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The aesthetic construction of the image of Cordoba's parks in Andalusian poetry

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Abstract:

Practically, this article traces the representations of the Andalusian space in poetry, focusing on Cordoba with its palaces, gardens, and water structures, considering them aesthetic axes that invite rhetorical contemplation. It reveals how Andalusian poets transformed these spaces from material components into living artistic entities pulsing with beauty, through the employment of complex rhetorical mechanisms, most notably the vivid metaphor, the compound simile, and descriptive rhythm. The article also highlights the interaction of poetry with architecture and nature, where elements of architectural construction intertwine with patterns of nature to produce poetic images saturated with vitality and aesthetic vision. It concludes that the Cordoban space in the Andalusian poetic imagination is not merely a narrative background, but a rhetorical entity reflecting a layered aesthetic consciousness that uses language to reshape reality into artistic forms that transcend description toward imagination.

Keywords: Cordoba's parks, Andalusian poetry, description of nature, Andalusian architecture, poetic imagery, simile and metaphor.

Introduction:

Andalusian Cordoba enjoyed a special place in the aesthetic memory of Arabic literature due to its lofty palaces, lush gardens, and timeless waterways. This architectural and civilizational richness was reflected in the poetry of the Andalusians, who found in Cordoba's parks and the surrounding architecture and nature a fertile material for description and depiction. They created poetic images that combined sensory pleasure, refined imagination, and deep civilizational significance.

This article aims to uncover the aesthetic features of describing Cordoba's parks in Andalusian poetry through three major axes:

1. Description of buildings and architecture.
2. Description of water structures and spaces connected to the sea and rivers.
3. Description of gardens, orchards, and gatherings of conviviality and music in the embrace of nature.

The article highlights how the Andalusian place (palaces, rivers, gardens) was transformed into a living aesthetic entity through rhetorical devices, foremost among them simile, metaphor, and personification.

It proceeds from a central problematic: How did the Andalusian poet transform the palaces, gardens, and water spaces of Cordoba into a living aesthetic entity through rhetorical devices?

Description of buildings and architecture:

The Andalusians found in the lofty structures a fertile subject for description, and they were more passionate and attentive to this aspect than the Eastern poets, due to the elegance, ornamentation, and beauty that distinguished Andalusian architecture. Although many of the meanings they used were common, they nevertheless sought innovation and invention. These poets created masterful poems depicting the architectural techniques that bestowed upon the nobles' palaces an atmosphere of refined luxury[1] The description of palaces and buildings in general was closely linked to praising their owners and commending them and their achievements, as though the grandeur of these structures derived from the greatness of their builders. The poet undertook the task of describing palaces and all that is connected to them cisterns, baths, pools, columns, gardens, and orchards depicting them with magnificence and loftiness, as if they were suspended among the stars. At times, poets projected onto them human sensations and attributes within a framework of personification, turning them into a woman adorned with elaborately embroidered garments… etc.

Just as the construction of the cities of al-Zahra and al-Zahira represented a major revolution in architecture, it also marked an important shift in the description of crafted nature. These two cities stirred both interest and admiration, becoming the talk of commoners and elites alike due to their ancient engineering, refined construction, and the beauty of their ornaments and engravings features the people had never known before. Over time, al-Zahra and al-Zahira transformed into eternal symbols of love and loyalty, a memory cherished by every lover who once lived moments of meeting

in their surroundings. He would sing the melodies of love and ply the tunes of youthful longing with the finest singing and music.

At the forefront of those enchanted by them were groups of poets who sought to embody this sentiment in poetic pieces preserved by time after the loss of these magnificent monuments. The finest said about al-Zahra of al-Nasir is this poem by Ibn Shukhays, Muhammad ibn Mutarrif:[2]

Here are the buildings of the Commander of the Faithful that have arisen
making the end of the world surpass the beginning.
Likewise the stars, for we have found the sun the greatest of them in worth,
even if it falls short in height compared to Saturn.
Indeed, the construction of al-Zahra' has shone with a mark
unmatched in worth by anything like it or anything resembling it.
Its beauties surpass the effort of any describer
For speech is like silence, and brevity like error.
But its excellence among all the buildings of the earth
Is like the excellence of its founder's reign over all other states.
The arches of its curves nearly rivaled
The crescents of good fortune, were it not for the stain of setting.
It came together so that its imperfections became perfection,
For sometimes things diminish by attaining completeness.
Its radiance outshone, upon its highest ridges,
Pearls adorned by nature in their unstrung beauty.
How many a pair of loving birds ceaselessly
Wandered within it, from meadow to shade.
When the bubbles of the basin drifted, they urged the two
To move from one quenching to another refreshment.
As though its marble slabs were poured
From the water of a pale dawn neither frozen nor flowing.
Or cut from sheets of the sky on a day of clarity,
Made brighter by the sun's being in Aries.
It puts to shame the softness of cheek-skins
Where the water of modesty flows in moments of bashfulness.

