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Self-deprecating Humor in Abu Dulama's Poetry

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Abstract

Abu Dulamah, besides being known as a court poet during the early Abbasid Caliphate, was also known as a comedian. His humor had a distinctive style, namely mocking himself, his wife, and members of his family. There are several studies discussing him, such as Fahndrich (1977), who examined his anecdotes. This article aims to explore whether it is true that the poetry created by Abu Dulamah, uses the technique of self-deprecating humor, thus making the poems humorous. In conducting this research, the author used qualitative research methods, library research, and descriptive analysis. Data were collected from journal articles, books, and the internet, which include Abu Dulamah's biography, his humorous poems, and techniques of self-mocking humor. This data was then selected and classified into several categories according to the chosen topic. Then, it was analyzed using theories on poetry, Arabic rhetoric, and humor. After analyzing the rhetorical and humorous elements contained in his poems, this article agrees with the opinion that Abu Dulamah was a poet who was skilled at creating poetry. With its simple everyday themes and easy-to-understand language, it captivates readers. Likewise, his unique wordplay, with its characteristic self-deprecating humor, makes his poetry humorous and makes him a renowned comedian unlike any other poet of his time.

Keywords: Poetry, Humor, Self-Deprecating, Abu Dulamah, Rhetoric

Introduction

In Arabic literature, humor is mostly found in humorous stories characterized by satire or mockery. In these stories, humor is usually associated with deviations from

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the normal or conventional, allowing them to escape the social and psychological constraints that burden humans. Humorous anecdotes have different names in Arabic, according to their quality, for example, *nadira* (short anecdote), *turfa* (medium anecdote), and *fukah* (long anecdote). The term *al-adab al-hazli* (jocular literature) is the most commonly used term in Arabic literature. Furthermore, humorous formulations or humorous expressions can also be found in a number of poetry and prose texts, both classical and modern. (Attardo, 2014:55)

Humorous poetry can be viewed as a form of "caricature" in which laughter is combined with elements of seriousness. Humorous poetry seeks to exaggerate and highlight flaws to convey a message, criticize certain social phenomena, or highlight certain vices prevalent among some individuals in Abbasid society, such as greed, excessive self-indulgence, and hypocritical religious behavior. Therefore, the implied meaning of the humorous style of poetry does not negate the power of its underlying meaning. This is because irony is one of the pillars and essential elements of this style, which is based on the simultaneous presence of one thing and its opposite. This allows the reader to have multiple interpretations and perspectives. This explains why humorous scenes often dominate the implied meaning, while tragic scenes remain hidden within the poem's folds and hidden worlds. This can be observed in the poems of a group of satirists, parasitists, and lampoons, among other poets of the Abbasid era. Abbasid poetry marks a crucial moment in the history of Arabic poetry, a moment when popular laughter transformed into a poetic field and merged with it within an artistic framework. It succeeded in surprising its recipients, defying their expectations and anticipations. On the one hand, it became a kind of poetic weapon used by famous poets against their opponents, far from frivolous and entertaining. (Ammi, 2024).

According to Iyengar-Paddy (2025), the most beautiful thing about humorous poetry is that it's equally enjoyable to write and read. The best part is that we can humorously mock, lampoon, tease, belittle, and debunk the most important, popular, or sacred subjects—politicians, tax collectors, celebrities, family, even death and love. We can even mock or poke fun at the daily news that appears in the newspapers. Humorous poetry usually tickles our sense of humor, makes us smile, makes us laugh out loud, is natural and witty, often has an underlying wit and wisdom, and generally entertains us. But, unfortunately, some consider writing humorous poetry a kind of capital crime—something frivolous and unworthy of serious attention.

During the Abbasid period, the number of literary figures, including poets and non-poets, who specialized in entertaining rulers with jokes and anecdotes increased. Among them was the poet Abu Dalamah. He was among the humorous writers and poets who developed satirical imitations, which were largely confined to the Arab world and unknown to Westerners until recently. (Ammi, 2024). One such writer who liked to incorporate humorous elements into his work was Abu Dalamah Zand ibn al-Jawn. He was renowned for his humor, entertaining adventures, his knowledge of general literature, and his talent for poetry. (Ibn Khallikan, 1842). Abu Dalamah was a black slave from the Banu Asad dynasty, born in Kufa at the end of the Umayyad period. Little is known about his early life. He was known in the early Abbasid period as a court jester or comedian during the reigns of As-Saffah, al-Mansur, and al-Mahdi. All of his poems are extant from that time. Ibn Nadim mentions that 50 pages of his

