

***Poetics in the Mirrors of Arab Critical Heritage- A
Reading of the Book: Al-Rawd Al-Mari' fi Sina'at Al-
Badi' by Ibn Al-Banna' Al-Marrakushi***

الشعرية في مرايا التراث النقدي العربي قراءة في كتاب:

"الروض المريع في صناعة البديع"

لابن البناء المراكشي.

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Abstract:

The poetic essence of a text emerges from the relationships among its components. Poetics is thus defined by general principles that govern a creative text's meaning and ensure its literary individuality. Classical critics, like Ibn al-Banna, recognized these essential elements that define literary texts and contribute to achieving poetics.

According to his perspective, these elements enable the writer to deviate from the conventional and familiar, crafting new expressions characterized by innovation, originality, and a sense of the unusual. This ensures distinction and uniqueness in terms of composition, structure, and meaning within the literary text.

Keywords: Poetics; Heritage; Critical; Reading; Art of Rhetoric.

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ملخص:

يعد النص بناء متكاملًا، ولا تتحقق الشعرية فيه إلا من خلال العلاقات القائمة بين مجموع مكوناته، ولهذا يمكن القول إن الشعرية تتجلى من خلال ثلة من القوانين العامة التي تضبط دلالة كل نص إبداعي، وتجعله متميزًا بسمات تحقق فرادته من الناحية الأدبية، وقد تفتن النقاد القدماء إلى طبيعة المكونات التي تجعل نصًا ما نصًا أدبيًا، ومن بينهم "ابن البناء المراكشي" في كتابه الروض المريع.

وقد حدد في كتابه أهم المكونات التي تسهم في تحقيق الشعرية في العمل الإبداعي، فهذه المكونات حسب تصوره تساعد المبدع على تحقيق الانزياح والخروج عن النمطي والمألوف لخلق تعبيرات جديدة تتسم بالابتكار والخلق والغربة، وهذا ما يضمن التميز، والفرادة من حيث الصياغة، والسبك والدلالة للنص الأدبي.

كلمات مفتاحية: شعرية؛ تراث؛ نقد؛ قراءة؛ صناعة البديع.

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1-Introduction:

The critical movement, through its engagement with and exchange with various human sciences—linguistics being one of them—experienced the emergence of numerous terms and methodologies, including the concept of poetics (Bekis, 2010, p. 7), Critics employed it to examine the components of the creative text and to establish the fundamental principles and characteristics that set it apart from other texts. Consequently, some have defined it as “the collection of aesthetic features or qualities that distinguish poetic styles from one text to another or from one literary period to another.” (Al-Ayashi Kanuni, 2012,

p. 2) This suggests that certain features and characteristics originate within the text itself, shaping its poetic essence. Therefore, identifying these elements is essential to understanding the underlying structure that governs the text. Tawfiq al-Zaidi illustrates this point, stating “we do not doubt that the works of Imru’ al-Qais, Abu Tammam, al-Mutanabbi, and others all fall under the category of ‘literature.’ There is no room for doubt regarding what constitutes ‘literature,’ as it has become an unquestioned fact. However, the moment one inquires about what defines this so-called literature, confusion arises, and the answer remains elusive. The reason is that the answer is both apparent yet concealed, and clear yet shrouded in ambiguity...”. (Al-Zaidi, 1985, p. 8)

Al-Zaidi used the term "***literary***" instead of "***poetic***" because the latter has evolved beyond its original meaning, which was once exclusively associated with poetry. Over time, it has developed into a broader theoretical framework that examines the. (Bekis, 2010, p. 8) Al-Zaidi sought to demonstrate through his text that defining a comprehensive and exclusive concept of defining characteristics of literature—what is known as *literariness*, the quality that grants each literary work its uniqueness poetics is a challenging task. As a result, *literariness* has always been closely linked to *poetics*, which examines the structure of a literary work to clarify its literary function—an essential foundation that underpins literary creations and leaves its distinctive imprint on them. (Ragheb, 2003, pp. 379-380). This structure is what defines the uniqueness of the literary text, leading Henri Meschonnic to assert that poetics is "a theory

concerned with literary specificity and the search for concepts through which the workings of literature are examined. It is an endless exploration within the boundless realms of language and literature”. (Michonnik, 2003, p. 22)