When the blossoms of stars fill the sky above it,

Its waters seem to surge with light yet without flames.

And when the breeze of wind drives it, you would think it

A blade of a sword set trembling by a hero's hand.

The poet in this poem tried to reveal everything he saw leaning in the appearance of the external structure, at least; yet astonishment overcame him, and he found himself unable to enumerate its beauties or encompass its wonders. Speech and silence, detail and brevity became equal to him, as he indicated in the fourth line:

Its beauties surpass the effort of any describer * For speech is like silence, and brevity like error.**

And it was enough for him to make the status of this city like the status of the sun among its constellations, or to make its superiority among the buildings of the earth as a whole like the superiority of the state of its founder over other states. One must not overlook the intermingling in this poem between describing the structure and praising the caliph, as is clear; this is a prevailing feature that recurs whenever the described object is connected to the caliph or ruler. The poet here also seems excessive in his use of rhetorical images, as we are accustomed to seeing in nature; scarcely a single verse is free of an image. Mention, for example, the metonymy in the second verse 'Thus the stars… we found the sun,' and the paronomasia in the third between 'mithl' and 'mithl,' the antithesis in the fourth between 'speech and silence' and 'brevity and error,' and the simile in the fifth 'Its excellence is like the excellence of the state of its founder…' and so on.

And if this was the case of Ibn Shukhaysh with al-Zahra', Ibn Hudhayl's case with it is different, for his amazement before it is greater, and his fascination with it is stronger; therefore he began enumerating its beauties, using a cluster of magnificent similes which he included in exquisitely crafted and imaginatively rich verses[3]. He said:

Its arches were like a fluttering wing,

Its descending lines complained of the weariness of bending

What adorned its whiteness was its slenderness

Like tall palms rising upright toward the heights

It was like myrtle branches with the wind between them

Like the clusters of pomegranate blossoms and roses in their freshness

When the eye met the sun, it smiled

Shining like domes of palaces, wondrous in the light

Except for a yellow palm in its elegance,

Abandoning it out of pride, not out of fatigue.

Lovers who, when they gathered their adornments,

Revealed wine that overflowed with radiance and beauty[4]

From reading these verses, we notice two important phenomena:

– The poet's reliance, in his description of the structure, on visual imagery, in which simile plays a dominant role. In every verse of the six lines there is a simile, and these similes are vivid, drawing their material from the open social life of Andalusia.

– The poet's deriving of these similes from the world of living beings, and his avoidance of rigid similes taken from precious metals and gemstones. These six images represent a living being: in the first verse it is a bird, and in the remaining verses it is a group of human images as well, most of them drawn from the life of love and lovers, and we are accustomed to seeing this personification[5], and this blending occurs when speaking about the description of nature, and thus Ibn Hudhayl succeeded here in breathing life into the elements of his subject. As for Ahmad ibn al-Darraj, he turned to one of the pleasure-houses of al-Zahra' connected to it, namely "Dar al-Surur," and described it with a brilliant depiction that won the admiration of the Andalusians in his time:[6]

The House of Joy, whose balconies rise

Above the shining stars in their elevation

And when a man approached it, his worth increased

For it spread upon him its most precious radiance.

So it became the basil of life and its spirit

The heart of the world and the splendor of its sight.

It appears clearly in the verses the poet's astonishment and admiration for this integrated structure through this vivid depiction: this house is lofty, as if it were above the stars. Then the poet returns to a set of factors and causes that all joined together to complete the image of this enormous edifice: it is white, as though the clouds had spread over it a white garment, and as though the hands of good fortune had fashioned its construction, and as though the joy and delight of life were a breath from the gentle, pleasant breeze of its air. The passage, as shown, is laden with rhetorical devices; in addition to metaphor, there are successive similes. The distinctive feature of these similes is that the poet did not draw their material from inanimate objects or living beings, as is usually required, but rather took them from the world of the heavens. There are clouds, stars, the hands of good fortune, and the winds, all of which harmonize with the elevated status surrounding this structure and its qualities. In this, he approaches Al-Buhturi's description of the palace of Al-Mutawakkil, when he made it so high that it reached the clouds, even the planet Jupiter[7].

