



The Misconception of Translating the Term “Free Verse” into Arabic

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Abstract:

Free verse, with its unregulated lines, transcends language barriers, but its melody varies among different cultures. This study examines the adoption of free verse from the Western world into Arabic literary works, highlighting the obstacles and advancements encountered by Arab translators and poets. The study inspects the main qualities that differentiate English free verse from its Arabic counterpart. The study examines how the natural musicality of Arabic affects its treatment of free verse by analyzing the distinct functions of meter and rhyme.

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How does the lack of meter in English free verse contrast with the abundant rhythmic customs of Arabic poetry? The research also explores the historical background, comparing the earlier popularity of free verse in English with its later development in Arabic literature, while being aware of the traditional poetic legacy it aimed to transform. How did Arab poets combine the Western rebellious structure with the traditional Arabic poetry rhythm and rhyme? What changes did the poets make to imagery and sound devices to connect with Arab feelings and emotions? This study examines the pioneering work of Nazik Al-Mala'ika, Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab, and T. S. Eliot's influence in shaping Arabic free verse and its impact on modern Arabic literature.

Keywords: Arabic Poetry, Free Verse, Meter, Rhyme, T. S. Eliot.

المفهوم الخاطئ لترجمة مصطلح "الشعر الحر" الى العربية

ملخص البحث:

الشعر الحر بأسطره غير المنسقة يتخطى حواجز اللغات، رغم أن لحنه يتباين بين الثقافات المختلفة. تتناول هذه الدراسة اعتماد الشعر الحر من العالم الغربي في الأعمال الأدبية العربية، مع تسليط الضوء على العقبات والتطورات التي واجهها المترجمون والشعراء العرب. تبحث الدراسة في الصفات الأساسية التي تميز الشعر الحر الإنجليزي عن نظيره العربي. وتتناول الدراسة كيفية تأثير الطبيعة الموسيقية للغة العربية على معالجتها للشعر الحر من خلال تحليل الوظائف المتميزة للوزن والقافية. كيف يتناقض الافتقار إلى الوزن الشعري في الشعر الحر الإنجليزي مع النظم الإيقاعية الوفيرة للشعر العربي؟ يستوضح البحث أيضاً الخلفية التاريخية، ويقارن الانتشار المسبق للشعر الحر باللغة الإنجليزية مع تطوره اللاحق في الأدب العربي، مع الأخذ بنظر الاعتبار الإرث الشعري التقليدي المرجو نقله. كيف جمع الشعراء العرب بين البنية الغربية المتمردة وإيقاع الشعر العربي التقليدي وقافيته؟ ما هي التغييرات التي أجراها الشعراء على الصور والاصوات الشعرية للتواصل مع المشاعر والعواطف العربية؟ كما وتعرض هذه الدراسة

على الأعمال الرائدة لكل من نازك الملائكة، وبدر شاكر السياب، وت.س. إليوت، وتأثير الأخير في تشكيل الشعر العربي الحر ووقعه على الأدب العربي الحديث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعر الحر؛ الوزن الشعري؛ نازك الملائكة؛ الأدب العربي .

1. Introduction

The challenging world of free verse is the freedom to breathe without the constraints of meter and rhyme. Free verse is a purposeful defiance of strict forms, not a random occurrence. It stems from a need for genuine expression, a longing to convey the intricacies of human existence without the limitations of conventional form. It enables poets to access the innate strength of language, mirroring the cadences of everyday speech and the intense feelings inside. During the beginning of the 20th century, a shift in the Western literary landscape occurred when poets rebelled against the strict rules of form and rhyme. Free verse emerged as a form that liberally conveys human emotions and modern experiences. From the shores of Western rivers to the deserts of Arabia, free verse travels holding the tales and aspirations of individuals. Free verse bursts onto the paper in English and Arabic alike. However, interesting distinctions appear beneath the liberated lines. English free verse flourishes with adaptability, with lines unrestricted by meter and frequently devoid of rhyme. Arabic free verse, as it strives for freedom, retains the influence of its vibrant, rhythmic heritage. In this instance, meter may loosen its hold, and rhyme might unexpectedly show up, showcasing the natural musical quality of the language. The study surveys the diverse functions of meter in influencing free verse in different languages. It reveals the evolution of structure by comparing the unstructured lines of English poetry to the more structured approach found in Arabic free verse. Ultimately, the

research demonstrates that the emergence of free verse in English happened before it became prevalent in Arabic literature.

