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Comparative Analysis Of Ibn Sīnā's And Al-Fārābī's Treatises On Poetics

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Abstract: This article presents a comparative analysis of Poetics in the writings of two major medieval Islamic philosophers: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (Al-Farabi) and Abū ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). Both scholars engaged deeply with Aristotle's Poetics, integrating it into the Arabic-Islamic intellectual milieu. Al-Farabi's Canons of Poetry and Ibn Sina's Poetics (as part of his encyclopedic Kitāb al-Shifā', "Book of Healing") are examined to elucidate their respective theories of poetic art. Key areas of comparison include their classification of poetics within the Aristotelian logical corpus, their conceptions of poetic syllogism and imaginative "assent," and their treatment of tragedy and comedy as high versus low forms of art. Drawing on Aristotle's legacy and the Neoplatonic context, Al-Farabi and Avicenna each made distinct contributions: Al-Farabi emphasized the logical and social function of poetry (often linking it to rhetoric and political philosophy) while Avicenna expanded the moral and psychological dimensions of poetics. Influences from Aristotle's Poetics and late antique commentary are traced, alongside insights from modern scholars (e.g. Dimitri Gutas, Jon Walbridge, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī). The study concludes that Ibn Sina's commentary builds upon and departs from Al-Farabi's foundations – for instance, by rejecting the notion that poetic syllogisms must be false and by affirming the role of imaginative discourse in eliciting emotional responses and conveying moral insights. This comparative inquiry sheds light on how medieval Islamic thinkers preserved, interpreted, and transformed Aristotle's Poetics, laying groundwork for subsequent literary theory in both the Islamic world and, via Ibn Rushd (Averroes), medieval Europe.

Introduction: Aristotle's Poetics [Black, 1990] – a foundational work on aesthetics and literary theory – found new life in medieval Islamic philosophy through Arabic translation and commentary. By the 9th century, the Poetics had been translated into Arabic (via Syriac) by the Christian philosopher Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus. This translation was imperfect, containing omissions and misunderstandings twice removed from the Greek original. Against this backdrop, Muslim philosophers sought to clarify and adapt Aristotle's ideas for an Arabic-speaking intellectual milieu. Al-Kindī (d. 873) reportedly wrote an epitome of the Poetics, now lost. A generation later, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (870–950), often titled "the Second Teacher" after Aristotle, composed a work known as Kitāb al-Qawānīn al-Shiʿr ("The Canons of Poetry") as well as an epitome (Kitāb al-Shiʿr, "Book of Poetry"), in an effort to present a 'purer' and more accessible version of Aristotle's Poetics [

Both Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna thus integrated Aristotle's Poetics [] into the framework of the Aristotelian logical corpus (the Organon). However, they did so with different emphases and innovations. Al-Farabi [

The aim of this study is to compare Ibn Sina []'s and Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s treatises on poetics, highlighting how each understood key concepts – such as poetic imitation (Arabic muhākāt), the role of imagination (takhyīl), and the genres of tragedy and comedy [] – and how each was influenced by (and diverged from) Aristotle. By examining their works side

by side, we can discern the evolution of medieval Arabic literary theory from Al-Farabi [

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aristotle's Poetics [Black, 1990] in the Arabic Tradition: The reception of Poetics among medieval Muslim scholars has been charted by modern researchers (e.g. by Salim Kemal, Deborah Black, and others). Aristotle's Poetics [

Modern scholarship on Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s poetics is highlighted by Abdurrahman Badawī's critical editions and analyses. Badawī edited the Arabic text of Aristotle's Poetics [] and its Arabic commentaries (including Al-Farabi [

Modern scholars have paid special attention to the concept of the "poetic syllogism []" (qiyās shi'rī) as developed by Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974], Avicenna, and later Averroes []. Dimitri Gutas highlights Avicenna's mastery in dealing with a flawed Arabic translation of the Poetics – Gutas lauds Avicenna's Poetics chapter in the Shifā' as "a masterpiece of literary analysis," given that Ibn Sina [] had to reconstruct Aristotle's meaning from a garbled text. Gutas and others also note an infamous episode (recorded by Avicenna's disciple Ğūzğānī) in which Avicenna allegedly forged a few illustrative poetic passages, passing them off as from Aristotle, to test his contemporaries' understanding – a colorful anecdote that underlines both the gaps in the transmission of the Poetics and Avicenna's confidence in his own interpretative skill.