poetry collection have not survived. His surviving poems consist of 46 pieces, most of which are parts of several long poems. However, there are also long qasidahs describing his foal, mimicking the lengthy descriptions of Bedouin poetry. Abu Dulamah was indeed a eloquent speaker and a humorous parody writer. However, some of his poems had themes considered less than desirable, such as those complaining about fasting and prayer, encouraging the sick to drink alcohol, and mocking his wife (Meisami, 2003:30).

The exact year of birth of Zand ibn Al-Jun, also known as Abu Dulamah, is unknown. He was born an unknown person and was a black slave of the Banu Asad clan. He was later freed. He spent his youth in the alleys and streets of Kufa. He was accustomed to idleness, as he had no skills or trade to earn a living. However, he possessed something more important than skills and trade. He possessed a talent for poetry and a sense of humor that no one could match. Perhaps he realized the importance of these talents, which qualified him to attain the highest rank. Therefore, he knocked on the doors of the rulers of the Umayyad Dynasty, hoping to gain their support and status. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi mentioned that Abu Dulamah was one of the wittiest poets, the most brilliant in wit, the sweetest in humor, and the quickest in wit. He had stories and anecdotes about the founder of the Abbasid state, all of which were amusing and interesting. (Fir'aun, 2000).

Abu Dulamah (d. 778) had his own style of entertaining Caliph al-Mahdi and other courtiers. He evoked laughter by mocking himself, his wife, and his family members. Lewis (1990:30) also stated that in his poems, Abu Dulamah was not ashamed to describe his lowliness. To entertain his master, he made jokes by making fun of himself or his family. (Ali, 1998). One of the verses of his poem, which is a self-mockery, is: Our color is the same, our faces are black and ugly, and our names are shameful, This was said, Because Abu Dulamah came from a black slave who became the most famous court poet and comedian in the early Abbasid Caliphate. The phrase Abu Dulamah, literally, means "Father of Blackness." (Appiah, 2005).

Based on the background above, this study intends to discuss the rhetoric used by Abu Dulamah and the type of self-mocking humor that is his characteristic.

Literature Review

In conducting research on Abu Dulamah's humorous poetry, the author also reviewed previous studies to see the relationship between these studies and the author's research, including the study conducted by Bassal (2025) who examined an innovative methodology for teaching and studying classical Arabic poetry, with a particular emphasis on its humorous elements. His study focused on analyzing the works of the Abbasid poet Abu al-Shamaqmaq, using contemporary humor theories in examining his poetic works. His approach integrates theoretical frameworks derived from psychology, philosophy, and sociology with a practical analysis of classical Arabic poetry. His methodology offers a new interdisciplinary perspective in understanding and interpreting medieval Arabic literary humor. His paper is divided into two parts: the theoretical part provides a brief overview of selected humor theories and the practical part applies these selected theories to poetry. The similarities between the above writing and this article, first of all, are that both analyze

Abbasid poets and Classical Arabic poetry. However, the emphasis is different, namely that what is discussed in the above article is about innovative methodologies for teaching and studying classical Arabic poetry, with a special emphasis on its humorous elements, while in this article what is discussed is the rhetorical aspects and self-deprecating humor.

Meanwhile, research on Abu Dulamah was conducted by Fahndrich (1977) in an article entitled "Compromising the Caliph: Analysis of Several Versions of an Anecdote about Abu Dulamah and Al-Mansur." Although not specifically discussing Arabic humor or humor in medieval Arabic literature, it nevertheless makes an important contribution to the study of humor-making techniques in medieval Arabic anecdotal texts. The purpose of the article was to demonstrate the originality and artistry of Ibn Khallikan's version of a particular anecdote. To this end, the article took the important step of analyzing the same anecdotal text according to its humor generation criteria (Douglas, 1985). The similarities between the above article and this article are that both discuss Abu Dulamah, but the difference is that the article analyzes anecdotes, while this article focuses on his poetry.

