

## Review

# SATIRE IN CONTEMPORARY ARABIC FICTION

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This article explores the complex world of satire in modern Arabic fiction, looking at how authors use humor as a potent social critique weapon. The article examines the wide range of literary genres where satire is used by writers to highlight social concerns, question accepted wisdom, and elicit introspective thinking via a lens that strikes a balance between wit and critique. Utilizing a range of noteworthy pieces, the examination delves into the complex relationship between humor and cultural criticism, demonstrating the adaptability of satire as a rebellious element in Arab literary works. The writers create a satirical fantasy that both entertains and challenges the complexity of the Arab world through crazy storylines and deft wit. The purpose of this investigation is to clarify how satire has changed in recent Arabic fiction.

**Keywords:** modern Arabic fiction, satire

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**Concept of Satire:** Satire is a genre of the visual, literary, and performing arts, usually in the form of fiction and less frequently non-fiction, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, often with the intent of shaming or exposing the perceived flaws of individuals, corporations, government, or society itself into improvement.<sup>1</sup> Although satire is usually meant to be humorous, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit to draw attention to both particular and wider issues in society. A feature of satire is strong irony or sarcasm "In satire, irony is militant", according to literary critic Northrop Frye<sup>2</sup> but parody, burlesque, and exaggeration,<sup>3</sup> In satirical literature and speaking, the devices of juxtaposition, contrast, analogy, and double entendre are commonly employed. This "militant" sarcasm or irony frequently claims to accept as normal—or at the absolute least, to endorse—the exact things that the satirist is trying to call into question. Satire is a common element in a wide range of artistic mediums, including songs, plays, literature, music, cinema, television, and internet memes.

The word *satire* comes from the Latin word *satur* and the subsequent phrase *lanx satura*. *Satur* meant "full" but the

1. <sup>1</sup> Elliott 2004.

2. Frye, Northrup (1957). *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP. p. 222. ISBN 0-691-06004-5.

<sup>3</sup> Claridge, Claudia (2010) *Hyperbole in English: A Corpus-based Study of Exaggeration* p.257

juxtaposition with *lanx* shifted the meaning to "miscellany or medley": the expression *lanx satura* means "a full dish of various kinds of fruits".<sup>4</sup> The word *satura* as used by Quintilian, however, was used to denote only Roman verse satire, a strict genre that imposed hexameter form, a narrower genre than what would be later intended as *satire*.<sup>5</sup> Quintilian famously said that *satura*, which is a satire in hexameter verses, was a literary genre of wholly Roman origin (*satura tota nostra est*). He was aware of and commented on Greek satire, but at the time did not label it as such, although today the origin of satire is considered to be Aristophanes' Old Comedy. The first critic to use the term "satire" in the modern broader sense was Apuleius.<sup>6</sup> Satire was a rigorous literary genre according to Quintilian, but the name quickly grew beyond its initial constrictions. According to Robert Elliott, a noun begs for expansion as soon as it crosses the boundary into metaphor. In this case, *satura*—which up until then had no verbal, adverbial, or adjectival forms—was expanded instantly through an appropriation from the Greek word for "satyr" (*satyros*) and its derivatives. Interestingly, the word "satire" in English originates from the Latin word "*satira*," although terms like "satirize" and "satiric" have Greek roots. Around the fourth century AD, the term "satyricus" was coined for satirists. One of St. Jerome's adversaries referred to him as "a satirist in prose" or "satyricus script or in prose." Subsequent orthographic modifications obscured the Latin origin of the word satire: *satira* becomes *satire*, and in England, by the 16th century, it was written 'satyre'.<sup>7</sup> The word *satire* derives from *satira*, and its origin was not influenced by the Greek mythological figure of the *satyr*.<sup>8</sup> In the 17th century, philologist Isaac Casaubon was the first to dispute the etymology of satire from *satyr*, contrary to the belief up to that time.<sup>9</sup>

