

## The Rise of New Poets : Thematic Transformation in Arabic Literature from The Umayyad to Abbasid Period

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**Abstract.** Arabic literature experienced a significant thematic transformation from the Umayyad to the Abbasid period. In the Umayyad era, poetry was still rooted in classical qasidah, focusing on praise, tribal pride, and romantic ideals. However, the Abbasid era brought a wave of literary renewal, influenced by sociopolitical and cultural shifts. This study explores how these contexts shaped literary themes and styles, using a descriptive qualitative approach through library research and textual analysis. It focuses on works by Al-Farazdaq, Al-Akhtal, Jarir, Abu Nawas, Abu al-Atahiyah, Dibil al-Khuza'i, and Al-Jahiz. The findings reveal that poetry in the Abbasid era became a tool for social criticism, spiritual reflection, and personal expression. Meanwhile, Al-Jahiz significantly advanced Arabic prose, making it more intellectual and educational. This study concludes that Arabic literature evolved not only in form and content, but also in function, reflecting the intellectual and cultural dynamism of Islamic civilization.

**Keywords:** Abbasid, Arabic literature, New Poets, Transformation, Umayyad

**Abstrak.** Sastra Arab mengalami transformasi tema yang signifikan dari era Dinasti Umayyah ke Dinasti Abbasiyah. Pada masa Umayyah, puisi masih berpijak pada bentuk qasidah klasik dengan tema-tema seperti pujian, kebanggaan suku, dan cinta normatif. Namun, era Abbasiyah membawa pembaruan sastra yang dipengaruhi oleh perubahan sosial, politik, dan budaya. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menelaah bagaimana konteks tersebut membentuk tema dan gaya sastra Arab, dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui studi pustaka dan analisis teks. Objek kajian meliputi karya Al-Farazdaq, Al-Akhtal, Jarir, Abu Nawas, Abu al-Atahiyah, Dibil al-Khuza'i, dan Al-Jahiz. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa puisi pada masa Abbasiyah berfungsi sebagai media kritik sosial, renungan spiritual, dan ekspresi personal. Sementara itu, Al-Jahiz memperluas peran prosa menjadi lebih ilmiah dan edukatif. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa sastra Arab tidak hanya berubah bentuk dan isi, tetapi juga mengalami perluasan fungsi sebagai cermin dinamika peradaban Islam.

**Kata kunci:** Abbasiyah, Sastra Arab, Penyair Baru, Transformasi, Umayyah

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic poetry experienced significant development from the Umayyad to the Abbasid Caliphate. During the Umayyad era, poets preserved the conventions of classical qasidah, marked by praise for rulers and tribes, themes of tribal rivalry, and romanticized desert imagery as seen in the works of Al-Akhtal, Al-Farazdaq, and Jarir. However, the Abbasid period brought about a cultural and intellectual transformation that gave rise to a new generation of poets known as the "New Poets." Figures such as Abu Nawas, Abu al-Atahiyah, and Dibil al-Khuza'i began to reject classical conventions and introduced new themes such as urban life, freedom, existential reflection, and bold social and religious criticism. Their works reflect the complexity and plurality of Abbasid society, especially in urban contexts.

In parallel with the evolution of poetry, prose began to flourish through the contributions of scholars like Al-Jahiz, who developed a distinctive style that blended philosophy, humor, ethics, and scientific inquiry. His prose marked a shift toward intellectual and didactic literature, positioning prose as a medium for reflection and discourse.

Although this study focuses on classical Arabic literature, its thematic exploration, ranging from political propaganda to spiritual contemplation offers comparative insights that remain relevant for broader literary discussions, particularly in the fields of textual analysis, social criticism, and genre transformation. It also seeks to understand how shifts in literary form and theme mirror the evolving values and intellectual dynamics of the Arab-Islamic world.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Previous studies have discussed the development of Arabic poetry and prose during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. Kinany (1948), in *The Development of Ghazal in Arabic Literature*, traces the origins and changes in ghazal poetry from pre-Islamic times to the early Islamic period. He highlights how the form and function of ghazal evolved in line with the social and cultural dynamics of its poets.