Another study was conducted by Dawabusyiah and Abbas Al-Misriy (2010), which highlighted the unacceptable behavior, both socially and religiously, of Abu Dulamah who lived in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras. This can be done through the study of his poetry that deviated from the beliefs, customs, and traditions of his society, so that he became a rebel – a behavior that gave rise to hatred and hostility towards the society in which he lived. This paper seeks the reasons for this rebellion and its social and religious impacts through the study and analysis of his poetry using analytical and descriptive methods because these methods are the best methods for studying this topic. The similarity between the paper and this article is that both discuss Abu Dulamah's poetry and both use descriptive analysis, but what is analyzed in that paper is more general, namely Abu Dulamah's unacceptable behavior, both socially and religiously during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, while what is discussed in this article is more specific, namely only Abu Dulamah's behavior who likes to criticize himself to gain appreciation, sympathy and love.

Methods

In conducting this research, the author used a qualitative research method, beginning with identifying data from journal articles, books, and the internet regarding Abu Dulamah's biography, humorous poetry, and self-deprecating techniques. These data were then selected and classified into several categories according to the predetermined topic. Afterward, they were analyzed to draw conclusions.

The theory used in this discussion is that proposed by Thatcher (2021), who states that several types of poetry generally incorporate humorous elements, including satirical poetry. Satire is an excellent way for poets to respond to social trends and current events. Often, this type of humor relies on ridicule and exaggeration to expose and criticize someone's stupidity or vices. Satirical poetry plays a crucial role in challenging political, cultural, and aesthetic oppression. Lee (2025) states that the main characteristics of satirical poetry are the use of irony and sarcasm to convey a message, criticism of social norms, politics, and cultural values, the use of humor and

wit to engage the reader, often a mocking or scathing tone, and the use of exaggeration and hyperbole to emphasize a point. Creating satirical poetry requires a combination of creativity, wit, and a deep understanding of the subject matter. Irony and sarcasm are important tools in satirical poetry. Irony involves making a statement that means the opposite, while sarcasm involves using language that is mocking or insulting. To use irony and sarcasm effectively, consider the following tips: be subtle, avoid overly obvious or excessive use of irony and sarcasm, know your audience, understand who your readers are, and adjust your tone. Use language carefully. Choose words and phrases that convey the desired tone and meaning, and utilize humor and wit to convey your points.

Humor and wit are crucial elements of satirical poetry. They help engage the reader and make the criticism more relatable. To utilize humor and wit effectively, try the following: Use puns and clever word choice. Puns can add humor and wit to satire. Exaggeration and mockery can be used to highlight the absurdity or hypocrisy of an issue or individual. Drawing unexpected connections between seemingly unrelated ideas can add surprise and humor to satire. Satirical poetry often has multiple layers of meaning, with different surface-level interpretations of the underlying message. To create complex and layered meaning, consider the following techniques. Metaphors and allegories can add depth and complexity to satire. Using words or phrases with multiple meanings can create ambiguity and add layers to satire. Surprise readers by changing their expectations and challenging their assumptions. Satire is often used to critique social norms and challenge the status quo. By using irony, sarcasm, and humor, satirical poets can highlight the absurdity or hypocrisy of certain social norms and encourage readers to think critically about these issues. Satire can be a powerful tool for social change, challenging readers to think critically about issues and motivating them to take action. By using humor and wit, satirists can make complex issues more understandable and engaging, inspiring readers to engage in conversation.

Apart from satirical poetry, the theory of self-deprecation used is the theory found in Sahni (2025) who said that self-deprecating humor doesn't always work for everyone. It tends to be more effective when it comes from people who are already perceived as competent. This theory suggests that small, harmless mistakes can actually make high-achieving individuals seem more likable by humanizing them. If self-deprecating becomes a pattern, it ceases to be perceived as confidence and begins to feel like a reflection of genuine self-doubt. For example, in a group project, if someone consistently jokes, "I contribute nothing to this team except stress," it might initially elicit laughter. However, if they say it consistently, people may stop taking it as a joke and begin to assume they are truly unreliable. Over time, such humor can shape how others perceive their true competence, even if they are genuinely trying hard. However, not all self-deprecating humor is effective. If used excessively, it can make someone appear insecure rather than confident.

