



South-Asian niche as the poetic helicon of Taufiq Rafat: a metapoetic study

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ABSTRACT. The genre of metapoetry thematizes the fictional elements – the inspiration of a poet, his poetic process, meta-poetic metaphors, the role of the poet in society, and intertextual references – partaking in the making of poetry explicitly or implicitly carried through a poem within a poem technique. This paper presents Eva Müller-Zetlemann's theoretical pronouncement of meta-poetic elements, i. e., poetic inspiration, poetic process, and meta-poetic metaphors, at play in the metalyrics of Taufiq Rafat from his anthologies *Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems 1947-78* (1985) and *Half Moon: Poems 1979-1983* (2008). Rafat's inspiration is the South-Asian terra firma and lived experience that makes him infuse the regional sensibility through a poetic process of perceiving and penning down immediately. His meta-poetic metaphor involves the invention of an image of cultural genesis that informs the process of poetic creativity. Moreover, the study also considers the explicit expression of the role of the poet in society and the functions of poetry in Rafat's poems, otherwise a prose phenomenon. Thus, the paper analyzes the conscious expression of the construction of South-Asian singularity inspired by the cultural kernel in content and form in Rafat's metalyrics.

Keywords: metapoetry; poetic inspiration; creative process; meta-poetic metaphor; self-reflexivity; pakistani idiom.

Nicho Sul-Asiático como o Helicon Poético de Taufiq Rafat: um Estudo Metapoético

RESUMO. O gênero da metapoesia tematiza os elementos ficcionais – a inspiração de um poeta, seu processo poético, as metáforas metapoéticas, o papel do poeta na sociedade e as referências intertextuais – participando do fazer poético explícita ou implicitamente realizado através de um poema no interior. uma técnica poética. Este artigo apresenta a pronúncia teórica de elementos metapoéticos de Eva Müller-Zetlemann, i. e., inspiração poética, processo poético e metáforas metapoéticas, em jogo na metalírica de Taufiq Rafat de suas antologias *Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems 1947-78* (1985) e *Half Moon: Poems 1979-1983* (2008). A inspiração de Rafat é a terra firme do sul da Ásia e a experiência vivida que o faz infundir a sensibilidade regional através de um processo poético de perceber e escrever imediatamente. Sua metáfora metapoética envolve a invenção de uma imagem de gênese cultural que informa o processo de criatividade poética. Além disso, o estudo também considera a expressão explícita do papel do poeta na sociedade e as funções da poesia nos poemas de Rafat, outrora um fenômeno em prosa. Assim, o artigo analisa a expressão consciente da construção da singularidade sul-asiática inspirada no núcleo cultural em conteúdo e forma na metalírica de Rafat.

Palavras-chave: metapoesia; inspiração poética; processo criativo; metáfora metapoética; auto-reflexividade; idioma paquistanês.

Received on September 14, 2021.
Accepted on May 24, 2022.

Introduction

The primary concern of newly liberated countries is to invent native idiom or the expression of cultural experiences to delineate their distinct identity as seen in the case of America, Australia, West Indies, Africa, and India. The creative faculty in Pakistan appears to be colored by a servile replica of colonial representations by the first generation of the comprador class to appease their colonial masters. But the second generation of the post-independence intelligentsia, to which Taufiq Rafat belongs, is more aware of its political role in the construction of native identity (Hosain, 2017). They employ the medium of poetry as an intuitive art to create South-Asian sensibility (Awan & Ahmed, 2011). The mental response to this sensibility encompasses the

essence of cultural identity which is a reservoir of national heritage, art, music, mythology, climate, landscape, flora and fauna, culture etc. (Rafat, 2017).

Rafat stands head and shoulder high among his predecessors and contemporaries in the creation of native identity through Pakistani idiom which is culturally specific. This idiom dyes the colonizer's language in local colors regarding the untranslatable expressions of cultural myths, customs, philosophies, habits, likes, dislikes, behaviors, thinking patterns, activities, interests, and ways of living of humans, animals, and plants. This idiom allows Rafat to give life to the native identity by discussing each and every aspect of the land including the geographical descriptions, sights and sounds of changing weathers, ways of living of wildlife, every specie of flower, plant, and tree, village and city life attitudes, childhood frivolities and old-age wisdom, dirty slums and the sophisticated colonies, superstitious villagers and logical citizens, professional psychology from street hawkers to the doctors, treatment of love, religious and political ideologies, pre-war and war-torn narratives, and eastern symbolism drawn on all cultural images of flora and fauna. The treatment of all these objects raises them to the level of myths. Hence, every mention of 'pot licking' brings to the reader's mind the myth created by Rafat through his cultural idiom of 'pot licking'. To cut the long tail short, Rafat's works are enough to study the Pakistani lifestyle.

South-Asian born Taufiq Rafat (1927-1998) is a prolific poet with two anthologies "Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems" (1947-1978) and "Half Moon: Poems" (1979-1983), two English renditions of Bullhe Shah: "A Selection" (2014) and "Puran Bhagat" (1983), and a verse play *Foothold* to his credit. For the first time in Pakistani poetry written in English, his works engage an unsurpassed range of regional themes and amalgamation of various poetic styles making him the Ezra Pound, Wordsworth, Ted Hughes, Philip Larkin, Seamus Heaney, Pablo Neruda, and Shakespeare of Pakistan. Out of his stylistic kaleidoscope of multifarious Isms, modernism appears to be Rafat's signature style that brings to the forefront his meta-poetic concerns. Plenty of his poems directly relates to his poetic ideologies, the process of poetic craft, meta-poetic metaphors, content, the template he is going to employ, and his function as a poet (Sirajuddin, 2017).