Nugraha (2020), in his work *Arabic Literature in the Umayyad Era*, presents an overview of the characteristics of classical Arabic literature, particularly in the context of da'wah and politics. He emphasizes that poetry in this era became a powerful ideological tool in shaping the narrative of power. Zarawaki (2022), in *Analyzing the Literature and Literary Works of the Abbasid Dynasty*, discusses the shift in themes and styles during the Abbasid period, marked by the emergence of “New Poets” and the assimilation of non-Arab cultures. She also highlights the contributions of important figures such as Al-Jahiz, who expanded the genre through the development of prose.

Cutri and Safii (2023) show that during the Umayyad period, literature developed alongside political pressures and interests. Poetry became a medium for propaganda and tribal identity, with poets divided into factions of power or opposition. Al Hinduan et al. (2020) systematically examined the characteristics of seven dominant poetic genres, such as madh, hija', zuhd, ghazal, khamriyyat, and naqaidh. Each with its own distinctive style and function, and used as a medium for cultural struggle or resistance.

Zakiyyan et al. (2023) emphasize that the Abbasid period was marked by major transformations in social structure, which also influenced literary forms and themes. Poets

and writers no longer came solely from Arab circles but also from Persia, Turkey, and Andalusia. This led to poetry and prose becoming more reflective, philosophical, and representative of urban and pluralistic societal values. Akastangga specifically examines Abu Nawas' stylistic renewal, which rejected desert symbols and opted for a symbolic, urban, and *mutakallimun* approach, making him a pioneer of modern literary discourse in the Abbasid context.

These studies provide a strong theoretical and empirical framework for understanding changes in themes and language styles in classical Arabic literature. This research combines analysis of poetry and prose from the two major dynasties, the Umayyad and Abbasid, and highlights the contributions of writers to the formation of values and social expression in Islamic society.

To analyze these transformations systematically, this research adopts a framework rooted in literary evolution theory and cultural studies. Literary evolution theory enables an understanding of how themes and genres change over time in response to socio-political dynamics. Meanwhile, the lens of cultural studies helps interpret how these literary works reflect and shape the values, norms, and conflicts of their time. Thus, this literature review serves not only as a theoretical foundation but also as a scope-defining framework for analysis focused on the variables of thematic and stylistic transformation in Umayyad and Abbasid Arab literature.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the thematic transformation of Arabic literature from the Umayyad to the Abbasid dynasties. Aligned with the postpositivism paradigm, this approach assumes that social realities are complex, dynamic, and must be understood within their contextual meanings (Zuchri, 2021). The study employs library research and textual observation of selected works by Al-Akhtal, Al-Farazdaq, Abu Nawas, Abu al-Atahiyah, and Dibil al-Khuza'i, as well as the prose of Al-Jahiz. As a form of naturalistic inquiry (Bogdan & Taylor in Zuchri, 2021), the analysis focuses on interpreting texts within their socio-cultural contexts. Observations were conducted systematically through close reading, identifying themes based on frequency, emphasis, and relevance to social and spiritual conditions. The research process was also enriched by collaborative group discussions as informal peer reviews to broaden perspectives and minimize bias. Data was collected from scholarly sources and analyzed

inductively to trace thematic patterns, aiming to reveal how classical Arabic literature mirrors the broader intellectual and societal shifts between the two dynasties.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### Old Poetry Style: Umayyad Era

During the Umayyad caliphate, the system of governance shifted from a caliphate to a monarchy. This political transformation significantly influenced Arab social and political dynamics and further reinforced tribal traditions, an influence that was strongly reflected in the literature of the time. As explained by Nugraha, the Umayyad dynasty is divided into two periods: Umayyad I (661–750 CE), centered in Damascus, and Umayyad II (756–1031 CE), based in Andalusia. Both periods nurtured literary traditions that, while still rooted in classical forms, began to evolve in both function and content.

According to Al-Iskandariy (as cited in Sasmita et al.), Umayyad literature falls under the *shadr al-Islam* period, the early phase of Islam's development where poetry was heavily influenced by the Qur'an and Hadith, often serving as a medium for religious preaching (da'wah). Meanwhile, Dadan Rusmana (2007) points out that poetry also developed as a result of emerging political factions, religious sects, warfare, and intertribal rivalries. These factors gave rise to several poetic genres, such as:

a. Syi'ir al-Siyasi (Political Poetry)

Used as a tool of propaganda to support certain political groups. For example, Al-Farazdaq's poem praises Bisyr while degrading al-Muhallab:

*"If not for Bisyr's generosity, I wouldn't care about al-Muhallab's anger. They are leaders from the tribes of Qays and Khindif. (whereas the Banu Azad) are like horses tied to an anchor, bearded like the Nabateans."*

This illustrates how poetry functioned as a political instrument and a symbol of tribal identity.

b. Syi'ir an-Naqaid (Polemical Poetry)

This type of poetry contains elements of pride (fakhr), satire (hija'), and praise (madah), used as a tool to either attack or glorify specific individuals or groups. It flourished during the Umayyad era, particularly through the works of poets such as Al-Akhtal, Jarir, and Al-Farazdaq, who were well known for exchanging poetic jabs and insults in a competitive literary tradition.