2. Western Free Verse

“To free or not to free, that was the question” (Ward, 2020). The term free verse is often employed in a broad sense. Some literary critics tend to apply this term to any poem they admire that does not appear to adhere to the conventional iambic meter. However, it should be noted that many works considered free verse or as breaking away from traditional rules are, in reality, a skillful utilization of the inherent flexibility within those rules. Poets from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, such as Whitman, had already ventured into the realm of unrhymed poetry with lines of irregular length. Even poets like Matthew Arnold, who were highly conscious of adhering to regular forms, had produced delightful poems composed of short unrhymed lines without any predetermined length or metrical pattern (Fraser, 2017: 71-73).

Gustave Kahn, a renowned French symbolist poet (1859-1936), can be credited as one of the earliest advocates for the “vers libre” movement. He asserted that his free verse style had evolved from his experimentation with poetic prose, a technique employed by the Romantics and Parnassians. Another poet who stood out as the most innovative among the early “verslibristes” was none other than Jules Laforgue himself. Laforgue’s artistic progression led him to independently embrace a more liberated form of expression, which resonated with Kahn's sensibilities. This affinity is evident in a noteworthy passage from the preface to the ‘Premiers Poèmes’, where Kahn, a close friend of Laforgue, lauds the distinctive characteristics of his work (Jones, 1947: 206-208).

The metric system, passed down through the ages by poets and meticulously developed by generations of prosodists, formed the

core of poetry. The proponents of prosody were not only safeguarding civilization but also critiquing the emerging poets that they were likened to the radicals in literature who sought to upend or dismantle the established norms and principles on which literature is built. In this context, the meter was synonymous with verse, poetry, culture, and ultimately civilization. Based on the definitions outlined by the field of prosody, free verse was essentially considered prose. This critique was frequently leveled against free verse, as it was seen as disconnected from prosody, and prosody from it (Hartman, 2014: 6-8).

Throughout its evolution, the term "verse" has acquired three distinct connotations. Chronologically and logically, these connotations encompass a single line of poetry, a collection of lines forming a stanza or strophe, and the overall structure or methodology that challenges the conventional interpretation of "metrical composition" when referring to free verse. "Verse is language in lines". Free can be considered synonymous with "non-metrical", indicating that the structure of free verse relies on rhythmic organization through means other than numerical patterns (Hartman, 2014: 11, 24-25).

The pursuit of individuality, originality, and novelty served as driving forces behind the exploration of alternatives to traditional meter. Through their quest for liberation, the early modernist poets successfully unlocked fresh prospects in terms of prosody. Certain writers found solace in the notion that each person's free verse is distinct, reinforcing the idea of personal expression (Hartman, 2014: 27).

Beginning as so many English versification books do, here are some of Alexander Pope' lines:

“What dire offense from amorous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing-this verse to Caryl, Muse! is due:
This, even Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.”
(The Rape of the Lock, 1699)

Authored in 1714, this text exemplifies a period marked by the highest degree of regularity in English prosody. It can be argued that during this era, there existed a firm belief in the iambic pentameter as the definitive formula of verse. Our conviction remains unshaken as we confidently identify the precise nature of this verse.

To examine the transformations that have occurred since the era of Pope, it is worthwhile to explore a concise evolution of poets from the subsequent two centuries. One such poet is Robert Browning, who emerged 135 years after the publication of Pope's renowned work, “The Rape of the Lock”:

“Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews-sons mine ... ah God, I know not! Well-
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!”

