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The Poetics of Interpretation and the Production of Meaning in Ancient Satirical Poetry

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Abstract:
Satirical poetry is one of the purposes of Arabic poetry, both in ancient and modern times. While it differs from other poetic purposes in terms of vocabulary and meanings, this distinction renders it unique and imbues it with a special aesthetic. This aesthetic is linked primarily to the poet and involves a unique interpretation experienced by the recipient, expressing emotions such as anger, hatred, or annoyance. Satirical poetry holds a distinct literary quality, manifesting in the psychological and linguistic methodology used to address events, individuals, or even cities. How does the literary nature of satire affect the recipient's psyche? What impact does it leave on them? To what extent has the poetic nature of satire influenced the reader's reception?

Keywords: Ancient satirical poetry; poetics of interpretation; meaning production; poetics of satire; reading and reception.

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Introduction:
A careful examination of ancient discourse reveals a strong connection to the art of satire, which is often critiqued through the lens of ethics and the emotions and events it elicits. This raises questions about satirical texts: Are they detached from ethical underpinnings, or do they remain influenced by them? Do these texts align with the artistic characteristics of Arabic poetry? Have they conveyed beauty within ancient poetry? How did Arab culture contribute to the literary nature of satirical texts? What is the poetics of interpreting satire? And to what extent were these satirical texts received and influenced by their audience?
We believe that addressing these questions requires examining critical issues that preoccupied early critics in their efforts to uncover the artistic foundations of Arabic poetry across ages. They delved into the burdens of the self, exploring literariness and poetics to uncover the aesthetic identity of the ancient Arab poetic imagination.
Arabs, in their early desert life, lived primitively, competing for leadership. Ibn Khaldun noted that Arabs were the hardest to govern due to their pride and resistance to authority. They were quick-tempered and used both the sword and poetry to criticize their enemies.
During the Abbasid era, literature flourished, and satire emerged as a necessary phenomenon serving societal needs. Satire evolved rapidly, targeting personal flaws, even criticizing caliphs and ministers. The style leaned toward simplicity, ease, and common expressions, reflecting everyday speech. Aristotle noted that attitudes toward satire ranged from admiration for its excellence to disdain for its crudeness, as it appeals to humanity's innate love of imitation, rhythm, and learning. Satirical mockery oscillated between outright rejection and conditional acceptance, balancing harsh sarcasm and light-hearted humor with specific intent.
From the outset, satire places us in a structured, evolving framework, offering readers limitless opportunities to interpret the intricate relationships between signifiers and their dynamic meanings. Satire aims to exert its impact on the subject of criticism, often relying on brevity and innuendo to achieve this goal.

The Poetics of Interpreting Satire in Ancient Poetry:

In Arabic literature, satire is a poetic art expressing anger and mockery, contrasting praise. It mirrors the harsh,

barren land where virtues like courage and generosity are praised while cowardice, betrayal, and treachery are condemned. The satirist directs anger toward rulers, sects, religions, and doctrines, advocating one side against another. Satirical techniques range from realistic to caricature-like, explicit, and implied, with individual and collective satire addressing personal traits or broader societal issues.

Satirical poetry juxtaposes virtues with their opposites: ignorance against knowledge, cowardice against bravery, miserliness against generosity, and treachery against loyalty. Historically, satirists were seen as guardians of demons, while readers—whether as casual audiences, students, or critics—interpreted satire based on its unique poetics that resonated deeply, often more profoundly than with the creator themselves. Satirical poetics represent a functional interaction between interpretive poetics and active reception, distinguishing authenticity from falsity in literary texts.

The satirical process involves description, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation to guide readers toward a clear understanding, bridging ethics and aesthetics. The Abbasid era's literary evolution, influenced by Persian, Indian, and Syriac cultures, expanded satire's scope and its societal role.

The Aesthetics of Interpreting Satire in Ancient Poetry:

The criticism of Arabic satire highlights its unique ability to express human emotions and experiences. Key observations include its artistic openings, rhythmic dynamics, and the emotional interplay between the poet's psyche and the audience's feelings.

Satirical poetry often begins with complaints and expressions of personal turmoil, particularly during the Abbasid era, where political satire gained prominence. Such interpretations contributed to the growth of Arabic poetic creativity, enhancing its artistic depth and societal relevance.

The Poetics of Meaning Production in Ancient Satire:

Satirical poetry reflects individualism and personal experiences, addressing people or groups directly or indirectly. This style, characterized by simplicity and directness, resonated with everyday conversations, often appearing in short, impactful pieces.

Modern poetic theories have been employed to explore the meanings and symbols in satire, focusing on the rules of poetic language, which operate in two ways: either by applying the axis of selection to the axis of combination or by creating a gap between surface and deep structures. This dynamic generates innovative meanings by establishing new relationships between seemingly unrelated elements in conventional poetry.