A clear example can be seen in a poem by Al-Akhtal, where he mocks Jarir and his tribe, Bani Yarbu':

*"As for Kulaib of Bani Yarbu', they had no excellence. They were left behind, while others carried out their duties. They were absent, blind, and completely unaware of what was happening."*

In this poem, Al-Akhtal directly ridicules Jarir's ancestry by suggesting that his forefathers lacked any notable achievements. The phrase "blind and unaware" highlights the tribe's alleged incompetence in both political and social leadership, portraying them as lacking direction and incapable of governing.

c. Sy'ir al-Ghazal (Love Poetry)

During the Umayyad dynasty, the shifting of political centers to regions like Syria, Mecca, and Medina gave rise to an environment of luxury and indulgence. This new social reality fostered a different poetic sensibility, leading to the emergence of ghazal as a distinct literary genre focusing on love and romantic longing. Ghazal poetry during this era developed into two main forms:

1) Omarit Ghazal

Omarit Ghazal developed in the region of Hijaz, emphasizing pleasure, music, and luxurious living, often without much regard for moral values. The central figure in this genre was Umar ibn Abi Rabi'ah, whose poetry was known for its bold expression of romantic obsession. One example reads:

*"Wash me as much as you like, my friend! But today,  
let the sunlight shine with me by the saddle's side.  
There is no flaw in my love for Zaenab, for her  
my heart is bound and to her alone it belongs.  
Ah, can I imagine how we met at al-Khaif,  
and not recall the regrets of love?  
My songs for other women were but jokes  
she lives in solitude, all hope has faded.  
My love for her is pure, and this fire of passion burns bright  
stop your reproach!"*

This poem reflects Umar ibn Abi Rabi'ah's intense infatuation with Zaenab, expressed through metaphorical language and emotional intensity. His diction is highly expressive and intimate, particularly in the line, "There is no flaw in my love for Zaenab... my heart is bound to her", which reveals a deeply personal tone. Through his poetry, Umar projects a love that is passionate, even selfish, and challenges conventional moral norms.

## 2) Udhri Ghazal

Udhri Ghazal represents a more sacred and self-sacrificing form of romantic poetry, often associated with religious or spiritual undertones. Generally idealistic, melancholic, and pure, this genre centers on unfulfilled longing and emotional devotion.

Key figures in Udhri Ghazal, as noted in the historical overview by Ridwan, include Jamil ibn Ma'mar, Qais ibn Zarih, and Urwah ibn Hizam, among others. A sample from Jamil's poetry reads that is quoted from Ridwan:

*"If only.. I could spend a single night  
in the valley of Qura, how joyful I would be!  
Might I someday meet Busainah alone,  
and share our love?  
My longing for her has only grown,  
ever blossoming and deepening.  
I have spent my life waiting for her promise  
though not long ago, it feels like years.  
All I have asked has not been denied,  
and her love endures, unlike the others."*

This poem conveys Jamil's deep emotional love for Busainah, marked by suffering and yearning. Through themes of waiting, sacrifice, and hope, he articulates his relentless longing and emotional vulnerability. Phrases like "blossoming" and "deepening" metaphorically illustrate how his love intensifies with time, like a flower in bloom. The line "*though not long ago, it feels like years*" captures the emotional weight of time, reflecting sincere and pure devotion.

These forms of ghazal, both Omarit and Udhri, were further developed by other renowned Umayyad poets such as Al-Farazdaq, Al-Akhtal, and Jarir, all of whom played significant roles in enriching Arabic literature during the Umayyad period.

