

The Concept of Poetry From Some Great Arab Poets' Perspectives

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Abstract—At the beginning of the Renaissance, the phenomenon of writing introductions to poetry collections had spread among Arab poets. Remarkably, civilisational transformation played a prominent and stimulating role in the emergence of this phenomenon. The current study deals with six poets who wrote introductions to their collections in the book titled '*Introductions to the Arabic Poetry Collections*' to express their sentiments and perspectives on 'the concept of poetry,' which had been renewed due to acculturation and direct contact between civilisations facilitated by the availability of means of communication and media development during their time. The six poets focused on in this study are Ahmed Faris Al-Shidiac, Sami Al-Baroodi, Ahmad Shawqi, Hafiz Ibrahim, Khaleel Motran, and Al-Zahawy. The study revealed that 'the concept of poetry' among these poets had not departed from its common definition within the old traditional framework. However, Al-Shidiac and Shawqi had direct contact with Western poets and modern criticism theories. Despite the various formulas and methods used to discuss this concept, it remained consistent with the definition of poetry provided by the old critics. Additionally, the results revealed a discrepancy between the level of theorising and views on the concept of poetry and the level of application and composition of poetry by the poets. For instance, the level of poetry theorising for Al-Shidiac and Al-Zahawy was higher than their level of poetic composition.

Index Terms—Arab poets, introductions to poetry collections, the concept of poetry, Arabic language

I. INTRODUCTION

This study analyses the concept of poetry in the book "Introductions to the Collections of Arabic Poetry", written by six poets. It examines the poets' views on the concept of poetry, explores the similarities and differences between their perspectives, and assesses the extent to which the content of the introductions aligns with the nature of their poetry. Furthermore, it investigates how each poet harmonised their theoretical views with their actual poetic works (Al-Jezawi et al., 2023; Alkhalidi et al., 2022; Malkawi et al., 2023). Importantly, the poets included in this study do not come from a single environment, and as such, they do not belong to a completely homogeneous culture. They come from the Levant (greater Syria), Egypt, and Iraq. This diversity allows for exploring multiple ideas about poetry and facilitates the discussion of different branches and views (Melhim et al., 2023).

In the introductions to their diwans (collections of poems), the poets presented their views on the concept of poetry, emphasising the reasons for their interest and the urgency created by the rapidly changing civilisational stage. The tools of poetry had changed, and the methods of criticism were no longer the same. The opinions of other nations had interacted and mixed, necessitating the development of the poets' vision and concept. Cultural exchange and civilisational interaction between the West and the East extended beyond material-related aspects, including intellectual exchange. Both parties engaged in extensive exchange, transmission, and influence. The Renaissance witnessed numerous debates and discussions among poets and critics in various cultural fields. Notably, poetry received considerable attention and criticism, which the book '*Introductions to the Arabic Poetry Collections*' highlighted, discussing its advantages, disadvantages, and weaknesses. The introductions were subject to criticism as part of the poetic components constituting poetry and poets.

II. WRITING INTRODUCTIONS

Following Napoleon's campaign against Egypt, the Arabic region underwent significant changes, setting the stage for future aspects that differed from the preceding centuries. History has shown that political change influences various areas of life, especially when substantial, as politics has shaped civilisations throughout the ages. Politics acts as the legislator

and regulator in people's lives, holding both enticement and intimidation. Many individuals are led back and forth by the signs and arrows of politics (Abumelhim et al., 2023; Aljedayah et al., 2022; Grinin & Korotayev, 2022; Tignor, 2015).

The world of thought and literature is closely tied to this change imposed by politics, invasions, and wars. This field, which observes the movement of society and its worlds, is influenced by the events surrounding it. The nineteenth century witnessed the turbulent winds of change in various areas of life, particularly in the Arab world, which was part of the Ottoman Empire and a central axis of politics at that time (Al-Saidat et al., 2023; Alkhaldi et al., 2023; Grinin & Korotayev, 2022). An active literary movement emerged, encompassing prose, poetry, criticism, translation, and the introduction of novel elements. A distinction arose between the old group of writers and the modern group: one sought to preserve the uniqueness and identity of Arabic literature, while the other tended to move towards the West, influenced by intellectual and literary schools, while another faction preferred adhering to the classics.