2- Description of water vessels:

Describing ships and fleets in earlier periods was closely linked to the theme of praise, for it appeared as an introduction in which the poet spoke about the hardships of the journey that led him to the person he praised, and about what he encountered on the way of the horrors of the sea and the fatigue of travel. Then he moved on to mention the owner of the fleet and praise him. Thus, in many cases, the element of praise overwhelms the descriptive element. This trend is most clearly represented by Ibn Darraj al-Qastalli in his panegyric poems, when he replaced the mount once a horse or camel for the ancients with this new means that plows through the depths of the sea. Then the description of ships developed to include talk of war fleets and highlighting the role they played in protecting the coasts and repelling enemies.

The Andalusians freed themselves in their artistic depictions from the rigid forms of earlier imagery to some extent, attempting instead to express their own Andalusian environment and their distinctive new civilizational reality. Images and expressions drawn from social life emerged, such as wine and women two principal aspects of their social life that indicated their deep attachment to them and the extent of their influence on people's souls, especially women. They likened the ship to the wide, beautiful eyes of fair maidens. Their descriptions of ships varied according to the qualities they attributed to them: they likened them to mountains moving upon water, to predatory birds, fierce lions, horses, ravens, armies, and to a bride gliding gracefully over the water's surface, surrounded by maidservants and attendants along with other images, some of which we will mention in due course.

One should not be surprised by the great interest the Andalusians showed in depicting ships, boats, and water sails, for we know that Al-Andalus is a peninsula surrounded by water on almost every side, in addition to the rivers and streams that run through it lengthwise and crosswise. Nor is it permissible to accuse Andalusian poets of intruding into such a theme or of imitating the Eastern poets in it; rather, their description of ships is a regional phenomenon connected to the condition of Al-Andalus as a peninsula[8]. And the poets used metaphors for the ship and the fleet, referring to them as ravens, horses, and eagles. The following verses by Ibn al-Abbār Ahmad Muhammad al-Khawlānī combine all these descriptions. He says:[9]

How delightful is a water-born vessel, gliding along

Floating and even if the people of fire ignite it extinguishes them

The winds make it soar bare, with wings

Like white doves rising together in unison.

Each dark one of them no squadron can cast down

They call it a raven whose swiftness is for victory.

The one who sees it finds no power to grasp its nature

For it is the offspring of water and the gyrfalcon is its peer.

Ibn Darraj al-Qastalli may stand out as one of the Andalusian poets most devoted to describing ships and fleets and showing great interest in them, due to his frequent travels between the kingdoms of al-Andalus. However, this position of his is often merely a vehicle for the purpose of praise, so the ship has no greater role than being a mount that carries him to the one he extols. These are verses from a poem he composed in praise of Mundhir ibn Yahya al-Tujibi:[10]

Truly, toward you we rode the winds as mounts,

And the ships were drawn beneath us.

Thus we moved upon the billows of the sea, carrying them

Like palanquins fluttering with our lancers.

Upon them are the backs and the cherished depths

Whenever they call upon the truth of certainty.

And by God how many tender mothers

We lead death wherever it wills, and it protects us.

And we direct each one as we wish, and surely

He knows that we proceed with firm intention.

Ibn Darraj here does not describe the ship for its own sake so much as he describes it as the means that carries him to the one he praises after which its role ends. In it, he portrays his journey across the sea and what he encountered of horrors and dangers, and he likened the ship amid the raging waves to palanquins in which women ride.

This is an old simile he drew from his reading of ancient poetic heritage; palanquins are placed on the backs of camels, not on ships. Yet the closeness of resemblance between the two images the palanquin swaying over desert sands and the ship upon the sea may be what inspired him with this Bedouin image.

However, Ibn Darraj did not restrict his description to the ship merely as a means of transport; rather, he composed poems describing the Arab fleet in which he reached a high level of seriousness and skill, such as those he composed about the fleet of al-Mansur ibn Abi ʻAmir, which crossed to Ifriqiya to fight his opponents from Banu Ziri. He said:[11]

It bears from him a sea brimming with spears,

With every purchased mamlūk, as though

When it outraces the gusts of wind, you would think

Its waves and plains are driven mad by it.

And it carried the captives of truth when

His horses were unable to overcome its pirates.

In this description, Ibn Darraj was not able to free himself entirely from the influence of the ancients, for horses, steeds, palanquins, and serpents were still present in his imagination.

Ibn Darraj was not alone in the field of describing ships; alongside him were other poets who contributed to this direction, even if they did not reach the level he attained.[12]

Here, for example, are these verses by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, in which he depicts the ship as it cleaves through the depths of the sea like a mountain walking, or like a bride swaying in her gait among her maidservants and attendants. He says:[13]

A bearer of the sea that endures upon the sea,

One who sees it would think it a mountain moving through the water.