## Satire in Literature

Satire in literature is a type of social commentary. Writers use exaggeration, irony, and other devices to poke fun at a particular leader, a social custom or tradition, or any other prevalent social figure or practice that they want to comment on and call into question. Contemporary writers have used satire to comment on everything from capitalism (like Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, which uses extreme exaggerations of consumption, concern with social status, and masculine anger and violence to skewer American capitalism) to race (Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*, for example, features a young black male protagonist in Southern California who ends up before the Supreme Court for trying to reinstate slavery).<sup>10</sup>

### Types of Satire:

Satire is still a potent weapon in modern society. In recent decades, satire has found significant outlets in film and television in particular. Satire comes in three primary forms, each with a distinct function. Horatian satire: is humorous with a hint of societal criticism. It's intended to make lighthearted fun of a person or circumstance.

1. One work of literature that exemplifies Horatian satire is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which was written in the eighteenth century. The piece parodies the style of travelogues that were popular in the period. Swift intends to journey to writers, the English government, and human nature itself through his made-up narrator, Gulliver.
2. Stephen Colbert hosts the late-night television program "The Colbert Report" which provides a perceptive and poignant political critique of America.
3. A well-known example of Horatian satire is the online news site "The Onion".

<sup>4</sup> Kharpertian, Theodore D (1990), "Thomas Pynchon and Postmodern American Satire", in Kharpertian (ed.), *A hand to turn the time: the Menippean satires of Thomas Pynchon*, pp. 25–7, ISBN 9780838633618. However, the use of the word *lanx* in this phrase is disputed by B.L. Ullman, *Satura and Satire* (Class.Phil. 1913).

<sup>5</sup> Branham & Kinney 1997, p. xxiv

<sup>6</sup> Kharpertian, Theodore D (1990), "Thomas Pynchon and Postmodern American Satire", in Kharpertian (ed.), *A hand to turn the time: the Menippean satires of Thomas Pynchon*, pp. 25–7, ISBN 9780838633618. However, the use of the word *lanx* in this phrase is disputed by B.L. Ullman, *Satura and Satire* (Class.Phil. 1913).

<sup>7</sup> Elliott, Robert C (2004), "The nature of satire", *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

<sup>8</sup> Ullman, BL (1913), "Satura and Satire", *Classical Philology*, 8 (2): 172–194, doi:10.1086/359771, JSTOR 262450, S2CID 161191881, *The Renaissance confusion of the two origins encouraged a satire more aggressive than that of its Roman forebearers*.

<sup>9</sup> Antonia Szabari (2009) *Less Rightly Said: Scandals and Readers in Sixteenth-Century France* p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Masterclass Articles.

**Juvenalian:** Juvenalian satire is not humorous; it is grim. Its purpose is to confront authority with truth.

- 1. A notable example of Juvenalian satire is seen in George Orwell's 1945 novel *Animal Farm*. The Soviet Union during the Stalin period and communism are the intended targets of the book. Though it may be seen as a straightforward story about farm animals, *Animal Farm* is also an allegorical satire, with deeper political overtones.
- 2. The television program *South Park* serves as a contemporary example, combining scathing criticism with silly humor. The program has addressed a wide range of contentious issues, such as criminal justice, Hollywood, the Pope, and abortion.
- Menippean: Menippean satire moralizes a specific ideology, such as racism or homophobia. Like Horatian satire, it can be lighthearted and humorous, but it can also be as biting as Juvenalian satire.
- 1. One of the greatest instances of Menippean satire in literature is found in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The book makes light of upper-class intellectualism, but it does it in a really funny way. Though there, the mockery is lighthearted in tone.
- 2. A modern-day example is *Saturday Night Live*, which has carried a long tradition of poking fun at elected officials ever since Chevy Chase's 1975 impersonation of Gerald Ford.<sup>11</sup>