(The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church, 1849)

The metrical pattern remains fairly consistent, albeit slightly less so compared to Pope's. However, what is particularly noticeable about Browning is how the words fit less comfortably into the line; they appear to be in conflict with it, to the extent that the syntax and meaning occasionally appear forced. While traditional meter

still prevails in Browning's works, it is being challenged by non-metrical elements. Whereas reading Pope offers the delights of smoothness and wit, Browning's works provide a rougher experience, characterized by prosodic tension and dramatic irony (Cooper, 1998: 4-5).

The overall trend in 'free verse' is shifting towards a democratic casualness that allows for a wider variety of words. When liberated from the strict meter, the line has diverged into two distinct paths. One path leads towards minimalizing lines, while the other moves towards line expansion. Poets who perceived traditional meter as 'oompa oompa' have aimed to cleanse poetry of grandiosity or affectation, simplifying it to its most essential components, emphasizing semantic content, and reducing syntactic complexity.

“Of death
the barber
the barber
talked to me
cutting my
life with
sleep to trim
my hair—
It’s just
a moment
he said, we die
every night—”

(Death the Barber, William Carlos Williams)

The metrical line and grammatical unit are subtly interrupted by the line breaks, effectively challenging the reader's preconceived notions. This interruption serves to elevate the ordinary exchange between an individual and their barber, imbuing it with a sense of

extraordinariness. Moreover, in poems of this nature, the visual component holds great significance. When isolated on a complete page, the poem assumes a concentrated aesthetic, akin to being distilled into pure whiteness (Wainwright, 2004: 93-94).

The liberation of the line has fostered a different style of writing that is characterized by expansiveness. In this approach, poems can adopt a deliberately casual tone, sometimes even appearing ostentatious, as they leisurely navigate through the constant influx of everyday impressions without the burden of having to reach a profound conclusion. Consequently, the lines in this type of writing tend to be longer and more fluid.

“• Ah nuts! It’s boring reading French newspapers
in New York as if I were a Colonial waiting for my gin
• The spent purpose of a perfectly marvellous
life suddenly glimmers and leaps into flame
• I’m getting tired of not wearing underwear
and then again I like it
strolling along
feeling the wind blow softly on my genitals
• Totally abashed and smiling
I walk in
sit down and
face the frigidaire
• Light clarity avocado salad in the morning
after all the terrible things I do how amazing it is
to find forgiveness and love”
(Les Luths, Frank O’Hara)

The democratic and conversational style of modern ‘free verse’ constantly grapples with the challenge of expressing profound matters due to its refusal to adopt a formal position. It aims to

seamlessly blend into the natural rhythm of everyday speech while simultaneously setting itself apart (Wainwright, 2004: 95-96).

Free verse poetry is characterized by its departure from traditional stress and meter patterns, allowing for a wide range of rhythmic possibilities. Despite the absence of strict metrical rules, free verse poetry still maintains a sense of rhythm through techniques such as typography, syntax, syllabics, and breath units. These techniques, although distinct from one another, are often used in tandem to create a cohesive and rhythmic structure in free-verse poetry (Minot, 1988: 61).

Typography, frequently known as visual rhythm, holds significant importance in the display of a poem within the confines of a printed medium. The arrangement of words on the page (as seen earlier) not only impacts the visual aesthetics but also influences the reading experience. Consequently, typography is intricately connected to the auditory dimension of a poem, influencing the interpretation of the poem when spoken aloud. Cracking a logical justification for each typographical component resembles the delicate strokes of an artist's brush, as most of the choices made in crafting a poem are driven by intuition (Minot, 1988: 62-63).

Syntactical repetition in free verse serves as a potent tool employed by poets to achieve diverse effects. Instead of merely echoing words or phrases, the repetition of grammatical structures or sentence patterns is consistently employed throughout the poem. Similar to the use of repeated sounds, the repetition of syntactic patterns generates a rhythmic pulse within the poem. This rhythm can elicit a calming and meditative effect. Concise, parallel sentences can create a rapid-fire effect, while longer, balanced structures can establish a feeling of steady movement. Additionally, the utilization of syntactic repetition serves to create linkages among various segments of the poetic composition,

cultivating a perception of cohesion and smoothness. Furthermore, specific syntactic structures can evoke distinct emotions.

“Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?

Who justify these restless explorations?

Who speak the secret of impassive earth?

Who bind it to us? what is this separate Nature so unnatural?

What is this earth to our affections?”

(Passage to India, Walt Whitman)

Repetitive questions, for instance, can engender a sense of confusion or urgency, while short, declarative sentences can build tension or convey a feeling of frustration (Minot, 1988: 64-66).

Syllabics can be employed as a valuable tool within the realm of free verse, even though free verse itself does not adhere to a specific syllable count per line. When composing a free verse poem, a poet might opt to employ lines containing a specific count of syllables with the aim of attaining a specific outcome. The beauty of free verse lies in its ability to allow poets to experiment with contrasting line lengths and syllable counts, thereby granting them the freedom to explore various poetic possibilities. Nevertheless, the utilization of syllabic techniques must be purposeful and avoid leading to a fixed and foreseeable structure. The primary focus should always remain on the overall emotional impact and natural flow of the poem. By strategically incorporating syllabics into a free verse composition, poets can introduce an additional layer of complexity and emotional resonance to their work (Poemanalysis, 2024).

Breath units serve as a fundamental element in free verse, intertwining the act of respiration with the cadence and composition of the poem. Although free verse poems lack a predetermined meter or rhyme scheme, they possess an innate

rhythm that mirrors our speech patterns and inhalation-exhalation cycles. These breath units encompass approximately the number of words or phrases that an individual can effortlessly articulate within a single breath. By contemplating the notion of breath units, poets and readers can gain a profound comprehension of the underlying rhythm and emotional resonance embedded within free verse poetry. “The breath is the engine, the poem's content is the fuel” (Boehman, 2015).

Besides, relativity, in its broadest sense, presents a valuable contribution to the study of free verse's prosody. The particular emphasis is placed on the observation that the rhythmic arrangement of an individual line within free verse is not ascertainable independently, but instead necessitates an analysis of the lines that come before and/or after. In essence, the rhythmic essence of free verse remains elusive unless we compare and contrast one line with others. Additive rhythm is a fundamental attribute found in free verse poetry, in which the poem's rhythm is influenced by the preceding lines. This gradual accumulation of rhythm creates a discernible pattern, giving shape and structure to the poem (Andrews, 2017: 4, 11).

The use of metrical feet such as iambs or trochees in free verse poetry enriches the poem's rhythm, capturing the diverse cadences of spoken language. T.S. Eliot's “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” serves as a prime example of this concept. While Eliot's verses occasionally hint at a metrical structure, they primarily draw their rhythm from the nuances of spoken language and the poet's creative intentions, showcasing the flexibility of free verse in the context of modernist literature. The rhythm of Free Verse is marked by its fluidity and adaptability, capturing the intricate nature of human experiences and emotions (Huqiaing, 2023: 2, 5).

Free verse and regular verse, Duffell argues, should not be seen as distinct systems, but rather as components of a unified system in which a poem can exhibit characteristics of both modes of versifying. They exist on a continuum, encompassing a spectrum of meters ranging from the most structured to the least. Individual poets have the freedom to select their position on this continuum for each poem they create. Contrary to widely held assumptions, free verse does not lack meter; rather, it can be characterized as polymetric. A free verse poem possesses numerous verse designs, although they may not adhere to the traditional stress-syllabic patterns (2010, 34).

Furthermore, the poet has the liberty to arrange these designs in any order they desire. Free verse poets push beyond the boundaries of the loosest English meters and, in order to differentiate their work from prose, incorporate a plethora of devices derived from regular verse. It is unfounded to consider free verse and regular verse as separate systems within the English language. Using a biological analogy, free verse evolved from regular verse, yet it stubbornly resisted extinction. Free verse, as a newer mode of versifying, gained popularity due to changes in poetry-reading habits during its inception, aided by the prevailing spirit of an era that embraced change. Therefore, free verse represents an expansion rather than a negation of the existing poetic repertoire, resulting in a broader range of metrical choices for poets than ever before (Duffell, 2010: 35).