A sea traveling upon a sea with a maiden,

As though she were a mountain journeying across the water.

She adorns the bride, and her rising bosom sways her,

And the wave laughs at her when she submits to its motion.

One who reads these verses realizes, at first glance, the poet's affectation and his play with words, as is clearly evident in the first verse where he repeats the word sea four times, in addition to repeating the letter ḥā' six times in the same verse, along with his use of metaphor and simile.

And among the finest poems composed in this manner are these verses by Yūsan ibn Hārūn al-Rammādī, in which he describes the ships coated with pitch. He says:[14]

Their coatings had burnished them, and they shone forth,

As though in the darkness of tempests they were stars.

As though, in the abode of their moorings, they were hilltops,

With water as their field and the waves at play.

You see the oars working in their curves,

Like the wide black eyes in the delicacy of delight.

Their lofty decks were gleaming in abundance,

As though they were the flanks of horses leaping in battle.

They strike through the air the heels of the clouds, when

Eagles in the heights sweep down upon them.

As though they anchored upon their fires, and thus became

Around them the eyelashes of eyelids upon the veils.

They anchor while the waters of the sea penetrate them,

Lightning-like, like specks of light in the darkness, flashing.

Al-Rammadi here seems to represent two directions: the ancient one, through his description of the ship in its preparation as horses galloping and readied with discipline so that it may be capable of entering battle; and his description of it in the midst of water as an eagle shaking itself in the air. And this is a new direction drawn from the poet's lived reality and environment through a series of similes, such as his likening it when moving through the sea calmly and slowly to a sober man, steady in his stride. But when the waves play with it, tossing it right and left, and it sways in its movement, it resembles a drunken man whose head has been overtaken by wine, causing him to lose balance and sense. Likewise is his likening it to the wide, beautiful eyes and its oars to the eyelashes of eyelids.[15]

And when the Andalusian poet describes the waterwheel and the mill, he depicts a purely Andalusian subject, for his environment was known for its abundance of rivers and valleys along which several waterwheels were installed for drawing irrigation water and for agriculture. Here, for example, are these verses by al-Rammadi describing two waterwheels like two rainclouds, with wakefulness flowing between them. He said:[16]

How could the air not grow cool for the river

While its shade above it is like a phantom at dawn?

Its water is of gentleness and purity, for they

In beauty are a pair descending upon pearls.

Its surface resembles a face thinned by the pain of heat,

So it became a coldness surpassing the thirst of humankind.

White as pure silk you see it, when

Branches fall into it like radiant mirrors.

It flows gently, and like two fans for it

Is a coolness of silver that dazzles the eye

The poet asks in a tone of wonder how the air does not grow cool for a river situated between two waterwheels, as though they were two rainclouds continually sprinkling it with droplets of water during their rotation. The water appeared pure, as if sifted through a sieve, and the droplets scattered by their turning were like falling pearls. As for the silver particles shed by their cooling, they too fall, and finally he sees in this river a person tormented by intense heat, standing between these two fans to ease the heat of the weather upon him.

As we notice, the poet relied on several rhetorical images: the interrogative of amazement in the first verse, simile in the third and fourth, and metaphor in the last, when he claimed that the river in its clarity is none other than a fair-faced person suffering from extreme heat who came to these two fans to cool him from the heat of the air this being an implied metaphor.

3 – Description of gardens and orchards:

The first thing to note in this field is the distinction of this art by the ease and clarity of its language and the simplicity of its structures in general, except in a few rare cases, as we shall see. The expressions came delicate and precise, harmoniously composed, light and pleasing to both ear and soul.

This clarity of wording led to clarity and simplicity of meaning, for it expresses the lived civilizational reality with its economic, social, and intellectual aspects. An example of this expression of reality appears in the verses of Abu al-Qasim Ibn al-ʿArif al-Qurtubi describing a rose:[17]

I went at morning to the palace of ʿAbbāsa,

While sleep had overpowered its guards.

I found her there, upon her cheek,

With drunkenness having stunned her attendants.

She said: "Did you come in a moment of slumber?"

I said: "Indeed," so she pressed her cup.

And she extended her hands toward a rose

Whose breaths the fragrance seemed to imitate.

Like a maiden seen naked by a beholder,

She covered her head with her garment completely.

And she said: "Fear God do not disgrace

The vessels of your uncle, ʿAbbās."

So I turned away from her in agitation,

While neither the forgetful one withdrew nor did she forget.

