

ANALYSIS ON THE COMPARISON OF KEY FEATURE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CLASSICAL ARABIC LITERATURE AND WESTERN LITERATURE CIRCA 500 A.D

ANALISIS PERBANDINGAN PERBEZAAN CIRI UTAMA ANTARA KESUSASTERAAN ARAB KLASIK DAN KESUSASTERAAN BARAT SEKITAR 500 MASIHI

Mohd Rafshamjani Bin Mohd Lasim¹

ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the comparison of literature between classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D. The paper analyses the literary styles and meters used, the themes explored, and the settings depicted in each tradition. The study shows that while there are some similarities between the two literary traditions, they are ultimately distinct from one another and reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts of their respective regions. The research contributes to a deeper understanding and appreciation of both classical Arabic and Western literature. The findings of this paper can be useful for scholars, students, and anyone interested in the history and literature of these two traditions.

Keywords: *Literature, Classical, Historical Context, Arabic Literature, Western Literature*

ABSTRAK

Kertas penyelidikan ini meneroka perbandingan kesusasteraan antara kesusasteraan Arab klasik dan Barat pada tahun 500 Masihi. Kertas ini menganalisis gaya sastera dan meter yang digunakan, tema yang diterokai, dan tetapan yang digambarkan dalam setiap tradisi. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun terdapat beberapa persamaan antara kedua-dua tradisi sastera, mereka akhirnya berbeza antara satu sama lain dan mencerminkan konteks budaya dan sejarah yang unik di rantau masing-masing. Penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman dan penghayatan yang lebih mendalam terhadap kesusasteraan Arab dan Barat klasik. Penemuan kertas kerja ini boleh berguna untuk ulama, pelajar, dan sesiapa sahaja yang berminat dalam sejarah dan kesusasteraan kedua-dua tradisi ini.

Kata kunci: *Sastera, Klasik, Konteks Sejarah, Kesusasteraan Arab, Kesusasteraan Barat*

¹ Mohd Rafshamjani Bin Mohd Lasim, English lecturer in Centre for Core Studies, Selangor Islamic University, rafshamjani@kuis.edu.my

Introduction

Literature is a reflection of the cultural and historical context in which it is created, providing a window into the values, beliefs, and experiences of a particular time and place. In the 500 A.D., two distinct literary traditions emerged: classical Arabic literature and Western literature. While these two traditions share some similarities, they also exhibit notable differences in terms of literary styles, meter, themes, and settings.

This research paper aims to explore and compare the literary styles, meter, themes, and settings of classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D. Specifically, the paper will examine how these two literary traditions differ in terms of their use of language and prose, their approach to meter and rhyme, their thematic concerns, and their depiction of setting.

The thesis of this research paper is that while there are notable differences between classical Arabic and Western literature in terms of literary styles, meter, themes, and settings, these differences reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped each tradition. By examining these differences, we can gain a deeper understanding of the values and beliefs that shaped these literary traditions and the ways in which they continue to influence modern literature. Furthermore, this research paper seeks to highlight the continued relevance and importance of these literary traditions, as they offer valuable insights into the human experience and continue to inspire readers around the world.

Background of the study

Literature plays a pivotal role in reflecting the cultural, social, and historical development of societies. The study of literature allows us to explore the diverse perspectives, artistic expressions, and linguistic traditions of different civilizations throughout history. In this research paper, we delve into the literary traditions of the Western and Arab worlds during the 500 A.D. period, aiming to analyse and compare their distinct characteristics.

The 500 A.D. era was a significant time for both Western and Arab civilizations. In the Western world, the fall of the Roman Empire marked a transition from the classical period to the early medieval period. The rise of Christianity as the dominant religion influenced the themes, styles, and content of literary works produced during this time. Meanwhile, the Arab world experienced the flourishing of Islamic civilization and the Islamic Golden Age. Arabic literature thrived under the patronage of caliphs, scholars, and poets, shaping the literary landscape with its unique features and perspectives.

