life does not follow a specific rule in arranging its events."^{xviii} This acknowledgment underscores the difficulty of formulating universal laws for creativity; the boundless nature of poetry defies reduction to systematic analysis.

Abdel Muti Hijazi reinforces this notion, emphasizing that the circumstances surrounding a poem's genesis differ from one work to another. Creativity is inherently evolving, not static or routine, and this evolution contrasts with the rigidity of rules, which are founded on constancy and stability. Mahmoud Darwish similarly asserts, "There is no rule or basis for creating a poem, as each poem takes its course and builds itself differently." These perspectives collectively highlight the transformative and individualistic essence of poetic creation, making it a unique and perpetually renewing artistic process.^{xix}

The issue of the boundaries between consciousness and unconsciousness in the creative process divides opinions among poets. Some argue that poetic creation cannot solely be a conscious process; unconsciousness is not its negation but a prerequisite for consciousness to manifest. Consciousness, represented by culture and experience, requires a transformative process of melting and selection performed by the unconscious to become poetry. Conversely, others assert that when creativity becomes wholly subject to consciousness, it signals its demise. Pure reason, they contend, cannot endow creativity with legitimacy, as creativity oscillates between consciousness and unconsciousness, between memory, experience, and dreaming, between affirmation and denial.

Poetry, as a fusion of vision and dream, embodies this fluctuation. For Adonis, a dream represents a leap beyond established concepts, an upheaval of existing systems, and a transcendent perception that gazes beyond reality.^{xx} The creative process, then, exists as a continuum of moments that intertwine consciousness and unconsciousness.

Both contemporary Arab and Western poets share the view that a poem resembles a lake into which numerous rivers flow, a synthesis of knowledge, experiences, and influences. This "lake" metaphor provides insight into critical poetic issues such as the poet's relationship with language, the interplay of meaning and free association, and the integration of folkloric and mythological heritage within the poetic fabric.

When discussing the boundary between art and reality, the author concludes that most poets view art as inherently distinct from reality. The relationship between the two is defined by their differences. One of the primary motivations for poetic creation lies in the poet's recognition of reality's deficiencies and discordances. Writing, therefore, becomes a means to address these deficiencies, reshaping reality into an imagined, alternative version.

Salah Abdel Sabour emphasizes this relationship by elevating art above reality for the beauty and truth it reveals. Azeddine Mihoubi highlights the dialectical relationship between art and reality, subjective and objective, as the foundation of creative expression. This relationship is fundamentally unequal; for poets, poetry transforms reality into something better and more beautiful using the poet's transcendent vision, linguistic mastery, rhythmic innovation, and imaginative wealth.^{xxi}

The poet's creative journey is characterized by their ability to transcend and innovate, breaking free from routine and conventional reality. This endeavor includes internalizing aesthetic values that evoke surprise and wonder while achieving intellectual depth. Through this process, the poet marries language, imbuing it with radiance without succumbing to its seductive simplicity or superficial charm.^{xxii}

Accompaniments to Creativity:

In *Questions of Poetics*, the author explores several dimensions of the creative process through the lens of poets' experiences, focusing on the poetic state, writing conditions, and obstacles. The "poetic state" encompasses the psychological, intellectual, and emotional conditions surrounding the act of writing. Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati describes this state as one of distraction and absence, which dominates the self and disconnects the poet from reality.

He refers to this state as "Al-Ma Bayn" (the In-Between)^{xxiii}, borrowing from Sufi terminology. This parallels Abu Nuwas's depiction of the poet's state as a balance between wakefulness and alertness, often described by critics as existing between consciousness and unconsciousness.

The author identifies various terms poets use to describe the emotional states accompanying creativity. For instance, Salah Abdel Sabour refers to a contemplative state, while Adonis labels it "madness." Omar Azrag calls it "absence," Abdul Aziz Al-Maqaleh describes it as a mix of "great joy and great sorrow," Bahri Hamri emphasizes intellectual and imaginative effort, and Mohamed Zetili speaks of an overwhelming desire to reshape the world. These diverse emotional states reflect the poet's profound engagement with their craft during the creative process.

The conditions for poetic writing differ from one poet to another, shaped by personal preferences and habits. For instance, Samih Al-Qasim finds comfort in writing during the late hours of the night, after everyone has fallen asleep, relishing the quiet and even the sound of others' breathing in the house or neighborhood. In contrast, Salah Abdel Sabour emphasizes the necessity of solitude and isolation for artistic work^{xxiv}, arguing that creativity, especially poetry, demands complete immersion in an alternate world, a feat achievable only through solitude.