For example, the poet Aws ibn Hajar says (1):

When a camel was tied with a saddle and cushion,
On a journey to a judge, it went astray entirely.
As if, when you approached him, his arrogance and pretension returned to him,
Like the stubbornness of a camel unwilling to drink.
It is as though I refined poetry by praising him,
Like polishing a rough, dry, lifeless rock.
Does he not accept our good deeds? While the shadows of swords
Swing over him, threateningly exchanging blows.
You intended goodness, then fell short,
Like a restless camel hindered by a tightened tether.
You withheld a little that could have benefited,
And denied me what could have been granted as a debt never recalled.
You met me on the day of Najir with words,
As light and fleeting as the breeze over wild trees.

Criticism of Satirical Poetry

Much of the criticism of satirical poetry deviated from ancient poetic standards, neglecting its core themes and essential characteristics. This was due to the dominance of ideologies promoting concepts such as nationalism, authenticity, and reform under the guise of protecting history from distortion and preserving heritage from seizure.

This poem, however, arose from a political farce that left only a bitter sense of humiliation and the severity of the situation. It employed caricature-like imagery with boldness, critiquing both the external and internal aspects of the text. Consider Al-Buhturi's verse mocking Abu Khalid ibn Ali Al-Ta'i: (2)

A life's misfortunes have weighed heavily on me,
And I address the calamities of time with reproach.
Ruins upon Wadi Nariz, for its streams flow
With no virtues to celebrate.

Driven away as the sun's radiance turned pale and glaring,
To the degraded doorway, where even its guards are not respected.
It is not the generous who are sought after for their hospitality,
Nor the noble for their gifts and rewards.
He detests offering peace so much that I thought
He chews its name like bitter colocynth in his mouth.
He sought to excuse himself but choked on his saliva,
Thinking I would stoop to rival his canine manners.
I forgave him silently, for when a contemptible person
Commits an offense, I choose not to rebuke him.
If the Ta'i mountain's peak humbles itself,
And its edges bend to enemy invaders,
It is plundered by tribes of Awad and Hamdan,
Where once it and the eastern lands were its dominion.
This happened only because its horsemen gathered
Over blunt swords that failed them in battle.
They circle around their ruined leader,
Whose feasts deny them food and drink.
When their weapons fail, they are disregarded, and when few,
Their raids on livestock are met with ease and confidence.
A lover of indulgence, who wakes at noon,
With fate shielding him, though his deeds are blackened.
He is preoccupied with his concerns on both sides,
Distracted even when his friends and loved ones visit.
A mount for thieves, carrying burdens
That weigh its shoulders as if for another owner.
Abu Khalid, may God never reward you with goodness,
For you are nothing but a billy goat, failing its milker.

As observed in this poem, even Arab politicians are not exempt from critique. The focus on oral interpretation emphasizes the connection to people's realities, addressing their daily concerns and striving to reform societal corruption by engaging the active intellect against the prevailing mindset. This approach compels the critic to diagnose societal ailments, identifying their causes to prescribe effective remedies. Naturally, the emphasis is placed on these societal, moral, and political maladies due to their detrimental impact on society (3).

Thus, the reception of Arabic poetry has remained confined to value-based interpretation and the generation of meanings that, despite attempts to break free, align with humanistic and universal concerns (4). Critics often highlight the poet's call to the audience to adopt virtues opposite to the vices he condemns, producing an alternate meaning that clarifies the intended message. Consider Al-Mutanabbi's lines in *For the Desires of Souls, Secrets Unknown (5)*:

His eyelids do not rest, as if afflicted
With an ailment or pierced by sour grape juice.
When he gestures while speaking, he resembles
A laughing monkey or a wailing old woman.
He appears smallest when he speaks,
And most dishonest when he swears.

The poet pays particular attention to the external appearance of his subjects, attributing humorous and grotesque caricature-like qualities to them, turning them into vile animals. These individuals, who held power and authority in reality, are degraded into objects of ridicule. For instance, in Al-Mutanabbi's depiction of Kafur, he portrays him as a grotesque character, driven by racial pride and arrogance. Al-Mutanabbi saw Kafur only as an old slave, a thick-lipped black man subjected to public mockery (6).

The production of meaning with such audacity and elevated confidence in satire reflects a semiotic focus on the connotative perspective. It explores poetic language's distinctive, deviant features, driving the style toward simplicity and freeing poetic symbols from the dichotomy of signifier/signified. Instead, it emphasizes how meaning emerges through the fusion of its components and the adaptation of its presentation in simple ways.

The violence of reality and the spirit of the era, as we see it, have given rise to the violent caricature—images and scenes that appear outwardly humorous and playful but carry a painful, poignant purpose. Through

descriptive imagery, we find mockery and sarcasm amplified, targeting political figures such as ministers and caliphs, even extending to parents. For example, the poet Al-Hutayya mocked his own mother (7):

May God reward you with harm, old woman,
And bring you disobedience from your sons.
Move away, sit far from us—
May God relieve the world of you.
Are you a sieve for secrets entrusted to you,
Or a furnace for those who converse with you?
Have I not shown you my hatred explicitly?
Yet I doubt you even comprehend.
Your life, as I see it, is a life of disgrace,
And your death would bring joy to the righteous.