Metapoetry is a genre that emerges from Modernism although it has its roots since the beginning of writing. It refers to a type of poetry that comments on its own style through the denotative or connotative description of poetology. The robe of metapoetry, in this debate, is perfected by the theoretical underpinnings of Eva Müller-Zettelmann. Her theorization states that the art of writing poetry that includes the poet's poetic inspiration, his literary philosophy, the development of the poet in his poetic process, poetic responsibility for society, intertextual references etc., partakes in the narration of the poem. The meta-poetic thematic concerns take into their realm the meta-poetic aesthetics or themes narrating the details of the poetic philosophy of the poet, his way of composition, the structure of the poem, literary devices, and the creative use of language. The poet consciously writes in his poem about the process of writing poetry as he is aware of his function in society.

The objective of this paper is to consider the theoretical stances of Müller-Zettelmann on metapoetry to analyze Rafat's selected metalyrics from three specific lenses, i. e., poetic inspiration, poetic process, and meta-poetic metaphors. Since poetry germinates from the very land where it has firm roots, according to Rafat, his poetic helicon¹ is none but the South-Asian niche to construct native identity. His poetic process is based on the spontaneous response to the cultural phenomenon. As regards meta-poetic metaphors, they are also invented upon cultural images. This paper is an endeavor to delve deep into these facets of Rafat's metapoetry.

Literature review

Stephen Harrison traces the ancient history in the most celebrated Greco-Roman literary traditions of epic poetry for its meta-poetic nature (Harrison, 2007). Catullus' works use the metaphor of the flat surface of the sea for paper, the ship's beak for the pen, and sailing for the activity of writing on the paper. Callimachus' Hymn starts with meta-poetic symbolism of the poet's singing with the singing of the sea, i. e., the things of its people the sea brings to the shore. Virgil's *The Georgics* continues the tradition of using sea metaphors for the realm of poetic activity. Similarly, his poem *The Aeneid* relates the progress of the Trojan voyage to symbolize the poetic voyage undertaken by the poet.

John Henkel argues that in *Aeneid 6*, when Aeneas enters the ancient forest of Italy for arboriculture, Virgil has entered into his fertile realm of the literary process to refine his poetic pieces by removing away the

¹ In Greek mythology, helicon refers to the sacred mountain where the poetic Muses dwell to inspire the poets for their grand task of writing poetry.

unwanted weeds. In *Eclogue 10*, Virgil's Gallus carves the amorous words on the bark of the tree which is followed by an annotation². The tree bark is a metaphor for the poetic books, i. e., *libers*, where the threads that make the bark stand for the lines made up of words in the poetic books. Virgil's declaration that Gallus must rise from the shadow of a big tree is an allegory for the poets to develop their original style by stopping to follow other poets. In *Georgics 3*, Virgil uses path or road as a metaphor for craft, chariot, or foot for poetic creativity. In *Georgics 2*, Virgil presents the equation between artificial methods of tree plantation and poetic creativity through different genres. The term grafting is a metaphor for Virgil's own obsession with the fusion of different genres (Henkel, 2014).

Maria Natalia Bustos titles Theocritus' *Idyll 15* as the manifesto of metapoetry (Bustos, 2019) as the poem engages the process of creativity and literary criticism. The tapestries, Praxinoa's costume, Adonis' song, and the character's literary registers having intertextuality³ are the meta-poetic elements. The invocation to Lady Athena is a metaphor for the epic invocation to signify the artistic views of the Hellenistic period. The toilsome embroidery on the costume is compared with the accurate lines written by exemplary artists. The commentary on Adonis's song, which uses the technique of *ekphrasis*⁴, serves as literary criticism among the critics as some appreciate the song, while others find fault in the art.

Anna Kuismin has used the term metapoetry in collaboration with self-reflexivity to highlight the poetry of the Finnish peasant class in creating a nationalistic idiom through their art of pen (Kuismin, 2016). They use the peasant register where 'furrows' serve as the metaphor for writing lines on paper and 'plowing' for the act of writing itself.

Graham Hale Jensen brings to light the meta-poetic nature of Canadian poet Louis Dudek's poetry while covering the theme of boundary-crossing between lived experience and the transcendental nature of art (Jensen, 2011). His poetic philosophy finds expression in his meta-poetic poems which is to relate the real current of life and its transformation through imagination into transcendental truths through the thought process. The flow of the waves in the sea is compared with the process of the mind in the making and dissolving of poetic creations. The sea serves as the metaphor for the poetic mind as a repository of images.