Moreover, another group favored the romantic side. These significant differences gave rise to diverse opinions, numerous studies, and oral debates reinforcing or excluding certain directions. As a result, poetry became the subject of extensive critical debates in the media and various literary forums.

With every movement of change, regardless of its nature, new tools and means emerge to serve and support the intended transformation, enabling it to manifest in its complete or nearly complete form. Poetry, too, experienced its share of this process, with poetic anthologies serving as rich and independent research fields. Introductions to poetry books became a means of defending poetry and the poets, serving as a persuasive tool for recipients who may differ in their poetic doctrine and artistic taste. The question arises, 'Why were the introductions to the diwans established?'

The introductions to poetry collections provide fertile material for study, leading to questions about poet-critics and poets who are critics. Does a poet necessarily become a critic when they write the introduction to their poetry? Do their views in the introduction necessarily align with their poetic approach? Was the construction of the introduction a justification for their approach, a clarification, and a means of convincing others of the opinions and poems within their book?

The general changes can affect the private areas of societies, as poetry is an area of thought and culture. Poetry has undergone and responded to the repercussions of change. The introductions were one of the poets' tools to indulge in the adventure of publishing their poetry in the hearts of the large and voluminous critical audiences in the period under study. Consequently, in this case, the introductions served as a bridge between the poet and the recipient and between the poet and his diwan, especially when the poet was hesitant or afraid that his poetry might not be able to express itself. Thus, the introductions acted as a self-review, a vision, and an attempt to acclimatise the poet to the dangers of experience that await the critic's arrows. The poet assumes that he will answer inquiries about his poetic experience that the critic or ordinary reader may have and thus convince them. Therefore, these introductions relieve the poets' tension and bridge the distance between poetry and the reader.

In the Arabic heritage, we find introductions to translations, selections, and others that mention the general framework of the subject. Ibn Qutayba, in his introduction to his book 'Poetry and Poets,' discussed the causes, types, and times of poetry. A similar approach can be seen in the introduction to Abu Zaid Al-Qurashi's book 'Jamharat Ash'ar Al-Arab' (The Collection of Arab Poetry). Regarding the introductions to collections, which began to be written in the second half of the 19th century, researchers believe that they served as a crossing document, paving the way for the challenges that poets faced due to their openness to different civilised worlds and new critical schools. The book 'Al-Shidiac Al-Naqid' (Al-Shidiac the Critic) stated that Al-Shidiac's introduction is a model for poets' introductions to their collections. Introducing Al-Shidiac was the spark that summarised part of his state-of-the-art ideas inspired by heritage. Surprisingly, this was the first introduction to a collection of modern Arabic poetry (Shawabkeh, 1991). The advent of publications and newspapers has increased the writer's eagerness for his intellectual production. It has become easier to obtain multiple book prints, and critics have found it easier to carve out a space in publications to subject new authors to the scalpel of criticism. Thus, these introductions act as defensive curtains for their writers, protecting them from missed opportunities for recognition (Al-Matwi, 1989).

Education is also a reason for writing introductions. The number of introductions has increased to educate the reader and provide them with a cultural supplement that helps them understand poetry and take note of some of its references. For example, Suleiman Al-Bustani made a lengthy introduction to the translation of the Iliad (Homer's Iliad) (Al-Matwi, 1989). Al-Shidiac enriched the introduction to his poetry with linguistic materials that enhanced the reader's diction and explained poetic adversities in depth. Shawabkeh (1991, p. 18) writes, 'The importance of this introduction lies in its focus on the poetic process, making it a valuable piece in nineteenth-century poetry criticism, aiding researchers in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the first critical attempts and shedding light on the culture of critics in this century. The introduction also addresses linguistic issues related to the poetic process (Shawabkeh, 1991, p. 6). Shawabkeh further states, 'This introduction insists on discussing poets and clarifying their linguistic and moral errors. It appears that the author wanted to rectify some matters that he did not address in his other books "except with knowledge" (Shawabkeh, 1991, p. 7).