As we notice, the imagery in this satire is explicit yet delicately veiled, maintaining the poetic nature of the verse. This balance represents a disruption of traditional criteria for Arabic poetry, as modern critics perceive it. Using static caricature-like imagery, poets created satirical pictures—some familiar to the point of losing novelty, and others defying classical boundaries. This reflects the unification of intellectual and emotional commitment, aiming first to elevate human thought and transform ideas, and second, to improve actions and their outcomes.

Regardless of how original or imitative a text may be, the poet's main concern is to expose people's deceptions and drag them down to a degrading level. Therefore, his speech is often straightforward, avoiding elaborate imagery or excessive hints and symbols. The texts we have relied on encapsulate the caricature-like tendency to depict flaws in an ugly manner on the one hand and to explicitly identify the subject of ridicule on the other, making the satire all the more painful.

Some poets approach their texts comprehensively, addressing all aspects, while others focus on a single facet they consider most important to illuminate the text and make it more accessible. For instance, some studies regard rhythm as the key to unlocking the text's essence, while others emphasize symbolism and poetic imagery. Meanwhile, many interpretations explore the encoding nature of poetry, revealing the interplay between verbal sarcasm and mockery rooted in imagery. Caricature becomes a "drawing formed by words charged with emotion and feeling," (9) using human actions to portray flaws grotesquely. The combination of these elements enriches the text and enhances its appeal. Focusing on caricature as a tool of satire highlights the harshness of the times, in the words of the poet: *"Delicate meanings hidden in the mind, as if they were embodied so the eyes could see them." (10)*

The text abounds with actions that fill its space, unfolding rapidly to evoke an atmosphere of conflict. Here, the path is the intricate structure of actions and imagery. The poet has constructed an organized framework that manifests in the parallelism of poetic lines and their linguistic proximity.

Thus, Arab literary criticism has persistently occupied a militant space, revolutionizing it with a heroic and symbolic dimension. It seeks to convince us of the poetic gains linked to the collective aesthetic identity of the nation. In this poem, what stands out most is the detailed depiction of actions in the poetic scene—from the subtlest revealing movements to the interpretative meanings they produce.

The poet narrates in a concentrated cinematic language, generating vivid images that resonate with the audience's emotions and integrate seamlessly. This creates a precise, detail-rich depiction. In our view, these actions could not vividly portray the satirized figure's repulsiveness without being rooted in harsh traits: *"In his nature, he is coarse; in his writing, severe; he was openly hostile and evidently arrogant." (11)*

The writer's freedom lies in how others perceive and engage with his work, as he deems appropriate. This understanding makes art a complement to life and an extension of existence. Those who wish to infringe upon this freedom aim to evoke eternal moments born from the self and embodied in language. No matter how much methodologies attempt to penetrate this freedom, they remain theoretical gains, lacking the fervor of creativity that gave rise to such moments. Consider the words of Bishr ibn Abi Hazm (12):

The protection of the tribe of La'am has ceased,
No sheep are spared, no camels returned.
They are the vilest of people while they live,
And the most rotten when buried in their graves.
Cowards uncovered in the morning of terror,
When swords leave their scabbards and stand bare.
Their lowest ranks break the covenant of their neighbor,

And they never lift up a poor man among them.
When you come to them seeking generosity,
You find goodness with them scarce and elusive.
Whoever is ignorant of the tribe of La'am,
Will find me knowledgeable of them, fully aware.

Satire is a branch of Arabic lyrical poetry where the poet expresses feelings of anger and mockery. It can be considered the art of insults and sharp criticism, reflecting the opposites of virtues, such as ignorance versus knowledge, cowardice versus courage, stinginess versus generosity, and treachery versus loyalty.

In ancient Arab society, life was shaped by competition and valor. Ibn Khaldun noted that Arabs were among the most difficult nations to govern due to their ruggedness, pride, and spirit of rivalry. An Arab would rebel against any authority that restricted his freedom and would quickly resort to sword and poetry to confront his enemies.

This temperament stemmed from harsh living conditions and poverty, where courage and generosity were highly valued, and cowardice and betrayal were condemned. The satirical poet directed his criticism and anger toward rulers, governors, and emirs, and also addressed ideologies, religions, and beliefs, often aligning himself with specific factions, resembling a political party or religious sect.

Satire employs various styles, including:

- **Realistic Satire**: Depicting the satirized person as they are.
- **Sarcastic Caricature**: Using exaggerated humor.
- **Explicit Satire**: Clearly naming the satirized individual.
- **Implied Satire**: Alluding subtly to the target.