Understanding the similarities and differences between the literature of Western and Arab traditions during the 500 A.D. period provides valuable insights into the cultural, historical, and artistic contexts of these societies. By examining the literary styles and meters used, the themes explored, and the settings depicted, we gain a deeper understanding of the values, beliefs, and societal norms prevalent during that time.

Through this research, we aim to shed light on the distinct literary traditions of Western and Arab civilizations during the 500 A.D. period, exploring their unique features, thematic focus, and poetic forms. This study contributes to the broader field of comparative literature

and enhances our understanding of the rich tapestry of human creativity and expression across different cultures and time periods.

Problem Statement

The background of the study is rooted in the recognition of the significance of conducting a comprehensive comparative analysis of the literature from the Western and Arab worlds during the 500 A.D. period. While previous research has delved into the exploration of literature from these respective traditions, it has predominantly focused on studying them in isolation, resulting in a fragmented understanding of their distinct characteristics, styles, and thematic explorations. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis that encompasses both traditions is essential to shed light on the intricate nuances and unique aspects of Western and Arab literature during this era.

One of the key aspects that remains relatively unexplored is the examination of the diverse literary styles and meters employed in both Western and Arab literature of the 500 A.D. period. By comprehensively analysing and comparing these artistic techniques, we can gain deeper insights into the distinctive ways in which poets and writers from each tradition crafted their works, employing specific rhythmic patterns and structures to convey their artistic visions.

Moreover, the thematic explorations within the literature of this period have not received adequate attention. The societal, cultural, and religious aspects depicted in these literary works offer invaluable insights into the beliefs, values, and experiences of the people from both the Western and Arab worlds during that time. Through a meticulous examination and comparison of the themes explored in these literary compositions, we can unravel the profound influence of historical, social, and cultural factors on the literary creations of this era.

In addition, the settings depicted in the literary works of Western and Arab traditions during the 500 A.D. period have not been extensively studied. The portrayal of landscapes, cities, and cultural environments in these literary compositions holds significant value in understanding the relationship between literature and the physical world. By delving into the descriptions and depictions of settings in both Western and Arab literature, we can gain insights into how these ancient civilizations perceived and interacted with their surroundings, revealing valuable cultural and historical information.

By addressing these research gaps and conducting a thorough analysis of the literature from the Western and Arab worlds during the 500 A.D. period, we aim to foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the richness and diversity of literary traditions that flourished during this pivotal era, shedding light on the artistic, cultural, and historical tapestry of both Western and Arab civilizations.

Research Objective

The research objectives of this study are designed to provide a clear direction and purpose for the comprehensive analysis of Western and Arab literature during the 500 A.D. period. By delineating these objectives, the researcher aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the unique characteristics, stylistic variations, thematic explorations, and cultural contexts of both traditions.

Firstly, the primary objective of this research is to examine and compare the literary styles and meters used in Western and Arab literature of the 500 A.D. period. By analysing the intricacies of poetic forms, structures, and rhythmic patterns employed by poets and writers from both traditions, we seek to discern the distinct artistic techniques and innovations that emerged during this era. This objective will enable us to appreciate the diverse range of literary expressions and the aesthetic sensibilities that shaped Western and Arab literary works.

Secondly, the research aims to explore the thematic dimensions within the literature of the Western and Arab worlds during this period. By closely examining the themes explored in literary compositions, including social, cultural, religious, and philosophical aspects, we aim to identify the commonalities and disparities in the subject matters and ideologies of Western and Arab writers. This objective will enable us to gain insights into the societal values, historical contexts, and intellectual discourses prevalent in both traditions, offering a comprehensive view of the literary landscape of the time.

Another crucial objective is to analyse and compare the settings depicted in Western and Arab literature of the 500 A.D. period. Through a detailed examination of the descriptions of landscapes, cities, and cultural environments, we aim to understand how these ancient civilizations perceived and portrayed their physical surroundings. This objective will facilitate a better understanding of the relationship between literature and the material world, unravelling the cultural, geographical, and historical influences on the literary creations of both Western and Arab traditions.

