

Theoretical Framework

This article will focus on ~~one of~~ the medieval Arab critics and theorists, al-Jahiz (776–868 A.D.), ~~with a concentration on~~ four main areas: form and meaning (signifier and signified), badi' poetry, ~~whether al-Jahiz was more like classical Arab or modern poets~~, and al-Jahiz as the author of ~~the~~ begging short stories. Important questions will be addressed for each category. ~~First, for~~ First, regarding form and meaning, what aspects did al-Jahiz believe ~~prefer~~ authors and poets should ~~to~~ focus on in their literary texts? Second, in terms of badi' poetry,.... Third, as a critic, did al-Jahiz ~~favore~~ embrace classical Arab poets or contemporary Arab poets ~~more?~~ ~~Exploring these two literary topics from the perspective of al-Jahiz's criticism will help the writer of this dissertation describe and analyze the poetry of al-Hariri in the context of medieval Arabic literary theory. The third focus of the dissertation will be to examine~~ Finally, how can we best understand the meaning of al-Jahiz's ~~as the author of~~ begging short stories, which also comprised the primary ~~the same~~ theme ~~where most of his Maqamat al-Hariri are about.~~ Exploring these literary topics from the perspective of al-Jahiz's criticism will help the writer of this dissertation describe and analyze the poetry of al-Hariri in the context of medieval Arabic literary theory.

Form and Meaning (Signifier and Signified)

Form and meaning (signifier and signified) will be the main focus of this dissertation. When Medieval Arab critics studied literary texts and poems, they analyzed the texts according to both form and meaning. In their writings, they criticized authors

Commented [EH1]: I might change this to "al-Jahiz's poetic style" for clarity

Commented [EH2]: If you're going to set it up this way, you will need to address all four items in the paragraph.

Commented [EH3]: Is the article about al-Jahiz or al-Hariri? It's not clear.

Commented [EH4]: why have you colored certain words?

and poets, ~~primarily on these two aspects of the works,~~ and evaluated the aesthetic values of a text, ~~primarily according to these two literary aspects only in these terms,~~

In this dissertation, the ~~writer I~~ will focus ~~my scholarship~~ on al-Jahiz for several reasons. First, he is ~~among one of~~ the earliest Arab critics ~~who~~ discussed the topic of ~~poetic form~~ and meaning in ~~some~~ detail. ~~Poetry critics preceded him. There were some critics before him,~~ including Abu Amr al-Shaybani¹ (713–821 A.D.), ~~but none who~~ discussed ~~form and meaning this topic with,~~ but not with the level of detail of al-Jahiz. Second, al-Jahiz wrote short stories about begging, ~~that can be seen as an important thematic~~ source ~~for~~ the *maqama* genre, which typically includes stories about a begging protagonist. Since al-Jahiz ~~both wrote was both a writer of~~ short stories and ~~a literary critic expressed his own thoughts on the debate over form and meaning,~~ he is ~~an ideal figure through which to interrogate questions of form and meaning in the best medieval Arabic literature, critic to select for this dissertation.~~ Third, al-Jahiz's writings ~~comments on discusses~~ both literary prose and poetry ~~in his writings,~~ making his ~~work useful to the study in a good critic for the study of~~ *Maqamat al-Hariri*, ~~a form that which~~ contains both poetry and prose.

Al-Jahiz is one of the earliest Arab critics to consider the topics of ~~form~~ and meaning. He studied the topic in two of his books: ~~first, he examined the issue in~~ *Kitab al-Hayawan* (Book of the Animals), and ~~then, wrote his final thoughts and judgment on this issue in~~ *Kitab al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin* (The Book of Eloquence and Demonstration). ~~In~~ *Kitab al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*, he also references his earlier opinions in ~~Kitab al-Hayawan~~. In the debate over form versus meaning, Al-Jahiz argues that form is more

¹Al-Jahiz mentions in the third volume of his book *Kitab al-Hayawan* (Book of the Animals) that Abu Amr al-Shaybani prefers meaning over the form.

important ~~than meaning in determining the quality of~~ a literary text. By **form**, he meant both verbalism (the use of words) and style attributes such as sentence and phrase structure.

Al-Jahiz claimed that authors or poets should carefully choose their words and place them in a suitable position within the sentence. ~~These~~ **A poet's** words must neither be colloquial nor obscure; instead, they should be **clear and** academic ~~and clear in tone~~. ~~A w~~ **Words must also needs to** agree with **adjacent** words ~~next to it~~ and should not be "heavy in a tongue" when ~~it is~~ pronounced. He also insists that each sentence **agrees** with the sentence next to it. He admires the sentence that agrees with its neighbor sentence, a technique called *al-qiran* (homogeneous). Therefore, al-Jahiz suggests that authors and poets choose uncomplicated words when writing a text or poem. He also considers the interests of the reader when he insists that authors and poets choose words that are acceptable **and comprehensible** to their readers....

Commented [EH5]: what does he mean by "agree"?