These introductions often present the recipient's opinion, indicating motives about the recipient. One of the functions of these introductions is to fulfill the recipient's desire to know the poet's approach and see their visions, whether written by the poet or someone else. These introductions are keys to the diwan and its main thresholds, especially if the writer is armed with good critical material (Issa et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the recipient may express their impressions about the subject of the introductions, revealing the effect the introduction had on them and the feelings it evoked about the subject or the diwan. Taha Hussein, for instance, remarked upon reading the introductions to the three collections of Shawqi, Hafiz Ibrahim, and Motran's diwans, stating, 'I came across the first of these collections of introductions that I loved to read, so I read them. I found reading them amusing and pleasurable, diverting me from the poetry of the poets' (17). Taha Hussein expressed how the introductions influenced his feelings, and one of these effects was pleasure. He also commented, 'As for the introduction of Motran, it is short but both tiresome and enjoyable simultaneously. It is tiresome because of the rhyme, which lacks elegance and music, and enjoyable because its writer wanted to convey something, and he succeeded in doing so. This thing is neither trivial nor easy' (Taha Hussein, n.d.).

According to the requirements of neutral scientific research, it is customary for the introduction to a book, whether academic or otherwise, to specify the content and method of the book. Scientific research should avoid revealing emotional expressions and self-disclosure, using clear and expressive language that conveys meaning without using imagery or exaggerated displacements. Therefore, the question arises: were the propositions and language of these introductions in line with the requirements of neutral scientific research, avoiding emotional sentiments, and satisfying the desires of the soul? This is the question that the current study seeks to answer by analysing these introductions. It is important to note that these introductions primarily represent the writers' vision, whether it is the poets themselves or writers appointed by the poets. Taha Hussein discussed this, stating, 'But you agree with me that these introductions, in their entirety, do not provide us with anything that shows us what this general literary taste sees as the supreme example of artistic beauty in poetry' (n.d., p. 18).

We may disagree with Taha Hussein here in his saying that 'introductions do not give us anything in their entirety,' as if the writer does not present something significant in his introduction, he will be a target for the pens of critics or the tongues of readers, and this in itself is something that may stir a state of stagnation, stimulate discussion, and raise critical issues

III. THE CONCEPT OF POETRY IN THE INTRODUCTIONS

During the so-called Renaissance era until the end of the first third of the 20th century, poets addressed the "definition of poetry" in the introductions to their collections. This topic has long preoccupied critics throughout the history of Arabic literature. It was discussed by Qudamah ibn Ja'far in "The Criticism of Poetry," Ibn Tabataba in "The Meter of Poetry," and Hazem Al-Qirtajni in "The Poetry Approach." Arab and Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, and Ibn Rushd, also extensively explored the subject of poetry and expounded on Aristotle's book "Poetics," known as "The Art of Poetry." Ibn Rashiq Al- Al-Kairwānī (2000) stated in his book "Al-Umdah" that "poetry is based, in addition to the intention, on four things, namely: words, meaning, rhyme, and meter. This defines the boundaries of poetry, as rhymed and metered speech is not considered poetry without intention, as seen in the Qur'an and the words of the Prophet Muhammad, which are metered but not classified as poetry (Ibn Rashiq Al- Al-Kairwānī, 2000, p. 21).

The common saying that "poetry is rhymed, metered speech" has lost relevance in modern Arabic criticism due to Western influence on contemporary Arab thought, including literature. This influence has prompted a "reconsideration" of many intellectual domains and sciences. Poetry has been fortunate to assimilate literary doctrines, including classical, romantic, symbolic, and modern realism. Poets began to employ words and craft their works in a way that aligned with the ideas and meanings expressing each doctrine's content.