Billy Collins' poems present a meta-poetic tangency between self-reflexivity and humor (al-Zubbaidi, 2015). His poem "Sonnet" relates to the conventions of the sonnet in the poem. In every line, the reader is made aware of the remaining lines to complete the sonnet while indulging in courtship themes, end rhymes, and iambic pentameter of Elizabethan Sonneteers. In the sestet, Bill states that Laura will ask Petrarch to put down his pen and come to bed as the solution to the problem of unrequited love discussed in the octave. On the contrary, in 'American Sonnet', Collins explicitly states that he is not going to tread the trodden path of Petrarch or Spencer using meta-poetic metaphors of field plowing, i. e., to carve out the furrow of fourteen lines in a well-plowed field, in modern style. In his poem 'Madmen', he relates his meta-poetic philosophy that a poem is written with inspiration and if it is lost, the poem remains unwritten. He uses the metaphor of bird for the poem, headlights for the brain, signpost and street lamp for inspiration, madmen for the artist, and the doctors who cure the wounds of madmen are the critics who destroy the works of the artist by making claims that their works are full of faults.

Framework for metapoetry

Metafiction is fiction that contains an expression of the ways of making it fictive, as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) delineates the literary philosophies of James Joyce leading to his literary development as he strikes upon epiphanies in the stream of consciousness style (Joyce, 2008). The term meta-drama tells how the drama is written. As *Hamlet* uses the technique of play within play to discover the guilt in the character Claudius while laying down the poetic philosophies of Shakespeare such as art should be holding a mirror up to nature (Shakespeare & Hibbard, 2008). Similarly, the term metapoetry refers to the poems that tell about their process of composition. The theoretical dimension of metapoetry lacks a solid and comprehensive treatment save some generalizing principles by a handful of essayists. Most prominent of them appears to be Eva Müller-Zettelmann's metapoetic underpinnings that serve as a beacon to analyze Rafat's metapoetry.

Müller-Zettelmann (2005), in her essay "A frenzied oscillation: auto-reflexivity in the lyric", defines metapoetry as the explicit or implicit self-reference to the fictional angle of an aesthetic piece of work. This

² Providing with notes to explain the textual meanings of the complex images.

³ Allusions to the past as well as contemporary literary texts.

⁴ A figure of speech which provides the description of the scenes to create the effect of visualization by employing imaginative and vivid imagery.

technique of writing a poem is termed as self-reflexivity. It has the self-reflection of multiple poetic concerns such as the poet's literary philosophy, thematic range, poetic development, poetic craft, and metalyric function of the poet and poetry within a poem plainly. It, primarily, describes the philosophy and the steps involved in the poetic craft (Baker, 1997). It seems to be a form of poetic narcissism which pursues the satiation from the poet's adoring his ivory tower of self-portrait (Weber, 1997). Hence, the demand of the meta-poetic genre is making the informed reader⁵ active in the play of interpretation.

Metapoetry relates an aesthetic theme and form to inform the presence of artistic creativity. In other words, a poem dealing with the artistic or aesthetic theme that introduces a reference to its poetic inspiration and its process of making, the social function of poetic creativity, the invention of meta-poetic metaphor, and the informed reader is termed as a metalyric. It has a distinguished form and content since poetry is given preference to deal with poetology – poetic inspiration, the subject matter, poetic philosophy, or what to write about – than prose in this regard. The preference of poetry for the expression of metalyric elements owes to the fact that the interplay of poetic theory and poetic practice can be conveyed well in poetry to imply poetic content far better than prose. The metalyric function needs the poetic skills of metre, rhythm, and phonetic prosodies of textualization with the special invention of meta-poetic metaphor – an intellectual and cultural image embedding creativity – for better and concise handling. In meta-poems, the self-reflection of the poet's conscious awareness of his metalyric role in society (Jäger, 1996) makes a conscious or contextual appearance through enunciated or concealed text.

The poem which directly displays its content within the realm of metapoetry is called primary metalyric while the poem which relates it indirectly is called secondary metalyric. Primary metalyrics discuss metalyric content at the level of enunciation with epigraphs, critical commentary, meta-poetic metaphor, direct allusions to other poets in the poem, and the inclusion of other poet's textual quotes creating a continuous dialogue between meta-poetic works. Generally, the ending stanza plays a vital role in interpreting the whole metalyric content (Müller-Zettelmann, 2005). In this way, the criticism about literary techniques and the poetic processes leading to particular literary effects become an open secret at the enunciation level.

In secondary metalyric, however, the content does not show enunciated metalyric text. The content of the poem generally seems heteroreferential until the ending lines come to rescue the metalyric content (Müller-Zettelmann, 2005). The metalyric theme is implied through the poetic form – the creative process regarding language issues, the structure, and the quality of the poem. To this degree, the poem comprises the poem's self – aesthetic and structural aspects of the poem (Balakian, 1997). Its poetic language circulates around the textuality of the poem having an implied meta-poetic metaphor. The poem combines the main text and paratext⁶. That is to say that the elements such as dedication, titles, and prefaces etc. also participate in the hidden drama of secondary metalyrics to imply metalyric function. Its reader should be well aware of chameleonic poetic styles to comprehend the form and the content of the poem and its societal context.

Hence, Müller-Zettelmann's meta-poetic concerns regarding poetic inspiration and process along with meta-poetic metaphor become a very valid interpretive framework for this debate to be explored through the meta-poetic works of Taufiq Rafat in this paper.