We find Aḥmad ibn Faraj al-Jayyānī describing the iris as cups of white silver, saying:[18]

You sent iris blossoms of victory,

From a flask of fragrance,

The remnants of violet wine,

Or your white cheeks drawing near

To my yellow cheeks from longing.

The description of the iris here is taken from the image of silver iris-shaped cups prepared for drinking one of the products of the luxurious and extravagant life witnessed by the Andalusians in that era. Or it is like the white cheek of the beloved drawing near to the yellow cheek of the lover, struck by the pain of passionate longing an image drawn from their well-known social reality.

– And with the clarity and delicacy of the words, the meaning becomes clear and easy to grasp. This becomes evident as we read these delicate verses by the muṣḥafī Abū Jaʿfar ibn ʿUthmān, which he improvised in describing the travel of a robe. He said:[19]

And a yellow garment, artfully disguised in a robe of narcissus,

Exhaling a musk musk of fragrant breath.

It has the scent of a beloved and the hardness of his heart,

And the color of a lover worn thin by illness in his clothing.

Its yellow hue is borrowed from my own yellow pallor,

And its breaths in perfume are the breaths of a comforting companion.

It had a garment of gold, dust-hued,

Upon a body yellowed, smooth as refined gold.

The reader of these verses feels no strangeness or aversion neither in wording nor in meaning as he reads the lines from beginning to end. He feels both pleasure and delight as he follows the poet's tale with this quince, which he treats as though it senses and understands, clothing it in the garment of a passionate beloved, from whom he draws enjoyment for both heart and senses.

We also find Ibn Hadhīl describing the rows of willow trees in one of the estates that belonged to al-Manṣūr ibn Abī ʿĀmir:[20]

And there appeared a row of maidens stepping out

To the shade; the branches rose for you in delight.

As though they were slim-necked maidens of willow

Competing between tenderness and sweetness.

The winds of the east stir them, and you see them

Gently greeting, like hands at play.

Truly, the hanging locks are a playground for breezes at dawn,

As though your color were silvered from the willow's hue.

We also find ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dākhil, founder of the Umayyad state, describing a palm tree in the garden of his palace in Cordoba, known as Munyat al-Ruṣāfa.

A palm tree appeared to us in the midst of al-Ruṣāfa,

Set far in the land of the West from the homeland of palms.

So I said: you are my likeness in exile and separation,

In long yearning and distance from kin.

You grew in a land where you are a stranger,

So one like you in far removal and origin is like me.

And it is as though this palm tree were a symbol of the Arabs there, and this poetic piece likewise a symbol for them, carrying a longing that cannot reach the distant homeland a longing infused into this strange palm that the Arabs brought with them to those remote, harsh, far-off lands. And just as they carried the palm with them, they carried into their poetry the Najdi Bedouin elements ruins and other motifs and they carried what the Abbasids had innovated in describing nature, upon which they

poured from their own environment, feelings, and imaginations what infused it with life and vitality, in the manner we find in these early exquisite verses, as though they were a foreshadowing of the Andalusian poet's intuitive sense of embodying elements of nature with human emotion.[21]And an Andalusian poet says, describing a garden:[22]

And a green garden whose blossoms gleamed,

Where I kept company with noble youths of pure presence.

The silver stream laughed with its water,

And when it rippled in the breeze, it glittered.

White droplets scattered upon the surface,

Like pearls strewn over brocaded carpets.

And the blossoms appeared on their branches,

Like full moons shining among the terraces.

It was as though, to the eye, it were a polished sword,

Whose flashing dazzles when beheld.

Like a necklace in a beautiful arrangement adorned,

Pearls with pearls, and silver with emerald.

These examples we have reviewed are marked by the ease and clarity of both their wording and meaning so much so that the reader or listener need not exert great effort to understand them or grasp their essence, nor is he compelled to consult dictionaries to explain their vocabulary, for their expressions are simple, their meanings familiar, and they express purely Andalusian subjects. Among the factors that led to the simplicity of language in descriptive poetry and its meanings is the connection of this art with music, since most of these poetic pieces were composed for singing in the gatherings of caliphs and princes, and in assemblies of pleasure and entertainment.

And if the simplicity of diction and clarity of meaning are a prominent feature of purely Andalusian themes such as descriptions of gardens and parks, some other themes were not exclusively born of the Andalusian environment, nor were they limited to Andalusian poets alone.