Types of satire include:

- **Individual Satire**: Targeting a specific person.
- **Group Satire**: Directed at a particular community.
- **Moral Satire**: Highlighting ethical flaws.
- **Physical Satire**: Criticizing physical attributes.

During the Abbasid era, literature flourished significantly, and satire emerged as a vital tool for societal critique. In this period, satire evolved to address political, ideological, personal, and social issues. It focused on uncovering hidden flaws, even among caliphs and ministers. The satire of this era was characterized by its simplicity and directness, mirroring the language of daily life. Short poetic compositions were commonly used for their efficiency and clarity in delivering messages.

Understanding and Producing Meaning in Satirical Poetry

The aim of satire is often to uncover the implicit depth of meaning and its aesthetic elements. Algerian poetry has paid particular attention to this aspect, using a semiotic reading approach to unravel internal relationships. This approach presents satire in a grotesque and exaggerated manner, enhanced by caricature-like qualities. Examining the distorted and repellent imagery reveals the poet's intention to expose the flaws of the satirized and delve into their psyche through vivid, repelling rhetorical imagery designed to "stimulate the listener's attention and provoke their focus." (13)

Despite comprehensive engagement with the themes of Arabic poetry and their validation, the accompanying critical movement often appeared cautious and subjective. It was influenced by ideologies, repetitive patterns, and purely historical dominance. These patterns, as some claim, lie at the core of objective vision in what this perspective advocates.

From the standpoint of divergent interpretations, there is an aspiration to establish a general theory for the effectiveness of poetic discourse. This endeavor does not explore the roots of creative activity but instead seeks to deconstruct its structures. It draws inspiration from critical methods derived from the formation of literary discourse, its societal and aesthetic functions, and its relationship with varying levels and modes of reception and their meanings.

However, what happened with the Emir of Aleppo was repeated with the ruler of Egypt, whom Al-Mutanabbi turned against due to neglect. He insulted him, saying:

And though Al-Mutanabbi satirized Egypt for its ruler, the Andalusian poet Abu Bakr Ibn Bajja satirized his own land due to the hardships and poverty he endured there. Having witnessed the transformation of its conditions during the era of the Taifa kings, he said:
I stayed among you in deprivation and want,
Had I been free and proud, I would not have stayed.

I kept weeping on your behalf, hoping you'd awaken,
Yet you've slept, oblivious to generosity.
I have no livelihood with you, but I'll seek it
In lands where provisions are decreed.
Neither does your orchard yield fruit
Nor does your sky shower rain.
If Andalusia turns harsh for me,
I will head to Iraq, and rise there with honor.

The poet centers his mockery and scorn on intellectuals, reaching the peak of vindication when the cultured become the satirized. Yet, satire in the poem is not limited to the intellectuals; it extends to the public, whom the poet accuses of heedlessness and ignorance. This satire essentially transforms intellectual images, which call for reflection and contemplation, into theatrical scenes designed for amusement and entertainment, serving as tools for either knowledge or sensation.

Despite the skill in taste and broad reflection this process requires, the modern critic has managed to craft a reflective, productive vision in light of it. This vision involves both the producer and the receiver of the discourse, merging sensation with artistic creation. It affirms the poet's generative ability to achieve the vision and convey the intended idea. The poet intensifies the effect of various rhetorical forms in constructing the text and divides the poem into four artistic panels, reflecting a life of security, peace, tranquility, and serenity (14). For example, consider Al-Buhturi's satire of the poet Al-Khath'ami (15):

Now I know that resurrection is true,
And that God does whatever He wills.
I saw Al-Khath'ami lift a nose so lofty,
It tightens even the vastness of space.
He ascends so high that all who aim fall short,
His awe chokes the very air around him.
He is the mountain, without whose peaks
The heavens would fall to the earth.

The focus on resistance and historical discourse came at the expense of aesthetic and artistic aspects, with reality becoming the supreme narrative in every creative experience. This approach preserved the characteristics of an unchanging reality. However, critical experiments often failed to separate symbolic and poetic elements from the realistic and mundane. Consequently, they added little to readers' understanding of modern Algerian poetry and may have obscured the true nature of the literary void accompanying the disappointment of reception. This void stemmed not only from a lack of innovative forms but, more importantly, from the absence of viable readings that could uncover the reasons and meanings behind this void. Among the outcomes of this void was a sociological interest in the system of classical Arabic literature. This focus sometimes highlighted the true causes of the void, attributing them to a lack of awareness regarding disrupted references. The limitations of interpretative visions and the tendency toward didacticism also contributed to this issue.