### **New Poetry Style: Abbasid Era**

After the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty, power shifted to the Abbasids (750–1258 CE). This period became known as the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, marked by cultural openness and intellectual flourishing. As noted by Zarawaki (2022), citing Bustam, the assimilation of foreign cultures enriched the Arabic language, both in vocabulary and

style of expression. Literary genres were no longer limited to classical qasidah, but expanded to include khamriyyat (wine poetry), thardiyyat (hunting poetry), zuhdiyyat (ascetic poetry), as well as philosophical and satirical prose.

a. Abu Nawas

Abu Nawas, whose full name was Al-Hasan bin Hani bin Abdul Awwal bin Sabah, was born in 140 AH (757 AD) in the village of Suuq al-Ahwaz, in the region of Khurdistan, which is located northwest of Baghdad. He came from a mixed family, with his father being Arab and his mother Persian. At the age of six, he was taken by his mother to Basra to be entrusted to his uncle. In Basra, Abu Nawas spent his youth studying various religious sciences, including poetry, fiqh, and hadith (Fathoni, 2012). As his intellectual growth progressed, Abu Nawas became acquainted with many literary figures who influenced his career as a poet.

Abu Nawas lived during the golden age of the Abbasid Dynasty, specifically under the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–809 CE). Baghdad at that time was a center of knowledge, art, and culture, as well as a gathering place for scholars from all corners of the Islamic world. This environment greatly supported the development of creativity and freedom of expression, including in literature.

1) Revolution in Arabic Literature and the Deconstruction of Classical Qasidah Tradition

Abu Nawas (140 AH/757 CE - 814 CE) emerged as a revolutionary figure in the “New Poets” movement of the Abbasid period, fundamentally transforming the landscape of classical Arabic poetry. The transformation brought about by Abu Nawas was not merely a change in themes but a shift in the paradigm of literary creation. Abu Nawas is regarded as the pioneer of modern poetry in Arabic literature. He pioneered a shift from traditional poetry (classical qasidah) focused on praise and desert life to urban and hedonistic themes. He introduced new poetic forms such as khamriyyat (poetry about wine), ghazal (love poetry), and zuhdiyyat (spiritual poetry).

Abu Nawas completely deconstructed the conventions of traditional Arabic poetry. In the material “The New Poets,” he explicitly rejected the desert themes that had become ingrained in the qasidah tradition: “The lovelorn wretch stopped at a desert camping ground to question it, and I stopped to inquire after the local tavern.” This quote represents a radical shift from the romantic search for the desert to the search for a tavern as a symbol of urban life.

Abu Nawas' rejection of traditional elements such as camels, camp ruins, and desert journeys reflects an awareness of the irrelevance of such themes to the cosmopolitan urban society of Baghdad. He argued that poets could not be expected to write about realities they had never experienced.

Abu Nawas, described as a close friend of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, led this movement. He expressed the complaint that poets could not be expected to write about desert plants and animals they had never seen, in the form of poetry they considered tedious. Quoted from the material "The New Poets," Abu Nawas specifically expressed his dislike for the classical Arabic poetry tradition about life in the desert. He criticized themes such as desert journeys, camels, and abandoned camp ruins, which he considered outdated and incompatible with life in the rapidly developing cities of the Abbasid era.

## 2) Khamriyyat as a New Genre and Controversial Themes

Abu Nawas pioneered the genre of khamriyyat (wine poetry), which became a hallmark of the Abbasid literary revolution. Abu Nawas was known as a bold poet, often controversial. His works reflect his spiritual journey and search for divine values after a youth marked by sin. However, in his poetry, he also expresses deep regret for his sins, frequently addressing themes such as wine (khamr), pleasure, and freedom.

Abu Nawas's poems show how themes of freedom, the enjoyment of life, love, alcohol, and the acceptance of human mortality form the main characteristics of his work. These themes influence Abu Nawas's poetry to be more personal, bold, honest, and full of passion for life, differing from previous traditional Arabic poetry, which was more rigid.

The themes of freedom and acceptance of mortality are one of the main characteristics. Abu Nawas invites readers to accept the transience of life and enjoy the present moment fully, without being burdened by fear of sin. In his poems, he suggests that life is too short to be spent in sadness or self-restraint.

An example can be found in the quote from "The New Poets": "*Make the most of Youth, it stayeth not for ever; Let the wine flow round from eve to morn one river!*" Here, the themes of enjoying youth and the impermanence of time are clearly evident. Abu Nawas encourages readers to enjoy life to the fullest before old age arrives.

The theme of worldly pleasures, particularly wine and love, is also highlighted. One of Abu Nawas' distinctive traits is his boldness in openly writing poems about drinking wine, even amidst social and religious norms that prohibit it.