Meanwhile, according to Bitterly (2020), self-deprecating humor can be an effective method for neutralizing negative information about oneself. Individuals are perceived as warmer and more competent when they disclose negative information about themselves using humor than when they disclose it in a serious manner. When

they add humor to the disclosure, peers perceive the negative information as less true and less important. However, there are limits to the benefits of self-deprecating humor. Among low-status individuals, it can backfire if the trait or skill in question is an important area of competence

Self-deprecating humor is often used as a humorous tool, both by professional comedians and by others. When used to elicit laughter, self-deprecating humor typically involves lighthearted self-mockery rather than delivering serious self-criticism. Self-deprecating humor can be used to demonstrate humility or "level the playing field" when there is a difference in status or other differences. This can make the person appear more relatable or convey a sense of solidarity. This strategy is sometimes used by leaders such as politicians. Some people believe that self-deprecating about their past can also improve their current self-image. Beginning a statement with a self-deprecating comment can be an attempt to avoid criticism. Self-deprecating humor can be a way to help cope with or accept a difficult situation or circumstance. It can be personal, such as making a joke about living with a serious illness. It can also be done to address a larger issue, such as a woman joking about being single to highlight sexist societal expectations. (Jones, 2023)

Discussion

One day, Abu Dulamah visited the palace. There, he met the caliph sitting with prominent dignitaries, such as Ismail ibn Muhammad, Isa ibn Musa, al-Abbas ibn Muhammad, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, and a number of prominent figures from the Banu Hashim. The caliph ordered Abu Dulamah to mock one of the dignitaries present and threatened to cut out his tongue if his mockery failed. This was extremely difficult for him, as he did not want to offend any of them, but he had no alternative but to do so, so he began to create satire, but to mock himself (Ali, 1998:38).

As Murphy (2016) points out, while there are a number of reasons a writer might be drawn to the use of self-deprecating humor, its effect remains a common path to insight and truth for nonfiction purposes. First, satirizing others is extremely difficult, and the writer may feel safer being the butt of his own jokes. Self-deprecating humor, then, relies on exploiting something perceived as negative about the narrator. Self-parody is a way for a narrator to poke fun at themselves. While parody involves imitating another writer's style, self-parody seeks to exaggerate the writer's own style. However, it's important to approach the use of self-deprecating humor with consideration and self-awareness. While this humor can bring levity to conversations and relationships, its impact on one's self-esteem and the perception of others should not be overlooked. When used moderately and with a deep understanding of its potential effects, self-deprecating humor has the capacity to foster a sense of connectedness, endearing warmth, and genuine human connection.

The following is a poem by Abu Dulamah

ألا أبلغ إليك أبا دلامة	فلست من الكرام ولا كرامه
إذا لبس العمامة كان قرداً	وخنزيراً إذا نزع العمامه
جمعت دمامةً وجمعت لؤماً	كذاك اللؤم تتبعه الدمامه

فإن تَكُ قد أصبت نعيم دنيا فلا تفرح فقد دنت القيامة
(Fir'aun, 2000)

<i>That you are not a noble person and there is no nobility in you</i>	<i>Has it not been conveyed to you, O Abu Dulamah?</i>
<i>And if you do not wear a turban, you are no different from a pig</i>	<i>If you wear a turban, You are no different from a monkey.</i>
<i>Humiliation is always followed by evil.</i>	<i>You accumulate evil and You accumulate humiliation.</i>
<i>Do not enjoy yourself for now, for the Day of Reckoning is near.</i>	<i>So, if you obtain worldly pleasures</i>

(Ali, 1998:38)

In analyzing this poem, the author will first use the theory proposed by Iyengar-Paddy (2025), who states that one of the key elements of humorous poetry is its brevity, using only a few lines and rhyme to convey a single point. The poem's title may not be a significant element of this humor. Among its types is the epigram. Epigrams convey wisdom or a memorable message in a few words in an impactful way. Epigrams can be serious or humorous.

Abu Dulamah's poem is also short, consisting of only four stanzas. Like classical Arabic poetry, each stanza is divided into two columns. The first column is called as-sadr and the second column is called al-'ajz, for example:

فإن تَكُ قد أصبت نعيم دنيا فلا تفرح فقد دنت القيامة

According to Almuhareb (2013), there are three main writing styles of classical Arabic poetry:

1. poems written in a single column with each stanza consisting of two lines;
2. poems written in a single column with each stanza consisting of two lines, with the first half of each stanza written right-aligned and the second half left-aligned; and
3. poems written in such a way that each stanza is written as two parts on the same line, separated by one or more punctuation marks or spaces. In some cases, this style can also be written without a separator, leaving the reader to guess the end of the first half and the beginning of the second.