The Meta-poetic tradition

A literary text cannot be open for interpretation in isolation, rather it belongs to a particular literary tradition instead of the author's pronouncements regarding its meaning (Barry, 2017). The meaning of meta-poetic poems is interpreted through the meta-poetic tradition which paves its way from the pre-Hellenistic period to the contemporary world.

The first poem dealing with poetic treatise is Horace's *Ars Poetica*, written between 20 BC and 30 BC, which contains thirty poetic tenants pertaining to knowledge of genres, style, decorum, precision, critical freedom, and sincerity (Kilpatrick, 1990). Alexander Pope's poem 'Essay on Criticism' requires that the poets and critics should be witty enough to follow the natural poetic rules of balance, symmetry, and beauty set by ancient Greeks and Romans as their poetic inspiration (Pope, 2014). William Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' is a meta-poetic poem that relates his poetology to have consisted of four stages in the writing process – sensation, recollection, contemplation, and recreation – when he is inspired by nature (Wordsworth & Miller, 1910). S.

⁵ The reader is intellectually equipped with the understanding of poetic tradition and aesthetics – genre, prosody, diction, narration perspectives, literary devices, and thematic dimensions to speak a few.

⁶ According to Gerard Genette, literary theorist, paratext refers to those parts of a literary work that work as an introduction to the main work such as title, chapter titles, cover page, author's name, preface, notes, introduction, or other material that affect readership to frame a threshold meaning of the text.

T. Coleridge's poetic muse is the supernatural guide as his poetics deals with unconscious realms of mind to which he gives a simultaneous response in 'Kubla Khan' (Milne, 1986). Archibald MacLeish reacts against Horace's poetic conventions in his poem 'Ars Poetica' (1928), a modernist meta-poetic manifesto (MacLeish, 1926). Wallace Steven's 'Of Modern Poetry' relates the function of poetry, i. e., to develop a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary world and the breach from immediate past literary norms of old prosodic rules to perform that function (Stevens, 2011).

Placement of Taufiq Rafat in Meta-poetic tradition

Metapoetry is a self-reflection of a poem having an aesthetic theme that diverts attention to its structural prosody, opines Müller-Zetzelmann. The self-referential elements to disseminate aesthetic themes include the poet's poetics, poetic process, metalyric function, metapoetic metaphor, and intended reader. The metalyrics are easy to perceive for their recognizable form and content. They have an explicit group of words talking about the art of poetry making. Owing to this assertion, a body of Rafat's poetry is distinguished by its metapoetic form. As regards metapoetic content, Rafat's works reflect a bearing of the meta-poetic legacy. This section comprises the meta-poetic elements – poetic inspiration, composition process, and meta-poetic metaphors – in Rafat's meta-poetic poems.

Poetic inspiration

Poetic inspiration has been considered fundamental to the process of creativity since ancient Greeks. In ancient Greek, Mount Helicon was considered the dwelling of poetic Muses where the poets used to go for imploring the help of muses to be divinely inspired to write poetry. In Christianity, inspiration was considered as the gift of the Holy Ghost to man in the form of scripture. Eighteenth-century saw inspiration as the association of ideas leading to a self-revelation of the understanding of the conflicts. The romantics saw inspiration in Pantheism as God is the part of every object of nature. Coleridge saw nature as a supernatural phenomenon received in a vision. Sigmund Freud introduced a modernist approach to the inspiration that it is the result of unfulfilled desire and childhood trauma as it directly comes from the unconscious. Seamus Heaney sees his own personality as his poetic helicon. Ted Hughes finds inspiration from wildlife. Richard Wilbur sees it as a process of capturing the conscious ideas the mind strikes upon. Similarly, Rafat sees poetic inspiration in the South-Asian topography.

Müller-Zetzelmann (2005) prefers poetry to deal with poetic criticism, i. e., the poetic inspiration which is otherwise dealt with in prose. Müller-Zetzelmann's pronouncement about the preference of poetry to deal with this matter is well-established in Rafat's primary metalyric 'Reflections'. The poet confesses in this poem that instead of wasting a lifetime to meet the criterion of writing millions of words to introduce one's poetic inspiration in prose, he should attempt this metalyric function in his metalyrics directly and easily (Rafat, 1985). He does not fall into the error of writing prefaces to his works, rather he tells through his poetry what his content is (Sirajuddin, 2017). The subject matter which inspires Rafat's poetry, in general, uses the device of native idiom to manifest cultural heritage, mannerism, customs, mythology, geography, flora and fauna, legends, art, music, ecological conditions, seasonal cartography etc. All these facets of South-Asian life are his poetic helicons as they inspire his poetry.

The poetic inspiration of Rafat is the direct treatment of South-Asian terra firma. He has many primary metalyrics to his credit in this regard. Rafat's poetic inspiration surfaces itself in his primary metalyric 'Poem' replacing the function of a preface. In this poem, Rafat enunciates explicitly the subject, style, and function of his poetry. He discards the age-old topic of love in the favor of a more radical topic – the life of his land – for his newly liberated nation. The subject matter appears to be the dissemination of the sight, sound, and reflection of the native life. Correspondingly, the primary metalyric 'The Poet as Martyr' states that the stuff of Rafat's poetry consists of ordinary people of South Asia who dwell on the South-Asian landscape. The description of these people and their activities in his poetry is an attempt to create their particular identity so that he may secure their right position in the world (Rafat, 1985). In the same manner, in his primary metalyric 'My Neighbours' the poet is looking for inspiration and tries to imagine the lifestyle of his neighbours – a lawyer, two lovers, a clerk, an insurance agent, a dejected artist, and an enthusiastic boy (Rafat, 1985).

