

TRADITION: WHAT HAPPENED TO POETRY?

by Ferrick Gray

Prefatory Remarks

This essay falls far short from any definitive answer to the question in the title. Perhaps it has missed the mark altogether. It contains my thoughts and as such, I take full responsibility for them, whether they be deemed arrogant, ignorant or acceptable. I am under no delusion that some readers will have a *violent* reaction to what I have written, and to a point, I understand their attitude. However, I too have been subject to similar criticism when in a position where it was inappropriate to voice my personal thoughts about poetry due to the *herd* mentality as to what constituted poetry.

In the general population, one finds that certain opinions are favored by those of whom are in agreement with how Murry put it — *the fashion of the age*, and be damned anyone who dares to differ. All that results is a tumultuous stream of insults and derogatory comments.

It is entertaining to think that people, even from opposing sides, may be able to debate in a civil manner. Apparently this is not so — emotion and ego step forth and argument ensues. For some reason, each thinks they know the facts of the matter at hand better than the other.

When I was in the process of planning this essay, I thought to give it the title **What Happened to Poetry?** However, purely by this title it would likely have been thought of in a negative fashion as criticizing the poet of today. In some ways, perhaps it still does, but it is not meant to be taken entirely in that manner. Whatever the assumption, or accusation, where is the harm in the question? The younger generation may think nothing of the subject. In all honesty, I do not find their attitude surprising. They have little interest in what they see offered up as poetry, or poetry in general. I too have little interest in what I see today. Whichever way we look at it, we have to admit that something, some *defining element* of poetry has changed. Was it a movement of some type? Perhaps there was in a manner of speaking. The whole business changed, and in its own way. We might even say in a natural way, but there have been other things that have influenced poetry. Some desirable and some not so much.

Is the poet today judged on their merits, or are they judged in comparison with the past? Another way of asking this question is: Are they *judged by tradition*? If so, how, and has tradition created or caused the change in what we accept as poetry today?

Introduction

When we say something is good, great or whatever other adjective we wish to use, what are we actually expressing? First, there is the *comparison* with something else that helps us arrive at the second, this being a *personal opinion*.

If one is to say that something is good, bad, great or indifferent, one needs to be very clear in explaining why. This is one point that Murry addressed¹. The precision of language was also addressed by Eliot² as well as that of tradition³.

Regardless of how good the critic, we find that the use of some words start to take on a vague meaning. Mostly it is the way words are being used. They may well be used in a different context to what the reader normally uses these words, or they have become common and dull due to overuse.

In what follows, I will discuss how poetry has changed and questioning the role of *criticism* and *tradition* along with other influences on the poet of today.

Judging the Poet

How do we judge the poet (or indeed any writer)? It comes as no surprise that we tend to form an opinion very quickly based on our likes and dislikes. In other words, what we have read in the past. It makes good sense that we will be more tolerant of someone with which we are familiar.

Our earliest experiences have no doubt come from our education or lack thereof, and neither situation makes the decision easier or harder to make. I know that many have come to loathe poetry, among other subjects, due to the manner it was studied, or forced to be studied at school. From this simple observation it is clear, to a point, that our past experience influences our decision.

Not everyone is a critic or wants to be, yet everyone is capable of passing judgment without any apparent justification. Hence, it comes down to a *personal preference*. Two questions:

1. What is *personal preference*?
2. How does it *develop*?

The first question is the easiest to answer by nature of the two words used. *Personal*, meaning ourselves and *preference*, our liking. In other words, it is something we like. Now this is all very well, but how does this something we like develop and/or change over time?

Clearly our likes and dislikes change over time, but there are those that become ingrained in our persona. They become part of us and contribute to the person we have become, whether we are aware or not.

Invariably, some will stay with us because we have been exposed to them for a longer or greater period of time. This includes *likes* and *dislikes*. However, we can and do come to appreciate some things that we once did not at an earlier time. In many ways, this is part of our maturing.