3. Arabic Free Verse, Al Taf'ilah Poem

During the early years of the twentieth century, neo-classical poets, such as Ahmad Shawqi, solidified the traditional style as a significant success of the literary revival in the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, a new generation emerged in the inter-war

period, favoring romanticism over the established tradition. While neo-classical poetry continued to thrive in certain areas, there was a growing interest in romantic Arabic poetry, whether produced in America or the Arab regions (Boullata, 1970: 248).

Poets like Khalil Mutran and Iliyya Abu Madi were renowned for their expertise in the classical form, characterized by its elevated language and meticulous construction. Despite their adherence to classical norms, these poets also exhibited varying degrees of romanticism. This style of poetry was dominant in the 1940s, a period when Al-Sayyab and others were just starting to explore their poetic voice. Although they found this type of poetry appealing, it was not a prevalent trend in Iraqi literary circles at that time. Iraqi poetry, influenced by a neo-classical style championed by Ma'ruf al-Rusafi, was perceived as being somewhat outdated. Apart from the dynamic poetry of Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, the neo-classical convention in Iraqi poetry had run its course and was losing relevance in contemporary society. However, it persisted in exerting a significant impact on the overall populace (Boullata, 1970: 249).

As a direct response to the neo-classical poetry prevalent in Iraq, while also being influenced by the romanticism that had permeated from external sources, Baland al-Haydari's opening collection, "Khafqat al-Tin," was published in 1946, followed by Nazik Al-Mala'ika's first collection, "Ashiqat al-Layl", and Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab's debut collection, "Azhdh Dhdbila" in 1947. Although this belated Iraqi romanticism did not introduce any groundbreaking elements, it largely echoed the previous romanticism of other Arab poets, which was gradually fading away or being partially replaced by symbolic elements. Their contribution to the success of this Iraqi romanticism was instrumental in paving the way for further advancements in Arabic poetry, particularly in Iraq. However, they

possessed the insight to realize that romanticism would in a little while lose its relevance, even within the Iraqi context. The social and cultural aspects within the Arab domain necessitated the emergence of a new form of poetry (Boullata, 1970: 249).

The Arabic poetry of the twentieth century then experienced an unprecedented level of experimentation, surpassing any previous era. This period was featured by a strong drive for renewal and revolutionary change, as well as a pursuit of modernity and independence. Moreover, it witnessed a significant rebellion against conventional poetic forms and themes. In a span of less than fifty years, more than six different poetic forms became the focus of widespread investigation. These included prose poetry, poetic prose, blank verse, strophic verse, free verse, and prose poem (Al-Tami, 1993: 185).

“And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stairs.
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.”
(The Waste Land, Eliot)

Through these verses, T. S. Eliot impelled Al-Sayyab and other Iraqi poets to embrace the inevitable demand for a linguistic metamorphosis to remain in step with the ever-changing world, as though he directly addressed them (Naser, 2016: 12).

Al-Sayyab’s poetry was profoundly influenced by the works of T. S. Eliot, whose exceptional qualities and refined rhetorical style permeated the creations of numerous modern Arab poets. Within the realm of contemporary Arabic poetry, Eliot is often hailed as

the primary source of inspiration, as asserted by numerous Arab critics. The impact of Eliot on Arabic literature began to emerge in the early 1930s, primarily through the efforts of initial translators who introduced his ideas to Arabic literary circles. Al-Sayyab's artistic endeavors were particularly molded by Eliot's renowned poem "The Waste Land", which was published in 1922. Similar to Eliot, Al-Sayyab faced a multitude of challenges, including orphanhood, serious illness, government interference, job loss, exile, and instances of corruption in Iraq (Ayasrah & Azmi, 2019: 79).