Jon Walbridge and S.H. Nasr have commented on the broader differences between Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna. Walbridge points out that unlike Al-Farabi [

In summary, prior scholarship establishes that Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna both treated poetry as a form of syllogistic art within the Aristotelian tradition, but with different nuances. Al-Farabi [

RESULTS

Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s Treatise on Poetics (Canons of Poetry)

Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s Risāla fī Qawānīn al-Shi'r ("Epistle on the Canons of Poetry") is essentially a commentary on Aristotle's Poetics [], though it also draws on other Hellenistic sources. In this treatise, Al-Farabi [

In developing these ideas, Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] remains close to Aristotle's framework but adapts terminology to Arabic literary culture. Lacking a living tradition of Greek theater, Al-Farabi [

Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] also delves into the means and methods of poetic imitation. Following Aristotle,

he identifies the three primary media of poetry as: (i) rhythm (meter), (ii) language (words), and (iii) melody. In practice, Arabic poetry normally combines meter and language, and may be accompanied by musical chanting. Al-Farabi [

Importantly, Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] emphasizes the psychological faculty of imagination (al-khayāl) as the bridge between poetic images and the intellect. In Canons of Poetry, he explores how poetry works by stimulating the imaginative faculty to create mental images (khayālāt) that can move the emotions 【78†L411-419】 . He aligns this with his epistemology: in Al-Farabi [

To summarize Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s contribution: he refashioned Aristotle's Poetics [] into a logically grounded art of imaginative persuasion. He codified the aims of poetry (praise vs. blame) in ethical terms, described the mechanics of poetic syllogisms, and highlighted the centrality of imagination. In doing so, Al-Farabi [

Ibn Sina [Kemal, 1991] (Avicenna)'s Treatise on Poetics (within Kitāb al-Shifā')

Ibn Sina []'s approach to poetics appears in the last section of the logical part of his Kitāb al-Shifā' ("The Book of Healing"), completed c. 1020s. Often referred to simply as Kitāb al-Shi'r (Book of Poetry), Avicenna's treatise is both a commentary on Aristotle and a free exposition of his own views. Avicenna had access to the earlier efforts of Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and the Arabic translations by Matta and Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, though he was critical of their shortcomings. He opens his treatise by frankly acknowledging that Aristotle's work is based on Greek poetic genres unfamiliar to Arabs, and thus one must extrapolate general principles. Avicenna then proceeds to reinterpret those principles in a broader, more universal framework.

One of Avicenna's first moves is to define the key terms muhākāh (imitation) and takhyīl (imaginative representation) rigorously. Avicenna argues that poetry is a kind of imaginative discourse that produces takhyīl, an imaginative impression in the soul of the listener. In logical terms, he situates the poetic syllogism [Black, 1990] within his theory of syllogistic arts: whereas demonstration yields certain knowledge and dialectic yields consensus, poetic syllogism [

Avicenna's treatment of the aims of poetry closely follows Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s tripartite scheme, with some elaboration. He reiterates that the ends of poetic imitation are: (1) praise of virtue and noble acts (madḥ), (2) censure or satire of vice (hijā'), or (3) neutral depiction (muṭābaqa, correspondence). He explicitly equates ameliorative imitation with encomia (praise poems) and depreciative imitation with satire,

noting this in "general terms" since actual poems may mix elements. However, Avicenna places a "marked emphasis on the ethical and rhetorical aims" of these imitations. He stresses that poetic images of virtuous deeds educate and those of vile deeds warn, echoing Aristotle's idea that poetry is both pleasing and instructive. In a telling statement, Avicenna asserts that "learning is pleasant not to philosophers alone but to common people" when delivered through poetic portrayal. Thus, he deepens the Aristotelian view by explaining the psychological mechanism: people take delight in recognizing an imitation and deriving a lesson or insight from it.

Another significant contribution of Avicenna is his analysis of how poetry delights. He elaborates that a poem can please in two ways: through content (the depicted scenario, which the audience may recognize and find meaningful) and through form (the verbal beauty, rhythm, and harmony). Avicenna famously remarks that a poem is like a body that can give pleasure even when its "soul" (content) is weak, by virtue of its well-made form alone. Elements such as meter (wazn), rhyme, and eloquent phrasing produce a sensory delight that can carry a poem lacking in substance. Nonetheless, the highest poetic effect comes when both content and form work together to portray the original in a vivid likeness, triggering recognition and emotional response in the audience. This reflects Avicenna's holistic understanding of artistic effect, combining aesthetics with psychology.