1 J. Middleton Murry. Fourth Impression 1935. *The Problem of Style (The Meaning of Style)*. Oxford U.P.

2 T. S. Eliot, 1921. *The Sacred Wood (The Perfect Critic)*. Alfred A. Knopf.

3 T. S. Eliot, 1921. *The Sacred Wood (Tradition and the Individual Talent)*. Alfred A. Knopf.

It may be that earlier there was a poet that we did not like. Perhaps it was their style, language or that we did not like the poet because of the person they were reported to have been or are. In other words, we had a dislike for them because we did not agree with their system of beliefs. This may seem a strange thing to do, the inability to separate the poet from their work, yet it occurs quite often.

Other possibilities are that we were only exposed to a few of their works which may not have demonstrated their true skill in forming verses. Hence we find something different and we are amazed that it is written by this particular poet. Such is the case, we seek out other works, or at least take time to study the poet in a little more detail and gradually develop a new appreciation for them.

It may also be that we come back to the poet we thought little of at some later time and are surprised to find that we *understand* their work, and can now appreciate the style of composition. All this has to do with our maturity. It is a matter of taking the time, and maybe giving the poet or writer the benefit of the doubt.

The second question is not so easily answered as its answer involves more than only past influences. By this I mean the *individual's past*. The connection with the *past* and *tradition* entwined with an individual's past, is the past of many other individuals. Those who have influenced us (now) and that which was passed down by those before. Hence our make-up is the conglomerate of previous generations' *personal preferences*. We must also take into account the different education systems⁴ of the times.

Regardless of the system, however good or bad, there have always been those who enjoyed what they did, those who participated because they had to, and those who loathed it. The middle cohort probably have little to say about the matter, but all three have been influenced in some way. We pull these influences or experiences from our past according to what we are dealing with, then come to a conclusion about the subject in question.

Now when we come to consider earlier individuals, we find the concept of *tradition* striding forth. I believe you as the reader understands the context of the word *tradition* here in that systems have rarely changed, and still become matter of fact— In other words: *This is the way it is done!*

The use of *tradition* above, is very indicative of how we generally use it, and it always comes in a more or less negative way when dealing with written subject matter, that being poetry, prose and also drama. *Traditional* is an adjective often used to describe something that is no longer required or is outdated, even unoriginal at the present time. It is not very often that it is seen in a positive light. Why is that? Simply stated, *traditional* is considered old, in the past and not applicable today. It may have been once, but not now. The comparison is between *then* and the *now*. The problem is that we do not necessarily appreciate the *past*, and we do not know exactly what the *now* really is or represents. Somehow we have missed the jump between *then* and *now*. We have little knowledge of the past due to our education systems. So who is to blame?

The fact is that we all have a somewhat different idea of what the word *traditional* means with respect to literature, and at the worst, a very ignorant understanding. *Traditional* for most modern poets means anything that uses a set form and/or rime. Basically all of these are coming from the early history of English poetry. Many might even say that if it cannot be considered of the *vers libre*, then it is *traditional*. The problem is that *vers libre* can only be defined in terms of *negatives*. In other words in terms of what it cannot or does not have, well, what it is *not supposed* to have.

This is the example of judging a poet by comparison with traditional forms, and often they are not greeted or appreciated in a positive light, because everyone else knows better. I would doubt whether there is any great originality today as in form or style. Indeed most, if not all a poets, are

4 We may be tempted to call or feel that they are more indoctrination systems rather than education.

reminiscent of another in some way. This does not mean that all poets copy others, only that there is very little that is new, which has partly led to the downfall of the popularity of poetry. For example, look at poets today. There is very little difference in their style. Some are very good while others are simply horrendous, but a bad poet would write bad verses in any style. So what is the complaint? Is it bad to be judged by tradition as we have taken it in this context? Yes and no. If we consider that it is bad to be judged by tradition, that would be true if that is all that is done. However, we would expect a critic to do more than merely compare with the past and be done with it.