Kamal Abu Deeb approached the text from a comprehensive and holistic perspective, viewing it as a network of interconnected relationships. He derived the concept of poetics from these relationships, which are embedded within the text itself. He states: "Poetics is a relational characteristic, meaning that it manifests within the text as a network of relationships that develop among primary components. Each of these components, in isolation, may not be poetic when placed in a different context. However, within the specific context where these relationships emerge, and through their intertwined movement with other components that share the same fundamental trait, they transform into a creative force that generates poetics and serves as an indicator of its presence”. (Abu Deeb, 1987, p. 53)

This implies that the text functions as an integrated structure, where poetics emerge through the relationships among all its components. Consequently, the formulation must exhibit interdependence and harmony between these elements. Thus, poetics aims "to identify the general laws that govern the meaning of each work, seeking these laws within literature itself. This discipline is concerned with the abstract characteristics that define the reading of the literary event—that is, literariness”. (Todorov, 1988, p. 84). Thus, poetics seeks to identify and define the fundamental principles governing the creation of literary texts, whether poetry or prose, by exploring the key

characteristics that establish a text as a work of creative expression. Classical critics discussed poetics concerning the art of poetry, which, like any artistic craft, is governed by specific laws to ensure structural harmony and completeness. Al-Marzouqi outlined seven essential components that form the foundation of poetry: the honor and correctness of meaning, the richness and accuracy of diction, precision in description, the appropriateness of simile, the cohesion and harmony of a poem's structure achieved through the selection of a pleasing meter, the suitability of the borrowed element (*isti'ārah*) to its intended meaning, and the alignment between words and their meanings, ensuring a strong connection to rhyme without contradiction. These principles collectively shape the literary integrity and uniqueness of poetic composition. (Al-Marzouki, 1967, p. 9) It is the basis of the artistic structure of the poem, and without it, the poem or piece does not reach perfection or achieve distinction and uniqueness. Many contemporary critics have considered the theory of the column of poetry to be the ideal and most complete model and the final formulation of ancient Arabic poetry. (Subhi , 1988, p. 119) Accordingly, what are the characteristics and features that make a work a creative work, whether poetry or prose, and guarantee it distinction and uniqueness in terms of formulation, casting, and meaning according to the vision of Ibn Al-Banna Al-Marrakushi?

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the fundamental laws governing the creation of a literary text by examining the relationships among its key components that contribute to achieving poetics. Poetic quality emerges only

through the harmony and interdependence of a text's elements, thereby shaping its distinctive aesthetic. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of these concepts, the study employs the descriptive method, allowing for an in-depth analysis and systematic deduction of its principles within this field.

2-The concept of poetry according to Ibn al-Banna al-Marrakushi:

Ancient critics sought to define the concept of poetry, yet it remains one of the most complex and elusive notions, resisting precise definition. This has led to the evolution of its meaning across different eras, to the extent that some have claimed that the concept of poetry is renewed with each poem. Ibn al-Banna al-Marrakushi centered his analysis on imitation and imagination as two fundamental components in the construction of poetic discourse. He defined poetry as "discourse composed of false, imaginary statements by way of imitation, from which provocation with illusions occurs"(Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 81)Thus; imitation serves as a key element in determining the nature of poetry, with simile forming its foundation according to his perspective. He states, "Everything in simile that involves falsehood or exaggeration does not belong to wisdom but to poetry, for poetry is based on imitation and imagination rather than on factual truths". (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 103), He equated imitation with simile, which becomes evident in his discussion of the distinction between imitation and invention. According to his view, a poet can imitate something known and existing by representing it with something that does not exist and is

unknown, thus creating it from within himself and through his imagination. (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 101)