Nonetheless, this vision occasionally touched on the reasons for transformation in the stance of classical Arabic literature. This transformation wasn't solely driven by admiration for poetry but also by proving its worth, creating a dynamic interplay between opposites that enriched the image and fostered reciprocal influence (16). He is Abu 'Ubada al-Walid ibn 'Ubayd ibn Yahya al-Ta'i, considered one of the three greatest poets of his time alongside Al-Mutanabbi and Abu Tammam. He was born in Manbij near Aleppo, and his poetry was famously described as "Chains of Gold." When asked about him, Al-Ma'arri was once queried, "Who among the three is the best poet?" He replied, "Al-Mutanabbi and Abu Tammam are philosophers, but Al-Buhturi is truly a poet." Numerous books and essays have been written about him since ancient times. He died in 284 AH. Among his poems is a satire on Bedouin life (17):

When they part after a battle, their blood unavenged,
They gather again for another, with bloodshed continuing.
A soft maiden disparages her husband's valor,
If he lies beside her without avenging the blood of kin.
It's the fervor of ignorant rebellion, a pride like that of the Kulayb tribe,
Which bends not even strong men to submission.
Warriors of chaos, their hearts surge with hatred,
So much that even their armor feels tight.

They kill the noblest souls to quench vendettas,
With hands barely willing to obey their resolve.
When they clash, blood spills forth one day,
Then, remembering kinship, tears overflow.
Lances sever ties of kin as they sever lives,
And kinship is blamed, a bond ever despised.

On Ibn al-Rumi (18):

Ibn al-Rumi, whose full name is Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Abbas ibn Jurayj (or George), was a major Abbasid poet ranked alongside Al-Mutanabbi and Bashar ibn Burd. He was notorious for his biting satire, which ultimately led to his death by poisoning at the hands of Al-Mu'tadid's minister, whom he had insulted in verse. Born, raised, and deceased in Baghdad, Ibn al-Rumi was known for his sharp tongue; he often turned against those he praised, discouraging patrons from seeking his eulogies. This might explain why his poetry is less celebrated than that of his contemporaries. Among his satirical works is a poem targeting a man named Amr (19):

O master whose branches never cease to shelter roots,
Can someone like Amr impose humiliation on me while his days persist?
Can someone like Amr insult me intentionally,
While no blade is drawn to settle the score?
Does he not see your wrath for me?
Like death swirling in the blade of a sword.
O Amr, floods have carried you away;
Woe to your mother and her despair.
Your face, O Amr, is long,
And in dogs' faces, there is also length.
Tell me, where is your shame, O dog?
But dogs, alas, cannot answer!
The dog is known for its aggression,
And treachery is the dog's trait.
All the dog's flaws are found in you,
Except they may depart, while in you they remain.

On Ibn al-Mu'tazz:

Ibn al-Mu'tazz, Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Mu'tazz Billah ibn al-Mutawakkil ibn al-Mu'tasim ibn Harun al-Rashid, was an Abbasid poet and caliph who ruled for just one day and night. As a poet of the Abbasid era, he excelled in both verse and prose. He was a poet at heart, uninterested in governance, but when Al-Muqtadir became caliph, military commanders deposed him, deeming him too young, and appointed Ibn al-Mu'tazz, naming him "Al-Murtada Billah." However, his reign lasted only a day, as Al-Muqtadir's loyalists overthrew him and reinstated the caliph. Ibn al-Mu'tazz was handed over to his servant Mu'nis, who strangled him. Among his poetry is a piece lamenting the hypocrisy of fair-weather friends:

A companion of ill-repute, with many faces for me,
And a drum in his mouth, beating my secrets aloud.
When he abandons friends, he turns bitter,
Causing my throat to choke with his venom.
Yet I cannot do without him; at times, he bites me,
And at others, he relents, though my face remains furrowed.
Like the waters of the Hajj route at every stop,
Blamed for its taste but still consumed by all.

The choice of poems often hinges on the emotional resonance they evoke in the audience, which is heightened when the work contains substantive expressive elements tied to a specific narrative or occasion. These compositions, often accompanied by contextual backstories, illuminate the relationship between the poet and his subject, revealing the inspiration behind the verses. Such poetry is not only a reflection of its creator but also an artistic mirror of others, blending personal expression with universal truths (20).

The Interactive Reception of Classical Satirical Poetry:

It is natural for poetry, like other forms of art, to remain connected to life. However, poetry should not be reduced to mere historical recounting or a reflection of reality. The essence of poetry lies in its ability to imagine possibilities, free from the constraints of specific situations or conditions. If it must adhere to anything, critics

would better invest their efforts in exploring the absence of literary meaning that accompanied the experience of Arabic poetry.

Historical events influence the nature of art produced by humans across ages. This is a natural outcome of reactive interactions that shape the essence of art. Yet, the artist's vision transcends the tangible and individual reality. Through an exploratory perspective, the artist examines the potentialities of existence, beginning with an observation of its most tense and contentious moments.

Reality is replete with diverse debates, challenges, and confrontations, which the creative artist absorbs into a literary framework. All these elements contribute to the historical and artistic level of poetry and explain the author's mode of reception. This approach is akin to targeted reading, focusing on thematic elements such as romantic odes, praise, and satire, reflecting the dynamic nature of time, movement, and existence in the objective world (21).