It is true that some comparison should be made, but it is unfair to always be compared to poets long since gone. They wrote at a particular time in the history of literature in which the forms they used were most common, *the fashion of the age*. This does not mean that all poets and poetry were equal. It is not a matter of merely imitating past poets. This is generally not very successful at all, and to say that someone today writes like Shelley or Byron is a rather ignorant statement to make because there is no obvious comparison having been made. Basically it is how they may have remembered Shelley or Byron from their youth or from school, but more likely it is the traditional form that has evoked a memory to produce the ensuing comment.

A little something of note which I found delightful is from Marianne Moore regarding this problem, and possibilities:

PICKING AND CHOOSING⁵

LITERATURE is a phase of life: if
 one is afraid of it, the situation is irremediable; if
 one approaches it familiarly,
 what ones says of it is worthless. Words are constructive
 when they are true; the opaque allusion — the simulated flight
upward — accomplishes nothing.

To only judge according to tradition is merely a comparison of form. For example, someone may write a sonnet, it may not necessarily be a good sonnet, but the object of discussion will by way of necessity, come to the Shakespearean sonnet, because this is the most recognized and well-known sonnet form. In many cases, it would appear that there can be no other form of sonnet, but not all of Shakespeare's sonnets are perfect in every aspect of their construction or writing. So the comparison comes from ignorance. Since the sonnet is a very old form and is written to what you may call, *strict rules* or a *formula* as in the rime scheme, it is immediately considered old fashioned, out of date and unoriginal. It may well be that the poet is making some attempt at imitation, but it definitely does not make it unoriginal whether expertly or poorly executed.

The problem is that few will take the time to investigate if there is anything new about it. They care not for the adherence to structure, the rime, the *volta* or development. It is simply old. There is no consideration for the attempt or the skill that is required to write a sonnet, and the poet's attempt to create a work of beauty.

Such is the case of the so-called modern critic, they are ignorant of many aspects of poetry, more so the history and development. There is no evidence of reading or interpretation. The complexities are lost on them.

5 Marianne Moore. 1924. *Observations*. The Dial.

This is where the problem occurs when the word *traditional* has its very and unwanted, negative connotations. What we need is more than a casual comment regarding comparisons. We have to ask — Is *vers libre* now becoming *traditional*?

The Difference between Traditional and *so-called* Modern Poetry

There are stark differences in what we see *then* and what we see *now*. To a point, we must expect there to be differences, but what has caused these changes?

I could be harsh and say that for some it is the inability to create something of a traditional form, and yes, in some cases this is true, especially those who not actually criticize, but make derogatory comments about the form while proclaiming their work to be superior with respect to the *creative spirit*. That statement may fall heavily on some and create an instant dislike for what I am endeavoring to bring to light. But does it matter?

Now I will admit, there was a stage in which everyone was, or appeared to be writing in the same style. Yes, this you could say was unoriginal in that there was nothing *new*. We can only say this style-wise, it does not imply content-wise. Within this phase there would still have been some extraordinary work produced, but people were getting tired of the same, and looked for something different, but what was this something different, and what would it entail?

So what is this *Vers Libre*?

It would appear that most people who write under the guise of *vers libre*⁶ do not actually know what it is or what its purpose was meant to be. One can tell from its name that it is of French origin. The English call it *free verse*, which would be a literal translation, but many of the poets today interpret it very differently, and I would say—incorrectly.

The *vers libre* made its appearance in the late nineteenth century, and the *free verse* is an early twentieth century innovation of it. In a manner of speaking, you could say that this was a movement of sorts. No-one denies that it did not have an impact. The pentameter had reigned supreme for many, possibly too many centuries. That didn't mean it was necessarily bad, only that it was becoming dull and uninteresting. It is a matter of taste, and like everything, when it is all written the same way, one starts to lose their appetite. Hence Pound's *to break the pentameter; that was the first heave*⁷.

