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### CRITIQUE ON ARABIC LITERATURE IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC ERA

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#### ABSTRACT

This article presents a comprehensive critique of Arabic literature in the Pre-Islamic Era, known as "Jahiliyyah" (الجاهلية). This term was originally associated with ignorance in the sense of idiocy and pessimism. The article delves into the various features of literary criticism during this era, including levels of criticism and the titles of notable poets.

In the Pre-Islamic Era, poets were recognized by different titles reflecting their mastery of poetry and emotive expression. Critics played a significant role during this period, attracting poets seeking their judgment. Critics often expressed favoritism towards certain poems, poets, tribes, or the entire Arab community, and this preference influenced their critical judgments.

The most famous critical judgments were directed at the "Mu'allaqat" (المعلقات), exceptional poems hung proudly on the Kaaba walls. Pre-Islamic criticism lacked fixed and written rules, relying on the critic's literary instinct and taste. It encompassed linguistic, moral, and thematic criticism.

The article explores the concept of "ijazah", where one poet completes the verse of another in a seamless manner, showcasing the depth of understanding and linguistic sensitivity of the second poet.

The article sheds light on the significance of literary criticism during the Pre-Islamic Era, its role in refining poetry, and the emergence of poets as skilled critics, contributing to the development of Arabic literature.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

This article provides a comprehensive critique of Arabic literature during the Pre-Islamic Era, known as "Jahiliyyah." It explores various aspects of literary criticism during this period, the titles of notable poets, and the significance of critics in refining poetry. Overall, it highlights the role of critics in shaping Arabic literature before the rise of Islam.

### ***Objectives:***

- To examine the concept of "Jahiliyyah" (الجاهلية) in the context of the pre-Islamic Arabic literature and its relation to ignorance, idiocy, and pessimism.
- To explore the different levels of literary criticism prevalent in the pre-Islamic era, including self-criticism, special criticism among poets, and general criticism from the wider Arab community.
- To analyze the significance of titles and special names given to poets in the pre-Islamic era as indicators of their mastery in poetry and ability to convey emotions.
- To highlight the importance of the Arabic novel as a critical tool for broadcasting and publishing poetry, and its role in shaping and refining the literary artistry of poets during the pre-Islamic period.

### ***The Research Method:***

The methodology used in this article is descriptive and analytical. The author describes various aspects of criticism in pre-Islamic Arabic literature and analyzes the levels of criticism, titles of poets, and the concept of preferring one poet over another. The article relies on historical and literary sources to support its arguments and draw conclusions about the nature of literary criticism in the pre-Islamic era.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The literature review of this article examines various aspects of criticism, including linguistic criticism, moral criticism, and criticism of meter and rhythm. It emphasizes the concept of showing preference for one poet over another and how critics played a pivotal role in refining and educating poets. The review also discusses the importance of the Mu'allaqat (المعلقات) poems, which were highly praised during that era. Additionally, the review acknowledges the role of narrators, who acted as broadcasters of poetry and played a major role in criticism. Overall, the literature review indicates that literary criticism was a well-established and respected practice during the Pre-Islamic Era, contributing to the refinement and elevation of poetry in Arabic literature.

### *Research Questions :*

1. What is the meaning and significance of the term "Jahiliyyah" (الجاهلية) in pre-Islamic Arabic literature?
2. What were the different forms and levels of literary criticism in the pre-Islamic era?
3. How were poets in the pre-Islamic era evaluated and judged by critics and the public?
4. What was the significance and impact of the Mu'allaqat (المعلقات) poems in pre-Islamic literary criticism?
5. How did the concept of the novel play a significant role in criticism and the dissemination of poetry in the pre-Islamic era?

The word "Jahiliyyah" is taken from ignorance, as Shawqi Dhaif explains that the word "Jahiliyya" which was given to that era, is not derived from ignorance (the opposite of knowledge) but rather it refers to ignorance in the sense of idiocy and pessimism. It is also clear that this word was used for indiscretion and foolishness.<sup>1</sup>

Jahiliyyah does not mean lack of knowledge of sciences such as medicine, astrology, and so on but in the terminology of historians or commentators it is the unsophisticated era.