### Satire in Arabic Literary Tradition

Characteristics of satire in Arabic literature: mankind has observed satirical writing throughout their creation of the earth, and it is seen to be a human legacy that has been carried down through countries and centuries. Hardly a country exists that does not have a history represented in this art form, whether it be in news, poetry, pictures, or characters. This is because satirical literature, in all of its forms and manifestations, provides the human soul with a great deal of happiness and joy that either clarifies or eliminates these things. Some scholars even trace the origins of satire back to the ancient Egyptians, who captured this irony in their writings and drawings and attended on the subject. which are similar to the practice of "contemporary caricature" and which they exhibited on the walls of their temples. As we mentioned earlier, about this, Shawqi Dhaif says in his book "The Humor of Egypt" "Satire is the most developed kind of humor as it needs intelligence, subtlety, skill and cunning..<sup>12</sup>

Satirical literature has methods, formulas, elements, and pillars that its message cannot reach without it and its construction is not complete in its absence. It also has phenomenologies in human life including spoken jokes in prose, poetry, story, fixed drawings (Caricatures), novels and films in the modern era, and so on. Literary satire was known in Arabic writings, both ancient and modern, in the pre-Islamic era, it was linked to anger, satire, defamation, and exposure. This is evidenced by what Hassan bin Thabit said, satirizing Banu Abd al-Madan with the length of their bodies and their fatness: There is no problem by those people having long and thick bodies [It is just like the bodies of mules and dreams of birds.]<sup>13</sup> Since their irony was lost when poetry and prose were combined and we have only found a small number of them, it cannot be claimed with certainty that their irony was sparse or weak.

With the advent of Islam, this art declined, especially since the Qur'an forbade it in several places, such as the Almighty's saying: "O you who believe! No people shall ridicule other people, for they may be better than they. Nor shall any women, ridicule other women, for they may be better than they. Nor shall you slander one another, nor shall you insult one another with names. Evil is the return to wickedness after having attained faith. Whoever does not repent – these are the wrongdoers".<sup>14</sup> However, it became common during the era of the Messenger [P.B.U.H] due to many battles that broke out between Muslims and polytheists. When the Messenger [P.B.U.H] sat in the mosque with the Muslims, the infidels would mock them and they say "These are his companions, and they say, If what Muhammad [P.B.U.H] had brought was better, no one would have preceded us and God would not have singled out others for us and among the examples that indicate ridicule that Messenger [P.B.U.H] passed by "Al-Waheed bin al-Mughirah" "Umayyah bin Khalaf" and "Abu Jahl bin Hisham" they slandered him and mocked him, so it angered him, so God Almighty revealed to him about that: "Messengers before you were ridiculed, but those who mocked them were besieged by what they ridiculed".<sup>15</sup> This art developed and spread with the beginning of the Umayyad Caliphate when Islam spread almost throughout the Arabian peninsula because with the transformation of the Shura regime into a hereditary monarchy, political conflicts, and partisan differences spread between Muslims. Examples are what Al-Akhtal said about Bani Kulaib, "The Jarir Tribe": "People when their guests make their dogs bark they ask their mother to urinate over the fire, she holds some of the urine in stinginess thus is not generous in it so she urinates for them limitedly."<sup>16</sup> In light of these verses, we can conclude that Al-

<sup>11</sup> Masterclass Articles.

<sup>12</sup> محمد معوض أبو عيسى، الفكاهة في الأدب العربي إلى نهاية القرن الثالث الهجري، دراسات و وثائق، الشركة الوطنية، 1390هـ-1970م، ص35.

<sup>13</sup> عبدالرحمان البرقوقى، شرح ديوان بن ثابت الأنصاري، دار الأندلس، ط3، بيروت، 1983، ص270.

<sup>14</sup> Surat-ul- hujrat Verse no. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Surat-ul-anaam Verse no.10.

<sup>16</sup> شمسي واقف، الأدب الساخر أنواعه و تطوره مدى العصور الماضية، 1390هـ، ص113.

Akhtal made fun of the frugality of the Jarir people as well as their apparent mockery of their fire. Moawad Abu Issa comments, "This is an extreme irony, because not only did he describe Kulaib as mean, base, and vulgar people, but he also made their fire seem like a small, insignificant amount that could be extinguished by a small amount of water." Returning to the Umayyad era, we see that antithesis poetry was popular and had a role in the evolution of satire.