Judging by the above opinion, it appears that Abu Dulamah's poem uses the third writing style, with one stanza divided into two columns, with the first and second columns separated by a space.

Besides brevity, another element of humorous poetry, according to Iyengar-Paddy (2025), is rhyme. Rhyme is an important tool for creating lighthearted verse. Almost all humorous poems written have an end rhyme pattern. Rhyme engages the reader's senses and also makes the poem easier to understand.

In the poem above, Abu Dulamah also uses rhyme, namely /-ah/. This rhyme can be seen in the last word of the first stanza: *karamah* (honorable), the second stanza: *al-'amamah* (turban), the third stanza: *ad-damamah* (evil), and the fourth stanza: *al-qiyamah* (doomsday).

Another element used in humorous poetry is the refrain, which is repetition. A refrain is the repetition of a line, or part of a line, throughout the poem. A refrain can be used to repeat a phrase to reinforce meaning. A refrain can be used with wordplay or phraseology.

In this poem, Abu Dulamah also uses a refrain. As found in the third stanza of the first column:

*/Jama'ta damamatan wa jama'ta lu'man/
You accumulate evil and you accumulate humiliation.*

In this stanza, Abu Dulamah repeats two verbal phrases */jama'ta/* (you accumulate).

Another element, according to Iyengar-Paddy (2025), is satire. Satire is a serious yet humorous art form often used to mock something or someone. Satire makes people laugh. However, satire is also serious, thought-provoking, and multidimensional in a sharp yet humorous way. Self-deprecating humor is a particularly humorous and enjoyable form of satirical humor.

In the poem above, Abu Dulamah undoubtedly uses satirical elements that contain self-deprecation. He criticizes himself with words like these:

- *You are not a noble person and there is no nobility in you*
- *If you wear a turban, you are like a monkey*
- *And if you don't wear a turban, you are like a pig*
- *You accumulate evil and you accumulate humiliation*

In addition to using the humorous poetic elements above, Abu Dulamah also uses rhetorical devices, such as in the first stanza of the second column. There are the words */al-karram/*, meaning noble person, and */al-karam/*, meaning glory. These two words share the same root, namely /k-/ , /r/ , and /m/. In Arabic rhetoric, Hasan (1996) refers to this as *jinas gayr tamm* a type of *an-naqis*, which is an imperfect paronomasia, or two words that share the same type of letter, vowel pattern, and vowel sequence, but differ in the number of letters.

In addition to using *jinas gayr tamm*, Abu Dulamah also employs the rhetorical form of *tibaq ijabi*. According to al-Maragi (n.d.), *tibaq ijabi* refers to the combination of two words with opposing meanings in a sentence, one positive and the other negative, as in the following example. In the second stanza of the first column, the word *labisa* (to put on) is found, while in the first column, the word *naza'a* (to take off).

Another rhetorical element found in Abu Dulamah's poetry is found in the second stanza of the first and second columns. In the first column, Abu Dulamah denounces himself as *qirdun* (a monkey) when wearing a turban, while in the second column, Abu Dulamah denounces himself as *khinzirun* (a pig). In Arabic rhetoric, such a metaphor is also called *at-tasbih* (simile), which equates two or more things that have similar characteristics (one or more) which generally uses the particle "like"

between the two things. However, in this line, what is used is *tasbih muakkad*, namely tasbih whose word "like" is not mentioned in the text (al-Hasyimiy, 1960).

In the poem, Abu Dulamah calls himself a *qird* (monkey), but is a monkey considered a bad animal? Al Issawi (2021) states that monkeys do have a bad reputation and are considered a symbol of evil in most Middle Eastern countries. Besides possessing several bad traits, such as cunning and deceit, monkeys are among the ugliest animals, so unattractive people are often called by this name. A monkey is a symbol of evil in Arab culture. The word *qird* (monkey) means imitation. People who are good at imitating others are called by this name. This is because this trait is part of the animal's nature. Ancient Arabs referred to bad things by this name. One of the most common meanings of the word *qird* (monkey) is activity. A lively and mobile person is also called a *qird* (monkey).