Avicenna also ventures into technical discussions on metaphor and narrative structure. For instance, where Aristotle discussed mythos (plot) and lexis (diction), Avicenna reframes some of these in Arabic rhetorical terms. Due to the corrupted state of the Arabic Poetics text, Avicenna at times substitutes his own exposition: notably, he inserts a discussion of majāz (figurative language) at the start of his commentary, essentially saying there are three "manners" of poetic expression – direct description (tamthīl or simile), metaphor (majāz, literally transfer or substitution), or a mix of both. He clarifies that this is not Aristotle's classification per se, but Avicenna's attempt to articulate how poetic meaning can be conveyed either literally or figuratively (or in combination), an insight likely drawn from Arabic balāgha (rhetoric). Avicenna's awareness of linguistic nuance and audience reception is evident here.

A crucial aspect of Avicenna's poetics is his integration of poetry into his epistemological and psychological framework. In Avicenna's hierarchy of knowledge, he places poetry at the lowest level of the intellectual sciences, consistent with the Aristotelian tradition and Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s context-theory. Poetry does not yield knowledge of universals or necessary truths;

it deals in particulars and imaginative scenarios. Yet Avicenna does not condemn poetry. Rather, he justifies its value by describing its unique mode of cognition: poetry addresses the faculty of imagination and through it can influence the ethical character and emotions of individuals in ways philosophy cannot directly do. Avicenna agrees with Al-Farabi [

In concrete terms, Avicenna's commentary re-evaluates tragedy and comedy []. He follows the established Arabic understanding that tragedy corresponds to praise poetry and comedy to satire, but he elaborates the point that tragedy (madīḥ) has an edifying function – to ennoble the audience by portraying virtue overcoming vice – whereas comedy (hijā') has a corrective function – to humiliate vice and induce laughter that scorns base behavior. Avicenna concurs with Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] that Greek tragedy's aim was ethical and its pleasure intellectual (the pleasure of learning through fear and pity), and he extends this to assert that even ordinary people experience joy in learning through imitation. Avicenna explicitly cites Aristotle's idea that humans find delight in imitation because it yields understanding (e.g., recognizing a representation and grasping its lesson). Hence, Avicenna positions the pleasure of poetry not only in the sensory or emotional response, but also in the subtle cognitive satisfaction it provides. This sophisticated synthesis of Aristotle's aesthetic psychology with his own is a hallmark of Avicenna's contribution.

In summary, Avicenna's treatise on poetics built upon Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s foundation but introduced notable developments: he refined the theory of the poetic syllogism [] (allowing poetic premises to be true or false, and focusing on imaginative assent []), he stressed the dual delight of poetry (form and content) and its capacity to impart ma'rifa (knowledge or awareness) in a non-discursive mode, and he underscored the ethical dimension of poetic art. His work can be seen as "a major advancement" in Arabic Aristotelian poetics, integrating logical, psychological, and social considerations into a comprehensive method. Avicenna's commentary would later strongly influence Ibn Rushd (Averroes []) in al-Andalus, who wrote his own epitomes and commentaries on the Poetics. In fact, Avicenna's nuanced approach – especially his idea that poetry aims at imaginative persuasion (takhyīl) without necessarily being bound to falsehood – was inherited by Averroes [

DISCUSSION

The foregoing results illustrate both continuity and divergence in how Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Ibn Sina [] understood poetic theory. In this discussion, we

synthesize these findings to compare the philosophers point by point, and to interpret the significance of their contributions within the broader intellectual currents of their time.