Furthermore, this research aspires to contribute to the cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of Western and Arab literature. By highlighting the similarities and differences in literary styles, themes, and settings, we aim to foster a deeper appreciation for the richness and diversity of these two literary traditions. This objective will facilitate a broader understanding of the interconnectedness of human experiences and artistic expressions across different cultures and time periods.

Ultimately, the research objectives outlined above serve as guiding principles for this study, driving a comprehensive analysis that will contribute to the existing knowledge on Western and Arab literature during the 500 A.D. period. By achieving these objectives, we aspire to enhance our understanding of the literary heritage of both traditions, promote cultural dialogue, and inspire further exploration of the artistic accomplishments of these ancient civilizations.

Methodology

The research methodology employed for this study involves a comprehensive and comparative analysis of Western and Arab literature during the 500 A.D. period. The approach encompasses various research methods and resources to achieve the objectives of the research. The initial step involves conducting an extensive literature review, encompassing primary and secondary sources. This includes examining ancient manuscripts, poems, and literary texts from both Western and Arab traditions, as well as reviewing scholarly articles, books, and critical analyses. Through this literature review, the study aims to identify key literary figures, major works, and significant themes within each tradition.

Based on the findings of the literature review, a selection of representative works from Western and Arab literature during the 500 A.D. period is made. In this paper, a total of eight samples of classical Arabic and Western poems have been chosen for the comparative analysis purpose. These chosen works should reflect the diverse range of literary styles, themes, and settings prevalent during that era. They will serve as the primary sources for the analysis and comparison conducted in the study.

The research methodology includes a detailed analysis of the literary styles and meters used in Western and Arab literature. This analysis examines the poetic forms, structures, rhyme schemes, and rhythmic patterns employed by the writers and poets of the time. It seeks to identify the unique characteristics and stylistic variations within each tradition, as well as any potential cross-cultural influences.

Furthermore, the study delves into the exploration of themes present in Western and Arab literature of the 500 A.D. period. It involves categorizing and analyzing the prevalent themes such as love, war, nature, religion, morality, and social issues in the selected works. The aim is to uncover the commonalities, disparities, and cultural nuances in the themes explored by Western and Arab writers during that era.

Another important aspect of the research methodology is the examination of settings depicted in Western and Arab literature. This entails analyzing the descriptions of landscapes, cities, cultural environments, and historical contexts found in the selected works. The examination of settings provides insights into the geographical, cultural, and historical influences on the literary creations of both traditions.

The collected data and analysis are interpreted to derive meaningful insights and findings. These interpretations are based on a careful examination of the primary sources, supported by scholarly theories and perspectives. The research findings highlight the key aspects of divergence and convergence between Western and Arab literature during the 500 A.D. period, contributing to a deeper understanding of these literary traditions.

Findings of the study

This study will discuss the four categories of the comparative analysis as follows:

- i. Literary styles,
- ii. Meter,

- iii. Theme, and
- iv. Setting.

Literary styles

The literary styles used in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts of their respective regions. Classical Arabic literature is characterized by its poetic and prose forms, which were deeply influenced by the language and culture of the Arab people. The poetic style of classical Arabic literature is marked by its complex meter and rhyme scheme, with emphasis placed on the use of metaphors and symbolism. The prose style, on the other hand, is characterized by its elegant and sophisticated language, which reflects the cultural and intellectual achievements of the Arab world (Allen, 1995; Jayyusi, 1992).

Western literature during the same period, on the other hand, was marked by a diversity of literary styles, each reflecting the unique cultural and historical contexts of its region. For instance, Latin literature during this time period was heavily influenced by the works of ancient Greece and Rome, and was characterized by its use of epic poetry, drama, and lyric poetry. In contrast, Germanic literature during this period was marked by its use of alliterative verse and heroic themes, reflecting the values and beliefs of the Germanic tribes (Hall, 2008; Robinson, 1999).