A Satirical Poem by Al-Buhturi (22):

I shall never forget Hind, the last of the ages,
Despite the passing of time and its turns.
On the day she approached us, playful and kind,
Her new allure came from mischievous acts.
She delighted men, healing them with her smile,
Like the dew of clouds or the juice of grapes.
With large eyes, a soft gaze, and a curved nose,
She was slender-waisted, full-hipped, and noble.
She arrived, adorned in a fine-patterned robe,
Moving like water rippling over pebbles.
She was no rough desert dweller of humble lineage,
Sharing drinks with shepherds in crude vessels.
Nor did she bear the lineage of meanness,
Bringing forth the basest of children, ill-bred.
When poetry was granted to her, I said,
"Surely resting suits her better than haste."
Al-Buhturi, whose face we recognize as disgraceful,
For we've never seen a man of decency with such a face.
How could he produce the sharpest verses,
When his visage bears the mark of shame?
A man whose large beard grows in renown,
More suited to ridicule than poetic creation.

Satire arises from differing interpretations and understandings of texts by the poet. It aspires to establish a general theory of poetic discourse's effectiveness, not by examining the origins of creative activity but by deconstructing its structures. It draws inspiration from critical methods that analyze the formation of literary discourse, its societal and aesthetic functions, and its relationship with different modes and patterns of reception.

The Poetics of Reception in Satirical Poetry:

In the map of Arabic poetry, society has been given a broader space, as its demands have intensified among audiences due to the impact of poetry on them. This need became more pronounced as writers strengthened their ties with their communities, seeking to challenge the persistence of customs and attitudes that inspired satirical language.

This pressure led poets to repeatedly explore specific poetic themes, saturating audiences with them and lowering their expectations for anything that could evoke amazement or admiration. Among the most notable of these themes was praise, which came to be seen by many as synonymous with flattery, begging, and sycophancy due to its excessive treatment across all eras of literature. "As the painting, so is the poetry." (23)

While the experience of satirical poetry holds sociological and historical importance, it often stopped at describing and documenting texts without questioning them. This approach failed to account for the aesthetic distinction between what qualifies as poetry and what merely expresses it. Moreover, it reduced all creativity to a mere reflection of people's concerns and frustrations, as seen in Mahmoud Sami Al-Baroudi's satirical lines (24):

A companion, like the burdens of the soul, confronts me,
Caught between my collarbone and my innards.

If he speaks good, it is by accidental intent;
If he speaks evil, it is by purpose and design.
He commits wrong only after preparing for it,
And he refrains only after causing harm.
I associated with him for a time, with no prior acquaintance,
Yet he proved more deadly than the gravest illness.
He seeks my favor, but his deeds ruin his entirety—
How can one live after being mortally wounded?
May God never bless him wherever he is,
And may his actions bring him nothing but misfortune.

The Interactive Reception of Satirical Poetry:

Some literary genres, such as satire, have acquired negative connotations in the minds of audiences due to poets' rebellion against the traditional boundaries of these genres (25). This rebellion has led both audiences and critics to adopt negative attitudes toward them. Satire is a prime example of this phenomenon, as it often defies limits, evoking reactions like "neither earth confines it, nor does the sky, and no reason restrains it." Such perceptions compel critics or interpreters to delve into texts, unlocking their various layers, both apparent and hidden.

The system that generates metaphors, symbols, metonymies, and similes remains perplexing, despite the advancements in linguistic criticism enabled by the progress of linguistics. This complexity has inspired critics to adopt various interpretative approaches to devise methods for assessing literary meaning.

Many aspects can define the uniqueness or core characteristics of a single literary text. This openness allows for specialized perspectives in analyzing and interpreting texts. However, when satire is mentioned, associations with insult, slander, and personal vengeance often come to mind.

This explains why audiences have generally held more negative views of satire than of praise. Although ancient critics emphasized satire's value as a genre, they also stressed the importance of boundaries that poets should observe when engaging in it. Satire "achieves nothing out of nothingness (26)," as illustrated in the poet Al-Hutayya's verses (27):

Step away and sit far from us—
May God relieve the world of your burden.
Are you a sieve when entrusted with secrets?
Or a furnace on those who confide in you?
Did I not make my enmity clear to you?
Yet I doubt you have the sense to grasp it.
Your life, as I see it, is a wretched one,
And your death would surely please the virtuous.

Despite its controversial nature, satire has been a vital part of Arabic poetry. Early criticism sought to explore its reception and analyze its deeper meaning, though this effort often prioritized content over form and aesthetics. Modern criticism, however, has benefited from advances in methodology, introducing more nuanced approaches and perspectives to understand satire's significance.