By its definition, *free verse* is, or the *verse is free* if *when it is not primarily contained by the metered line*. This in itself is not strictly correct, it depends what you want to read into it. Every verse is metered, purely by the use of the word *verse* the implication is there. What is probably better is to say that free verse does not *proceed by a strict set of rules and does not conform to any formal structure*. However, it *cannot* be entirely free.

Although free verse will *always* have metrical feet present, there is normally no consistency of the type of foot (think of *iambic pentameter*). Neither does it have anything to do with the number of syllables. The basic unit of free verse is known as the **strophe**.

The *strophe* itself is a structure taken from the Ancient Greek, but has been modified for English verse to include or mean a *structural division* of a poem. The poem may contain stanzas of varying length which differs from the more formal constructs. Mostly it is thought of verses flowing as they are read by an intelligent reader. There has been a lot of discussion as to whether there is much difference between free verse and prose.

6 I will use *vers libre* and *free verse* interchangeably since for the most, they are considered the same.

7 Ezra Pound, Canto LXXXI.

In essence, free verse has an essentially simple definition which on the surface appears to be appropriate. However, the free verse poets of today, not all, have interpreted it in a very different and incorrect manner. I suppose this comes from the belief that everyone is a poet and that anything goes, but this is far from accurate.

False Beliefs about *Vers Libre* (Free Verse)

Unfortunately, there are many people who think that anything qualifies as poetry. The problem is exasperated by the multitude of social media communities that now exist. One has only to skim through some of these communities to realize that all is not good. **Poetry this is not.**

What has occurred here is a result of the nature of the platform itself. It is too easy to get something out there to a massive audience. In most cases the general public is not interested in what others are writing, they are only seeking praise for their own attempts. Another common attribute is the lack of any *negative comments* or *criticism*. The reason for this is that no-one is interested in the negative aspects or how one may be able to improve their work. Of course this makes the community worthless to a person who genuinely wants to read, write and improve their skills in poetry. You do not go to these communities to learn. In all fairness, there are some which do make some attempt at criticism or suggestions for improvement, but these are few and far between.

It is the absurdly large number of these communities which give the general reader a very distorted idea of what is meant by *free verse*. What we find are three characteristics that most of the so-called free-verse proponents would have us believe.

1. verses (lines) *cannot or should not rime*,
2. verse *lengths* must be *different*,
3. verses must be *absent of meter*.

The fact is that formal poetry constructions can also exhibit *similar* characteristics. *Blank verse*, which is almost always written in iambic pentameter, does not exhibit any riming pattern or scheme, but it is **not** free verse. Although most formal styles have a consistent verse length, variations to the length do occur in some work and are very effective. Thomas Hardy⁸ often used varying verse lengths maintaining rime and meter while still creating some of the finest lyrical poems where the rhythm was appropriate to the emotion. The last is a ridiculous statement to make because **every** verse has meter, it can *never* be absent! So this assertion is easily ignored, and a much better way of stating something akin to this would be to say there is no consistency in the metrical foot that has been used in the verse. Even the use of *verse* implies that something is being measured.

One needs to wonder about the accepted requirements for free verse and whether one, two or all three are necessary for any particular poem. Clearly the third can be ignored since it is purely a reference to something that is often discussed in formal poetry, many say that the poem should have no meter, but this is basically an attempt to divorce free verse from anything remotely associated with formal verse. Hence, it would appear that it is the first two that are the only requirements. As has been previously noted, formal verse can also exhibit these same characteristics. We may now gather that there must be something more to it.

The only point that can be argued for *vers libre* is that it freed the poet from the strict rules of formal poetry. This is really what was all about. As a result, the poet was at liberty to write how they wished. There was no reason to rime, use consistent line lengths or be constrained by a regular meter.