Similarly, his primary metalyric 'Squirrels' replaces the function of a prose manifesto. Rafat's poetic helicon surfaces here to be a festive scene of two beautiful squirrels chasing each other on a vine. The mention of a waterfall, a beautiful face, and ecstatic Mansoor are all meta-poetic reminiscences of the South-Asian

niche as Rafat's poetic inspiration. To this poem, Rafat applies Müller-Zettelmann's assertion that a strong metapoetic effect is achieved through an ending having a metapoetic element because it provides a conjecture about the meaning of the poem. It means that the ending adds a lot to the understanding of metapoetic gaps. The last stanza of the poem directly discloses Rafat's poetic philosophy, i. e., the intellectual search for language and template to record a cultural event (Rafat, 1985).

In a similar context, the enunciated content of Rafat in the primary metalyric 'Not to be Ignored' is the representation of every side of South-Asian paraphernalia. The poet hyperbolizes this fact by presenting opposite binaries as he opens up: "Whether it is a century at Lord's, / or a poem" (Rafat, 2008, p. 41). None of these and nothing between these two extremes should be ignored. The poet must not ignore even a trivial subject matter by keeping himself busy in an unending effort of poetic process.

In this regard, both the festive and gloomy sides of the land should be preserved in poetic history instead of prose. The metalyric role of the poet is given utterance in his secondary metalyric 'One Kind of Poet' to discuss the celebrated facet of land. The poem shares a heteroreferential content at the level of enunciation. It relates a well-dressed boy as an audience to an unrehearsed match and his "[...] eyes are bright with knowledge" (Rafat, 1985, p. 196). The boy shouts encouragement to the boys who are playing the match. The poem falls under the category of secondary metalyric for its paratext, i. e., the title, gives a solid metapoetic grounding. The boy becomes a metaphor for the poet. The heteroreferential content implies that one function of a poet is to disseminate and celebrate the culture of his nation to create a patriotic zeal and a sense of belonging and security.

However, being the mouthpiece of people, Rafat is not blind to the dark side of the picture. In the primary metalyric 'Another Kind of Poet', Rafat tells that he is the spokesman of the oppressed of his country. The grief, anger, and despair of the hunger-stricken call him to do justice with his art by showing their plight to the world as he reflects: "My gods are Despair, Indignation, / and the World's Hunger. I am / the spokesman of the oppressed" (Rafat, 1985, p. 199). He has the guts to speak the mini-narratives of the oppressed, the plague-stricken bony children, the insecure peasant women, the female war victims, the children attached with sacrificial animals, the poor brides, the abused children, the soldier's widows etc. following realism as well.

To sum up this section, it can be asserted that Rafat has primary and secondary metalyrics to his credit where he lays down the metaphysics of his poetry as well as the implementation of this metaphysics to show the self-reflexivity of his poems. His metaphysics discusses the poetic inspiration that informs his poetry in general. It is no more than the textual recording of the South-Asian experience. Some poems lay down the theoretical stances in this regard while others dress these stances in imagistic style – direct treatment of the subject. The self-reflexivity of his poems enriches the aesthetic themes to treat his poetic inspiration and ideology.

Poetic process

The poetic process is the art of writing poetry which consists of creative stages like milestones leading to a destination. The creative process makes the poet burn the midnight oil in the selection of the subject, his take on the subject, the objective correlative metaphor, genre, style, words, and prosody. This process is accustomed to being discussed in prose, but Müller-Zettelmann emphasizes its discussion in the very poem. Poetry says things in far fewer words enriched with far more meanings using prosody to imply it. Thus, it saves the time of the poet as well as the reader to work on prose to understand poetry, as in Ted Hughes' primary metalyric 'Thought Fox', in which he relates the stages of how the idea appears to the poet and the blank page gets printed. Rafat is no exception in discussing his creative stages in his primary and secondary metalyrics. Two types of poems are seen in this regard in Rafat. He lays down the metaphysics of the poetic process in some poems while in others, he applies this metaphysics or handles the content the way he tells in the former ones.

The metaphysics of Rafat's poetic craft is the immediate response to South-Asian stimuli to create a distinct South-Asian identity for his people (Rafat, 2017). This immediate response is culturally specific as it varies from country to country in its expression to construct a distinct identity. Rafat chooses the template of imagistic theorizing of Ezra Pound for identity delineation of his people as it brings into play cultural-specific vocabulary, dialect, rhythm, themes, direct treatment of the subject, conversational perspectives, and concrete images (Ayers, 2004) to deal with this task.