In his quote: *“Ho! A cup and fill it up, and tell me it is wine, / For never will I drink in shade if I can drink in shine,”* he not only celebrates wine consumption but also presents a *carpe diem* philosophy that challenges social-religious norms.

The theme of wine in Abu Nawas' poetry serves as a metaphor for liberation from social conventions and the search for the authenticity of human experience.

For example, in the quote from “The New Poets”: *“Pour into thy cup a sparkling ruddy vintage That will melt to ruth the miser's hardest mintage,”* wine becomes a symbol of pleasure and liberation from the hardships of life. The drink is not only a symbol of celebration but also a comfort to the heart.

Abu Nawas is known for his poetry exploring themes such as wine (*khamr*), pleasure, and freedom, reflecting a more free and hedonistic lifestyle among the Abbasid elite.

Some of his poetry excerpts in the “The New Poets” material:

*“Ho! a cup and fill it up, and tell me it is wine, / For never will I drink in shade if I can drink in shine. / Curst and poor is every hour that sober must go, / But rich am I whene'er well drunk I stagger to and fro”.*

*“Pour into thy cup / a sparkling ruddy vintage / That will melt to ruth / the miser's hardest mintage, / Sought and chosen out / of old for Persia's ruler, / Dower'd with twin delights / of fragrancy and color.”*

These quotations show how Abu Nawas celebrates worldly pleasures and wine in his poetry, expressing joy in life and the pursuit of pleasure. This attitude is very different from the traditional emphasis on simplicity and piety.

### 3) The Dialectic of Sin and Spirituality

The paradox in Abu Nawas' work lies in the dialectic between hedonism and spirituality. According to (Khalilah, 2025), Abu Nawas was a controversial figure. As a Muslim, he often engaged in actions prohibited by his religion. When under the influence of alcohol, he frequently spoke incoherently and inserted poems praising alcoholic beverages, known as *khamriyat* poetry. Alcohol became the center of his life, even surpassing religious commands as his primary goal. As cited in a journal written by (Zarawaki, 2022), Abu Nawas was known as a dissolute poet due to his poems celebrating the pride of drinking alcohol.

However, according to Fathoni (2012), on a Night of Destiny, he was visited by a stranger who caused him to change his behavior to be more Islamic. He finally realized the mistakes he had been making. He felt that he was not something valuable like salt, but more like a fly. This realization prompted him to repent and abandon all behaviors contrary to Islamic teachings. After that, he became a devout worshiper, humble in demeanor, often spending time in seclusion at the mosque, and more reserved. Despite his transformation, he continued to write poetry. However, the content of his poems underwent a transformation or change, no longer focusing on worldly themes but instead filled with remembrance of God and prayers. One of the most famous poems to this day is *Al-I'tiraf*, which is often recited in Islamic boarding schools or in the form of *nasyid*. It describes the overflowing desire of a servant to seek forgiveness from God.

After the peak of his hedonistic life, he underwent a profound spiritual transformation, especially after the event of *Lailatul Qadar*, which changed the direction of his life. The work *Al-I'tiraf* is a manifestation of repentance and the search for forgiveness, revealing the psychological complexity of the poet.

This transformation shows that hedonism in Abu Nawas' poetry is not merely a celebration of desire but part of a deeper search for existential meaning.

Extreme experiences in worldly pleasures led him to a profound spiritual awareness.

b. Abu al-Atahiyah

Abu al-'Atahiyah, whose full name is Ishaq bin Ismail bin al-Qasim, was born in Kufah in 130 AH. Abu al-Atahiyah was born in an important city in Islamic history, known as a center of religious and literary learning. He came from a modest family and worked as a pottery seller before becoming famous as a poet. His simple life experiences influenced his straightforward and easy-to-understand poetic style. His poems are easy to understand, concise, and not overly elaborate. Most of his poems are about asceticism and proverbs. He died in 211 AH (Syakhrani, 2023).

Abu al-Atahiyah lived during the heyday of the Abbasid Caliphate, a period marked by intellectual and cultural progress, as well as luxury. However, amid this grandeur, there was also political and social uncertainty. It was this environment that shaped his thoughts and poetry. Some sources mention that he moved around frequently, which may have influenced his view of the world.