This period marked the beginning of the emergence of this art, however, as the Abbasid era brought prosperity and a qualitative leap as its first rules took root as a self-contained art. This was especially true since poets and writers adopted it as their writing style and a way to express their attitudes towards reality and its contradictions, so we mention For instance, the animal language stories found in Ibn al-Muqaffa's "Kalila wa Dimna" convey the political unrest that was in effect at the period as well as the skill of the maqamat and "Risalat-ul-gufran." "The Message of Forgiveness" by Abu Alaa al-Ma'arri, combined intense anguish with irony in laughter. We should acknowledge Abu Othman Amr bin Bahr, also known by his pen name Al-Jahiz, for the creation of the art of irony. Al-Jahiz brought satire to Arabic prose literature in the ninth century. He developed a comic style while addressing weighty subjects in what is now recognized as anthropology, sociology, and psychology, "based on the premise that, however serious the subject under review, it could be made more interesting and thus achieve greater effect, if only one leavened the lump of solemnity by the insertion of a few amusing anecdotes or by the throwing out of some witty or paradoxical observations. He was well aware that, in treating new themes in his prose works, he would have to employ a vocabulary of a nature more familiar in *hija*, satirical poetry."<sup>17</sup> He emerged in this field as: "Society took the material for his pen, so he created a new trend."<sup>18</sup> In writing and creativity his book "Al-Bukhala" is considered the most famous of his books that he wrote in this field. In it: "Who made us laugh by depicting their ways of being careful and frugal, and their tricks in dismissing guests...ime, this art was During this t"<sup>19</sup> very important in establishing a new literary style that addressed societal concerns. For example, in one of his zoological works, he satirized the preference for longer human penis size, writing: "If the length of the penis were a sign of honor, then the mule would belong to the (honorable tribe of) Quraysh". Another satirical story based on this preference was an *Arabian Nights* tale called "Ali with the Large Member".<sup>20</sup>

In the 10th century, the writer Tha'alibi recorded satirical poetry written by the Arabic poets As-Salami and Abu Dulaf, with As-Salami praising Abu Dulaf's wide breadth of knowledge and then mocking his ability in all these subjects, and Abu Dulaf responding and satirizing As-Salami in return.<sup>21</sup> An example of Arabic political satire included another 10th-century poet Jarir satirizing Farazdaq as "a transgressor of the Sharia" and later Arabic poets in turn using the term "Farazdaq-like" as a form of political satire.<sup>22</sup> Ibn al-Roumi is regarded as one of the most well-known satirists, using his poetry to poke fun at society.

As far as the modern era is concerned, it was in turn replete with satirical images, so we mention the Egyptian critic and writer Al-Mazni, whose books were mostly filled with funny images and satirical methods. ... ) mocks stories from the heroes of his stories (...) and mocks a journalist from politicians, the press, and parties,<sup>23</sup> so it is said that his satire is closer to irony as a doctrine, in addition to the Libyan writer Ali "Mustafa al-Masrani" in his story "Majma-ul-juhla" We mention for example What one of the ignorant people said: "Ignorance is the nun of prevention... It involves shielding and maintenance. The people of knowledge may see it as ugly, thorny, and harmful, but it protects us and benefits us... So should we defend our skins? Or do we let scholars and educated people flay our skins?"<sup>24</sup> We also find the writer Maroun Abboud often inclined to purposeful irony, as the spirit of Al-Jahiziyya prevailed over him, and Maroun Abboud turned to this direction in drawing the characters of his stories, his artistic goal is caricature in which he tries to enter the insides of the human soul and its psychological worlds and its reflection. Al-Jahiz had a great influence on other books, as he was the one who created a new art, and the students looked forward to him, as his effects extended over time in the field of satirical literature until it reached the era in which we live. Among those who were influenced by his style Al-jahaz, Al-Akkad, Al-Mazini, Al-Rafei, Ahmad Husian Al-Zayan, as well as the professors of Arab universities and others, and among the most prominent people who were also influenced by Al-Jahiz, we find Taha Hussein, according to what was mentioned

<sup>17</sup> Bosworth, Clifford Edmund (1976), *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banu Sasan in Arabic Society and Literature*, Brill Publishers, ISBN 90-04-04392-6.