The primary metalyric 'Poem' enunciates the metaphysics of Rafat's poetic craft in verse, as Müller-Zettelmann demands. Its content describes the contemplative stages regarding the selection of subject and style as well as the function of poetry in planning a poem. The poem becomes the preface poem in which he

lays down golden rules to writing a good poem. Before writing a poem, Rafat starts a debate to discuss the nature of the subject. He compares the traditional and modern poetic subjects. The traditional people's apple of eye theorems of platonic or sensual love to appeal to the simple sensibilities of the reader are discarded in the favor of political topics. He prefers the subject matter of the expression and preservation of mundane events of his land to inspire his poems, the more reasonable metalyric purpose.

The next stage is about the selection of a poetic mold to shape this subject matter. Following the working of the conscious mind in understanding a topic, he informs that the poem should be developed logically. It should not be written in fragments or isolated pieces rather it should be made whole and structurally organized. Rafat puts: "[...] not in snatches/ or separable lines,/ but mood and thought sustained,/ the whole fruit,/ exactly ripe" (Rafat, 1985, p. 182).

The last thing to consider for writing a poem surfaces itself in the last contemplative stage. It is the consideration of the metalyric function of the poet. Rafat directly discusses four functions of a poem which are his signature style. The first function is the portrayal of a common life experience as the subject matter of the poem. The second is to delineate a universal philosophy out of the prosaic experience. Rafat's 'Circumcision', in this regard, describes the prosaic experience of circumscribing a boy and the experience delineates the universal philosophy that experience comes at the cost of innocence (Rafat, 1985). Rafat goes on to put another critical function of a poem to put these subjects in a laconic mould to arrange them with harmony. Rafat uses the mould of imagism to concentrate his ideas in concrete images. The last poetic function is the pursuance of realism. Rafat's poetry is the live drama of South-Asian life. Hence the poem directly relates the aesthetic theme to discuss the metaphysics of his poetry regarding subject, style, and function. All of these rules mold his oeuvres in general.

Similarly, the primary metalyric 'Squirrels' is Rafat's metapoetic manifesto owing to its direct presentation of the artistic theme. He gives in this poem not only the metaphysics of his poetic process but also shows how to apply this metaphysics to create a poem practically. The poem is the manifestation of his mental process while writing a poem following Müller-Zettelmann's preference for poetry (Müller-Zettelmann, 2005). This poem presents various stages of intellectual selection and rejection in his poetic criticism. He considers different meta-poetic theories delineated by other metapoets to come to terms with his own poetic philosophy. The poem is the pure expression of his mental conflict at play in his mind in the creative hour.

First of all, he catches a fascinating South-Asian natural sight of two chasing squirrels. The natural strips ornamenting their bodily attire present an ever-changing mixture of strips when they chase each other on a vine. He feels of himself as divinely inspired by this culture-specific natural scene of chasing squirrels. It echoes the poetic philosophy of Coleridge in 'Kubla Khan' that a vision can inspire a poet to such an extent that he starts recording his thoughts as Mansoor uttered his slogan in his frenzied state which caused his public execution. Then he goes on to think about the 'Objective Correlative' of T. S. Eliot to write a poem in such a way as the listener, on listening to the poem, starts experiencing the same emotional state of what the poet would have felt at the time of poetic creation. Many likewise philosophies enter his stream of consciousness. This colonization of his mind is finally decolonized as he dismisses all these broodings in the ending stanza. Rafat follows, in this poem, Müller-Zettelmann's technique of unfolding the main idea in the ending stanza.

The final stanzas state that the consideration of others' metapoetic theories is only a distraction to keep him from his real business of writing a poem because these debates turn his attention to literary criticism. Rafat says that the unseen worries of future criticism and the value of symbolism should be ignored in the creative moment. Now the mind has struck upon a poetic image in its creative dark and the words, phrases, and sentences illumine it like phosphorescent to put them down on the paper. The emotion must be penned down immediately to have a simultaneous response to South-Asian signature sensibility. Otherwise, it will be lost forever, and the regional identity will become a slavish imitation of other cultures losing its individuality. He rejects the poetic theories of others in favor of his own theory which suits best his metalyric function. Rafat's poetic theory appears to be South-Asian helicon which inspires him to such an extent that he feels intellectual ecstasy to write a poem immediately after perceiving it. Hence, the primary metalyric 'Squirrels' becomes Rafat's Manifesto that explains his poetic process at the level of enunciation to circulate the aesthetic theme.

Being a modern poet, Rafat's take on literature is realistic in recording the immediate response to the stimuli. He is aware of the mental levels involved in the poetic composition. His poetic process is concerned with the conscious mind or short-term memory reservoir. The immediate response to a particular South-Asian phenomenon is the service of the conscious mind. Things perceived through the senses are saved in the

conscious for a temporary time. After a while, they move into the subconscious to process their logical operation in the world. They can be retrieved from the subconscious with a little effort of recollection if focused within a limited period. But if they are not worked out in time, they move into the unconscious or long-term memory and become the part of the dark truths hidden over there to which the human conscious is blind (Michelson, 1991). Hence, being practical, Rafat's creative view is concerned with the conscious brain in order to record the immediate response to a particular situation. Otherwise, the inspiration will be lost, and the poet will be unable to get it back as the idea will move into the irretrievable unconscious. Rafat was a forgetful man and this fact bears testimony from his close friend Kaleem Omer (Omar, 2017). That is why Rafat's poetic philosophy becomes the work of a conscious mind.