Poetic writing is far from an effortless endeavor; it is a challenging journey fraught with obstacles and barriers, among which language poses the most significant hurdle. The poet often struggles with language's inability to fully encapsulate the vast, indefinable poetic obsession. While language is finite and governed by rules, the poetic obsession is infinite and spiritual. Youssef El Khal reflects on this tension, noting two key challenges faced by the poet: the rigid limits of language, with its rules and principles necessary for intelligibility and literary heritage, and the constraints of traditional poetic expression.^{xxv}

Azeddine Mihoubi adds that additional obstacles arise even before writing begins, such as summoning imagery and language during the initial poetic outpouring, as well as contending with the distractions of daily life^{xxvi}. The author identifies a range of challenges faced by poets, including language limitations, the weight of poetic heritage, the intensity of emotions, and the delicate balance between reason and emotion.

The Essence (Concept):

The author introduces the term "pre-conceptual vision," exploring three interconnected dimensions: the poetic vision, the poet, and poetics. In discussing poetic vision, the author asserts that poetry transcends its linguistic, imagistic, and musical forms. Instead, it represents a unique mode of knowledge that creates and manifests itself within these forms. This type of awareness perceives natural and human existence in a way distinct from other forms of cognition.

Terms such as *conception*, *perception*, *consciousness*, and *knowledge* are often associated with this poetic vision. Khalil Hawi describes it as "a type of knowledge that transcends the scope of science, which is confined to the tangible and apparent, rivaling philosophy and surpassing it in discovery, creation, and construction, traits characteristic of the genuine poet."^{xxvii}

Contemporary poets attribute distinctive properties to this poetic vision, including *discovery*, *transcendence*, *innocence*, *transformation*, *inclusiveness*, *prophecy*, *mysticism*, *tragedy*, *fragmentation*, and *synthesis*. These attributes are central to the poetic vision and serve as a window into understanding poetry itself.

The second issue pertains to the poet as a creator. A poet, by definition, possesses an intrinsic ability to perceive what others cannot, discovering and foreseeing what is yet to be uncovered. The poet's distinctive creative dimension lies in their

advanced vision, allowing them to explore the unknown. Adonis identifies three essential components of creativity: *feeling, thinking, and writing*.

For Adonis, a poet is not merely talented but also deeply cultured, embodying the qualities of an educated individual with sharp vision, profound sensitivity, active intelligence, and reflective thought. These traits enable the poet to swiftly assimilate cultural influences and transform them into a distinctive and insightful poetic vision.

Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati views the poet's culture not as a mere collection of data and theories but as something that transforms into a vision, an intellectual and emotional lens through which the poet perceives and creates. Similarly, Nazik Al-Malaika ties culture to artistic taste, linguistic sensitivity, aesthetic creativity, and semantic innovation^{xxviii}. Culture, when fully assimilated into the self, becomes a vision or form of knowledge that enables the poet to transcend limitations, grasp the present, and anticipate the future.

The poet, as a philosophical being, experiences life not only in poetic moments but also through a deeply personal perspective, shaped by philosophical, ideological, or emotional interpretations of life's events. This philosophical inclination distinguishes the poet, as both poet and philosopher view the world through a distinctive stance.

Adonis asserts that the poet is far more than an observer, describer, or commentator. Instead, the poet embodies the emotional and existential act of witnessing the world, the raw essence of its joys, sorrows, and struggles. For Adonis, the poet's work transcends simple narration or commentary, becoming a visceral record of experience, capturing the world's essence with both its solidity and fragility.^{xxix}

The author delved into the concept of "poetics," which signifies the elements that make poetry distinct from other forms of writing. He referenced the corresponding term in Arabic tradition, the theory of the "Column of Poetry," as discussed by Al-Amidi, Al-Jurjani, and Al-Marzouqi. All spoke about the elements of poetry, which Al-Marzouqi detailed, defining the poetic essence that distinguishes a poet from others. This Arabic theory (Column of Poetry) is structured around three axes: the semantic axis, which includes the word, the meaning, and their relationship; the imagery axis, which involves description and metaphor; and the structural axis, which involves composition. Thus, the Arabs focused on the linguistic, rhetorical, and structural aspects of poetry.