The word "Jahiliyyah" is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in four subjects, including:

يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ<sup>2</sup>

We define criticism linguistically: distinguishing dirhams, and Ibn al-Manzur mentioned it like this, and it came in Lisan al-Arab that it is removing falsehood from it<sup>3</sup>.

**The idiomatic meaning:** It shows that the word is not far from the original linguistic meaning, which is the distinction between good poetry and bad poetry<sup>4</sup>.

**The terminological concept:** It is the study, interpretation, analysis, and balance of literary works with others, and then judging them to clarify the value and literary degree<sup>5</sup>. We know that criticism is closely related to literature, whether it is poetry or prose.

**Literature in language:** Actually, it is a supplication that the writer is praised among the people because it is politeness that invites people to praise, and keeps

<sup>1</sup> Ahmed Shawky Deif, Tarikh Ai Adab Al Arabi, Al Asar Al Jahili p. 39

<sup>2</sup> Surah Al-Imran, Ayah: 154

<sup>3</sup> Lisan Al Arab, Muhammad bin Mukaram Ibn Ali Manzur Al Afriqi, Bab Al Dal, Fasal Al Noon Dar Sader, Beirut, Tabah Al Thaltha-1414<sup>h</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Naqd Al Sher, le Qudamah Bin Qudamah Al Baghdadi, Abu Al Faraj, Almutawafi 337h, Mutbat Al

jawaeb, Qustantiniyah, Al tabah Al Aula 1302, S2

<sup>5</sup> Tarikh Al Naqd Al Adabi end Al Arab, Dr Ehsan Abas, S4

them away from taboos, and it is also said that food that invites people to an invitation or banquet<sup>6</sup>.

**Literature in terminology:** composition or eloquent speech that is intended to influence the emotions of readers and listeners, whether it is poetry or prose<sup>7</sup>. The word literature is one of the words that changed its meaning during the time with the change of Arab life and its transition from the role of the Bedouins to the roles of civilization<sup>8</sup>.

***Some aspects of criticism in Arabic literature in the pre-Islamic era, which is the (Al Asr Al Jahiliyyah):***

With the development of the time, criticism is rooted in literature in terms of text. The most important aspects of literary criticism in the pre-Islamic era<sup>9</sup> are that the criticism, in its essence, is a judgment issued from a comprehensive perspective of art in general or of poetry in particular, but this judgment is not random to begin with the stages of tasting, i.e. the ability to discriminate in interpretation, inference, analysis, justification, and evaluation, and the steps are logically sequential in the discriminatory power, But this approach is not achieved in the oral tradition, because oral speech cannot be considered and meditated on, and for this reason organized criticism has been delayed until the rules related to authorship are rooted, which paves the way for examination, alteration and consideration<sup>10</sup>.

**Some titles of poets in the Jahiliyyah:** Poets in pre-Islamic times were given different titles and various special names to show the extent of the poet's mastery of poetry and his ability to express his feelings and art in different ways.<sup>11</sup> Al-Jahiz mentioned that the poet was called a poet: because the poet feels different feelings, feelings that no one else feels. If the poet does not have the ability to generate meaning he cannot invent words reduce a word and invent it or add other meanings that do not belong to it, or reduce other words, or transfer a meaning to another side, or put some words that have no truth, and there is no He only has a weight advantage.<sup>12</sup>

**The concept of literary criticism and the meanings of a critic.** In general, the idea of a skilled critic who is able to attract people to him was an idea known since ancient times among people particularly, in writers. The critic is an accomplished poet and a skilled judge. Marzbani narrated in the book

<sup>6</sup> Anehayah fi ghareeb Al hadeeth wal Athar, Majd Al Deen Abo Al sadat Al Mubarak, Part1, S30

<sup>7</sup> Tarikh Al Adab Al Arabi Al Aser Al jahely, Shogy daif, S7

<sup>8</sup> Nafs Al Masdar, Al safha nafsaho

<sup>9</sup> Altafkeer Al Naqdi enda Al Arab, Dr esa Ali, Al Akoob S25

<sup>10</sup> Tarikh Al Naqd Al Adabi end Al Arab, S8

<sup>11</sup> Altafkeer Al Naqdi enda Al Arab, S25

<sup>12</sup> Aleumdat fi jamal alshier wa'akhlaquh, alhasan bn rashi q alqayrawaniu , tahqiq muhamad muhy

alldiyn, j 1, S 114, 115, 116.