Ahmad Faris Al-Shidiac, the first poet to write an introduction to his poetry in the nineteenth century, initially limited his concept of poetry to "an ability by which a person can depict meanings in inappropriate words." He noted that graceful and elegant words are used in flirtation, while in enthusiasm, luxurious and frightening words are employed (Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 454). This definition highlights language as the first and primary material in Al-Shidiac's poetry. However, he later developed a new definition of poetry that surpassed the constraints of language and established laws. He elevated poetry to a level that transcends the mind (Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 454). Al-Shidiac's second definition implies that judgment of poetry is subjective, similar to beauty. It lacks a clear definition or a description that can be confined to language or contained in a definition. Ultimately, it is "a secret that God deposits in the hearts of whomever He wills among His servants." By using the term "secret," Al-Shidiac emphasises the ongoing search for an adequate and comprehensive definition of poetry, leaving room for readers to visualise and explore poetry's existence and essence. Al-Shidiac expresses his vision of poetry and its nature through this definition while staying within the circle of definitions and perceptions established by ancient Arab critics.

According to Arabic references, Mahmoud Sami Al-Baroodi (1992) may be the second poet to present his diwans (collections) with an introduction. He defines poetry as "an imaginary glint, its flicker shining in the sublimity of thought, its rays emitted to the leaf of the heart, and its luminosity overflowing with threads connected to the tongue, and it is blown with the colors of wisdom, with which the darkest will be enlightened and guided by its path." Al-Baroodi's definition portrays poetry as a glimpse of imagination that reaches thought. Poetry becomes an idea or a group of ideas formulated in a specific system. These thoughts are like emitted rays that spread and flow, producing poetry through the tongue, which contains wisdom, benefits, and sermons. With this definition formulated in artistic figurative terms, Al-Baroodi links poetry to the academic mission of conveying thoughts and serving as guidance and education.

Following his definition of poetry, Al-Baroodi further outlines the characteristics of good and concise poetry, stating that "the best speech is that whose words are familiar and whose meanings are familiar, whose derived meanings are close to, but far from, the goal, free from the stigma of affectation, free from arbitrariness, needless to review the idea" (1992, p. 29). These qualities are part of the definition of poetry, which must fulfill these conditions to be considered complete and deserving of the label "good poetry." In this regard, Al-Baroodi's definition aligns with Al-Shidiac's definition, as he is consistent with the traditional definitions that discuss the issues of meaning, words, and their goals.

It is worth noting that Al-Baroodi, the author of the "Anthology of Poetry" (known as "Al-Baroodi's Anthology"), expresses his poetic vision and taste for good poetry to some extent. If he had fulfilled his desire to write an introduction to his anthology, it would have provided an additional resource for understanding and studying this poet. Unfortunately, Al-Baroodi's introduction to his anthology is limited to one page. According to the footnote, "Yaqoot Al-Mursi commented on this introduction that Al-Baroodi dictated to him in his final illness and mentioned that he intended to explain the reasons behind his selection of the seven chapters and the order in which they were arranged" (see Al-Baroodi's Selections, p. 29).

Al-Baroodi was aware of the importance of introductions during the changing times he lived in. However, his illness prevented him from writing an introduction to his anthology, and he passed away shortly after. An introduction to a poetry anthology is as important as an introduction to a diwan. The anthology reflects the taste of the person who made the selection, while the introduction reveals the critical vision and thoughts of the anthology maker regarding their chosen poems. The same era that necessitated introductions to poetry collections due to change and cultural interactions also called for poetic anthologies to refresh memories and facilitate comparisons between the old and the new. Therefore, the issue of selections, whether in poetry or prose, requires not only critical study but also an examination of the circumstances and reasons behind the choices made, as well as an exploration of the taste, critical thinking, and intellectual status of those responsible for the selection process.

Regarding Ahmed Shawqi's (1987) introduction, he defined poetry in a different style than Al-Shidiac or Al-Baroodi, yet he still needed to provide a distinct definition. The difference lies in the presentation and wording. Shawqi did not intentionally set out to define poetry. Instead, his definition emerged coincidentally while he was conjuring an idyllic image of the ideal poet. He verbalised three conditions that poets in the Arab world must combine to reach the pinnacle. Shawqi (1987) stated, "A person's confidence lies in poetry being their nature, and this is the most necessary condition. It is a matter that concerns parents and teachers more than anyone else. They should become acquainted with their children's future, who are God's trust in their hands, according to their inclinations and private thoughts. If they appreciate the child's talent, they should take their hand and assist them" (p. 28).