Semiotic Reception of Satirical Poetry:

Modern semiotic criticism has employed new tools and perspectives to analyze poetic structures and their components. This has allowed for more comprehensive interpretations, as seen in Al-Suyuti's discussion of Dhu al-Rumma, where he remarked:

"His poetry was beautiful, his comparisons excellent and skillful. Yet, he was neither a scornful satirist nor an excessive eulogist. A poet, however, is one who scorns to humiliate and praises to elevate—words that resonate, filling the mouth and striking the ear."(28)

The Poetics of Reading Satirical Poetry:

The contemplative approach that transitions from explanation to interpretation attempts to highlight unrealized possibilities while advocating for independence and exploration of literary uniqueness. However, traditional Arab criticism often viewed texts as fixed entities rather than open systems of possibilities. Consequently, sociological reception of satirical poetry has remained confined to its social nature, failing to transcend predetermined notions about its scope.

As Al-Mutanabbi lamented in his satire (29):

I never thought I'd live to see a time
When a vile dog would insult me and be praised.

He extended his satire to critique entire cities, as in his verses about Egypt, where he felt his status as a poet was disregarded:

Whenever a vile servant kills his master
Or betrays him, Egypt rewards him with rank.
Egypt's guards have slumbered as foxes roam;
They are now sated, yet the vineyards remain.

Not content with criticizing the city, Al-Mutanabbi targeted its people:

I came as a guest to liars whose hospitality
Offers neither food nor farewell gifts.
Their generosity comes only from their tongues—
May they and their false generosity perish.
Death does not claim one of their souls
Without a foul stick in his hand to endure its stench.

Satire, as a literary genre, occupies a complex space in Arabic poetry. It combines sharp criticism with aesthetic finesse, challenging societal norms and individual flaws. However, its reception has often been shaped by preconceived notions, limiting its appreciation. By embracing contemporary interpretative methods, critics and readers can uncover the intricate layers of satire, exploring its artistic and cultural dimensions.

Parallel to the deviations of texts, reading seeks to understand and interpret the nature of these deviations. One of the greatest outcomes of reading is that it offers us multiple opportunities to contemplate and explore a text. Therefore, crafting an appropriate poetic image within the domains of praise and satire becomes a prerequisite for earning the title of "poet."

Through these genres, critics can assess a poet's creative standing. Al-Jahiz also highlighted the value of satire by referencing the Arabs' awareness of avoiding causes for satire and their manner of dealing with satirical poets. This underscores their methodology and logical approach to uncovering truths.

The goal of such efforts is to uncover the semantic depth of implicit meanings and their aesthetic components. Algerian poetry has addressed this issue through semiotic readings, which focus on unraveling internal relationships. This is reflected in Rabah Bouhouche's interpretation of metaphor's role in sacrificial, ascendant poetic discourse, relying on the principle of displacement and the intensity of suggestiveness, as demonstrated in these verses.

Arabic literary criticism has sought to adopt the semiotic method as a theoretical framework for reading, drawing on Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic system while maintaining certain contextual, societal, and cultural values linked to the unity of the creative self. Al-Jahiz noted that Arabs feared satire's impact on their descendants, as it could disgrace both the living and the dead. For instance, when the poet Abd Yaghuth ibn Waqas al-Harithi was captured by the Banu Tamim at the Battle of Day of al-Kulab, they bound his tongue to silence him, illustrating that "the legitimacy of self comes through the annihilation of the other." (30)

The issue was never with the genres of praise or satire themselves—no explicit prohibition exists against them—but rather with the poets' approach. This determines whether audiences accept or reject their work. Ancient critics emphasized the need to avoid excessive and vulgar satire, which targets personal integrity. Such satirical works are often considered "classical images that do not go beyond direct description of tangible things." (31)

Reading literature through the lens of history or the sociology of literary phenomena has often been challenging for critics, given the inherent deviation of literary works from pure realism. This deviation stems from their imaginative, symbolic, and emotionally suggestive qualities.

Figurative imagery—expressing intended meaning through similes, metaphors, and metonymies while avoiding literal interpretations—enhances the text's strength and beauty. For example, Ibn al-Rumi's satirical verses demonstrate such imagery (32):

O 'Amr, torrents have swept you away—
Woe and ruin be upon your mother.
Your face, O 'Amr, is long,
And so is the face of a dog.
Tell me, where is your shame, O dog?
But a dog cannot reply.
The dog is known for its aggression,
And treachery is its nature.

The dog's flaws are all in you,
Except they leave the dog, but not you.

Symbolism in Satirical Poetry:

Symbolism employs linguistic tools to convey deeper meanings by referencing historical, cultural, or religious concepts. For instance, a poet satirized the Abbasid minister Ubayd Allah ibn Khaqan and his scribe Ibn Yazdad using verses from the Quran (Surah Al-Takwir) as symbols of the ruin caused during their tenure (33):

Ibn Yazdad is twisted and deformed,
Yet he recites, "When the sun is folded up."
Tell Ubayd Allah: You revived my state,
Only to shatter its remains ("And the ships were abandoned").
When distinguishing among fools,
Your voices turn lively ruins into emptiness.