However, perhaps the reason why Abu Dulamah calls himself a monkey is that one of the bad traits of monkeys, according to al-Issawi (2021), is their fondness for collecting things. This was similar to Abu Dulamah's habits. As recounted by Fir'aun (2000), Abu Dulamah knew how to use his wit and humor to raise money. He was always skilled at inventing ways to ask questions and solicit money, relying on humor.

Collecting things, especially money, isn't just Abu Dulamah's hobby; it's something many people do. So, it seems that in addition to criticizing himself, Abu Dulamah is also implicitly criticizing readers who enjoy collecting money. As Harper (2025) notes, self-mockery motivates the use of self-deprecating humor in personal narratives and is a tool for finding common ground with readers. We do or say something stupid; we embarrass ourselves; we make the same mistakes over and over again; we fail at something important to us; we hate our appearance; we feel flawed and worthless. For a comedian, there are lessons to be learned from such experiences.

In addition to *qird* (monkey), Abu Dulamah also uses the word *khinzir* (pig) to self-deprecate. But why does Abu Dulamah use such a term? According to Freke (2025), pigs appear in spiritual beliefs throughout the world. For thousands of years, humans have viewed these animals as more than just livestock. They hold special significance in many cultures. Some people consider pigs to be a symbol of good luck and wealth. Others consider it a sign of greed or uncleanness. The main spiritual meaning of pigs centers on abundance, fertility, and prosperity. Pigs symbolize wealth, good fortune, and the abundance of the earth. Conversely, in some spiritual traditions, pigs symbolize uncleanness and greed. One of the reasons why Abu Dulamah criticized himself for being like a pig, may be because there are similarities between Abu Dulamah and pigs, namely that they are both greedy. As told by Firaun (2000), Abu Dulamah's greed for money led him to false dreams.

According to Sahni (2025), if someone frequently makes crude jokes about themselves, people may perceive them as frivolous. Instead of finding them funny, they may feel awkward or even anxious. While self-deprecating is generally harmless, a recent study revealed that people who frequently demean themselves with harsh insults and criticism can cause significant damage to their mental and emotional health.

In addition to using prayer beads, Abu Dulamah also uses prohibitive phrases (*nahi*) in his poetry. This is evident in the fourth stanza of the second column, which contains the prohibitive phrase:

Do not enjoy yourself yet, for the Day of Reckoning is near

The term prohibitive phrase (*nahi*) lexically means to forbid, restrain, and oppose, while in Arabic rhetorical terminology, it means a demand to abandon an action from a superior authority. (Fayud, n.d.) In the line above, Abu Dulamah warns himself not to enjoy himself, for the Day of Reckoning is near. The purpose of this prohibition is to mock (*tawbikh*) Abu Dulamah himself, because he feels he is not a noble person, so it is not appropriate for him to have fun. Fun is only for the honorable. Even if he ever gets the chance to have fun, it will be short-lived, as the Day of Judgment is approaching.

As Chambre (2025) points out, self-deprecating humor reflects one's weaknesses, allowing for vulnerability, introspection, identification, and entertainment. When self-deprecating humor is executed well, emotions can be managed, trust can be built, and connections can be fostered. This type of humor serves as a tool for individuals to recognize and accept their weaknesses and imperfections with warmth and compassion. Self-deprecating humor can help people establish new friendships or romantic relationships. Showing vulnerability often makes others feel safe, and individuals who use self-deprecating humor appear more approachable. They often receive acceptance and appreciation. Studies show that those who are willing to poke fun at themselves are perceived as more likable than others. Engaging in self-deprecating humor can have both positive and negative psychological effects.

Another form of rhetoric found in Abu Dulamah's poetry is the use of *harf ta'kid* (emphasis particles) in the fourth stanza, both in the first and second columns, as seen below

فإن تك قد أصبت نعيم دنيا فلا تفرح فقد دنت القيامة

In the first column there is a emphasis particle: /*qad*/ as in /*qad asabat naim dunya*/ (you truly obtain worldly pleasures) and in the second column /*qad danat al-qiyamat*/ (the end of the world is truly near). Sentences that are preceded by a verb with a *harf ta'kid* (emphasis particles) in Arabic rhetoric can be included in the category of *kalam khabar at-talabi*. As stated by al-Jarim and Mustafa Amin (1989), when the interlocutor is doubtful about the information reported by the speaker. The interlocutor is expected not to accept the information from the speaker. Therefore, his words must use the *harf ta'kid* (emphasis particles) to convince him. In this verse, Abu Dulamah asserts to himself that what he says will truly happen, there is no doubt that if he truly obtains pleasure, do not enjoy it yet, because it is only temporary, the end of the world will truly occur.