At this point, Shawqi believes that poetry is not just a talent but an essential condition for achieving true poetry, which confers the poet's attribute among poets. He considers talent to be a fundamental aspect of the definition of poetry. While poetry requires learning and understanding language issues, its central axis lies in a genuine talent implanted in the soul, nourished by the water and eloquence of language until it grows and bears fruit. Shawqi's idea of talent may align with the "The Devil of Poetry" theory in Arab heritage.

In his second condition, Shawqi states, "Learning the sciences and engaging in experiments are necessary because poetry is not separate from being informed and wise, and it can only come from a knowledgeable and experienced person" (1987, p. 33). This aligns with what has been revealed in Arab critical heritage, emphasising the importance of providing poets with cognitive and cultural material that sharpens their talent and stimulates them to achieve a high level of poetry. Shawqi exemplifies this by discussing Abu Al-Ala Al-Ma'ari, noting that he formulated facts in his poetry, possessed an awareness of life experiences as a system, explained the states of the soul, and almost attained its secret (1987, p. 33). Facts refer to culture, knowledge, and experiences. Thus, Shawqi's conditions echo the ideas expressed by Ibn Qutayba in his book "Poetry and Poets," which include the importance of good words and good meaning and the role of experience and culture in shaping expression and meaning.

Shawqi's third condition is that "poetry should not be used as mere ornamentation in the absence of worldly affairs and concerns," as poetry carries a message that verbalises issues and suggests solutions (1987, p. 30). Shawqi adheres to the principle that "art is for life" rather than "art for art's sake," standing in contrast to voluminous opinions in heritage books that assign poetry a functional role in confronting life events.

From these three conditions, one can derive Shawqi's definition of poetry or express his vision of its essence. He emphasises the presence of talent, which is beyond human control and is considered a gift from God. However, humans can nurture and advance talent by being attentive to it. Additionally, poetry is seen as knowledge and wisdom, which obliges the poet to be cultured to introduce new and captivating elements and immerse poetry in life events, drawing from and reflecting on them to convey a meaningful message. Therefore, poetry encompasses talent, wisdom, exhortation, and life. Shawqi also emphasises the educational aspect, highlighting that talent alone is insufficient and should be nurtured. He calls upon fathers and educators to recognise and foster this talent in children. Talent alone can only be complemented by satisfying the second condition of acquiring knowledge and experience.

Shifting to Hafiz Ibrahim, he focuses on defining the nature of poetry in his introduction. However, his definition begins with a poet's language rather than a critic's. He states, "Poetry is a science discovered with the sun, and mankind has no idea how to put it," suggesting that poetry is a hidden potential in people's souls, like electricity in bodies. The mind can only easily grasp it if the soul's movement provokes it. He acknowledges the difficulty of defining its essence,

comparing it to the inexplicability of the soul itself (Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 454). Ibrahim considers poetry a secret of the universe, similar to the existence of the soul, which is not fully comprehended or defined. Thus, the definition remains limited to encompassing "poetry".

While Hafiz's arguments touch upon the meaning associated with the concept of poetry mentioned by critics, particularly the role of imagination stimulated by the movement of the soul, his definitions still need to be discovered. He expresses his dissatisfaction with the definitions found in Arab and non-Arab books and provides a list of attributes associated with poetry, such as wisdom, imagination, eloquence, and truth (Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 527). He presents these features in a literary language closer to poetry but needs to provide a clear and definitive formulation. He also mentions the opinion of philosophers that poetry is anything that impacts the soul, with the best form being metered, expanding beyond specific meters and rhymes (Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 527). While this view gives a sense of poetry's impact on the soul, it fails to differentiate poetry from other soul-stirring experiences.

To offer a more satisfactory definition, Hafiz presents two examples, one from poetry and another from prose, in an attempt to touch upon the essence of poetry. However, despite his efforts, he needs help to arrive at a clear and specific formulation. He distances himself from the formal features of defining poetry, such as rhythmic and rhymed speech. He even entertains the idea proposed by philosophers, which diminishes the significance of rhythm in poetry.