In articulating the implementation of metaphysics in creating a poem, Rafat's celebrated primary metalyric 'Bird From Porlock' is self-referential. It not only employs explicit metapoetic form and content but also alludes to S. T. Coleridge. The paratext, i. e., the title of the poem also refers to its artistic theme. The poem relates a stage in the creative hour of the poet. The poet is trying to illumine his mind with a south-Asian situation to fill his creative dark but is distracted and the vision is lost. The poem relates that the poet is having a skeleton of a poem while looking into the sky as he makes smoke rings lying on a bench under the tree. A bird shits in his eyes and he starts rebuking the bird while his vision is lost. He says, "I had a wonderful poem going,/ and now it is gone" (Rafat, 2008, p. 29). Rafat finds an affinity with Coleridge's poetic process as to writing in a frenzied state of inspiration immediately. And the interruption can put an end to it enraging the poet. He comes to reconcile with Coleridge's anger at the interruption of a visitor from Porlock when he was writing *Kubla Khan*. The poet mourns his memory which seems to be inferior to that of Coleridge in retrieving after interruption. Rafat says that Coleridge has left a splendid fragment but he himself is left with a shit-spattered mind. This inter-textual reference to Coleridge along with the title of the poem brings to focus the constructed-ness of the poem suggesting its metapoetic treatment. The poem combines the primary and secondary metalyric elements, i. e., allusion and title respectively to its self-referentiality.

The same self-referential facet of pronouncing the implementation of the metaphysics of the poetic process is discussed in Rafat's primary metalyric 'A Lost Poem'. As the title indicates, the poem utters the stages of the creative process which receives an interruption, and the content is lost. The poem presents a character's humming as symbolic of his poetic process of thought selection. He lays down in the bed and gets satisfied for he has selected the words in a while and places himself in the comfort zone of bed. But no sooner does he do this than the poem is lost in the meantime. He gets up unconsciously and tries to get back the idea, but it is lost. The poem says, "He got up, then, and paced the floor/ threw open a window and looked at the stars" (Rafat, 2008, p. 33). Pursuing Müller-Zetzelman's pronouncement of strong effect to be found in the ending, the poet concludes in the final lines that creative work can only be done by putting oneself into the continuous and tireless effort of creativity by sticking to the point all the time to come up with a solution. Otherwise, it will be lost forever. The poem becomes instrumental in the utterance of the aesthetic theme pointed out by Müller-Zetzelman.

Similarly, the primary metalyric 'My Neighbours' presents the implementation of the poet's poetology. The poem has a heteroreferential content until the ending lines come. Belonging to the tradition of metapoetry, the ending lines clarify the above heteroreferential content as to be the subject matter of the poet. It is a detailed description of the poet's process of subject selection. The poet reflects on the lives of his neighbors in the darkness of the night while looking at the street from the window, smoking. He considers a rhetorical question about how his neighbors will be reacting to privacy.

He finds it difficult to think of a fat lawyer, very courteous with friends and foes, to be as controlled and rigid as the poet in the act of lovemaking. The subject of love then changes to the two lovers who are at every tongue in the locality as a matter of ridicule, satire, and hostility. The poet wonders whether the wife-beating inspires sexual orgies in the poetry of the bank cashier or whether these orgies inspire the beating of his wife. The poet is not sure if the insurance agent is again stretching over his couch while studying the pornographic book. Then the subject changes to another character who resides within blank walls and is sobbing over there and lamenting over the decision of the rejection of father's faith. Then a boy, humming a song, enters the street. His voice breaks the silence of the night as well as the poet's working mind who removes his cigarette, having gotten the inspiration for his poem. The impulsive moment Rafat catches as: "The eyes return to the manuscripts on the desk./ And, suddenly, the mouth is full of teeth" (Rafat, 1985, p. 1914).

Thus, the ending lines, as described by Müller-Zetzelman, engage a metapoetic content. The love lives of his people make the subject matter of his poem. The poet's treatment of love is not a traditional romantic

realm of spirituality, rather it comes out as more a biological and instinctual desire. Following realism, the poet shows a darker side of the nature of his fellow beings in the treatment of love.

The secondary metalyric 'Going after Geese' implies metapoetic content symbolizing the metaphysics of creative stages. The poem is an implication of a tiresome poetic process in the making of a perfect poem. The poem relates a heteroreferential content of a journey to hunt geese. The poet passes by many arduous paths to conquer the geese. The stages follow the path to be covered by a jeep on the road to the plain on horseback through the water to the marshland on foot. The dangerous task of hunting is then tackled with cautious techniques. The content has implied metapoetic suggestions, pointed out by Müller-Zettelman. The geese symbolize a perfect poem while the different paths are creative stages of the selection of the subject, style, and metalyric function. The poet says, "No one comes/ to these treacherous flats except the committed" (Rafat, 1985, p. 100).

To epitomize this section, we can say that Rafat's primary and secondary metalyrics disseminate the aesthetic theme referring to the poetic process. He enunciates the metaphysics of his poetic process and implementation of that metaphysics also. The metaphysics includes the subject of the representation of his land in a concise and logical style to create a realistic individuality of his land. The representation must be given an immediate recording otherwise the idea will be lost forever, while the implementation of this metaphysics utters the direct description of the subject matter.