Here, the poet skillfully uses imagination to build artistic imagery, employing metaphors that leave a profound impact. Al-Buhturi used similar methods in his satirical verses (34):

The day of your birth calls for condolences,
While the day of your death invites celebration.
If a man commits evil for your sake,
He is rewarded for his good intentions.

During the Abbasid era, poets enjoyed greater freedom in choosing their poetic themes, particularly in the realm of satire. Ministers, governors, and princes were more tolerant of satire, often confronting it without resorting to bloodshed, except in rare cases. For instance, Caliph Al-Ma'mun tolerated satirical poetry directed at him by the poet Du'bel Al-Khuza'i and did not punish him. Du'bel, known for his satirical poetry, continued his sharp critique, even targeting the Caliphs Al-Mu'tasim and Al-Wathiq simultaneously, as exemplified in his verse *(35):*

A Caliph Died, and No One Grieved for Him,
Another Rose, and None Rejoiced for Him.
The Misery of the First Faded with Him,
And Misery and Wretchedness Came with the Second.

On Satirizing Minister Al-Khaqani (36):

Known for his poor administration and acceptance of bribes, the poet said:

The bureaus have been wailing since you took charge,
And the treasury suffers from a long illness.
When crises come your way, you meet them
With feeble insight and a mind so frail.

Building on this perspective, critical studies transitioned from a single interpretation to a horizon of analysis that destabilized rigid standards. It required the reader to possess a reception competence—a combination of refined taste and intellectual acuity to interpret symbols and implications. As Ibn Al-Athir noted, there is an "excess that the virtuous and the honorable avoid." However, the rebellion of certain poets against such clear guidelines led to their works being perceived by some audiences as beyond the realm of creativity and artistry. These works became "the window through which the mind receives the winds of life" as fate would have it (37).

Ibn Al-Mu'tazz Criticizes a Fast Imam (38):

We have an imam who's a burden
But swift in the spirit of prayer.
He rushes through it, pecking quickly,
Without a proper recitation.
As if he were a rider, you'll see him
Hastening with all his might.

If it is self-evident that the symbolism of mythology lies in its structural and artistic purpose, then Eid Al-Malik Murtad links, in theory, the content of expression to artistic construction. Yet, this separation fades in practical application. Whether the poet Muhammad Al-Eid Al-Khalifa successfully embodied this symbolism aesthetically and semantically or not, he sought to create an ideal image reflecting the Arab reader's aspiration for freedom and its reclamation.

Conclusion:

From the foregoing, we can deduce that the literary nature of satirical texts in classical Arabic literature was not an isolated historical phenomenon. Instead, it was a multifaceted art form deeply intertwined with the

realities of its time. When analyzing the works of early satirists, we find an interconnection between the artistic and the ethical, a blend of the psychological and the mythical, and a discussion of the text that often involved its reception by audiences.

When moving from the text itself to its reception, which received significant critical focus, it becomes evident how profoundly the socio-historical context influenced critics' perceptions of this genre. The brevity and eloquence of satire, for instance, emerged within a unique cultural framework reflecting the tribulations of the Arab psyche.

Despite the clever attempts to apply semiotic methodologies, some critics found this approach overburdened certain poetic texts with a surplus of theoretical tools and critical terminology. However, this does not diminish the depth of applied practices or the analytical rigor in developing inductive reasoning, which paved the way toward semantic dynamism.

The nature of poetry remained enigmatic, often seen as a symbolic activity evoking meanings of love and beauty. Like other arts, poetry was tied to metaphysics and mythology until it evolved into a semantic system where language became its core material.

It is likely that poetry's detachment from the rhythms of nature and its association with human activity and daily life transformed it into a functional system aiming to impart new meanings. This shift prompted critics to explore the structure of this system in depth.

Thus, language became the reader's path to understanding. Algerian criticism acknowledges this through applied practices that reveal a progressive vision and mature awareness of the poet's distinct engagement with words, meanings, and symbols. Notably, the critic Rabah Bouhouche exemplified this advanced perspective by merging traditional values with modern innovations through a deconstructive reading that highlighted the absurd's dramatic aesthetics.

This vision relies on tracing words in their interrelationships and proximities, uncovering their latent meanings. Such insights are only possible through a profound mastery of the laws of poetic language, often referred to as "sublime poetic language."

In the Abbasid era, literature flourished, and satire emerged as a vital tool for serving society. Satirical poetry during this period was the most responsive to developments, addressing personal flaws and societal vices, including those of caliphs and ministers. Satire leaned towards simplicity in style and expression, reflecting the colloquial language of the people.

In conclusion, satire and humor in classical Arabic poetry played a significant role in Arabic literature, serving as a creative and ingenious medium for expressing social and political critique.

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