Integration into the Organon: Both Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna accept Aristotle's inclusion of poetics (and rhetoric) as part of logic – specifically as the final and least certain logical arts. This reflects the Neoplatonic [] "context theory" they inherited, which ranked the sciences and positioned Poetics as an appendage to logic. Al-Farabi [

Theory of the Poetic Syllogism: A pivotal comparative point is how each conceived the nature and truth-value of poetic arguments. Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] took a relatively strict view: a poetic syllogism [] is composed of premises that need not be true – in fact, often are known false – but which create a semblance (shabah) or imaginative image leading to a desired emotional conclusion. For him, what matters is the effect (e.g., instilling courage, fear, admiration), not the factual truth. Thus, a poet might say "All heroes are as brave as lions" – literally false, but imaginatively stirring. Avicenna, while agreeing that poetry's aim is not factual verification, does not insist that the premises must be false; he only insists they must be effective in imagination. He explicitly "rejected [Al-Farabi [

Both thinkers, however, agree on the outcome: poetry yields imaginative assent [] (ijti'āl al-khayāl) rather than intellectual conviction. They both would classify a response to poetry under taṣawwur (conceptualization) rather than taṣdīq (assertoric belief). The difference is mostly one of emphasis and allowance for truth in premises. This difference might reflect Avicenna's broader epistemology: he often seeks to reconcile the apparent with the real, finding gradations of certainty, whereas Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] (at least in the logical context) tends to draw clear lines between demonstrative knowledge and other forms.

Role of Imagination and Prophecy: Another key comparison is their treatment of the imagination's role. Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna both share the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic [] view that the imagination is a lower faculty that mediates between sense and intellect. But Al-Farabi [

Where they differ might be in tone: Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] seems more cautious – for him, the comparison underscores that poetic images are mere surrogates for rational truth. He contends that "for philosophers like Farabi, poetical language is a mere surrogate or auxiliary for truths that can be fully grasped intellectually". Avicenna, by contrast, while agreeing that the highest form of truth is intellectual, is willing

to explore what the imagination contributes on its own terms. His allowance that poetic imagery can yield enjoyment of learning implies a more integrative attitude – he sees value in the imaginative experience per se, not just as a crude vessel for philosophy. This subtle philosophical difference aligns with their reputations: Al-Farabi [

Ethical and Aesthetic Dimensions: Both philosophers agree that poetry has a strong ethical dimension – it is didactic or at least morally relevant. Tragedy (praise poetry) is "high" art because it deals with noble subjects and can inspire virtuous emulation; comedy (satire) is "low" art because it concerns base subjects and often incites laughter at the ludicrous or immoral. They inherited this hierarchy from Aristotle (who said tragedy imitates better people, comedy worse people) and from the Arabic adab tradition (which tended to regard madīḥ as a prestigious genre and hijā' as a vulgar necessity). Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] explicitly mentions that the noble or ignoble status of the objects distinguishes the genres. Avicenna follows suit and even intensifies the ethical interpretation: for example, he explains that showing evil in an "abhorrent" portrayal can still yield a sort of pleasure when the audience recognizes the depiction and learns to avoid such evils. Both thus justify even the low genre (comedy/satire) as socially useful – comedy ridicules vice, which implicitly encourages virtue. However, they also caution against poetry's potential to mislead. Al-Farabi [

Tragedy vs. Comedy – High and Low Art: In concrete terms, both philosophers elevate "tragedy" (praise of the noble) as the superior poetic mode and see "comedy" (satire of the base) as its foil. They adopted the practice (initiated by the Arabic translators like Matta) of translating tragedy as madīḥ (praise) and comedy as hijā' (satire). This translation strategy, which some later scholars criticized as a misunderstanding, was actually a clever adaptation: it localized Aristotle's genres to the Arabic poetic tradition. Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna both use these terms in their treatises, indicating that they indeed thought of Poetics as applicable to the art of lyrical praise and blame poems rather than to drama (since drama as such did not exist in their cultural context). They maintained Aristotle's judgment that the subject matter distinguished high vs. low art: praise poetry deals with exalted subjects (gods, heroes, virtues) and thus was considered the more serious and elevated art, whereas satirical poetry deals with mockery of defects and common folk, considered a lower, though still useful, form. Both also preserved Aristotle's notion of catharsis in a transformed way: in tragedy/praise, the audience feels admiration and possibly tarabbī

(edification) through fear and pity at noble suffering; in comedy/satire, the audience feels amused contempt which cathartically releases them from the vices being ridiculed. Avicenna, in particular, discusses how a poet can depict something hateful in an aesthetically pleasing portrayal such that people can contemplate it safely and even learn (he gives the example that seeing an image of a hated thing can still give partial pleasure through the recognition and the form, even if the content is ugly). This aligns with the idea that tragedy and comedy [], though opposite in social status, both provide pleasure and insight in different mixtures. Tragedy (praise) provides elevated pleasure and insight (hence "high art"), comedy (satire) provides derisive pleasure and a more coarse insight (hence "low art").