Before speaking about the style employed by Andalusian poets in describing nature, it is useful to note that the Andalusian poet was deeply connected to his environment and fully immersed in it; thus

he internalized it in his poetry, and his tools for portraying it were the rhetorical devices of expression simile, metaphor, and metonymy. Foremost among these tools was simile, which they used extensively, forming a distinctive feature of nature poetry shared by most if not all poets, since simile is a means of revealing aspects of natural life and manifestations of human behavior and activity in both Bedouin and urban stages[23].

The poets were influenced by the natural and civilizational factors surrounding them, and the images of palaces, gardens, flowers, parks, streams, and gatherings were imprinted in their minds and imaginations. When they set out to describe these scenes, they focused on the images preserved in their imaginations, and thus their descriptions and imagery came as a truthful expression of this reality.

These are verses by Ibn Baṭṭāl al-Multamis, depicting the beauty of the earth in spring. He says:[24]

The light in it delighted the insects, ***So their clasping was in the southern air.

As though the fluttering of its eyelids*Were, for us, the joy of gates opening.**

Its cups' fingertips urged it on, ***And some of its companions offered it to us.

Its admiration wanders through the garden, ***And a fair maiden clings to its garments.

When we read these verses of Ibn Baṭṭāl, we are in fact reading through them the Andalusian environment in all its dimensions and manifestations, as though we were living these scenes with the poet in reality. He transports the environment to us

or, more accurately, he transports us to where he is so we see with him the blooming garden, the companions, the wine cups, the singing assembly, and the moments of love. All of this appears vividly in these six verses in which he describes the garden that he was able to embody before us and breathe life into through these dynamic rhetorical images, relying on the tool of simile, which he used four times in an attempt to detail the image further without burdening the reader or leading to obscurity or complexity.

The poets also used metaphor, which played a role in what is called the personification of nature that is, attributing human qualities to nature. This was one of the notable characteristics of nature poetry in al-Andalus. The importance of metaphor here lies in its clear revelation of the poets' attempt to elevate familiar reality into a broader, freer, and more beautiful imaginative reality, and it also reveals the development that occurred in their feelings and emotions toward nature.

We present here these verses by Abū ʿĀmir ibn Shuhayd describing the garden:[25]

The month of rain visited its gardens until their blossoms were drenched,

So it made them flow, while the meadow lay sleeping like one veiled beneath drifting waves.

Up to his saying:

Leave the eye wandering in the plight of love

pages consumed by the flames of passion.

The one in pain dances for the one who soothes,

And seizes ecstasy in silence and in melody.

His garments of stillness conceal him, yet he is

A heart-stricken lover, enraptured in longing.

His tears melt in the hand of his composer,

Healing him while he smiles through his pain.

Here we notice that Ibn Shuhayd has used a series of metaphors which he applied to elements of the garden: modesty keeps vigil, the meadow sleeps, the rose blushes, the anemone complains, and the branches of the trees ascend until the end of these metaphors. Thus he transformed this wedding of nature, rejoicing in the spring season, into a human wedding filled with sounds and movements, to the point that the reader feels as though the poet is speaking about human beings rather than trees and flowers of the meadow. Hence metaphor held the foremost place in highlighting these images in the manner you have seen.

4 – Description of gatherings of conviviality and pleasure:

Gatherings of conviviality began as a social phenomenon in the final days of the Umayyad state in al-Andalus, and this phenomenon then spread and became widespread during the era of the Ṭāʾifa kings and the periods that followed, shared by both the elite and the common people alike.[26]

The Andalusian poet's relationship with nature was one of intimacy and affection, not of struggle or domination. People poets and non-poets alike came to partake in its joy, deeply enamored with its beauty. This led to the emergence of a new phenomenon in nature poetry: adopting nature as a retreat and a place of delight, where they completed their ecstasy awakened in their souls by the melody of a singing girl, a cup of wine, or both together.

Thus the poets described these gatherings in which they found, in the beauty of their scenery, what added a special flavor and a new character to their pleasure, as in the following verses by Yūsuf ibn Hārūn al-Rammādī, in which he describes a wine gathering he held in nature. He said:

A cup like a clear stream if you feel its radiance,

Upon a meadow, a dawn rises for us through it.

When we drink our cup, it pours its excess

Over the gatherings, and the world grows numb to it.

As though the dark cloud had settled upon the earth,

And brought forth a laughing meadow that blossoms.

After the clouds, the joy of the earth appears,

Beloved sights allowed only for a fleeting glance.

And my delight is from this shimmering wine,

Where flies rose around us with their buzzing.

Upon our meadow while the listener lagged behind

The earth's adornment shone in every place.

Above it the sky wept fourfold,

And when it wept, it gleamed to us in affected grace.

And a beauty-mark upon the nose of the blissful lover

Reminding him of the glow of wine and of my company.