Thus, simile serves as the theoretical framework within which the process of imitation operates, as it inherently involves elements of falsehood and exaggeration. Its purpose is to create the illusion of truth in what it portrays, making it a defining feature of poetry rather than wisdom, which is grounded in truthfulness and persuasion. (Al- Kharazi, 2005, p. 54) Accordingly, simile, according to Ibn al-Banna, is a mechanism that contributes to achieving the element of depiction, which does not lead to formal rigidity, nor does it eliminate the breadth of imagination (Qasabji, 1980, p. 80) This process sustains the continuous flow of imagery in the poet's mind, according to his perspective. From the critic's viewpoint, if a poet imitates and imagines something that does not exist at all, it transitions into invention. This aligns with the belief held by some that "poetry is the realm of falsehood and the pursuit of the impossible, making such exaggeration permissible within it". (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 104)

He also explained that poetic imagination plays a role in shaping reversed simile—where one thing is compared to another, and just as the first resembles the second, the second also resembles the first. He states: "They may be equal in that so that one of them has a quality that requires it to be placed before the other, while the other possesses a quality that necessitates its precedence over the first. Thus, each becomes superior in one aspect and inferior in another, making the reversal of the simile balanced between them. Moreover, poetic imagination may

elevate the less significant to a higher status, thereby justifying the reversal of the simile." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 103)

Accordingly, imagination is the basic activity in reversing the simile, and this pattern is achieved if the quality is equal in the imagined and the simile on the one hand, and in the imagined and the simile on the other hand. (Shawqi, n.d, p. 122) In addition to the simile, which he made synonymous with imitation, which is the essence of poetry, he added other rhetorical types due to their imaginative nature, although their methods differed in depicting meanings and the rhythm of connotations (Al- Kharazi, 2005, p. 56) Rhetorical devices such as metaphor, metonymy, and analogy play a crucial role in the process of imitation, which lies at the heart of poetry. However, this imitation may diverge from reality, contradicting it and creating an illusion of similarity. The effectiveness of the resulting images depends on their ability to engage the recipient and elicit the desired psychological response from the poet. This aligns with the idea that "poetry is discourse composed of false, imaginary statements by way of imitation, from which provocation occurs through illusions." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 81)

Imagination makes poetic discourse influential with imitative sayings, and this is what made these patterns tools for diagnosing this imagination, and tools for poetic craft in general. (AL-Ghazi Alal, 1999, p. 607) Imagination is a provocation with illusions to imagine what the poet intended; that is, he says something in which he deceives himself and shows himself what he does not see (Al-Jurjani, n d, p. 275) Especially since the power of imagination lies within itself, and the degree of

response varies from one recipient to another. Thus, the poet strives to convey his experience through an imaginative and impactful artistic form. This aligns with Hazem Al-Qartajani's view that *"poetry is not judged as poetry based on its truthfulness or falsehood, but rather on its imaginative expression."* (Al-Jurjani, n d, p. 63) Thus, he diverges from Ibn Al-Banna', who explicitly linked poetry to false statements, yet he agrees with him on the role of imagination in poetry. He also classified discourse into five types: proof, argument, and rhetoric—these three, according to his perspective, serve the path of truth. The fourth category, poetry, and the fifth, sophistry, both represent discourse based on false statements. This reinforces the idea that imagination and imitation are fundamental to constructing poetic discourse.

Additionally, he emphasized the art of rhetoric and its role in enhancing the beauty of creative texts, stating: "Whatever speech consists of staccato words, combined parts, lacks rhyme, and ends with different letters is outside the realm of rhetoric and belongs to the speech of common people." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 147), However, he did not separate rhetoric from the two linguistic sciences—rhetoric (*balāgha*) and semantics (*ma'ānī*)—as they are intrinsic characteristics of speech. He also addressed the role of meter within his discussion of the divisions of speech, stating "Speech is divided into metered and rhymed, which is poetry, and non-metered, which is prose, and both are used in discourse." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 81)

Thus, meter is a fundamental feature of poetic discourse, as it elevates speech from the level of prose to that of poetry.