In conclusion, Shawqi's definition of poetry emphasises the role of talent, knowledge, and life experiences. He considers talent a divine gift that should be nurtured, while knowledge and experience contribute to the poet's ability to produce exceptional poetry. On the other hand, Hafiz Ibrahim's exploration of the nature of poetry revolves around its impact on the soul and its mysterious essence. However, he needs help to provide a precise definition.

To reach a satisfactory definition, Hafiz provided two examples, one from poetry and another from prose, in an attempt to grasp the essence of poetry. To convince the reader of the specificity of poetry, he cited verses by Bashar bin Burd (1966, p. 288):

هزرتك لا أني وجدتك ناسياً لأمرى، ولا أني أردت التقاضيا
ولكن رأيت السيف من بعد سلة إلى الهز محتاجاً وإن كان ماضياً

hzztk lā anwī ūjdtk nāsyān l'amrī, ūlā anī ardt t-tqādīā
ŭlkn r'ayt s-sīf mn b'd sltī il l-hzw mhtājan win kān māḍyan

"I shook you, not because I found you forgetful of my affair, nor because I wanted to quarrel, but I saw the sword from a distance in need of shaking, even if it was a thing of the past".

Then Hafiz (1966, p. 228) comments after these two verses, saying, "And where he said in prose (i.e., Bashar bin Burd), by God, I lived until I met people. If I had created the world, it would not have been beautiful except for them. Today, I live among people whom I do not see as sane, prudent, generous, honorable, or doing anything to equal a loaf." Then Hafiz continued his speech, saying, "Do you not see in these two texts a spirit of poetry, in which the second had no less impact on the listener than the first?" (1966, p. 228). Moreover, if we had to answer this question of Hafiz, the answer would be, "Yes, we do not see what he is asking about. The meaning is tainted by repetition for the writers and the general public. No inspiring sentence causes a jolt or an impact on the soul." After all of this, Hafiz believed he had presented a definition of poetry or conveyed a clear idea to the reader, so we hear him say, "This is poetry, and this is its truth, as for the way it works..." (1966, p. 228). Then he mentioned the potential of good poetry and an outstanding poet. All of this is more impressionistic than logical.

Moreover, the third of the three poets who engaged in the poetic scene after Shawqi and Ibrahim is Motran, who titled the introduction to his book "A Brief Statement." It was brief, as he did not delve into the issues of poetry and its branches. Rather, he contented himself with explaining his method in poetry, which did not provide him with a direct definition like Shawqi's but rather involved extracting the definition from sentences in which he expressed the characteristics of his poetry and through which he viewed the characteristics of really good poetry.

Motran (n.d.) said, "This is poetry that its servant does not organise, and the necessities of rhythm do not carry it without its intention." It is stated there with the correct meaning and in formal language. It does not look at the beauty of the singular verse, even if it denies its neighbour, insults its brother, and violates the conclusion. "Rather, we consider the beauty of the verse in and of itself, the whole poem in its composition and arrangement, and the consistency and compatibility of its meanings with the lack of perception, the strangeness of the subject, the conformity of all of this to the truth, its passion for free feeling, the investigation of the accuracy of the description, and its completeness according to a measure" (p. 10).

Given that he did not necessarily believe in the poet's criticism, his opinion on his poetry, or his method of writing poetry, the definition of Motran's poetry and his vision came from what came in the paragraph. Motran presented the characteristics of his poetry as well-developed, for he was not a slave to it and was not obligated to it; his expressions were consistent with their meaning, and the part was complementary to the whole, meaning that the poem has an integrated and harmonious texture. In his poetry, he stayed away from wild words and strangeness.