“Muwashah”<sup>13</sup>, that the genius of a great critic is that the poets would come to him and present poems to him. The poet Hassan bin Thabit presented his poetry to the genius critic with the knowledge that the genius has the ability to criticize, explain, and accurately distinguish poetry. So, the critic expressed his opinion on Hassan’s verses, he criticized the genius, clarified his reasons, and then judged his poetry, and this indicates the depth of his point of view.<sup>14</sup> . It is clear to us that the interpretation of judgments and critical reasoning was not uncommon at that time. It is clear from this that Hassan was aware of the position of the genius of a critic, otherwise his poetry would not have been presented to him. As for the critical concept, it is also clear from that example that critical judgments and poetic reasoning were present, and that the poems had weight and poetic value, and there was competition in the poetic level. Genius critics are credited with raising the level of poems and improving poetry until they reach a high literary status.

**Preferring a poet over other poets:** The idea of favoring a poet over another was an important idea in the pre-Islamic literary era, when it was close to the proficiency levels of their poets and the ideas of the critic was influenced by some of the poems, so he would issue critical judgments and favor one poet over another. We find an example of this in the Book of Songs, a story that occurred between the intellect and Labid bin Rabia. Labeed recited some of his verses, and the intellect told him that you feel the best of Banu Amer, so he ordered him to increase it. He said to him, “You are the most poetic of the Banu Hawazin.” Then he commanded him once again to chant, so Lubeid sang him with his words.<sup>15</sup> Al-Asma'i mentioned that al-Tufayl al-Ghanawi was called al-muhbar in the pre-Islamic era because of his good poetry<sup>16</sup> The meaning of ink in poetry is improvement that attracts the listeners' admiration for its harmony. The poet uses some attractive words in his poetry to give it a glamorous look. But sometimes the poetry is devoid of the original meaning, and this is the inked poetry, as the ink poetry is beautiful in form, empty of words, devoid of meaning. Rabia al-Asadi said to Amr ibn al-Ahtam: As for Amr, your hair is like cold ink, in which the eyes shine. Every time I look at it and revisit it, my sight decreases.<sup>17</sup> Of course, Amr's hair shines at first sight, but whoever can discern its brilliance and luster will discover that his hair, if you look at it repeatedly, lowers its status over the sublime meaning.

<sup>13</sup> Almuwashah fi makhadh aleulama' ealaa alshueara' 'abu eubayd allah bin muhamad almarzibani j

1, s 69.

<sup>14</sup> Almasdar alsaabiq, s 69

<sup>15</sup> Al'aghani , 'abu alfaraj al'asbahaniu , tahqiqu: samir jabir , almujaladi. 4 , s 274

<sup>16</sup> Tahawol alshueara' , abd almalik bin qarib bin abd almalik al'asmae , tahqiq almustashriqi: sha.

hizb almuhafizin , aljuz' al'awal , alsafhat 10

<sup>17</sup> Almuwashah fi ray al oulama' ealaa alshueara' 'abu eubayd allah bin muhamad almarzibani j 1 s

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***The most prominent disadvantages of pre-Islamic criticism:***

The idea that there are no fixed and written rules that can be invoked when criticizing literary texts and resorting to the critic's judgment and his literary instinct on them led to the characterization of critical judgments. Generally, in the pre-Islamic era, criticism stops at a certain positive or negative point, and this habit is considered one of the general negatives in that era.