Meta-poetic metaphor

All the meta-poetic poems have a meta-poetic metaphor for the creative process of the mind in the making of a poem. In Müller-Zettelman's view, metalyrics devise metapoetic metaphors through the creative use of intellect and language. There is no dearth of meta-poetic metaphors in the metalyrics pulsating ancient Greek, Roman, Finnish, British, Irish, and American sensibility. The metaphor of sailing in the sea, rise and fall of water waves, pruning trees, plowing the field, carving on tree barks, herding, grafting, weaving tapestries, singing a song, and walking on the road, have meta-poetic nature for the creative process. Treading the road of meta-poetic tradition, Rafat employs South-Asian metaphors of cigarette smoke, vine, ripe fruit, Gautam, and humming for the creative process in his metalyrics. These metaphors inform the South-Asian sensibility to delineate the South-Asian identity.

Rafat uses the metaphor of smoke rings for the creative process in 'Bird From Porlock' (Rafat, 2008). The smoke ring suggests a South-Asian intoxicating state to utter easily what one wants to. The adjective 'dark' with the 'smoke rings' suggests a creative mind. The origin of everything is a mysterious dark state as the origin of life takes place within dark screens. Ted Hughes' poem "The Thought Fox" also relates the same creative process which is rooted in the darkness of midnight. As the eyes of the fox illumine the dark wood, the poetic idea phosphoresces Hughes' creative dark and the blank page is printed (Hughes, 2009). Similarly, Rafat's poetic mind is also termed as dark when there is no content or vision. In this creative dark, the skeletons of poetic pieces are processed into complete forms as he starts smoking his cigarette. Rafat has used the metaphor of the dark smoke of cigarette in 'My Neighbors' also (Rafat, 1985). In the darkness of night, he starts observing the street while smoking a cigarette. His mind is put to brood upon the lives of his neighbors which finally become the subject matter of his poem, while the bird becomes the personal metaphor for distraction in Rafat's South-Asian treatment of the poem which is visitor from Porlock in British meta-poetic tradition.

The South-Asian metaphors also appear in Rafat's metalyric 'Squirrels' (Rafat, 1985). Rafat uses the metaphor of two squirrels that go up and down the vine to imply the creative process of word and thought in intuition at play in the veins of the brain. Similarly, the vine – a symmetrical pattern of fruit and leaves – becomes the metaphor for the creative brain which composes a symmetrical poem of best words molded in the best order.

South-Asian ripe fruit is a metaphor for creativity in Rafat's 'Poem' (Rafat, 1985). Ripe fruit has a particular taste to be cherished by the people as well as it is good for health. It is made up of an appropriate amount of all its ingredients. It is born after careful and patient nourishment of the tree in particular environmental conditions with proper food, water, and sunlight. Just like it, a poem is made up after a patient, careful, and considerate thought process involving the stages of thrill, fear, hope, hopelessness, disappointment, disillusionment, loss, triumph, consistency, commitment, hardships, pains, mental agony, and satisfaction.

Gautam is a metaphor for the creative process in 'Not to be Ignored' (Rafat, 2008). The life of Gautam was spent in South-Asian ecology to seek deliverance and he turned millions of hearts towards the light of self-revelation. Similarly, the poet is responsible for a higher task of identity revelation for his people.

'A Lost Poem' (Rafat, 1985) employs the metaphor of humming for the poetic process of word selection and arrangement. The poet starts humming in the poem when he hits upon the idea of it. A similar humming is observed in 'My Neighbours' when a boy enters the dark street while humming a song. It makes the poet excited as he hits upon his poetic theorem and turns towards the manuscript to put it down (Rafat, 1985).

To summarize this section, we can say that Rafat devises metapoetic metaphors in his primary metalyrics. The metaphor bears cultural autonomy that shows the final product after going through developmental stages. Smoke rings, vine, ripe fruit, Gautam, and humming are Rafat's metaphors to represent an artistic whole of best words arranged in the best order.

Conclusion

By considering the meta-poetic elements theorized by Müller-Zetzelman, we can conclude that Rafat's poetry is enriched with primary and secondary metalyrics having an aesthetic theme that draws self-reference to the poetic subject, style, and metalyric function. Rafat uses the medium of poetry to delineate the metaphysics of his poetic theory, poetic process, and metapoetic metaphor. Through his metapoetic lyrics, Rafat has done justice to his role as a poet being politically aware of the challenges posed to his motherland and his people. Since poetry is the child of the land where its people are rooted, Rafat's poetic helicon is his South-Asian niche to inspire him for his poetic subject. South-Asian animals, birds, plants, trees, towns, countryside, religions, cultural rituals, lives of people, everyday events, seasonal variation, landscapes, relatives, friends, oppressed classes, and war victims inspire him to write their lived experiences. The immediate response to these South-Asian situations delineates a particular South-Asian cultural identity of a distinct flavor. The meta-poetic metaphors, i. e., cigarette smoke, vine, ripe fruit, Gautam, and humming for poetic creativity also bear the testimony of their cartographic origin. Rafat's primary and secondary metalyrics are well constructed to come up with a solution to the identity issues of his country by inventing a native idiom rooted in South Asia.

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