In both Farabi and Avicenna, we see a clear hierarchy: the poetic celebration of virtue is esteemed as the highest function of poetry, while the lampooning of vice, though necessary, is secondary. Their medieval context (strongly influenced by ethical didacticism in literature) informs this stance. Neither entertains an idea of "pure art for art's sake"; poetry is valued insofar as it contributes to moral and intellectual culture. This contrasts with Aristotle's relatively more neutral analysis of tragedy/comedy in purely dramatic terms, but it was natural for writers in the Islamic milieu to assess poetry's worth by its alignment with ethical and religious ideals.

Influence on Later Thought: The differences and developments in Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s and Avicenna's poetics had a lasting impact. Al-Farabi [

In conclusion, the discussion reveals that Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna, while sharing a common Aristotelian framework, diverged in nuanced ways that reflect their individual philosophical orientations. Al-Farabi [

Comparative Analysis: Ibn Sina [] and Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]

Having discussed each philosopher's approach and the general differences, we now present a direct comparative analysis, organized by thematic categories, to clearly distinguish Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s and Ibn Sina []'s contributions to poetics.

• Context and Purpose of Poetics: Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna both set Poetics at the end of the logical curriculum, but Al-Farabi [

• Definition of Poetry and Imitation: Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] defines poetry as imitation (muhākāh) aimed at imagination – a poetic statement is essentially a metaphorical syllogism or an analogy that evokes an image. Avicenna agrees but provides a more elaborate definition: poetry is "imaginative utterance" (al-kalām

al-mutakhayyal) which can be in verse or ornate prose and which by its form instills an image or emotion. Avicenna emphasizes that the poet "gives the likeness of a thing, not the thing itself" – in other words, poetry uses fiction to point toward reality. Both use the term takhyīl (to cause imagination) to indicate the goal of poetry, but Avicenna formalizes this term within his logic.

• Poetic Syllogism and Truth: This is a critical point of divergence. Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]: Poetic syllogisms yield imaginary convictions and are categorically not concerned with truth – they deliberately use what may be false or non-existent to simulate the true or possible. Avicenna: Poetic syllogisms also aim at the imagination, but some truth can be involved – the premises might be true, semi-true, or fictitious, however truth is incidental to their poetic function. Both agree that poetic syllogism []s do not produce scientific knowledge, but Avicenna's allowance for true premises means he saw poetry as potentially reinforcing truths under a different mode (by making truths felt or vivid). For example, a poet could truthfully say "All mortal life ends in death" in a poem – a factual statement – but couch it in imagery that makes the audience deeply feel the reality of mortality. Al-Farabi [

• Emotional Effect (Catharsis): Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] touches on effect mainly in terms of moral conditioning – making noble things attractive, base things repulsive. Avicenna delves a bit more into the psychological response. He effectively describes a process akin to Aristotle's catharsis: through witnessing poetic imitation, the audience experiences delight and learning, a purification of emotions (especially in tragedy/praise where fear and pity might be aroused and resolved). Avicenna articulates that even unpleasant subjects portrayed artistically give a kind of pleasure in recognition and form, thereby prefiguring later aesthetic theories. Al-Farabi [

• Tragedy vs. Comedy (High vs. Low Art): Both equate tragedy with encomium (high style, noble content) and comedy with satire (low style, base content). Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s commentary, as far as we know, likely followed this equivalence and stressed that "tragedy" in Greek was aimed at praising virtue (he cites that Greek poetic genres did not imitate persons but actions for rhetorical purpose). Avicenna explicitly writes the ends "amelioration (praise) and depreciation (satire)" as the two poles of poetry. Both consider the "praise" genre superior. However, Avicenna offers more explanation: he notes that even a neutral depiction tends toward either praise or satire ultimately. And he clearly states that poetry "ameliorates noble deeds and depreciates ignoble

ones" – a concise summary of poetry's ethical task. In appraisal, both seem to admire what tragedy/praise can achieve (stirring noble emotions) and see comedy/satire as a useful but inherently less dignified tool (stirring laughter or scorn at the ignoble). Neither gives a hint of the later idea that comedy could be equal to tragedy in profundity; they follow the classical hierarchy strictly.