***The most important features of pre-Islamic criticism:***

Perhaps one of the most famous of these general critical judgments was directed at the "Muallaqat" where these poems were honored for their quality and superiority over other poems that were said in the same era and were hung proudly on the walls of the Kaaba.<sup>18</sup> One of the best examples of this idea is that the "Muallaqat" was one of the best poems that the Arabs were proud of in the pre-Islamic era, because at that time they were judging an entire poem if it was good or not, and if there was no critical thinking, they were not able to judge the poems. Ibn Rasheeq said in his book *Al-Omdah*: That the muallaqat were called madhhabs because they were chosen from the rest of the poetry, so they were written in Coptic, that is, with gold water, and they were also hung on the curtain of the Kaaba for its quality. That is why it was said: that if the king liked a poem by a poet, he would not have said, "Put it up, this is for us."<sup>19</sup> Criticism in that era was an instinctive matter, the judgment depends on the critic's taste<sup>20</sup>. In the pre-Islamic period, the purposes of poetry were multiple, such as satire, lamentation, pride, praise and spinning.<sup>21</sup> Literary criticism was partial in this era. The critic mostly relied on particulars, criticizing meter and words and leaving the artistic side.<sup>22</sup> The critical judgment was brief. The critic used to issue his judgment in a concise manner without elaboration.<sup>23</sup> Shawqi says: Narrating poetry in pre-Islamic times was one of the layer tools for publishing and broadcasting it, and there was professional competition between the poets themselves. Talking to him and others until his tongue flows and the spring of art and poetry descends upon him<sup>24</sup> he relied on the critical judgment.

Generally, the critic often issued his judgment without justification or a clear reason, for example, the judgment on the mu'allaqat because it is the best poetry of the Arabs, or the judgment of the genius of Labid that it is the poetry of the Arabs,<sup>25</sup> and the Quraysh called Al-Asha the Arabs' cymbal,<sup>26</sup>. Zuhair bin Abi Salma is the most famous person known for revision, that is, he used to take a full year to revise the poem, and most of his poems were called (Al-Hawwaliyat) because it was not organized once, and its author did not disclose it immediately after its preparation, but rather he used to review it repeatedly: revision,

<sup>18</sup> Alnaqd al'adabi fi easr aljahiliat , muhamad amir khalifa , s 65.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Omda, j1, S 96

<sup>20</sup> Duktur. Isaa Aali aleakub , altafkir alnaqdiu Ind Al Arab , S 150-160

<sup>21</sup> Al-Omda, j1, S 96

<sup>22</sup> Al Masdar Al Saabiq , S 150-160

<sup>23</sup> Al Masdar Al Saabiq , S 150-160

<sup>24</sup> Tarikh Al'Adab Al Arabi , Asr ma qabl Al Islam , Al mujalad. 1 ,S. 142

<sup>25</sup> Al Masdar Al Saabiq , S 150-160

<sup>26</sup> Al Masdar Al Saabiq , S 35

revision, and change, deletion and addition, and then he presented it to his friends whom he trusted, then he presented his poems to those with who have correct opinion, confidence and good taste, so that their opinion and advice, and he could change what was necessary. After confirmation, that it is the most beautiful composition with the best effect he formulated it, he presented it to the people<sup>27</sup>. Al-Hatea also used to take a long time to revise his poems.

### *What is vacation in poetry?*

**Ijazah means:** the poet says a verse, then the other poet completes the second part or the next part of the verse in the manner of the poetry of the first poet, while maintaining proportionality so that the poetry of the two poets appears as if it were a poem issued by the same poet. The idea of criticism here is that the second poet realized the depth and accuracy of the texture and the linguistic connotations of the text that he simulates, because if he did not realize the systems and their meanings in particular, he would not be able to complete and organize the words that contain meanings that correspond to those words and fit the meanings in the first text.<sup>28</sup>

### *Levels of criticism in the pre-Islamic era:*

**Self-criticism:** This means the poet's criticism of himself and his refinement of his poem because he himself and is the most cheerful and interested in refining his poetry in order to satisfy the audience receiving his poetry and attract the largest possible number of fans and narrators. Zuhair bin Abi Salma was one of the sects of these poets.<sup>29</sup>

**Special criticism:** It is criticism that arose among a group of Arab society, headed by the poets of the pre-Islamic era themselves, and that the critic used to arbitrate among the poets and choose the best.<sup>30</sup>