8 Thomas Hardy (June 2, 1840—January 11, 1928), English novelist and poet.

The only difficulty now is that the free verse poetry appears to be more like prose. But how do we define prose and distinguish it from poetry? The most obvious thing was it *looked* very different, but looks do make a reasonable definition for distinguishing between the two. So how do we come to any conclusion? This leads us to an interesting discussion. How does poetry differ from prose?

Poetry and *Prose*

It comes as no surprise that most people can distinguish between poetry and prose, but how is it done? Is this some form of innate ability? Are we born with this and perhaps an *a priori* understanding? It is possible, but I doubt it. There is something more to this albeit only slight.

Our first observation may be that prose (mostly) lacks the typical *formatting* of poetry. We are accustomed to seeing poetry in a certain format, that is, the way it is set out. Prose is very different and generally adopts a lengthier paragraph form, but this is not always the case, there are variations to both genres.

Whatever the visual differences, there are certainly structural differences which can, in most instances, distinguish poetry from prose.

Murry made an attempt at answering this, by addressing this question in his third lecture on *The Problem of Style*. My opinion is that he has made a good effort at it. In some areas he is not particularly convincing, but he does give some excellent points regarding what we may see as possible differences.

Murry has a different turn of phrase in that what was popular was *the fashion of the age*, which I have chosen to use earlier. We still see this today in that it is what is popular is what becomes the current trend. It comes as no surprise that this same thing occurred centuries ago. We need to take into account what the best form of, let's say media, should be the best way to express our ideas. Today, we have so many different ways to express ourselves whether personal or business oriented.

Without going into great detail of Murry's lecture, I will give a brief summary of his ideas regarding poetry and prose.

1. Most (writers) were compelled to embrace *the fashion of the age* because they relied on writing to make a living.
2. The most popular form will reach the largest audience.

The combination of these two suggest the major difference between poetry and prose, and both still make sense in today's current *economic climate* including the changing *social conditions*. It may seem very strange for the sudden appearance of such topics as *economic climate* and *social conditions*. This may well prove useful for a later discussion, but for the time being, we should acquiesce its applicability. It may well be that both have some relevance as to why certain forms were preferred over others. This makes a great deal of sense.

Even though in Elizabethan times the preference was still *blank verse*, prose soon developed due to a number of reasons.

1. Poetry lacked the precision of statement.
2. Poetry lacked the flexibility of a non-insistent rhythm.
3. Prose had a graceful and swift progression without the reader's (necessary) knowledge.
4. Prose avoids circumlocution and paraphrase.

It comes down to prose being capable of *exact thinking* and *exact description*, where the *emotional content* of poetry would cause difficulties. Hence with the progression, or preference for prose, we see a new push for what was a more accurate and possibly succinct expression of thoughts.

However, at times it was still difficult to distinguish between the two, especially now with the newer descriptor (category or classification) being *prose poetry*. Here the terminology appears to conflict and comes as a form of made-up descriptor being purpose-made due to the inability to write completely in one form or another. Yet it seems we feel compelled to find something different between *free verse* and *prose poetry* else why bother with using both terms?

At this point, there would be four possibilities to writing:

1. formal poetry,
2. free verse,
3. prose, or
4. prose poetry.

If the current *properties* of *free verse* seem obscure, what is the possibility of those for *prose poetry* being any clearer. We need to ask ourselves questions regarding the difference between each *if possible*. The first three have in effect been distinguished adequately. It is the fourth that raises objections.

Prose Poetry — Does it truly exist?

One can only expect objections to this type of classification purely because it is attempting to combine two very different genres. However, there are also just as many supporters of the *prose poem* idea (of whom claim to be successful writers of this strange genre) as there are objections.

No doubt what I have to say here will cause some offense, but personally I do not believe such a thing exists and is merely some ridiculous term created to satisfy someone's creation—of sorts. There have been too many attempts at being *different*, being *original*, being *modern*—all without foundation. Most come from inability in one genre or another, and poets refer to themselves as *avant-garde* which means little to nothing, apart from being proficient poetasters.

