

The Other in the Poetry of Ibn Sara Al-Andalusi

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Abstract

The dialectic of the "Other" in poetry has garnered significant attention from researchers and critics, as the relationship between the concept of the "Self" and the "Other" is intertwined and interdependent. The existence of the Self is defined by the presence of the Other, and this existence is realized through the divergence among individuals and social groups, as well as through differences in consciousness, values, and concepts. However, the interdependence of the Self's existence with the Other is a fluid, relative, and changeable condition. What is considered the "Other" now may not be so later, depending on the shifting and volatile relationship between the Self and the Other. Most researchers and critics have referred to the relationship between the Self and the Other in terms of terminology within psychology, classifying the components of the Self as the "Ego," "Id," and "Other." The concept of the "Other" entered critical discourse, leading to studies that explore the subjectivity of the poet in relation to the subjectivities of others, or the poet's perception of the differing Other.

Criticism of the "Other" has often appeared in the context of satire, which manifests in the critique of the ideology held by the Other, though at times, it has also appeared in the context of praise. In this sense, the image of the Other has been either positive or negative. Therefore, in this study, we address both the positive and negative aspects of the Other according to the poet's intellectual perspective and vision. Through an examination of the poetic work of Ibn Sara al-Andalusi, it is evident that the Other is depicted in various forms—religious, political, intellectual, cultural, and more. All these representations of the "Other" are present in his poetry, classified accordingly. The critique of the "Other" often appeared in the context of satire, representing a critique of the ideology held by the Other, while at times, it emerged in the context of praise. Thus, the image of the Other, in this sense, has been either positive or negative. In this discussion, we explore both the positive and negative aspects of the Other, based on the poet's intellectual perspective and vision.

Keywords: The Other, Ibn Sara, Andalusian Literature, Cultural Criticism.

1. Introduction

The "Other" in the Poetry of Ibn Sara al-Andalusi

The dialectic of the "Other" in poetry has significantly engaged the attention of scholars and critics, as the relationship between the concept of the "Self" and the "Other" is intertwined and interdependent. The existence of the Self is defined by the presence of the Other, and this

existence is realized through the differentiation among individuals and social groups, as well as through disparities in consciousness, values, and concepts. However, the interdependence of the Self's existence with the Other is a fluid, relative, and mutable condition. What is considered the "Other" now may not be so later, depending on the evolving and fluctuating relationship between the Self and the Other.

Most scholars and critics have referred the relationship between the Self and the Other to the realm of psychology, classifying the components of the Self into the "Ego," the "Id," and the "Other." The concept of the "Other" entered critical studies, giving rise to research that explores the poet's subjectivity in relation to the subjectivities of others or the poet's perception of the differing Other.

Abdel Moneim Hefny posited that the "Other" is a "specific term for the different, applied to persons, things, and numbers, and denotes the different in essence. It is opposed to the 'I,' and both are embodied in consciousness; the more consciousness increases, the more the sense of the 'I' and the 'Other' grows. The 'Other' is not as it is in reality but as I perceive it." The "Other" in its philosophical sense is a term that elucidates the relationship between the subject (the knower) and the object (the known), addressing the analysis of the nature of knowledge as an influential actor in ethics and existence as a whole. The concept of the "Other" also reflects the anxious stance of the Self before the Other, marked by cultural and civilizational differences, searching for what is different in the hope of achieving perfection or the ideal model through an objective process that connects them.

The Ego cannot create its external world without the Other, with which it collides to form the general framework of the environment in which both the Ego and the Other operate. The Ego's need for the Other is essential, as it is only defined through the Other's existence. These two elements (the Ego and the Other) possess fluid and changeable forms, contingent upon shifting events, internal and external factors, thus denying them any fixed nature that may seem apparent in their outward appearance. Derrida posits a connection between the Other, the Self, and identity, stating that "the origin always refers to its successor, and identity to its Other, which itself establishes it as identity."