Abu al-Atahiyah (130 AH - 211 AH) represents the contemplative dimension of the "New Poets" movement, which offered a philosophical alternative to the hedonism

of Abu Nawas. His poems reflect a critical awareness of the social, political, and spiritual conditions of Abbasid society.

Abu al-Atahiyah was part of the “The New Poets” movement that emerged during the Abbasid era and brought renewal to classical Arabic poetry. This movement tended to abandon the traditional Qasida style with themes such as praise for rulers, war, and desert journeys. Instead, they focused more on modern themes. Abu al-Atahiyah was one of the key figures in this shift, known for his simple and reflective poetry.

#### 1) The Theme of Transience as a Critique of Civilization

In the context of the splendor of Abbasid civilization, Abu Al-Atahiyah presents a counter-discourse through the theme of transience. The main theme in Abu al-Atahiyah's poetry is often about the transience of the world and the futility of worldly life. This theme makes his poetry feel serious and full of warnings, unlike Abu Nawas. The influence of this theme on his poetry is evident in his choice of words, which often include “death,” “collapse,” “destruction,” “fate,” and “transience”. The language he uses tends to be direct and simple to emphasize the moral message he wants to convey. The tone of Abu al-Atahiyah's poetry is often sad, full of warnings, and invites readers to reflect on the end of life. In addition, the symbolism of the world is often likened to a “fragile building” or “earth that ends in dust.”

There is a quote from Abu al-Atahiyah's poetry in “The New Poets” that reflects the theme of the transience of the world:

*"Every soul will experience death, and everything new will become obsolete. Where are the kings who built sturdy palaces? Where are those who accumulated wealth and riches?"*

In this quote, Abu al-Atahiyah clearly emphasizes the transience of everything in the world. He questions the existence of rulers and the wealthy from the past, implying that power and wealth are not eternal.

#### 2) The Aesthetics of Simplicity

Abu Al-Atahiyah developed an aesthetic of simplicity that contrasts with the formal complexity of traditional poetry. His “direct and easy-to-understand” style of poetry reflects the democratization of literature, which allows moral messages to be accessed by a wider segment of society.

The use of words such as “death,” “collapse,” “destruction,” and “transience” creates a consistent semantic field to convey the message of the transitory nature of worldly life. This linguistic strategy demonstrates an awareness of the power of words in shaping readers' perceptions and attitudes.

Abu al-Atahiyah is an important figure in “The New Poets” who brought significant changes to Arabic poetry. He is known for his poems that discuss sadness, transience, and the brevity of life. Unlike Abu Nuwas, whose poems focus on worldly pleasures, Abu al-Atahiyah invites readers to reflect more on death and remember the more eternal life that follows. The themes in Abu al-Atahiyah's poetry create a serious and meaningful style of poetry. The themes of the transience of the world, death, and spiritual advice that he raises make his poems a reflection on the human condition and a reminder of the limitations of life. Abu al-Atahiyah emerged as a moral voice amid the rapid cultural freedom of the Abbasid era, offering a deeper, more reflective perspective on worldly life.

c. Dibil

Among the poets who emerged and gained prominence during the Abbasid era, Dibil al-Khuza'i (d. 860 CE) stood out as a sharp-tongued figure known for his bold social and political criticism. He was closely associated with the Shi'a community and often voiced his dissatisfaction with the ruling authorities through his biting satirical poetry. Unlike many Umayyad-era poets who focused on madah (praise of rulers) or fakhr (tribal pride), Dibil pushed Arabic poetry in a new direction—towards social opposition and structural critique.

In his poetry, Dibil attacked social hypocrisy, including fabricated claims to noble lineage:

*“They sat and selected a pedigree which passed amongst the Arabs after dusk. But when morning, the gold showed as counterfeit.”*

This verse denounces the construction of false social realities made for power, which are inevitably exposed, just like counterfeit gold that only appears genuine in the dark.

He also expressed disappointment over the fall of Baghdad and the transfer of power to Samarra, which he viewed as a sign of decline:

*“Until calamity overtook her, Baghdad was the home of kings... He who sees Samarra is not rejoiced. Nay! She is a sorrow for whoever sees her.”*

In another poem, he harshly mocked social inequality through biting metaphors:

*“A defective chin, a thick nose, and a forehead like the beam of the money-changer.”*

This description goes beyond physical mockery. It symbolizes the erosion of moral values and the commodification of identity at the time.