Contemporary poets have discussed the essential characteristics of poetics from various angles, highlighting its suddenness, excitement, novelty, vision, humanity, and authenticity. These attributes reflect the poets' thoughts in defining poetics and the concept of poetry itself.

Contemporary poets have felt a deficiency in how poetry has been defined. Nizar Qabbani questioned, "What is poetry?" He responded, "Everything that has been said on this subject does not go beyond the external manifestations of the experience, not the experience itself. Just as a psychologist studies the effects of anger, emotion, and joy on the human body."^{xxx} The shortfall in defining poetry, according to the poet, stems from a methodological issue; critical studies, instead of studying poetry in its essence, study the framework in which it is embodied.

The difference between the thing and its framework is clear. Poetry, like color, light, and sound, manifests through an objective equivalent but does not exist independently. Nizar Qabbani admits he dares not define the essence of poetry, as it mocks boundaries. A similar view is held by Abdul Aziz Al-Maqaleh, who says, "Since I started the journey of writing, poetry and I have not known what it is, nor where it comes from, and as our steps together have widened, so has the expanse of mystery between us." Poets acknowledge the difficulty of defining the concept of poetry, though their definitions are often fraught with ambiguity and obscurity, with each poet possessing a unique understanding of what embodies poetry.

Function of Poetry:

The term *function* here refers to the role of poetry, which Arab poets have often struggled to define, expressing this ambiguity in their writings. Al-Bayati notes, "The function of the poet is difficult to pinpoint, its starting and ending points unclear. The poet is creative and revolutionary, a pioneer of the future who embraces the world and things, sometimes a plow and a sword, the spring of the carpet of the wind, the frost of the world we live in. He is akin to the four seasons through which things renew, and he is also the return of Tammuz from the underworld to life."^{xxxi}

Al-Bayati emphasizes the multifaceted nature of poetry's function, which cannot be confined to a singular element. Since poetry encompasses linguistic, emotional, aesthetic, cognitive, social, and psychological dimensions, its function is as diverse as its components. This diversity makes it challenging for observers to reduce poetry to any single purpose or role.

Poetry, like life or humanity, operates across multiple functions. Just as life serves various roles, poetry reflects this multiplicity. The overarching function of poetry, as many poets see it, aligns with existence itself. Poetry, under this lens, seeks to offer an alternative conception and perception of reality in all its facets, social, political, cultural, aesthetic, and moral. Poetic writing becomes an aesthetic adventure, inherently tied to reimagining existence within frameworks of conjecture, creativity, and innovation.^{xxxii}

Adonis explores the shift in poetry's function from ancient to modern times. He observes, "The traditional view of Arabic poetry was to observe the world and reclaim and describe it, while its modern mission is to fundamentally reconsider this world, to change it, to create a vision and to innovate and renew."^{xxxiii} Historically, poetry's purpose revolved around accepting and preserving the world as it was, functioning as an act of recovery, description, and imitation. Modern poetry, in contrast, rejects this acceptance, aiming instead to radically reconsider the world, reshape it, and construct a unique vision of a new world.

Poets sometimes agree and at other times diverge in their views on the function of poetry. For instance, Youssef Saadi links poetry with politics in terms of its overall function, on the basis that politics, like poetry, aims to achieve a comprehensive goal, the politician aims to overturn the system that controls various societal domains.

Through their writings, the author observes that poets strive to establish kingdoms on earth through the poetic act, and to affirm the value of poetry in performing this task, they associate it with other forms of human action or knowledge. Adonis connects the function of poetry with vision, Al-Bayati links it with revolution, Hijazi with mythology, Youssef Saadi with political action, and Azrag with aesthetics.

Besides the overall function, there are partial functions that poets recognize alongside the overall function, such as discussing the poet's relationship with one aspect of life, which is varied among contemporary Arab poets. These include the social function, the humanistic function, the cognitive function, the aesthetic function, the psychological function, and the ethical function...

Poets consider the social function as one of the primary functions of poetry, given the condition of the Arab individual and the needs of the Arab society. Buland Al-Haidari talks about the necessity of poetry being a provocative factor and a driver for change, emphasizing the need for literature that develops our sense of social values.

Salah Abdel Sabour states, "I see that poetry necessarily has a social role, but this role is determined through its unique vision; poetry or art in general is not harnessed to any of the gods in our societies, and there are many gods, religion, power, social pressure, or the society itself."^{xxxiv} The poet emphasizes that the social role performed by poetry springs from the poet himself and is not imposed by an external authority, and poetry performs its social function as poetry alone.