The term "Other" is used to denote "what differs from the established norms that distinguish social groups as distinct entities, or, in other words, the condition in which there is an existence different from the Self." The Other exists to assist the Self in realizing its existence, as the Other represents an unconscious symbolic linguistic structure that engages in a dialectical relationship with the Self, ultimately producing a coherent semantic structure. The Self must form its own image, achieved through the accumulation of experiences and states linked to consciousness, which generates specific experiences in the Self, shaping its mental and emotional images of the Other. This, in turn, determines the Self's attitudes and behaviors toward the Other, ultimately defining the Self's identity and internal and external features.

The concept of the "Other" has occupied a significant place in the epistemological landscape, both ancient and modern, though attention to it has increased recently, despite its broad, vague, and ambiguous meaning. Philosophers and thinkers have differed in providing a precise

definition, leading to its becoming a term of relative and variable meaning, particularly in the philosophical, social, and psychological realms, due to its explicit external attributes and implicit internal ones. From a psychological perspective, the "Other" is a collection of traits and behaviors that extend across intellectual, social, and psychological spaces, attributed by the Self to the Other as it is present in the general field of the Self's identity, which is necessarily a composite identity that cannot stand independently from the Other without being an incomplete or fragmented identity.

Naturally, the intellectual theme of the "Other" has held immense importance in both European and Arab thought alike, placed under scrutiny in academic research, especially in literary, cultural, gender, postcolonial, Orientalist, and Occidentalist studies, among others. This has elevated the concept to the level of representing the "Other" in all its diverse manifestations, whether in terms of religion, nationality, race, or gender. The Self's identity is formed and comes to life through its engagement with the different Other, an essential element in understanding and shaping identity. The "Other" is too expansive to be confined to a specific attribute, as it may manifest in a negative, positive, or neutral manner, extending across all regional, sectarian, familial, or tribal centers. The "Other" may be adjacent or neighboring, which is why this concept has been utilized across religions, civilizations, and cultures to understand those who agree or disagree with the Self. Since the concept of the "Other" is deeply intertwined with all ideas, perspectives, and positions that distribute between the Self and the Other to form a shared epistemological system, philosophers, thinkers, and intellectuals have explored it, and writers and critics have used it as a tool to craft a literary discourse that encompasses the binary of Self and Other in their literature and criticism.

The "Other" cannot be defined or understood except through the "Self" or "Ego," as it is "the entity different from the Self, a relative and fluid concept, as the Other is only defined in relation to a central point, which is the Self. This central point is not absolutely fixed, as the Other may be defined in relation to me as an individual, or to a particular group, which may be internal, such as women in relation to men, or the poor in relation to the rich, or external in relation to society as a whole." Ultimately, the Other contributes to the formation of the Self; the Self does not exist without the Other, as they form an inherently intertwined and interdependent duality, affecting each other reciprocally. Although the Other is different from the Self, it signifies and completes it. This indicates that the definition of the "Other" is intrinsic to the definition and formation of the "Self" or "Ego," which encompasses "the meaning of the Self, including both conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions that form a sense of who we are and all the feelings brought into different contexts through culture."

A dialectical relationship has thus developed between the Self and the Other, as the two are inseparable. Every human Self has its Other, which is why the Self or Ego, in various fields of knowledge, has generated numerous significant propositions, including those "related to the Self's relationship with itself, its relationship with consciousness, existence, and the Other, and the relationship between existence and otherness (the Other). It has also produced other propositions specific to the true existence of the Self and its divisions and roles in the theory of

knowledge, in which the relationship between the Self and the object forms its core and primary dilemma."

The expansion in the concept of the "Self" allows it to play a pivotal and active role as a central entity, its geographical dimension being narrowly defined in its individuality, and broadly extended in its relationship with other pronouns, with the "Other" and others. The "Other" cannot exist as an "Other" without containing within it an "I," for every "Other" is interwoven with an "I," but the "I" does not necessarily contain an "Other," although it cannot fully sense itself without it.