It has been stated that the *prose poem* exhibits characteristics of both prose and poetry, but is indistinguishable from what is known as a *micro-story*. What is this? They say something shorter than a short story. So it appears that what is being referred to as a *prose poem* is actually something else already in existence.

Now what actually defines this genre of *prose poetry* is it does not show the rhythm of verse, and for a meaningless addition, it is said not to be *free verse*. The current definitions are ambiguous to say the least. *Prose poetry is written as prose but has none of the line breaks normally associated with poetry, but uses poetic devices*. Granted, some prose (not prose poetry) does have a poetic nature to it, but this is not what is being referred to as prose poetry. It is merely prose with a poetic nature to it. There seems to be no consensus on the matter.

There are many other definitions composed by academics, and as one would assume, are made of spurious academic clap-trap meaning nothing whatsoever to anyone but themselves. As is the common attitude, when what has been done becomes too difficult for the population at large, it is changed to a more mediocre form resulting in below and well-below expectations in composition. When one cannot distinguish one style from another, it can hardly be said to exist as a separate entity worthy of consideration or discussion. I believe it is safe to say that there are two genres for poetry and they are formal verse and free verse. Other variations may be classified under either of these two. Prose is not one of them.

How did *Tradition* fail Poetry?

I wish now to bring back my discussion to that of *tradition*. Clearly, traditional poetry (as in form, rime and meter) has failed to satisfy the poetry community at large. Whereas prose developed and continues to do so, poetry failed to bridge the gap and unfortunately has few prospects of ever doing so.

It is that tradition weighed heavily on poetry as a whole with centuries of much the same. As I have stated earlier it was not the point that what was written was bad verse (although there certainly would have been), the problem was that English verse was all based on the same, and this was the dominance of *iambic pentameter*.

Now one could be cynical and say that these poems all read much the same. Although true to a point, it was due to this *sameness* that people, especially the up-coming poets, stopped reading and writing in this style. As a result traditional poetry lost its appeal. So much so that a poet has little success, more so in formal verse. Not necessarily because it is bad verse, but as Murry so aptly stated— it is not *the fashion of the age*. Anyone hoping to make traditional formal verse *the fashion of the age* will be confronted with an insurmountable challenge and is doomed to fail.

There are many reasons which are responsible for this failure. It was mentioned by Murry, and it is still very appropriate today that *economic* and *social conditions* played a huge role. Both of these have great influence on what is placed before the public eye, and it is no secret that money and profit is the driving force behind the publication of verse today.

When we compare the formal structures of traditional poetry to that of free verse, the most obvious point is that it is easier to express one's self with free verse. However, this is not as simple as it may appear. As with any verse, there is good and bad regardless of its style or appeal. The overriding fact is that we need to choose the most appropriate style to convey our thoughts. Today, free verse appears to have that advantage, and so too prose.

We can think of the excitement that accompanied Chaucer's work, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Spencer to name a few of the earlier masters. Then along came Byron, Shelley and Keats. Of course there are other notables around this time. All this was quite *new* to start, but interest in it all started to fade in the early nineteenth century. Simply stated: Nothing happened. However, we should give some credit to Shelley and Keats, especially Keats who did make an attempt to give us something different. Other than this little flight of fancy, poetry was basically stagnating.

It was not until *vers libre* made its appearance on the scene that we find others (not all of the *vers libre* school) come into their own. We have the likes of Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, HD (Hilda Doolittle), T. S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams as a sample. Of all these one in particular, Ezra Pound, was in constant search of something different, something new in poetry. However Pound is one of those poets that cause some discontent due to his political beliefs. At times it is difficult to separate the poet's beliefs from the poet's work.

For a brief moment it looked promising, but poetry had suffered too much from the blight of *tradition*, and even these power-players were not successful in reinstating poetry's once fine name. Much has been written about this by Murry, Pound, Eliot, Dobrée, Saintsbury among other great critics, but the want and taste of the general public had changed. Even with the preference leaning heavily to free verse, poetry has never garnered a great appreciation in any style.