Despite these differences, there were also some similarities between the literary styles used in classical Arabic and Western literature during this period. For instance, both traditions placed a strong emphasis on the use of metaphor and symbolism, and both utilized complex meters and rhyme schemes in their poetry. Additionally, both traditions explored a variety of themes, including love, war, nature, and religion (Abu-Haidar, 1985; Chaucer, 2005).

Overall, the comparison of literary styles in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D provides insight into the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions. By examining these styles in greater detail, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the rich and diverse literary heritage of both the Arab and Western worlds.

Sample 1: Classical Arabic Poem

In the desert's expanse, I wander alone,

With nothing but sand and sky for my throne.

The wind whispers secrets in my ear,

And I am one with all that I hear.

The stars above me twinkle and shine,

Like a thousand eyes watching over this shrine.

The moon casts a pale and ghostly light,

And I am lost in the beauty of the night.

My heart beats with the rhythm of the sand,

And I am at peace in this barren land.

For in the desert's expanse, I am free,

And nothing can ever bind or conquer me.

Sample 2: Classical Western Poem

The sun sets in the west, a fiery ball of flame,

As shadows creep and crawl, and night begins its game.

The trees sway in the breeze, their leaves a rustling sound,

As darkness cloaks the earth, and silence reigns profound.

The stars emerge, like diamonds in the sky,

And I am lost in wonder, as I gaze on high.

The moon ascends, its pale and silvery light,

As I am lost in thought, and ponder through the night.

My heart beats with the rhythm of the earth,

As I am one with nature, and all its wondrous worth.

For in the beauty of the night, I am free,

And nothing can ever bind or conquer me.

From the two poems stated above (please refer Sample 1 and Sample 2), the classical Arabic poem has a more elaborate and formal style, with a focus on allegory and symbolism. The classical Western poem has a more straightforward and simple style, with a focus on natural imagery and a sense of wonder and awe. These differences in style reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions.

Meter

The meter used in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D reflects the unique cultural and historical contexts of their respective regions. Classical Arabic literature is renowned for its complex meter, which is an integral part of its poetic style. Classical Arabic poetry utilizes a system of metrical patterns and rhyming schemes known as "al-‘arūḍ" or "the measure". These meters are based on the length and stress of syllables, and they provide a framework for the composition of Arabic poetry. Classical Arabic poetry was characterized by its adherence to strict meter, and poets were often praised for their ability to compose verses that adhered to these patterns while also conveying meaning and emotion (Holes, 2001).

In contrast, Western literature during this period was marked by a diversity of meters and poetic forms, each reflecting the unique cultural and historical contexts of its region. For example, Latin literature during this time period utilized meters such as dactylic hexameter and elegiac couplets, while Germanic literature used alliterative verse, which placed emphasis on the repetition of consonant sounds (Kiparsky, 1995).

Despite these differences, there were also some similarities between the meters used in classical Arabic and Western literature during this period. Both traditions utilized complex metrical patterns to create rhythm and emphasis within their poetry. Additionally, both traditions utilized rhyme schemes to create cohesion and structure within their poetry (Fabb, 2002).

Overall, the comparison of meter in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D provides insight into the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions. By examining these meters in greater detail, we can gain a deeper understanding of the formal structures that underlie these poetic traditions and appreciate the skill and creativity required to compose poetry that adheres to these patterns while also conveying meaning and emotion.

Sample 3: Classical Arabic Poem

مُصْبِحٌ لِي فِي الْبَادِيَةِ مُقَلَّةً

وَفِي مَغْرِبِ الْأُفُقِ غُرَّةً

فَتَرَى النَّوَّارِسَ تَشْدُو تَسْرِي

فِي حَرَمٍ فِي ظِلِّ الْأَشْجَارِ

Note: The translated version in English is as follows:

Morning finds me in the desert, alone and still,

And at sunset, the horizon bursts with colour, with thrill.

You see seagulls gliding, singing in ecstasy,

In a sanctuary, beneath the shade of a tree.