The intertextuality between Eliot and Al-Sayyab is evident in their mutual attitudes towards traditional poetry. They both recognize the significance of the past heritage in shaping modern poetry. Nevertheless, they emphasize the need to defy the outdated constraints, styles, and limitations imposed by tradition. According to both poets, contemporary writers must rebel against the flaws inherent in traditional thoughts and styles, as they have become obsolete in today's context. Their approach involves a fusion of historical and present-day concepts through the use of symbolism and the incorporation of ancient myths into modern poetry, serving as the initial phase of their exploration of intertextuality. Additionally, certain key terms and phrases from Eliot's work can be found in Al-Sayyab's poetry, including references to evening, winter warmth, the gulf, drowned sailors, bones, eyes, bodies, water, and rain (Ayasrah & Azmi, 2019: 80, 83).

Similar to Eliot, Al-Sayyab utilizes brief, rhythmic phrases to converse with anthropomorphized elements such as the seasons in his poetry. Al-Sayyab's succinct lines are characterized by boldness, evoking surprise and posing questions that compel readers to interpret and draw their conclusions. In his poem 'The Sinbad City', Al-Sayyab constructs a fantastical city to mirror his

perceptions of a contemporary urban landscape undergoing seasonal transformations, akin to Eliot's "The Burial of The Dead":

"Hey Spring!
Hey Spring what is it with you?
You came without rain
Without roses,
Without fruits,
Your end was like your beginning
Wrapped with dark blood..."

(The Sinbad City, Al-Sayyab) (Naser, 2016: 15)

A significant technique borrowed from T. S. Eliot is the repetition of one or more words. This technique, frequently involving the repetition of a rhyming word, serves to highlight a particular theme or enhance the poetic rhythm. In Al-Sayyab's "Hymn of Rain"/Unshudat Al-Maṭar, for instance, the word rain/matar is recurrently used to symbolize fertility and hope in the context of Iraq (Althamneh, 2017: 17).

The phenomenon of modern Arabic poetry was characterized by the emergence of the free verse movement. This movement, however, encountered remarkable confusion in terms of its terminology. Its prosodic form, wherein the poet enjoys the freedom to vary the number of feet in each line, can primarily identify the poetry produced within this movement. Nonetheless, these feet need conform to a specific meter and generally adhere to the overall rules governing that meter. In essence, the poets associated with this movement predominantly employ a mono-foot meter (Al-Tami, 1993: 185).

In Al-Mala'ika's introduction, she expounded upon the movement's prosodic foundations, its objectives, and its arty characteristics. Furthermore, she authored a chain of articles that

probed into various issues related to the movement. It was in 1954 that she coined the term “free verse” to encapsulate this novel poetic form. The terminology in question became increasingly popular within the emerging cohort of poets during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, characterized by a profound sense of defiance towards the established political and social structures in the Arab region, a strong desire for advancement, and a longing to depart from the conventional norms of literature. (Al-Tami, 1993: 185-186).

The Arab world was significantly impacted by the phrase free verse/ash-shi'r al-hurr, which permeated throughout the region. However, this term faced opposition from other versifiers and critics associated with the same movement. Subsequently, they proposed other terms as alternates. Interestingly, these individuals often utilized their distinct terms and occasionally employed multiple terms within a single article. Al-Tami revealed that a total of eleven terms were utilized to describe free verse/ash-shi'r al-hurr, yet none of them garnered unanimous agreement among poets and critics. This proliferation of terms has simply contributed to the confusion and perplexity surrounding the topic, thereby bewildering the reader. Moreover, the issue is further compounded by the fact that many of the proposed terms can be applied to free verse/ash-shi'r al-hurr and prose poem/qasidal an-nather (1993: 186).