Have you seen how the poet described this magnificent scene, which he and his companions took as a place of revelry and a stage for amusement, where they passed the cup over what the earth had brought forth of every delightful pair after the sky had poured upon it what was hidden in its breast, so it became adorned with beauty in all its regions? Let us observe how artistic beauty intertwined with sensual beauty for al-Ramadī, and how the earth, in exchange, became a woman of weddings with whom the clouds held a union, impregnating her so that this beauty that scattered in every place was her offspring. This confirms what we have noted about the changing vision of the Andalusian

poet toward nature in his renewed poetry, and let us also observe how the poet built his images upon contrast, relying on antithesis and metaphor.

For the sky wept, and the gardens laughed after its weeping, so the joy of the earth was bound to sorrow. The poet's metaphor of weeping, laughing, joy, sorrow, and weddings for

Among these gatherings were those held in the evening and lasting throughout the night, and those that shared certain descriptions before each diverged. Both described wine, its servers, and its instruments cups and ewers before night gatherings turned to describing the states of the sky with its stars and constellations, their wandering and brilliance, while daytime gatherings singled out the states of the earth, represented in its meadows, flowers, rivers, and streams, and other e natural elements reveals his inclination to personify nature and attribute to it some of the characteristics and feelings of living beings. Though he did not greatly expand on this, nature still preserved its identity; yet this inclination to borrow the sensations of living beings for nature indicates the poet's heightened sensitivity toward it. He no longer viewed it as rigid, mute, or lifeless, and he used these metaphors not merely as exaggeration but because nature had become close to his soul, so he felt its sorrow, joy, weeping, and laughter as he felt these in the living world around him.[27]arthly delights that fell under their eyes and stirred their emotions. Among these gatherings were those of kings and princes, usually held in their palaces or in pavilions over rivers, surrounded by boats. Distinguished ministers, eminent poets, musicians, and singers were invited to both types, and thus poetry, art, and drink combined to create an atmosphere of general joy. These gatherings were naturally more free and spontaneous, held in gardens, along waterways, and on the banks of streams and rivers lined with flowers. Andalusian poets left behind much poetry describing drinking and convivial gatherings, and this poetry has particular features: the predominance of improvisation born of the moment, the dominance of imagination, and the use of vocabulary with specific qualities that build poetic imagery appealing to one or more senses. It is also characterized by the scarcity of long odes, the abundance of short poems, and the variety of its imagery according to the elements from which it is composed.[28]

Perhaps in the following examples these features become even clearer, as we find Yusuf ibn Harun al-Ramadī describing a wine gathering, yet unable to free himself from the influence of nature that had possessed him and the other Andalusians. He said:[29]

Drippings of time's rain, a delicate linked chain,

Where a gentle outpouring flows from its clouds.

As though it were silver streaming over the earth,

faint dew descending as it draws near.

A cool shimmer that tempts the eyes with its gleam,

Gliding like light in the evening of its winding paths.

In this scene we see how the description of wine gatherings, in which the drinkers spread themselves over nature, stripped away from the purely descriptive tendency that focuses on the radiance of the wine, its color, its taste, and other external qualities, and replaced it with a description of nature itself.[30]

In addition to wine, Andalusian poets were also concerned with other civilizational themes, such as describing instruments of entertainment and music like the lute, the zither, and the tambour; the connection of musical instruments to Andalusian social life was clear.

Regarding the description of musical instruments, we select the following verses by Ibn Abd Rabbih, in which he described the lute, saying:[31]

O Lord, a sound shaped by sinews,

With a base beneath which its foot lies hidden.

Hollow, its fingers drawn together,

Its still tones arranged in measured motion.

Four strings to which souls are drawn,

Whose parts unite with delicate harmony.

The smallest of them is the greatest in hearts,

From it arises both healing and ailment.

When you release its notes with an eager mouth,

Whose tongue in utterance seeks to learn,

You would say: "A bathhouse whose echo replies,"

Revealing beauty though it has no mouth.

Ibn Abd Rabbih's lute is a hollow instrument, empty at its core, with four strings that produce a melodious, plaintive sound when played. The four strings are played by fingers, and each one corresponds to a particular aspect of the soul, yet the smallest of these strings is the one most affecting to the hearts with its soft, sweet tones. When a skilled player begins to perform, its rhythm seems like the cooing of a dove answered by another. This lute has a tongue, yet it rests in the musician's hand, which moves the strings and makes them speak though their speech comes from no mouth.