By defining the meaning of the "Self," the nature of the "Other" is naturally also defined. This relationship is "fundamental, transcending the articulation between thought and analysis, which reveals its ontological stakes clearly, and beyond the distinction between self-identity and objective identity, which highlights its concept of existence as an act and force with an ontological dimension." The "Other" grants the "Self" full control in identifying its strengths and weaknesses and helps it to explore broader fields and horizons. This does not imply that the concept of the "Other" is solely an individual concept, but it is also a collective one; society forms its perception of the "Other" based on its perception of itself, just as an individual forms their perceptions of the "Other" based on their self-perception.

For instance, when discussing the "Other" within a religious context, such as within Islamic, Jewish, or Christian circles, the "Other" is anyone belonging to a different sect, whether Islamic, Jewish, or Christian. Human epistemological reality guides us to understand that "everything outside the individual self is the 'Other' to that self, and everything outside the intellectual or doctrinal group is the 'Other' to that group, and this ascends to the level of the nation, where the 'Other' for our nation's Self is the Western or non-Western entity."

Thus, the term "Other" is a relative, abstract, and ever-changing concept that evolves with the "Self," which shares with the "Other" the formation of "the dual totality of self-being, simultaneously undermining it, intertwining and reflecting in an endless series, starting from the most precise internal splits in the relationship of the Self with itself over a very minute time span, and not ending until the end of human existence in time and space." The "Self" ultimately derives its essence from the "Other," whether material or abstract, to the extent that in our world today, "the 'Other' has become a component of the Self's identity and a condition for its richness and advancement, to the point where rejecting the 'Other' could be said to equate to the death of the Self

In examining the poetic work of Ibn Sara Al-Andalusi, we find that the "Other" is represented in various forms (religious, political, intellectual, cultural, etc.). All these forms are present in his poetry through poems directed towards the "Other" according to this classification. The critique of the "Other" is often expressed through satire, which targets the "Other's" ideology, though sometimes it appears through praise. The image of the "Other" in this sense is either positive or negative, so this study will explore the "positive Other" and the "negative Other" based on the poet's perspective and intellectual vision.

1-The Positive Other:

The positive "Other" in the poetry of Ibn Sara Al-Andalusi is a natural extension of his religious and intellectual inclinations and a reflection of his principles and values. The poet focuses on praising princes, leaders, judges, and friends, highlighting their virtues. Ibn Sara Al-Andalusi also addresses the "Other" as a group and as an individual—sometimes praising a person, and at other times praising a group of people. His bias towards his Eastern roots is evident when he extols them in many poems, showing pride in his lineage.

For example, in one poem, he expresses his pride in his noble Arab lineage:

For God, more splendid than the braids of Himyar,

He who terrifies the enemies, never giving them peace.

The land of the peninsula delighted in his determination,

Adorning the lover of pearls with a bridle.

Undoubtedly, the poet attempts to establish an objective connection between the "land," which represents a high human value, and the "Self," leading to the "Other" he targets with praise and exaltation. The poet enumerates known locations and tribes familiar to the audience, using them as an introduction to the praise he wishes to bestow upon his people from the kings of Yemen, specifically mentioning the kings of Himyar and their successors. Perhaps the clearest example of praise is when the poet employs the words "splendid" and "terrifies," taking advantage of the symbolic meaning associated with fear and awe, which signify culture, awareness, and high status. This feeling remains prominent among people in any village they entered and wrote about their history, traditions, and customs.

Here, the poet emerges from his inherently biased Self towards his people, who represent the "Other" intended for praise, in an attempt to distinguish the role of the "Other" and highlight its uniqueness. The beauty of addressing the "Other" can be observed in how the poet seeks to address the "Other" as an ethnically and culturally diverse entity.

The positive "Other" is also evident in the elegy, where the poet explores the themes of farewell and separation, drawing from nature the aesthetic elements represented by the symbolic meanings of its components. He writes:

The heavens' heart broke for the pearl,

A blossom that filled the horizon with piety's fragrance.

She did not leave the earth except with her dignity,

The world preserved her, hidden in her bud.