The issues of using the phrase free verse/ash shi'r al-hurr arose due to several factors. Initially, this phrase is a direct rendering of the English expression “free verse”, which denotes poetry that is not strictly bound by a regular and measurable pattern of stress or accent. Instead, it does not rely on a regular rhythmic beat or the recurrence of significant expressions, image patterns, and similar elements. Rhyming in this type of poetry also exhibits a

comparable choice and irregularity. However, Al-Mala'ika's advocated form, the subject of her theoretical discussions, is not truly free in nature. The poet's liberty is confined to changing the quantity of feet in a line, while still having the freedom to employ any scheme of rhyme or none at all. Furthermore, the term encompasses multiple meanings, adding to the complexity surrounding its usage. Additionally, before Al-Mala'ika, this term had already been employed to denote a distinct form. Lastly, critics rejected the classification of free verse/ash shi'r al-hurr as metrical/mauzun) and instead used it in the same article to describe prose poetry (Al-Tami, 1993: 186).

The appearance of free verse, Al-Mala'ika maintained, can be traced back to a multitude of factors, which can ultimately be condensed to four primary rationales, all interconnected with the dominant inclinations of the population. Firstly, the unrestricted use of meters allowed poets to break free from the confines of the romantic environment and delve into the realm of reality and actuality. The modern Arab poets examined the traditional forms of two hemistichs and discovered that it clashed with their objectives. This was primarily due to the fact that the poem/qasida, a traditional form, had to be lengthy and adhere to a single rhyme scheme. Furthermore, it was characterized by melodic embellishments and a highly ornate style. As poets found themselves bound by the constraints of these old meters, coupled with the numerous challenges posed by modern life, which left them with limited time to devote to the old rules, they sought liberation through a new form of composition. Additionally, the traditional form was inherently lyrical and heavily reliant on rhetorical devices, whereas the poets desired a form that offered greater freedom and a simpler choice of words.

Secondly, contemporary poets were inclined towards autonomy within the realm of modern poetry, seeking to establish their own distinct personalities. They aspired to break free from the influence of renowned poets such as Imrul Qays, al-Mutanabi, and al-Ma'ari, and instead, forge their path by innovating in accordance with the demands of the modern era.

Thirdly, modern thought was characterized by a tendency to distance itself from imitating the past in various artistic endeavors and other aspects of life. Poets of the modern era sought to break free from the constraints imposed by traditional rules governing poetry compositions. They composed their works based on the demands of the subject matter, sometimes extending the length and other times condensing it, without adhering strictly to a predetermined geometric structure.

Fourthly, it is crucial to prioritize the content over the form. In the past, traditional poems predominantly focused on the structure, neglecting the significance of the content. Consequently, it was unsurprising that contemporary Arab poets responded by shifting their focus towards the content and striving to detach themselves from superficial external elements (Khadim, 2023).

In Arabic free verse, as outlined by Al-Mala'ika, poets utilize one-hemistich lines of poetry with varying lengths and a flexible number of feet/taf'ilahs in each line, all governed by a controlled prosodic rule. The meter heart of free verse, she continued, was built on the unity of taf'ilah; freedom of varying the quantity of feet and the line length requires, first, that the taf'ilahs in the lines be similar. Thus, the poet can compose a verse depending on one foot of specific meter, repeated in all lines, as in:

“Fa’ilatun Fa’ilatun Fa’ilatun Fa’ilatun
Fa’ilatun Fa’ilatun
Fa’ilatun Fa’ilatun Fa’ilatun

Fa'ilatun
Fa'ilatun Fa'ilatun Fa'ilatun
Fa'ilatun Fa'ilatun"

The poet proceeds in this manner, freely choosing the number of feet in a line within the prosodic rules of the Ramal meter, following the poetic traditions that have abode poets since the pre-Islamic period until the present day. Al-Mala'ika used the designation one hemistich/shatr instead of two hemistichs/bayt in order to be consistent with free verse of late 40s and on (Bin Zawi, 2020: 3-4).