**General Criticism:** This is intended to criticize Arab writers and the general public, and it is known that the Arabs are the people of rhetoric and eloquence.<sup>31</sup> The forms of criticism in pre-Islamic literature are many and varied, but they all refer to two forms:

1. **The effect of self-criticism.**
2. **Criticism stemming from perseverance and patience.**

**The effect of self-criticism:** By expressive self-criticism, we mean the criticism that comes from a feeling based on innate taste. The hero of his narration and the nature of his taste are the pillars of judgment on his taste and integrity, and the judgment of criticism is linked to the arts of speech and the feelings of poets.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Al Dhawq Al'Adabi , D: Abd Al fataah Ali Afifi , S 20

<sup>28</sup> Altafkir Al Naqdiu ind Al Arab S 36-37

<sup>29</sup> Fi Alnaqd Al'Adabi Al qadim lilearab.D mustafaa Abd Al Rahman.S 105

<sup>30</sup> Al Masdar Al Saabiq , S 105

<sup>31</sup> Muqadimat Fi Alnaqd Al'Adabi , Al juz' Al'awal , S 60-80 walmasdar alsaabiq . S 105

<sup>32</sup> Tarikh Al Naqd Al'Adabi Ind Al Arab Al'ustadh: taha 'Ahmad 'Ibrahim. S 180

The beauty of literature among the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era was due to the taste and nature in which they grew up and to the true Arab environment in all its different aspects.<sup>33</sup> This type of criticism takes several directions, including:

### ***1. Linguistic criticism:***

It is based on criticism of errors in the use of the language. The Arab had an ancient and close relationship with the secrets of the language and its instinct. He can understand the clear meaning of the words whenever the poet deviates from the meaning of the correct sign; he uses the words in their wrong place and did not allude to the relationship between the original words and the correct meaning. The critic felt his direct feeling and expressed his feeling towards the quality of the essay. Al-Musayyib made a mistake when he described the camel in his poetry and used the word (Sa'iriyah) in the wrong place, but he denied it with a blink and used a sarcastic phrase, which is: "Astnouk the camel."<sup>34</sup> This indicates that the blink of his linguistic sense was strong, as he realized the poet's mistake and his distance from using the correct pronunciation.

### ***2. Moral criticism:***

Arab writer is close to the language, accurate in correctness, very sensitive to his language, he uses words according to his manner and nature and also, he is close to instinct, accurate in self-expression and feeling. He clarifies his ideals and values, depicts nature and explains the environment around him but if his words deviate from the meaning to be clarified, his expression deviates from the goal and fails to show his values and ideals<sup>35</sup> and the writer cannot fully communicate the idea to the reader, then his art is incomplete, and the matter needs criticism and care to develop the art.

### ***3. Criticism of my suggestions:***

In its inception, Arabic poetry was associated with some melodies, and the melodies passed through some different stages and settled on this specific system, and it became especially among those who were endowed with the talent of rhyming and poetry, and thus the poets agreed on specific tones, all of which were collected on rhyme and weight. As a result of this agreement, some tastes in the pre-Islamic period formed monotony, which was achieved by the unity of rhythm as well as the unity of melody, and repelled the musical dissonance caused by the turmoil that some poets suffered from. They have important notes on that, including their mistake in Al-Nabigha Al-Dhubyani, that he was strong in poetry<sup>36</sup>, as mentioned by some narrators.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Maealim Al Naqd Al'Adabi , D.Abd Al Rahman Outhman ,S 91

<sup>34</sup> Al-Muwashah lil-Marzbani, bahath li Muhammad Ali Al-Bahawi, S. 93

<sup>35</sup> Al-naqd Al'adabiu fi Al-easr Al-jahilii wasadar Al'Islam, Dr.Muhammad Ibrahim Nasr, S.

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<sup>36</sup> Al-Aqwaa: min eu'yub Al qafiat wahu aikhtilaf harakat Al rawi fi 'abyat alqasidat Al wahidati.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Muwashah, S. 37

*There are many forms of literary criticism, including:*

**Educating and refining:** This artistic process is real and purely done by the poets themselves, representing their view of the art of poetry and the maturity it must have in order to win the admiration of its listeners or at least to escape their censure.