However, in another passage, he clarifies that meter is merely one of several components that contribute to shaping poetic discourse. He states: "A verse may be poetry or not poetry, just as poetry may be metered or unmetered. People conventionally refer to all metered speech as poetry, yet they do not consider any prose to be poetry." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 82), and with that Ibn al-Banna sets a dividing line between the poetic statement that is distinguished by aesthetic and artistic value, and the verse that is devoid of any creative or aesthetic value (Al-Kharazi, 2005, p. 132), His statement "it can be verse and not verse" reflects his belief that poetry is founded on imitation and imagination before it is defined by meter. In this regard, he aligns with Hazem Al-Qartajani, asserting that imitation, imagination, and fantasy form the foundation of poetic composition.

2- Components of poetry:

He based his analysis on the principles of proportion and proportionality in his discussions on comparing one thing to another and substituting one element for another. Through his exploration, the key components of poetry that contribute to shaping the creative text can be identified. He highlighted various rhetorical devices that enhance the poetics of a text, including simile, metaphor, metonymy, and other related figures of speech.

***Simile:** He emphasized that for a comparison to be effective, "the object of comparison must possess a greater degree of the attributed quality—whether in precedence, permanence, honor, or another aspect—making it more deserving of the characteristic conveyed through the simile." (Ibn Al Banna,

1985, p. 103); In other words, there must be an inherent suitability between the compared object and the object of comparison in terms of the shared quality. He also explained that any exaggeration or falsehood in simile does not fall under the category of wisdom. According to his view, if a poet imitates and imagines something that does not exist at all, it is no longer considered imitation but rather an invention. In doing so, the poet introduces falsehood into his statement, rendering the imitation invalid due to its untruthfulness, which is the essence of poetry. However, he later acknowledged that some believe poetry is a realm where falsehood and extreme exaggeration are permissible. (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, pp. 103-104).

Thus, he regarded falsehood and exaggeration as inherent characteristics of poetic discourse, particularly since a poet can imitate something that does not exist at all. This is due to the concept of imitation for enhancement or distortion, where the poet may seek what is ideal or possible, even if it does not exist in reality. He further explained that appropriateness in simile lies in "the confusion of proportions, as proportion exists between two things. If the relationship between one pair mirrors that of another, then the four elements are considered proportional." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 105). Appropriateness refers to the moral connections and relationships between different parts of speech, while proportion, according to him, is the combination of two compatible elements.

***Metaphor:** It is one of the most significant tools for crafting artistic imagery, as it disrupts the conventional linguistic system and moves beyond the ordinary. Metaphor possesses a

remarkable and stimulating artistic energy that engages the recipient, evoking both surprise and intrigue—an effect that ultimately enhances the pleasure and enjoyment of the text. (Darabseh, 2010, p. 37)

He categorized metaphor under the concept of replacing one thing with another and identified several relationships within the extended metaphor, including totality, partiality, causality, effect, and anticipation (where something is named based on its eventual outcome or consequence). (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, pp. 118,121) TMetaphor arises from linguistic metaphor, as it merges both metaphor and simile. However, it is considered more eloquent than simile because it intensifies the expression of the attributed characteristic.

***Metaphor:** He categorized metaphor within the framework of replacing one thing with another, placing this technique under the broader concept of metaphorical expression. He also emphasized the necessity of proportion in metaphor, as it ensures clarity of meaning, appropriate word choice, and stylistic refinement. Thus, he asserted that all metaphors function as substitutions based on suitability. This means that metaphor relies on the closeness of similarity between the borrowed from and the borrowed for, ensuring a seamless fusion between wording and meaning.

He further stressed the importance of proportion in metaphor, arguing that if suitability is absent—or if it exists but is distant, weak, or unnatural—the metaphor becomes flawed. He illustrated this point with examples of unsuccessful metaphors, such as “the nostrils of the full moon,” “the water of blame,” and “the dog of union.” These, along with other

ineffective and awkward metaphors found in poetry, demonstrate how a lack of proper proportion weakens figurative language. (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 116)

If something is borrowed for something closely related and suitable, it is more appropriate than borrowing it for something entirely unrelated. Thus, he set a condition for suitability in metaphor, asserting that incompatible elements cannot be combined, as this would lead to a form of rhetorical embellishment known as antithesis. Therefore, suitability in metaphor must exist between two compatible elements.