جميل جبر، نوادر الجاحظ: سلسلة عالم الفكاهة، دار الحضارة، دة الجزائر، دت، ص5.

<sup>19</sup> الجاحظ البخلاء، مراجعة و شرح كرم البستاني، دار صادر، دة بيروت، 1471-1998، ص7.

<sup>20</sup> Marzolph, Ulrich; van Leeuwen, Richard; Wassouf, Hassan (2004). *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*. ABC-CLIO. pp. 97–8. ISBN 1-57607-204-5.

<sup>21</sup> Bosworth, Clifford Edmund (1976), *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banu Sasan in Arabic Society and Literature*, Brill Publishers, ISBN 90-04-04392-6.

<sup>22</sup> Bosworth, Clifford Edmund (1976), *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banu Sasan in Arabic Society and Literature*, Brill Publishers, ISBN 90-04-04392-6.

<sup>23</sup> نعمان محمد فؤاد، المازني الساخر، سلسلة أبحاث و مؤتمرات، اشراف جابر عصفور، أبحاث المؤتمر، ابراهيم المازني، مصر، ص197.

<sup>24</sup> على مصطفى المصراي: مجمع الجهلة، الدار الجماهيرية، ط2، ليبيا، 1924-1999م، ص10.

in the book "Asloob" "The Style" by Ahmed Shayeb. Taha Hussian was influenced by Al-Jahaz, especially in his style. He does not attack his opinion but mentions it to a friend and then refers to the introductions as an analyst and critic. He engages the reader in the research until he arrives at the correct opinion, then: "He leaves you and stands not far away in defiant of you, or laughing at you, in the gentle, sweet, or strong piece in which Al-Jahiziyah repeats and divides it..."<sup>25</sup> We also find Ahmed Amin an invitation to laughter when he says: "Nature is Our habit is to make for every door a key, and for every suffering a summary, and every knot a solution, and for every rigidity there is a relief. Man increases his worries and creates problems and troubles for himself. I found a remedy for all of this, that was the laughing ." And in another place he says: "Nature is not my grant-making facility to me, so when all animals did not find worries, they did not make them laugh and when I found the man alone to be the one who is worried and bruised I made him the only laughing animal".<sup>26</sup>

In our contemporary literature, irony is evident in Emile Habibi's literature, where Dr. Faour Yassin says about him: "The irony of Emile Habibi is not just a method that aims to amuse the reader by making him laugh with (the legitimacy of the goal), but it aims to reveal the composition of reality that makes it difficult for the writer to see it as an area of pure contentment or pure humor."<sup>27</sup> Emile Habibi says that his resort to satirical literature is due to two things: "The first is that I see irony as a weapon that protects the self from its weakness, and second, that I see in it an expression of a tragedy that is greater than the conscience of humanity can bear."<sup>28</sup> We may conclude from this by stating that Emile Habibi saw satire as a two-edged weapon that he used to both express his emotions and defend himself. Zakariya Tamir, who is regarded as a tragic and revolutionary poet in addition to being a realistic and sarcastic writer, is one of the modern poets who has succeeded in this field. acrobatic and daring acts based on revealing the harsh and painful reality to provide the recipient with an unmatched sense of pleasure.

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<sup>25</sup> [www.nizwa.com/articles.php](http://www.nizwa.com/articles.php) مفيد نجم، زكريا تامر : خطاب غابة هربت أشجارها، نزوى، العدد 32،

<sup>26</sup> [www.nizwa.com/articles.php](http://www.nizwa.com/articles.php) مفيد نجم، زكريا تامر : خطاب غابة هربت أشجارها، نزوى، العدد 32

<sup>27</sup> ياسين احمد فاعور، السخرية في ادب إميل حبيبي ، ص 91

<sup>28</sup> ياسين احمد فاعور، السخرية في ادب إميل حبيبي ، ص 91