The critical process appeared in the refinement, education and revision of the poet and his meticulousness in his poetry, and therefore in his artistry, so that he appears to people free from what distorts and insults him. This is a kind of cultural and practical criticism based on the criticism of the poet that I directed before others criticized him.<sup>38</sup> The old poet in the pre-Islamic era was very interested in his poetry especially: looking at it, correcting it, documenting it, and directing it in a pre-Islamic critical direction. Many poets followed him through the ages.<sup>39</sup>

*Arabic novel:*

The novel in poetry in pre-Islamic literature was the submissive tool for broadcasting and publishing it and it was a category that mastered it professionally, and it is the distinguished class for poets. Whoever wants to compose poetry, asks another poet to narrate his poems, and he continues the story for him and others until his tongue opens, and the fountain of art and poetry flows to him.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the novel represented the technical school in which young or novice poets learn the origins of poetry and art, just as artisans learn today the rules of the profession. and the origins of the craft.<sup>41</sup>

In the pre-Islamic era, the novel played a major role in criticism, and the narrators also had a high status there. They were like newspapers that spread and they used to do what audio and video broadcasting does in publishing and trying to reach the viewer and listener. The narrators are the lawyers for their poets who defend them and their poetry with sincerity and enthusiasm, and for this reason they allowed themselves to criticize their poems, then modify it as it is in line with criticism and make the poet accept criticism for modification, knowing that the narrator of his poetry is loyal to his poetry so because of his confidence in his criticism and his taste helped the narrators to amend. It also helped the narrators to play the role played by newspapers, radio stations and encyclopedias, which critics did not write down at the time based on his memorization and memory.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Alnaqd al'adabiu fi 'atwar takwinih eind allearabi, D. Mahrous Minshawi Al-Jali, p. 96

<sup>39</sup> Majalat Al-Jamieat Al'Islamiah bil'madinat Al-munawarah Al eadadi(59) li'sanah 1403h maqal

D. Muhammad Aref Mahmoud taht eunwan "malamih alnaqd Al'adabii wa-maqayisuh fi Al easr Al jahilii " S.285

<sup>40</sup> Al-easr Al jahili, D. Shawqi Dhaif, S. 142, T. dar Al maarif Al taasiea.

<sup>41</sup> Min Al zawahir Al faniyah fi Al shier Al jahili, D. Saad Dhalam, S. 43, T. muasasat yawm Al

mustashfayat

<sup>42</sup> Al dhawq Al'adbi, D. Abdel Fattah Ali Afifi, S. 21

## **CONCLUSION:**

The Pre-Islamic Era in Arabic literature, known as "Jahiliyyah", was characterized by a vibrant literary scene with poets recognized by different titles reflecting their mastery of poetry. Critics played a significant role in refining poetry and attracting poets seeking their judgment. However, criticism lacked fixed and written rules, relying on the critic's literary instinct and taste.

## **RESULTS**

1. Clarifying the importance of the topic and the status of ancient Arabic literature, especially poetry in the pre-Islamic era
2. Statement of the importance of literary criticism certainly criticism appeared at the time when literature appeared
3. The stages of the development of literary criticism over time and its impact on events and realities in different times
4. Statement of the most important features and levels of Arabic literary criticism
5. Literary criticism has been based on special rules since the pre-Islamic era
6. Statement of the accuracy and skill of Arab critics since ancient times

## **SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Expand the analysis on the impact of cultural, social, and historical contexts on the development of literary criticism during the Pre-Islamic Era. This will provide a deeper understanding of how poets and critics interacted within the framework of their society.
- Include a comparative analysis of the Pre-Islamic Era's literary criticism with later periods, such as the Islamic Golden Age, to identify continuity and changes in the practice of criticism and its influence on Arabic literature throughout history.
- Incorporate more concrete examples of critical judgments and their impact on the reputation and legacy of poets in the Pre-Islamic Era. This will help readers grasp the significance of the critics' roles and their contributions to shaping Arabic literary traditions.