Another poem by Abu Dulamah about self-deprecation is when Abu Dulamah came to Umm Salamah's house to offer condolences on the death of her husband, Abu al-Abbas as-Saffah, the founder of the Abbasid dynasty. Both of them wept so bitterly

that tears welled up in their eyes. Then, Abu Dulamah recited a poem for the deceased:

*No one could contain their grief at your death,
except me,
because they had gained something from you,
while I, even if I poured out all my grief,
would gain nothing.
After your departure, I asked everyone for alms and gifts,
but what I found was that one of the most generous turned out to be stingy.*

Upon hearing the poem, Umm Salamah asked Abu Dulamah, "O Abu Dulamah, what do you mean by them? Here, no one else is grieving, except you and me."

Then, Abu Dulamah replied, "Yes, Umm Salamah, I meant you and me. Of course, your grief is different from mine, because you have a child from her, while I have nothing from her."

Umm Salamah laughed at Abu Dulamah's words. It was then, for the first time, that Umm Salamah laughed after her husband's death. Then she said to Abu Dulamah, "If only you had said that to Satan, you would have seen him laugh too." (Fir'aun, 2000)

Before discussing Abu Dulamah's poem, we should first consider the story above. In the story, there appears to be an incongruity with the usual situation, making the story humorous: the reading of poetry in front of a corpse. In the Arab context, this is not common practice and may be considered inappropriate to local traditions. Funeral traditions in Arab countries place a greater emphasis on prayer as a form of final respect. Reading poetry, which may be considered less sacred or even potentially overbearing, is generally not included in funeral ceremonies.

As Straus (2014) notes, the term "incongruence theory" refers to a group of philosophical explanations of humor that posit the perception of incongruence as a source of amusement. While not entirely perfect, incongruence theory stands as one of the most prominent explanations of amusement in contemporary discussions of the philosophy of humor. Incongruence theory operates in two ways. First, and most importantly, it explains why people react with laughter in various situations (some of which are not humorous). In other words, incongruence theory provides an explanation for why humans find certain things humorous. Second, it explains what makes a situation itself humorous. This explanatory flexibility is an appealing feature of incongruence theory.

Abu Dulamah begins his poem with a rhetorical refrain that reads:

*No one can contain his grief at your death,
except me.*

In Arabic rhetoric, this style is called *al-qasr*, which means specifying something with something else, in a specific way (al-Hashimi, 2012). One way is by using the *harf al-nafi* (negating particle: not ...) and the *harf al-'istitsna'* (exclusion particle: except ...) (al-Ahdhari, 2012). The function of placing this rhetorical form at the beginning of the poem is to emphasize to Umm Salamah that she is the only one who

is not sad when faced with the death of her husband. This line also shows an incongruity with common customs.

Then Abu Dulamah continues with the following lines:

*because they have gained something from you
while I, even if I pour out all my sorrow,
will gain nothing*

In the lines above, Abu Dulamah also employs another rhetorical device, *thibaq salbi*, which uses two opposing words in a statement, one positive and the other negative (Jarim and Amin, 1999), in this case the words "getting something" and "not getting anything." These three lines above provide a justification for the previous two lines, indicated by the word "because."

What makes these lines humorous is the content of the justification, which is also incongruous with common practice. Generally, whether someone is sad or not is determined by the close or distant emotional relationship between one person and another, not by whether the person is given something or not. In another theory of humor, this is also called "unexpectedness," or something unexpected. One would never have expected Abu Dulamah to utter such words in front of Umm Salamah's body. As Monro (1963) put it, humor involves a violation of the usual order of events (deviation), the insertion of something that should exist elsewhere into a situation (contextual deviation, metaphor), something disguised as something it is not (hypocrisy, pretense, deception, etc.), wordplay, wordplay (ambiguity, grammatical irregularities, etc.), nonsense, forbidden transgressions (deviation of values, deviation from rules, etc.), and novelty, freshness, the unexpected, and escapism (deviation from habit, defeated expectations, surprise, escape).