In this passage, the poet addresses the implicit "Other," alluding to the social relationships connecting him with this absolute "Other" without specifying the identity of this "Other." The poet's depiction of the farewell as a means of preserving the dignity of the deceased, whom he describes as a "pearl" to highlight its beauty and rarity, expresses a longing for the departed, representing virtues like goodness, piety, and purity. This can be referred to as the "social Other." Although the elegy is a genre typically associated with sorrow and calamity, the poet doesn't refrain from softening his words, choosing gentle and melodious expressions. His stylistic choice leans towards simile to describe the "Other," creating a series of aesthetic images that deeply affect the audience. The use of simile is dominant in these verses, as it is deemed the most appropriate and impactful approach in elegies that aim to honor the positive "Other," who holds a special and esteemed place in the poet's self.

In another instance, the poet addresses the theme of contentment, stating:

I sought the approval of people with all my effort,
But I find contentment to be the true treasure of wealth.

Their approval is an unattainable goal,

And righteousness is the best to hold on to.

In this poem, the "Other" opposing the poet's self is "contentment," which he adopts as a positive theme capable of elevating a person to higher virtues. Contentment is regarded as a supreme value that can elevate a poor individual, making them a productive member of society. Conversely, the absence of contentment diminishes the status of even the most noble person, as lineage alone is insufficient to bestow distinction. The poet prioritizes contentment over other qualities, considering it a virtue superior to all others, leading its possessor to glory and elevation. Therefore, the poet's view is that a contented and satisfied "Other," despite being poor, is better than a greedy person whose eyes are never satisfied, for true wealth lies in the richness and purity of the soul. The influential image here is that contentment is the key player in a person's elevation or decline. By addressing those who have disciplined themselves in contentment and adorned themselves with its virtues, the poet positively approaches this "Other," emphasizing that seeking the approval of others is a futile endeavor. The poet, aware of the importance of contentment and satisfaction, uses this as a measure to highlight its superiority over greed, which consumes everything in its path. Through logical reasoning expressed in poetry, the poet subtly diminishes the significance of other qualities that are not associated with contentment. Here, the poet relies on simile to enhance the eloquence and beauty of his poetic discourse, comparing contentment to treasure and elevation, and its constant presence among people, whether physically or in absence, just as greed is likened to a condition that afflicts the ignorant.

In another image, within the framework of praise, Ibn Sara addresses the "Other" by praising his companions:

May God reward my brothers with goodness, for I found them
 A stronghold in times of hardship.
 They extended their hands to me, becoming my arms,
 And there's no good in hands without arms.

I adorn them with noble praise, for they are
 The jewels in the necklace of excellence.

In these verses, the poet uses narrative poetry to extol generosity, open-handedness, and noble qualities, personifying these virtues and using them as a visible addressee. Through this approach, he indirectly addresses the implicit "Other." This poem of praise is directed at his patron, Abu Bakr bin Ibrahim, the Almoravid prince, representing the "Other" in an implicit sense. The poet, through narrative poetic dialogue, begins with the poet's self and extends to the praised figure, falling within the realm of the positive "Other."

Here, the "Other" is twofold: the first is non-rational, represented by "generosity," which the poet invokes, converses with, and engages in dialogue with, as a prelude to reaching the second "Other," who is rational and the true subject of the praise. The poet draws a beautiful comparison between the first "Other" and the second "Other" by associating the arrival of "generosity" and the strength symbolized by "arms" with the arrival of the praised figure, Abu Bakr bin Ibrahim. As he expresses his attributes, courage, noble lineage, patience, and status, it becomes evident that he is the true actor in managing the affairs of the land and its people. The poet identifies the "Other" implicitly, without the need to mention him by name, instead relying on well-established attributes in the audience's mind, attributes of brave leaders and Almoravid princes. This is evident through terms such as "arms," "they extended," "a stronghold in times of hardship," and "necklace of excellence," alluding to their courage and ability to face adversities and challenges.