***Metaphor:** Metaphor is a rhetorical technique used for artistic depiction, where the principle of substitution remains fundamental in its formulation. This substitution is determined by the appendices and consequences of a given element. Ibn al-Banna explains this, stating: "Whenever the substitution involves the appendices of a thing and its consequences in existence, then it is a metaphor. Metaphors may sometimes be more effective than explicitness, and among their forms is what is known as subordination (tattbī'), irdāf (implication), and transgression (tajāwuz). Another form is representation (tamthīl), as seen in the Almighty's saying: 'And your garments purify'".

Al-Asma'i interprets this verse, explaining that "He meant yourself because the Arabs metaphorically refer to themselves using the word 'cloth.'" Similarly, in the Almighty's saying: "How patient they are with the Fire," the expression represents astonishment, meaning "they are, in representation, like those who amaze others with their endurance of torment." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, pp. 117-118) The metaphorical image, in turn,

depends on the relationships of similarity, suitability, and resemblance.

From the above, we can infer that Ibn al-Banna highlighted the most significant patterns used in artistic depiction, which play a crucial role in shaping the most suitable stylistic formulas for capturing and expressing the creator's experience. These patterns also elevate linguistic practice to a higher and more refined level of creativity. (Al- Kharazi, 2005, p. 383) He also added other expressive pictorial tools, including reward, which depends in its semantic approach on the relationships of suitability and resemblance; as Ibn al-Banna says: "Suitability may occur between opposites, meaning resistance and overcoming...". (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 109) From this text, we can infer that the pattern of *reward* (*mukāfa'ah*) differs significantly from simile, metaphor, and metonymy in terms of its structural composition, form, and visual features. However, despite these differences, the critic attributes the components of the image and its constitutive elements to a fundamental and constant relationship—similarity. This means that establishing perceived proportional relationships between these equivalent and opposing elements is essential. (Al- Kharazi, 2005, p. 340) Thus, the relationship of similarity remains the foundation of any artistic depiction, as it enhances the aesthetic and artistic value of a creative work while also contributing to meaning in an innovative way.

3. Components of Ibn al-Banna's Sub-Poetics:

Ibn al-Banna al-Marrakushi defined the essence of poetry as imitation and imagination. He also identified key rhetorical patterns that shape poetic craftsmanship, including metaphor,

allegory, metonymy, and simile. These devices not only provide semantic value—by facilitating interpretation and exegesis—but also enhance the artistic quality of a creative work.

However, he did not limit the creative process to these primary rhetorical patterns; rather, he expanded his analysis to include sub-patterns that play a crucial role in the construction of a literary text. These include expansion, antithesis, allusion, repetition, insinuation, division, wrapping, recovery, returning the conclusion to the beginning, and contrast. These patterns are essential components of poetics because they represent a deviation from conventional language use. By transcending linguistic norms, they create new layers of meaning, adding elements of excitement and strangeness to the creative work.

4-Stylistic Purposes of Poetic Discourse:

Critics have classified poetry into different categories based on the meanings and objectives that poets seek to express through their work. However, there has been considerable debate about defining these purposes, as they can only be understood by analyzing the various intentions underlying poetic creation. Ibn al-Banna elaborates on this complexity, stating: "The purposes and objectives in discourse revolve around a single subject, but this subject can be approached from multiple perspectives depending on the intended purpose. Some individuals may interpret or approach it differently from others, and thus, one cannot object to another's approach simply due to these differences. For this reason, it has been stipulated in rhetoric that the wording must correspond to the meaning, and the meaning must align with the intended purpose. A given meaning may be

eloquent for one purpose but not for another; therefore, no critique is valid unless there is first agreement on the intended purpose and the stylistic approach taken to achieve it". (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 89) This highlights the importance of aligning language, meaning, and purpose in poetic discourse, ensuring that a text's stylistic choices effectively serve its intended message.

Ibn al-Banna elaborated on the variations in stylistic approaches across different poetic and rhetorical purposes. As a result, poetic styles differ and evolve based on the intended objectives. In this regard, he was particularly concerned with defining stylistic features, emphasizing the necessity of aligning words with meaning and ensuring that meaning corresponds to the intended purpose. Since meanings shift depending on context and intent, a particular meaning may be eloquent for one purpose but ineffective for another. Therefore, no meaning should be critiqued without first identifying the purpose it serves, as this determines the appropriate stylistic characteristics. Thus, each purpose is defined by its unique stylistic approach, distinguishing it from others.