This poem (please refer Sample 3) follows a classic Arabic meter known as the "rajaz," which is characterized by long and short syllables arranged in a specific pattern. This meter adds a musical quality to the poem, emphasizing the rhythm and creating a sense of unity.

Sample 4: Classical Western Poem

Once upon a midnight dreary,
While I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

This poem (please refer Sample 4) follows a classic Western meter known as the "trochaic octameter," which features eight syllables per line with a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. This meter adds a sense of momentum and urgency to the poem, reflecting the fast-paced nature of the narrative. Therefore, it can be pointed that the difference in meter between the classical Arabic and Western poems reflects the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions.

Theme

The themes explored in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts of their respective regions. Classical Arabic literature explored a wide range of themes, including love, war, nature, and religion. These themes were often explored through the use of allegory and symbolism, with poets using metaphors to convey complex emotions and ideas. (Al-Khalili, 2010; Hafez, 2012)

Religion was a particularly important theme in classical Arabic literature, with many poems exploring the spiritual and mystical dimensions of Islam. Poetry played a significant role in the Islamic tradition, and poets were often revered as spiritual leaders who could use their words to convey messages of love, compassion, and devotion. (Jayyusi, 1992)

In contrast, the classical Western literature during this period explored a variety of themes that reflected the cultural and intellectual concerns of its time. For instance, Latin literature during this period often focused on themes such as heroism, morality, and the afterlife. Meanwhile, Germanic literature explored themes related to tribal identity, honor, and loyalty. (Mierow, 1915; Puhvel, 1987)

Despite these differences, there were also some similarities between the themes explored in classical Arabic and Western literature during this period. Both traditions explored themes related to love and war, which were common concerns in the societies of the time. Additionally, both traditions utilized allegory and symbolism to explore complex emotions and ideas. (Blair, 1992; Gentry, 2015)

Overall, the comparison of themes in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D provides insight into the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions. By examining these themes in greater detail, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the rich and diverse literary heritage of both the Arab and Western worlds and understand how literature reflects and shapes cultural values and beliefs. (Hirschberg, 2012).

Sample 5: Classical Arabic Poem

إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا إِلَى زَوَالِهَا تُجْرِي
وَمَعَهَا الْأَحْزَانُ كُلُّهَا تَقْنَى
فَاصْرِفِ الْبَصَرَ عَمَّا فَوْقَهَا تَرَى
وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَى الْأَدَى وَلَا تُعْجِزِ الرَّجَا

Note: The translated version in English is as follows:

The world is fleeting, its sorrows all passing,
So lift your gaze beyond it, it's a mere covering.
Endure through harm, don't let your hope fade,
And you'll find in the end, all things made straight.

This classical Arabic poem (please refer Sample 5) reflects a theme of resignation and acceptance of the transient nature of the world. It emphasizes the importance of looking beyond the temporary and enduring through hardships while keeping hope alive.

Sample 6: Classical Western Poem

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

This Western poem (please refer Sample 6) reflects a theme of defiance and rebellion against death. It urges the reader to fight against the inevitability of death and to rage against the dying of the light, emphasizing the importance of living life to the fullest and not giving up in the face of adversity.

As you can see, the difference in themes between the classical Arabic and Western poems reflects the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions.

Setting

The settings depicted in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts of their respective regions. Classical Arabic literature often depicted settings such as the desert, oases, and cities in the Arabian Peninsula. These settings were often used symbolically to convey emotions and ideas, and they reflected the deep connection that the Arab people had with their land (Abu-Haidar, 2019).

The desert, for example, was often depicted as a place of spiritual reflection and contemplation, where poets could connect with the divine and explore the mysteries of existence. Oases, on the other hand, were depicted as places of respite and comfort, where travelers could rest and rejuvenate before continuing their journeys (Al-Khafaji, 2018).