The "Other" depicted in these verses is the positive "Other" in various forms: sometimes as elevation, high ambition, and noble lineage, and other times as strength and bravery. The poet's approach to the "Other" in this positive manner and style reflects the true identity he embodies, whether it is his general or specific Islamic identity, his political stance rejecting oppression and submission, or his literary identity. Through these identities, he reaches out to the positive "Other," centering his poetic discourse on the "Other's" self, making that focal point the basis for addressing other selves by generalizing virtues and considering them the essential traits of the "praised Other," which should be the standard for distinguishing the righteous from the wicked.

In another portrayal of the "Other," it is manifested in his statement:

"O moon, may you never lack perfection, and may the clouds be quenched by your hands,
 Appear freely to us with a polished sword, just as the sharp blade glimmers.
 And reveal a smile that grants us hope, a flash of generosity in its grin,

We have laid our burdens under the shade of a tree, bearing fruit of righteousness and honor."

From these verses, one can deduce the identity of the "Other," and according to the poet's vision of this character, unaffected by whims and desires, the address is to an absent presence in the poet's memory. The poet relies on the stereotypical idea ingrained in the audience's mind, related to the inevitability of strength and generosity that are intertwined in the audience's perception, a notion drawn from religious, spiritual, and psychological references concerning the utopian savior or redeemer awaited to deliver from the stagnant reality to an imagined future that realizes a "terrestrial paradise."

The positive "Other" that Ibn Sara the Andalusian addressed in the aforementioned verses is a sincere expression of his positive view of them. Therefore, we see him directly praising, steering clear of the conventional approach in the structure of the panegyric Arabic poem, with its various preludes before addressing the praised one. The "Other" continues to represent the clash of consciousness with the awareness of the "Other," the poet's effectiveness with the effectiveness of the "Other." The two sides of the process differ through the poet's vision and the semblance that occurs in the imagery stems from the poet's internal conflicts and inclinations. Ibn Sara the Andalusian engaged with the ontological element in these verses, transcending it in the personality of the praised ones.

2-The Negative Other:

The general view of the concept of the "negative Other" is defined through the character of the "Other" and his position and status relative to the poet's self and the extent of her rejection and objection to him. Perhaps, the best way to express this rejection stemming from conflicting directions and values between the self and the "Other" is through satire, a poetic purpose well-known to the Arabs, representing the most effective means of expressing the poet's stance towards the negative "Other." Consequently, his literary identity is clearly reflected. The "Other" in Ibn Sara the Andalusian's poetry played a pivotal role, for there can be no "Other" without an "I" within, which can be termed as the intermingling of the "I" with the "Other." In this sense, the negative "Other" in the poet's view is a positive "I" in the eyes of the "Other" himself. This intermingling exists in most literary works; what one sees as right may be seen by others as wrong, as reflected in his lines:

"They condemned ignorance and scorned its rights, but eagerly spoke of it in council,
And it, in whose hand wealth obeys, the world comes to it despite the begrudging.

Ignorance is as attractive to wealth as iron is to a magnet."

The poet took the "negative Other"—ignorance—according to the principles rooted within him and his critical view of events and the struggle for gains, based on his convictions. This is what Ibn Sara the Andalusian meant in this portrayal, where the cultural negative "Other" is embodied. The poet's focus on attributing lowly qualities to the "Other" (ignorance) and how this "Other" used it as a means to achieve his ends is evidence of the poet's view of this "Other" as a negative one, intending through his satire to diminish his status and bring him down. In general, the verses

are a denunciation of the negative "Other's" attempt to impose opinions that contradict reality and logic.

In another similar example in both imagery and theme, he says:

"What excuse do I have? What excuse for Ibn Sab'in, infatuated with longing?

And he is but water from which the nights have left nothing but the essence."

The poet tends to invoke reason and wisdom and review the self and soul to refute errors and slips. The opening of the poetic discourse with a question indicates wonder and denial (What excuse?), a linguistic indication with profound effect reflecting the poet's disapproval of this act, through which he intended to launch into the negative "Other" to expose his false pretenses and reveal them to the audience, who awaits an answer to the question for the complete mental image linked to the completion of the poetic image in word and meaning.