He further highlighted that both word and meaning are essential elements in creative expression, and the quality of one cannot compensate for the deficiency of the other. Whether in poetry or prose, effective speech requires a harmonious balance between them. Eloquence is only achieved when "the word matches the meaning. When speech combines eloquent wording—due to its ease of articulation, pleasant resonance, clarity of meaning, and structural beauty, achieved through logical coherence, natural order, and depth of understanding—it

reaches the highest level, a position of distinction, and the pinnacle of noble expression." (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 87)

Therefore, according to Ibn al-Banna's conception, the creator must "express the desired meaning in a phrase that allows for its easy comprehension and effectively fulfills the intended purpose" (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, pp. 19-20) Ibn al-Banna emphasizes the importance of consistency and harmony between words and meaning in the process of reception and influence. To illustrate this, he identifies several factors that contribute to ambiguity in conveying meanings. He states:

* The reasons for which speech becomes ambiguous to the listener:

- Two related to the word itself: One is that the word is unfamiliar or obscure, and the other is that it belongs to common nouns with multiple meanings.
- Two related to the composition of words: One is excessive brevity, and the other is structural complexity, such as intricate poetic verses.
- Two related to meaning: One arises when the meaning it is inherently subtle and obscure, while the other occurs when understanding it requires prior knowledge of certain premises. If the recipient lacks these premises, they will fail to grasp the intended meaning. (Ibn Al Banna, 1985, p. 84)

By identifying these sources of ambiguity, Ibn al-Banna underscores the necessity of clarity and balance in literary expression to ensure effective communication. Thus, he

highlights various aspects of ambiguity that can diminish the creative quality of speech, leading to disorder and distancing it from true poetry. This disorder not only undermines the artistic and aesthetic value of a work but also negatively impacts the reception process, preventing the audience from fully engaging with and appreciating the text.

4. CONCLUSION:

As a conclusion, in Ibn al-Banna's conception, poetry is realized through imitation and imagination, as they serve as fundamental elements in constructing poetic discourse. These are reflected in its core components—metaphor, allegory, simile, and metonymy—along with other rhetorical devices that contribute to poetic expression, such as expansion, antithesis, insinuation, repetition, twisting, and turning.

He emphasized that the metaphorical image must be grounded in elements of similarity, appropriateness, and proximity. However, this requirement acts as a constraint on metaphorical creativity, which naturally seeks to deviate from the norm and transcend conventional language to produce texts marked by novelty and strangeness. He acknowledged the same principle in metonymic imagery, which, like metaphor, must be rooted in the foundational concept that generates poetry—similarity.

Additionally, he asserted that the metaphorical image must derive its components and structural elements from reality. Even when it extends beyond the realistic dimension, it cannot entirely detach itself from existing or conceivable elements. This definition, however, may restrict the full potential of imagination in achieving true creative innovation.

The text emphasizes that wording must be equivalent to meaning and that meaning must align with the intended purpose and objective, as meanings vary depending on context and intent. A particular meaning may be eloquent in one context but ineffective in another. Therefore, it is not appropriate to critique a meaning without first identifying its purpose, which in turn determines the appropriate stylistic characteristics. Each purpose is thus defined by its unique stylistic approach, which ensures its distinctiveness and sets it apart from other purposes.

Wording and meaning are fundamental components of creative expression, and the quality of one cannot compensate for the deficiency of the other. Whether in poetry or prose, speech is only considered sound when both elements are in harmony.

Through his analysis, Ibn al-Banna sought to identify the key components that define poetic discourse and creative expression. These elements enable the creator to move beyond conventional and familiar patterns, producing new expressions distinguished by innovation, originality, and strangeness. Ultimately, poetry consists of the characteristics and features that transform a work into a truly creative piece, ensuring its distinctiveness and uniqueness in formulation, style, and meaning.

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