

Book Review: Mar-Ritmi tal-Baħar. Poeżiji

Charles Bezzina

Gozo: Charles Bezzina (2018); 207 pages

REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Gozitan poet Charles Bezzina does not need any introduction; his various anthologies of poetry published over the last two decades have earned him a name among the main poets of our islands. His latest anthology is *Mar-Ritmi tal-Baħar* and it covers the period between 2014 and 2017. It contains numerous poems about various subjects which however are inspired by one central theme: the sea that surrounds us.

As I went through the anthology, I felt I was reading a diary of a different sort. *Mar-Ritmi tal-Baħar* is, in my opinion, an autobiographical piece of work, but not in the traditional sense of the term. With the clear exception of *Meta Waqgħet it-Tieqa tad-Dwejra* carrying the historical date of the 8th of March 2017, the author does not refer to particular episodes of his life by mentioning specific names or historical occurrences. Still, I perceive the anthology as autobiographical; there must have been particular moments in time when the poet felt he had to express himself through a poem after having been inspired by a situation or personal experience which he felt he could not allow to pass unnoticed. As is to be expected from our poeta tal-baħar, all the poems are somehow attached to the theme of the sea. The poet's mind feels unsettled as much as the waves of the sea move to and fro creating the natural force that renders man so tiny and insignificant. However, the poet stands to gain from the marine forces; every time he observes the movements of the sea, he feels the urge to bring pen to paper and write down his feelings which he transforms into sublime verses. The sea has the ability of stirring up from the very depths of the poet's soul, various events and thoughts that remind the poet of his past life (*Meta Lbierah Dalam Sewwa*). Sometimes it is the light reflected from the moon that brings these sentiments forth; on other occasions, it is the current of the sea itself that causes the poet to write down his poetry (*Boghod 'Il Barra*).

The sea is not the only reality that inspires our poet. Being born and bred within the European Christian tradition, Bezzina allows his Christian faith to come out and he communicates to us some unusual beautiful lyrics that express how deep his faith is. However, his religious beliefs, though rooted in his being, are considerate and somehow unobtrusive. His poem *Hobż U Inbid Irrid*



Nitolbok is simply staggering; through its lines, the divine becomes one with the human without losing any aspect of its awe. We come across the poet's wish to become one with his Creator in his other poem *Ilbierah Dħalt Infittxek* where God comes across as the divine doctor who is the only one who can sooth and cure.

Mar-Ritmi tal-Baħar is the product of multi-faceted spiritual experiences of a poet who is on an earthly journey towards his eternal home. A strong sense of solitude, a love towards mother nature and a unique ability to converse with such distinct realities varying from a mere wave to the Lord and Creator of the cosmic realities, are what make Charles Bezzina's latest anthology a must-read for all lovers of Maltese literature. It is a book of delectable poetry; every reader can take the poet's place and make each and every poem his own. While on one hand, the poems are the result of personal experiences, on the other hand, most of the poems reflect the common universal experience of man. *Mar-Ritmi tal-Baħar* is a diary that one can make his very own.