Through the perspectives of various poets, the *social function* of poetry emerges as multidimensional, shaped by the cultural and ideological frameworks of the poets themselves. This function encompasses class-based, national, patriotic, and human dimensions, while also having the capacity to transcend these boundaries.

The *humanistic function*, closely related to the social function, emphasizes the individual, society, and life, but it is distinguished by its universal focus. Here, the poet adopts a purely humanistic lens, free from political affiliations or intellectual constraints, and rooted solely in shared human belonging.

The *cognitive function* of poetry arises from the interplay of thought and the brilliance of vision, which manifests in poetic ideas expressed through imagery and rhythm. This prevents poetry from devolving into dry philosophy or abstract thought. Poets emphasize that the knowledge conveyed by poetry is inherently different from that of philosophy or science. It is sensory, comprehensive, and holistic, rooted in aesthetic experience. Unlike philosophy, which often delivers abstract wisdom, poetry encapsulates wisdom in its full aesthetic structure, achieving a complete and resonant form.

The *aesthetic function* highlights poetry as an autonomous art form with beauty as its primary and ultimate aim. According to Youssef El Khal, "Poetry is a beautiful art with no purpose other than to affirm beauty on earth, like music, sculpture, architecture, and painting. It seeks only to delight the human soul and enrich its humanity."^{xxxv} Nizar Qabbani echoes this sentiment, describing poetry as "a lily, an ornamental piece like a vase of roses resting on my table, from which I expect nothing more than the company of elegance and the friendship of fragrance."^{xxxvi} Poets generally assert that regardless of its other roles, poetry inherently fulfills its aesthetic function, achieving beauty in its essence. The *psychological function* of poetry centers on catharsis, or the release and liberation achieved through the creative process. For poets, writing serves as a means of relieving the tension that arises during moments of creation. Ancient poets often discussed this state of tension and the relief they experienced through writing. Contemporary poets continue to reflect on this function in various ways.

Egyptian poet Mohamed Abou Sinna observes, "There is a deep sense that writing is an act of self-gratification," suggesting that poetry not only achieves broader goals but also fulfills personal psychological needs.^{xxxvii} These needs align with the poet's nature, which both resists the present and aspires to something better. Poets have used terms such as *catharsis*, *satisfaction*, *relief*, and *ventilation*, all pointing to the same psychological state, a release and resolution through poetic creation.

The *ethical function* of poetry, as explored by contemporary poets, particularly Salah Abdel Sabour, transcends conventional notions of morality tied to religion or societal norms. Instead, it positions ethics as intrinsic to poetry's purpose. Abdel Sabour links aesthetic and ethical values, asserting that beauty itself embodies an ethical dimension. For him, ethics in poetry

signifies authenticity and alignment with one's core convictions. Poetry, in this sense, is created through sincerity, harmonizing aesthetic and moral integrity.

Conclusion

By examining the terminology associated with the theory of poetry through the lens of AbdallahLachi in his book *"Questions of Poetics: A Study in the Mechanism of Poetic Creativity,"* it becomes evident that the domain within which poetry operates is inherently ambiguous. Researchers must recognize that they are engaging with an elusive and complex phenomenon, one that resists definitive understanding or unanimous agreement. If poets themselves cannot fully articulate or monitor the state that defines their creative condition, critics must approach their task with caution, avoiding simplistic or overly rationalized judgments.

Understanding poetry as a phenomenon demands not only a vision and talent but also a broad and integrative body of knowledge. This knowledge must encompass the psychological, intellectual, and social dimensions of the creative process. Such a multifaceted approach is essential for grasping the intricate and layered experience of poetic creation.

A theory of criticism, therefore, can only be meaningful and effective if it is rooted in a foundational theory of the concept of poetry. Moreover, any theory concerning poetry must be grounded in an in-depth understanding of the internal experiences that shape and accompany the act of creating a poem.

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Footnotes:

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- ⁱHassan Nazem: "Concepts of Poetics: A Comparative Study in Foundations, Methodology, and Concepts," Arab Cultural Center, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 1994, p. 12.
- ⁱⁱSalah Fadl: "Methods of Contemporary Criticism," Atlas for Publishing and Production, Cairo, Egypt, 4th edition, 2005, p. 9.
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