• Language and Style: Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] deals with language mainly to discuss metaphor and analogy. Avicenna goes further in discussing linguistic style and metrics. Avicenna even compares Arabic poetic conventions (like the nasīb – love prelude – in odes) to Greek ones, showing a comparative literary interest. He acknowledges that Greek poetry had fixed genres and conventions just as Arabic does, implying that a commentator must translate concepts across cultures. Al-Farabi [

To sum up the comparative analysis: Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] provides the broad logical-political template: poetry is imitation aimed at imagination, persuading through false (or not strictly true) imagery for ethical and political ends. Avicenna retains that template but enriches it, giving the logical-psychological rationale: poetry persuades by imagination and gives pleasure of a special sort; it can utilize truth in its own way; it has a morally educative function through both content and aesthetic form; and it occupies a defined place in the epistemic hierarchy (lowest, but not negligible). Avicenna in many ways humanizes Al-Farabi [

Thus, while Ibn Sina [] and Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] share a commitment to an Aristotelian framework where poetics is part of logic and an emphasis on poetry's ethical utility, Ibn Sina [

Tragedy and Comedy as High and Low Art

A focal point of Aristotelian influence on both philosophers is their treatment of tragedy and comedy [Arberry, 1938], reframed in Arabic as high and low poetic forms. The idea that tragedy is a "higher" art and comedy a "lower" art is present in their works, rooted in the nature of the subject matter each genre handles.

Aristotle had defined tragedy as the imitation of noble actions, meant to evoke pity and fear resulting in catharsis, and comedy as the imitation of base or ridiculous characters, aiming at laughter. In the absence of Greek-style drama, Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna mapped these concepts onto Arabic poetic genres. Tragedy was identified with madīḥ (panegyric or praise poetry) – poems that elevate and laud their subject – and generally with serious poetry about noble characters or themes. Comedy was identified with hijā' (satire or lampoon) – poems that mock or attack their subject – essentially,

poetry dwelling on the ludicrous or immoral, producing humor or scorn. This translation was not arbitrary. For one, ancient Greek comedies often did involve scathing satire of public figures (not unlike hijā'), and Arabic literature had a rich tradition of lampoon and invective serving a social function of corrective humor. Likewise, Arabic praise odes (qaṣā'id) fulfilled some of the societal role of tragedy – extolling virtue, commemorating the deeds of heroes or patrons, and eliciting admiration from the audience.

Both Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna affirm this equivalence. In Al-Farabi [

From their perspective, then, tragedy/praise is the loftiest poetic genre. It deals with noble subjects – for example, panegyrics of virtuous rulers, or poems on moral virtues – and its effect on the audience is to elevate: to fill them with admiration, emulation, or noble emotions (analogous to Aristotle's pity and fear). It is considered "high" art not only because of subject matter but also style: praise poems were composed in elevated language, rich metaphors, and dignified meters. Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna both hold that such poetry has an ethical excellence: it reinforces virtue by portraying it beautifully. Avicenna stresses that the poet's task in this genre is to "ameliorate noble deeds and virtues" – i.e., even if depicting real events, to present them in their best light and with an aim to teach or inspire. There is a direct line here from Aristotle's idea of showing better people than we are (in tragedy) so that we aspire to be like them.

Conversely, comedy/satire is the "low" art. It deliberately takes ignoble persons or flaws and imitates them in a exaggerated, ridicule-inducing manner. Both philosophers see a legitimate purpose in this – to depreciate the bad, as Avicenna says. By making vice ridiculous, comedic poetry provides a social sanction against misconduct (much as Aristophanes' comedies or Arabic satirical verses did). Yet, it is lower because it deals with the base, and the emotions it invokes (ridicule, derision, sometimes mere amusement) are not considered as ennobling or profound as those of tragedy. Avicenna describes that the pleasure in such portrayals is incomplete – if a person has never seen the vice in question, they enjoy only the form, and if they have, the enjoyment is mixed with recognition of something unpleasant. This analysis by Avicenna hints that comedic pleasure is more limited or "approximate" compared to the fuller delight and enlightenment tragic art can offer.