This subject is closely connected to the luxurious Andalusian society in which singing spread among its classes, and people became passionately attached to it.[32]

A student of nature poetry in al-Andalus may at first draw a general impression that it is a descriptive poetry dominated by material tendencies and external ornamentation, meaning that the poet stands before his subject as a mere painter and transmitter, distant from his own self and emotions. This explains the large quantity of poetry devoted to describing natural and civilizational scenes based on sensory elements. And as we conclude the topic of description, we should note the clarity of its

language and its inclusion of many civilizational terms. This clarity of language is partly due to the connection of this poetic theme to singing, for the relationship between description and song subjected it to its requirements. Linguistic ease was, in fact, a general tendency in Andalusian poetry. As for the poetic meters used in descriptive passages and poems, poets did not show an inclination toward a particular one; rather, they moved between long and short meters.[33]

First: Study Results

1. It was found that the parks of Cordoba are not merely spatial backgrounds in Andalusian poetry, but rather the center of the poetic image; palaces, gardens, and rivers become active elements that carry cultural and emotional meanings, storing both collective memory and individual longing at the same time.

2. The description of buildings and urban structures in Cordoba was associated with a clear laudatory and political function; the grandeur of the palace or the city (such as al-Zahra and al-Zahira) is presented in many texts as an extension of the caliph's or the prince's majesty, making the image of the place a mirror reflecting the legitimacy of authority and the glory of the state.

3. The description of ships, waterwheels, and aquatic spaces showed that the presence of the sea and river in Andalusian poetry is a regional phenomenon connected to the geographical nature of al-Andalus; the poet was not merely imitating the Eastern tradition but expressing the reality of a peninsula surrounded by water and crossed by rivers, employing new imagery drawn from wine, women, and scenes of daily life.

4. The description of gardens, orchards, and gatherings of companionship and entertainment was distinguished by clarity of language, transparency of diction, and delicacy of style; this is due to the association of this type of poetry with singing and social gatherings. Hence, it was dominated by vivid words and sensory imagery, with a strong presence of luxury, pleasure, and harmony with nature.

5. Rhetorical devices especially simile, metaphor, and personification occupied a central place in shaping the image of the Cordoban park; the place became a living being: laughing, crying, feeling, and likened to a bride, a beloved, or a joyful or suffering human being, which confirms the Andalusian poet's tendency to personify nature and infuse it with soul.

6. Textual analysis indicated that the Andalusian poet did not merely transmit the scene as it was, but reshaped it according to a unique aesthetic vision; the material blended with the imaginative, and the sensory with the symbolic, so that the parks of Cordoba became a space expressing the transformation of society from nomadism to civilization, and from desert to lush, water-filled meadows.

7. In light of the above, the image of the Cordoban park constitutes the essence of the interaction between place, history, and imagination; it embodies the spirit of Andalusian civilization at its peak and reveals a refined aesthetic sensibility in the treatment of both crafted and living nature.

Second: Study Recommendations

1. A systematic return to complete Andalusian poetic corpora (not only famous selections) to uncover more images related to parks and water spaces, as many texts remain scattered across collections and books.

2. Emphasizing the teaching of Andalusian nature poetry from the perspective of "the aesthetics of place" rather than merely superficial description; this is done by linking the texts to their architectural

and historical contexts (palaces, cities, gardens, rivers) to bring the image of al-Andalus vividly closer to students and researchers.

3. Benefiting from the intersection between literary studies and historical and architectural studies by reading poetic texts alongside what historians and geographers wrote about al-Zahra, al-Zahira, and the suburban estates of Cordoba, in order to develop a more comprehensive vision of the city's image in Andalusian consciousness.

4. Encouraging academic work on simile, metaphor, and personification in Andalusian poetry within the framework of the "rhetoric of place," rather than studying them as abstract theoretical concepts, treating them instead as active tools in shaping the poet's vision of the surrounding world.

Third: Proposals for Future Research

1. A comparative study between the image of the park in Cordoba and that of parks in other Andalusian cities such as Seville and Granada, to identify what is shared and what is unique to Cordoba in shaping the aesthetics of place.

2. An independent study on "the image of al-Zahra and al-Zahira in Andalusian poetry," gathering all related texts and approaching them from two perspectives: aesthetic (imagery and rhetoric) and historical (political glory and memory of decline).

3. An interdisciplinary study combining literature and the visual arts, comparing the image of the Cordoban park in poetry with what has been preserved through archaeological excavations and modern illustrations of these architectural and natural spaces.

4. Research on the topic of "gatherings of companionship and entertainment in Andalusian parks" as a cultural study tracing the relationship between poetry, music, singing, and wine, and how these elements intertwined to shape a unique aesthetic taste within Andalusian society.

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