According to the definition, it says, "and conforming all of this to the truth and its clarity of free feeling. Poetry is an expression of what is in the soul towards what it realises in reality, and it is a true and precise depiction of reality. Combining this with the above expressions and sentences makes it clear that the definition of poetry by Motran and the nature of his view of it, since they combine external reality and inner feeling, have a system that is neither detracted from nor added to:

حبذا الشعر إن كان مثيِّراً للشعور وإذا كان نزيها كأغريد الطيور

ḥubbaza aš-šiʿr in kāna muthīran liš-šiʿūr
wa-ʔidā kāna nazyīhan ka-ʔagārīd at-tuyūr

How wonderful is poetry if it is evocative of emotions?
Moreover, if it is pure, like the songs of birds.

Al-Zahawy favoured emotion over reason, the new over the old, and music over language. This indicates that the poet was inclined towards renewal for the sake of common life. He stated, "Avoiding exaggerations and everything that is not true, what the poet created is to break the traditions inherited by the sons from the fathers, and he says what he feels, not what his parents feel" (Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 554). Although he did not call for a revolt against language or violate its rules, the poet had the liberty to deviate from rhyme after every few verses. Undoubtedly, Al-Zahawy showed audacity in this regard, taking risks at a time when most poets adhered to a certain heritage, and some opposed calls for renewal.

However, this excessive persistence in language led to the use of simple language, which sometimes reached a point of weakness. Readers of Al-Zahawy's diwan do not need to strive to find such weaknesses and thinness. Nevertheless, his inclination towards rebellion and insurgency, as expressed in his prose, aligned with his poetry writing, although this had a negative impact on his poetry.

IV. CRITIQUE OF INTRODUCTIONS

At the beginning of this study, the issue of the "poet critic" and the extent to which a poet can be a critic were mentioned. Now, we raise questions such as, "Are the critical tools of a poet, based on their experience, the same as those of a specialised critic? Are a poet's critical opinions necessarily in line with their style of poetry? Did the introductions effectively convey the ideas and visions of their writers to the readers?"

Various discussions have taken place regarding these introductions, with some highlighting their positive aspects and others exposing their shortcomings, which may have led to criticism of the introductions themselves or the poetry of their writers in general.

Whatever its nature may be, this thriving critical movement around poetry would not exist without its diverse whims, moods, tastes, and methods. If it were not for rejecting the reality of unrefined Arabic poetry in the nineteenth century, poets, critics, and intellectuals would not have taken such risks in the name of renewal and learning from the experiences of other countries. Al-Shidiac was among those who rejected the dark reality that had overshadowed Arabic poetry. However, if his impact had been nonexistent, it could have been even more influential.

In this regard, Al-Jayousi (2001, p. 47) stated: "The field of poetry has remained relatively untouched by the achievements of the Renaissance that spread throughout the nineteenth century. In Al-Shidiac's lengthy introduction to his diwan, 'Al Maghna likul Ma'na,' which was perhaps the first introduction written by a modern Arab poet to his diwan, he emphasised that the vocabulary in poetry should align with the meaning and that poetry should be simple and consistent, free from pretension and affectation. However, despite this understanding of good poetry, he tended to write panegyric poems in accordance with tradition, acknowledging his aspiration to adorn his diwan with praise, saying, 'He was praising the Prince... Moreover, these praising poems were pretentious and lacked spirit and honesty' (2001, p. 47)".

Undoubtedly, his poetry fell short compared to his prose works and his views on poetic art. The same can be said for Al-Yazji, although the latter fared better. We prefer to present this paragraph at length, as it provides a comprehensive idea of the state of poetry in the 19th century and supports some of the statements made in this study.

Theoretically, Al-Shidiac paid attention to the concept of poetry, as Al-Jayousi (2001) stated. However, he either did not commit himself or was unable to produce what others did, thus following the pattern of others who criticised their poetry. Al-Jayousi criticised him because his panegyric poems necessitated a traditional poetic style, which, as she indicated, led to a fading of emotion and a lack of sincerity.