Hadara examined the taf'ilah of the free verse system, emphasizing its essence as a form of poetry characterized by a single foot. The musicality of this system serves as a reflection of the poet's emotional attitudes, rather than conforming to the meters established by Khalil. Despite this departure, free verse adheres to the prosody of Arabic poetry, with the exception of its structure and, to a lesser extent, its rhyme. If a poet wishes to compose a poem in a specific meter, they must maintain consistency in both the meter and its feet throughout the entire poem. The poet's freedom lies in the length of the lines and the use of a unified rhyme, which can be employed to enhance both the musical tone and the culmination of the emotional surge (Bin Zawi, 2020: 3-4). The poem is constructed upon the hemistich, which some critics suggest should be labeled as a poetic line. Poets are granted the freedom to select the number of feet in a line, whether it be one foot, up to a maximum of six large feet like mafa'ilun and mustaf'ilun, or even eight small feet if the bahr employed by the poet contains eight small feet such as fa'ulun and fa'ilun. However, many critics have refrained from stipulating the exact number of

feet in a line, leaving the determination to the poet (Bin Zawi, 2020: 3-4).

Free verse poets have the option to employ Khalil's single or double-taf'ilah meters in their poetry. However, single-taf'ilah meters are favored for composing free verse poems due to their clarity and simplicity, which reduces the likelihood of prosodic errors or the inadvertent inclusion of multiple meters in a poem. This category of meters consists of repeating one taf'ilah six times. These meters include *Al-Kamil*, *Ar-Rajaz*, *Al-Hazaj*, *Al-Ramal*, *Al-Mutaqarib*, *Al-Mutaraddik*, and *Al-Mujazzu' al-Wafir* (the final taf'ilah is omitted). Consequently, free verse, as Al-Mala'ika affirmed, adheres completely to the prosodic traditions of Arabic (Sulaiman, 2008).

In Arabic free verse, rhyme is not a fundamental feature, even though it may be present; certain poets have relied excessively on rhyme, resulting in free verse emphasizing ease and freedom from it. Rhyme in free poetry can be viewed as just one word among the vast array of words in the language, influenced by the moral and musical context, responding to the requirements of the musical tone following an emotional outburst. It acts as the word that offers the poetic line a conclusion that resonates with the soul (Khalil, 2023). Poets were afforded the chance to craft their poems in more expansive and unrestricted structures compared to the traditional form, thanks to this development. As a result, the use of rhyme in free verse poetry can encompass a wide spectrum and exhibit variations from line to line. Rhyme in free verse poetry can be manifested in three primary ways: blank rhyme (characterized by the absence of a set rhyme scheme), sequential rhyme (where two or three consecutive lines share a rhyme), and combined rhyme (where a word is recurrent at the end of first and last lines) (Khalil, 2023).

The early proponents of Arabic free verse, or modern poetry, had divergent views on the treatment of colloquial dialect. Although they shared a common goal of aligning poetry with everyday life, contemporary sentiments, and popular language, they diverged on the degree to which colloquial dialect should be integrated. While some advocated for the exclusive use of classical Arabic, others championed the adoption of the prevalent dialect among the populace to break down barriers to creativity (Fadhel, 2013).

Some individuals did not find any issue with incorporating colloquial words into a classical poem, while others strongly believed that the presence of colloquial language in classical poetry is offensive to the Arab spirit. They argued that it evokes feelings of regression and brings to mind the times of obscurity and suffering when colloquial dialects first emerged, Al-Mala'ika noted (Fadhel, 2013).

The founders of free Arabic poetry sought to elevate the poetic language by reconnecting it with the realities of daily life, although they held differing views on how to achieve this goal. A faction proposed the utilization of colloquial expressions derived from refined origins, as well as the enhancement of colloquial vocabulary to seamlessly incorporate them into poetic works in order to uphold truthfulness (University of Babylon, n.d.).

4. Conclusion

This study explores a modernized subcategory of poetry i.e. free verse. The discussion on free verse is approached from both Western and Arabic standpoints. Western formula replaces set meters and rhyme schemes with line breaks, relativity, syntactic structure variations, and lexical repetition. Arabic Al-taf'ilah/one-foot verse, which is also called free verse, exhibits slight disparities. Al-taf'ilah verse uses meters but breaks free from their

classical quantity, sticking to one foot. The innovators in both cultural contexts, namely Eliot, Al-Sayyab, and Al-Mala'ika, are touched upon.

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