In the following lines:

*After you left, I asked everyone for alms and gifts
but instead, one of the most generous turned out to be a miser.*

Abu Dulamah also employed a rhetorical device called *al-muqabalah*, which involves using more than one contradictory word or phrase in a single statement (Jarim and Amin, 1989), such as "I asked for" with "I got," "Everyone with one," and "Generous with stingy." What makes these lines humorous is their incongruity with common practice. Generally, mourners offer prayers asking God to accept the deceased's good deeds, rather than conveying complaints that would be of no benefit to the deceased.

Atkinson (2015) states that for self-deprecation to be considered humorous, providing relief or a pleasurable experience, three basic elements or ingredients must be present:

1. First, jokes allow the storyteller to overcome a particular difficulty ("transcendence").
2. Second, jokes allow the storyteller to connect with the listener ("connection").
3. Third, jokes inspire both comedian and audience to accept their human weaknesses or find peace in the face of absurdity ("acceptance").

Following Atkinson's (2015) opinion, the most prominent element in Abu Dulamah's humorous poetry is the element that allows the narrator to connect with the audience. As Fir'aun (2000) noted, Abu Dulamah's anecdotes were not limited to his friendship with the caliphs and his jokes with them. Instead, he shared several humorous stories with the general public. Abu Dulamah's anecdotes with the public were certainly different from his stories with the caliphs. His stories with the public were based on humor, clever deception, begging, and condescension, sometimes reaching the level of personal satire. As soon as he left the palaces of the caliphs and went into the marketplaces and alleys, he threw off the cloak of humility and false politeness that he displayed before the caliphs, instead he revealed his true identity: a reckless, careless, and crude satirical poet, whom people avoided for fear of his sharp tongue and the rudeness of his satire.

According to Ziv (1984), there are three purposes of self-deprecating humor:

First, it prevents aggression. If someone can smile when they see their own weaknesses, they can prevent aggression, a behavioral tendency characterized by the intention to harm others, either physically or psychologically. This behavior can be direct (such as hitting) or indirect (such as spreading gossip).

Second, it is to gain appreciation, sympathy, and even love. Self-deprecating humor allows the listener to see that humans share the same weaknesses as the speaker and makes it easier for the listener to identify with the speaker. This identification can lead to sympathy and empathy.

Third, it allows a person to actively confront the fears posed by their weaknesses. They can be emboldened by the very real fact that they can display weaknesses for show and then laugh about them.

Judging from Abu Dulamah's biography, it seems that the purpose of Abu Dulamah's self-deprecating poetry was to gain appreciation, sympathy, and even love. As stated by Fir'aun (2000), Abu Dulamah was born an unknown black slave of the Banu Asad clan. He was later freed. He spent his youth in the alleys and streets of Kufa. He was accustomed to idleness, as he had no skills or trade to earn a living. However, he possessed something more important than skills and trade. He possessed a poetic talent and a sense of humor unmatched by anyone. Perhaps he recognized the importance of these talents, which qualified him for the highest rank. Therefore, we find him knocking on the doors of the Umayyads, hoping to gain their support and status.

Meanwhile, following Murphy's (2016) opinion, self-deprecating humor is an interesting aspect of comedic expression. This humor revolves around individuals telling lighthearted jokes at their own expense, often highlighting their perceived shortcomings or weaknesses. This style of humor can serve various purposes, such as serving as a coping mechanism in the face of personal challenges, providing a means of connecting with others through humility, or even acting as a tool to defuse tension in social interactions. Therefore, the purpose of Abu Dulamah's humorous poetry is to provide a means of connecting with others through self-deprecation.

Conclusion

After examining two of Abu Dulamah's poems, this article agrees with the opinion that in addition to being a skilled poet, he was also a clever comedian. This is evidenced by Abu Dulamah's relatively short, epigram-style poems, yet they are rich in rhetorical elements that give them their distinctive qualities. Even though it uses many rhetorical elements, Abu Dulamah's poetry tends to be easier to understand, because the type of rhetoric he uses is not a type of rhetoric in the form of metaphors that contain many connotative meanings and require interpretation to understand it, but rather a type of rhetoric that contains denotative and simple meanings, such as just a play on words that contrasts two words or phrases in a line, but has a deep meaning and produces a high humorous effect.

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