Al-Shidiac's extensive knowledge and encyclopedic culture manifested themselves in the drafting of the introduction. He was a biographer and article writer who wrote about countries, dictionaries, and translations. His vast knowledge is evident in the introduction to his poetry, where he discusses numerous topics that could have been more cohesive and harmonious. In this regard, Al-Shawabkeh (1991, p. 17), the investigator of his introduction, stated, "The definitions that Al-Shidiac presents for the poetic process revolve around four main elements: experience, talent, form, and inspiration. He included recent discussions about his contemporary poets, his own poetic experience, and the subject of poetry and assonance. This digression in introducing the concept of poetry somewhat compromised its harmony and consistency".

Al-Muwailihi criticised Shawqi's introduction, which was previously discussed in this study. Al-Muwailihi pointed out Shawqi's contradiction when he viewed European poetry as providing him with modern methods and new meanings. Al-Muwailihi explained that Shawqi contradicted himself in the same introduction when he stated, "He himself bears witness that the Arab poets are wise, who did not lose sight of grandiose facts and did not miss the determination of lofty principles, and that they are the most capable of nations in instilling these principles in people's minds and expressing them in the most sublime and beautiful expressions" (Al-Khatib, 1997, p. 454). Shawqi's statements are consistent here. Recognising the Arabs' ability and uniqueness to create meaning does not imply that European literature lacks meaning due to its own traditions, customs, history, religions, and landscapes. Shawqi acknowledged the rightful place of both, and as nations progress and differ, new meanings are created and renewed with this development.

In Taha Hussein's (n.d.) book, "Hafiz and Shawqi," he discussed the introductions to the books of Shawqi, Hafiz, and Motran in "Introductions." He said about Bishop's introduction, "As for Motran's introduction, it is short, but it is tiring and enjoyable at the same time." "Tiring because of the rhythm in which there is no grace, circumstance, music, or fun, because Motran wanted to say something and said it, and this thing is neither trivial nor easy. Rather, it is a valuable thing with its danger and far-reaching impact, for he is rebellious against ancient poetry and rises with the innovators" (Hussein, n.d., p. 20). Furthermore, it is not an innovation for Taha Hussein to support Motran's position on this renewal. Taha Hussein is among the great advocates of renewal in literature and thought in the 20th century. His ideas converged with those of Khaleel Motran in this regard.

Regarding Al-Zahawy and his views on poetry, Al-Jayousi (2001) pointed out that Al-Zahawy has impacted modern Arabic poetry. "What Al-Zahawy left behind for Arabic poetry was important, as he showed levels of courage and adventure in experimentation, and on the other hand, he liberated poetry from a previous era whose first demand was the fragrant companion language," he said in the introduction to his collection (*Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, p. 251). Thus, the introductions have found those who support the opinions and ideas of their writers, as well as those who discuss them and disagree with their ideas. Undoubtedly, this is something required by the nature of literary criticism.

V. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the concept of poetry among the poets targeted in the study had not departed from its familiar concept within the traditional framework. However, some of the studied poets had direct contact with poetry theories and criticism of modern criticism in the West, such as Shawqi and Al-Shidiac. Despite their different treatment methods and formulas for this concept, the matter remains within what the old critics came up with within the definition of poetry. There is also a discrepancy between the level of application and the level of theorising of the poets. As we saw, the level of poetry theorising at Al-Shidiac was higher than his level of poetic formulation, and this is what Jamil Sidqi Al-Zahawy had as well.

Language was the first criterion and the basis for poetry in Al-Shidiac; thus, the language was the first criterion and the basis for poetry in Al-Shidiac. Moreover, for Al-Baroodi, poetry is a feeling that comes from the heart to shine in thought and then performs its function. In Shawqi, we abstract the concept of poetry conceptually by examining three conditions. Shawqi reflected that if they were fulfilled, good poetry would be achieved. Perhaps Hafiz was the most concerned with developing a definition for poetry, but even with this interest, he only went beyond what his predecessors had done. He employed the technique of citation and analogy, in which he cited the poetry of others, thereby defining poetry by poetry. Khaleel Motran still needs to come up with a direct definition of poetry. Rather, we extracted the significance of Motran by discussing his opinion on good poetry. Like Al-Shidiac, Al-Zahawy's poetry did not rise to the level of his criticism and theorising. However, he was the most audacious and eager for change, and the least of them celebrated the language.

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