What has Changed?

The major change depends on *the fashion of the age*, and today *that* fashion is technology. Behold Facebook and Instagram! These platforms in themselves may be fine, but they are the biggest curses upon poetry.

Everyone is born a poet — a person discovering the way words sound and work, caring and delighting in words. I just kept on doing what everyone starts out doing. The real question is: Why did other people stop?

— William Stafford

Most have heard the first five words, and continue to quote them out of context essentially boiling it down to *everyone is a poet*. I suppose this type of thing can make people feel better about themselves, but as far as what is accepted as poetry, it is ridiculously simple to write. It is very much, *anything goes*, yet Stafford's complete statement hints of something very different.

Probably the greatest contribution to the demise of poetry in the twenty-first century has technology. Along with this comes a whole host of psychological minions; ego, vanity, attention seeking and the burning desire to be remembered for something — anything. Technology provides the platforms required.

Admittedly it is very difficult to get one's work to any major publishing house. Most will not accept unsolicited works whereas, independent publishers will publish (most) work for a fee, self-publishing is something similar, but you work by and for yourself. Are these *the fashions of the age*? All very well, but self-proclaimed poets need to take a step back and be able to accept some form of criticism before and after publishing, unless it is just a matter of having your name on the spine of a book.

I will admit that my comments, particularly here, are not what you would describe as friendly, but the fact is that too much mediocre and below average work is flooding the poetry market. All this can do is make it even less desirable than it already is. Do remember that I am referring to English verse, but I would imagine that similar things would be occurring elsewhere. More is the pity. No-one is asking you to agree with me, but I think you can see my point no matter how distasteful you may find it (me).

It would seem that *tradition*, as in publishing, has failed poetry in more than one way, but the popularity of poetry had begun to decline much earlier. Eliot makes many references in his letters as to the difficulty of publishing poets who are not yet heard of. The financial gain for a publishing firm would be negligible, if anything at all, and most likely at a loss. Although interestingly, what you see in both appearance and quality *then*, is far superior to what we see *now*. I realize that I have given no supporting evidence for the previous statement, but I am relying on your commonsense after looking inside a 'poetry' community. What is it you see? Everything is the same. Brain-dumps and pithy sayings mostly heard before.

I believe that the reader today often *does try* to find something in the poetry which has been presented to them. However, there is not much to discover when it is all the same. Once more, there is nothing new to see. Naturally, the more prose-like nature gives way to a more accurate description and conveyance of emotion, but this is not poetry. This is prose. Little by little, the light of poetry is being slowly extinguished.

In Conclusion

I have stated a number of times that poetry is losing its identity and appeal, yet we now find a proliferation of 'poetry' communities, especially on social media platforms. Why this apparent contradiction?

We could say that people are still looking for something new, but this is clearly not the case with such communities. In them, you will find some free verse, **much** less formal or structured verse, but a great deal of prose-like *things*. It is difficult to describe exactly what this *thing* is meant to be, but the best would be to call it *prose*.

Communities spring up for any reason, and most of this type of community do the same thing with each one thinking they are better than the other. The short answer is that people are looking for praise, compliments and attention. Hence the lack of critical comments on any piece.

The added attraction is that these groups are generally very large, so there is a greater audience. People join as many communities as possible and post the same thing into every community where most other members have likely seen it before because they too are in every possible community.

I do not think we will ever find something *new* in poetry styles. Not that poetry today is without talented writers, but they cannot all be 'Eliots' and rock the poetry world with poems of the like of *The Waste Land*, *The Hollow Men*, *Four Quartets*, *Ash Wednesday* and the list goes on.

One never knows, perhaps there is someone who may be capable of bringing poetry back to its former self. For now, *the fashion of age* is *prose* — specifically, the *novel*.