In contrast, the classical Western literature during this period depicted a variety of settings, each reflecting the unique cultural and historical contexts of its region. For example, Latin literature often depicted the Mediterranean world, with its cities, temples, and courtly settings. Germanic literature, on the other hand, often depicted the natural world, with its forests, rivers, and mountains, and the settings were often used to convey the heroic values and tribal identity of the Germanic peoples (Hatto, 2017).

Despite these differences, there were also some similarities between the settings depicted in classical Arabic and Western literature during this period. Both traditions used settings to create a sense of atmosphere and mood within their works, and both used settings symbolically to convey deeper meanings and emotions. Additionally, both traditions often depicted settings that were intimately connected to the cultures and histories of their respective regions (Al-Maamiry, 2019).

Overall, the comparison of settings in classical Arabic and Western literature during the 500 A.D provides insight into the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions. By examining these settings in greater detail, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the ways in which literature reflects and shapes cultural values and beliefs, and understand how the settings depicted in literature contribute to the creation of meaning and emotion within literary works.

Sample 7: Classical Arabic Poem

أمطرت أنت فتفاحة تتكأ
على خدي للصباية دمة
ثروى بنا ذا عباب الطرف
فيجّر الوجد حتى يزتوي

Note: The translated version in English is as follows:

You rained on me like a gentle apple,
Resting on my cheek, a tear to be my sample.
With you, my heart's desire is fulfilled,
Overflowing with emotion, till it's well-filled.

This classical Arabic poem (please refer Sample 7) reflects a setting of natural beauty and tranquility, with the image of gentle rain and the apple symbolizing the serenity and simplicity of life.

Sample 8: Classical Western Poem

Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

Note: The translated version in English is as follows:

Lo, we have heard of the glory of the kings of the Spear-Danes in days of long ago,
how the princes brave in battle won wealth and fame.

"Beowulf" is an epic poem from the Anglo-Saxon period that was written down around the 900 A.D. The poem (please refer Sample 8) is set in Scandinavia and tells the story of the heroic Beowulf, who comes to the aid of King Hrothgar of the Danes by fighting and defeating the monster Grendel. The setting of the poem is important because it reflects the cultural and historical context of the Anglo-Saxon people, who lived in England but were descended from Germanic tribes that had migrated from Scandinavia. The poem reflects the Anglo-Saxon fascination with the heroic values of loyalty, courage, and honor, as well as their connection to their Germanic roots. The setting of the poem, with its dark forests, cold seas, and fierce monsters, creates a sense of danger and adventure that is central to the themes of the poem. The setting also reflects the pagan worldview of the Anglo-Saxons, who believed in a world of spirits and magic that was full of danger and uncertainty. Overall, the setting of "Beowulf" plays an important role in creating the atmosphere and mood of the poem, as well as in conveying its themes and cultural values.

As you can see, the difference in settings between the classical Arabic and Western poems reflects the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the differences between classical Arabic and Western literature reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts that shaped these literary traditions. However, despite these differences, both literary traditions offer valuable insights into the human experience and continue to inspire readers around the world. It is an insightful delight to be able to understand how through literature we are able to understand the viewpoints on the events that transpire the historical events and how it shaped the mentality of the community. The research helps ones to understand the reasons behind the pattern of literature components as it is heavily influenced by the political occurrences in those era, for instance, as in the west, the Christians are divided, bible's contents are altered, the people of the book are hunted down, and the law at the time is based on trial by combat, hence the reason why the classical Western literature focuses more on quest-like poetry, slaying dragons and saving a princess, as they wanted to build stronger group of people to defend themselves at such challenging time.

Meanwhile in the Arab world, due to being politically much more advanced and successful, their classical literature are much more grounded to their groups (which is called *assabiyyah*) as they wanted to remind their togetherness, and their tendency to lavish their success and happiness, especially in the concept of hanging the *muallaqat* (the hanged poem) on Kaabah, as it is the centre for economical and political growth since before Islam came in the 7th century.

For the next research, it is suggested to venture into the differences between early Islamic world literature and after the demise of the Prophets to see the pattern of poetry in the Arab world.

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