Among the verses that point to the negative "Other" is his saying:

"Paradise has passed, and Hell has come, so here I am, miserable after having been content,

And no sooner had the sun set than the dark wings of night followed."

Ibn Sara the Andalusian did not stop at addressing the negative "Other" and viewing him as deviant and different from the poet's self, which belongs to a certain racial formation. This confirms his spiritual and psychological stance rooted in his human essence, through his poetic self, which he employs in exposing the flaws of the negative "Other" and revealing superficial manifestations, offering a true interpretation of what transpires in the human arena and the view of the negative "Other" in terms of color and appearance. The poet uses the technique of parallelism and antithesis to emphasize the theme he desired in a clear manner, demonstrating knowledge and awareness ("Paradise/ Hell," "miserable/ content," "sun/ dark night"), to indicate that the poet casts the negative effects on what is social, as the rejection of the different Other, racially, represented a psychological and social contradiction in accepting this different one, categorizing him as a qualitatively and socially negative Other. This stems from the collective consciousness inherited from ancient times and continues across generations, rejecting the divergent, despite the similar reality of this negative Other, but color was the deciding factor in preference.

Examples of the negative "Other" also appear in his satire of jurists who use religion as a means to achieve their ends. He says:

"Did you consider our food lawful in the 'Muwatta,' O wolves appearing to us in colored robes?"

The negative "Other"/religious is represented in Ibn Sara the Andalusian's verses. The religion that protects rights and enacts laws was taken by these people as a means and way to usurp rights, violate sanctities, and neglect the enjoining of good and forbidding of evil due to the dire living and economic conditions Andalusia was undergoing, and their turning a blind eye to the ruler's policies as long as they did not hinder their interests. He stripped them of the image of piety and salvation and reduced them to worshippers of power and wealth. Religion turned into a trade and

exchange of worldly interests, and he inclined to all this with brevity and clarity, far from the grandiloquent imagery and rhetorical excess, which made most of his output revolve around verses that do not exceed one or two, especially concerning the critical view, as the ultimate goal is to convey the idea without flaw. This output is a vivid expression of a painful reality, using the technique of sarcasm that resembles praise, where his style of satire often takes the form of witty humor or harsh criticism that grates the ear, using obscene words we have refrained from quoting.

2. Conclusion:

- Concepts of the self and the Other have occupied researchers and critics, who have sought to understand their relationship by resorting to psychology through classifying the components of the self (the ego, the id, and the Other). The concept of the Other has entered critical discourse, leading to studies that explore the poet's subjectivity towards the selves of others, or the poet's view of the differing Other, which has garnered increased attention recently, despite its broad, vague, and indeterminate nature.
- Philosophers and thinkers have disagreed on a specific definition of the Other. From a psychological perspective, the Other consists of traits and behaviors extending across intellectual, social, and psychological realms, attributed by the self to the Other as they are present in the public sphere. The identity of the self is inherently composite and cannot be independent from the Other without being incomplete or fragmented.
- The Other grants the self complete control over understanding areas of weakness and strength and helps it look towards broader fields and horizons. This does not imply that the concept of the Other is individualistic, but it is also collective.
- The image of the Other has been either positive or negative. This study examines the positive and negative Other according to the poet's perspective and intellectual vision.
- The concept of the negative Other is determined by the character of the Other and his position and status relative to the poetic self and the extent of its rejection and opposition to him. Satire of the Other is perhaps the best means of expressing the rejection arising from conflicting directions and values between the self and the Other.
- Ibn Sara the Andalusian employed techniques such as conciseness and clarity, avoiding ornate and elaborate rhetorical structures. His critical perspective used techniques of blame that resemble praise, with his style of satire often taking the form of witty humor or sharp criticism that offends the ear.
- Most examples in the diwan refer to a diverse and varied Other, reflecting the poet's convictions and belief that both the positive and negative Other stem from the poet's self, reaching the Other whether similar or different, agreed upon or divergent.

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