Dibil also responded to the claim that suffering silences creativity with a profoundly existential assertion:

*“They announced my death... They hold that if a poet experiences evil, his poetry dies. Far from it! The lifespan of a poem is long.”*

*“The bad poem dies before its author, but the excellent one lives, though its author dies.”*

Through these lines, Dibil demonstrates that poetry can serve as a weapon of resistance, not merely as a form of entertainment or a tool for legitimizing power. He opened a new path in Abbasid Arabic poetry, transforming it into a vehicle for public outrage, social critique, and collective awareness, voices rarely heard in earlier classical literature.

#### d. Al-Jahiz

While Dibil voiced dissent through verse, Al-Jahiz (d. 869 CE) led a revolution in adab prose, a literary genre that blended aesthetic, ethical, and educational purposes. Al-Jahiz was a rationalist thinker of the Mu'tazilite school, active during the reigns of Caliphs Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma'mun, a period marked by openness to philosophy, foreign cultures, and scientific inquiry (Novira et al., 2023).

In his *Kitab al-Bayan wa at-Tabyin*, Al-Jahiz compiled quotes, stories, and anecdotes that reflected social pluralism and the democratization of intellectual discourse. He amplified the voices of slaves, women, and commoners while delivering sharp social commentary through witty, yet profound language:

*“And what is the fools' sense of honour? That they regard forgiving one another as a wrong.”*

He also addressed issues of racism and the value of artistic merit over social status:

*“If his skin is black, yet his praise is white and his poem is truly Arabian...”*

This quote reflects the egalitarian spirit of Abbasid literature, where the quality of a poem outweighed the origin of its author.

In his spiritual reflections, Al-Jahiz conveyed deep moral messages, such as in his retelling of a statement by Hasan al-Basri:

“Surely, a thing of which this is the end ought not to be desired at the first and ought to be feared at the last.”

Meanwhile, in Kitab al-Hayawan, Al-Jahiz did more than compile an encyclopedia of animals. He used scientific observation as a medium for symbolic and humorous social critique. This work illustrates how Abbasid prose evolved into a platform for communicating philosophy, science, morality, and cultural criticism in accessible ways.

Through his reflective and dialogical writing style, Al-Jahiz represents a shift away from qasidah poetry that glorified rulers, toward a more flexible, rational, and life-oriented literary form, a hallmark of Abbasid literary maturity (Novira et al., 2023).

### The Differences of The Themes and Style

To clarify the thematic transformation of Arabic literature from the Umayyad to the Abbasid era, the following table summarizes key aspects such as genre, style, language, social function, and notable literary figures from both periods.

**Table 1.** The Differences of Arabic Literature in Umayyad and Abbasid

No	Aspects	Umayyad	Abbasid
1.	Theme	Praise, political satire, and classical love	<i>Khamriyyat, Zuhdiyyat, and Thardiyyat</i>
2.	Style	Qasidah and classical form	Urban life, free, and reflective
3.	Function	Political and tribal legitimation	Personal and social reflection
4.	Figure	Al-Farazdaq, Al-Akhtal, dan Jarir	Abu Nawas, Abu al-Atahiyah, Al-Jahiz, dan Dibil
5.	Prose Development	Not yet dominant	Developed and expanded by Al-Jahiz

## 5. CONCLUSION

The development of Arabic literature from the Umayyad to the Abbasid period reflects not only a stylistic evolution, but also a deeper ideological and social transformation. In the Umayyad era, poetry remained rooted in classical conventions such as praise and tribal pride, reflecting the political and tribal structure of the time. However,

poets like Al-Farazdaq, Al-Akhtal, and Jarir began to introduce their works with personal expression and satire, subtly breaking away from rigid traditions.

The Abbasid period brought this transformation to its peak. Abu Nawas challenged conservative norms by exploring themes of freedom, indulgence, and human weakness. Abu al-Atahiyah offered a counterweight through reflections on death, faith, and the emptiness of worldly pleasures. Dibil al-Khuza'i used satire to expose hypocrisy and injustice. Collectively, these "New Poets" redefined poetry as a vehicle for criticism, introspection, and cultural renewal.

Meanwhile, Al-Jahiz revolutionized Arabic prose by using humor, reason, reflection, expanding literature's role into philosophy, ethics, and education. His inclusive voice amplified marginalized perspectives and democratized knowledge. Together, they turned literature into something more than art, it became a space for dialogue, for resistance, for thinking. This transformation laid the foundation for a more dynamic and conscious literary culture.

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