Furthermore, style differentiates high vs low art. Both thinkers would note that praise poetry often employs majestic, grandiloquent diction, while satire might use

colloquial, biting words or even obscene language (in some Arabic hijā'). In their logical-aesthetic analysis, they don't delve deeply into style levels, but implicitly they acknowledge it: for example, Avicenna's mention that various languages have their specific rules but share a common structure suggests awareness of high vs low registers across cultures. The high art of tragedy/praise uses the most refined balāgha (rhetoric), whereas the low art of comedy/satire might break decorum intentionally for humor.

It is important to note that while they classified comedy as a lower form, neither Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] nor Avicenna condemned it. They saw a proper role for it in the polity: satire can correct behavior by shaming wrongdoers through public mockery. In the ideal virtuous city, Al-Farabi [

In medieval Islamic aesthetics thereafter, this high-low distinction persisted. Poetry of madīḥ (praise of God or the Prophet, panegyrics to kings) was esteemed; hijā' was seen as sometimes necessary but not something to pride oneself on. Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna's Aristotelian rationale gave philosophical justification to these genre hierarchies ingrained in Arabic poetic tradition.

CONCLUSION

Ibn Sina [] (Avicenna) and Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] stand as the two premier figures in the formative phase of Arabic poetics under Aristotle's influence. Through this comparative study, we have seen that Al-Farabi [

• Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s poetics is characterized by analytical clarity and didactic intent. He treats poetry as a logical art that produces imaginative illusions for the sake of persuasion. His key contribution is the notion of the poetic syllogism and the categorization of poetic aims (praise vs blame). He effectively "reconstructed" Aristotle's Poetics [] in a purer form for the Islamic world, at a time when the available translation was deficient. By doing so, Al-Farabi [

• Avicenna's poetics is marked by philosophical depth and systematization. Avicenna confirms and then transcends Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s ideas: he confirms that poetry is an imaginative syllogistic art and that its genres correspond to praise and satire. But he transcends by probing how poetry moves the soul and by acknowledging a role for truth and intellectual enjoyment in poetry. Avicenna's commentary on the Poetics has been praised as "a masterpiece of literary analysis" that showcases his ability to derive coherent theory from a corrupted text. It developed a more comprehensive method for analyzing poetic language – integrating logical form, linguistic trope, psychological impact, and ethical purpose into a unified account. This

method essentially laid the groundwork for what we might call a medieval philosophy of art in the Islamic world.

The combined legacy of Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna's work on poetics was profound. It "paved the way for Ibn Rushd", the last great Andalusian commentator on Aristotle, whose own writings on Poetics in the 12th century would transmit these ideas to Latin Europe. Indeed, it is through Averroes [] (who cites the doctrine of takhyīl and follows Al-Farabi [

Within the Islamic world, the impact was also lasting. Although explicit commentaries on Poetics after Averroes [] are scarce (poetics was often subsumed under rhetoric in later madrasa curriculums), the principles enunciated by Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna became part of the adab (literary culture) discourse. For example, later scholars like Husain Vaiz Kashifi in Persian literature, or even implicit in the poetics of mystic poets (the idea that poetry can convey truths to the masses), reflect assumptions originally justified by these philosophers. The very defense of poetry against theological iconoclasm (the argument that poetry can illustrate moral truths in a pleasurable way, and thus is not merely lying) owes a debt to Avicenna's positive appraisal of poetic imagination.

In conclusion, this comparative study demonstrates that while Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Ibn Sina [] share the Aristotelian conviction that poetry is an imitative art of the imagination, they diverge in tone and scope: Al-Farabi [

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Leezenberg, Michiel. (2001). "Katharsis, Greek and Arab style: On Averroes []'s Misunderstanding of Aristotle's Misunderstanding of Tragedy." In Documenta, 22(4) (Ghent, 2004), pp. 274–300. – An article discussing how Aristotle's concept of catharsis and tragedy was interpreted by Arabic commentators. It highlights that Arabic philosophers had a "radically different idea" of poetic language focused on social/political concerns. It underscores the high-low art distinction and how philosophers like Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974] and Avicenna politicized poetics in a way foreign to Aristotle.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – "Al-Farabi [Dahiyat, 1974]'s Philosophy of Society and Religion." (2020). – This online resource provides background on Al-Farabi [

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